

*Western Heights Bilingual Church of Christ-Iglesia de Cristo  
bilingüe en Las Alturas Del Oeste*

## Information Privacy Policy

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In developing and maintaining the website for Western Heights-Alturas Del Oeste, we go by an unofficial policy with respect to inclusion of personal information. We spell this out below both to make it clear and to invite discussion. This is a difficult issue to write about and we do not mean to come across as alarmist but in our role, we do have the responsibility to handle congregational information carefully.

**Note**, that unlike most website privacy policies, this mostly addresses the privacy of *congregational information*, not *information from website visitors*. We do not collect any information from website visitor except guestbook entries and normal aggregate hits logs. No visitor information is given or sold to others.

Feel free to [contact](#) us with comments, questions or concerns.

-- [The website ministry team](#)

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### Background

As use of the internet has grown becomes more mainstream, many concerns have arisen over access to personal information on the internet. Websites and most public posting forums are and are meant to be totally public. Any information posted there is released into a wide domain in which you have very little control over how the information is used. Search engines and automatic programs (known as robots or spiders) can read and collect information from an incredible number of web sites in a short time.

Concerns and issues have often been inflated into fears by print media to the point where many people are very concerned about using the internet. Even though most of the personal information available in the internet is also publicly available elsewhere, there are still common (and valid) concerns related to the ease of access and collection of information.

Some of the current concerns that are prevalent include:

- **Unsolicited (unwanted) Email**  
Unsolicited and generally unwanted junk email (SPAM) is a huge annoyance to most people, to the point that many states have considered ways to make it illegal and email providers must implement extensive

filtering to attempt to cope. This is generally commercial but can concern anything. Many people are careful about letting their email addresses become widespread to limit SPAM.

- **Harassing Personal Contacts**

This can include all sorts of undesired personal contacts, whether hate-mail, personal harassment, stalking or pedophilic advances toward children or youth. This is probably more often initiated in chat forums than regular websites. (We believe that this is much more rare than the media would portray, but it does concern many people and is still an important issue to consider)

- **Identity Theft**

Gathering of personal details of others for various kinds of fraud has become more prevalent in recent years.

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## Privacy Policy

We have several basic groups of people that might be listed or referred to; staff, adult members, youth and missionaries. Information of concern includes names, email addresses, phone numbers and photos. Home addresses are never posted.

1. **For staff**, we list names, email addresses (usually office emails), and office phone numbers. No home phones, etc. It is important that people be able to contact the staff and that access is all through the office.
2. **For adult members**, we often list names when they are a contact for some group or activity that we are covering on the website. We do not list email addresses unless they have specifically given permission (they often ask us). We do not list phone numbers. It is assumed that other members have the church directory or can call the office for phone numbers.
3. **For youth and children**, we generally do not list full names, but at most the first name and initial of the last name. We also do not list email addresses or phone numbers. Photo captions do not include full names and often do not include names at all. This is more to protect them from the more dangerous types of people that can and do use the net to contact and take advantage of young people. We are currently trying to decide how to apply this policy to the guestbook for the youth group.
4. **For missionaries**, we are very careful what, if anything, we list. Sometimes, missionaries are in countries where they would be in danger if it were known that they are 'missionaries' or even christian. In some

countries, it is actually illegal to be there as a christian missionary and they could be imprisoned or deported. We don't post info, even names, emails or country, without the explicit permission of that missionary or from our staff person in charge of missions.

Some specific areas of our online functionality have additional guidelines.

1. Central has a **printed member and ministry directory** with names, addresses, email, etc which is only available to members and friends of Central. It is periodically distributed in print at the church. To request a copy or to add your information to this directory [contact the office](#). This directory is not available online.
2. Our **website ministry team** has additional concerns since sensitive information is often shared. The specific policies and procedures we follow are documented there.
3. When using **photos** of Western Heights-Alturas Del Oeste events, members, etc online, either directly on the website or in our photo albums, we use the following guidelines.
  - Including photos in our site is a privilege for us, and we intend to respect and honor it.
  - Photos are almost always of people in public spaces, at public events.
  - We try not to post anything that would be embarrassing, objectionable or hurtful to anyone in the photo. If we know someone is shy about such things, we ask them before posting the photo.
  - Applying other parts of our general privacy policy, we don't put full names of children or youth as captions with photos, and we minimize how often we use full names of adults.
  - We will gladly provide credit for who took a particular photo if desired by the photographer, and we would certainly honor any copyright wishes or restrictions.
  - We will gladly remove any photo immediately upon request.

In any case, if you see a photo that includes you or your child and would like it removed from the site, we would be glad to do so. Just [notify the webmaster](#) with the details.

Please be aware, that while we never post home addresses, there are a number of websites that provide white pages, or extensive listings of mailing addresses. There are also a number of *people-finder* type sites that help in locating people

and their names, phone numbers, email addresses, etc. These sites have many sources of data and you can probably assume that you're in there somewhere.

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## Other resources of interest:

### Heal Your Church Web Site: [HIPAA \(HIPPA\), Disclosures and your Church Website](#)

"Posting sensitive information online isn't just a good way to discourage new visitors, it is also a good way to get an existing member to quit while sending you to jail or worse - get your pants sued clean off..."

### Web work by students has its limits

*"Policy: Baltimore County schools, in trying to protect children from predators, prevent the publication of their pictures or last names on the Internet."* Published in the Baltimore Sunpaper Oct 31, 1997.

(Note: This article concerns the ongoing discussion in the Baltimore County School System about this issue. Their policy is pretty strict, but then they are concerned more with children while we deal more with adults on our site)

### [Home Page Snoops](#)

(U.S.News Online, 5/11/98)

An article about the risks of putting personal and family information online.

### [Exposing Our Families to the Internet](#)

(from Shaking Your Family Tree, 6/19/97)

Another article about the risks of putting personal and family information online.

### [OU Police Notebook - Internet Safety Section](#)

The [OU Police Notebook](#) by the University of Oklahoma Department of Public Safety is one of the best police/public safety websites on the internet. The Internet Safety section in particular contains too much good information to describe here. Parents, especially should check it out.

### [The First Rule of Privacy: Just Say No](#)

*"The weakest link in the chain of your privacy could very well be yourself."*

A good article on privacy and handing out personal information by Ira Winkler.

### [GetNetWise.Org](#)

In a bid to create an online clearinghouse of advice on keeping kids safe on the Internet, U.S. government officials have joined forces with some three dozen Internet firms and trade groups. The Web site comprises a list

of online safety tips for parents, teenagers and young children; a listing of some 80 different online content-filtering software tools; a tip sheet for reporting incidents of online harassment; and a guide to content created especially for kids.

You may also wish to check out our page of [Links to Resources for Understanding the Internet](#) for additional similar resources.

*([Suggestions](#) for additional resources would be very welcome, particularly good guides for parents on teaching their children responsible and safe interaction on the internet and pointers to useful, non-inflammatory articles on web privacy and safety issues.)*