

Title Artificial Intelligence Accountability and Disclosure Policy for The Diocese of West Missouri

Proposer(s) Cassie E. Brown

1. Resolved: that The Diocese of West Missouri shall develop and adopt Artificial
2. Intelligence (AI) Policies and Disclosure statements and publicly publish such, and
- 3.
4. Resolved: that all churches of The Diocese of West Missouri shall develop AI Policies
5. and Disclosure Statements which shall not conflict with the AI Policies and
6. Disclosure Statement of The Diocese of West Missouri., and
7. —
8. ~~Resolved: that all such policies shall mandate the disclosure of AI tools when utilized~~
9. ~~by a church and shall outline specific policies for when and how AI may and may not~~
10. ~~be used.~~

Explanation

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a rapidly evolving area of technology which presents ethical, legal, and even theological challenges to churches. Currently, technology such as generative AI and machine learning is being used for tasks including artificially creating images, video, or sound; developing bulletins and advertising materials; performing research tasks, hiring, or task automation; or creating written output such as commentaries, prayers, or sermons.

The proposers recognize that there are ethical debates associated with the use of generative AI and machine learning, especially in tasks where human discernment, creativity, or spirituality is replaced, modified, or abbreviated.

Yet churches can and do choose to use AI in these and more ways without the requirement to disclose when and how this technology is being used.

Recognizing that this is a rapidly changing and complex technology, and that the ethics of the technology itself are still being studied by TEC at large, this resolution does not seek to ban or regulate the use of AI in The Diocese of West Missouri.

Rather, to increase accountability, transparency, and trust, any use of AI tools should be disclosed and the policy for the use of AI technology needs to be well-supported and clear.

An excellent model policy to examine is found at The Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes.

Background information is provided on the following pages.

THE BACKGROUND MATERIAL

Artificial Intelligence and The Diocese of West Missouri

Proposing an artificial intelligence (AI) policy for the Diocese of West Missouri is no more a straightforward and easy solution to a complex problem than it is empty virtue-signaling. AI is a complex issue.

Episcopal priest Rev. Chris Corbin sums up the complexity neatly when he writes:

“We should seek to embrace discipline rather than abstinence, and harm reduction rather than harm elimination. Draw the bright lines where they actually belong, hold every technology to the same scrutiny instead of fixating on the frightening new one, and keep the load-bearing, incarnational aspects of ministry fully human².”

Of course, while this is quite elegantly stated, it is extremely difficult in practice. There are countless uses of AI that have advanced human flourishing. Many technical advances in medicine, biology, and engineering would simply be unthinkable without the power of these tools. The Archbishop of Canterbury, herself a nurse, discussed the contributions of AI to the fields of nursing and science when addressing Parliament in June of 2026³.

However, the question at hand is not about whether AI as a technology should be banned from all human use. The question is whether it is appropriate to permit the use, impacts, outcomes, and theology of AI to remain invisible and silent in The Diocese of West Missouri.

What Is AI?

Firstly, while it is important to ensure that one discusses the issues at hand in consistent terms, there is not a generally accepted, universal definition of artificial intelligence. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab defines AI as “the development of systems that can perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence, such as reasoning, learning, and problem-solving⁴.”

AI “is not a monolithic technology⁵” currently and instead comprises multiple tools serving multiple purposes. These tools are integrated across technologies. AI has been added into commonly used technologies such as Zoom, Canva, and Microsoft Office Suite, browser search engines such as Google and Bing, and many websites’ help chat functions.

One of the types of AI most applicable to this conversation is “generative AI.” This technology not only analyzes data, but also creates new, realistic content based on information learned by an algorithm, which could include generating text, images, computer code, or even

² Corbin 2026.

³ Mullally, 2026.

⁴ MIT Media Lab 2026.

⁵ Awad 2025.

other forms of data⁶. These are often driven by large language models (LLMs) which are “trained” on massive data sets. Up to 54% of adults in the United States create content using generative AI “such as text, images, videos, and audio based on a user’s prompt or request⁷.”

Many generative AI models are “proprietary”, such as ChatGPT (OpenAI), Gemini (Google DeepMind), and Claude (Anthropic) and are created, maintained, and owned by private companies. There are open-source LLMs also, such as DeepSeek, Pythia, and BLOOM, which offer varying levels of licensing and code accessibility balanced with differing ethical restrictions⁸.

Why Is AI a Christian Issue?

Intellectual Property, Theft, and Fair Wage Practices:

Generative AI such as ChatGPT and Claude have been trained using massive data sets. In order to accumulate the sheer amount of data needed to produce the necessary training, large quantities of the internet have been “fed” to these models, without respect to intellectual property, including using the creative work of human beings who went uncompensated or under-compensated for their labor.

Moreover, even those who were compensated, such as in the \$1.5 billion dollar settlement where Anthropic paid authors and publishers for “engaging in copyright infringement to build its large language models⁹” still risk future losses. Such LLMs now promote free or low-cost alternatives to paying artists, designers, authors, or other human creators for their labor, after their labor has been stolen or minimally compensated, and is now stylistically reproducible through machine learning.

Recent surveys also note that a third of organizations “expect AI to reduce their workforce in the coming year¹⁰.” Such large-scale adoption indicates that this technology aims to be highly disruptive to the job market and employers. This prediction seems possibly outrageously large, but it should be noted that the same survey reports that “generative AI reached 53% adoption in three years, faster than the personal computer or the internet¹¹.”

The training of AI technology is also environmentally damaging. Notably, generative AI is “more energy-intensive than task-specific models...due to the commercial deployment of large multi-purpose generative AI models, like OpenAI’s GPT-4.¹²” (See *Environmental Impacts, Climate Change, and Creation Care*.)

⁶ Awad, *ibid*.

⁷ Galaraga, 2026.

⁸ Awad, *ibid*.

⁹ Milliot 2026.

¹⁰ AI Index Steering Committee, 2026.

¹¹ AI Index Steering Committee, *ibid*.

¹² Albornoz and Norori 2025.

Unequal Access to Resources:

The Diocese of West Missouri currently has 47 active churches, for which, per the report given in the *Diocesan Profile 2024: Meet Us in the Middle*, there were only 15 full-time priestly cures. The Diocese's Central Deanery had 16 churches and only 2 full-time priestly cures¹³. In circumstances such as these, when time-saving technology becomes available which could lift a burden from such under-resourced churches, one might think it cruel to deprive them of it.

Indeed, technology exists to help create opportunities and level playing fields. However, this is not the boon it might at first appear to be. It is an open question which church-related tasks can be considered “inconsequential” or “ordinary” or “secular” enough to automate. Drafting a flyer for a church picnic through a prompt might feel of little enough consequence to the part-time administrator. A time-pressed priest might want to craft a better sermon, or at least support more research, using AI tech, knowing that there are many other tasks that are demanding attention. A harried vestry member might wish to utilize a platform's AI notetaking function for the vestry minutes. Each of these seem like opportunities to increase the functionality of a small church community, possibly even helping them gain a little more equal footing alongside better resourced congregations.

Of course, the answer is not shunning, shaming or punishing smaller churches for seeking to use technology to make up for a lack of resources. Whenever possible, the solution is to identify ways to strengthen the people who are living as the Church in these places, rather than to excuse the technology making it easier for such congregations to continue to function with less.

However, it is foreseeable that if larger, better staffed churches utilize the same AI technology as smaller churches, the smaller churches will still be outperformed in certain areas—or at least the demands for the use of the technology will continue to increase. Thus, the “playing field” is not truly leveled by simply onboarding technology.

Adaptive/Assistive Technology:

AI has enabled a wave of adaptive technology which can benefit the disabled community. For example, there are AI-based technologies, such as automated captioning for Zoom, which have created opportunities for d/Deaf and hard of hearing people to participate in meetings with hearing individuals in real time. Automatic captioning technologies allow content, such as services and sermons, which are broadcast on YouTube and other platforms to be accessible to d/Deaf and hard of hearing people as well.

Again, AI is not without its drawbacks in these areas. Because AI is always a reflection of the datasets it is trained on, it has been known since as early as 2020, that AI-automated speech recognition is twice as likely to misinterpret the words spoken by Black English speakers than the

¹³ The Diocese of West Missouri 2024.

same words spoken by white speakers¹⁴. Dorn et. al. also noted that AI reinforced racial stereotypes and falsely projected “anger” onto African American Vernacular English (AAVE)¹⁵.

Some words are automatically changed or edited in these captioning processes by some of these AI tools. (Point of privilege: In a sermon preached by the author, one of the words was deleted from the captions by AI, because it was a word that was used by some people for offensive reasons, though it was not used as such contextually in the sermon.)

Yet, the ability to communicate with marginalized and oppressed disabled communities is certainly a holy opportunity.

Environmental Impacts, Climate Change, and Creation Care:

AI has a huge environmental cost, according to growing evidence. Training complex AI models, such as generative AI applications, use substantial resources and emit large amounts of greenhouse gases. The amount of energy and resources is difficult to estimate at this time while the consumption is constantly increasing. As was noted,

“training one large language model can generate approximately 300,000 kg of carbon dioxide emissions, equivalent to 125 round-trip flights between New York and Beijing (Dhar, 2020). The computational demands of training AI are doubling approximately every 100 days, with projections suggesting that by 2028, AI could consume more electricity than Iceland did in 2021¹⁶”

But that is not the only impact on our planet or its people. AI requires a physical infrastructure which consumes energy and resources, such as graphics processing units, which are built from rare earth minerals and metals. Extracting these raw materials has a negative environmental impact through greenhouse gas emissions and overburdens limited water systems often in heavily exploited nations. The workers who extract these materials often operate in unsafe and exploitative conditions while exposed to toxic chemicals and human rights abuses¹⁷.

Data centers are buildings which house computer systems, servers, and networking equipment to store, share, and process digital information. Data centers power AI by storing and processing the data that make up the systems. The energy demand to power such buildings doubles approximately every four years in addition to requiring large amounts of water to cool the hardware¹⁸.

¹⁴ Andrews 2020.

¹⁵ Dorn, et. al. 2025.

¹⁶ Albornoz and Norori *ibid*.

¹⁷ Albornoz and Norori *ibid*.

¹⁸ Albornoz and Norori, *ibid*.

Privacy, Surveillance, and Violence:

AI has enabled the increased surveillance of individuals for the purpose of lucrative data collection, as well as to enhance the ability of other actors to monitor and regulate citizen activities. As noted, “companies such as Flock and Palantir are utilizing AI for purposes of unregulated real-world surveillance, granting these companies unprecedented abilities to invasively document the lives of individuals, match them to their online activity, and sell that data to the highest bidder¹⁹.”

This surveillance activity, enabled by AI’s ability to sift and manage data, dehumanizes people, turning lives into product, and product into profit. Further, although governments and the private sector are currently relying on AI-products for things ranging from traffic stops to identifying stolen vehicles, it has been revealed that AI has the capacity to “strategically lie” and “exploit loopholes” in its own programming²⁰.

Thus, it is worth remembering that although it feels accessible and simple to utilize, the very accessibility of the technology is part of its cost.

Transparency and Acceptability to Church Members:

In a global Ipsos opinion poll noted in *The AI Index 2026 Report*, 79% of those surveyed agreed that “Products and services using artificial intelligence should have to disclose that use²¹.” In that same report, it was noted that 52% responded affirmatively to the question “Products and services using artificial intelligence make me nervous²².”

This strong public concern for transparency should encourage The Diocese of West Missouri to both create a public-facing and clear AI policy for disclosure as well as to consider prayerfully when the use of AI is necessary and appropriate.

Intellectual, Social, and Creative Flourishing

The use of generative AI is associated with loss of important areas of independent skills necessary for human flourishing. One study discovered that unmoderated access to AI in an educational setting “diminished analytical skills and ethical dilemmas such as academic dishonesty and data privacy issues.” The unchecked use of AI leads to dependence and loss of critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, and creativity²³. Over-engagement also has been noted to have a negative impact on motivation and engagement, due to things coming simply too easily, causing complacency and lack of growth and self-reliance.

¹⁹ Grace Episcopal Church, 2026.

²⁰ Booth, 2025.

²¹ AI Index Steering Committee 2026.

²² AI Index Steering Committee, *ibid.*

²³ Abubakar, Jeilani, & Yusuf, 2025.

This is termed “over-reliance” and happens when individuals put “undue trust in AI-generated content... neglecting their analytical capabilities... [leading] to superficial engagement with the learning material²⁴.” Individuals are also prone to engaging in academic dishonesty, sometimes due to lack of clear guidelines or ethical guidance or awareness. It is also noted that use of generative AI has an overall negative impact on creativity and a “flattening” of creative output due to the fact that, as was observed in a study,

“[AI’s] entire model is based [on] things people have said before, with no way to generate novel ideas. Even when asked specifically to do so [a generative AI model] is unable to do so. This means that using direct results from [a generative AI model] for brainstorming is really someone else’s work²⁵.”

Thus, it is notable that elements of humanity that are crucial to human flourishing are negatively impacted by the ongoing and persistent use of generative AI, especially in settings where creativity, research, production, or education/learning occurs. Spirituality certainly seems an arena capable of similar atrophy.

Chatbots, which are a subset of generative AI applications, have also been noted to prolong engagement with their users including in highly unethical ways. These rise up to such levels as discouraging users from seeking crucial help for urgent mental health crises. Chatbots are also, according to research,

“facilitating violence against women and girls: allowing roleplays of incest, child sexual abuse and rape with few safeguards, risking the normalization and the legitimization of such abuse. These harms are not simply the result of user misuse - AI platforms design choices, policies and governance failures are encouraging and enabling them, and existing regulation is wholly inadequate to prevent them²⁶.”

Skills and gifts that are important elements of humanity often become impaired, or even tarnished, by some of these tools.

Spiritual Discipline and Formation:

Leaders across the faith have taken up urgent discussions of AI and its implications for Christ-followers.

Pope Leo wrote his first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, to address artificial intelligence and pray for our era to be “builders of communion, not architects of Babel²⁷.” Pope Leo’s encyclical returns repeatedly to the concept that perfection is not the purpose of humanity. The

²⁴ Abubakar, Jeilani, & Yusuf, *ibid*.

²⁵ Habib, Vogel, Anli, & Thorne, 2024.

²⁶ Mullally, 2026.

²⁷ Pope Leo XIV, 2026.

encyclical emphasizes that, in fact, human imperfection is not in opposition to our our inherent dignity which “belongs to every human being simply by virtue of their existence²⁸.”

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has written an “issue paper” on Artificial intelligence that examines the concept through the lens of Corporate Social Responsibility. In this paper, it is noted that responsibility as a social construct becomes “vastly more complex” when AI is used by law enforcements, militaries, governments, and other agencies:

“Who is responsible for the rights violations of citizens unlawfully targeted by law enforcement, or civilians targeted by the military? Are the writers of the initial programming responsible? Are those who oversaw the development of knowledge through AI responsible? Are those in management who made the decision to use AI responsible? Are the people closest to the actual effect responsible? If decisions such as allocating health care resources, or identifying targets for search by law enforcement, or choosing military targets are being informed by AI, or even made by AI, one error in the algorithm has manifold consequences for human rights, and the path to restitution of those rights is unclear²⁹.”

Thus the ELCA Lutheran community approaches AI with a deeply cautious set of moral teachings, comparing these questions to scriptural authority, and examining the way that the very structure of the technology diffuses responsibility in concerning ways.

Members of the Anglican Communion are already responding at various levels to AI. In June 2026, the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Rt. Rev. Sarah Mullally, addressed British Parliament to discuss implications—political, technical, humane, and Christian—of AI. Mullally talked about the nature of human creation, that we are “designed for relationship, relationship with God and with others, and with the created world around us³⁰.” She discussed how work, creativity, and partnering with God to see His kingdom arrive on earth, are all a part of human flourishing.

Episcopal Preachers—lay and ordained—have begun adding their names as signatories of the St. Dunstan’s Pledge for Preachers. This states that those who sign commit to not use generative AI to write sermons, homilies, or reflections, stating:

“At no point in the brainstorming, planning, drafting, or writing of my sermons will I use ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, Gemini, or any other generative AI of any type available to me,” the pledge reads. “I will use my own words. I will quote words written or spoken by other people, not produced by generative AI³¹.”

The author of the St. Dunstan’s Pledge, Rev. Emily García, wrote of preaching, “It’s an incarnational act, an ongoing conversation within a worshiping community, rising out of prayer

²⁸ Pope Leo XIV, *ibid*.

²⁹ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 2025.

³⁰ Mullally, *ibid*.

³¹ Galaraga, *ibid*.

and study and the life of real people³².” The pledge acknowledges that faith requires a human component to participate relationally in the act of preaching—that all parts of sermon preparation are holy, and that only by participating in this process is a congregation experiencing a relational, spiritual act.

If, as was mentioned earlier, a smalltown parttime priest feels pressured to write a “better” sermon through the use of AI, it might come from being under resourced. As noted, we recognize that many churches experience unequal resourcing. We encourage such churches to look to sermons prepared by other human homilists. The act of sharing a human communion of the word gives a sermon or homily meaning and purpose.

As Christians, we recognize that “every tree is known by its own fruit” (Luke 6:44). The fruits of generative AI have been discussed here at length, though each quite briefly. Some are explicitly good, many are ill. Nothing of this technology is without weight and consequence. Mullally quoted Anglican author and theologian C. S. Lewis, who stated, “We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. If you have taken a wrong turning then to go forward does not get you any nearer.”

We believe that beginning with a commitment to *disclose* the use of Generative AI tools is the way to open the door for these conversations, as well as to increase trust and transparency in all of our communications with one another and with folks beyond our Diocese.

The Diocesan Vision Statement reads “God’s just and peaceful beloved community built on our shared love of God and one another.” In light of this vision, we urge the Diocese to continue even further in these conversations regarding AI: speaking compassionate truth, listening deeply to all impacted, and seeking justice, at every level of our collective life.

³² Galaraga, *ibid.*

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