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LIFEWAY CHRISTIAN RESOURCES

Brentwood Statement on
Artificial Intelligence
and Christian Ministry

June 2026

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Christian ministers should...

1

PURSUE WISDOM

Technology is not morally neutral, yet we are responsible for how we develop and employ these tools. (Proverbs 9:10)

2

CHAMPION GOD-GIVEN DIGNITY

All people are created in the image of God — fundamentally distinct from that of mere machines. (Genesis 1:26–27)

3

PROMOTE TRUTH AND FIDELITY

Oppose deception and champion truth in an age of deception and misinformation.

4

CULTIVATE TRUST AND INTEGRITY

Be above reproach in all our ways and in our use of AI. (1 Timothy 3:2)

5

PROTECT PRIVACY

Guard the privacy of our people through the things we share with AI systems as well as the information gained from their use (Proverbs 11:13; 25:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:11).

6

REPRESENT AND PROCLAIM THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Aspire to accomplish the church's mission through responsible AI use, always promoting the intrinsic relational nature of gospel work (Matthew 22; 28).

7

MODEL FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP

Teach our people to critically engage and cultivate wisdom for all of life in the age of AI. (Romans 12:2)

BACKGROUND

In April 2026, a group of Southern Baptist leaders consisting of pastors, university and seminary professors, and representatives of each Southern Baptist entity were invited to Lifeway Christian Resources' headquarters in Brentwood, Tennessee, to participate in crafting a statement to help guide Christian ministers in the age of artificial intelligence.

“According to Lifeway Research, 3 in 5 (61%) U.S. Protestant churchgoers say they’re concerned about the technology’s influence on Christianity. Fewer than 3 in 10 (28%) disagree, while 11% aren’t sure.”

— 2026 Lifeway Research Study: Protestant Churchgoer Views On Artificial Intelligence

The Brentwood Statement is intended to help disciple makers begin conversations at their churches to address emerging questions and concerns with AI.

PREAMBLE

From the beginning, humans have been called to cultivate technology under the sovereign hand of God. Today, we recognize both the opportunities and challenges before the church with the rise of powerful artificial intelligence (AI) systems and platforms that shape our lives every day. These issues are vital for Christians to directly engage as they affect how we live, both individually and corporately, in light of who God is and what He has done for us in Christ. AI is revolutionizing our world, including Christian ministry, at such a rapid pace that many feel overwhelmed and fearful. Others often rush into innovations without adequate reflection. While Christian perspectives on ethical uses of AI will vary across time, culture, and tradition, these issues cannot be avoided, especially in ministry. Christians are eager to hear authentic and robust ethical engagement on responsible use of these tools, and the church must think deeply about what these tools are doing for us and to us as humans.

Technology is a tool, and we are responsible for our use of it, but all tools have a design and purpose which reflect and push the values of their creators and our larger culture—for good or ill. Technology has both intended effects as well as unintended consequences that cannot always be foreseen. Robust Christian engagement on these issues will require us to push past simplistic understandings of these technologies and push back on the widespread cultural values of efficiency and convenience at any cost. Christian leaders must recognize the deeply formative and informative aspects of all technologies, including AI, as these tools shape our perception of God, ourselves as human beings, and the world around us.

Southern Baptists have long been part of the discussion about the ethics of AI, including the 2019 statement from The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission entitled “Artificial Intelligence: An Evangelical Statement of Principles” and the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention Resolution “On Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies.” Still, there is a need to address how these technologies intersect with Christian ministry and identify principles that ought to guide our use of these tools in key areas including preaching, teaching, discipleship, counseling, evangelism, missions, worship, and church administration. This work intends to build upon these foundations and provide biblical guidance for disciple makers as we navigate the questions of AI use — both as leaders and church members.

While the pervasiveness and complexity of AI continues to increase, it is our hope that these principles continue to assist and serve local churches as they engage their communities with the hope of the gospel and encourage the application of our faith to the entirety of the Christian life, including emerging technologies like AI.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR AI IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

PRINCIPLE 01

Pursue Wisdom

As with all technology, wisdom is required to discern the proper use of AI tools and the motivation behind our actions, which is central to the pursuit of the good life. Since these tools can be harnessed for good in Christian ministry, we must slow down to ask deeper questions than simply *can* we use a particular technology but rather *should we* and how *should we use* a particular technology.

As applications of AI are developed, the role of the Christian minister is to critically engage these tools instead of rushing to adopt or reject developments in this field. While these tools are not morally neutral, the ways we use them matter. We are responsible before God and others for the ways we employ them in our ministries. Slowing down to consider the ends and purposes of these tools allows us to see that the ends of technology will not always align with the true ends of Christian ministry, namely the cultivation of virtue and wisdom.

We are all being disciplined by our use of technology. The challenge for Christian leaders is to recognize how we are being disciplined as we are transformed “by the renewing of [our] mind, so that [we] may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).

True wisdom is not found in human tradition (Colossians 2:8) but in God Himself who is the source of all truth, beauty, and goodness. Thus, great care must be taken when engaging with AI, especially in ministry contexts. Godly wisdom cannot be gained quickly nor pursued in isolation. Proverbs 1:7 tells us, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline,” and later we read “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment” (2 Timothy 1:7). Any use of these tools must be weighed against the inherently personal nature of Christian ministry in community and promote wisdom, recognizing the inherent value of all people.

PRINCIPLE 02

Champion God-given Dignity

As Christian ministers, we believe any use of AI must not only be rooted in the pursuit of wisdom and align with the Great Commandment to love God and love our neighbor but be centered around the dignity of all people as made in God’s very image (Matthew 22:37-39; Genesis 1:26-27). God is our Creator, and we are His creatures. Our value and dignity as human beings does not come from the things we do or contribute but from the simple fact that God loves us and has set us apart in His creation (Psalm 8). All human beings, no matter our stage of development, location, or abilities, are made in God’s image and are thus infinitely valuable despite contemporary claims to the contrary. This image is manifested in myriad ways, including our rational, relational, and representative capacities.

As creatures, we happily embrace our God-ordained limits and recognize God's complete otherness as our maker, sustainer, and redeemer. Technology can be a blessing, but we are often tempted to find our true value in work and ministry; yet, we delight in how God has made us. We seek to champion His good design for all of life even when these God-ordained limits seem foolish to the world. We must remember that nothing we create with our hands is outside of the sovereignty of God, nor can these tools diminish the fundamental dignity and intrinsic value of human beings as created by God. We must not blur the line between humanity and machine in any way even as AI imitates, mimics, and is often seen as a substitute for human beings.

God blessed human beings with the ability to grow spiritually in relation to Him and others (1 Corinthians 6:11). The Holy Spirit uses God's Word to transform both the disciple and the disciple maker (1 Timothy 4:16). Therefore, Christians must avoid outsourcing the formative aspects of the work of the ministry even as they pursue wisdom on responsible use of AI. Disciple making is a uniquely human practice that cannot be automated or outsourced in the name of efficiency and convenience. True spiritual growth cannot be achieved outside the power of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts, always pointing us to the finished work of Christ as sent out by God the Father.

Throughout our ministries, we must keep God's glory and human dignity at the very center and recognize that ministering to real people is time consuming, messy, and difficult yet beautifully rewarding. While these tools may save us time, any use must be on promoting human to human connection and championing the gifts of all. Despite the power of technology to shape our perceptions of those around us, people are also not simply problems to be solved but are to be loved and cared for as holistic beings. We cannot relegate the task of ministry to mere machines given the inherent embodied nature of Christian ministry.

Any use of AI in brainstorming, researching, writing, editing, and more must be seen through the lens of wisdom. Preachers and teachers 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.

PRINCIPLE 03

Promote Truth and Fidelity

In an age of deception, misinformation, and distrust, Christian ministers must champion truth and fidelity to our calling in everything we do, including caring for and shepherding those God has placed in our communities. In the age of AI, misinformation is not only able to be spread faster than ever through contemporary modes of communications but also created at an unprecedented scale using AI tools. We must train our people how to discern truth from falsehood and champion truth no matter the perceived short-term benefits. Christians are to be marked as a people committed to truth, which ultimately finds its foundation in God Himself. God has chosen to reveal Himself both in nature and most specifically and salvifically in His Word. Scripture is breathed out by God and thus inspired, authoritative, and inerrant. Paul reminds God's people that it "is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God's Word is sufficient for ministry and clearly shows us how we are to live as well as minister to others, no matter the challenges we face in this life.

As part of our fidelity to God's Word and our callings as Christian ministers, we must not outsource the personal nature of Christian ministry to mere objects and machines, as God has called us to personally love, care for, and

pursue His beloved. Ministers are to be above reproach in every way as fitting for the call God has placed on their lives (1 Timothy 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 (Matthew 5:39).

PRINCIPLE 04

Cultivate Trust and Integrity

Christian ministry is a stewardship of interpersonal trust. Leaders who violate this sacred trust do damage to the flock but also to the name of Christ as ones called to represent God in our ministry contexts. Cultivating trust and integrity is a daily and life-long practice, as it takes time to build it but only moments for it to crumble. Building trust in the age of AI includes how we present ourselves, our work, and our ministry to others.

Given the power of these tools to shape our perception of truth, beauty, and goodness, we must stay above reproach by openly discussing any use of AI in our ministries with fellow pastors/elders, deacons, staff, and volunteers as well as the larger church body. If AI cannot be used with transparency, it might be because that practice could cause another to stumble and doubt the minister's integrity. As with other technologies, we must verify all information gathered from AI as these systems routinely make mistakes and might leave out critical details, information, contexts, and truths that affect our fellow image bearers.

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. While these tools may be used at times with wisdom and to augment our original work, overreliance on these tools, outsourcing of our work, or passing off the work of someone or something as our own is an abdication of the responsibility God has bestowed on those He has called to lead His church.

AI should also never replace counseling, personal discipleship, and mentoring because of how impersonal these systems are—no matter how they are portrayed, mimicking or imitating authentic human connection.

PRINCIPLE 05

Protect Privacy

Uploading personal data to digital tools, including open and public AI systems, can compromise the informational privacy of those in our midst. We must be incredibly cautious with the type of information turned over to these systems, as this data may be used to train AI models and may be used in ways we did not realize nor knowingly consented to. We also must be aware that these tools can provide us with information that is not always wise for us to know about our congregations. Just because we can do something does not mean we should. While consent is requisite, the Christian calling goes above and beyond, focused on the common good of others. Sensitive data has been entrusted to local churches and must be protected not only from unauthorized use in AI systems but also data compromises in a more traditional sense.

Ministers should also be aware that uploading copyrighted material, personal work—including sermons and essays—and other written material to these systems potentially opens this material to be accessed and used in ways outside of our direct control. Even in closed systems, it is wise to protect sensitive personal data and use these tools with complete openness and transparency, respecting the privacy and dignity of all.

Represent and Proclaim the Kingdom of God

As ambassadors of Christ and those called to lead God's people, we believe any use of AI must be rooted in the recognition of God's kingdom as well as His unique call on His church to take the gospel message to the ends of the earth. God is in control of all things, including the development of AI, and thus, nothing will be created that surprises Him.

God the Father has "rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves" (Colossians 1:13). In light of this new identity in Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are to "walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might" (Colossians 1:10-11). We must see that part of fulfilling the Great Commandment to love God and love our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39) is directly fulfilled by following the Great Commission of making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

Every action and pursuit is rooted in this new identity and calling given to us, including the use of AI in Christian ministry. In everything we do, we are to represent the good news of Christ and are "under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society" (BFM2000, Article XV). As ministers, we thank God for the countless believers working in this field and seeking to cultivate a biblical perspective on these tools and how they shape our perception of the world around us. This call extends to all, especially those in local church ministry, to make disciples of all nations and teach them to "observe everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20).

In missions and evangelism, we recognize God can and does use technology, including AI, to carry the gospel message, but it is the Spirit of God who changes lives, and the people of God are to share what God has done for them as renewed human beings. AI can be a helpful tool but must never be seen as a substitute for gospel ministers nor as an agent and minister of reconciliation in itself. These tools should not be presented as a substitute for missionaries or evangelists. These tools can be employed as a way to augment our work but not in ways that distract from it nor replace it.

These tools are not moral subjects, nor can they experience God's saving message for humanity through the perfect work of Christ. 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.

Model Faithful Leadership

Often amid cultural challenges and questions, there can be a tendency to either be quick to speak, quick to anger, and even quick to dismiss. But Christian leaders must cultivate true biblical wisdom rooted in the fear of the Lord and teach our people to do likewise (Proverbs 9:10). James’s exhortation in 1:19-20 to “be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for human anger does not accomplish God’s righteousness” reminds us of a proper disposition amid cultural challenges. This posture of wisdom for Christian leaders includes neither uncritically embracing nor naively rejecting AI in ministry but learning to critically engage it from a place of hope.

AI tools are blurring the fundamental distinction between humanity and machines as well as at times conforming us to the patterns and ways of the world in subtle, yet distinct ways (Romans 12:2). Christian leaders must teach our people how to navigate the questions and concerns related to AI rooted in both truth and grace as modeled in our Savior’s own life who is the very wisdom of God Himself (John 1:17; 1 Corinthians 1:24). We must model a faithful response to these innovations as well as encourage our people to think critically about these tools. We also should encourage our people working in this field to go about their work in ways that are committed to these principles and to recognize their work as a way to love God and to love their neighbors as themselves.

Faithful leadership will be marked by the cultivation of wisdom as Christians minister to others, no matter the challenges we face. At times, we must push back against particular uses of AI, especially in the church, that distract us and distort our unique callings as Christians. But we also remind our people of the gift of technology, which God can and does use for His glory and our good.

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