

Guidelines and Policy for the Use of Artificial Intelligence

THE HEART

Our guiding convictions for using AI in ministry.

PURPOSE

Artificial intelligence is reshaping how we work, communicate, and minister. As followers of Christ, we are called to engage these tools wisely and with discernment. These guidelines intend to help our church staff and PATHMAKERS use AI in ways that honor God, protect people, and advance the gospel.

SEVEN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1. Pursue Wisdom.** Ask not just can we use AI, but should we, and how. Technology is not morally neutral. Slow down. Pray. Seek counsel before adopting new tools in ministry (Prov. 9:10; Rom. 12:2). Any use of AI in brainstorming, researching, writing, editing, and more should be seen through the lens of wisdom. Staff and PATHMAKERS are doing more than simply transferring information as they are focusing on the transformation of the whole person, which is by God's good design done in community. Overall, we must remember AI cannot replace the hard work of studying, preparing, or teaching, nor should it be a substitute for God's unique calling on ministers of the gospel.
- 2. Champion Human Dignity.** Every person is made in God's image; no machine can replicate that. AI must never replace the deeply personal, embodied nature of discipleship, counseling, or pastoral care (Gen. 1:26–27). As part of our fidelity to God's Word and our callings as Christian ministers, we should not outsource the personal nature of Christian ministry. Staff and PATHMAKERS are to be above reproach in every way as fitting for the call God has placed on their lives (1 Tim. 3:2). People are to minister to other people, and we must ask ourselves if our use of AI discourages, outsources, and/or distracts from loving our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 5:39).
- 3. Promote Truth.** In an age of misinformation, we commit to accuracy and honesty. Always verify AI-generated content before sharing. Scripture, not AI, is our ultimate authority (2 Tim. 3:16–17).
- 4. Cultivate Integrity.** Be transparent about when and how AI is used in our ministry. What carries your name must reflect your work and character. Do not pass off AI-generated content as solely your own (1 Tim. 3:2). The things Christian ministers say, write, and post that carry our name ultimately must be of our own work, and we must reject plagiarism in all its forms. AI should never be used to subvert the God-given responsibilities of the Christian minister. AI should be a thought *partner*, not our thought *leader*.
- 5. Protect Privacy.** Never share personal, sensitive, or confidential information about congregation members with AI systems. Guard the trust placed in us by our church family (Prov. 11:13).
- 6. Represent the Kingdom.** All AI use should serve the Great Commandment and Great Commission. These tools may support our mission, but they are never a substitute for Spirit-empowered, people-to-people gospel ministry (Matt. 22:37–39; 28:19–20). AI should also never replace counseling, personal discipleship, study, and mentoring.
- 7. Model Faithful Leadership.** Leaders set the tone. Teach our people to think critically about AI, neither dismissing it nor following it uncritically. Model the wisdom and discernment we want our congregation to develop (Rom. 12:2). As Christian leaders, we believe the line between humans and machines must be maintained and championed in all aspects of ministry, including the distinct call upon the church to be ambassadors of Christ.

PRACTICAL EXPECTATIONS FOR STAFF & PATHMAKERS

- **Minister.** Never use AI to replace your personal ministry including counseling, prayer, discipleship, mentoring, visitation, and Spirit-led guidance you may provide.
- **Review.** You are personally responsible for your communications and documents. AI is like a smart friend who is sometimes wrong. Don't copy and paste or use AI content without reading and carefully considering every word.
- **Protect.** Do not use names, prayer requests, health info, or sensitive data when working with AI tools. Maintain people's privacy. Important: Within every AI tool you use, turn off "Improve the model" or "Help improve our AI models."
- **Cite.** Your work should be substantially your own. If you use verbatim AI-generated text, cite AI as you would a commentary or book, such as "Source: AI research"
- **Ask.** If you have questions about your use of AI at Houston's First, contact the IT Director.

THE SPINE

The detail behind our convictions: who this covers, how we handle tools and data, and how the policy is administered.

WHO THIS COVERS

This Policy applies to everyone employed by Houston's First Baptist Church, whether full-time or part-time, and to anyone else granted access to sensitive church data, such as our Church Management System (ChMS), Rock. It covers the use of AI on any Houston's First device, and on any personal or other device when that device is used to perform Houston's First work or to access Houston's First systems, accounts, or sensitive church data (collectively, "users," or "you").

UNDERSTANDING AI

AI is computer-based technology that can analyze information, generate content, and perform tasks that resemble human reasoning, and may be embedded within other programs and applications. "Generative AI" is a common type of AI that produces content, such as text, images, code, or video, in response to user prompts. These definitions inform the requirements throughout this Policy. Two realities of AI shape much of what follows and are addressed under the principles below: AI output is frequently inaccurate or biased and must be reviewed (see Promote Truth), and many public AI tools retain user prompts to train their models (see Protect Privacy).

GOVERNANCE AND UPDATES

Questions about this Policy should be directed to the IT Director at Houston's First who serves as Houston's First's AI Lead. Houston's First employees may also raise questions with their immediate supervisor or department Minister or Director. This Policy may be updated at the discretion of Houston's First to reflect changes in AI and its adoption.

APPROVED AI TOOLS

The only AI tools approved for Houston's First work are those the Houston's First IT department provides or has specifically signed off on. Use these tools for Houston's First business with your Houston's First-issued credentials and resources. To use any AI tool that IT has not provided or approved, obtain written approval from the IT Director in advance.

HANDLING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Principle 5 commits us to protecting the privacy of our church family. In practice, that means the following:

- Never put confidential, proprietary, or personal information into a public or unapproved AI tool. Many public tools capture what you enter and use it to train their models, which can push that information outside your control. This includes names, contact information, giving records, health details, prayer requests, HR files, and membership or ChMS (Rock) data.
- Trusted platforms vs. untrusted ones. The dividing line is not AI versus no AI; it is trusted, secured tools Houston's First provides and controls versus outside or unvetted ones. Sensitive church information may be used only within Houston's First-approved, secured tools, and never in an outside platform.
- Even in an approved, secured tool, share only what the task requires. Don't include more sensitive detail than the work actually needs.

PASTORAL USE OF AI

The work of a pastor, to shepherd, teach, preach, and minister to souls, is done through the Holy Spirit, faithful study of Scripture, and personal presence. Pastors may use generative AI only in a limited manner as a research aid in preparing sermons or other teaching, never as a substitute for the Spirit's leading or God's own voice.

TRANSLATION

AI may be used to assist with translation, but all translated content must be reviewed for accuracy, cultural appropriateness, and consistency with the voice of Houston's First before it is distributed. Public-facing Spanish communications must be reviewed by a member of the Spanish Ministry team who is familiar with the Houston's First Spanish Brand Guidelines.

EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS

AI must never be used in connection with employment decisions, including hiring, performance evaluations, disciplinary actions, or terminations. These are human judgments about image-bearers and remain the responsibility of people.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Do not use AI to infringe the intellectual property of others. Review AI output to ensure it does not include the branding or copyrighted content of third parties, particularly before anything is published or sent outside Houston's First.

COMMUNICATIONS AND CREATIVE STANDARDS

AI-assisted communications and creative work remain subject to Houston's First established Communications and Creative policies, review processes, branding standards, approval workflows, and promotional priorities. AI does not replace the Communications or Creative Teams or bypass existing request and approval procedures. Public-facing materials must accurately reflect the voice, mission, and brand of Houston's First.

AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION AND SYNTHETIC MEDIA

Do not use AI to create or alter images, videos, voices, likenesses, testimonials, ministry stories, or other content that falsely attributes statements, endorsements, or approvals to a person or organization. Synthetic voices, images, videos, or likenesses of pastors, employees, PATHMAKERS, congregation members, or other individuals may not be created or used without approval from the Communications Department. AI-generated media may be used for conceptual or illustrative purposes, but it must not be presented as authentic photography or documentation of actual people or events.

ACCEPTABLE CONDUCT

Use AI in a professional and Christ-honoring manner, never in any unbiblical, illegal, unethical, fraudulent, offensive, threatening, discriminatory, harassing, defamatory, or otherwise inappropriate way.

LOGIN AND ACCOUNT SECURITY

Protect your login credentials and ensure your AI accounts are not accessible to others. Use only your Houston's First email address or Houston's First-supplied credentials when logging into an AI tool for the purposes of Houston's First.

MONITORING AND HOUSTON'S FIRST SYSTEMS

Houston's First may monitor the use of AI by its users and will take appropriate action if it suspects a user has used AI inconsistently with this Policy. Houston's First reserves the right to selectively block AI tools as it deems necessary. Any documents, records, materials, files, content, or communications created, sent, or stored using Houston's First's technology resources are available to Houston's First leadership, and users should have no expectation of privacy in those items.

RAISING SECURITY CONCERNS

If you become aware of a possible data exposure, a security risk, or an AI tool being used on Houston's First systems that IT has not provided or approved, notify the IT Director. This is about protecting people's information, not policing coworkers; early awareness lets IT address a risk before it becomes a problem.

COMPLIANCE AND CONSEQUENCES

Every user is expected to review, acknowledge, and follow this Policy, and adhere to the guidelines at all times. Failure to follow it will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination as determined by the Houston's First Human Resources Department. Using AI tools for illegal purposes may also carry legal liability.

These principles are a condensed adaptation of the Brentwood Statement on AI and Christian Ministry (Lifeway Christian Resources, 2026), tailored for Houston's First Baptist Church: <https://brentwoodstatement.lifeway.com>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND SIGNATURE

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the Guidelines and Policy for the Use of Artificial Intelligence. I understand that it is my responsibility to read, understand, and comply with the requirements and expectations outlined in this document.

I understand that failure to comply with this Policy or its Guidelines may result in corrective action, up to and including termination as determined by the Houston's First Human Resources Department.

I further acknowledge that if I have questions regarding the interpretation or application of this Policy, I am responsible for seeking clarification from the AI Lead, my immediate supervisor, or my department Minister or Director before using artificial intelligence in a manner that may be inconsistent with this Policy.

Signature

Print Name

Date