

The Algorithm and the Almighty: Navigating Artificial Intelligence through a Reformed Lens

A Sample Policy for Congregations and Mid-Councils on Artificial Intelligence and the Life of the Church

Purpose Statement

Recognizing that we are created beings of a sovereign God, that we have the capacity for generative creativity, and that there is a variety of opinion on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the augmentation or wholesale replacement of our own natural abilities, this policy seeks to establish normative guidelines for such use. Notably, this policy does not seek to answer the ethical question of “Should AI be used?” That question is properly answered through individual discernment and prayer. This policy seeks instead to establish guardrails for those who discern that such use is appropriate.

Guidelines for Use

1. **Support the Church’s Mission:**
Use AI only in ways that strengthen the church’s witness to Jesus Christ and its call to embody God’s love and justice.
2. **Practice Transparency:**
Employ AI openly, in ways that can be explained and justified to the community.
3. **Keep Human Responsibility Central:**
Ensure that people remain accountable for all uses of AI and for addressing any harms it may cause.
4. **Respect the Limits of Ministry:**
Do not allow AI to replace the human presence essential to worship, sacraments, preaching, pastoral care, and other core practices of the church.
5. **Protect Privacy and Security:**
Safeguard personal information and uphold the right to privacy in all AI-related activities.
6. **Rely on Expertise:**
Seek sound scientific knowledge and ethical guidance to inform decisions about AI use.
7. **Use with Restraint:**
Limit AI to specific, necessary purposes, mindful of its potential impact on creation and community.
8. **Be Watchful of Bias:**
Approach AI with curiosity and humility, remaining alert to embedded biases and refusing to reinforce social or economic inequities.
9. **Stay Rooted in Faith:**
Let scripture, the Confessions, and the Book of Order guide discernment and practice in all interactions with AI.

Implementation

Congregations and mid-councils are encouraged to review their use of AI on a regular basis, ideally as part of their annual ministry or committee reports. Such reviews should take into account both the opportunities and the risks of emerging technologies. Education is an important part of faithful engagement; therefore, councils are urged to provide training for members, leaders, and staff so that they may better understand the benefits, limitations, and ethical implications of AI, especially in relation to the church's mission and witness. Clear lines of accountability should be established, with designated individuals or committees tasked to evaluate new applications of AI and to respond if harm occurs. In all cases, the adoption of new AI tools should be preceded by prayerful discernment, grounded in scripture, the Confessions, and the wisdom of the wider community of faith. Finally, congregations and mid-councils are encouraged to share their experiences and insights with others across the church, contributing to an ongoing conversation about the faithful and ethical use of AI in the life of the church.

Conclusion

As Reformed Christians, we affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord of all creation, and that no technology, however powerful, stands outside the sovereignty of God. Artificial intelligence is one of many tools shaped by human hands — capable of serving God's purposes when used wisely, but also vulnerable to distortion by sin. The church's calling is not to fear such tools nor to embrace them uncritically, but to discern their place within God's providence with humility, courage, and hope. In all things, we seek to glorify God, to love our neighbors, and to bear witness to the One in whom all wisdom and knowledge are found.