

Congregational Guidelines for the Responsible use of Computers and the Internet:

All congregations within the Presbytery of Hamilton are requested to review their current administrative practices with respect to the use of computers and Internet access in the light of these guidelines.

Oversight of Computers and Internet Access:

All congregations within the Presbytery of Hamilton that either own computers or provide Internet access are expected to:

- a) Take whatever action is necessary to ensure that their computers and/or Internet access is securely located and configured so as to prevent unauthorized access.
- b) Create a written "User Policy" that clearly defines appropriate use of the congregation's computers and/or Internet access. The primary motive for establishing a "User Policy" is not to restrict personal use of the congregation's technology, but to insure that ethical guidelines are understood and observed. The congregation's "User Policy" ought to clearly specify that the congregation's computers and/or Internet access are not to be used for any illegal activity, for the viewing or distribution of pornography, to engage in online gambling or for any activity that would violate the principles of the "Leading With Care" policy of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- c) Require all staff and volunteers who are authorized to use the congregation's computers and/or Internet access to sign a statement confirming that they are familiar with and accept the congregation's "User Policy".
- d) Take the necessary steps to ensure that staff and volunteers authorized to use the congregation's computers and/or Internet access are aware of their responsibilities and obligations to respect and protect the ownership and confidentiality of the digital documents on the congregation's computer system and of any files which may be transferred to a personal computer in the course of conducting the business of the congregation.

Confidentiality and Digital Documents: Congregations must take special care in the handling of those digital documents that contain personal information about congregational members or confidential session business. Such confidentiality concerns are intensified by the fact that congregations often expect officers and volunteers to use their personal computers in conducting the business of the church. Anyone who has reason to have confidential congregational files on their personal computer must be made aware of their responsibility to prevent such documents from being accessed by unauthorized viewers. For example, such material should not be stored on a shared family computer without security protection. (Password protected user accounts and inexpensive external storage devices are two means of satisfying this expectation.)

Oversight of Congregational Websites: Congregational websites are an official representation of the congregation and must remain under the oversight of the Session. The designation of a Webmaster and accountability for the content and operation of the website should be under the direct oversight of the Session. Care must be taken to make sure that appropriate confidentiality policies are understood and maintained and that copyright laws are observed.

The Web Committee of the Presbytery of Hamilton is prepared to assist any congregation in the practical implementation of these guidelines.