

Proposal: Development of an AI policy for the United Church of Canada
Origin: Kent Chown, Nakonha:ka Regional Council

Why is it important for the United Church of Canada to have a policy around the use of AI?

The United Church of Canada must establish a policy around the use of AI to ensure that technological advancements align with its ethical values, social justice principles, and commitment to inclusivity. As AI increasingly influences decision-making and community engagement, a clear policy will help mitigate risks such as bias, misinformation, and privacy concerns while promoting transparency and accountability. Additionally, such a framework can guide the responsible integration of AI in church activities, fostering a balanced approach that enhances spiritual growth and community well-being while safeguarding against potential harms associated with the misuse of technology.

What is happening now?

As of now, the United Church of Canada does not have a specific, publicly available policy exclusively dedicated to the use of AI. However, the church is actively engaged in discussions about technology and ethics, which may include considerations for AI as it becomes more integrated into church operations and ministry. The church emphasizes values such as social justice, inclusivity, and ethical decision-making, which would guide any future policy development concerning AI.

What is the recommendation

To develop a policy for the use of AI in the United Church of Canada, GC is asked to:

- form a diverse steering committee comprising church leaders, IT experts, and congregational representatives.
- Conduct a needs assessment through surveys and interviews to gather input on current and potential AI applications.
- Research best practices from other organizations and draft a policy framework that outlines ethical guidelines, approved uses, and security protocols.
- Engage the church community through workshops to gather feedback and refine the policy, then present it for approval to governing bodies.
- Finally, implement training programs for staff, establish a monitoring system to evaluate the policy's effectiveness, and create a communication plan to inform the congregation.

Background Information

It is important for the United Church of Canada to have a policy on the use of AI to ensure that its adoption aligns with the church's ethical principles and mission. Such a policy can help mitigate risks associated with AI, such as bias, privacy violations, and misinformation, thereby fostering trust within the community. By providing clear guidelines, the church can promote responsible and equitable use of technology, ensuring that AI serves to enhance, rather than undermine, its core values of inclusivity, social justice, and community engagement. Additionally, a well-defined policy can facilitate informed decision-making about how AI tools are implemented in church operations and outreach, ultimately supporting the church's goals in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

How does developing a policy on the use of AI help us to live into the United Church's commitments on equity?

Developing a policy on the use of AI helps the United Church of Canada live into its commitments on equity by ensuring that technology is utilized in ways that promote fairness, inclusivity, and social justice. Such a policy can establish guidelines to prevent bias and discrimination in AI systems, addressing concerns about algorithmic inequality that may disproportionately affect marginalized communities. By explicitly stating the church's values around equity, the policy can guide the responsible implementation of AI tools, ensuring they enhance accessibility and support diverse voices within the church and broader community. Additionally, fostering transparency and accountability in AI usage aligns with the church's commitment to empowering all members, encouraging engagement, and ensuring that technological advancements do not exacerbate existing inequities but rather contribute to a more just and equitable society.

Note: This proposal has been written by ChatGPT