

COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET

Adopted by the General Board in 1998

One of the new technologies that have been introduced to society in recent years is known as the Internet. This innovation literally brings the entire spectrum of information available in the world into any computer screen. While much of this information is wholesome and useful, a great amount is lewd, pornographic, or dangerous. In addition, the Internet provides a forum for direct interpersonal relationships via “chat rooms” and “e-mail.” Many people have been unwittingly snared into corruption by participating in these forums.

The UPCI recognizes that the widespread use of the Internet among our people in the workplace and in the home may not be reversed. At the same time, the very real dangers presented must not be ignored. We, therefore, submit the following guidelines to monitor the access and use of the Internet:

1. *Placement of the computer.* Any computer used for Internet access should be located in an area of the home that is used by the entire family. This discourages the wrong use by the operator because he or she knows that others will have knowledge of all sites visited on the Internet and what files or pictures are downloaded.
2. *Blocking software.* A number of programs may now be purchased which prevent vulgar or sexually explicit material from appearing on the computer screen. We urge our people to protect themselves and their families by placing one or more of these programs on each computer used for Internet access.
3. *Shared passwords.* Unauthorized or unsupervised use of a computer by a minor or a person who is not a family member may be easily stopped by passwords. It is also possible for two people to compose the password with each knowing only a part, thus insuring that two are required to access or unlock a program or Internet site.
4. *Log of visited sites.* Nearly all Internet browsers include a function that records all sites a user accesses. This log may be reviewed at any time. We recommend that all users be apprised of this feature and a regular evaluation of sites visited be made.
5. *Time-consuming.* The interactive nature of the Internet lures many users into spending inordinate amounts of time exploring it. Not only does it waste time, it is addictive as well. We urge our people to exercise great caution and restraint in their use of this medium.

The word that best enables us to regulate the use of the Internet is *accountability*. Anyone who makes use of this technology ought to recognize the insidious nature of the Internet, and that it especially affects users who access the sites secretly or without the knowledge of others. There are few other areas where the biblical principle of accountability means more than Internet usage. We believe that every effort to establish and maintain accountability is vital to our people who are involved in the Internet.