

COMPUTER ETHICS POLICY
West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, ELCA
November 2006

Introduction

Access to the computing and networking equipment and resources of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod is a privilege granted solely to synod staff. On occasion, with permission of the Bishop, other deployed, contract, or visiting staff, Mission Directors or the Youth Ministries Resource Consultant may be granted access.

All hardware, software and data files are considered the property of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod. As such, data files are subject to review and monitoring without permission of a "User". Only hardware and software provided by the synod are to be used for synod business.

Failure to abide by these expectations and rules may result in discipline, including discharge, depending upon the severity of the violation.

Misuse, Abuse, Criminal Activity

A staff member or user must not deliberately perform any act that will seriously impact the operation of computers, peripherals (such as printers, copiers and other equipment) or networks. This includes, but is not limited to, tampering with components of the network, creating excessive network traffic or interfering with the operational readiness of a computer.

A staff member or user must not attempt to modify in any way a program diskette or CD which is provided by the synod or the synod's computer infrastructure provider.

A staff member or user must not knowingly run, install or give to another person, a program that could result in eventual damage to a file or the computer system. No software program owned or installed on synod hardware is to be copied or loaned for usage by any other person, staff or otherwise.

All staff and others granted limited permission for computer use must comply with all licensing agreements for software and copyright laws. In particular, copies of copyrighted software shall not be made unless the synod has a license specifically allowing the copying of that software for use by the synod.

Staff members or users must not perform acts that are wasteful of computing resources or that unfairly monopolize resources to the exclusion of any other staff member or user. These acts include, but are not limited to, sending of mass mailings, chain letters or obtaining unnecessary output of printed material.

The following types of information and software cannot be viewed or placed on any synod-owned computer system:

- That which infringes upon the rights of another person;
- That which is abusive, profane or sexually offensive to the average person;
- That which consists of information that may injure someone and/or lead to a lawsuit or criminal charges. Examples include libelous statements, pirated software, destructive software, pornographic material or copyrighted images and information.

A staff member or other user must not harass others by sending annoying, threatening, libelous or sexually, racially or religiously offensive messages through electronic means.

A staff member or user must not attempt to monitor another user's data communications, nor read, copy, change or delete another user's files or software, without express permission of the primary user.

Synod-owned and operated computers are to be used to support the work of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod. These resources are not to be used for personal or financial gain.

Privacy

Computers and network systems are inherently insecure. All staff and users are cautioned that, in general, these technologies are not "private." Users should not expect privacy when using the synod's system or network.

E-Mail

The West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod maintains an electronic mail system to assist in the conduct of the work of the synod. All hardware and software are the property of the synod. All messages composed, sent or received on the mail system are and remain the property of the synod. They are not the private property of any staff member or user.

The e-mail system may not be used to solicit or promote any commercial venture, political cause or candidate, outside organization or other non-church related concerns. It is not to be used to create any offensive or disruptive messages.

The synod reserves the right to review, audit, intercept, access or disclose all messages created, received or sent on the e-mail system for any purpose.

List Serve

The List Serve is a method of quick and efficient electronic mail communication between the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod and its rostered leaders and congregations having equipment to receive information by computer. It is to be used to convey urgent and pertinent information as determined by the synod staff.

The Website

The website of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, www.wv-wmd.org is a communication tool that can be accessed by anyone wanting information about the functions of the synod. There are various links with other agencies and institutions placed on the website. The website is continually updated with information about various subjects and links to other sites for conference, assemblies, meetings and other material deemed pertinent and timely for good communications in the synod.

Personal Use of Computers

Incidental and occasional personal use of synod computers is allowed for reasonable activities that do not require substantial hard disc space or other computer equipment. All software and data files not supplied by the synod must receive prior approval by the system administrator.