



## AI Guidelines for the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference of The United Methodist Church (TWK)

### 1. Purpose and Scope

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming how organizations communicate, work, and connect. The TWK Conference embraces the opportunities AI offers while grounding its use firmly in the mission of The United Methodist Church: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Because ministry is profoundly relational, embodied, and shaped by grace, any use of AI must enhance—not diminish—the human work of loving God and neighbor.

We also acknowledge that AI systems require significant energy and water to train and operate, contributing to carbon emissions and resource strain. As people of faith committed to caring for creation, we encourage the thoughtful use of AI, balancing its benefits with an awareness of its ecological impact and a commitment to sustainability.

These guidelines establish principles for the ethical and effective use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies within the Tennessee-Western Kentucky (TWK) Annual Conference.

#### A. Scope

These guidelines apply to all clergy, laity, conference staff, volunteers, committees (both church and conference level), and specific ministries operating within the TWK Conference, including diverse congregations and leaders.

#### B. Defining AI within this Policy

This policy is designed to cover the following generative and autonomous AI technologies:

- Image and video creation
- Generative text
- AI Agents
- AI-based chat

This policy is NOT designed to cover routine task automation or existing software features, such as:

- Email and social media scheduling
- General search engine functions
- Spelling or grammar check tools (e.g., Grammarly)
- C. Goals for AI Use

The main goals for using AI in ministry within the TWK Conference are to:

- Augment, not replace human connection and capabilities.
- Increase efficiency by automating and streamlining administrative tasks (e.g., taking minutes, documenting decisions, creating templates).
- Support ministry through processing, summarizing, and editing content.
- Enable pastors to spend more time in one-on-one ministry.

## **2. Ethical Use and Human Workforce Consideration**

At the heart of Christian ministry is relationship—real people bearing Christ’s love to one another. AI can be a powerful tool, but it must never replace the human presence essential to pastoral care, preaching, decision-making, and leadership. For this reason, TWK affirms a “human-in-the-loop” approach: AI may support tasks, but humans remain accountable for all ministry content and actions.

### **A. Augmentation, Not Replacement**

AI tools must be used to enhance, not substitute, human creativity and judgment.

Good, Helpful Uses of AI:

- AI brainstorming for the beginning stages of sermon writing.
- Editing existing text for clarity and understandability.
- "Reverse outlining" to check for effective communication.
- Contextualization (adjusting content for different audiences or purposes).
- Instructing AI to ask questions to prompt human thinking.

Problematic Uses of AI:

- Generating an entire sermon, weekly newsletter, or pastor’s message.
- Generating "Official communications," reports, or similar content without substantial human modification and review.
- Substituting AI for personal relational matters or pastoral care.

### **B. Workforce Impact**

- The Conference is committed to open and transparent conversations with staff and volunteers about the uses of AI (good, bad, and best practices).

- Policies will be reviewed and updated regularly with staff and volunteers to ensure awareness and understanding.
- AI use should aim to maintain current levels of human time investment, allowing for shifted uses of time and tasks towards higher-value human connection.

### **3. Quality Control and Theological Integrity**

Theological formation is uniquely human work. AI can assist with research or organization, but it cannot grasp the mystery, nuance, or lived experience of faith. Therefore, any content generated or shaped by AI must be reviewed by a human—preferably the original creator and, in official contexts, by the pastor or the conference Communications Office.

All AI-assisted content must be evaluated for accuracy, theological faithfulness, and contextual appropriateness. AI tools may unintentionally produce misinformation or theological distortions, so users should approach outputs with discernment and care.

#### **A. Responsibility for Review**

- The primary responsibility for reviewing AI-generated content for accuracy and theological alignment rests with the person doing the generating.
- Personal responsibility: Individuals should accept personal responsibility for all content produced “in your name,” regardless of AI assistance.
- Content "officially from the church" must be reviewed and approved by the pastor.
- Content "officially from the conference" must be reviewed and approved by the communications team or designated authority.

#### **B. Content Integrity**

- Theological Content: For sensitive content like sermons, prayers, devotions, Bible studies, and liturgies, human development, not just oversight, is recommended.
- Process: Churches are encouraged to establish workflows to review content and to consider using shared church accounts to maintain consistent oversight.
- Education: Guidelines must be established on what to "front-load" the AI with (e.g., descriptions of UMC Theology, Social Principles, the Book of Discipline, and the Church’s core values).

### **4. Data Security, Privacy, and Compliance**

AI systems often store or learn from the information entered into them. For this reason, sensitive data must never be entered into AI tools. These protections honor the dignity of every person and reflect the church’s commitment to “do no harm.”

## A. Data Protection

- **Sensitive Data:** Sensitive or confidential data must not be entered into AI applications. The TWK Conference must define what data is considered sensitive.
- **Compliance:** Confidentiality statements must be updated to include statements regarding AI and data use.

## 5. Content Development Guidelines and Transparency

People deserve to know when AI plays a role in the creation of church-related content. TWK encourages both general disclosure (covering broad use cases) and specific disclosures when appropriate. Transparency is not intended to diminish the usefulness of AI but to maintain honesty, clarity, and relational integrity.

### A. Categories of Generated Content

For disclosure purposes, the following definitions shall apply:

Category	Definition	Disclosure Requirement
Human-Generated with AI Assistance	AI tools support, enhance, or streamline the human creative process, but the human contributes the majority of the creative content (e.g., Grammarly).	Generally acceptable; blanket disclosure may suffice.
Collaboratively Generated Content	A balanced collaboration where AI provides initial drafts/frameworks, which are substantially modified, expanded, or restructured by humans.	Generally acceptable, but may require specific disclosure depending on the situation (e.g., major reports).
AI-Generated Content with Human Assistance	The primary ideas, structure, or creative output originate from an AI tool, with minimal human input (e.g., a fully AI-written pastor's message).	Generally not acceptable for official communications or theological content. Specific disclosure is mandatory when used in acceptable contexts.

### B. AI-Generated Media

- For AI-generated images or videos, creators must avoid plagiarism and ensure ethical use. Plagiarism-detection tools may be helpful, though their limitations should be clearly understood.
- As AI-generation becomes increasingly advanced, ministries must ensure that images reflect the identity, diversity, and values of The United Methodist Church and do not misrepresent real people or situations.

## 6. Implementation, Training, and Review

Not all AI tools are created equal. When choosing AI platforms, ministries should consider a variety of factors to ensure the tool chosen aligns with the values of the church. As tools evolve quickly, churches should avoid locking themselves into single-vendor solutions without due discernment.

TWK will provide training on responsible AI use and help leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of major tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Grok, Copilot, and others.

Ministries should also establish internal approval processes for new AI initiatives and for official communications involving AI-generated content.

### A. Tool Selection Criteria

Criteria for selecting AI tools for use within the ministry should consider:

- Ethical considerations (e.g., copyright, bias).
- Quality of the AI tool.
- Affordability and ease of use.
- Compatibility with Church/Conference values.
- Churchwide vs. individual use.

### B. Policy Review

- AI policies and practices will be reviewed at least annually and potentially tied to the budgeting process.
- The intent is to empower conference and church-level staff to make necessary, minor policy adjustments quickly and report them, rather than waiting for a committee to act, with the understanding that key is trust and awareness.
- A mechanism for staff and stakeholder feedback, including a reporting requirement for concerns, will be established.

The conference will designate primary contacts for questions about AI use, training requests, or ethical concerns. Procedures will be established for reporting misuse or breaches of this policy. Accountability mechanisms will ensure that all AI-supported ministry work reflects TWK's standards of integrity, transparency, and faithful discipleship.