

A Sample Policy for the Appropriate use of Congregational Computers

Staff and volunteers of _____ Church who are designated to have access to the Internet and church technology are required to use their access in a Christian, legal, and informed way, conforming to network etiquette, laws and courtesies.

_____ Congregation will determine:

- The extent to which staff/volunteers may use the Internet and/or church computers to accomplish job responsibilities. Any questions about the appropriateness of a particular use of the Internet should be discussed with the supervisor;
- The appropriateness of using the Internet and/or church computers for professional contacts and career development activities during office hours;
- The training required of staff using the Internet and/or church computers and the work time that may be used to practice/acquire skills needed to effectively access and use the Internet and/or church computers; and
- The wisdom of installing a pornography filter or other Internet blocking software.

The Internet is not a secure communication channel and should not be used for sending or receiving confidential or sensitive information.

Use of the Internet and computers is a privilege, not a right, which may be revoked at any time for inappropriate conduct. Misuse of Internet access or computers by a staff person may result in other disciplinary action, including but not limited to, termination of employment. Examples of inappropriate conduct include, but are not limited to: use of inappropriate, offensive or abusive language in either public or private messages; unlawful activities; defamation; infringement of copyrights; misrepresentation of oneself or the church; logging on or accessing pornographic, sexually explicit, violent sites or materials, accessing gambling sites, initiating viruses, and sending messages that might result in congestion or disruption of networks and systems.

Staff should notify the pastor or officer if s/he observes or becomes aware of any inappropriate conduct or use of the Internet and/or church computers by church staff or others.

All programs, files, and E-mail are property of _____ Church. Staff use of church technology is not private. _____ Church reserves the right to monitor staff use of the Internet and/or church computers at any time. Staff must abide by security policies, procedures and guidelines, and are to refrain from practices that might jeopardize the church's computers, data, network, system's security or work in general. Staff must guard against computer viruses and security breaches of any kind. Staff who use the Internet may not transfer or install any software or files from the Internet to any church computers or information systems except in consultation with appropriate technical staff (i.e., no downloading of software, programs, games, etc.).

Although church staff is specifically mentioned throughout this policy, the same provisions apply to church volunteers. This policy applies to all Internet/computer use on church premises and use of church property outside of the church premises.

(Note: This information does not constitute legal advice. Congregations requiring legal assistance should engage a qualified licensed attorney, The Eastern District, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is not responsible for any loss, injury, liability, or damage related to your use of this material.)