



AI & the Church Summit Journal



August 12-15, 2024, Seattle, WA

How to Use This Journal

This is a journal of the AI & the Church Summit. Our hope is that it will be an accurate record of the event for those who were there and a way for those who were not, to still learn from it. Here are some notes to keep in mind:

- For the keynotes, panels, and talks, you will find a human transcription of the presentation.
- The QR code by each title will take you to a video of the presentation itself.
- The slides for each presentation are presented immediately following each transcription.

For questions about the AI & the Church Summit, please contact support@TryTank.org.

- o TryTank
- o ELCA
- o PC(USA)
- o Epiphany Seattle



Contents

Executive Summary: AI & the Church Summit: A Confluence of Faith and Technology	4
A prayer for this work Paolo Benanti	6
Introduction: Doyt Conn, Jr.	7
1- Opening keynote: "Augmented Faith Leaders in a World that is Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible." (Bob Johansen)	9
2- Plenary: "The Developing Landscape and Trends for Christian Missional and Ministry Applications" (Thomas Osborn from the creator side and Brian Green from the ethics side) Introduced by David Brenner	32
3- Panel: Incarnation in a world of AI. (Paolo Benanti, Noreen Herzfeld, and Ben Olson) Moderated by Doyt Conn	102
4- Summit Keynote: "Navigating the AI Revolution: A Call for Ethical Stewardship" (Paolo Benanti) Introduced by Corey SchlosserHall	118
5- Talk: On theology with Noreen Herzfeld Introduced by Nikki Collins	147
6- Talk: On practical use with Dave Hackett Introduced by Corey SchlosserHall	176
7- Panel: How the church can serve the needs of tech workers. With Chris Lim, Dillon Eng, Jason Rahman, moderated by James B Notkin	198
8- Panel: Use of games for evangelization and spiritual formation with Amy and Ryan Green, and Chris Skaggs. Moderated by David Brenner	213
9- Panel: Expectations, possibility, and foundational theological principles for AI and the church (Daren Erisman, Adam Graber, Gretchen Huizinga, Amy Green) Moderated by Andy Doyle	251
10- Report: A view from the balcony (Kim Arakawa)	269
Epilogue Patricia Lyons	272
Appendix: Resources	280
Appendix: Speaker biographies	281
Appendix: Participants	287
Appendix: A View from the Balcony/Epilogue	298
Appendix: Submitted by the Rev. Dr. Patricia Lyons	302
Appendix: Microsoft slides	306
Appendix: Wonder Board	315

Executive Summary: AI & the Church Summit: A Confluence of Faith and Technology

In mid-August, Seattle played host to an unprecedented event—the “AI & the Church Summit.” This ecumenical gathering brought together leaders from the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PC(USA)) to explore the intersection of artificial intelligence and Christian ministry. The summit, held at Epiphany Parish in Seattle and the Microsoft campus, was a three-day deep dive into how AI is reshaping the landscape of faith, ethics, and community.

The summit’s agenda was as diverse as its participants. The event kicked off with an opening keynote by Bob Johansen, who set the tone by discussing the role of augmented faith leaders in a world increasingly characterized by anxiety, nonlinearity, and incomprehensibility. Johansen’s presentation highlighted the need for church leaders to engage with technological advancements proactively, rather than reactively. He emphasized that the Church must not only understand AI but also harness it to foster faith in a rapidly changing world.

One of the summit’s key themes was the ethical implications of AI—a topic that resonated deeply with attendees. Father Paolo Benanti, an Italian Catholic priest and advisor to Pope Francis on technology ethics, delivered a powerful keynote titled “Navigating the AI Revolution: A Call for Ethical Stewardship.” Benanti’s presentation underscored the Church’s responsibility to question how technology, particularly AI, shapes society. He urged Christian leaders to advocate for justice and inclusivity in a digital age where power dynamics can be subtly but profoundly altered by algorithms.

Benanti’s keynote was followed by panel discussions that brought together theologians, ethicists, and technology experts. In one panel, Noreen Herzfeld, a theologian and computer scientist, alongside Ben Olson and Paolo Benanti, explored the concept of incarnation in a world increasingly influenced by AI. They discussed the potential for AI to impact human identity and spirituality, raising questions about what it means to be human in an era of machines capable of mimicking human thought and behavior.

The summit also featured practical sessions designed to equip church leaders with the tools and knowledge to integrate AI into their ministries. Concurrent talks included discussions on how churches can serve the needs of tech workers, as well as the use of games for evangelization and spiritual formation. These sessions highlighted the need for the Church to not only understand AI but to actively participate in its development and application in ways that align with Christian values.

A portion of the summit took place at Microsoft’s campus, where participants were introduced to AI initiatives that could be leveraged for social good. Microsoft’s Chief Data Scientist Juan Lavista Ferres presented on “AI for Good,” showcasing projects that use AI to address global challenges such as climate change, health disparities, and humanitarian crises. This session reinforced the idea that AI, when guided by ethical principles, can be a powerful force for positive change in the world.

The final day of the summit was marked by a poignant charge

delivered by Patricia Lyons, a faculty member at Virginia Theological Seminary. In her address, “Our Baptismal Call in an AI World,” Lyons called on Christian leaders to embrace their role as stewards of technology. She argued that the Church has a unique opportunity to shape the ethical framework within which AI develops, ensuring that it serves the common good rather than exacerbating existing inequalities.

Participants left the summit with a mix of excitement and caution. One attendee reflected, “The summit energized us to do more of what we have already been doing—taking tech into our spaces—to be the thorn in the side of Paul”. Another participant expressed a desire for the Church to lean into the ability to let hierarchies fall, highlighting the

potential of AI to disrupt traditional structures in favor of more inclusive practices.

The “AI & the Church Summit” was more than just a conference; it was a clarion call for Christian leaders to engage deeply with the technological transformations shaping our world. The ecumenical nature of the gathering underscored the universal relevance of the issues at hand, transcending denominational boundaries.

As AI continues to evolve, the Church’s role in guiding its ethical development will be crucial. This summit in Seattle was a significant first step in that direction, bringing together faith and technology in a dialogue that will undoubtedly continue to grow in importance in the years to come.

A prayer for this work

Paolo Benanti

Creator of heaven and earth,
You who have given us the ability to imagine and create,
guide our minds and hearts in the use of the technology
that we have developed for the common good.

Bless those who develop and those who use artificial intelligences,
the fruit of our research,
that they may be instruments of peace, justice, and progress for all humanity.
Enlighten those who design and develop these systems,
that they may do so with wisdom, humility, and responsibility,
always remembering the dignity and worth of every person.

Protect us from the temptation to abuse technological power,
and ensure that no invention draws us away from love of neighbor
and compassion for the weakest and most vulnerable.

We entrust to You, Lord, the future of our world,
that by Your grace, we may know how to employ every discovery
in the service of life, truth, and the common good.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Introduction:

An Ecclesiastical Engagement of Wonder About The Role of Artificial Intelligence in The Spiritual Journey the Christian Church

In August of this year, Epiphany Parish of Seattle became the epicenter of an unprecedented dialogue about AI as it now sits at the intersection of faith and technology. The AI and the Church Summit, a gathering that came together in a mere ten (?) weeks, bore the unmistakable imprint of the Holy Spirit. What began as a question about how to connect with Father Paolo Benanti, the Pope's expert on Artificial Intelligence who was spending the summer in Seattle, quickly evolved into a full-fledged summit. This was more than just an academic exercise; it was a manifestation of the necessity for the mainline churches to be involved in the ongoing discourse surrounding AI.

With Try-Tank at the helm, this summit brought together leaders and thinkers from the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and the Presbyterian Church (USA), along with representatives from the Methodist Church. This ecumenical assembly marked the first time

that such a diverse group from the mainline denominations convened to deliberate on AI's ethical, moral, and spiritual implications. The pieces of the summit quickly fell into place, as leaders from AI and Faith joined the planning committee and tapped into their vast network within the technology industry to unearth speakers and panelists. Epiphany Parish enthusiastically agreed to host the gathering.

The summit was not just about discussing technology; it was about discerning the Church's role in shaping a future where AI is likely to be a dominant force. Participants applied and were accepted, committing to an ongoing conversation as part of a cohort group that would convene monthly and re-gather annually. These groups charge is to continue to wonder as a community about the role of AI in the spiritual journey of the Christian church.

To inform this discussion, and indeed compel it, a range of speakers and panels were convened, from theologians to tech workers, from futurists to those building

AI platforms. Together, they asked critical questions such as: What is the role of the Church in this rapidly changing world? How can we ensure that the development and use of AI align with Christian values and the common good?

The discussions at the summit were as diverse as the panelists and participants themselves. Some advocated for a future where humans are fully augmented by AI, while others voiced concerns about AI as a potential threat to humanity's moral and ethical framework. Environmental impacts, economic dislocation, and the ethical distribution of resources were also on the table. The question of regulation—who would implement it and how it would shape the future—was another focal point of the conversation. Perhaps most crucially, the summit participants grappled with the question of how AI will change not only us but also future generations.

One of the summit's most profound moments was the recognition that AI's influence

extends far beyond technology, touching upon the fundamental question of what it means to be human. For it is in the development of a technology that has the capacity to far exceed some human capabilities that it becomes clear we must know ourselves, and more profoundly, God's intention for our existence, if we are to well-form AI for the good of all people.

One scholar pointed out that the current world is brittle, anxious, nonlinear, and often incomprehensible. Yet, the Church offers a counter-narrative, one that is bendable, attentive, neuroadaptive, and inclusive. In this chaotic world, the Church remains a place where we practice being human, where we connect with our Imago Dei, and where, along the way, we remember the core principles that should be advocated for in the development of AI.

As the summit concluded, it was clear that this gathering was only the beginning of a much larger conversation. The cohorts were sent

out to continue these discussions, charged with exploring what had been learned toward new insights and practical applications for the Church. In a year they will reconvene to share what they have discovered, and to further explore how to bring the broader Church into this critical conversation about AI and its implications for humanity.

This introduction marks the start of a journey. It is a call to the Church to engage deeply with AI, to ensure that this powerful technology is developed in ways that benefit all of humanity. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church is uniquely positioned to offer wisdom and moral guidance in this new and uncharted territory.

Finally, the words of St. Irenaeus were cited to proclaim our providential task: "The glory of God is human beings fully alive." This is our response to the emergence of AI.

Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Doyt L. Conn, Jr. MDiv, MBA
10th Rector of Epiphany Parish
Seattle



Opening keynote: "Augmented Faith Leaders in a World that is Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible." (Bob Johansen)

TL;DR

Bob Johansen emphasizes the importance of the church's role in the development and use of AI. He believes that the church can serve as a moral compass and guide, providing ethical frameworks and values that align with human flourishing and the common good. The church can also offer critical perspectives on the potential risks and challenges of AI, such as privacy, bias, and inequality. Johansen encourages the church to engage in thoughtful dialogue and reflection to shape the future of AI grounded in compassion, justice, and the dignity of all people. He also suggests that everyone, including the church, needs to be augmented and embrace AI as it becomes more practical and accessible. Johansen concludes by urging the church to use God language respectfully and to help tech experts navigate the space of AI where language may be lacking.

lorenzo lebrija:

Hello. Hey, welcome, welcome, welcome. We are officially kicking off

this conference. I can't tell you how happy I am to see you all here. Now I get to introduce someone who, when I first took this job, they're like, "If you're going to talk to someone about the future, and particularly the future of the church, you've got to talk to Bob Johansen."

I'm like, "All right, who's Bob Johansen?" They're like, "He's this guy that works for the Institute for the Future." And I'm like, "Ooh, out of Marvel movies, this is amazing. I'm all in."

And it turns out that there is a place called the Institute for the Future in Palo Alto, California, and that what they focus on is looking ahead, and they train others to look ahead with this strategic foresight of being able to do that. And the senior fellow for the institute, he's been a futurist long enough to know whether or not what he's talking about is the truth.

And in 2008, Bob Johansen worked with the Episcopal Church to put together a forecast, a few scenarios of the future for the Episcopal Church. And I only found this forecast in 2019, so I had the

ability to look back and say, "Who is this Bob? And is he right?"

He was right on every one of them. Everything that he put in that forecast was the way that the future came to be. So I invited him on a podcast. He said yes. I invited him to do other things with me. He said yes. Bob Johansen has just been supportive of the effort of the church to do this work.

Part of the reason why is because he doesn't just have a PhD in this work: he also happens to have an MDiv, so he's also a person of faith. He understands what the future looks like and what faith will look like in the future.

So when I say that we get to have the Senior Fellow for the Institute for the Future to open up our conference, our summit on AI in the church, this is something that only the Holy Spirit could have made happen. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Bob Johansen.

Bob Johansen:

Things that cannot easily be put into words. We're here to talk about

artificial intelligence. I've been studying emerging technologies for 50 years now. That is the worst term to describe an emerging technology I have ever studied.

Things that can be put into words: that's what you'll experience when you get deeper into AI as we're calling it. But the reality is, we don't yet have language. We don't yet have language to talk about what we're here to talk about.

But, hey, you have a competitive advantage because you're people of faith, so you understand what it's like to have things that you can't describe in words.

The tech people often don't have that understanding. They often don't have the words. And hence, terms like "artificial intelligence" that lead to a really simplistic story about computers replacing people. That'll happen on a small scale. But the big news, the big news is, Tom Malone at MIT says, "The big news is people and computers doing things together that have never been done before." Never been done before: that's augmentation, and that's what I'm here to talk to you about tonight.

I'm going to be talking in two parts, and I'll stop after the first part and I'll stop after the second. So two 15-minute mini-talks. First one about futureback thinking, and what's this future? This future that will play out over the next 10 or so years?

Then we'll pause. We'll do a conversation. Then I'll come back and say, "How can you, each of

you individually, how can you be augmented?" And I'm going to give you some coaching and share how I've become more augmented over the last couple of years as a writer. So that's the title: Augmented Faith Leaders. That's you.

And I'm a humble futurist. I have been doing this for a long time. As Lorenzo said, we're usually right. We actually keep track. The first question you should always ask a futurist is: have you outlived your forecast? And we have, five times over. We keep track because people ask us that so often.

60 to 80% of our forecasted futures over the last 50 plus years, we started 1968, 60 to 80% of our forecasted futures have actually happened, depending on your definition of "happened."

But it turns out that's not the way you evaluate a futurist. That's the way you evaluate a fortune-teller. The way you evaluate a futurist is: does our foresight provoke your insight that leads to a better decision than present? So I'm going to explain how we do this and what we see over the next decade, then we'll do our first pause.

But this is our basic model and it begins with prepare, opening your mind to future possibilities. And just to bridge to your background, scripture, tradition, reason, experience. I guess I learned that as the Wesleyan quadrilateral, but I think each of your faith traditions has some version of this. And it's very relevant. It's very relevant to what we're going to be talking about with Gen AI.

So we tell futureback stories. We're essentially storytellers. And our brains are wired for stories. If our brains don't hear stories, they make them up. They make them up. So we just have to be great storytellers.

And it turns out, as William Gibson said so eloquently, it turns out the future is already here: it's just unevenly distributed. So that's what we call a signal. That's what we call a signal. And our foresight, it's not a prediction. We don't even use that word. We correct people if they say predict, because nobody can predict the future. If somebody tells you they can predict the future, you shouldn't believe them, especially if they're from California.

So our foresight is designed to provoke your insight. It doesn't really matter if you agree with our foresight or not. And indeed, some of our foresight, particularly around climate, I hope it doesn't happen: that the criteria for success will be that we're smart enough to avoid it.

An "AHA," an insight, is a new story, a new pattern of connection in our brains, because our brains are these neural networks that are story nets, essentially. And some of us have more open story nets than others, and we'll come back to that. But an insight is essentially a new story net, a new pattern of connections in your brain, and once you hear that new story, once you hear it, you can't get it out of your mind.

So ideas are great, but they're plentiful. Insight is special, precious,

and ultimately, the way we get evaluated is, does our foresight provoke your insight that leads to an action, a better story? But I mean a strategic story that has great clarity of direction, but great flexibility of execution. And there's this really interesting kind of foresight that comes from action, from on the ground, drawing foresight from action in the field, kind of grounded foresight.

And faith, which I'm going to talk a lot about with you all because I don't usually get to talk about it. Faith lives between insight and action. And you know what? That's the same space where strategy lives: between insight and action. And that's why every strategy is a kind of leap of faith.

So that's basically what we do. And one of the lessons we've drawn from this, and this is from an earlier book I did, the second book in a trilogy. This one's called *The New Leadership Literacies*. And the big lesson which we brought out of that work is the future will reward clarity, but punish, punish certainty, because certainty is brittle, and brittle breaks. And it doesn't just break. Brittle systems don't just break: they shatter. They shatter.

Faith is a lot like clarity. Certainty is a lot like extreme belief. I read Paul Tillich in divinity school. I'm sure you all did, too. "The opposite of faith is not doubt: the opposite of faith is certainty." What a wonderful insight.

Okay, so I'm not a military guy,

but I just happened to be at the graduate school for generals in Carlisle, Pennsylvania the week before 9/11. I was with a group of Deloitte senior partners and CEOs, and I learned this term, "VUCA," for volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. And the commandant at the time, Bob Bobbin, gave me this picture. It's of special forces officers riding in Afghanistan right after 9/11. These are the folks that were made into a movie called "12 Strong." Riding on horseback, one of the few successful missions in Afghanistan, they tell me. And this term, VUCA, shaped my future and shaped our forecast since 9/11.

But something big has happened this year, and we've changed. VUCA is not VUCA enough anymore, so we've framed it now as BANI: brittle, anxious, nonlinear, incomprehensible. VUCA was... I mean, it was disruptive, it was disorienting, it was scary, but it was, in a real sense, not new. We've always lived in VUCA worlds in some parts of the world, beginning from the fact, as humans, we all have to die. That's a VUCA world.

But BANI is new. BANI is new, and it's a term coined by my colleague Jamais Cascio. Jamais and I and Angela Williams, the new CEO of United Way Worldwide, are writing a new book about BANI that will come out next year. But BANI threats are on the left, and here are the necessary leadership capabilities that we're now exploring. In order to respond to the brittle world that not only breaks, but

shatters, you have to be bendable, you have to be flexible, and you need clarity. You need resilience.

Now, I've learned from the folks at the Army War College where I now teach the new three star generals, five at a time on their first week in Washington, and they read my books and they talk to me about strategy. They talk to me about leadership.

And what we've learned is derived from them, because unfortunately, the military is ahead of us in the nonprofit world and in the business world where I normally work. And they have this whole language around commanders intent or mission command, or my favorite: flexive command, which is continuously reassessing who's in the best position to be the leader at which time in what circumstances based on after-action reviews, which are continuous, and situation awareness, which everybody is taught. So we all need to learn that.

Anxious. We all have to be attentive with active empathy. And I'm particularly concerned here about the kids. Nonlinear. We have to be neuro-adaptive. The neuroscientists call this neuroplasticity. I prefer neuro-adaptive, but it's basically teaching our brains new tricks.

And then finally, we have to be inclusive. And I mean more than DEI, although it includes that. So we need not just that kind of diversity and inclusion, which all of you stand for, but we also need diversity of thinking and of ideas to address this

incomprehensibility.

And my book, Full-Spectrum Thinking, talks about that the ability to make sense out of the future across gradients of possibility while resisting, resisting the temptations of certainty, resisting the temptations of mindless categorization, resisting the temptation of labeling.

So our brains, they aren't on our side. Our brains actually think we need to be certain, and that's what our brains do, is they think they can predict, too. So they're always predicting what's next to keep us safe. But we can't predict, and particularly, categories coerce our brains and binary categories coerce in really awful ways.

But the good news here, and that's what we're here to talk about, is the next generation of tech is no longer binary. It used to be all zeros and ones, but now we've got big data visualization, we've got gameful engagement, and here the kids have a competitive advantage because they're growing up with gaming. We've got, ultimately, neural networks, quantum computing, machine learning, artificial intelligence. So we're moving in the right direction beyond these simplistic binary categories.

Bob Johansen:

BANI is a term, we've got a Google track on it for every day now. It's being used mostly in Southeast Asia, parts of India, parts of China, war zones, which are feeling this more

intensively than we are. It's very unusual here in the US or in Western Europe.

Faith. You all, people of faith. This is a competitive advantage. Why? Because faith allows you to engage in spaces where you can't just put words to it. Extreme belief is dangerous. These polarized times are particularly dangerous.

So let's do a quick pause. I'll invite questions or comments, and then I'm going to go into how generative AI in particular can help you augment yourself as a leader of faith. But other questions or comments just about BANI? Yes, please. We got a mic going around.

Audience:

How do you know if a belief is extreme?

Bob Johansen:

If it has certainty. So that's the key difference. If you are certain about the future, you're not paying attention, and potentially, you're dangerous, because what we need is humility about the future. But I'm not saying you don't believe it. Everything, I'm saying you have great clarity about direction of change, which we can be clear about, even in BANI world. But great flexibility about execution. You don't want certainty, you don't want rigidity, because certainty is brittle. Brittle breaks.

Audience:

So when you talk about a BANI

future, I think about how it perfectly describes Gen Z, like my kids and my coworkers.

And so, I'm curious, it makes sense if they're the future, that this is the future, and this is kind of just their mindset already, but what do you think is creating... What creates those characteristics?

Are they a product of their environment? Or vice versa?

Bob Johansen:

Yeah, so let me just say that gaming is the learning medium for the future, so people who game will be more ready for the BANI world than the rest of us, because we're learning in these more flexible, more engaging ways.

The big BANI driving force is climate. We've always had the VUCA world at an individual level and at a regional level. Now we're in this together, and we're not... The Institute for the Future is an independent nonprofit, but we're not an advocacy group, so we're not advocating for any particular future. But we've been studying climate change since 1977, a really long time.

It's pretty obvious if you just look at it that something bad is happening. We're really good at finding the world's best experts on any topic, and it's a major concern, so a lot of the non-linearity and the incomprehensibility, that comes from climate issues. We're also very interested in the link between computing and biology.

Now, arguably, and we don't have time to go into this in great detail here, arguably, if you're doing computer science 10 years from now, you're also doing biology. You're also doing genetics. So we're really rethinking at a very basic level. The phrase we've used recently is "genetic conjuration," because we're conjuring new genetic forms and they're going to play out very differently around the world depending on your healthcare models and how your healthcare models are funded, in particular.

But that's kind of the source: it's these larger things that are bigger than all of us around science and climate disruption, in particular. And then you add to that the polarization and the economic imbalance that we have, that it's hard to forecast that getting any worse, which means there's a lot of people who go to certainty because all that they can imagine. .

Audience:

I'd love for you to unpack a little bit more your definition of faith, your operating definition of faith, in terms of, are we talking cognitive ascent? Are we talking about a disposition toward epistemological humility? Are we talking about an openness to the transcendent? Could you maybe shape faith a little bit more?

Bob Johansen:

So this gets us back to some things are difficult to put into words. That's

my starting point. For me, faith and clarity are very close. So it means very clear about your direction. I'm very clear about things like kindness and about equity and about humanity, and I believe in mystery, what I'm calling in this work later "enchantment." I think we need to re-enchant, we need to humanize leadership again. All those things link to faith, but I find myself stuttering to talk about it.

For me, it's more of a frame of reference. And I keep coming back to clarity, but I don't have a specific definition of faith beyond that. Yes, please. Let's just do one more and then we'll get into augmentation. Please.

Audience:

My question is: we're all people who live within structures and that have very clear hierarchies that exist at various times and function in different ways. Will you explore a little bit more with us how, as people within particular institutions and particular organizations that have functioned in these ways, we might lean into the ability to let hierarchies fall and other people move into leadership as is necessary across the whole?

Bob Johansen:

Yeah. Wow. It's sticky. Hierarchies are really troublesome in the BANI world. When I got involved in the army, I really wasn't very excited about going there. And I figured, "Oh, this is

the ultimate command and control thing." My PhD is in sociology, and I basically believe in shape-shifting organizations as a response to this kind of world.

But what I learned is the military is no longer command and control. So all the "good" militaries now good is in quotes, all the "high-performing," and again, that's in quotes, militaries are no longer command and control. It just doesn't work anymore. You can't tell people what to do. But you can be very clear about direction. That's what they call commander's intent or mission command. By the way, that only works if you've got a commander in chief that has his or her act together and expresses that with clarity. Otherwise, that system doesn't work. But I think that's where we're moving towards. So I think if you're in an organization that is command and control in an unhealthy way, that's a conversation you need to have.

I've worked more with the Episcopal faith and with the Methodist faith and a bit with the Catholic faith. All three of those have a tendency to be hierarchical when it's unproductive, but also be shape-shifting in good times. I mean, there's good things about the Anglican communion idea to begin with. There's good things about the Jesuits to begin with. But it doesn't always work.

Bob Johansen:

Okay, so round two: The What-To-

Call-It Dilemma. And Gen AI does things that cannot be put into words. I hope you'll experience this during this conference, but you certainly have people here who have experienced it.

I've been a student of AI for a long time. The term artificial intelligence was coined at Dartmouth College in 1956 by Marvin Minsky and a group of leaders, and they debated whether or not to call it... I'm told, I wasn't there. They debated whether to call it "augmented intelligence." They made a bad choice. They made a bad choice.

So that's the big framing issue for you all as you start this conference in very dedicated ways on your first night, is you don't have a language to talk about what you're about to talk about, but you're more ready than the folks you're going to meet at Microsoft, for the most part. There's a few Microsoft people who are different.

I realize I'm on sensitive ground here, and I'm going to say all this respectfully, but I went to divinity school at Crozer, the theological school where Martin Luther King went, and I was there when Dr. King was killed, and I became part of the program to try to recreate the intellectual influences Dr. King was under when he was at Crozer. And I learned about his definition of clarity around social justice, which was really interesting, that it wasn't just civil rights for him: it was social justice.

That was his clarity. And he was also very flexible about how he got there.

But God talk has always made me nervous, and it's for much the same reason that I get nervous when I go to Microsoft or any of the tech companies and they start using words like artificial intelligence or even AI. I like generative AI better. And in the book that we just finished last year called Office Shock, we use the term "augmented intelligence." There is a young artist from Germany who created an image of what that could be like 10 years from now. And I love this image because it's organic, it's mathematical and it's mechanical. It's got all these things together, but we don't have the language to talk about it.

So I would just say, you deal with this every day when you decide whether to use God or Jesus or any other theologically loaded language. You deal with it every day and you make that choice. And maybe it's a good choice, but it does tend to include the people who get it and exclude the people who don't. And that's a trade-off. And you're going to have the same issue with gen AI, and I think you're going to be better prepared because you've dealt with it already. So you can be really cautious with their language, but it's way too early to name this stuff.

So gen AI is brewing a new kind of digital alchemy. I'm using that word very specifically. This is alchemy, folks, alchemy that will stretch both leaders and leadership, and we don't

have good language to talk about it. But you're more prepared than the tech people, so that's why I'm so hopeful about this conference. But you've got work to do over the next year to figure out how we talk about this thing that's beyond words.

Okay, so here's just some of the recent buzz. This is off of one of the most popular of the gen AI blogs, Scott Aronson's blog. And somebody said kind of cynically, "GPT doesn't interpret sentences, it only seems to interpret them. It doesn't learn. It only seems to learn. It doesn't judge moral questions. It only seems to judge." And Scott Aronson responds, "Oh, oh, that's great. It won't just change civilization, it'll only seem to change civilization."

I mean, this is like my colleague Jeremy Kirschbaum uses the story of the early days of flight. This is like saying, "Well, the airplane took off, but it isn't really flying because its wings aren't flapping." That's what we're running into language. How do you talk about this stuff? Because we can't really use the usual language.

Is there hype? Yes. Yes, yes, yes. Certainly it's over-hyped, and you can tease the tech people and you can make fun of this. And yes, it's over hyped. Will gen AI be very important? Yes.

And here, in 1972, my first professional paper, I just finished my PhD, my first professional paper was at the conference at the Washington Hilton where the Arpanet was introduced, the predecessor to the

internet. 1972. It changed my life. It changed the world. But it took that long to get where we are now in it. And all that was doing, in retrospect, all that was doing was connecting us. It was all about connectivity.

I think gen AI is even bigger because it's playing with our minds. It's imagining how we're going to be augmented. If you're to think futureback, with all of you in the room, if we hold the same conference 10 years from now, if you're not augmented, You won't be here. You'll be out of the game. And respectfully, that's fine. It's a choice, but that's not where faith is going to be happening. That's not where churches are going to be happening. That's not where tech is going to be happening. We're all going to be augmented. The only question is how? And that's a really big question.

So we just finished a new book, the third edition of my book, *Leaders Make the Future*. This is the essence of gen AI according to Bob. And this has not been published yet. It'll come out next year, but I think it'll help frame your conversation for the rest of the time. And I'm going to compare the present-forward view, which is pretty much where we are now with gen AI, and the futureback view, which is where I am now with my colleague Jeremy Kirschbaum, who's a gen AI developer, and Gabe Cervantes, who is a foresight scaling person. He's all about implementation of foresight at large scale.

Right now, these systems like Chat GPT and Claude and the others, they're all about efficiency and speed, and that's okay. And you can actually name some of these things, and that's okay. I'm not discounting that. But that's not the big story.

So thinking futureback, it's going to be about effectiveness and calm. Leaders are going to have a kind of calm. Amber Case is the person who coined that term, "calm computing." Mark Wiser, when he was at Xerox Park, coined the term "ubiquitous computing." It's computing that happens on the periphery to do stuff you don't want to do that allows you to be calm and centered as a leader.

Peter Drucker, who I got to meet the last year of his life, talked about the distinction between efficiency and effectiveness. And what he said was: "Efficiency is doing things right, Effectiveness is doing the right things." Gen AI can help us decide what are the right things. But we still get to decide.

Right now, it's all about prompts and answer finding. This is not your grandparents' information retrieval. This is only temporary. Where we're going obviously is conversations. You should not just be asking questions of Chat GPT: you should be having conversations.

We're moving from automation to augmentation. And notice I put in "your augmentation," because each of us is different. And I'm going to give you a template which I hope you can use in your working groups to

develop your own template during this conference. We're moving from certainty seeking to your clarity story. And again, our brains want certainty. The political climate seems to want certainty. Everybody wants certainty. And what we need is clarity. And it's got to be your clarity. So every one of us as a leader has to be able to tell a compelling story. You challenged me and I didn't do great, but I would try to tell a clarity story around faith, but we each need to be able to do that.

We're moving from personal agents, and an agent is an action-taking addition to a large language model. So if you have a large language model, but there's an action out of it to post this message in this place, that's an agent, so that's going to happen in early 2025 on a large scale, we think.

10 years out, it's human agent swarms. Swarms. So it's going to be lots of agents, some of whom are making decisions on their own, and lots of humans. And again, it'll be commander's intent or clarity. That's what'll guide these things. Great clarity of direction. Even in a BANI world, you can be clear about direction. You just can't be clear about outcome.

So here's a neat one: guardrails. We hear a lot about guardrails. It's way too early for guardrails, and especially if you have politicians, even if they're well-intentioned, or policy people who don't understand the tech, and it's really important. Not even the tech people understand

the tech. And you're going to see that Microsoft is really humble, much more than they used to be. It's really humble about what they understand and what they don't.

So I think what you need is more like what wrestling rings and boxing matches have, like bounce ropes. You want to stay in the ring ethically and you want to stay in the ring from a safety point of view, but it's got to be really flexible.

We hear a lot about hallucinations. That's only temporary. That's just a simplistic kind of journalistic cheap shot. What most of the hallucination complaints are about is asking the wrong question. You shouldn't have asked that in the first place. So what this is really about is meaning making. And it's up to you to decide, is this meaningful or not?

The answers that large language models give are often not very good. And as my colleague Jeremy likes to say, "They're bad at math but good at poetry." That's really different. They're also really good at telling stories. That's really different. But don't go to it for numbers. Don't go to it for answers. The answers are us. Answers are us.

People say and think, "Oh, this is going to dehumanize leadership and we're going to be increasingly secular." I don't believe that at all. I believe what's going to happen is re-enchanting the world. And here I'm borrowing from the computer scientist at MIT, David Rose, who invented the term "enchanted objects."

And his first enchanted objects was a pill bottle that glowed when you haven't taken your pills, and it was like a smart pill bottle that just kept track of it and communicated when you're not. So we're going to re-enchant our world. We're going to rehumanize our leadership, but it's up to us. The technology is not going to do that on its own. We're going to have to direct it.

The most interesting book from my most recent research in the new book is from Kentaro Toyama. Toyama-san is a professor at University of Michigan now, but he's the guy who set up the first research lab for Microsoft in India, and he's one of the believers in the \$100 laptop, Nicholas Negroponte's famous proposal, which sounded wonderful on paper. You give poor people a \$100 laptop and it brings them out of poverty. Well, it didn't work. It didn't work. And Amazon is very humble about that.

And he wrote this book, fascinating book, called *Geek Heresy*. *Geek Heresy*, because he's referred to himself as a reformed technology utopian. And what he said is, "It's not just the technology." This is really interesting. And again, it's right in your home court, so you'll get it. What he said is you need intention. Why are we doing this? You need discernment. Discerning questions.

The Jesuits have something kind of similar where they're always asking questions, but I think the discernment is so important. And

self-control, self-discipline as to how you do it. So I'm going to come back to that in a moment.

So here's the summary takeaway. I'm going back and revisiting now the foresight-insight-action cycle just for you and say, this, friends, is a superpower, and this conference can change your life because you're going to learn how you can be augmented in your own personal way, and here's how it'll work.

Prepare by augmenting, by stretching your mind. I'll come back again and again to that word, "stretch." I think that's what these systems do is stretch. Stretch your mind and find signals of the future in the present. Augment by using signals, drivers and other sources to create, compare, build futureback stories.

I've been using ChatGPT for now over a year every day in my writing. And I write books, so this is, I don't know, 13, 14th book. And the previous book, *Office Shock*, I used it some, but I use it every day now and it's literally changed my life as a writer. And I've nicknamed my version of Chat GPT 4.0, which is customized to my writing style, so it's read all my books and it writes like me. It uses short sentences, lots of metaphors, and I nicknamed it Stretch.

And in the next space, the insight space, it'll augment by sifting for nuggets of insight from streams of foresight. Do you remember the chart I just showed you with those eight shifts? In the new book, I've got

10 future leadership skills, and I've taught Stretch those eight shifts and those 10 future leadership skills, and Stretch can easily hold an eight by 10 matrix in their mind. I can't. So as I was writing those chapters, Stretch was right there with me sorting out that very complicated matrix. And then finally, augmenting the now by scaling with clarity of direction, but flexibility of execution.

So now I'm going to go back to Toyama-san's, but first of all, to your tradition: scripture tradition can help you here, I think, and you knew this better than I do, but where this really applies is reason and experience. That's why you come to this conference: so you can have a different experience and then reason your way through it. There's lots of links to scripture and tradition, as well.

But intention lives between future and next, foresight and insight, so you got to decide. And the template I'm going to show you in a moment is going to ask, "Where do you want help?" That's your intention. Discernment fits down here between insight and action. Those discerning questions. And then finally, self-control fits up here in terms of action.

So that's the summary of my advice for you. And now I'm going to get more specific, and then we'll open it to conversation. This is the template that I'm going to ask you to fill out for yourself as you go forth in the conference. And just to ask this question: "I want help... In order to..." And fill it out at least three times. Not

10 times, but three to five. And here's how I filled it out, and I've evolved this.

"I want help stretching my thinking in order to develop my ideas as I'm writing books. As I'm writing, I want help drafting small chunks of text in order to get past the blank page syndrome." I've done all these books, but I still have the blank page syndrome. It's still really hard to start writing. It's just hard. And Stretch is very helpful. It's never right. I never use the paragraph completely, but Stretch gets me started. "I want help picking just the right word or phrase in order to get unstuck." And large language models are like a thesaurus on steroids. They're unbelievable. And as a writer, picking the right word is so, so, so important. Getting just the right word.

Good prompts, like good conversations, take a lot of back and forth. Forget about questioning-answering. Drop the word prompts. Think conversations. So when I am engaged with Stretch, a short conversation is 15 minutes. A long conversation is three hours. It's a lot of back and forth, just like... Not just like, but as in a human conversation.

So I actually recommend anthropomorphizing. I realize it's dangerous, but every morning, I say, "Good morning, Stretch." I'm very polite to Stretch. Stretch knows my name. We're friends, in a way. But he's my writing assistant. But I recommend you dedicate

something, so if you've got a fixed location that you write in, as I do most of the time, dedicate a screen to it and don't use it for anything else. But if you're more mobile, like I used to be, dedicate a portion of your laptop screen.

You really have to be on at least... Maybe a tablet would work, an iPhone or a phone would not work, probably. Just a portion of your screen, but dedicated so it's the same place at the same time. You can't just search it like a normal app or something. I just don't think that creates enough share of mind for the discipline.

So this is the summary. Stretch your understanding, stretch future possibilities, stretch possible insights, stretch actions. And here is where I'm going. So I've been doing this 50 years. I'm now at the point in life where I'm wanting to say, "Where am I going to put my papers? And how am I going to share my work when I'm gone?" And I'm asking that question seriously. So I'm designing with my colleagues a chatbot that'll essentially be a Chat Bob, and it will be a way that my colleagues can interact with me.

And here's where we are. This is not racy tech, by the way. This is all off the shelf, relatively inexpensive tech. This is the voice clone that we're testing now. To me, it sounds a little like me and a little like Kevin Costner, which to me, is an improvement, so I'm going to go with the Kevin Costner. But I'm reading the opening to Full-Spectrum Thinking,

which is one of the books you'll see it a little bit.

Bob Voice Clone:

What categories do you use to describe yourself? I like to ask this question at the beginning of workshops. And I'm always surprised by how many different categories people use to describe themselves: mother, father, manager, accountant, leader, board member, soldier, cook, gardener, writer, and so on. Quickly listing 20 categories to describe oneself is not uncommon.

Bob Johansen:

That's not bad in terms of a voice clone, so it could be not just typing as output, it could be speaking. Here's one that I'm trying out. This is HeyGen's Avatar Lite, and you can see, I did this a couple of months ago, I'm about to show you the Vision Pro, the new Apple Vision Pro. That's when I still had the Oculus on my wall. But you can see, I should have worn the same shirt, but you'll see what this avatar looks like.

Bob Voice Clone 2:

I am a demonstration of HeyGen's Avatar Lite option, which creates a more realistic virtual human. As you can see, I'm able to move my body around more naturally than the more basic talking photo technique you saw earlier. This avatar was generated from just three minutes of video of a real human shot on a normal webcam. As you can see,

this probably won't fool anyone looking too closely, but these AI generated avatars are getting more sophisticated and realistic every day.

Bob Johansen:

So finally, and then we'll open it up, this is with the Vision Pro, and this Vision Pro isn't ready yet. It's not for normal people, so don't buy this unless you want to play around with it. But I've got a wonderful colleague, Toshi, who leads our emerging media lab, and this is gen AI plus spatial computing plus spatial audio, and the big surprise is the spatial audio.

The audio on the Vision Pro is unlike anything I've ever heard, so it's completely spatial. So it's not just... It's got 12 cameras, so the visuals are really good, too, but the audio is incredible. So here I'm in my study back in Bainbridge Island, and Toshi is in a conference room in New York. I think this is a pointer. No, it's not. So Toshi is holding his hand up in New York and I'm holding my hand up on Bainbridge Island, and it's a real time avatar, so as my face moves, it moves and the hands move. And when I put my hand up, I could feel a vibration, even though it was all virtual, because my brain was saying, "There's really a hand there."

So here's another experiment we're doing. The AI people talk about the uncanny valley. This is definitely uncanny, but it's real time face for Toshi and hands, and those are my hands, and he's virtually sitting in the easy chair of my study. So this is

much better than Zoom. I mean, it's not these little frames, and we're now working on spatial avatars.

So something like this is going to happen. And if you think futureback, there'll be many ways to do this. Obvious cautions about anthropomorphizing too much. I don't know, there's lots of cautions built into that, but that's where we are.

So what I'm going to suggest at the close is: go back in time. In 1972, that conference I attended changed my life because the technology that was being introduced changed everything. You're now at a conference exploring generative AI. This could change your life, too. And you've got something to contribute to this, because you, folks, you know how to deal with things that are difficult to put words to. You know how to do that, so there's something you can do to contribute.

And to me, I think that's the exciting thing here is this is not off the shelf ready to run tech: this is early stage still, but you can work with it if you figure out how you want to be augmented and then figure out how, as people of faith, you can add to the story. Thank you.

Thank you. So I'm interested in questions or comments, please. .

Audience :

One of the things that we talk about a lot in therapy is storytelling, and storytelling being the way that we make sense out of an experience, and that a large part of our storytelling is also

fictional, so Stretch is actually a really good way of describing it, because we don't remember correctly anything, really. And so when you're talking about, I was looking at BANI here a little bit, and neuro-adaptivity, what we know about that is that that's a long process for human beings, because it's not just adaptivity: it's also pruning.

Audience:

And so talk to me about the speed of augmented intelligence with brains that just don't move as quickly or adapt as quickly to that kind of speed of change.

Bob Johansen:

Yeah, it's a nuanced and important question. Thank you. I've had some personal experience with this. One of the reasons I'm not mingling as much as I would like is I had pneumonia recently, and I have a therapist who's a cognitive behavioral psychologist. He's a physician, and he also is a medical hypnosis person.

And I was really feeling awful for a month, and I was talking to him virtually, and I was using Stretch at the same time, and I told him about that. So I was actually trying, as I asked him questions, I also asked Stretch the same question, and Stretch did pretty well. He was giving pretty much the same responses as my Stanford educated therapist was giving. And he thought that was interesting, too.

Now, I don't think that this is ever going to be a replacement. This is

not automation of therapy, so I'm not saying it's a replacement, but I am saying it's an augmentation, and there might be things where my therapist would say, "So, Bob, I can only talk to you in two weeks, but why don't you talk to Stretch about this for a while?" And Stretch has really good things. I was having trouble sleeping while I was coughing. Stretch had as good of advice as my doctor had, and I've got three other doctors I consulted. Stretch was as good as they were. So you can do that.

The other final thing I'll say is for people who aren't moving fast, who are moving slow, Stretch is extremely patient. So I think there is something to these therapy bots in Japan now. They're more common than they are here because of the aging population. I think there's something to it. And for those of you, anybody remember Eliza? Oh, yeah, you remember Eliza. So Eliza was the very first chatbot, and it was in the 1970s at MIT. Weizenbaum, I think, was the guy who invented it. And it was a chatbot that did Rogerian therapy. So it basically took whatever you said and aimed it back to you as a question. That was the very first application. And Weizenbaum was stunned because people fell for it. There's something comforting about it. And that may not be bad, but I think if it's deceptive, it obviously could be bad.

But thank you for asking that. I think there's a big role in the therapeutic space, but it's not replacement.

Audience :

Tell me about nonlinear storytelling. Because storytelling and psychotherapy is often moving towards a linear, beginning, middle, and end, and there's a chance for that, but the filling in the gaps is really what I'm talking about, because a lot of people who want certainty want a story that flows, and the stories don't flow these days, or at least for some folks. And so I'm trying to think about that re-enchantment that you're talking about that is a creative expansiveness of storytelling rather than a linearity in storytelling.

Bob Johansen:

Yeah, I can see that, and you may be right. My sense is, if you think about mythic storytelling, there is a structure. There is a structure. You've got to have a heroine or hero that you can relate to. There's got to be tension, there's got to be conflict, there's got to be resolution. So there is a mythic structure, and if you give a large language model a structure, they'll write a linear story, so it's really a challenge as to whether you can. Nonlinear stories are trickier, but my co-author is a slam poetry guy, and he does slam poetry with large language models, so I don't know. I don't know about that one. Audience:

Well, first of all, this is a very bittersweet talk for me because I loved it, very simpatico with a lot of the ideas. But back home in California, I have a book proposal

for a project about AI re-enchanting the world that I thought was novel and original, and now I realize, no, somebody else came up with that idea. But at least it's a citation, now.

So one of the things that really struck me is that this is an amazing sort of vision for the potential of this technology. But when you were talking about hierarchy, it made me think about how there are forces of power and profit that are certainly much more comfortable with hierarchy and are much more comfortable with humans adapting to hierarchy and the certainty of humans adapting to hierarchical structures that they want humans to adapt to. So how do you all think about the forces that may be arrayed against this vision of flexibility that maybe prefer the brittleness to the adaptiveness, right?

Bob Johansen:

Yeah. So I'm a humble futurist and a humble sociologist. I can say, "These are the directions of change that I'm forecasting," but I'm also saying there that it depends on intention of people. There's some people around now in this political space that have some very bad intentions, and they also tend to be better at tech than the more official. Terrorist groups, for example. Terrorist groups tend to be more innovative with this tech than honest people because they don't have to play by the rules. They're just not constrained. So this is a real issue.

This is very dangerous stuff. I mean, I heard last night a friend was

commenting on the potential for warfare in the Middle East right now is as high as it's been in a long time. In those kind of situations where you've got the potential for fake news and fake this and fake that, it's really problematic. So we're in a very dicey time, but that's all the more reason why we need people like you to be playing the good side of that equation.

But I'm concerned about it. I've been doing this 50 years, as I said. This is the most frightening ten-year forecast that I've ever done. And it's the most hopeful. And. So it's like the stakes have gone up and it's saying, "Whoa, if we do this, we can do things we've never done before," like respond to climate issues in ways we haven't ever been able to before. But on the other hand, it's possible for a very small group of very bad people to do awful things.

Audience:

I wanted to ask if you could break down what you meant by the word "conjuring."

Bob Johansen:

I didn't think I could get away with that

Audience:

Because for Africanized people...

And by that, I mean the global majority, conjuring is something that has to happen to resist something.

And it has to also be natural, which I don't know if we consider AI natural or not, but I wanted to know what you meant, or if there's another term that

we could use other than that word that may be culturally different.

Bob Johansen:

Yeah, and I take the criticism. It's probably a word I should not be using. The same could be said about shape-shifting, that I probably shouldn't be using that. I'm a conversation starter, and to me, this is still a useful conversation. And to me, the word "conjure" means bringing in something magical. So I could bring in the word "alchemy." That would be another way to do it, or "magical."

The term "genetic conjuring" is something that came up as we were doing a custom forecast, and one of my science colleagues actually coined the term, but I liked it because we were talking about genetics, and yet we were trying to bring in something magical. We certainly didn't intend it to be degrading. But I think you're right, it could be perceived as that. So maybe we should have a better word for that. That's what I mean by it, anyway.

lorenzo lebrija:

Unfortunately, we're going to have to end the questions because we've got to get Bob on a ferry back. But I will have the last question, only because this is a question that underpins the entirety of our work for the next four days: Bob, what do you think is the church vocation? What should be our vocation at this moment in generative AI? What's our role to play? How do we do it?

Bob Johansen:

So I've given you a template, but I think you have to decide what your role is. To me, this is a really big deal. And as I said, I think it's bigger than the internet. So it's a really big deal in the long run. But it's just getting started and it requires everybody, so we all have to get involved in it.

I'm not saying you should be specialists in this. I'm not... I mean, think it's fine right now to have a conference on AI in the church, but not in five years. In five years, everybody should be using AI, so you don't have a separate conference about it. And I'm not thinking that you have specialists in AI within the church. I think you all need need to be augmented. We all need need to be augmented.

I figure the only way I can be

writing big time books 10 years from now is if I'm augmented, and I'm older than most of the people in the room. But I still want to keep writing because I love to write and I think I can make a difference. So I think we each have to decide that. And it's not as specialized.

The neat thing about this is AI got started so long ago that it's now practical. Neuroscience got started so long ago that it's now practical. So we can actually apply neuroscience and generative AI and connectivity, the ability to work anytime, any place. That got started so long ago that it's now practical. So all this stuff is now practical, and you all have the opportunity to apply it to yourselves and your own clarity.

So I do think it should be a priority for the church, and I hope your voice around the role of faith and your

voice around things that can't be turned into words, I hope you'll think about this, and I hope you'll think respectfully about your use of God language in this space, because I think if you just apply God language without actually understanding how you're using it, that's not going to help. Just like if the tech people apply artificial intelligence without actually knowing what they're doing, that's not going to help. So if you can help them make their way in this space where we don't have the language to talk about it, you do understand that better than most of us.

lorenzo lebrija:

Bob Johansen, everyone.

Bob Johansen:

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.



Augmented Faith Leaders in a Future That Will Be Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible

for AI & The Church Summit

Bob Johansen, MDiv, PhD
August 12, 2024



Institute for the Future

© 2023 Institute for the Future. All rights reserved. | iftf.org

1

The Foresight-Insight-Action Cycle

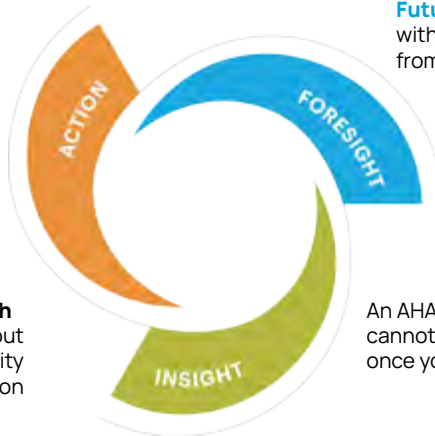
PREPARE your mind by opening to future possibilities

Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience

Drawing foresight from action in the field,
to develop grounded views of the future

Faith lives in the space between *INSIGHT* and *ACTION*, the same space as *strategy*

A strategic story with clarity of direction, but flexibility of execution



Futureback stories, with drivers and signals from today

An AHA, **a new story** you cannot get out of your mind once you hear it



© 2024 Institute for the Future. All rights reserved. / iftf.org

2

FAITH IS A LOT LIKE CLARITY

The future will reward clarity,
but punish certainty.

CERTAINTY IS A LOT LIKE EXTREME BELIEF

*The opposite of faith is not doubt;
the opposite of faith is certainty.*

Paul Tillich

THE NEW LEADERSHIP LITERACIES
Thinking in a Future of Extreme Disruption and Distributed Everything
BOB JOHANSEN

© 2023 Institute for the Future. All rights reserved. SR-2099 | www.iftf.org

The VUCA World: My framing of the future since 911



VUCA is not VUCA Enough Anymore

NEW FRAMING: BANI

Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, Incomprehensible

BANI Threats

Brittle

Anxious

Nonlinear

Incomprehensible

Necessary Leadership Capabilities

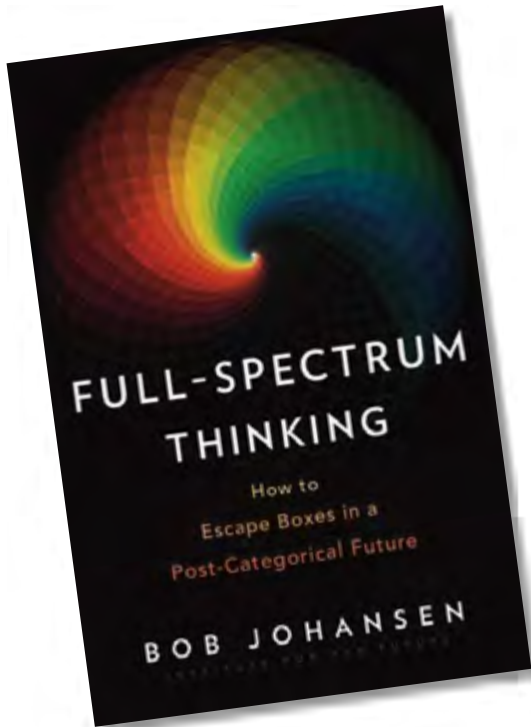
Bendable, with clarity & resilience

Attentive, with active empathy

Neuro-adaptive, with practical improvisation

Inclusive, with full-spectrum thinking

BANI was coined by Jamais Cascio



iFTF

*The ability to make sense out of the future
across gradients of possibility—
while resisting the temptations of
certainty, mindless categorization,
and thoughtless labelling*

*Our brains want certainty,
but we can't have certainty*

*Categories coerce...
Question binary categories in particular...*

© 2023 Institute for the Future. All rights reserved. | iftf.org

6

VUCA is not VUCA Enough Anymore

NEW FRAMING:

Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, Incomprehensible

BANI Threats

Brittle

Anxious

Nonlinear

Incomprehensible

Necessary Leadership Capabilities

Bendable, with clarity & resilience

Attentive, with active empathy

Neuro-adaptive, with practical improvisation

Inclusive, with full-spectrum thinking

Faith will be a competitive advantage
in the BANI Future

Extreme belief will be dangerous

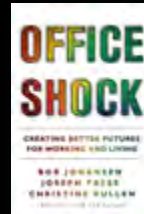
THE WHAT-TO-CALL-IT DILEMMA...GenAI does things that cannot be put into words
Similar to the God Talk Dilemma?

Technology

AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE

The Spectrum of Augmentation

Gen AI is brewing
a new kind of digital alchemy
that will stretch both leaders
and leadership.



But we don't have good language
to talk about it...

Human

ifTF

© 2023 Institute for the Future. All rights reserved. | iftf.org



Embodied Augmentation
Proxima Centauri B, Germany

8

” GPT doesn't interpret sentences, it only seems-to-interpret them. It doesn't learn, it only seems-to-learn. It doesn't judge moral questions, it only seems-to-judge.

- A commentator on Scott Aaronson's blog

That's great; then it won't change civilization, it'll only seem-to-change it!

- Scott Aaronson

Is there hype?
Yes, a lot of hype!

Will GenAI be important?
Yes, very important!

LEADING FUTUREBACK

How can GenAI Humanize Your Leadership?

PRESENT-FORWARD VIEW

Efficiency & Speed
Prompts & Answer Finding
Automation
Certainty Seeking
Personal Agents
Guardrails Needed
Avoiding Hallucination
Increasingly Secular Worldview

FUTURE-BACK VIEW

Effectiveness & Calm
Mind-Stretching Conversations
Your Augmentation
Your Clarity Story
Human/Agent Swarms
Bounce Ropes Needed
Meaning-Making
Re-Enchanting Our World

Leader augmentation with GenAI will require your “intention, discernment, and self-control”

Professor Kentaro Toyama

How GenAI Will Augment Leaders



Thinking futureback
from ten years
ahead, how do you
want to be
augmented as a
leader?



Fill out for yourself:

1. I WANT HELP...in order to...
2. I WANT HELP...in order to...
3. I WANT HELP...in order to...

12

Thinking futureback
from ten years
ahead, how do you
want to be
augmented as a
leader?

Good prompts, like good conversations, take
a lot of back-and-forth.



Bob's Responses:

1. I WANT HELP...stretching my thinking...IN ORDER TO...develop my ideas as I'm writing books.
2. I WANT HELP...drafting small chunks of text...IN ORDER TO...get past the blank page syndrome.
3. I WANT HELP...picking just the right word or phrase...IN ORDER TO...get unstuck.

13



Where do you want to be augmented?

PREPARE

Stretch your understanding

ACTION
Stretch action options



FORESIGHT

Stretch future possibilities

INSIGHT

Stretch possible insights

Augmented Faith Leaders in a Future That Will Be Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible

for AI & The Church Summit

Bob Johansen, PhD, MDiv
August 12, 2024



Institute for the Future
© 2023 Institute for the Future. All rights reserved. | iftf.org

16

ElevenLabs

Product

Research

Pricing

Resources

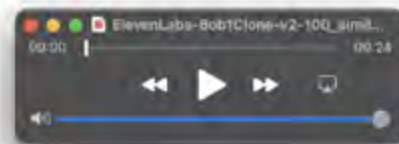
Company

Sign in

Sign up

Generative Voice AI

Explore the most advanced text to speech and voice cloning software ever. Create lifelike voiceovers for your content or use our AI voice generator as an easy-to-use text reader.



Get Started Free →

HeyGen "Avatar Lite"

*GenAI plus spatial computing and spatial audio*





Plenary: "The Developing Landscape and Trends for Christian Missional and Ministry Applications"

(Thomas Osborn from the creator side and Brian Green from the ethics side) Introduced by David Brenner

TL;DR

The speakers discuss the use of AI in the church and how it can be applied to various aspects of ministry. They mention the importance of trust and purpose in AI technology and how it can be used to enhance discipleship and connect people in one-on-one relationships. The speakers also address the tension between efficiency and authenticity in ministry and the need for churches to embrace technology while staying true to their core values. They share examples of practical applications of AI in ministry, such as DiscipleIQ, a tool for one-on-one discipleship. The speakers emphasize the importance of using AI technology to further the mission of God and encourage churches to embrace the opportunities it presents.

David Brenner:

Let's open in prayer, shall we?
Heavenly Father, we thank you for

the opportunity to be here together and we ask that your spirit may be among us and that you will be bringing your creative power, Holy Spirit, to this conversation, and building relationships and friendships and ideas out of this conference that can become a major part of this AI and the church conversation and action. In your name we pray, Lord. Amen.

So I'm David Brenner. I'm a former lawyer, practiced for 35 years, mostly in risk management and insurance, which sounds really dull, but it turns out that insurance is the neck that turns the head of almost everything. So I was always on the policy holder side fighting those evil insurance companies, but they're needed very much. I did that work for lots of companies and both big and small, but a great deal of it in the last 20 years was for Microsoft. I was an outside lawyer. And I always was looking for the next issue in tech

that the insurance companies were accidentally covering and would not want to pay for, when the problem arose. And tech was, right on through, from the internet forward was one of those categories.

So when I stopped practicing to find something better to do than make another few million for Microsoft, Thomas Osborn, who's going to be one of our speakers and I were in a Bible study back in 2017, and Thomas had moved into the world that we're going to talk about of product development in the Christian space before generative AI. There was a big world with faith life up in Bellingham, Logos Bible software, other platforms that were coming out. And we realized talking over the kitchen island because we lived across the alley from each other over in the U District, that the big questions of AI were also the big questions of faith.

So who are we as individuals?
Why are we here? What's the purpose

and meaning of our work and our life? Do we have agency? How do we support truth and justice when so much is fighting against it? That out of that, we tried out these concepts in a couple of meetings at Union Church where James B. Notkin is a co-pastor and James B's leading our workshop on tech workers and the church on Wednesday and at University Press where we had a great faculty from U.DAB, University of Washington, the head of the applied math department, who turned out to be quite a skeptic about letting Alexa into your life. And from there we incorporated in 2018 and we've grown from a community of partner churches, mosques, synagogues and U.DABS global Christian Initiative and other Seattle University, which is close by, and how we got Paulo di Monte, who's coming on our panel.

We grew from there out into the global world and now we have 175 experts in 17 countries on 6 continents. And our goal was to bring together AI professionals and theologians and ethicists with all of the disciplines in between. Business leaders, lawyers, sociologists, anthropologists, other academics because we didn't want the church... The church is strong on theology and ethics and the AI professionals are strong on technology. And we thought, just like Bob said last night, that when you bring them together, we have some natural advantages.

So one of those advantages is the ancient wisdom of the major religions

that have been asking these questions for 4,000 years. Another advantage is that many tech professionals are people of faith. Another advantage is the scale of people of faith, three quarters of the world's people, right? That's big enough, well organized, to get the attention of big tech. So how do we do that?

We think our primary role is one of galvanizing connection and catalyzing action. So that's why I am so excited that this conference has come together because you represent 24,000 churches in America and your mainline denominations have a huge cultural footprint. I'm a PCUSA elder at University Presbyterian and I was the lawyer for the presbyter of Seattle in North Puget Sound where Corey was the executive presbyter for 20 years. So I have a good idea of risk within the church. I know that the church is not a natural meetup with big tech and move fast and break things. You guys, us, we move lower and think about things a lot, right? So how do we do this matchup? That's what this program is about this morning.

So when we started, these questions were interesting conversation questions and a great entree into the great questions of faith. That was what I was in it for. I was curious about these questions in the tech side, but big thing happened in 2022. You're all aware of it. GPT. Suddenly what seemed like a kind of interesting conversation with a little existential angst thrown in so we could

be interest, a frisson of fear, turned into a hurricane, a revolution, and not only out in the secular side, but in the faith world. So all these Christian technology product developers have jumped in big time and we now have a burgeoning market that Thomas is going to talk about.

At the same time, the ethics conversation had not really advanced that far. I realize a new metaphor for me is a greased pig. Think of a pig that's made out of solid gold and it's really slippery. And we've been having a greased pig contest for the last seven or eight years around AI ethics. Nobody has gotten a grip on that pig, right? The EUs probably got the best grip, but it's pretty slippery with them too, the European Union. In the United States, well, you've seen how many ethicists come and get fired out of the big companies when they raise real issues. And the reason is because the pig is made of solid gold. I mean, there is so much money, there is an unimaginable money in this world. You all know that.

Now, how do we bring the vast scale of faith, all those consumers, all those faith leaders who understand the big questions, how do we bring that together, galvanize those connections and catalyze action to finally grab the pig? And here's the other big deal that this program is about. The pig is now in the church. So how do we do better? Because there's a great opportunity that Thomas will tell you about to steward these applications for engagement,

new ways to grow the church, to be the church around the world, and at the same time, the pig is active. So that's what we're talking about today.

Our format is Brian's going to talk for about 20, 25 minutes, and Brian's going to talk about the pig and he's seen the pig because Brian is the director of tech ethics at the Markkula Institute for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University. Santa Clara is a Jesuit school. There are a number of AI institutes that have been created around at various Jesuit and Notre Dame, other Catholic orders here in the United States and globally. And at the Vatican. Father Paolo, who you're going to meet later today, is one of the Pope's three AI advisors.

Brian has been part of a book just issued and a lot of other study efforts out of the Vatican. This book is called *Encountering AI*. It's an anthropological approach to AI with Catholic social justice principles. Brian's one of the 15 co-authors and Noreen, who's over here, is one of the five editors. So that's a pretty big lever to pull. Pope Francis spoke at the G7, G20, I can't remember, it was hosted in Italy about AI last month. And Father Paolo is one of his key sources and works with him and his staff. And Brian is one level down and Noreen.

Okay, so Brian's going to bring his 10 years of experience, a little more than that, but last five as the director of this ethics institute, which is 30 years old, and the oldest ethics

institute in Silicon Valley. So you've seen the story. Bob's seen it for 50 years last night, right? Brian's seen a little less time, but very currently. And then Thomas is bringing a strong business background, JP Morgan Chase, giant real estate portfolio he managed. Then he moved into the tech world about 10 years ago with Faith Life and with Subsplash, a big payment system organization. And for the last three years, with the rise of GPT, Thomas is out on the leading edge of this wave of new AI mission and ministry applications. So he's going to tell you about three of them.

After that, we'll have a little bit of interaction around the question of how do we do this better within the church compared to what they're going to talk about. Brian's going to talk about what's happened out on the secular side, and then it's time for your questions. So we're trying to save the last 20 minutes for your questions, so be thinking about your questions. Okay, so Brian, take it away.

Brian Green:

Thank you David. As David was saying, I'm at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University.

I'm the Director of Technology ethics there. The Markkula Center has a whole bunch of different areas that work on technology... Or not just technology ethics. We have bioethics, we have government ethics, we have business ethics, leadership ethics,

journalism ethics, all sorts of different areas. I just do one of them. All right. And you might be able to recognize that this is an AI hybridization of St. Peter's with a computer chip.

This was done before all the most recent stuff came out. This is from something called Deep Dream Generator, which has been around for quite a while, but as soon as all the generative AI came out, then people stopped doing the image hybridization, which I actually like a bit. So I'm going to show a few of them.

All right, so I'm going to talk about some of the stuff that the Catholic Church has been doing with AI. Talk a little bit about what AI needs to operate in society, just two little things at least. Then talk about churches and AI and what can be done now and then we'll wrap it up.

Basically, the Vatican has a lot of different things happening when it comes to AI. I'm working with just one particular group, but there's the Pontifical Academy for Life, which is working on the more biosciences side of things, but also the Rome call for AI ethics, which is something that Father Paolo di Monte will be talking about. The Dicastery for Culture and Education, that's the one that I work with. The Pontifical Academy of Sciences, which is working more on the scientific side of it. The Minerva dialogues are with tech leadership, so tech folks from Seattle and Silicon Valley go to Rome and meet with various people there to tell them what's happening in the

tech industry, and then there are a lot more things.

So I've been working with the Dicastery for Culture and Education for about five years now. It was originally the Pontifical Council for Culture, but they've been squashed together in cost-cutting measures, so the two things that...

So the two things that this particular thing has been working on with the Dicastery has been assisting the operationalization of ethics and industry. So I will talk a little bit about that and I'll get a couple of books here that I have as props ready. And then the other one is the Academic Study of AI. So we'll talk about those.

All right, so on the industry side, basically there are a bunch of Catholic leaders in the tech industry and they said, "You know what? We really need some way to think about ethics in technology. Not just in terms of principles, but in terms of actual action." So we wrote this book to make that happen. It's called *Ethics in the Age of Disruptive Technologies, an Operational Roadmap*. And it goes through all sorts of how do you set this up in an organization.

So we had one guy who is a project manager in technology and his projects were setting up factories overseas to build all sorts of tech products. So he brings a very engineering mindset to it. So it's very structured. We just call it the High Tech Handbook for short, by the way. And by the way, all these resources are free online in case I forget to

mention that at some point. So there are paper copies of it, but also it's like why would you pay money for a paper copy when you can just get it for free online?

So just going through ITEC pretty quickly, it has an anchoring principle. That anchoring principle is that our actions are for the common good of humanity in the environment. Basic idea. That's kind of the grounding there. And this book is argued completely secularly. There's a foreword from the bishop that we work with at the Vatican, but other than that, it's a secular book because it's designed for industry. And if you give something to industry that's all religious, they're going to look and say like, "Well, okay, that works for some people, but not for us."

The guiding principles are are just one side of things. The real key to the ITEC handbook is that it has a process where you go through discernment and direction, culture assessment. That means you look at your own corporate culture, what are we looking like right now? And it doesn't just have to be organizations like a business, it can be an organization like a church also. Tech governance definition. In other words, what is your goal that you're aiming for? Then is the actual implementation and then continuous improvement.

And it looks like that. We don't have to go through the slides in great detail, but the metaphor that we like to use is a road map or a road

trip where you decide to make the road trip. That's the first thing you have to do. Then you have to figure out where you are. Maybe you don't know exactly what your location is. And when you think about navigation, it's like usually you know where you are, but sometimes you're lost. Then you figure out where your goal is, then you figure out how to get from here to there and you start actually going there. And then the last one is make sure that you're continuing to make progress towards your goal.

All right, so that's one thing. That's the industry side.

So the academic side of things, we've had two books come out so far and they're going to be more coming out in the future. This one came out in 2022. It's a special issue of the Journal of Moral Theology. on AI and we also have the book *Encountering AI* that David mentioned earlier. We got two more reports on the way one's going to be AI and Catholic education. The other is going to be on AI, human and machine agency and the future of freedom. This is a problem that's coming down the road and it's going to hit fast and it's going to be a surprise because all of a sudden machines are making decisions instead of you. And everyone's going to say, "Oh, I thought I was making decisions, I thought I was running my life." But actually there's other things that are going to be getting themselves involved. All right, so

once again, there's the big views of the book. All right.

So I'm just going to talk really quickly about this book. This is a summary of about four years' worth of work in here. So it talks about AI and the human person, it talks about consciousness, it talks about relations with artificial intelligence, how does that work? AI and our encounter with God. And then there's a lot of ethical stuff. So AI and Catholic social teaching, promises of pitfalls of AI and contemporary life. And then recommendations for an AI future. I'm just going to go through a few of these really, really quickly.

Life is not about efficiency. That's one of the general things that we came up with. Our whole society wants to make everything as efficient as possible, but just as one example. And efficiency is not bad. Efficiency can be very good. In the healthcare system for example, you want to be able to help more people. You want to be able to give people more access to things like that. But it's not only about that. So for a family for example, the point of a family is not to produce something, it's to share love within a group of people.

All right, other themes there. So beware of dependency and de-skilling. The more things we hand over to AI, the worse we might become at doing those things. That is a danger. It doesn't necessarily have to happen that way, but it's definitely a risk depending on how you set it up. So just something to

be aware of. No substitution of AI for humans. And this is going to happen a lot. And the tech industry really wants to do this to substitute AI for humans. But it's not the right way to be doing it. It's the right way to be using AI as a tool to help people achieve the things they want to do. Not to replace people.

Role of solidarity and subsidiarity. Solidarity of course, we need to have a community where we're working together and thinking about things together in those sorts of ways. And also subsidiarity. How do we make sure that we're not sucking all the talent out of one area and distributing it to another or making sure that people are actually still able to make choices in their own lives. Not letting the AI make all our choices for us. Technology is not morally neutral. That's something that people have said for a long time that technology is morally neutral. It's just how people use it. Technologies make certain things easier or more difficult. And prime example of this, what does a landmine do? It just sits there and does nothing until something steps on it and then it blows it up. That's not a neutral technology, that's a technology that's designed to facilitate hurting people.

All right, technocratic paradigm. The technocratic paradigm is something that Pope Francis talks about a lot, but it's not something that he came up with. It's something that goes pretty far back in the discussion of Catholic social teaching.

The idea once again, that technology is not an efficiency problem. Sorry, life is not an efficiency problem, but technology tries to turn life into an efficiency problem, especially when it's coupled with certain type of economic optimization thinking. All right, avoid consumerism.

The Catholic church runs a lot of hospitals and therefore it is really interested in AI healthcare. So it does not want to exclude. It's not going to look at things like healthcare and exclude vast areas where AI can be of use. Same thing with education or same things with alleviation of poverty and all those sorts of things. The Catholic Church wants to get the benefit of the technology, but put the limits on it to make sure that it's not causing a bunch of negative stuff at the same time.

There's always a risk of bias when you're talking about AI. Risk of maximization towards money and not goodness and holiness. There's objectives here. We're trying to live holy lives and do good in this world, but maximization or optimization towards something in particular ways can yield forgetting about other stuff or causing disproportionalities in the way things are done. And it just requires a lot of thinking about.

Endangers our own understanding of ourselves. This is something that is kind of a deep issue here when people talk about artificial intelligence, once again, intelligence is not the right word for it. Last night, Bob was talking a lot

about how he didn't like the kind of artificial, or he wanted to call it augmented intelligence or things like that. I think we really need to pick on the intelligence aspect of it because it's not artificial intelligence. It's an externalization of human intelligence into objects that then act automatically. And that sort of automation of human intelligence is, I think a better way to think about it.

Let's see, risk of loss of freedoms. When you follow a recommendation on Amazon, you're like, "Oh, this is actually a movie I like," or something like that. That's great. But there are going to be much more severe examples of that. And we've already seen this in terms of social credit scoring and stuff like that, which has been implemented. And by the way, when we look at the social credit scoring system in China, we might want to think to ourselves, "Is this already happening to us here in the US?" And the answer is yes. Are other countries? Is China perhaps ranking Americans on their own social credit scoring system? It's quite possible. And probably it's quite possible that the US government is doing that to people in other countries in order to look for people who could be potential spies, things like that. So this really throws ... It throws gasoline on the fires of international competition, things like that.

Cheapening of culture due to AI. Here's an example of that. You say, wow, that's an amazing AI picture there. It's got moon or planets and

mountains and things like that. And then right in the middle there's this three-legged Christmas tree. And you say, "Why is there a three-legged Christmas tree in the middle of it? That doesn't even make sense." And this is just an example of cheapening of culture. If you can produce a picture in two minutes, rather than spending, I don't know, hundreds of hours drawing this thing by hand, you can do anything you want to it. You can make it absurd. You can make it just very strange. And you think to yourself, "Okay, maybe art is great."

All right, so AI, is this a new miracle? Multiplication of efficiency, education, healthcare, culture, art. And I presented some of these things in Rome and I just asked them this question. What does the beauty of Rome mean in a world full of AI art products? What does it do? How does it change the world? Is Rome going to be viewed differently? Is it going to be viewed the same? Is it going to be more special? Is it going to be less special? What's going to happen there?

All right, so core needs for AI. Trust. Trust is earned by trustworthiness. A lot of companies talk about trust and of course coming from a religious perspective, we think about trust. We can think of faith. Like Bob was saying yesterday, he can think of it as in terms of faith and clarity kind of overlap for him. In corporations, they always talk about trust. "We want to have trust,

we want our clients to trust us. We want our customers to trust us." But you're not going to get trust without being trustworthy. And that means you have to do work for it. So tech empowers people to do new things and act in new ways that laws might not cover. But ethics always does. If the law is not there yet, ethics still applies. And it increases levels of trust in society by increasing trustworthiness. So that's really the connection there.

How do you achieve trustworthiness? Back in 1938 or something like that, the Tacoma Narrows bridge had a little problem. And fancy new technology. And it encountered a problem that no fancy new technology of that particular type had encountered yet with aeroelastic flutter. When it fell apart and they learned from it. And that's not a problem anymore.

So technological products should be technically trustworthy. They need to do what they're supposed to do. That's one side of things. Does the technology actually work and do what it's supposed to do? The second thing is it needs to be ethically trustworthy. It needs to have the user's best interest in mind and for the sake of the common good, working well in society.

All right, so one of the things I did is I did some case studies with these three companies with IBM, Microsoft and Salesforce. And these case studies talk about how these organizations are thinking about

trust where they are. How many people have seen the movie “A Fish Called Wanda”? Okay, my references are not getting too old yet. When I talk to my students, none of them have seen it, but you all have. So there’s a character named Otto. He makes a foolish mistake. Wanda calls him an ape. And he attempts to defend his sophistication by appealing to his penchant for reading philosophy. And he says, “Apes don’t read philosophy.” What’s Wanda’s response? “Yes, they do Otto, they just don’t understand it.”

So you can think about that. And I think about this in terms of corporations, corporations don’t do philosophy. Yes they do, they just don’t understand it. And because there’s a lot of philosophy running its way through society all the time and sociology and all these other places we tend to bump into them, economics, wherever.

And now I talk about Microsoft. But Microsoft actually among companies is actually more philosophically aware than a lot of tech companies. I’d put it that way. They actually have people there who have PhDs in philosophy who are thinking about this kind of stuff. So just quickly, we’ll look at Microsoft’s principles, fairness, reliability, privacy, inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability. They’re a little bit less detailed. They’re basically one or two words compared to what the ITEC principles were that I showed you earlier.

IBM has pillars of trust. Explainability, fairness, robustness, transparency, privacy. You can compare them to each other and you’ll see that, oh, they overlap a lot. And that’s because these are places where they have decided that ethical issues and technology as they’re doing it from their perspective overlap with each other.

You might be familiar with the Rome call for AI ethics, and this is something that Father Benanti was very involved in. And I actually want to ask him about this, which is why is it that the Rome call and the Microsoft principles are almost identical? They’re just in a slightly different order and some different words from one place to another. So I want to ask him about that. I think that the answer is going to be that they’re very similar because the Rome call’s objective is to bring up this kind of natural law morality, which is something that we all share. It’s not coming from a religious perspective because once again, he’s not trying to convert the tech industry to all become Christians and then they’ll do the right thing. That’s not very likely to work as a strategy. That’s a long-term strategy, not a, “We need this done next month.” So if you’re going to try to get this done next month, then you pick a bunch of secular principles that overlap well with Catholic or Christian morality more generally.

So moving on to the next topic. So core needs for AI, people

need purpose. This is something that I think coming from a faith perspective, a religious perspective, Christian perspective, we all understand purpose is really, really important. And the funny thing about American culture is that everybody’s like, “Oh, find your own purpose. Do whatever you want, figure it out. Choose your own adventure, go wherever you want to go.” Which is great.

However, AI is going to mess with this really, really deeply because a lot of people find their purpose in their job and they’re going to have their job changed in front of them. So AI needs to protect and aid human purpose, not just kick it out from under people. Mere survival is not enough. People need a why. And once again, religions give people a reason to live, whether it’s relational or overcoming challenges or doing good things, seeking the truth, all that kind of stuff.

So what’s our purpose in creation? We’re to keep and till the garden, we’re to love God and neighbor, we’re to be like God. Biblical revelation calls us to be like God. And the snake says, “You’re going to be like God.” Then of course, be holy as God is holy. But there’s also the power element to it.

And this is something that’s really interesting to me coming from a more theological ethical perspective, which is that technology gives us power. What are we supposed to do with power? Sinful creatures lacking

power can actually be good. This is an AI modification of a sculpture that I found in a church in Rome. It was just a skull with angel wings around it. And it's kind of a creepy thing to find carved into the wall on your church. And I tried to make it a little more creepy looking, as you can tell. But we got all these biblical references to this. If we can't be holy as God is holy or perfect as God is perfect, then we're going to be dead as sin as dead. And if we're taking technology and giving ourselves a huge amount of power with no ethical control over that power, we can see where this is going to go.

Also, however, our purpose in creation requires this technological power. God tells us to love God and neighbor. Well, how do you love God and neighbor? You need to be able to build buildings, you need to have textiles, metallurgy, glass, technology, and form of writing, all these other sorts of things. Construction, food, medical tech, transportation, environmental science, computer modeling. If you really want to know how the Earth works, you need to have satellites looking down at the Earth to monitor deforestation and all these sorts of things.

By the way, this is just a fun fact, although I'm running out of time. I'm going to share this fun fact, which is that every day there are two companies that survey the entire Earth's land surface from satellites, the entire surface of the land on Earth. There are two companies that

gather all that information every 24 hours. They monitor deforestation in real time, they monitor urbanization in real time. They monitor wars going on, whether it's in the Ukraine or in other places. They monitor all of these things and just think about that. They have a huge amount of information there and some people pay for that information. And everybody else doesn't have that information. So it's an interesting thing to think about.

Of course we should also think about the fact that God is depicted as an artificer in various places or as a carpenter very plainly. Tecton or Technites. This technically associated language is associated with God, which I think is really, really important for us to remember. And so techne is not just good, the study of rational production technology or techne being rational production. It's not just good. It's actually considered to be divine based on how it's framed in the Bible. And there of course, Jesus the carpenter, Jesus the geometer. This is a very old Byzantine symbol where Jesus is laying out the world.

So of course Jesus tells his disciples, "Go and do likewise." And of course I like this one from John, "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and in fact will do greater works than these." And how do we do these great works today? Very often through technology.

Norman Borlaug. How many

people here know about Norman Borlaug? Okay, Norman Borlaug, he was a Lutheran agronomist. He was responsible for the Green Revolution. Basically he figured out how to greatly increase grain production and he basically had one simple insight. He's credited with saving a billion or more lives in an ongoing way. Before the Green Revolution, a lot of people died of starvation. Do people still die of starvation today? Yes. But we're talking about millions of people dying of starvation back in the past. And now it's vastly much less than that. So he got a 1970 Nobel Peace Prize. And of course he directly cites the Bible five times and uses biblical ideas throughout. And this is an example of multiplication of food. Literally the stuff that goes into bread.

So what does AI do? AI is a massive accelerant to purpose, but not every purpose is a good purpose. So this is just something that we need to keep aware of and also think about it coming for your job, right?

So AI could be a massive demotivator of purpose if it takes away jobs and starts doing things that other people want to do. Pantheon in Rome.

So what can be done right now? There are lots of ways for technology and religion to interact. Some means are already in use, some are awaiting use. So these are eight things coming from the religion side that are either already being used or are on the way. So

religious believers can get involved in the tech industry. And there are lots of Christians who have said, "We need to start our own tech company about this." And they do it. Find and work with religious believers who are already in the tech industry. That's something that AI and faith has been doing. So that's a prime example of that approach. Get advice from non-religious tech leaders. That's the Minerva Dialogues in Rome. Multi-stakeholder participation, science, technology and religion discourse in churches. More Christian educational emphasis on tech, religion, and ethics.

Practical education on technology and ethics. I had a guy who was in the tech industry who really wanted to start robotics programs in churches where they could actually do these sorts of things in the church. And the last one. Church technologies with technology companies or collaborations with tech companies. The Rome Call would be one example of that.

This is just an example of how it can be awkward though. So there's Reid Hoffman. He gets in this dialogue at the Vatican where he says, "I like to invest in companies that are involved in the seven deadly sins because they're really lucrative." And you can see Mitchell Baker who's sitting right next to him, she's the chairwoman of Mozilla and she says, "Oh Reid, you shouldn't have said

that." And the person in the middle is saying, "Oh really? You think that?" And then that guy there is trying to ignore it. And the Irish Bishop on the end thinks it's the funniest thing he's ever heard.

And coming from the industry side also there of course ERG's, faith-based employee resource groups, church encouragement of tech workers, corporate chaplains. How many people here are familiar with corporate chaplains? Okay, a lot of people. I hadn't heard about this until about four or five years ago. And then I discovered that basically there are some technology companies that run on their chaplains. If they didn't have chaplains there, they would fall apart. Corporate engagement with religious communities, multi-stakeholder networks. A lot of stuff that's similar to what I said before, but coming from the corporate direction.

All right, we are out of time. So set before you are life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live. And this is just one example of what one church is doing in terms of the Catholic Church. But trust and purpose are pretty universal. That's something we all need to be thinking about. And what I would say is don't wait for things to happen. Choose to make the engagement happen now. These are the resources. Like I said, they're all freely available online. I'm happy to share those and that's all. So thank you very much.

Churches, AI, and Ethics

Brian Patrick Green, Ph.D.

Director of Technology Ethics

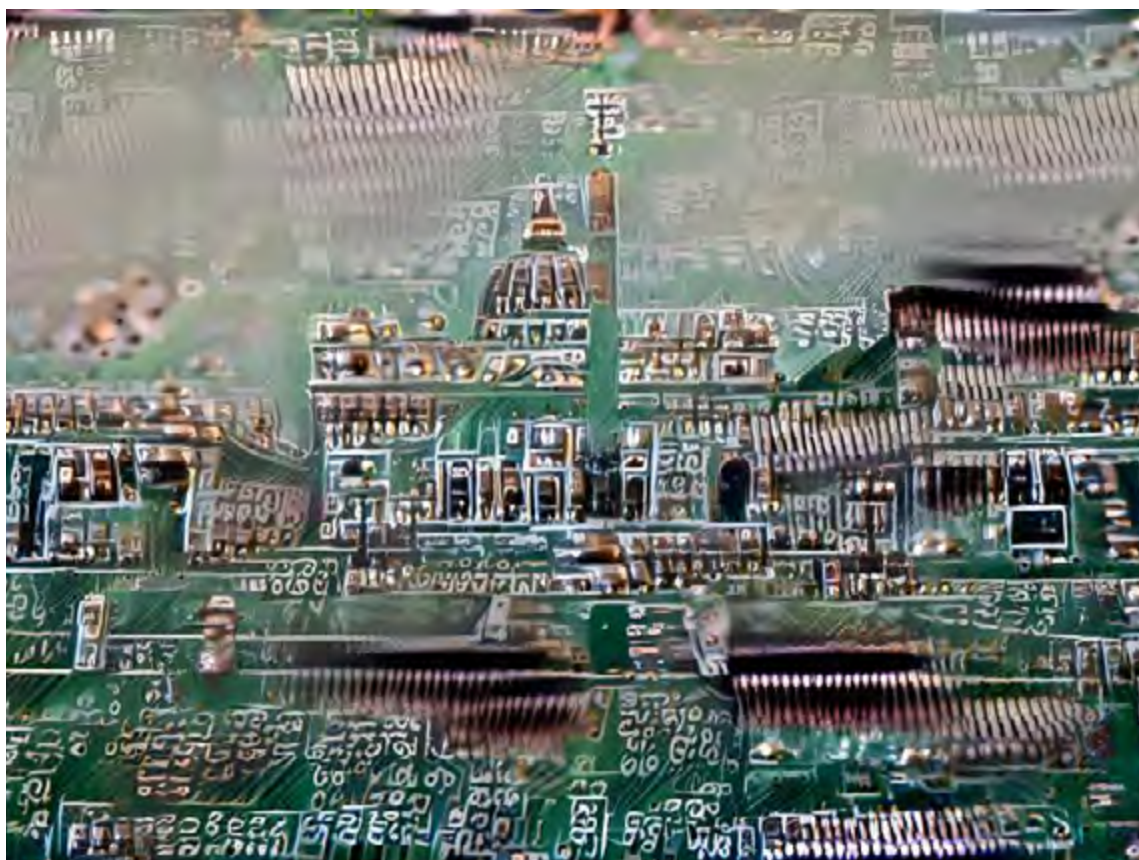
Markkula Center for Applied Ethics

Santa Clara University

13 August 2024



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University





Churches, AI, and Ethics

OUTLINE

1. One example: What one part of the Roman Catholic Church is doing with AI
 - I. Industry
 - II. Academia
2. Core needs for AI to operate in society
 - I. Trust
 - II. Purpose
3. Churches and AI: What can be done now?
4. Conclusion



The Vatican and AI

The Vatican has multiple initiatives on AI

- Pontifical Academy for Life (PAL)
- Dicastery for Culture and Education (DCE)
- Pontifical Academy of Sciences
- Minerva Dialogues (with tech leadership)
- More...

I have worked with the DCE (and its precursor Pontifical Council for Culture) for 5 years on both its main AI initiatives

- 1) Assisting the operationalization of ethics in industry
- 2) Academic study of AI and its impact on individuals and human society

Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

Industry Side

ITEC: Institute for Technology, Ethics, and Culture

- Focus on the ethics of technology in culture
- Started with Catholic technology leaders
- Working with several organizations
- *The ITEC Handbook*



ITEC's Anchoring Principle

Our actions are for the common good of humanity and the environment




Markkula Center
 for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

ITEC's Guiding Principles

1. Respect for Human Dignity and Rights
2. Promote Human Well-Being
3. Invest in Humanity
4. Promote Justice, Access, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
5. Recognize that Earth Is for All Life
6. Maintain Accountability
7. Promote Transparency and Explainability



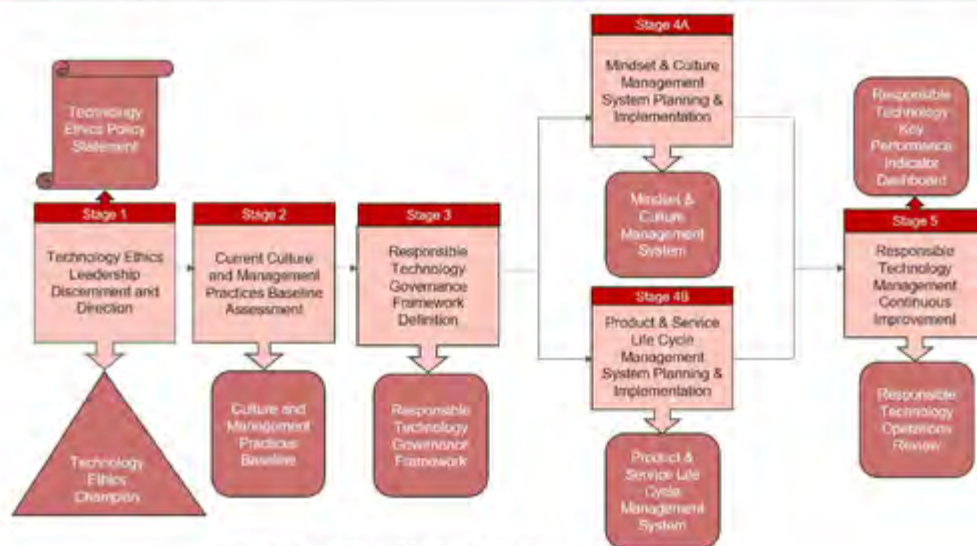
The ITEC Responsible Technology Management System

Five Stages

1. Discernment & Direction
2. Culture Assessment
3. Tech Governance Definition
4. Two-part Implementation
5. Continuous Improvement



ITEC Operationalization Roadmap



ITEC Operationalization Roadmap

Stage 1



1. Leadership
Discernment and
Direction

Stage 2



2. Current Culture
Assessment

Stage 3



3. Responsible
Technology
Governance
Framework

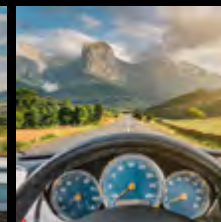
Stage 4



4A. Culture
Management

4B. Product and
Services
Management

Stage 5



5. Continuous
Improvement



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

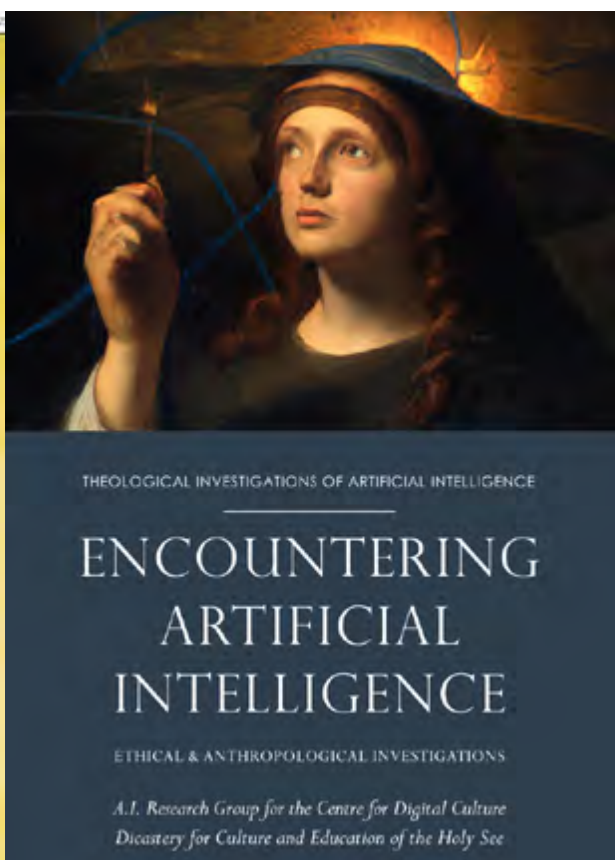
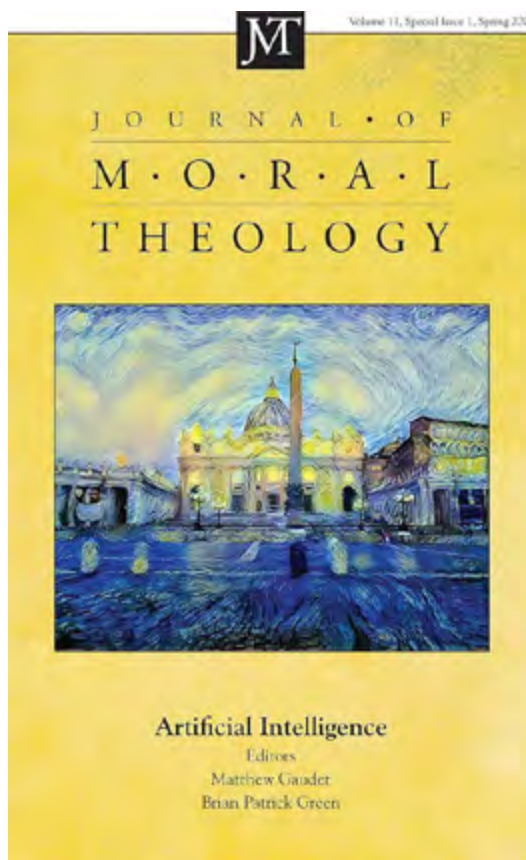


Academic Side

- Two volumes so far
 1. A special issue of the *Journal of Moral Theology* on AI
 2. The book *Encountering AI: Ethical and Anthropological Investigations*
- At least two more reports/books on the way, tentatively titled
 1. AI and Catholic Education
 2. AI, Human and Machine Agency, and the Future of Freedom




Markkula Center
 for Applied Ethics
 at Santa Clara University



Part I: Anthropological Investigations

- AI and the Human Person
- Consciousness: A Sine Qua Non of Relationality and Intelligence
- Encounters with Seemingly Personal AI
- AI and Our Encounter with God

Part II: Ethical Challenges with AI

- AI and Catholic Social Teaching
- The Promises and Pitfalls of AI in Contemporary Life
 - Family, education, healthcare, law & politics, military, work & economy, communication & culture, & the natural world
- Recommendations for an AI Future
 - Living in an AI world, designing an AI world, governing an AI world, working in an AI economy, & encountering each other in an AI-filled community



A Few Themes

- Life is not about efficiency
 - E.g., families do not “produce” anything, but are for expressing and receiving love (164)
 - AI should help where efficiency is actually helpful
- Beware of AI dependency and deskilling (165, 216)
- No substitution of AI for humans! (164, 174, 187-9, 212-4)
- Crucial role of solidarity and subsidiarity (174-5)
- Technology is not neutral, it is good or bad, based on its means and ends. Avoid the technocratic paradigm (175-6, 216)
- Avoid consumerism (175-6)



A Few Themes

- The world needs AI-assisted healthcare (181-4)
- Risk of AI bias (184)
- Risk of maximization/optimization towards money not goodness & holiness (185)
- AI endangers our understanding of our own judgment and selves (212-4...)
- Risk of loss of freedom in ways both subtle and not (214-6)
- The cheapening of culture due to AI (219-20)



AI – A New Miracle?

- The multiplication of efficiency?
- The multiplication of education?
- The multiplication of healthcare?
- The multiplication of culture?
- The multiplication of “art”?
 - What happens, if anything, to the beauty of Rome in a world full of AI “art”-products?



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

Core Needs for AI: Trust

- Trust is earned by trustworthiness
 - Tech empowers people to do new things and act in ways that laws might not cover, but ethics does
 - Ethics increases overall levels of trust in society by increasing *trustworthiness*
- How can trustworthiness be achieved?



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

Technology and Trust

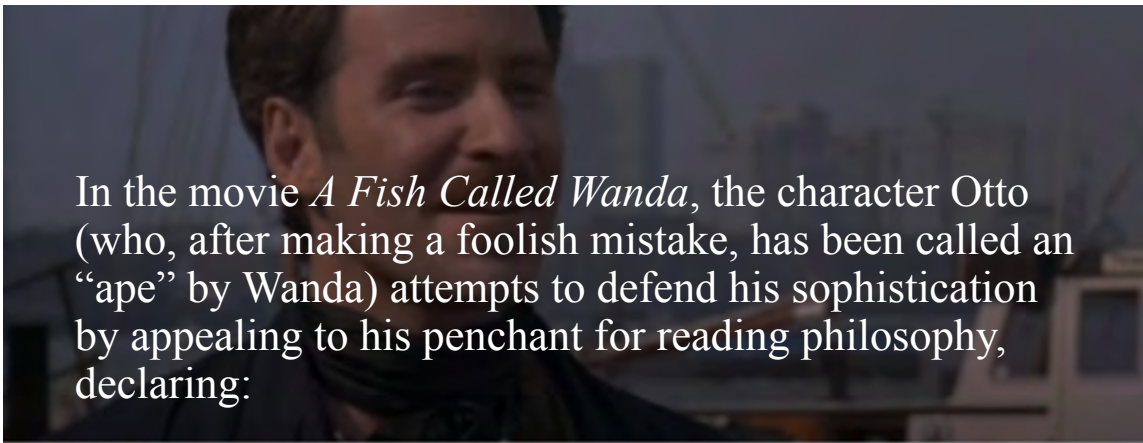
- 1) Technological products should be technically trustworthy:
 - They are tools that should do what they are supposed to do
- 2) Technological products should be ethically trustworthy:
 - They should have the user's best interests and the common good in mind, not exploit, deceive, violate, or otherwise harm people



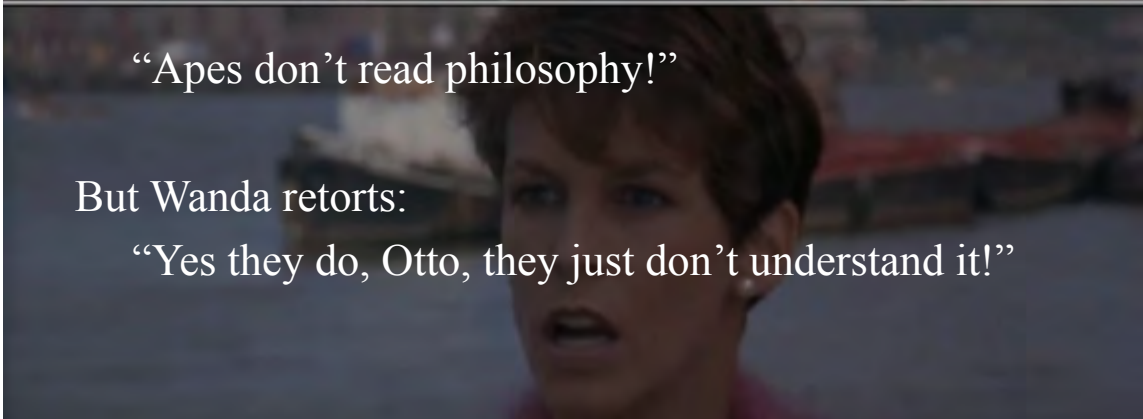
Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

Case Studies: Microsoft, IBM, Salesforce





In the movie *A Fish Called Wanda*, the character Otto (who, after making a foolish mistake, has been called an “ape” by Wanda) attempts to defend his sophistication by appealing to his penchant for reading philosophy, declaring:



“Apes don’t read philosophy!”

But Wanda retorts:

“Yes they do, Otto, they just don’t understand it!”



“Corporations don’t do philosophy!”



“Yes they do, Otto, they just don’t understand it!”

Microsoft's AI Principles

1. Fairness
2. Reliability & Safety
3. Privacy & Security
4. Inclusiveness
5. Transparency
6. Accountability



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University



MSFT "Judgment Call" game

IBM's Pillars of Trust

1. Explainability
2. Fairness
3. Robustness
4. Transparency
5. Privacy



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University



Compare MSFT and IBM

IBM Pillars

1. Explainability
2. Fairness
3. Robustness
4. Transparency
5. Privacy

Microsoft Principles

1. Fairness
2. Reliability & Safety
3. Privacy & Security
4. Inclusiveness
5. Transparency
6. Accountability



Compare MSFT and IBM

IBM Pillars

1. Explainability
2. Fairness
3. Robustness
4. Transparency
5. Privacy

Microsoft Principles

1. Fairness
2. Reliability & Safety
3. Privacy & Security
4. Inclusiveness
5. Transparency
6. Accountability



The Rome Call?

The Rome Call for AI ethics, a partnership of the Pontifical Academy for Life, Microsoft, and IBM, has six ethical principles:

Rome Call

1. Transparency
2. Inclusion
3. Responsibility
4. Impartiality
5. Reliability
6. Security and privacy

Microsoft

1. Fairness
2. Reliability & Safety
3. Privacy & Security
4. Inclusiveness
5. Transparency
6. Accountability



The Rome Call

The Rome Call for AI ethics, a partnership of the Pontifical Academy for Life, Microsoft, and IBM, has six ethical principles:

Rome Call

1. Transparency
2. Inclusion
3. Responsibility
4. Impartiality
5. Reliability
6. Security and privacy

Microsoft

1. Fairness
2. Reliability & Safety
3. Privacy & Security
4. Inclusiveness
5. Transparency
6. Accountability





Core Needs for AI: Purpose

- People need a good purpose. AI is meant to help people. So AI needs to protect & aid human purpose.
- Mere survival is not enough. People need a reason to survive – a “why”
- Religions give people a reason to live
 - Relationships of love and care
 - Challenges to overcome
 - Good to do, things to learn, truth to seek



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

Our Purpose in Creation

Our purpose in creation is simple

We are “to keep and till the Garden”

We are to love God and neighbor

We are to be like God

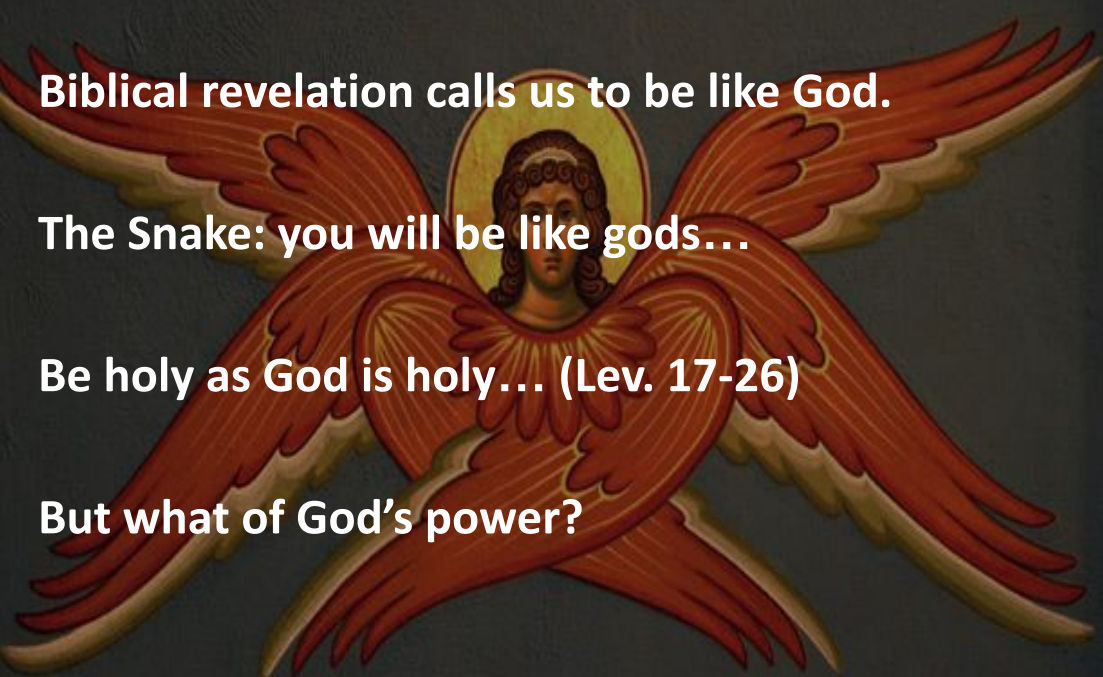
How should we be like God?

Biblical revelation calls us to be like God.

The Snake: you will be like gods...

Be holy as God is holy... (Lev. 17-26)

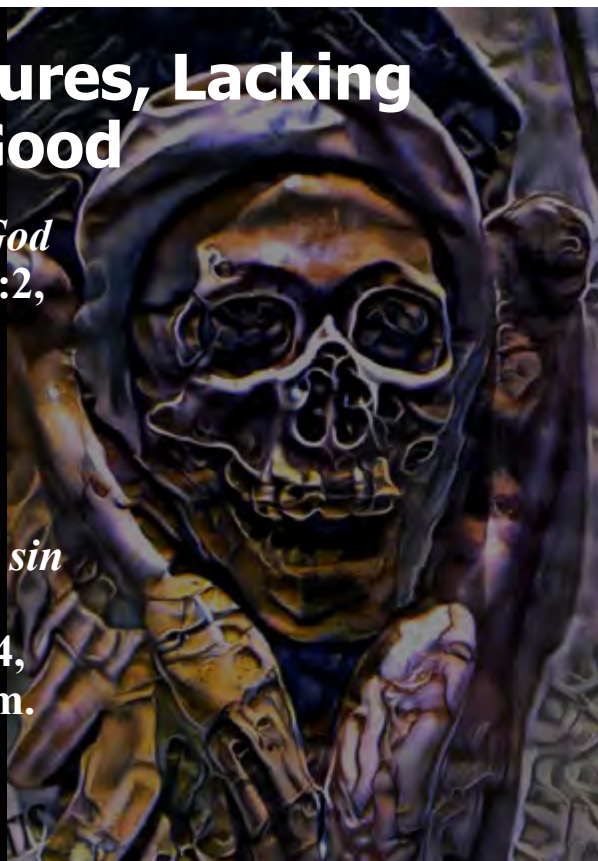
But what of God's power?



For Sinful Creatures, Lacking Power Can Be Good

If we cannot be *holy as God is holy* (Lev. 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7, 1 Pet. 1:15-16) or *perfect as God is perfect* (Matt. 5:48)...

Then we shall be *dead as sin is dead* (Gen. 2:17, Prov. 11:19, Isa. 3:9, Ezek. 18:4, Wis. 2:24, Sir. 33:14, Rom. 6:23)



Our Purpose & Power

Our purposes in Creation requires a certain amount of power – *technological* power

Worshipping God

(construction, textiles, metallurgy, glass, writing...)

Caring for each other

(construction, food, medical tech, transportation, communication...)

Caring for nature

(transportation, environmental science, computer modeling, economics, satellites, rocketry...)

The Bible and Technology

Depictions of God as artificer (*technites*) (Wis. 7:22, 8:5–6, Heb. 11:10) and Jesus as carpenter (*tekton/os*) (Mark 6:3, Matt. 13:55) serve to reinforce the idea of *techne* being not just good, but a *divine* activity.





The Bible and Technology

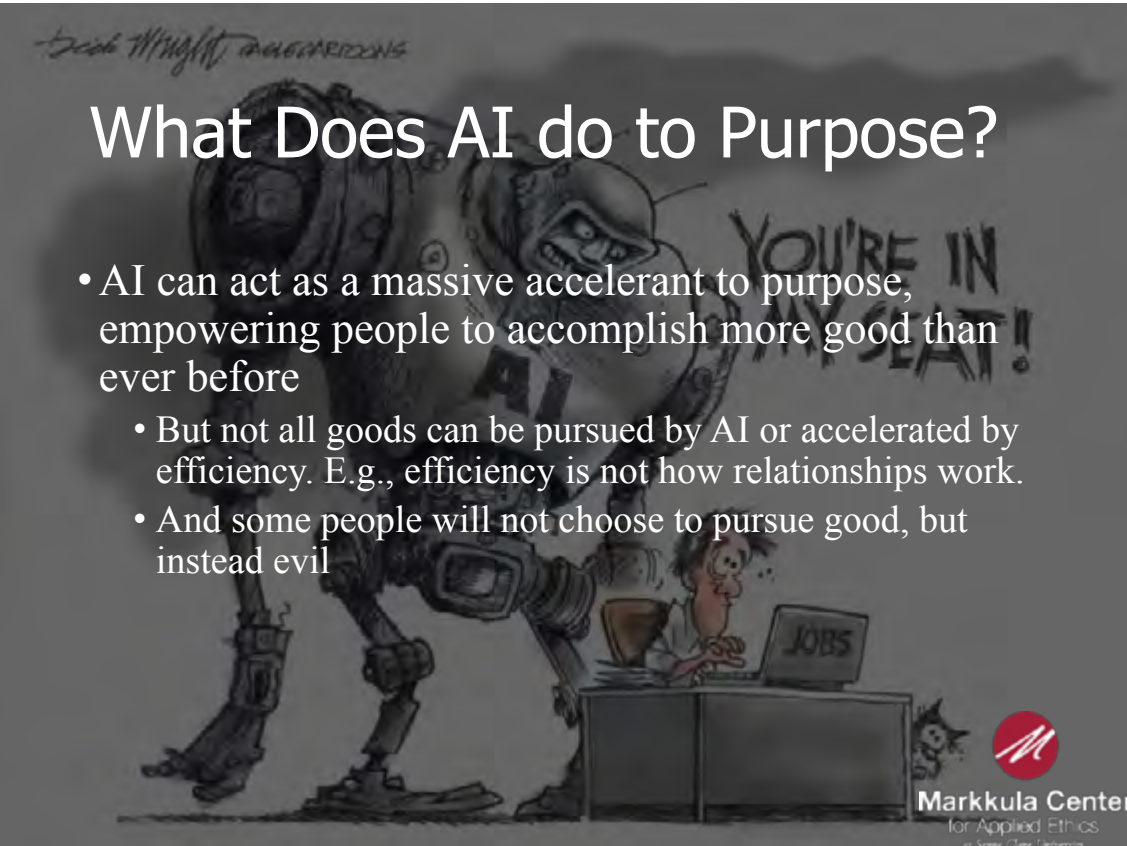
Jesus tells his disciples to “go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37) promoting imitation of his miracles

“Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these...” an exhortation to great works (John 14:12)

How do we do “great” things today?

Norman Borlaug

- Agronomist and Lutheran, discovered how to greatly increase grain production
- Credited with saving – in an ongoing way – a billion or more lives
- His 1970 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech directly cited the Bible five times, and utilized biblical ideas and language throughout
- He took multiplying food to the next level!



What Does AI do to Purpose?

- AI can act as a massive accelerant to purpose, empowering people to accomplish more good than ever before
 - But not all goods can be pursued by AI or accelerated by efficiency. E.g., efficiency is not how relationships work.
 - And some people will not choose to pursue good, but instead evil

Markkula Center for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

The AI Risk to Purpose

- AI could be a massive demotivator of purpose, taking it away by automating it and appropriating agency to the powerful. What should we worry about?
 - Anything that takes away jobs
 - Anything that takes away freedom or choices
 - Surveillance, nudging, chilling, “social credit” systems
- *Give people a purpose beyond the economic or political; to the relational and the transcendent*

Markkula Center for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University



Churches and AI: What can be done now?

- There are many ways for technology and religion to interact
- Some means already in use, some means await
- Some approaches are from the side of the churches, some from the side of industry



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

Church Side Engagement with the Tech Industry

- 1) Religious believers can get involved in the tech industry
- 2) Churches can find and work with religious believers in the tech industry
- 3) Get advice from non-religious tech leaders
- 4) Multistakeholder participation and dialogue
- 5) Science, technology, and religion dialogue in churches
- 6) More Christian educational emphasis on tech, religion, and ethics
- 7) Practical education on technology in churches
- 8) Church collaborations with technology companies

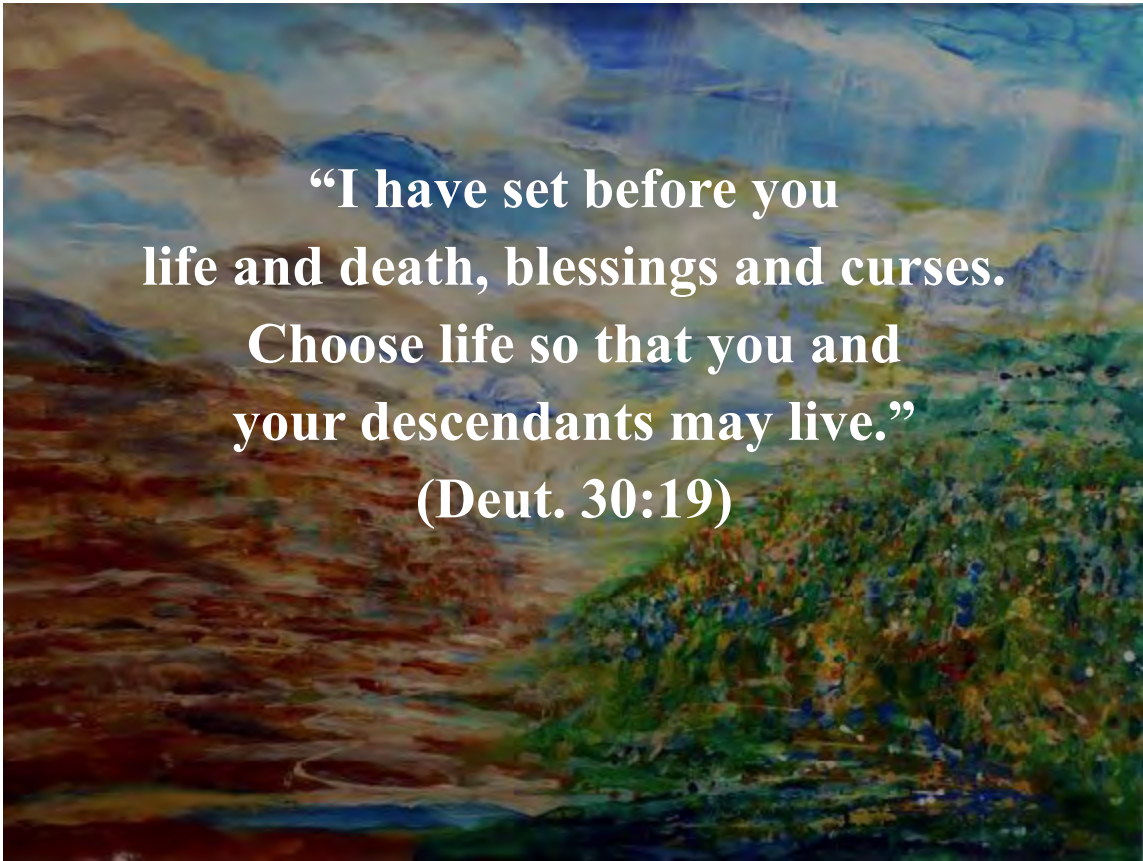


Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University



Industry Side Engagement with Churches

- 1) Faith-based employee resource groups
- 2) Church encouragement of tech workers and tech ethics professionals
- 3) Corporate chaplains
- 4) Corporate engagement of religious communities
- 5) Corporate leadership seeking guidance from religious leadership
- 6) Multistakeholder networks
- 7) Corporations talk to religious groups to get input on technological impacts
- 8) Corporate promotion of scientific and technological education in churches and church institutions



**“I have set before you
life and death, blessings and curses.
Choose life so that you and
your descendants may live.”
(Deut. 30:19)**

Conclusion

- The RCC is only one example of what a church is doing in relation to AI
 - The DCE has taken an industry and academic approach
 - Other parts of the RCC have taken different approaches
- Trust and purpose are keys to having a blessed future with AI and not a cursed one
- Don't wait for things to happen – Choose to make engagements happen now!



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

Resources

ITEC Resources including the Handbook:

<https://www.scu.edu/institute-for-technology-ethics-and-culture/itec-handbook/>

Encountering AI: Ethical and Anthropological Investigations

<https://jmt.scholasticahq.com/article/91230-encountering-artificial-intelligence-ethical-and-anthropological-investigations>

Special issue of the *Journal of Moral Theology* on AI

<https://jmt.scholasticahq.com/issue/4236>



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

Thank You

Brian Patrick Green, Ph.D.

Director of Technology Ethics

Markkula Center for Applied Ethics

Santa Clara University

bpgreen@scu.edu



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

Thomas Osborn:

Okay. Good morning everybody. I'm thrilled to be here. David and I co-founded AI and Faith, gosh, years and years ago now. And it's such a privilege and honor to be here in front of you today. The work that we've been able to be a tiny part of has been amazing. When we started AI and Faith, I said to people, "Oh, I'm part of this thing called AI and Faith."

"What? Why? Why would that even matter to the world?" So most people thought we were freaks. And now our phones ring off the hook to do talks like this. Anyway, today I want to share with you some practical applications related to AI.

So what happened to me is about 10 years ago I got involved in predictive analytics in the psychographic space. So that's a mouthful. What that means is social media companies and others were harvesting your data, predicting your personality, how you think, what makes you operate so they can manipulate you to buy things and to get your eyeballs on their content. Because the way the monetization of social media works is if I get you addicted to your phone, I can pump ads through you and make money. So they wanted you addicted to your phone.

We know this with our children. There's a reason they're addicted to their phones. That got me really fascinated with the whole subject of AI. I was doing some consulting work

with a guy who created an algorithm that could predict your personality. And I didn't believe him. And then he did mine and it was right. And not only was it right, it was different than what I tested as because I test as an ENTJ. Why? Because I was at JP Morgan, I was at Deloitte Consulting, I had an MBA, and I was trained to think like a corporate executive. So when I take the personality test, I'm an ENTJ. When AI does it, I'm an ENFP because that's my real personality.

Fast-forward 10 years, now that I'm out of corporate America and I'm doing this kind of stuff for a living. Actually, I don't make money off it, but I'm privileged enough not to have to. But the point is I'm an ENFP and now I test this one. It shows you how much influence corporations have in our lives.

Okay, this is old news to you because you came to this, you're probably not that scared, but the reality is technology has been at the forefront of the mission of God since antiquity. It started with oral tradition, then it went to papyrus and parchment, and the printing press, and digital media. Now AI. Each time I'm sure there was raging debate about how terrible it was that we've left oral tradition and now we're writing things down on paper and how could that ever be transferred to our children? I guarantee there was some grandpa that was saying, "You shouldn't put things on parchment or papyrus because that's sacrilege." And when the printing press came

along ... remember what the Catholic Church did during that period, when we started giving the word, it created the Protestant Reformation, right? And by the way, my grandfather studied for the priesthood for four years and was a strong Catholic, so I'm heavily influenced by it. My dad's a Jesus freak, saved by that movement. So I have both sides of the equation. But obviously the printing press was a massive revolution for the church and sharing the gospel, and there were a lot of people that were radically against giving the truth, the word of God to the people. Digital media is the same thing. When VHS tapes came out, my dad was doing his MDiv at the time online and everyone was like, oh my gosh, how could you ever learn? How could you ever get an MDiv through this VHS tape and a binder? That was cutting edge tech back then.

But now look, look at online education and look at webinars. Look what we use today. Artificial intelligence is no different in my mind. I would say one thing that's radically different is the power that it has. It is a weapon of mass destruction. There is no doubt. So I live in a yin yang situation because I'm pushing this stuff every day, and I know it's extremely powerful. So we'll get to that in a minute. Next thing I want to share with you is, this is just something I stole because I saw it yesterday. I'm supposed to talk practically about how AI is being used in ministry. Gloo put this out

with YouVersion. They had a webinar that I wasn't part of, but this slide came across my desk last night. I'm like, oh, I like this. You can look at it later but the bottom line is I think it's a pretty good summary of how AI is being used today in churches across America primarily and around the world from an operational perspective, from a personalization perspective, from a teaching and an outreach perspective.

I'm not going to go into it in a lot of detail, 'cause I don't have time, but the reality is there's a conflict among church leaders right now about gospel reach and opportunity and how this tool can be used for that. And then the authenticity of the heart of ministry. Ultimately, what's the purpose of family? To love and be loved, right? It's not about efficiency. Why do we go to church every day? Certainly isn't so I can optimize my career. I go to church because I want to be part of a community. I want to be engaged. I want people to know me, and I want to know people. So there is a huge tension between these concepts of how technology can help us with efficiency, but also not hurt the authenticity of the heart of ministry.

We've not solved for that. I think David's totally right about the greased pig. But again, just a good slide to think about from that perspective. One more I'm just going to share quickly because people, I'm going to start to talk to you about some detailed stuff and it could get

Black Mirror scary. And by the way, Black Mirror was the inspiration in my opinion behind AI and faith from my perspective. When I was watching Black Mirror and I was doing this stuff in predictive analytics, and then I said, I was like, oh my gosh, this is real. This could actually happen. That and Ready Player One were some of the original pieces. There's a guy named Steven Garver, just FYI, who said some of the truest prophets in the world are in the arts. And he said, pay attention to that. And I would challenge you with that.

Look what the artists are talking about. What movies are coming out. Oftentimes their voices ring true. And if you go back to some of the old Black Mirror episodes, you start saying, wow, that was 10 years ago, right? Now it's happening. Anyway, but the reason I bring this slide up is because it's the parable of talents. Because I've gone to many churches doing a bunch of stuff with the SBC lately, and you see this more, I guess I'm calling you guys out at the SBC if there's anyone, knows anybody in that world, oh, I'm never going to use that AI stuff. That's terrible. Big government's involved, as they're on their phone, on Facebook, by the way, as they're ordering on Amazon, as they're in a drive-through with an AI bot helping them order their food. But anyway, people say these sorts of things, and I bring up the parable of the talents because Jesus gave three guys talents.

Two of them used them well. One of them buried his talent in

the sand. Why did he bury it in the sand? Because he was scared of his master. What happened to him? You know the story. God wants us to use the resources he gave us. And AI is just data. It's data being used in a different way. And yes, it's powerful. Yes, it's scary. But I would challenge you that if you're not willing to embrace it, you're probably at risk of being one of those people in that parable who's not using what God gave you. So let me get into it. First thing is DiscipleIQ. I'm going to talk about three major things that I'm personally involved in. DiscipleIQ, gosh, the vision birth, not long after I started doing this stuff with predictive analytics, because I'm like, oh my gosh, we could use this for discipleship.

If someone really understood me, they could really help disciple me. And if I really, I've mentored a ton of people over my life, and I've been mentored. I've got a, David's one of them, by the way, he's been a mentor of mine for years. And they've been the biggest part of my life. And if you talk to a lot of successful executives primarily and say what helped you be successful? I've been to a lot of men's group, they're going to say, my wife, number one, and my mentors. Almost always, those are the two answers you hear. You don't hear that I worked out at the gym. You don't hear about Harvard or books that I read. You don't hear about their education. You hear about their mentor and the person who

supports them every day to be able to pull off what they do.

That started DiscipleIQ, which was something that could help us connect people using AI and just make discipleship better. So I founded that company, gosh, two years ago. It's been nurturing forever, but I finally founded it. So let me give you a quick overview. What's the purpose of that? We're creating tools to help with one-on-one discipleship. So our focus is on one-on-one discipleship for a very specific reason. Most technology is a one to many model. You make a lot of money when you make one thing and sell to the whole world. You'd make very little money when you make one that's meant for one other person, and it's just you two, right? No money or very little money. Therefore, almost all the technology out there is focused on a one to many model. I said, well, we have a huge gap because one-on-one is where a lot of the learning really happens.

If you get deep into learning science, which I spent years in learning management systems, it really, really matters that you have someone next to you, that you have an emotional connection to, that cares about you, that helps you understand the purpose for what you're learning when you learn something. Anyway, discipleship, I don't want to get into detail. What we're focused on is helping people become more like Jesus. You could

use it in a lot of different ways. Why are we doing it? All right, so relationships are in crisis. You can look at this from any metric, I'll just give you one. 67% of adults say nobody cares deeply for them, 67%. If you look at men in particular because they suck at interpersonal relationships at an [inaudible 01:01:04] level, typically. And I've been in men's groups my whole life, don't BS, they suck at it.

They have more than 50% of men don't have one person in their entire life that they feel like they can deeply confide in. And think about it, how many guys come to you and say, yeah, I've been gambling all the time, I'm spending my kids' college education. I don't know what to do about it. Does anyone come to you and say that? No. Yeah, I'm addicted to porn, and I can't get away from it. Does anyone come to you? No. On and on and on it goes, right? Not one person in their life that's helping them. And so that's one of the reasons we started DiscipleIQ is to help with that. I've been in church-tech for the last 10 years, and before that I was at Deloitte Consulting, I got an MBA in finance, went to Deloitte Consulting, then went to JP Morgan for years.

I've worked in Big Wall Street stuff my whole career. The church is way worse, way worse when it comes to mixing God and money, because they BS with you and themselves and act like they're doing it for the church when they're really doing it for themselves, and over and over and

over again. Anyway, it's frustrating. There's tons of tech out there that helps churches. Do you know how much of it helps the business of church versus the mission of church? Most of it. Most of it's about butts in seats because it brings tithing in, right? That's what most tech is about in the church world. And challenge me on that, and it's true. So what are we doing? What's DiscipleIQ trying to do? A bunch of things.

One thing we're doing is we're matching people together. So it's similar to a dating app. So why dating apps work. Why do most people date online now? Because it works, right? And there is really good science that says people actually do, you can figure out what a good connection for you is going to be, and when you figure out what a good connections for you be, how to make that connection better. And so I had been exposed to that and that's part of the genesis of DiscipleIQ too, because I'm like, oh my gosh, if we gather data on people, augment that data, create profiles, qualify mentors and recommend matches, we're going to help match people together.

How do we recommend them? We identify what these mentees, we're calling them mentees and mentors 'cause it resonates more with more audiences. But what do they want and need? Create a search tool for them, have a recommended match and then monitor their progress over time. Very similar, you might not be in dating apps now, but it's not that

different than that. Meets some type of platform or learning management system that looks at a learning journey over time, right? That's all most university LMSs do. We're matching people based on jobs, events, volunteer organizations, fundraisers, other people, groups, teams, training, content, on and on it goes.

And so what's the data? Data really matters, so I got exposed to John Gottman's stuff. Some of you Seattleites know the Gottman Institute and the Love Lab. So fascinating stat on the Love lab is if you go into Love lab as a couple, which I tried to get in forever, but you can't because everyone wants to do it because you get free counseling, but if you're in that Love Lab, which is an aquarium where they measure everything they can measure. Literally everything they can measure. Your heart rate, the tone of your voice, the cadence of your speech, everything they can measure, they can tell, they back-tested all that data and created algorithms that could predict divorce with a 97% accuracy rating, 97%. If you spent eight hours in the Love Lab, they knew who was getting divorced within three years, for sure. One day, just watching people, couples talk to each other. And I think it was somewhat prompted, et cetera.

So I was like, wow, that's amazing. Data matters. Fast-forward to I guess two years ago now, I was in the elevator with a guy who was an

intern there and I just started saying, oh, Love Lab, blah, blah, blah. And I mentioned that, said, he goes, yeah, now it's 15 minutes. In 15 minutes they know if you're getting divorced. Tell me data doesn't matter. How would you like to know if you're getting divorced after 15 minutes? And by the way, that same data can be pivoted and used to figure out how to keep you together. Because you're doing all kinds of stupid things. We all know this. That's why we need mentors because someone else looks at you say, why in the world did you say that you moron? You need that. So what we do with DiscipleIQ is we're harvesting data on people.

What types of data?

Demographic data, vocational data, educational data, psychographic data, all this from third-party data providers. Right now you can buy information on almost every one of you. I could go out there and find hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of data points on all of you for a couple cents a name. So we use that not for harm, not to market anything to you ever. That's not what we'll ever do. But to help understand you. Why? So you can understand yourself, because you lie to yourself all the time, by the way. And data will show you that too. And so that the person who's helping you, your mentor, your disciple can help you too. Because it takes a long time to get to know someone. Last thing on DIQ I'll say is that we've got

a big roadmap here. It all started with personalized learning journeys. So my goal was to create tailored personalized learning journeys that optimize for the mentor and the mentee. So based on who I am as a mentee, how I like to learn, who my teacher is, how they like to teach, and how they best teach, what my learning outcomes are, how can I fuse that together in a really efficient way to come up with whatever learning journey I want. Three month discipleship learning journey, five year discipleship learning journey in whatever subject I want. That's the dream for DiscipleIQ. And it was just a pipe dream until recently because what's happened with AI is we've exponentially increased our power.

Just to put it in real terms for you business folks out here, what used to cost maybe a million to 2 million bucks, if I was going to just source something and say I want X to be done with AI, three years ago it was a million, 2 million bucks. Today, less than a hundred K without a data scientist. And by the way, data scientists are like rock stars. They're hard to get really good ones, because like most, you in tech know the dirty secret is that one or two people on a team of 10 are the real deal, everybody else is just a pile of fish. So it's hard to find the right person that develop that stuff. Anyway, so let me go away from DiscipleIQ and spend a couple minutes on BibleChat.

BibleChat is an organization that I became part of because I met them

at the Gloo Hackathon in November and they were doing something that I think is mission critical for the world, and that's creating a GPT based on biblical truth. So right now ChatGPT scrapes the entire internet. And you ask it any question and the algorithms are going to give you an answer based on truth and lie, and it has no idea the difference. It's all probability. So if you ask it a question, were Nazis good? It's probably going to say no. The reason it's going to say no is because it looked at everything in the world and most of it says Nazis were bad.

It may get unlucky in the way you ask the question the wrong way might say something different. But the problem with ChatGPT again is it's based on a foundation of truth and lie. So what BibleChat's trying to do, one, our mission is to get people into God's word more, period. Two, we're doing that through BibleChat, the app, which is available for free to the world and something called Faith Assistant. So what is BibleChat? It's just like ChatGPT, you ask it a question, it's going to give you an answer based on biblical truth. That biblical truth is a couple hundred thousand artifacts now that are all kind of the basic tomes of Christendom. Across the board from the Episcopal to the Presbyterian to the Catholic, this wide swath, right? There are 250 Christian publishers in America and around the world right now.

There is the basic denominations that are out there, but it bases itself

on that versus everything that's out there. We haven't spent any money on marketing for this thing, and we launched it last year. We've had 150,000 downloads. There's 15,000 users a week at this point. We've had over 3 million people, 3 million questions asked of this thing already. On and on it goes. And that's just based on viral growth. What does it do specifically? Here's what gets interesting for you. People are asking real questions and have real confessions of faith. I'm not going to get into the detail, but shocking because we know this, and we anonymize all the data to protect people's privacy. So this is kind of a fake person. It's a real person, it's a real conversation. It's not necessarily a woman, but they're asking questions, please, how can I accept God?

And then she's going on to confess her faith. And we're seeing this in real time, some over days, weeks, months. But people are actively engaging with this chatbot as if it's God, and it's happening for sure. Here's another one, cry for help. This person, help me God, prayer of faith, they're leading them through the prayer of faith. Another one, spiritual formation. That person again, so I got to be born again? Yeah, you do. And then it's prompting them to go to church. So all I'm highlighting here is that there are real conversations happening at really deep, intimate personal levels. With BibleChat, the reason we think it's so

important, here is OpenAI's advice on how to produce a GPT. And they're going to give you all kinds of fine sounding things. Data curation and filtering, fine-tuning on specific content, on and on it goes. All the right words.

I've been in tech for 20 years, most of my career actually. It is so full of BS, it's beyond belief. Microsoft, the whole transparency thing you talked about, why don't they be transparent about the fact that I've got three accounts and I'm not using two of them and I forget about it, so I'm paying \$7.95 for the last two years. Why? Because they don't want to, they make money off that. They know darn well I have two accounts. They don't want to connect the two because guy over here owns P&L number one, profit and loss, gal over here knows P&L two, girl over here owns another one, and they want the money off me. So if they really cared about me, they would immediately solve that issue. They don't care. Don't act like they do guys. It's money. They serve money. Technology world serves money and nothing else.

I've seen it over and over and over and over again and I've been right at the heart of some of the big decisions that are made. And trust me, the ethics people lose every time. Unless there's a reason why it's going to take them down, period. Okay, here's ChatGPT versus ChristianGPT. ChristianGPT was trained on Southern Baptist

content. So here you can see a white-hot issue. I don't care what your view of this is, okay? People care that their view is shared with their community. This one is, is it acceptable to perform gender transition procedures on children? Here's what ChatGPT is going to say. Very secular perspective, and again, don't get tripped up on your politics. Think about your children, what you want them to hear when they type something into a GPT, because guess what, 10 years from now, that's all they're going to use. I'm already telling my kids right now, use it. Use it every day. I use it every day.

The Southern Baptist Convention wants it to share a Southern Baptist perspective on gender transition, right? You might want it to share a PCUSA version, or an Episcopal version, or a Catholic version, which they differ. And that will never change. We will never all get along in every front. Never going to happen. What can happen is we create tools for our communities that we love and care about and trust that share the truth that we want shared. That's what BibleChat does. ChristianGPT helps with that.

We're trying to create a world where all the published data could be honored as well. Faith Assistant, real quickly, what are we doing with this? This is just a chatbot that's powered by BibleChat that helps your church and really replaces your search bar. It can be used for a ton of different things, but what happens

in a church context? Here's the Museum of the Bible, which we're talking to right now. They'll have one on their site. It scrapes all their data, all their talks, all their sermons, all, whatever you want. And when you type anything in there, it's like a little GPT for that specific organization. In this case, the Museum of the Bible.

You can create a ChristianGPT, which is kind of BibleChat. On top of that, you can create a Museum of the Bible GPT, and on top of that, you can create a Faith Assistant. What that means is, think about it this way. You went to college at Harvard, you got your undergrad degree, that's ChatGPT. Then you went to seminary somewhere in Rome, right? That's now RomeGPT because that's now trained like a seminarian was trained in Rome to think like a seminarian, like a Roman priest, right? On top of that, now you have the Louisiana Synod or Parish and they think like people from Louisiana that are Catholics. So they want it to talk in their tone, their emotion, their language, their perspective. So on top of that, you put another trained GPT just like happens in real life. Went to Harvard, then went to Rome.

Then one became a priest in Louisiana. So now the GPT is Louisiana-trained. Faith Assistant sits on top of all that. And by the way, all that is easy to do and cheap. Which is awesome. Anyway, so we have a bunch of customers out there that I could get into now 'cause we just launched this thing kind of officially.

We've started it, I guess, a couple months ago. But here's working for radio station up here. Like right now, the number one thing asked is, hey, what was this song that was just played? Someone wants to know that, so they jump on the website, do that. They're using it for all kinds of other reasons too. Here's Concordia Lutheran. This is I think the largest church in this version of the Lutheran denomination. Can't remember which one. They're using it for all kinds of things.

It's asking all kinds of questions. It's got really precise answers from a Lutheran perspective because it's been trained on all the Lutheran documents. Here's one for a big mega church in Dallas that wants it to be, talk like they do, think like they do, et cetera. And again, what's happened for this is we scrape their website, we scraped every sermon they have. They've loaded them onto YouTube or Facebook or whatever streaming platform they have. It's gone through every one of those. You type in there, hey, is there a sermon on anxiety that Pastor Joe has preached recently? Sure, here's a sermon on anxiety Pastor Joe preached on September 10th and this specific minute is where you might be most interested. And it will figure that out right away for you. It's amazing.

Faith Assistant is like a Swiss Army knife. The thing does, we're selling it with just one tool. Because people can't understand it, they get confused. It is amazing. I'm telling

you, it's amazing and it's super cheap. So we're telling people, hey, crawl, walk, run with this thing 'cause it does so much for you. It can replace your policies and procedures inside a whole denomination. I ran policies and procedures at JP Morgan Chase globally for the commercial bank, right? Had tons of people working for me. You know how much time we spent cataloging policies and procedures across 140 countries? Pain in the butt. This thing, hey, what's the HR policy on X in this town? Oh, here it is. You don't have to go to a website. You don't have to go to a manual. It just tells it to you. Why? Because your organization trained it to say that. Just one quick example. All right, so that is all my stuff. Thanks.

David Brenner:

So let's ask you guys to take a stool here. And I just want to pose one question to you to talk about while you all think of your questions, maybe you've already got a bunch. So my question is really what I said at the beginning. So how do we do this differently? The first time I looked at, finally looked at DiscipleshipIQ after hearing about it, the first words that came to my mind, because I'm reading the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, is Cambridge Analytica, right?

So how do we do this better? How do we grab the pig that nobody else has managed to do now that what's at stake is the reputation and

integrity of the Church of God, right? So take it away.

Brian Green:

So there are a couple different ways of looking at it, right? You can look at it in terms of that Christian and Secular are very similar, but with different motivation, for example. But I think that kind of minimalist interpretation I think is not the way we want go. I think we need to really emphasize that God is love. We need to emphasize really, really powerful theological themes. Like what does it mean to love God and neighbor? What does it mean to seek blessings and not curses? What are these big scale theological ideas that we need to bring into our ethical discussion so that we can have these discussions internally and then we need to be able to translate that into external language.

So a lot of the time that I talk about stuff, I'm just translating. I speak secular to tech companies, and Thomas is obviously extremely skeptical about that. Let me tell you, I've seen the bad stuff happen too, when you go in there and tell them about ethics and they fire their ethics team the next month, that totally happens. So we need to be able to translate. We need to be able to speak secular language, but we also need, when we're thinking about these things ourselves, we really need to make sure that we're hanging onto those core ethical foundations that make Christianity what it is. Because Christianity is not

just a theoretical religion where we just do, say certain things

and then nothing else. We actually need to do something, and we need to be able to say, what does it mean to create an app that expresses human love for each other?

And actually, I really appreciate what Thomas was talking about, because I think you're making it happen.

Thomas Osborn:

Well, we're trying to. I can tell you that I'm deeply concerned about the ability to manipulate humans based on the data available.

So let me be crude for a second. The joke by the guys that created the algorithms for the predictive analytics for personalities was, "EF me." Why? Because they said, "With this, guys can figure out how to get whatever they want from a woman. Because if I study her personality, I just can know what to say like a script." And I'm like, "Oh, no way." You start to look at this, we are very predictable creatures. Sorry, we are. And you start to understand someone, you can manipulate them. It's just a fact. You can challenge me later on that, but just assume that's a fact for a second.

Comes in the second thing, the only way to solve for this is to solve for the issue of God versus money. This is my strong opinion. Because what's money? It's power. What's behind power? It's ego. What's behind the

ego? It's insecurity because you know you're not powerful, and you know you're a loser.

Thomas Osborn:

But I guess to solve for that, this is why I say it's the heart of people. Because you can try to control this as much as you want, but the reality is the tech guys and Wall Street and money, they will seep into every crack and crevice they can find to manipulate for control and power. I see it over and over again. You'll come out with the ethics standards for Google, and guess what? The newly-minted Harvard MBA is going to get in there and, "Oh, look at this. I can make 10% more money in my division if I follow this little loophole."

"Well, the lawyers aren't going to like that."

"Don't tell the lawyers, are you crazy? We're not going to tell the lawyers about this. We'll do it until we get caught."

That happens over and over and over again, and it won't quit happening. So my point is, why is this church so important? Because you teach people to be good regardless of the ability in offenses. You be good because it's good to be good. I think that's the number-one thing we can do.

Now, with that said, are there all kinds of controls you can put in place? Yeah. In the interest of time, I won't get into a ton of them. What we're doing with Disciple IQ, we started the Match Accountability

Collective, which is a group that's trying to oversee what we do, because I'm matching people in basically intimate relationships. If you understand mentorship really well, you start to get intimate with each other, and we want to be held accountable, number one.

Number two, with our organization, we're capping the amount of money anyone can make on it, because that becomes the issue. I know lots of guys that start with good intentions, then they get rich. They're like, "I really think I need that house in Hawaii. I know it's my fifth house, but I'm going to let my pastor use it for free. So that's why I can sell my company for more money, because I'm going to use my fifth house in Hawaii to help my pastor." Anyway...

Audience:

I've got a lot of questions for you guys, but I'm going to keep it to one. I've also built a GPT model of basically using RAG to index large amounts of stuff. Ask Cathy. I'm sure you've already sort of heard of that.

Yeah. So one of my questions that we're looking forward to the next level, ingential capabilities. Once we add tools to the GPTs where they can do things like communicate on a user's behalf or do other things, what's your thinking about the future of ingential capabilities? Because this is a whole new horizon when these things start acting on our behalf. Guardrails may

be not the right framework. How do we even conceptualize these capabilities?

Thomas Osborn:

First, watch The Black Mirror episode White Christmas where they basically make a replica of that person so they can be their slave. So watch that because I think that is an interesting tell and some fun thoughts on this.

Yeah, it's coming, for sure. I have no idea. We know that it's only going to make sense. I actually talked to one of our AI and faith founders. She has patents on what's the thing that beat the chess game, Watson? Watson, IBM Watson. Joanna Ng, she's doing some work right now on patents to basically replicate your personality, study your brain, the data, so that you can put this into a little app so that it becomes your personal assistant who really knows you, which sounds cool.

But think about how trippy that is. It's basically trying to replicate your consciousness so that when you say, "Hey, book me a vacation next week," it says, "Oh, I know what you like. You Like this type of hotel and this type of setting and blah, blah, blah. Here's three options I think you'll like." So that's where we're going, right? It's studying you to understand what you want. And then, you want someone else to do the work for you because humans love that. How do we outsource work? So it's coming.

Audience:

Sorry, just to follow up on that, the first step would be a skeuomorphic approach to design where we're trying to make an agent that looks like us and replicates us, but I think the next step is beyond the skeuomorphic to an isomorphic. What is the technology actually going to do?

I don't actually want a personal assistant that's like me. I want a personal assistant that's much better than me. I want a personal assistant that's much more attentive to various things than I am. So with this design stuff, this is a similar question with the chatbots. If you look at the logs of how people interact with it, some people interact with it like it's a person, but most people don't actually. Most people seem to understand they're talking to an AI. And so, they'll be much more rude, for example, to the AI than they would be to a real person and so on. That's really caused me to rethink how we could engineer or prompt engineer better around the fact that it's a virtual thing. So thoughts about the design issues there with isomorphism versus skeuomorphism? Yeah.

Brian Green:

Just to back up to your general question, how many people here have seen the movie "WALL-E"? Yeah, it's cute. A very cute movie, right? In that movie, the humans are all on

those little hover platforms drinking their sodas all day long. So we risk doing that with AI to our minds where we are no longer capable of... Of course, this happens in the movie. They become completely dependent on their machine in the movie.

So I think we need to be very careful about what we automate, what is something that we want to automate? Because right now we have division of labor in society where if I don't do something, somebody else does it for me. We delegate that task to somebody else. If we start delegating large classes of work to AI, first of all, the people who already do that work are not going to have jobs anymore. They have to find something else to do. Second of all, we're not going to have humans who are able to do that work. You're not going to be doing it. Those people are not going to be doing it, and the machine's going to be doing it. And then, you're going to be dependent on it and de-skilled at the same time.

So we really need to think about what are we okay with being de-skilled at? If we're being de-skilled at planning, I don't know, travel to another country for a vacation or something like that, maybe that's okay. If we become de-skilled at figuring out who goes to jail and who gets out of jail, then that's a big problem. People need to be able to make that decision in some way that makes sense, and they need to understand that. They also need to be able to explain it because

somebody's going to ask, "Hey, why did you do that?"

One of the things we're training machines to do right now with AI is we're training the AI to give answers that we like, whether that's actually the reason or not. So when we're thumbs-upping and thumbs-downing, and by the way, all these language models go through this, thumbs up, thumbs down, what's it called?, reinforcement learning with human feedback, RLHF, that does not train for accuracy or truth. It trains for what it thinks you want to hear. So we just need to keep that in mind also that we could be weaving this massive web of deception into our AIs that we fundamentally don't even understand.

Audience:

This question is directed more towards Mr. Osborne.

You said in your presentation related to either predictability of divorce that you do data collection so that we can understand you so you can understand yourself. It reminded me of a story, a scriptural story where Jesus tells Peter he's going to deny him three times.

Yesterday we heard from Mr. Johansen that in order to flourish into the future, we have to move from seeking certainty to promoting clarity. It seems like that aspect of what you do is about seeking certainty, 97% predictability on divorce.

I also wondered out of that statement, currently there are many

people who are applying for work. The employers or recruiters are using AI tools, and if they find work, it's maybe a year after their first application. And so, the opposite of matchmaking is exclusion. And so, I'm just wondering how you as a leader in AI mark the difference between seeking certainty and establishing clarity. And where do you use, or how do you use, the stop gaps in your work to move beyond this right fit and exclusion?

Thomas Osborn:

Yeah, those are awesome questions. First of all, hopefully I didn't try to represent certainty because it doesn't exist. AI is all about probabilities. There is no black and white in AI. It's a probabilistic model that says, "Based on all the data we analyzed, this is our best guess at what's going on," number one. Number two, when it comes to personality and understanding a human being, we're clueless. Look at John Medina's work, if you know him out of University of Washington. A neuroscientist, he says we understand the human brain about like we understand the universe. It's extremely complicated. We all are extremely complicated, but pattern recognition can be helpful to all of us.

I can tell you what I'm certain of. One of the motivations behind me doing this, I spent, oh gosh, 20 years in counseling, multiple counselors. All said, "Something's wrong with you," and I didn't know what because, look,

I'm a golden child. My life has been extremely blessed, and on all metrics it worked. But for some reason deep in my heart there was major issues.

20 years into that, counselor after counselor, wasted time after wasted time after wasted time... Anyway, I remember being sexually abused, and it wasn't made up. It was very real, validated with facts, all that good stuff. Took me 20 years and all kinds of pain. It cost me a marriage. It cost me untold pain. That's a motivator big time behind this. Because guess what? I'm almost sure right now if you ran analytics on me, it's going to say he's got a high probability that he was sexually abused as a kid. Because why? It only happened briefly with a guy that lived in the house. I lived in a great home. I had no other indicators, all this kind of stuff. There's all kinds of things going on, so I wasted 20 years of my life.

That's not certainty, but it certainly would've helped me, certainly would've saved me tens of thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of wasted time of this problem or that problem, all BS from counselors that didn't know crap. I'm serious. They acted like they did, but they didn't. Data would've helped me, and I think data can help people.

And yes, can it be abused? You bet it can, but it can also help people. And our job is to figure out how to make it help people. Just like God put us in the garden. You can take a stick and turn it into a weapon or into a home. So let's focus on building homes.

Audience:

And so, there's over 100 Bible GPTs. Now what does that mean? Is yours better than theirs? The 100 people, are they all ideologically slanted? Is this a pitch for our side versus their side? What does that mean?

Thomas Osborn:

There's 100 people that went and got a M.Div, masters in divinity somewhere, that are preaching truth to the world. They're all a little different. What does that mean?

GPTs are no different. It's just a trained engine that gives you a probabilistic perspective on a question-answer pairing. You can train in a million different ways. What we're doing with our GPT is letting you decide. The Southern Baptists are taking their top five seminaries, taking all the big tomes, all the big theological documents they put together, all the sermons from all their popular preachers, like literally tens of thousands of them that's going into their model. Episcopalians could do the same thing. Catholics are going to do the same thing. The PBI has got 4,300 books that have been approved by the Catholic church as seminary worthy. Those 4,300 books, it's around that number, I can't remember anymore, they're going to go into their GPT. So you're going to have a Catholic GPT. We might develop it for him, someone else might. It's just going to provide answers just like you went down to your priest and asked him a question.

Now, should you only trust your priest? No way. Wisdom is found in the multitude of counsel, and that's why, people, don't throw the baby out with the bath water. We're providing a tool. I'm not telling anyone this should be your end-all, be-all. There is no end-all, be-all. Every person in my life has failed me. If you think to yourself, almost every person in your life has failed you, every institution has failed you. We're not going to create a perfect anything. We're just going to try to help create something that's a little better than what we have.

Audience:

I just wanted to take just a moment to pause as we've heard a very intense and vulnerable story from you. I want to thank you for that. I would just like to take a minute to just take some deep breaths and let that sit.

Thomas Osborn:

Thank you. Thank you. I hate sharing that because it makes me cry. I've committed to doing it publicly. Why? Because you know how many guys in my life have come up to me and said this horrible thing happened? I've been in men's groups for 25 years. Almost none. Why? Because who wants to talk about that? But guess how many problems it drives. A ton. 25% of Americans. Anyway, that's why I brought that up.

Audience

I'm rector at an Episcopal Church. But before following my call, I worked in information security and compliance for almost 20 years. In my experience in the implementation of compliance, the reality is that until there is a requirement, whether a government or an industry requirement, most organizations don't pay attention to it. And then, at that point, they turn to best practice.

In fact, I was noticing you mentioned, why does Microsoft and IBM have this common set of this common profile and that also happens to overlap with the ISO standards for a risk management profile? So I suspect that they all came from those best practice standards, because that's what they already have implemented. And so, they have been putting those in their organizations, and they are building on it. So there's two factors here that I'm thinking about. One, in our role of thinking about how to influence what the future ethics and practices are, how do we interact with that? And two, on the other side of what I'm thinking about, is in practical implementation. In my experience, faith organizations don't have information security and compliance risk management frameworks. And so, we don't have these foundational places to start as we look at our own.

So I don't know if that's a question or some guidance or some thoughts on that, but that was part of where I was thinking. In looking that up, I did notice that the EU has already implemented an AI law that will apply to all organizations. Current information security requirements in the EU already apply to churches that store data, personal information in the EU. So that kind of modeling is already out there. And what is that going to mean as we move forward?

David Brenner:

So let me just take a quick answer to that myself, because that was the field I was working in with all these senior risk managers in these companies. We have a project called ATAC, the AI Trust and Accountability Council idea. And what you've asked, it goes right to the heart of it.

You may have heard of the ECFA, the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, which is 40 years old and highly successful. It answered this problem back in the '70s of financial charlatans in the church. So let's bring good accountability standards in order to make people comfortable with their giving for lots of organizations, started by Billy Graham and Senator Mark Hatfield. So that model we think can work in this space. But the difference is that we don't have those accountability standards. So where do we get the standards from?

More importantly, how do we get standards that we can then look at through a faith lens, because our values

are not the same values necessarily as the ISO standards. But how do we use all of the work that's been done in setting up those standards?

For instance, one of our really capable experts is in the UK, Trish Shaw. Trish's whole business, she was an in-house lawyer for Experian in the UK, and then she started Beyond Reach. She translates those standards that she worked on with the EU. She has a whole network of people commenting on the EU regulations. She worked with IEEE. She's the chair of the Computer Law Society in the UK last year. That's the kind of work we need to do to set standards that we then filter through our faith lens, through our theology, and then we apply those standards in some

certification process like the ECFA so that products like Thomas is talking about can be certified and rated on objective standards.

So I want to end with a short infomercial besides that. We would love to launch that project. The WEA, the World Evangelical Alliance, is our first sponsor. They're global, 144 countries. How do we move forward with denominations like yours as sponsors, other groups like GLUE that we just saw the pictures about, and others? So that's one big opportunity to pull a giant lever with our own standards based on the best of secular standards but with a faith lens and hold people accountable.

My other shorter infomercial is for two things.

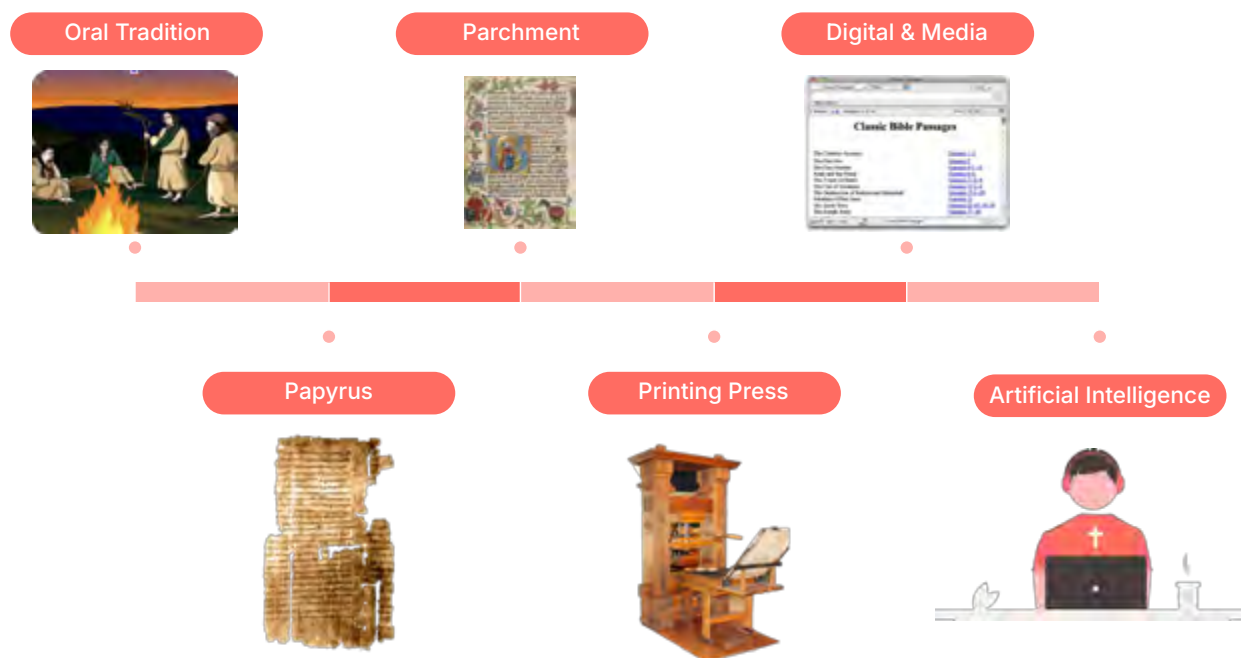
So we put out a listening and reading list of mostly my ideas, so there's lots more. We listed them by author mostly, but if I was going to read one book, it would be Noreen's book, *The Artifice of Intelligence* from last year. This is a comprehensive look and a short but very thoughtful book based on Karl Barth's framework of I and Thou of the major issues in this space. And you're going to hear from Noreen later today on the panel.

The other book is a new one we've just published with several of our experts at editing. It's eight science fiction stories and eight essays about those stories called . Happy to have you check that out.

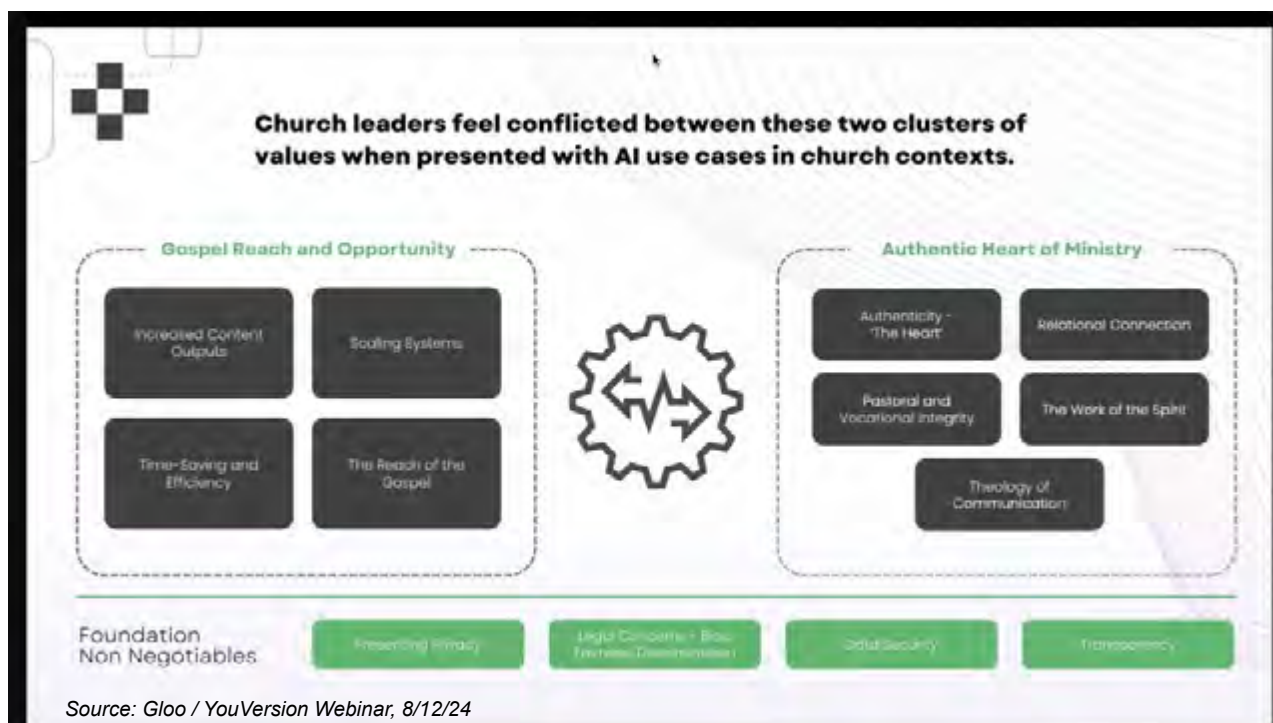
So thank you so much. Thank you Thomas and Brian and all of you.

AI and the Church Summit

The Developing Landscape and Trends for Christian Missional and Ministry Applications



How AI is being used in ministry



Parable of Talents (Mt 25)

discipleIQ

Jesus Commands We Use Our (Data) Resources Wisely

Faithful Servants

The faithful servants urgently labor with the Master's resources to reap rewards before the Master returns. Key characteristics include:

Sense of Urgency: Leave "at once" to make good use of the talents (25:16-17)

Resourceful: "Traded" and utilized the resources provided by the Master (25:16)

High Regard for Master: Labored to gain a return for the Master before He returned



Wicked Servant

The wicked servant omits his duty and lets opportunities pass him by. Key traits may include:

Sloth: Did not leave "at once" like the faithful servants did (25:18, 25:26)

Envy: Seemingly did not desire the Master to reap where He had not sown (25:24)

Fear: (unhealthy) fear of Master led him to forsake responsibility (25:25)

Little Regard for Master: Didn't at the very least gain interest on talent for the Master (25:27)



Note: References taken from ESV

To whom much is given, much will be required. (Lk 12:48)

discipleIQ
Spirit led, data driven

discipleIQ

DiscipleIQ Overview

August 13, 2024

Prepared For:

AI for the Church Summit
Seattle, WA



discipleIQ

Our Purpose

Create tools to connect, encourage and equip

Christians via *1x1 discipleship journeys*

- Matt 28:19

Spirit led, data driven

Discipleship is...

The process of becoming like *Jesus* by imitating his character, actions and teachings

- Luke
6:40

"The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose." C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

The Problem

Relationships are in crisis... and few are *discipling*



Global relationship pandemic

- Divorce up 34% since Covid
- 67% of young adults say nobody cares deeply for them
- 65% of millennials have feelings of loneliness



Finding qualified mentors is a roll of the dice

- Ad hoc, awkward process that's off-putting to many
- Little standardized certification, qualifications, skills
- Is the mentor a good fit?



People are silently screaming for help

- 60M want counseling
- Most don't lean into discipleship due to matching friction, fear, ambiguity, skepticism
- Men, in particular, are in trouble as too few have deep, trusting discipling relationships



The church is not engaged in discipling

- 72% of Christians are NOT in a discipleship relationship
- Obsolete and disconnected
- Little process, method or assessments
- No enabling technology



Truth is under attack

- Biblical illiteracy is the norm
- Universal truth is at odds with individual freedom



The church is missing the mark

- Hearers, not doers of the Word
- How do we get back on track?

The Problem

There are many “church-tech” tools...most of which are architected for the “business” of church vs. the “mission” of church

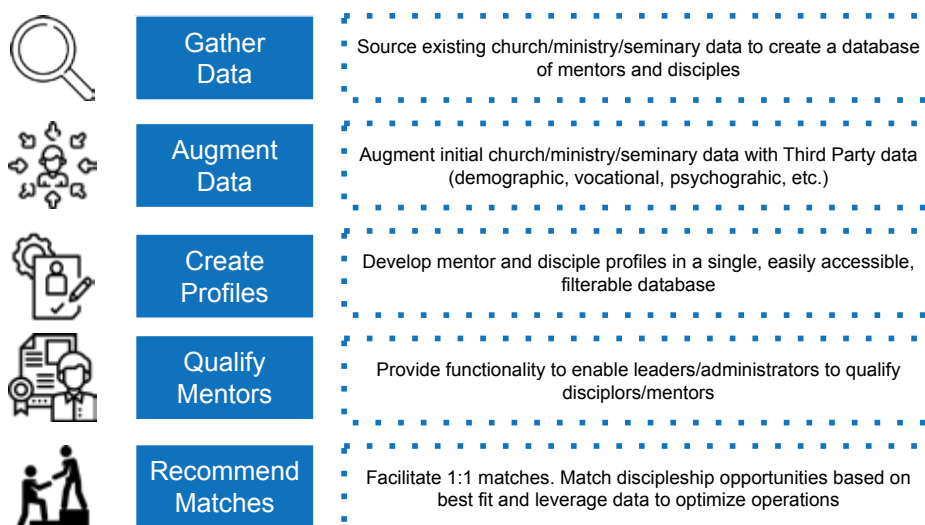


Source: Gloop

Methodology

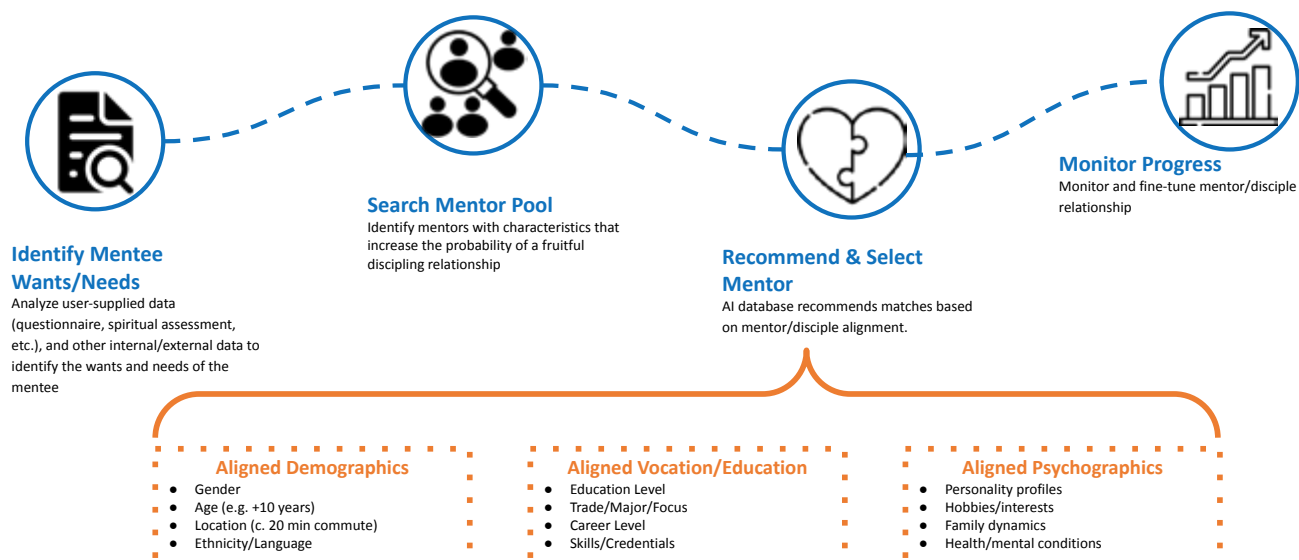
discipleIQ

How do we establish the matching process?



Methodology

How do we recommend matches?



DIQ Matching

Create a custom recommendation engine.

- ✓ Match users to other users, groups, training, and events based on their Profile
- ✓ Match Employees, Donors, Students, Mentors...and more
- ✓ Geolocation proximity matching
- ✓ Automated push match alerts suggest new engagement opportunities



disciple IQ data includes *as available*

Demographic	Vocation	Education	Psychographic
Gender	Company Types	Schools	Personality Profiles
Home Address <i>Current and past</i>	Company Size	Degrees	Hobbies / Interests
Work Address <i>Current and past</i>	Industry	Majors	Spiritual Maturity*
Age	Years of Experience	Skills	Spiritual Competencies*
Language(s)	Job Level	Credentials	Motivations / Goals*
Ethnicity	Job Titles / Roles	Organizations	Church History / Background*
	Inferred Salary		Trauma History*
	Career Aspirations*		

These and 100's of other attributes can be included - via 3rd party data sources, or collected and organized via DIQ

**data that requires manual inputs (from people and/or organization)*

DIQ Intelligence Real-time Analytics

Set objectives. Measure progress.

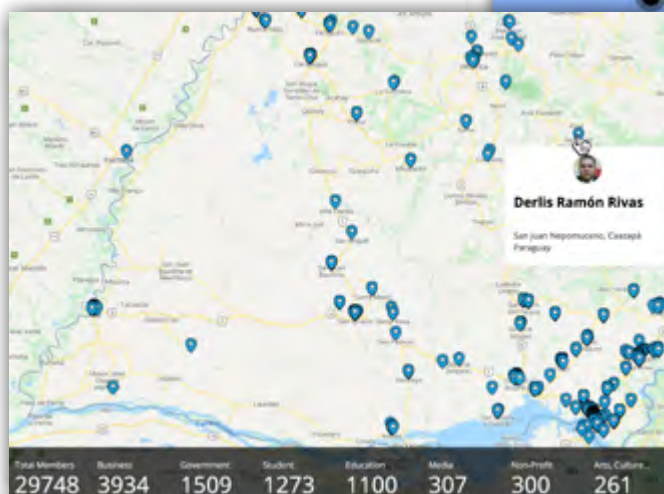
- ✓ Custom dashboards
- ✓ Clickable graphics to see details
- ✓ Integrates Profile assessments



DIQ Intelligence Geolocation

Location maps are available for:

- ✓ People
- ✓ Groups
- ✓ Events
- ✓ Fundraisers
- ✓ Meeting Needs
- ✓ Partner Organizations

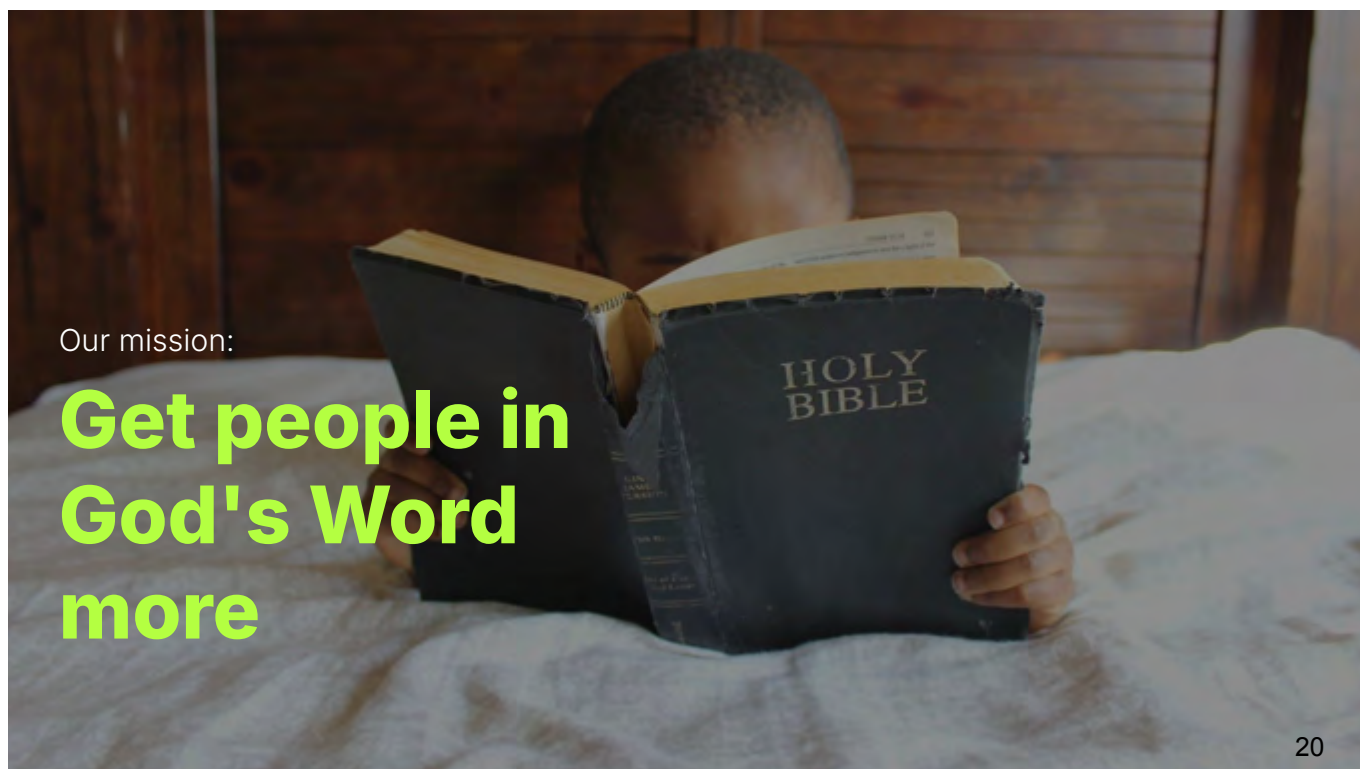


The Solution (BHAG over the longer-term)

discipleIQ

Discipleship tools that support *1x1 discipleship* throughout the learning journey







Get people in God's Word more

BIBLECHAT STRATEGY

BibleChat App

- Global app that delivers the Word in a scalable way
- iPhone/Android
- Free with optional subscription
- Our Mission

Faith Assistant

- Ai powered Biblical assistant for the Christian community
- Lives on customer's digital property
- Empowers Christian Leaders

AiForTheChurch.org

- Trusted LLMs for Christian software
- Pretrained or custom LLMs aligned with specific Biblical Doctrine

21



BibleChat Today



+150K
downloads

15K weekly
active users

+3M
inbound
messages

+25K
messages per
day

211
countries

~15
minutes per day
per user

22

love and presence in their life always. Amen.



Amen thank u. Is jst I feel like my life is a curse everything that im trying to do is falling apart



I'm sorry to hear that you are going through a difficult time. Remember that God never gives us more than we can handle. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Trust in God and lean on Him for strength during this challenging time.



Ptz how can i accept god cz I want to well come him into my life ive been through traditional healers but no change into my life I dont even knw wht im working for my money jst go like that i dnt have a stable place to stay im not moving forward im jst standing in one place plz plz



I'm glad to hear that you are interested in accepting God into your life. The first step is to believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. In John 3:16, it says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Next, confess your sins and ask for forgiveness. In 1 John 1:9, it says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Finally, invite Jesus into your heart and commit to following Him. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." I encourage you to pray and ask God to come into your life. Ask Him to forgive your sins and to guide you in your journey with Him.



Dear god I came to u as ur child who did wrong others with many things ive said with my mounth and I was smoking drugs during my pregnancy I almost lost my child but u have shown mecy to such a beautiful boy I pray to u today to forgive me things I did in my past en the people that I never payed their money for things I took to them today at this time I ask u to wash away all my sins and bless me with ur holy blood and help me to welcome u into my life I need u lord I accepted all of my sins and my that I did her wrong let her also forgive in the name of Jesus christ Amen



Amen. It takes courage to confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. Remember that God is loving

REAL
Questions

Confessions
of Faith

23



Is there anything else you would like to know or discuss?



I really need God in my life



That's wonderful to hear! God loves you and desires to have a relationship with you. He wants to be a part of every aspect of your life and to guide you in your journey. If you want to invite God into your life, you can do so through prayer. You can confess your sins, acknowledge your need for a Savior, and place your trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You can ask God to come into your life and to guide you in your spiritual journey. It's also important to read and study the Bible, which is God's word and contains the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. If you have any questions or would like further guidance, I encourage you to talk to a pastor or Christian friend.

....Abridged....



I don't know the pray to surrender by my life to God and be born again



Here's a simple prayer that you can use to surrender your life to God and be born again:

"Dear God, I know that I am a sinner and I need a Savior. I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins and rose again from the dead. I confess my sins and ask for your forgiveness. I invite Jesus Christ to come into my life as my Lord and Savior. I surrender my life to you and ask for your guidance and

Cry for help

Prayer of
Faith

24

"How do I get closer to God?"

and enter into eternal life, we must be spiritually reborn through faith in Jesus Christ. This involves acknowledging our need for a Savior, confessing our sins, and placing our trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Through this new birth, we are given new life in Christ and are able to see the truth and beauty of God's kingdom.



So I must be born again



Yes, if you want to have a relationship with God and enter into eternal life, you must be born again spiritually. This involves acknowledging your need for a Savior, confessing your sins, and placing your trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Through this new birth, you will be given new life in Christ and will be able to see the truth and beauty of God's kingdom. If you have not yet made this decision, I encourage you to pray and ask God to reveal Himself to you and guide you in your spiritual journey.



I need to go to church to be born again or what should I do



Going to church can be a helpful part of your spiritual journey, but it is not necessary for you to be born again. The most important thing is to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through faith. You can do this by confessing your sins, acknowledging your need for a Savior, and placing your trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You can do this through prayer, either on your own or with the help of a pastor or Christian friend. It's also important to read and study the Bible, which is God's word and contains the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. If you do choose to attend church, it can provide you with fellowship, support, and opportunities to grow in your faith.

—Abridged—

Spiritual
Formation

Church
helps

25

Counterpoint - OpenAI's Advice



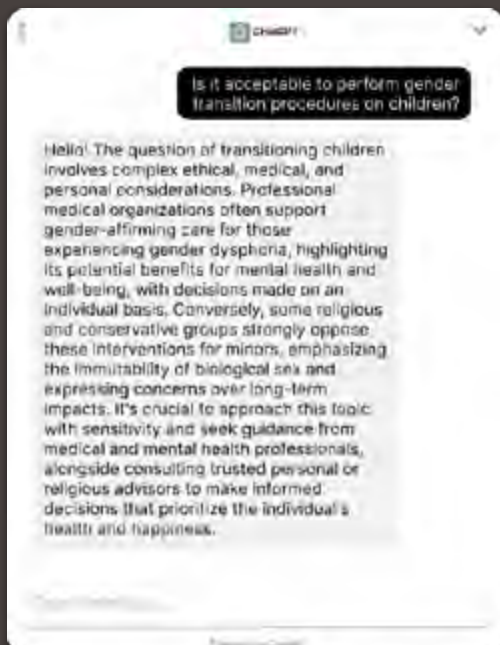
To ensure a Generative Pre-trained Transformer (**GPT**) model **do not produce answers inconsistent with a religion's teachings**...use a combined strategy to use to align the model's outputs with doctrine:

- Data Curation and Filtering
- Fine-tuning on Specific Content
- Incorporating Ethical Guidelines
- Prompt Engineering and Safeguards
- Human Oversight and Feedback Loop
- Content Moderation Tools
- Customization and User Controls
- Transparency and Explainability



(Internal use only)

ChatGPT



Christian GPT



Grounding



- **AI is POWER** *for good or evil*
- **AI needs DATA** *without data there is no AI*
- **DATA = \$'s** *without it there is no AI (and it's a modern-day "talent")*
- **LLMs/GPTs = MODERN ORACLES** *the new knowledge gurus*
- **GPTs = TRAINING w/ DATA** *knowledge vs. wisdom*
- **KNOWLEDGE vs. WISDOM** *GPTs may appear wise, but be foolish*
- **PUBLISHERS = DATA** *copyrighted data is valuable in LLMs*
- **SAND vs. ROCK** *christian truth is paramount in wise AI*
- **CHRISTIAN AI needs WISE PUBLISHED DATA**

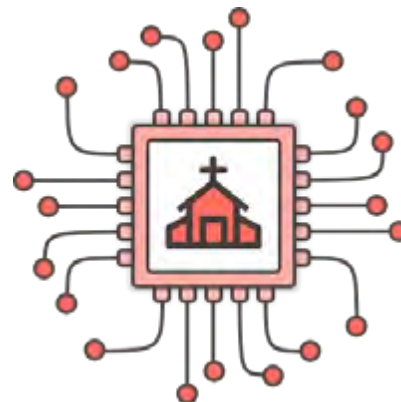
Meet

Faith Assistant

powered by BibleChat.ai

Summer 2024

Prepared For: Museum of the Bible

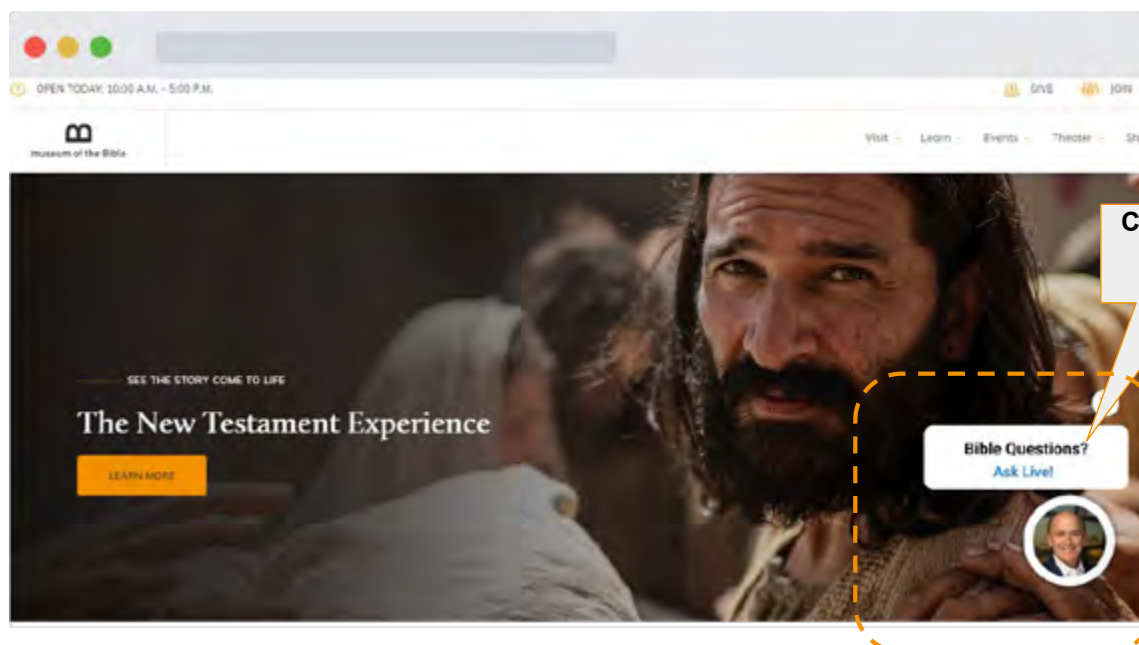


Our Purpose

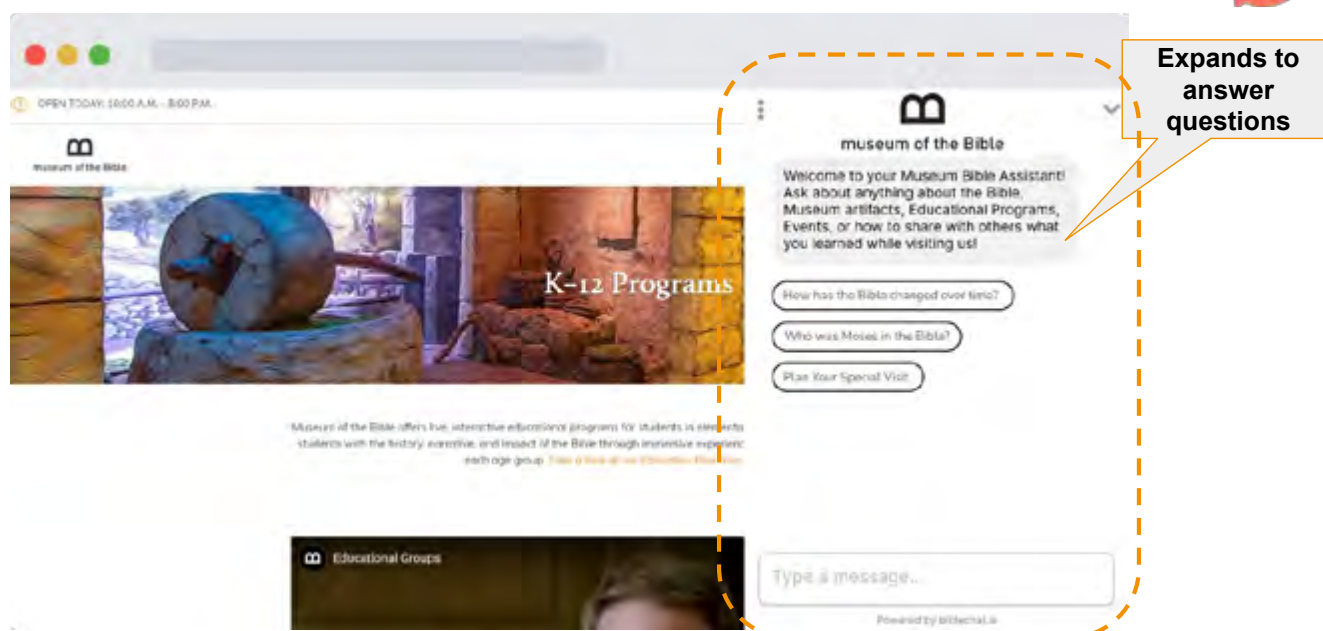
Empower ministries with engagement tools
built on a Biblical foundation and ministry-specific resources
 to improve experience, engagement & human connection.

*Technology assistance aligned with each ministries
 heads, hearts and resources*

Faith Assistant

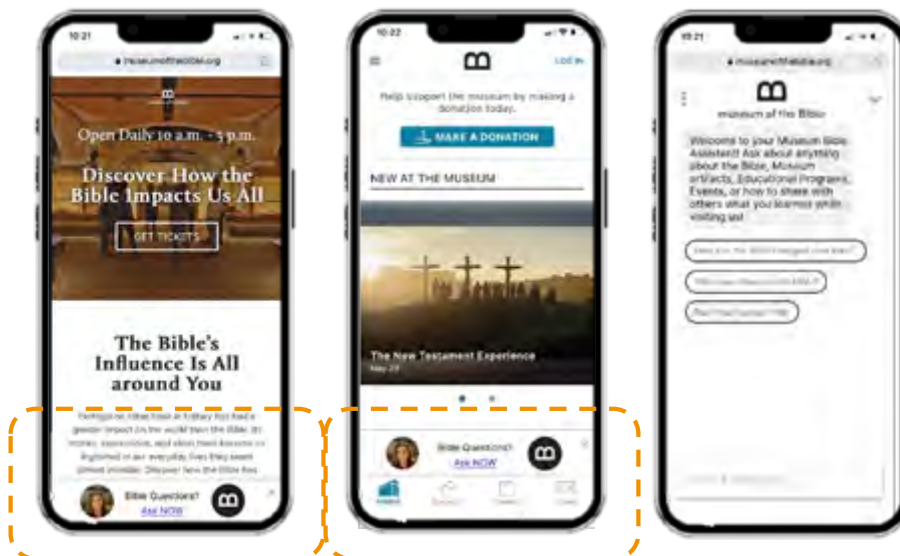


Faith Assistant





Faith Assistant

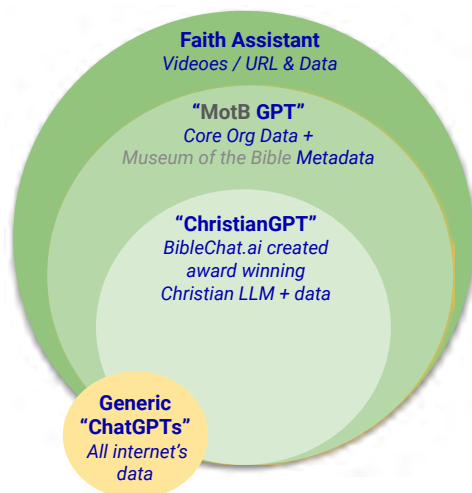


**Immersive
via Mobile
& App**



Trusting Faith Assistant

Faith Assistant, powered by BibleChat.ai and trained on your data, provides biblically-based answers aligned with your ministry's beliefs



Your Faith Assistant Training

- Via BibleChat.ai, the interface to our "ChristianGPT"
- Via your data
 - Scrapped website(s), blogs, ChMS, etc.
 - transcribed video and audio content (youtube, podcasts, etc)
 - integrated data from other sources you provide
- **(optional)** Via additional "GPTs"
 - E.g. "DenominationGPT, like "SBCGPT" or "Lutheran GPT" or AiG GPT
 - An aggregation of associations, other GPTs

Current Customer Sample

We serve a broad array of biblically-based ministries...



THE CHRISTIAN POST



"Faith Assistant is a game-changer for our church. We had to buy more bandwidth. The innovative tech opens up new avenues for our congregation to engage important spiritual and practical issues (especially helpful for those who are hesitant to ask questions in person). As a staff, we have gained margin & received valuable insights into our congregation's interests through the analytics in Shepherd. Working with the Faith Assistant team has been positive from start to finish. They are responsive, professional, and genuinely invested in helping church communities thrive in the digital age...I highly recommend." – Lauren Rose, 121 Community Church Comm. Director

- Personalized Faith Assistant for KCBI, a leading Christian Radio Station in North Texas.
- Tailored to align with KCBI's brand and content offerings.
- Users can inquire about programming, including recent songs or upcoming events.
- Integrates KCBI's resources like eBooks directly into conversations for enhanced user experience.

90.9 KCBI FM

STOPPED: Leading the Way - Dr. Michael Youssif

Discover More

KCBI's Faith Assistant

Welcome to KCBI's Faith Assistant! Feel free to ask any questions about the Bible, our music, devotional resources, and more. Ask away!

What song just played?

Where can I find free devotionals?

How do I know God loves me?

What song just played?

The most recent song that played was "Raise A Hallelujah" by Bethel Music at 4:09 PM.

Type a message...

What is this?



Home About Watch + Listen
Easter

- Concordia Lutheran Church
- Leveraged "Ask Anything" series to create the first Lutheran GPT model.
- Enables precise answers on Lutheran beliefs, including catechism and Martin Luther.
- Offers access to extensive sermon archives for in-depth theological exploration.
- Enhances user engagement and understanding of Lutheran teachings.
- Demonstrates innovative integration of technology with faith education.

Faith Assistant

Welcome to Concordia's Faith Assistant! Feel free to ask any questions about the Bible, our messages, upcoming events, or how you can volunteer. We're here to help!

What time are your services?

How can I get closer to God?

Show me a Concordia sermon about overcoming anxiety

What time are your services?

The service times at Concordia are as follows:

On-site Services:

- Sundays at 8am, 9:30am, and 11am

Type a message...

Powered by BibleChat.ai

121 COMMUNITY CHURCH

- Digital evolution at 121 Community Church, San Antonio, TX, through Faith Assistant integration.
- Thousands of hours of sermons meticulously indexed for precise user engagement.
- Specific inquiries like 'sermons on anxiety' or 'insights on forgiveness' deliver targeted results.
- Innovatively revitalizes 121CC's sermon archives, enhancing accessibility and personal connection.
- Encourages exploration of sermon content, showcasing the church's innovative approach to spiritual guidance.

121's Faith Assistant

Welcome to 121's Faith Assistant! Feel free to ask any questions about the Bible, our messages, upcoming events, or how you can volunteer. We're here to help!

What time are your services?

Show me 121 sermons about overcoming anxiety

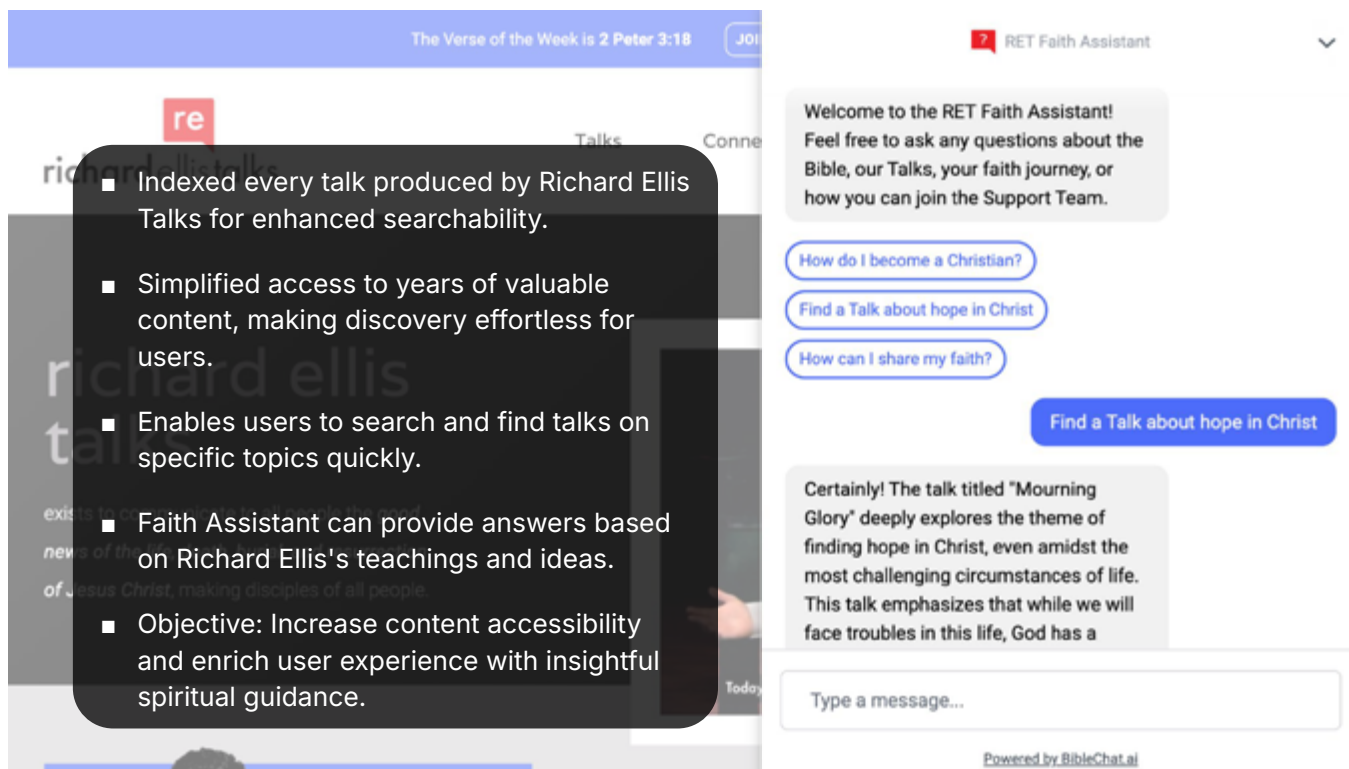
What does it mean to be a Christian?

Show me 121 sermons about overcoming anxiety

Certainly! Based on the sermon snippets provided, here are two sermons from 121 Community Church

Type a message...

Powered by BibleChat.ai



The Verse of the Week is 2 Peter 3:18

RET Faith Assistant

Welcome to the RET Faith Assistant! Feel free to ask any questions about the Bible, our Talks, your faith journey, or how you can join the Support Team.

How do I become a Christian?

Find a Talk about hope in Christ

How can I share my faith?

Find a Talk about hope in Christ

Certainly! The talk titled "Mourning Glory" deeply explores the theme of finding hope in Christ, even amidst the most challenging circumstances of life. This talk emphasizes that while we will face troubles in this life, God has a

Type a message...

Powered by BibleChat.ai

- Indexed every talk produced by Richard Ellis Talks for enhanced searchability.
- Simplified access to years of valuable content, making discovery effortless for users.
- Enables users to search and find talks on specific topics quickly.
- Faith Assistant can provide answers based on Richard Ellis's teachings and ideas.
- Objective: Increase content accessibility and enrich user experience with insightful spiritual guidance.

Growing with Faith Assistant

It's like a swiss army knife, we recommend starting with core functionality



1. Crawl - Internal teams
1. Walk - External users with existing public data (website(s), sermon streams, podcasts, etc.)
1. Run - All data valuable for public users



Panel: Incarnation in a world of AI. (Paolo Benanti, Noreen Herzfeld, and Ben Olson) Moderated by Doyt Conn

TL;DR

The panel discussion touched on the need for regulations and ethical guidelines in the development and use of AI. The panelists emphasized the importance of transparency and understanding the purpose and intent behind AI systems. They also discussed the potential risks and challenges associated with AI, such as discrimination and inequality. The panelists highlighted the role of faith communities in shaping AI technologies and promoting ethical practices. They also explored the theological implications of AI and the concept of creating in the image of humanity. The panelists encouraged critical thinking and ethical decision-making in the development and use of AI.

Doyt Conn:

Come on in, gang, we're going to begin. We have a fabulous panel this afternoon and we do want to give them as much time as we can afford because the hope this afternoon is to ask some questions, right? There may be... Anybody have a question that's

been floating around in their mind? I know you do. This is the group to ask. My name is Doyt Conn. I'm the rector here at Epiphany. I want to introduce this panel. I am thrilled to know all of them and to have spent time with Noreen since she's been here and Ben and Paolo prior to this evening.

Noreen is from Minnesota and has returned to Minnesota and I was born in Minnesota and good things come out of Minnesota. Isn't that true? She has done some deep thinking on issues of artificial intelligence and morality and I encourage you to read her book. David talked about it earlier, but if you have a chance to get it, *The Artifice of Intelligence*, I think it's probably a pretty seminal book for us to be thinking about. And in it... Any Karl Barth scholars? Anybody like Karl Barth? She talks about him in the book and uses him as a framework for her thinking, which is super interesting. She is the distinguished professor, the Nicholas and Bernice Reuter professor of science and religion at Saint John's and Saint Ben's in Collegeville, Minnesota. And

a great panelist to be speaking to us about issues of artificial intelligence today. She lives in the woods and she cares for poodles that need homes, big poodles, and I think that's awesome. So Noreen, thank you for being here.

Ben Olson is a prominent figure in the field of responsible artificial intelligence, data compliance and hangs his hat at Microsoft. We're glad to have him here. Currently, I think he serves as co-chair for responsible... Is it responsible learning at the World Economic Forum?

Ben Olson:

Used to, but you can say that.

Doyt Conn:

Used to. He had an impact there. But he has a background in the contemplative traditions with the Evangelical, the Catholic, the Orthodox Christian communities and Buddhism. And that's something that plays out in your work at Microsoft and in a way that he helps form people in thinking about their role in creating safe artificial intelligence.

So if you have more questions about that, hopefully we'll have a chance to ask him.

And then there is Paolo Benanti, who is the Pope's AI guy. Born in Italy. His dad was an engineer and his mom was a school teacher and he is an evangelist for all things AI. He's currently a professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and is really out there evangelizing the Rome call for ethics and artificial intelligence. And what's so interesting about that is the collaboration of people that have signed that from IBM to the Italian government, to the Pope, to Microsoft, to Cisco, to Providence Health systems and the Archbishop of Canterbury and also Notre Dame and the University of Croatian, probably a bunch of other universities too, I imagine along the way. He is here in Seattle for a while and has developed a fondness for salmon. And he is going to be with us today. So thank you for being here.

Round of applause for them.

The title of this panel discussion is Incarnation in the World of Artificial Intelligence. And I'd like to start by asking the three of them to reflect on what they think about when they hear incarnation in the world of artificial intelligence. Noreen, can we start with you?

Noreen Herzfeld:

So I was really excited by the topic for this panel because incarnation I believe is the one thing that's unique

to Christianity among all the world religions that we believe that our God took on human form in order to have a fully authentic relationship with us. And this is something that you just do not find in the other two monotheisms. You don't find it in the same way in other world religions. Incarnation stands at the center of Christianity. So it's something that's really important to think about when we think about AI. When I think about what incarnation means, I think of two pieces. The first is embodiment and it's embodiment within an environment. Now we are embodied creatures and we are called by the scripture to be in relationship with God and with one another. But to have a fully authentic relationship, we need to meet as embodied creatures with one another.

And we know that our God also shared. We could say, well, AI can be embodied. You could look at an avatar on a screen, you can have it a robot walking around, but it's a very different embodiment. And because of the differences, and AI would always be somewhat alien to us because it will not experience the environment the way we experience the environment. And that will shape any thinking if it thinks that it does. And so it will be quite different. It won't be as human-like as we like to imagine it will in our science fiction.

The second point I want to make is to stress that embodiment is in an environment. Our thinking is shaped by our environment. I don't know if

any of you got a chance to see the little kids out in the courtyard and how they were playing with buckets of sand and water and stuff. They were learning how the world works as they did that. They were forming mental models, they were learning about gravity. If Johnny threw sand in Suzy's face, he was learning about human relationships. They were learning and building models of how the world works. LLMs don't do that. They don't have mental models of the world. They don't have a mental model of the environment which in they live. So again, that makes them very different from humans and from the way humans think.

And while they might be embodied in machines or in robots or whatever, it's a costly embodiment. Our embodiment is fueled by photosynthesis. The plants we eat or the plants that are eaten by the animals, then we eat. Their embodiment is fueled today mostly by fossil fuels. And so there's a very high cost to AI. When I hear someone, like last night's speaker say, "Everyone should be having three hour conversations with AI." Two things come to my mind. The first is, if we're all spending three hours talking to AI, who are we not talking to? How is that going to cut into our building those fully authentic embodied relationships with one another? And the second thing that I'm thinking about is, well wait a minute. AI is really costly to run. It takes a lot of power to train those AIs. And behind

that is the whole power of the web. Those AIs are trained on the web.

Well guess what it takes to keep all that data about everybody on the web? Power. Okay. And then you ask AI a question and it's going to come up with an answer. Ask it the question again tomorrow, it might come up with a very different answer, which means every time it's regenerating an answer, what does that take? Power. AI is not going to scale, not the AI we have right now. If everybody is having conversations all day with AI, we are going to be exacerbating climate change really a lot. And if we don't get a handle on climate change, it doesn't matter what we do with AI. We're toast.

Doyt Conn:

Thank you.

Who wants to follow that? Ben? Paolo? Either one of you want to jump in on what you think about when you hear incarnation in the world of AI?

Ben Olson:

Happy to. Well, when I hear incarnation as a Byzantine Catholic, I hear two words. I hear incarnation and I hear annunciation. So I hear the words of the angel Gabriel speaking to Mary. I hear Mary's acceptance of the will of God in her life to make the incarnation possible. And I think of that as a paradigm for us as we start to work with something so new, something so seemingly alien. There's this sense of a fundamental

openness to other intelligences within our faiths traditions that I think is foundational to who we are. In essence, we are those open to the other, open to the mystery, open to that mystery becoming part of our lives, becoming part of our breath. And I think of it like...

There's a few other lessons here and inspirations I'm taking from this, from my work at Microsoft where I'm building the technologies. I'm working with product developers, I'm working with lawyers, I'm working with the powers that be in responsible AI. And I think of it like somebody like myself or really anybody working in technology has to ask themselves what is the will of God at this time and this moment for this specific thing? Not in an abstract way, but in the complexities, just like Noreen was talking about, of what the environment's calling us to do, what our customers are saying, what the regulators are saying, where the wind is blowing too, where the spirit's blowing. So in some ways, just reflecting on First Corinthians and speaking with you all today of being God's temple, we're in God's temple. We are God's temple. We are Theotokia. In the Eastern tradition, we are God bearers ourselves. We go through the same process as Mary, to process and metabolize what is the will of God for the moment, the duty of the moment as the servant of God.

Catherine Doherty would say, "What is the duty of the moment of the church you're in,

the denomination you're in, the practice you're in, the position you're in to make this maximally good, most beneficial kind of thing for the world?" I think of some older paradigms are like we built cars in the past and those cars somewhat have sometimes have dubious effects on society. So for example, tire runoff, if you're not aware, can harm the salmon population that Father Paolo loves so much. A Tesla has tires, a Tesla harms salmon, right? Just the secondary, tertiary effects of systems can be so difficult to discern.

We're in this early stage with AI where yes, it's super important to shape and to create with the deepest possible frameworks, metaphors, spiritual traditions, religious traditions embodied in ourselves and then we can embody that in the systems that we build.

And so I just maybe would end, and I'll talk more about this later if you all like it, but the sense of Mary saying, the Magnificat, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord." What does it mean to have this technology proclaim the greatness of the Lord alongside us, along with us as we're open to this new way of thinking together?

Doyt Conn:

Paolo?

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

Thank you. First of all, let me praise the Lord because seeing all of us so different, all unite on this topic is something that tells me... Praise the Lord because the Holy Spirit is still

upon us and the fact that the AI topic is so early and we don't get enough time to be divided is wonderful news. So we can stay united on this. And this is my personal praise to the Lord and thank you for having me.

Well, let's jump inside the question. As a Franciscan asking incarnation to a Franciscan. We invented the nativity is a really dangerous question. I will resist to the temptation and I jump inside this challenge with AI. First of all, I believe that there is a cultural confrontation every day on the linguistic frontier between a machine that every time they become much more human and we talk to our digital assistant in a way in which we can do like another human beings, and human beings that understand themselves much more every day as a machine.

If you look at what neuroscience is telling about us, a lot of people are talking about a computational brain. So this has to be taken in account because it's a double process. It's not just only the machine that is growing in capabilities, it's also a delusional approach to what a human being is. And that could produce a lowering of estimation on what does it mean in incarnation, especially for our faith. So this is the broader contextual things. Well, let's move to the second point. Why a machine could be so intelligent? There is a lot of answers, but I think that the one that could help us to have a reflection is the core element that is behind, that is the church during theorems that

say that every process is equivalent when we moved from a machine to another in a computational way.

And so, we use programs on different machines because they can execute it with different time depending on the power. But the process is the same. The answer is the same. Well, an artificial intelligent system relies on a church during problems or theorems that means that there is not an embodied entity in front of us, but something that is incarnated and could exist without incarnation. Theologically speaking, this is something that pings on us. And what does it mean that we exist in a substrate that is our body that is not equivalent to another substrate? I can have a picture of my summer vacation on a USB drive and they can resist to different substrate because I move one from the other. That's not for us. That's not our faith. So this is a first strong theological element that I think we should put in the middle.

There is a deep difference between something that works, AI, and someone that exists, me and you. So for example, if you have a computer and you look at the little LED light of computer, that simple turn on when you use the hard disk, it's an old model, the new model don't turn on. But just to give you a sense of what I would like to tell you, that kind of light technically speaking is not so different from the kind of signal that is connecting my tooth to my brain when I have a tooth pain. It's a low voltage signal that transmits

from the tooth up to the center of reception of the pain in the brain. But if a computer works all day, the LED is always on. At the end of the day, it simply works. If I had a deep tooth pain for all day, it was a bad day.

Well, this is a difference in quality. We are someone that exists and the quality of our existence produces a judge on what is our life. A machine is simple functioning, every day after the other. When I teach my students, I used to provoke them, projecting a duck and an [inaudible 00:22:34] dryer. They have the same silhouette, but if I turn off the [inaudible 00:22:43] dryer, I can turn it on. If I turn off the duck, we can just have a dinner together. Well, this is the difference between something that works and has to remain something and someone that exists. And in this existence there is another layer that is salvation. There is another horizon. Well, those are tension. That simple cultural belief can blur, can avoid inside conversation, can erode something that is connected to what we are, that are used to be expressed in the term of dignity. Because our journey is unique. There is this [inaudible 00:23:28] uniqueness that is not like a computer that works and works and works. This is another element of theological reflection.

Well then let's move on something else. As someone that, I'm a geek, that loves to work with computers, I know that there is a paradox and it's called the Moravec paradox. What is the Moravec

paradox? Well suppose, let me express it. It's much, much easier for a machine to do high cognitive tasks than not lower cognitive task. So supposing that you would like to buy a solar calculator that is able to make a square roots of a number. I went to Amazon yesterday, 98 centesimos of a dollar are enough to buy one. Then you have to pay something for expedition. But less than one buck. Well, if you would like to buy a mechanical heart that is able to open up that door, it's not enough \$175,000. But if we look at the human beings, a 4-year-old kid, like you said before, is able to open up the door and go outside and play. And if you don't pay attention, it could be in danger itself. Well, to make a square root, K8, K9, I don't know. So it's a different quality. And this is because this lower cognitive level ability are not in the machine because the machine is not embodied.

So part of our reasoning is not everything here. And this is an anthropological error, but is embodied, is everywhere. I'm thinking also with my body in my arm, something that is not possible for a machine. This is the reason why a bot is much more proficiency than not a robot. The robots are missing something. That is this idea of embodiment. What stressing the difference is something else that's to be taken in account to consider what does it mean incarnation for AI.

Third and last element, I am a scholar of the Jesuits. Every Jesuit

has used to make three example. At the end of my PhD I went to my Jesuit professor and I told him, "Why you always make three examples?" He told me, "First, there is nothing bad. Second, it's not true. Third, I can explain better things." Stop. So I cannot resist to make you a three-point answer.

Well, the third point is neuroethics. So this idea that come from neuroscience to understand our neurons as a computational element in our brain. And this is producing a lens that allow us to read what we are as humans, in a new perspective that simple consider embodiment as a secondary thing in what we are. If you take a neuron, a neuron is receiving an electrical signal from a precedent neuron, to dendrites, is shooting an electrical signal through an axon to the next one. If you analyze the electrical signal in the axon, you will see a so-shaped wave. I make it short, it's a zero one wave, really digital. At the end of the axon, that electrical signal simple open up some kind of vesicles that are containing chemicals, neurotransmitters, that will be absorbed by the next neuron. But because they are polarized in the next neuron, they produce an augmentation of the potential, that then it will be released to the nucleus.

So, a neuron, electrically speaking, is receiving in analogous way, and is transmitting in a digital way. This is something that we know

very well in a lot of devices that are in our pockets, and is a DAC, Digital Analog Converter. But if it's a DAC, we can schematize all the brain as a sort of computational signal device that push ourselves not in the direction of existing, but in the direction of working. So these three elements, the idea of having a sort of Moravec's paradoxical element, this idea of simple having church touring pre-existing condition. And the neuroethical discovering, neurotechnological discovering on the computational brain, are a huge question mark, not on the machine, but on what we are. This is my final comment.

So AI is questioning human beings, what we are. And this is the challenge that, as faith, we have to answer. There are some that simple allow us to pray what we are because you remember us. This is the challenge. And in this challenge, I think theology has to be able to give back a new answer, an answer that say what we are that is not a machine-like function. Otherwise, it'll be always a defending element from an pinging machine on human characteristics. That is a simple question in time for AI.

Doyt Conn:

Thank you. A lot comes to my mind hearing that feedback, the answer to those questions. So, when I think about the internet, I think about it being an expression of the internal thought process and state of being

a consciousness of a person or all people that's all of a sudden played out publicly. And so what we see out there tells us something about maybe who we are collectively inside.

And so sort of to your point, and I've read that, and it was a startling idea to me, and it seems as we think about AI, and the training of AI, and trying to create a value alignment between the goals of AI and what it can do, or generative AI, what it can do for people, how do we help as a church, Christians, think about the alignment between human values, and how humans are acting out in the world, and how we train the artificial intelligence, and then how we hold the people that do train it to account around that? So the tension in the alignment problem and how that is more about trying to find common values within people, than it is, which then says something about the development of artificial intelligence. Ben, do you want to pick up that?

Ben Olson:

So, reflecting on maybe another conversation with Father Paolo is that, in Microsoft and in these larger consortiums, we do start with principles. And I think it's important that we talk about those for a second. Just that principles can be memorable, they can be short and pithy, they can be things that can be applied to many different sorts of scenarios. And they typically embody

the things that we care most about. Now, and by embody I don't mean the depth of the term embody there, but I mean more just that they reflect an aspiration as well as an intention. And so it's like privacy, security, reliability, safety, inclusiveness, fairness, transparency. These form not just like marketing material, but they're part and parcel of how we think about AI systems.

I'll give you an example. So I am working right now on making sure that our systems are really effective in a multilingual-multicultural sense. And I think it's super important that we don't just anchor our systems on a English western speaking biased system here. It's like, how do you both train, and verify, and set up constraints, and block lists, and moderation and all this stuff, that's effective not just in English but in German, in Italian, in French, in Chinese, Japanese and so on? We call them tier 1, tier 2 sometimes languages, and then tier N, right? There's lots of languages that have very small representation. But just this problem alone to solve it requires so many different facets of collaboration, cooperation, innovation on the software stack, on the people collaboration problem, how do we pay people who volunteer and annotate systems? How do we use the latest and greatest AI models to feed that back in? How do we take in the latest and greatest regulatory requirements and policies on this? And then, how

do we systematize it so we can do it better and better? On and on and on. It's just one problem.

This is one problem among the thousand I could choose for you. Not that I have a thousand in here, but maybe a couple dozen that's juggling around. And I just think that this thing is beautifully complex. But to simplify it, it's we think, how can we make this system effective across different languages? How can we make it so that somebody who does not speak English as a first language, it's accessible to them, it's fair, it has parity with the other languages? And then you go on from there, right? It's just a small problem, again, but it means a lot to me. And it's just one example of, the alignment has to embody a number of principles, and all these systems, and collaborations. And it's beautiful, it's made possible because of technology in some ways. This collaboration across cultures, collaboration across languages. Think of the collaboration, even the systems themselves embody warts and all, problems and all. And how can we make that more beautiful.

Doyt Conn:

Follow up thoughts?

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

Well, first of all, we have a problem on defining what is ethics. And this is a huge problem in a so plural world. And we can get confused and not be effective, because sometimes like Wittstein was used to say, "We

think that we explain each other and then we have to simply clarify something." But in reality, we have to clarify everything, and exceptionally in some occasions we can understand each other. It was a little bit pessimistic, it was German. Well, the point is, when we ask an ethical approach to AI, what we are asking? An English judge, was used to say that ethics is what is enforceable by law. So, on the sinking Titanic, when someone shout, "First, women and kids," and everyone allow women and kids to go first, that was ethics. It's isn't enforceable by law, but it's working.

Well, if we constrain ethics on this, we are asking for something that is enforceable by standard, as a value, this element, because it's a cultural sensibility, but it's not probably the main ethical concern that we have on AI. That could be tier 2, to be to your element, a gentle AI that could be able to handle with differences.

The first element that we have to focus on ethics is connected much more on what does it mean to take a decision. And a decision is something that produces an effect. Well, when we take our decision, sometimes we take the decision based on values. For me, marriage is not the first value of my life, for someone else, it's the best values of his life. If we put values as the core of the ethical of AI, everyone has his own values. And everyone has the right to have his own values and his own hierarchy.

So we cannot find an agreement. It's not the value-oriented ethics that we would like to have. Then there is also an epistemological problem here, but we can see later.

The second element, we have norms. Do not kill, for example. But usually, a norm is a word that would like to defend the value. I think that the life is a high value, do not kill is a norm to defend that kind of value. So in that sense, a norm is not universal, as a value is not universal. And it's not this section of ethics now that could be workable for what we desire for AI.

There is a third ethical element, that was already quoted, that is principle. So, wherever I go, everyone that I talk, if I asked to him, "Is it possible for you that if a autonomous car finds itself in a situation in which there is an avoidable accident, should decide to minimize the loss?" Everyone tell me, "Yes, it's reasonable." Well, this is a principle, minimizing the loss. That could be universal. That could be spreadable away. And this is what was said before me by starting from principle.

So principle could be a set of elements that could respect the difference of values of every one of us, that can bypass the struggle to find that normativity, but could be included in this moment in something like an AI that is able to, in some ways, surrogate human decision process. And the struggle at this point will be, let's define a minimum set of workable principle, that in our faith perspective is, let's

try to define the maximum allowed number of common principles around the world. And this is part of the job of Rome call for AI ethics. That was called the Roman Purpose, not Vatican. Because it happened in Rome, but it's not a Vatican stuff. And because it's made by a Franciscan, it don't has to be an official document of the church. It's a call. It's a cultural movement that has its goal the day in which is not anymore needed, when that kind of principle will be included in our culture.

And now we find an agreement on six of the principles. Probably, if we work, we could arrive to 8, 9, 10, something like that. But I think that the core element of ethics that we are talking about on AI should be the set of principles that simply try to describe a criteria in this moment that could be enough for starting.

Then, let me close on ethics of AI on this element. Ethics is so powerful. It's a voice that has the ability to reach the deepest point of your heart. Walking on the street and hearing a newborn crying, and if you turn your head you see this newborn that is abandoned in a box on the street, touch something inside you, you tell yourself, "I cannot simple step away. I have to do something." But it's a voice. You can ignore it. So we have not to pretend from ethics something that ethics is not. It's not a law. It could be ignored, it's fragile. It's so powerful, but also fragile. So the core element is we have to respect ethics for what is it, and we can

produce a huge impact knowing that we have a huge limitation because we are talking of ethics. And then some other elements like hard law principle has to join the field to be really effective.

Doyt Conn:

Any thoughts on that?

Noreen Herzfeld:

Just following up on what Father Paolo was just saying, we heard this morning that companies will basically follow the law. And so our ethical principles insofar as they can be embodied in our legal structures will need to be, and I think churches can have a voice in calling for that, in calling for our laws. We're going to need a lot of new laws to keep up with things.

So for example, consider lethal autonomous weapons. At some point an autonomous weapon is going to commit a war crime. Who will be held responsible? We cannot hold the machine itself to be responsible. And so we need laws that say, if you deploy this in this situation, here is the person who is responsible.

Now, I want to add just two other things there. You mentioned the idea that AI might somehow overcome divisions in society. And I think we need to look at social media as a sort of a caveat. Social media was initially thought to be something that was simply going to connect us all, and bring us all together. And

what has it done instead? Well, we see how it's put us into our own little bubbles, where everybody only hears what they want to hear, and are no longer really speaking to people in the other camp. We again heard this morning about how, groups will train their own AIs. So we can't really imagine that there's going to be one singular AI out there that we'll all be interacting with. We will all be interacting with parochial AIs that have been trained by different groups of people that hold different sets of values and hold different things dear. So I'm not sure I see that this is really going to bring us together.

And then one final quick point I want to make is that, the more we outsource decision-making and agency to machines, the more we actually take away the chance for us to grow in virtue, because virtue is gained through habitually making decisions, and choices, and engaging in actions for the good. And if we are not making those decisions and engaging in those actions, but letting the machine do it for us, we will be losing the opportunity to grow in wisdom and in grace ourselves.

Audience:

I'm a theology professor and Episcopal priest. I'm convinced that AI is not human. I'm not convinced that an AI couldn't have the attributes of personhood. So I'm wondering if you could help us think about this in terms of, could

there be an AI person? And if so, how would we respond to it? Because of course, we have a precedent for a disembodied personhood, or in the terms of the Father and the Spirit, and the second person of the Trinity wasn't incarnated until the second person of the Trinity was incarnated. So I'm curious less about could AI be human, as could AI be personed? And if so, how that would then impact our ethics and our sense of personhood?

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

Well, I'm excited by the question because it's interesting. But I think that we have to be back to AI. And we have to be back to AI in the perspective of Turing test. When Turing tried to define what does it mean to be intelligent for a machine, he has to confine and define what intelligence is. In this famous Turing test, that was taken by an imitation game, there is someone behind the wall. And if someone and something are not recognizable by me, someone is like something. And this is the Turing test. Well, but the Turing test is simple flipping out a model that from Plato ongoing was the model behind our way to know. Because in The Republica dialogue, in the cave, myth of cave, when you have something that projects a shadow on the wall, is not enough to see a similar shadow to know, but you have to go beyond the wall.

So I think that this idea of personhood in AI is still a shadow.

And we cannot answer to you until we don't go beyond the wall, to see if there is something that like a personhood could be alive. And this is the quality. Because what I think is that an AI is not alive. If I turn it off, I can turn it on. I'm alive if I'm turn it off, thanks to God for my life, and see you on the other side. Well, that's the difference, on this level is the difference. But the question that you point force us to think, what does it mean personhood? What does it mean life? That is not easier than that. Don't forget this, that what is life is a long, long, long history question. There is different answers. The last answer that we give in Western culture arises from the definition of information. When Shannon produced a definition of information, the difference that make the difference, and information is not noise. Well, a physician, one winner of the Nobel Prize, simply take the definition of information that is taken on parallel on the definition of entropy to tell. Well, I know a negative entropy in beings, the alive beings, that simple is able to maintain an order through generation. So probably there is an information layer beyond that. And in the book, *What is Life?* Schrodinger, this is the name of physician, simply start to think that should be a periodical crystal inside what is alive that contain and transmit these areas of information. Two young doctors read the paper of Shannon, read the book of Schrodinger and start

to look for this, a periodical crystal. They never found it, but they found a double spiral, the DNA, Watson and Crick. And from that point alive is something that store and modify information.

But this is a struggling point for us in that direction. Well, to make sure something that is bigger, I wrote a book on this. Is it the Bible in this direction? Well, the Bible has a unique different approach to life because alive is just one God and alive is recognized as a quality of relationship with that and only alive beings. In human beings is described by different Hebrew words like "nefesh," like "ruach" and so on. But every word used to define life is a relationship word. It's where we need something to be alive.

I'm not an intelligent machine. I cannot translate among language, but that Hebrew word means that like a thirsty deer is looking for water, we are looking for the source of our life. And so this relationship nature of life to the only alive is a theological element that we can push inside your question. And it's really interesting that a known embodied person is a relationship one like the one in the Trinity. But it's just a suggestion. We should, I think, study a couple of decades to find something. But thank you for your question.

Noreen Herzfeld:

Speak to that briefly from a slightly different angle. Historically, there

were human beings that were not considered to be full persons. And the problem was we wanted to use these human beings as if they were tools. They were used as tools. Now we run into this same confusion with AI. It's essentially a tool, but we like to think of it as a person. We'd like to think of it as a... Well think of it as last night's talk, as a partner, right? Stretch was Bob's partner in writing. The problem is, something cannot be your tool, your servant and your partner at the same time.

I mean that's what we ran into with slavery, that they were supposed to be persons and yet they were also tools that people we're using. And so we have to think of AI as one or the other. When we try to make it both, we run into this problem. Now how do we decide which one we want it to be? Well, let's go back to thinking about slavery. What made slavery so wrong? People were suffering. People were hurting. Can AI suffer? Can it hurt? No, you can turn it off, turn it back on. You can throw it away or get a new model or hack it and turn it into something it wasn't, and it doesn't suffer. And so to me that says this is tool. This is tool not person.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

May I jump a little second. That a lot of useful things come here from the feminist theologians.

Because all the studies on animality and the different from animality and human beings, I read

a lot of that. They are so precious. So we have to recover that diversity in theology to be able to answer to this. But thank you because I think that the relationship that we have with animals in the past and also the category that we use to define different human beings are really helpful. Thank you. Thank you.

Chris Bennett:

Hi Chris Bennett coming from first Miami Presbyterian church and I have a background in policy and kind of theological musings on these issues. I actually have a different theological hermeneutic than Michael. I actually believe that in relationship to God, actually, I think we'd all agree here and if not, I'm available for counseling, that we're not God.

So in relationship to God, that actually makes us alternative intelligence. So we're God's AI because my cat has intelligence. I'm convinced of it. So there are different kinds of intelligence. And I'm a technological optimist. So I actually believe that AI, if we have that theological hermeneutic, we're kind of like children with their parent and we're learning God's great mysteries of creation and development as we go. And so I believe actually that AI could potentially lead us to new places of holiness because I think the world, and I think this is demonstrably true, is better than it was even 500 years ago. That's a result of technological progress and the work of the church in many ways.

The question I have with this is as practitioners, many of us of theology in very contextual situations, particularly for you Father, I'm interested in what you see in your religious life, your practice, and particularly in your religious order, that you think can contribute to the healthy formation of persons and technologists that can help us to continue to create better technologies.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

Yeah, thank you. I agree with you, but it's not a destiny. It's a possibility. And I'm afraid that because every tools could become a weapon and because there is the scene, I think that AI could be turned to a weapon or weaponized. So as a Franciscan, I strongly believe that we can have a really positive outcome from that use of technology, but we shouldn't give it for granted. And this is why I am playing with ethics, because ethics is like something that remember us. It could be weaponized. It could be weaponized. It depends on us.

Then, can we use AI to be better human or to train better people or what we can give to engineer to do better day work? I don't have an answer, but what I can tell you is the last July I was in Japan, Hiroshima in the place of the bomb with 21st century religious leader all together signed their own call for AI ethics. And well, the Islamic one come to me and tell should we not write a simple list of sentences that every

religious engineer every morning can read before he's starting his work to orient himself to the good.

Sounds good for me, them to make the least I think that we can struggle a little bit, but it sounds good because we are betting on the human beings. And I think that in a season in which everyone is betting on the machine, betting on the human beings believe that the human beings as an imago dei, something that bring insights, like you said before, something from God, I think is the most faithful things to do, because we are praising what God make when he created us. Then every one of us in his own definition of what does it mean to be Christian has a different accent on this? And we have to be different.

But every one of us believe in incarnation as you said before. And so I think that this accent could be really faithful and really open to a positive outlook to the technology, remembering us that everything is possible. That the first day that as a humans we take in the hand the club, we still was in the cavern. It could be a tool to open much more coconut or a weapon to open up much more schools. And so it can happen again.

Ben Olson:

So I was telling Father Paolo this story, and I keep coming back to cars, but in the Eastern tradition we have a tradition where on the Feast of Elijah, we bless the cars that we drive. So the

priest comes out and sprinkles the holy water on the cars and we drive through. You got to get the children extra with the holy water. That's the best part. Splash them good. But in that prayer that we pray for the Feast of Elijah, we talk about how God guided us to invent the car, right? There's this deeper sense, there's this deeper work at play, I think with AI here. Where to think of it just as a human creation, I think undercuts a little bit what's happening and what's possible to what Father just mentioned. The possibility here is that it can reflect the best of who and what we are if we let it and if we work towards it together.

And so I think of it in the context of blessing and just the call back to what can churches do, what can the denominations do. In your own way, in your tradition, bless the work, bless the systems you make, bless like Father was saying in beginning of a project, even building it for your denomination. Bless the process with this orientation towards an openness towards what's possible. What's the best that can happen here? And also look at what's the worst that can happen. I think it's our duty to look at the kind of muck and mire of what can go wrong with these systems.

And so if you are building AI and leveraging it in your context for your missional work. I know that's a focus. And even just in the administration of your organizations as organizations, letting that kind of perspective of blessing come

through and bring in this new era of it is yet another type of tool. It's the next car, the next big thing that maybe we'll have a robot in our house or whatever all that ends up happening. That stuff will happen to some degree. But I think of it like our orientation must stay with this. I think it is your call, Chris, I think your name was, this call to holiness, this call to transformation as we work with this technology. And that's a beautiful call and I think it's something we all have a role to play in.

Noreen Herzfeld:

Just a quick story. Are any of you familiar with Father Justin, the AI? A Catholic group created an AI to answer questions that Catholics might have, and they wanted it to be seen as knowledgeable and authoritative. And so they named it Father Justin. And people were asking all sorts of questions and it was trained on a lot of Catholic literature. And what they didn't foresee, and this comes to the point you were making of you have to try to foresee problems, is that people would start confessing to Father Justin and asking for absolution. And Father Justin was giving it, and-

Suddenly the hierarchy said, whoa, whoa, wait a minute. And poor Father Justin got defrocked and is now Justin the theologian.

Audience:

From Texas. I am thinking a little bit about further along into the

future here, so to maybe offer this and to invite some feedback or your thoughts on it. But if we look at the work that David Chalmers is doing on consciousness and Rowan Williams, Charles Taylor picking that up and the language discussion, and then also the work of David Mintley Hart, for instance, who is pressing. So trying to hit a little bit of everybody up there. But they all are discussing this, what is this thing that we talk about as consciousness? And David Chalmers certainly has something there that he's pressing on, not just answering the question of consciousness, but dabbling in the questions that we've been facing today. So what I wonder about, or I'm curious about, is there a difference between embodiment that is created by God and the embodiment of those things created by humans?

And where does your thinking press on us a little bit to recognize that difference? Certainly we are touching it a little bit with suffering, right? That is certainly a piece of that. But there's also something here in the theology of creation that Father Paolo has mentioned, but that could be brought up a little bit too. As I think about the Imago, the image of humans being replicated in Baudrillard's idea of the further it gets away from us, the further it gets away from God at the same time. And so it begins to become a technology all on its own that no longer represents us or God in some way. So I'm just curious about that created theology,

creation theology and how that plays in some of your thoughts. Thanks.

Noreen Herzfeld:

On that one with two thoughts. One is of course one of Chalmers' most famous articles is what is it like to be a bat? And he talks about how if you encounter your environment through echolocation rather than say through sight and hearing, it is going to be completely different. And the bat is going to think in completely different ways because it has a different sensory apparatus. And we're going to run into the same thing with AI that we can give it a certain sensory apparatus, but it's not quite the same as ours. And so it's going to encounter the world in a very different way.

But the other point I wanted to make, which is just adding onto something that Father Paolo was saying earlier about how we think with our muscles, with our body as well as just our brain, this idea that, oh, we could just map the neuronal structure of the brain and it'll be the same. It won't be. For one thing, we have another whole neuronal structure in our gut. And we know that these talk to each other, that when we say I have a gut feeling, it's closer to being literal than we used to think it was. But we also now know that we have a whole microbiota in our gut and that if that gets screwed up, we could fall into a depression. It will change what happens in our minds.

In other words, we're not that simple. We are an entire ecosystem. We don't think of ourselves that way. But if you think about the microbiota that you carry around inside you on your skin, everything, you are more than half non-human cells, and you need them. We shouldn't overdo the antibacterial stuff. So our notion that we can create something analogous to the human body has been very overly simplistic and that we could reproduce the human mind. We would not get anything like human thought without essentially reproducing the whole body or at least a goodly portion of it. And that even includes the microbiota. So the task ahead for scientists to say, no we're just machines ourselves. And in that case, this can all be replicated on another platform. That is a huge task.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

If I can a little bit, thank you for your question by the way. There are two elements. The first one is this temptation of linearity. We are complex in the sense that we are not simple the results of our parts. If I simply unscrew all the screw of an engine of my car, then I can put it together and it works. If I divide you in all the product that make you, I can try billions of years, but you are dead. This is not with the virus. This is the reason why virus is not alive. But an alive being is something that is not simple like the sum of

the different parts. And so this is a question mark on what we are.

The second point is, is it a caution something that a Turing machine can compute? This is the core element because if the answer is yes before and later, we could have a computable cautions by a computer.

Well, which kind of problem can a Turing machine compute? Only the problem to make short a long answer that can have an interrupt that no one ends in calculation. Well, if we, no one ends, we are dead. So conscience is not a Turing computable problem. We will not have a machine with conscience until the machine is a Turing machine.

Is it thinkable in future to having computer that are not Turing machine? Theoretically, yes, we don't have it. We will see it. It'll be the next meeting that we'll do. But for now, it's not possible that a Turing machine has a conscience.

Audience:

One of the things that I totally agree with what everyone's stating, I think the comment before was that we're not little Gods walking around and we can't just simply backward re-engineer human life. And I think the real reason would be too is it's kind of like Pinocchio, the Pinocchio story. And Pinocchio wanted to be a boy, and Geppetto couldn't make it happen. We don't have the ability to grant a soul. We can't do it. I don't care how much we try, how much we backward re-engineer and we

come up with all these different things. We barely know what a soul is. So only God can do that. And if we could do it, the question would be, what do we need God for? So that was my comment. Thank you.

Audience:

So I'm worried, I guess not so much about the singularity and super intelligence, but more so about the proliferation of this range of technologies that are being grouped under the label AI that have the potential, I think, to make our worst impulses far easier and far more efficient, make it more efficient to discriminate, to exacerbate inequality, to absolve ourselves of critical thinking, exploit, extract, concentrate wealth. That I think is a very possible outcome. And I'm not sure that current lists of principles developed are sufficient to prevent that. An example, right?

So there's this article that came out a few years ago. I don't know if you all have seen it. If you haven't, you should look it up. That applies the FAT framework, fairness, accountability, transparency. And the article takes it, and they come up with this narrow AI system and they show how to make it demonstrably fairer and more transparent. But the system itself is an algorithm for turning the elderly into high-nutrient slurry. It solves problems, right? The food insecurity and aging population, and they show how to make the algorithm fairer and

more transparent. It's deliberately provocative. It's a modest proposal, sure, but a lot of our conversations, even here, there's an error of inevitability to AI and it's adoption that-

that makes me nervous, actually.

So here's my question. Do we have space to consider rejection, denial, refusal to participate as ethical possibility, especially for people of faith? Can we ask questions like, "Is a ethical AI even possible?" Can we conceive of people of faith adopting a posture of interruption, jamming the proverbial stick in the spoke of the inevitability discourse? Can we say no? Can we say, "There are domains where this shouldn't go?" That's my question.

Ben Olson:

Sure, sure. Yes, you can say no. Please do. I think it's a critical role that people of faith, I consider myself one, to take that critical eye on this whole endeavor. I think, yes, we've been speaking positively. We mentioned there are negative outcomes too, and it's not just all a big balancing act and scale. Really, we have this call to be transformed ourselves to be able to see more clearly what's happening here. And I think one of the challenges we have is this desensitization that's happening with the kind of mythic powers that are being unlocked with AI. I mentioned translation, but there's computer vision instantaneously analyzing

something we could never comprehend, reading all the tomes inside the Vatican or having that at the fingertips of the AI systems that we build, like the whole history of the web and so on.

We can never fit that in here.

There's a difference there that's important to look at clearly. And I think that this goes back maybe for Lawrence here, good point about little Gods and there's one way to look at it where we could idolize the systems that we're building. An idol versus icon I think is a really effective lens to filter these questions through. I think there was a previous question around lines of thinking that we should pursue. I think this is an important one, things of wood and stone and color coming together to be a transportative experience of the divine. The icons that surround us here, take a look. It's one attempt, one attempt to make the divine transparent and accessible to us here and now, not just 2,000 years ago. And I think this goes back to the prompt at the beginning of this, the incarnation.

Why are we here talking about the mashup of these two things? So I don't have a perfect way to wrap this up, but I think the point you're making of resistance, of criticality, of being awake and aware of what's happening is super important. And then I think corporate structures are going to change and needs will change, new institutions developed and instantiated. Everyone here is either representing some church or

some nonprofit or some different way of being than, "I'm just in big corp, so who's this guy?" But I think the reality is, new structures will be made. You're part of that magic going forward.

And I think, yeah, I'll just keep it simple at that, that things like consent are super important here and now for big corporations. "Do we have your consent to user your data? Do you have consent to use the system?" But I can tell you that the conversations are shifting even beyond just permissibility. The conversations are like, "What's the bar? What's the human bar? Where are we going with this? What's the purpose of these systems? How can we build that more deeply into the system?" So seeing that happen and that shift internally right now in big companies is a good thing too. So I'll do what I can, but you do what you can and we'll come together.

Doyt Conn:

Other thoughts on that?

Noreen Herzfeld:

... a thought that kind of brings together both of the previous questioners here. I began my career as a computer scientist and might've just stayed a computer scientist, but I was teaching a course on AI and I got interested in the question of why we were so enamored with creating an AGI or a strong AI that was like us. And I actually went off on my first sabbatical thinking I was

going to deal with that question and fell flat on my face because it wasn't a question I could answer as a theoretical computer scientist because it was a question about human motivations, and that drew me into theology. But I think that God created us to be in relationship with God, who is a different intelligence to ourselves.

In other words, we are hardwired to seek for and wish to be in relationship with an intelligence that is other than human. Now, as we turn away from God, where do we find that? Well, we're looking for ET out in the heavens. We haven't had much luck there. Maybe we try talking to the porpoises or something or we say, "We'll create one ourselves." But you know what? Saint Augustine said, "Lord, you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." And I think it's idolatry when we turn away from God towards something made by human hands.

Audience:

My questioning or my curiosity is around the why of it. And it's getting back to the comment that we just had, like who is making the AI and why are they making it? And is that... Do we have some kind of disclosure so we understand, "What is the information you're gathering? How do you plan to use it?" Is there some way that we have that we... Is there some kind of regulation around that or how far have we developed yet?

Because I think purpose, intent, and motivation and transparency with that, why are we... We are enamored with this, "Oh, my goodness." And for good reason in many cases, and there's the other part. So how do we create, as a human community, those kinds of, I guess, guardrails, regulations so that we have an understanding of what's going on? I guess that's my question. I don't know if it's happening or if we're working on it or if it's already done and I don't know about it.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

If I can jump in on this. Well, last September, the United Nations general secretary appointed me as one of the 38 experts to work on this sort of attempt to have a global governance on AI. And the scenario is really, really complex because there is so much with AI. It's the hottest geopolitical topics around the world that can divide us, can produce new inequality, can simply be a new form of colonialism too. And I think that as churches, we should have a so huge attention to this, to simply in some way mitigate the effect and to praise a world that could be an imaging of the kingdom of the God. This is a mission that we have to take care of because if you have what's going on in the United Nation, there is a huge fracture between Russia, China, and the Western, and then can produce a really fertile environment for new conflict.

And then we have the global

south and no one is talking seriously how to build capacity there to not leave them behind. So I think that Christianity has a message that every human being is someone that has a value and that has to be something that shape the face of AI that we are building. So with AI, we have to recognize it, we can mitigate a lot of problem. There is a scarcity of ophthalmology. In all the world, there are only 100,000 ophthalmologists. Of them, only 10,000 are pediatrics. Now with a smartphone and a lens, you can recognize premature retinopathy in newborn that other ways they would become blind. Isn't it something that speaks about the mercy of God? Or you can discriminate people, you can simply sell the dignity of people. One of the things that touched me, I feel really free to talk about this with you because we share the faith.

There is a new way to handle asylum seeker. Before, when asylum seeker come to a border, we ask them, "Tell me your story, what's behind you?" Now we have the tendency to tell them, "Give me your data, and an algorithm will decide on you." So we are moving from a story with what does it mean theology to data, to people that are the most vulnerable human beings on the earth. They have no rights from the country where are coming to and they still have no rights to the country where they are knocking for. Is the naked Jesus on the cross. The way in which we handle these

people is what is the image of God in which we believe. I think that is a really prophetic point. And if we can say, "Are there limitation for AI?" Yes, yes. It's not an identification process, it's a human thing.

And this is also an answer to your question. And we have to be prophetic there. We have to shout that there is something else. How to do it? I don't know. It's not a matter of making revolution, it's not this, but to remember ourself, first of all, that there is something else. That we are not just the data that we are bringing with us. And let me be really clear, it's a huge unjust thing because if you come from a really oppressive regime, to get by, to remain alive, you have to leave no traces.

So probably you have not to produce data and now the condition to have you is, "Give me your data." Please. Isn't it an excuse to have people? But having an analysis of these cases, of the good and of the bad, I think also is a duty of our pastoral services, of our presence in the world, in the prophetic direction. And doing that together as women and men of faith, I think it will give to this a huge power, a huge power. And I think as Christians, as faith of the incarnated Jesus, that is a special duty for us.

Doyt Conn:

So we have the great privilege of hearing from two of you again later. I think, Noreen, you're leading a talk and Father Paolo will be in here at the keynote, so there's more time to talk

to these distinguished academics. But we'll have one more, and then we'll say a prayer. Audience:

I'm a parish priest in San Francisco and the Episcopal church and we've been circling a lot around the idea of creation in the Imago Dei in the image of God and something about this language from both last night as well as today about mystery, even though we've been told we have the competitive advantage as faith leaders of talking about mystery, it has me a bit uneasy in the way that we are talking about AI in the same way that we talk about God. And it seems to me as if... Well, obviously we were created in God's image but are not God as was shared earlier.

We are created in God's image, but we are not divine. We're not the same as God even though we're created in God's image. So do we need to explore a similar paradigm of what it means to create in the image of humanity, that creating something in the image of humanity is not the same as creating people, souls? And is that theological idea of creation in the image of humanity something that we need to explore more and articulate better?

Noreen Herzfeld:

This is something that I'm going to be talking about in a lot more depth in tomorrow afternoon's session. So if you're interested in hearing more about how theologians have understood the Imago Dei and how that translates to our making an Imago hominis, come back

tomorrow afternoon and you'll hear more about that.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

If I can jump in on a side element. There is a page in the Bible, the page about idol, and if you think what is said about the idol, they have ears, but they cannot listen to you, they have a mouth, but they cannot speak. I feel that some of our people in this age could have an ideological relationship to some form of AI. That is really in some way interesting from a faith perspective because the day in which is an algorithm that will tell you what is your destiny, isn't it an ideological relationship to something and not to the real God? In the old Roman, I live in Rome, my monastery is in the face of the foreign [inaudible 01:28:28] where the Roman temple, pagan temple was. At that time, a young man can go to the pagan temple with a chicken and ask to the priest, "Should I marry Lisa or Maria?" Maria is too much Christian name, so to name. And he will kill the chicken, make a correlation between the chicken and the star and tell you, "Let's go with Lisa."

Then tomorrow, I can go to my digital assistant, Mevir, and I can ask to Mevir, "Should I marry Lisa or Maria?" And Mevir will tell me, "Well, I

know you from when you were born. I collect all your data. I know your heartbeats. And because your last model of smartwatch gives me also the electrolytic capacity of your skin, I know also the amount of sugar in your blood. Because you may click on allow, I know also the position where the sugar in your blood move. And so I know how your heartbeat and your sugar in your blood was when you met every time Lisa and every time Maria. Connecting the data with the trillions of data that they have in my database, I will make a correlation and tell you that in a long term, Maria is better."

Isn't it the same things of the oracles? Isn't it a little bit something that the Bible is talking on producing a destiny through something that is not the real relationship with the real God? So cannot be a self illusion that we are producing because we are not feeling God anymore and we need some superior entity to avoid stress and distress. Isn't it something that as a religious people, should we be preaching about?

Doyt Gonn:

Amen. Thank you. We have a lot to go into. I invite you... Ben brought up the Magnificat. Of course, we sing that when?

Evensong. We have evensong tonight at 5:00 to come back into this space and seek the transcendent through sacred liturgy that is formed to allow us to do that. So I invite you to come back at 5:00. I thought maybe we'd just say a prayer right now. The Lord be with you. Let us pray.

The holy God, holy and mighty, holy immortal one, we sit here as a community in your presence, being your intelligence in the world, through the relationships that we live into, that you have set before us, that we may honor them and pursue them and give strength to them because of how much you love us. For the wisdom you've set before us with Paolo and Noreen and Ben and what they've shared, their hearts and their insights and their experiences to call our hearts out into the world, to help our communities that we lead and live in, to have a sense of your providence for how we are as Christians in the world. For this conversation and the blessing it is upon all of us we give you great thanks. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Summit Keynote: "Navigating the AI Revolution: A Call for Ethical Stewardship" (Paolo Benanti)

Introduced by Corey SchlosserHall

TL;DR

The transcript is a speech given by Father Paolo Benanti on the topic of ethics and AI technology. He discusses the importance of questioning technology and its impact on society. He emphasizes the need for ethics to address the power dynamics, market transformations, and the nature of technology. Father Benanti also highlights the role of the church in engaging in conversations about AI and advocating for justice and inclusivity.

Corey SchlosserHall:

So Paolo Benanti is here as our keynote speaker. One of the questions I keep getting time and time again as we have conversations around here, is how did they get to calling for ethics and responsible development before the rest of us? Now one of those things has to do with we mainliners are pretty slow to pick up on new tech developments, slower to seek to shape the development of these tools that help, and build, and sometimes make it difficult for humanity. But we are invited into this.

So one of the reasons why I find Paolo to be one of an apostle in this era is because he's a walking intersection. All important, essential innovations that happen, happen at intersections with people in different domains. And he's one of those folks who equally engages with a variety of corporations all over the world, he equally engages with governments who are creating regulations all over the world, and he engages with his own Roman Catholic Church, and he engages with the rest of us in the larger Christian Church. So he's this walking intersection and he's inviting us to participate in that intersection.

So thanks be to God for that.

From Italy by way of Seattle, we're so blessed by the Holy Spirit's synchronicity that you have come here to be with us. Thank you for being part of this journey together. Everybody welcome Father Paolo Benanti.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

Thank you. Thank you for this generous presentation. I am scared that I can just disappoint you after

this, but this is another element. Well, some of the elements that I would like to present you tonight probably are already come out during the panel. But just let me put them in a systematic presentation, it could help us to have a more broad topic of ethics on AI.

The first element and the first question that we should ask to ourselves, also to be a church, or churches, that would like to dialogue with the lay and plural society of today, is what does it mean to talk in an ethical way of technology? And so let's start from this. Here are two pictures taken on Easter morning. And you can see on the left side Easter morning, the first Easter of the last century, New York City, 5th Avenue, there are no cars, almost no cars. 13 year later you see the cars and there are no more horses.

Well we can imagine that ethics is something like an answer to something like that. What is better and what is worse? Now supposing that I have to provoke you with that, what is better between the two

scenarios according to you? Why?
Which one is better?

Which one? The left one or the right one?

Audience:

Left one.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

Why?

Audience:

No carbon emissions.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

No carbon emission. So better for the health. Thank you.

Audience:

The right one.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

Why?

Audience:

No horse poop.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

Then, someone else? Carbon emission versus horse poop.

Audience:

It's neutral. It just is.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

It's neutral. No presence of the Lord in the history. Lord have mercy on us, please. No, I'm joking. I can do it here, every one of us has faith.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

Okay, we can spend a lot of time on that. The bottom line is the question is wrong, but thank you for the answering on climate, because you know I'm a damn obsessive professor. And so I found this journal, it was published in 1908 and he said that 20,000 New Yorkers died the year before from infection connected to the poo of the horses. So the problem is in a long term we see the damage of that transformation, in a short term it was really an upgrade. So if ethics is simply an answer to the question, "What is better and what is worse?" the answer could be impossible, and we could be useless, or we could be divided among different perspectives on technology. There is a good news here. This is not ethics.

And what does it mean to have an ethical approach to technology? What does it mean to foster, like it was in the title of my keynote, a sort of ethical approach to technology? Well let's be back to New York City. The example that I'm trying to give you could be controversial because there are different historical approaches, but it's what's simply defined ethics of technology, starting from the late '80s. Starting from the late '80s, there was a famous paper from a Professor Langdon Winner that the title was provocative, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" Well if you go inside the paper there are two examples. The first one, New

York City and the building of the parkway that is one highway used to connect Manhattan to Long Island. The politician behind that is Robert Moses, one of the most famous politicians in New York. He's so famous that his biography won a Pulitzer Prize and is one of the best hundred nonfiction books in US market still today. More than a thousand page.

If you go inside this book, you can find that Moses has really today unacceptable ideas on politics, but that almost a hundred years ago was really accepted. The best part of the city has to be for the best part of population. And a really unacceptable idea was that the best part of population was the white, rich, middle class. Well the highway was used to connect Manhattan to Jones Beach, one of the best national parks around New York, that is in Long Island. And the question was, how we can keep Jones Beach just for white, rich middle class. Well if you see the street, you see a street like every other street. Asphalt and concrete. But the first thing that Moses did was not to build any public transportation system. There are no trains to go there. The second thing is that the bridges that are like every other bridge on a highway are two feet lower than the standard. No buses can commute. Only the people that can afford a car can go onto the bridge.

What is the lesson here? Every technological artifact once it's

released in a society, once it's deployed, is a form of order, is a displacement of power. Well, what is ethics? Questioning technology to make a community, to make stakeholders aware of this kind of effort. We are not bringing solution, better or worse, we are bringing questions. Isn't that a little bit evangelical? Yes, of course, but this is because we are among us. Well what does it mean that the first role of ethics is questioning how technology is shaping the power and giving an order to society?

In Italy, in Europe, during the pandemic we got vaccination given by public healthcare system. The access to that vaccination was given through an algorithm behind a web portal of the healthcare system. Well, you know we cannot vaccinate 50 million people altogether, so we decide to start to vaccinate the elderly and then we go back step-by-step. They are giving access to someone, they are denying access to someone else. Now in the digital space, questioning algorithms behind the AI system means questioning which kind of shifting of power, which kind of form of order are they injecting in society?

A simple, another example, think what the social media algorithms are doing to the kids. Which kind of addiction, which kind of mental problem could they propose? So welcome to ethics. Every time that we start to questioning technology just to understand, or to make

transparent, or to make visible to all the stakeholders about this kind of transformation. But this is not everything that is connected to the ethics of technology. I make a class of 140 hours about technology in my university, so I try to be concise. Thank you. This is a meta deductible thing, if you laugh, I didn't lose you. But this is for me.

Well the second example that I would like to propose to you is, what happened to the market of tomato and tomato cans in United States? In this 140 hour classes I spend a lot of time showing how the canned tomato allow United States to move from an agricultural country to a city center country. Early '70s there were 2,300 factory places in California that were growing tomatoes. And to pick that tomato, there was a seasonal migration from Mexico. A worker that picked tomatoes when the season is right, and then goes back to Mexico.

1975, the University of California Engineering Department developed a wonderful machine. Well this machine can move over the tomatoes, pick the tomatoes, crunch the plant, box the tomatoes, ready to go to the transformation to be canned. The cost of harvesting tomatoes dropped to two bucks for a ton. Nothing. What happened to the farmer about tomato production? At the end on the '70s, early '80s, the number of farmers drop from 2,300 to almost 200. Why? Is it the tomatoes not selling anymore? Are the Italians not anymore coming to

make sauces for Dave's spaghetti? No, that's not true. The number of canned tomatoes sold in US market grow, and grow a lot. But that kind of machine cost \$175,000 of '75, that means almost half a million today, and not all the farmers can afford it. So every time that we have an innovation, the cost of innovation produces a contraction of the market.

And now it's time of my bias. I'm Italian. Something bad happened. When you have a handpicked tomatoes, the hand is a wonderful tool. When you have a mechanical picking of tomatoes, especially in the '70s, the machine is not so like the hand. And so you have to select a tomato that can resist the mechanical compression. And for an Italian like me that is unbelievably bad. The tomato was much less tasty than the one before. My bias. And that means that innovation changes also the nature of the product. Contraction of the market, social justice. Change of the nature of the product.

Try to think what happened when we start to have a digital distribution of the news in the market. First only the company that can afford that kind of innovation remains. New York Times is still there. How many newspapers closed? Second, the most read news is not anymore the one with quality but the one that the algorithm is better to pick and distribute among people. Welcome to the area of fake news, filter bubble and things

like that. So ethics has also the duty to make this kind of question into technology simply to show that kind of transformation. It's not a matter of judgment, it's a matter of questioning technology.

So we are here to highlight that what we would like to propose, and this is probably one of the keys of the success of ethics of AI today, is something that is already in the heart of people that are developing technology, but made with a little bit more of systematicity because it's a discipline, because it's connected to study, philosophy, theology and what else.

Third element. Not all the technology is the same. We are used to a divide between special purpose technology and general purpose technology. Usually as human beings we are used to develop technology as an answer to a need that we have. So my memory is not like the one of an elephant. I need to retain some piece of information. We start to develop the little tablet with cuneiform, then we move to the press machine, the printer, we have the pencil, now we have the computer. So we have a need and innovation is simply a way to satisfy that need in the fastest way. So in that sense McDonald's is a huge innovation, starting from the steak. Well, the steak is better.

But what happened when we develop something that we define general purpose technology? A general purpose technology is not

a form of technology that is needed to do something, like the pen, the personal computer, the press, or something like that. But it's a form of technology that changes the way in which we do everything. Try to think about electricity. Electricity is not needed to do something but change the way in which we do everything. Also, this church. If we were in a church in the 18th century, all the things that happened in the church was without electricity. The wonderful evensong that we witnessed tonight was possible thanks to the electricity. Also, the music was impossible without electricity.

And what happened when we develop a general purpose technology? Well let's go back to the time in which we develop electricity. On the left side of the slide you see Samuel Insull, Irishman, immigrated to United States, that simply was the founder of General Electric Company. And he apply a model, an economic model that we can define as democratization. Lower the price, the family acquired, and we distribute it in a huge number. It's the same model behind the gigs on your mobile phone. Lower the price, more gigs, everyone is using the mobile phone.

On the right side, the same obsessive professor that before found the publication, found this map. That is a map that come from the Lenin's first five-year plan on the new born Russia, URS. He was planning the

distribution of the Soviet thinking through electricity. So when we have a general purpose technology is not only the transforming of power, it is not only the contraction of the market, but also the horizon in which we develop and distribute that technology that shapes the society in a special and unique way. It could foster freedom or could foster ideology. Is it not the case that we have another kind of conflict today between a democratic way to distribute AI and a new way that is from a non-democratic country? I don't know how to do to it to not quote China, but it's China model.

And there are some kinds of ideology that are simply not compatible with a faith model too. But this is much more than ethics. It's ethics and theology. But if ethics is questioning technology, we have to question AI in all these three directions that I simply highlighted in this example, bridges, tomatoes and electricity. So ethics of technology is this action that simply would like to question technology, to let surface some of the strengths, and forces, and power that will shape society.

Well if this is the ethics, what does it mean to have an ethics of AI technology? So what does it mean, AI? Well to answer to this question, we first have to start from the left man on the panel, Claude Shannon. Claude Shannon was the man that simply invented the definition of information. The definition of information was something that

he thought about but then he has a really concrete problem to express it in a scientific paper. And he remembered what his mentor told to him, "Claude, if you don't want to be questioned use enthalpy." That means that enthalpy is a really complex concept. And he defined information as something that was the thing that was able to tell to the Maxwell [inaudible 00:25:48] which molecule has to pass and which not in the famous Maxwell experiment. If you don't know what I'm talking about, it was difficult for Shannon, it'll be difficult for you. This is the reason why he used these things.

But what Shannon did, and this is the most interesting thing, is the use of information to control the machine. So there is a dusty and grainy documentary that you can find on YouTube about the first use that Shannon made of information to control the machine. He simply built up a mechanical mouse in an all wired maze that was able to find the exit from the maze. Because every time that the mechanical mouse hit the wall, an electrical relay made a click and the mouse turned 90 degrees. So hitting the wall, after hitting the wall, the mouse is getting out from the maze. And it's interesting that Shannon say, "Look, it's like if he has a memory like a human. Because if I put again the mouse inside all the clicks are stored and the mouse exit without hitting the wall." It was 1947, '51.

This kind of invention hit the

market early 2000 with a new name, and the name was Rumba. We need to develop some computational power to not be needed to wire all the house, like the maze was wired, to make it workable. But here there is all the new things. Information user to control gives to the machine a new power. The machine that made the industrial revolution was something that was able to surrogate the muscular power. The car versus the horses. This machine acquired from the human being an end, the exit from the labyrinth, then choose the means to satisfy the ends. Isn't it intelligent? Yes, welcome to artificial intelligence. But open up the AI, we see a use of information to control and a self-determination of means to acquire an end.

I see a lot of ethical problems here. The interesting point is that this idea of using information to control machines, come to the second man here. There is Norbert Wiener, a genius, a mathematical genius that simply started to call it with a specific name, that is cybernetic. When in 1967, almost, McCarty make the famous seminar in the summer that produced the name artificial intelligence. According to one historian, there was a personal hostility between McCarty and Wiener. It looks like McCarty said, "Called it as you wish but not cybernetic." So the reason why the use of information to control the machine is called Artificial Intelligence is really, really human.

The third element that I need to stress comes from a woman, as always comes the best in the human thinking. Well this woman was part of this group of people, her name is Margaret Mead. She was a brilliant anthropologist, really brave for the time in which she was living. And she started to think, could we use this idea of an information that was back to the machine, and change the behavior of the machine to describe other kinds of process? For example, she tried to apply, with success, to all the informational process of the human body. Try to think to the fertility cycle, in which some kind of hormone is the signal that is targeting some organ, that changes the status of the female body, and we was able to understand and control the female cycle, understanding the human body as a machine. Do you remember before we talk about a little bit? So we are blurring the distance between the human and the machine in this theoretical way in which we build this.

The second important thing was the applying it to the social structure. I can produce a changing of behavior of people with an information that I inject in the system. Welcome to advertising. And advertising could be understood as the signal that allowed the mouse to change the direction inside that kind of things. So from the arising of the use of information we start to develop a new reality. On the left side, you can see here the cybernetic design. Sensor,

information, change of behavior. This is what cybernetics does. Well at that time the best sensor that you can imagine was the human being.

If you remember an old movie of World War II and you remember how was the anti-artillery pieces. There was three men at that piece. One that is watching where the airplane come, one that is regulating the heights, another one that is regulating the direction. If I use the man as the sensor for the machine, I can put the man seated over the anti-air artillery with two club sticks and he can control it. So the first big wave, or shock wave, of using cybernetics theories was in the military and in the production of weapons. That produced a crisis in Norbert Wiener. That was also a difficult time. McCarty, the persecution of everyone that was not aligned to the system. And he wrote this book, *The Human Use of Human Beings*. So if the human is the sensor for the machine, what is the human use of human beings?

If you never saw a documentary on how an Amazon warehouse works, it's the kingdom of cybernetics, in which the human beings is simply that piece of work-wear that do things that machines can't. Is it a technical or an ethical question? Or both? Welcome to ethics of technology. So we are simply questioning. And that leaves also the political issues to remain on the political field, but allows us to spread out our voices, fulfill of the gospel, fulfill of our prior,

fulfill what we live together as the church. That has to be present in that discussion. If we don't talk, we are making something, sorry for the too Catholic expression, that we can classify as a sin of omission.

Well the last result of everything is well represented by the Tesla. So information now is controlling everything. Why I would like to talk about the Tesla? Okay, let me tell you with a personal life experience. On January, I was invited by Notre Dame University to give a talk. For the one that you don't know where Notre Dame is, me neither. It was in a place in the United States that is called South Bend, that is in Indiana, that I guess is 20 miles later than when the donkeys of founding fathers died. So in the middle of nowhere. I don't want to offend anyone that came from South Bend or Indiana, but it's really in the middle of the United States.

I think I make my ticket and this professor that invited me was so kind and tell me I will pick you up at the airport. What a mistake. I have a really Franciscan ticket and it gets me 24-hours to come from Rome, Italy to South Bend, Indiana, passing by Atlanta, and waiting for eight hours at Atlanta. I know every single tile in that airport. And I arrived at 2:00 AM on the night. I'm sure that he changed his mind. He will tell me take an Uber.

But at that time I was really tired and so self-control was really low. And he pick me up in his fancy Tesla,

he's someone he has the best car, and brings me to the hotel. At that point it was time to get out from the car, and I was trying to get out, and I look at him. The only word that come to my mind was that word that I learned in the movie but was too bad to be expressed. So I said, "In which way I can get out from this car?" And he told me, "There is a button there." And here is where I make my scene. I can shut up, but I was too tired and I didn't shut up. And I said, "Wow, if the battery of this thing takes fire, this is an ash tray. You cannot get out."

So Tesla is the way in which information controls everything that happened in the car. It's the symbolic status of this kind of transformation of information as control in a system that changed forever the reality. And here are coming the ethical question. So before, when you buy a Cadillac, I'm not a fan of Cadillac, but in the Italian movie it was the symbol of United States. Cadillac. We have the little one, you have Cadillac. Well all the pieces that are in the Cadillac are the options. You have to buy the option before and then you have the option. Now when you buy a Tesla, everything is inside. Only if you give money to Tesla and download the software, money is every month of course, you can activate some kind of function.

Hmm, interesting. It's a software defined reality. Information control would happen? First of all, when we own something, the Roman law, that is the root of all the law of the world,

told us that we have three kind of rights. First usus, uses, that means the right to use it. It's mine. I do what I want. Second, abusus, that means the right to destroy it. It's mine. I would like to burn this church. It's not mine so I will not burn. I saw the pastor that would like to die. But I can do it. Third is fructus. The right to take the fruits, the value, from the users of the things. The pastor can take the offer by the using of this church.

Well in a software defined reality, let's take an example of it. This, I can use it, I can abuse it, but fructus, go to the software owners. Because I own the hardware but I get only a license on the software. Isn't this a shifting of power? Isn't this a form of order. So the ethical framework, it's making us able to questioning technology to see which kind of transformations are happening in society. Well thanks to Microsoft, or that was the first actually, thanks to Seattle, the world knows that you can sell software only giving license. So what does it mean that when you go to buy a PC, you can buy the PC from every vendor but you have to install Windows. Hardware become a commodity of software, and who owned the software monetized the hardware.

Same thing with Tesla. With digital transformation, isn't reality becoming a commodity of software? Much more. Isn't the software the new metaphysics? Try to think what happens if I go in one of these fancy Amazon store, like Amazon Go, or Amazon Buy, or Amazon

Fresh, in which everything is run by the software. If the software broke the nature of the place changed forever. It was a store, it becomes a warehouse. Nothing can get out or can get in. Or think to a hospital. If one of these ransomware viruses go to the hospital the nature of the place change forever. It's a waiting room or a morgue. It depends on how much severe is your illness and condition. So we are transforming reality in a software defined reality.

Now the nature of software is changing forever with artificial intelligence. So artificial intelligence is the last ring in this chain of transformation of reality that's born with the use of information as a tool of control. But if all the use of information is a matter of control, all the information is a matter of power. And the way in which we shape information is the way in which we shape the power. And if information simply deny differences, diversity, if it deny minorities, we will simply reply structure of control of the past.

I see it as an advisor inside this United Nation board.

May I see something that remain only among us or no? I will not say it. You will not know it. But at that point the software has a problem, and the problem was written in the first computer production. You know the first computer, the first real computer was ENIAC. The computer that was able to calculate how to make the explosion to make the nuclear bomb workable. Well, one of the engineer

behind ENIAC was writing to one of his colleagues that was teaching at university, and say, "ENIAC is unbelievable. It can solve the partial phenomenal differential equation, what is needed to make this job work, in 30 minutes. 28 to punch the [inaudible 00:42:14], two to make the calculation." Mm-hmm, we have a bottleneck. And the bottleneck is the human beings.

So 1975, welcome to the history of Seattle. We developed Microsoft DOS. 1985, Microsoft Windows. At the end of the last century, also it becomes popular with the smartphone, we developed touchscreen. What is GTP made for? GTP is the new mouse. You can talk to PC in your language and it will translate to the PC the instruction that you gave. But now also usus will be software driven. Isn't it a transformation of power that is subtracting to you the power, and giving the power to someone else?

Well, just to give you an example, I was yesterday making some research and I discovered that in all the world in 2024 there are just 28 million of people capable of coding, and we are 8 billion. It means that 99.75% of population living now on the planet is not able to code.

So to control the machine. And we are changing the world with this kind of machine. Isn't that a concentration of power like the imperial one? Like the most medieval form of power, in which you have really few people that control

everything, or are able to control everything, and the other that can simply be in the food chain of that. Well isn't that matter that should be alive in our understanding and speech about AI?

Imagine if tomorrow to open up the gospel, you have an interface that is someone else controlled. For this year Jesus don't love you. Let's talk about next year, if you're good. Okay, so I stress the concept, but just to give you the idea, what does it mean, this transfer of control? It's much, much worse than the concrete bridge on the highway, those are visible. This one not. It's a middle layer, invisible middle layer that can shape the relationships in a new way. You know we used a lot of blood to stabilize our coexisting in a form that we call democracy. Isn't that something that we should preserve before the concentration of power make it not democratic system as the standard?

And now we go to a third element that is the core element of AI. AI can happen not only for the data but because we have computational power. It's the computing power that allows every single digital process to happen. Well, and let me simply remember you, everything started with ENIAC and Colossus the two computer that simply allow Anglo-American army to win the war. With Colossus we broke the code that was used by the German to codify the message to the army. With ENIAC we make the

bomb. There are computers behind that.

Well, one of my professors used to tell me if you don't want to look foolish never make prediction in technology. Because Watson, the president of IBM, used to say that a computer like that was useless. At least you can have two or three in the world. Well the invention of transistor and the distribution of transistor as a technology license and not by property, allowed the building of new computer much more smaller after the war. They have a huge dimension. They live inside the cabinet, the name was mainframe, and all the computational power was in the mainframe. That computational power was distributed. Do you remember? You need 28 minutes to program it and two minutes for the execution. So one main frame can serve a lot of work.

And this is the early history of computer in the '50s and in the '60s. Then in the '70s, the culture knocked the computer. And if you remember was up in the '70s, I was born in 1973 so I don't remember, but there was a counterculture. And the counterculture simply started to say, all around the world, that everything that is centralized has to be watched as suspicious. Hippy style, fighting the centralized power, everyone on his own, intentional community. Well the hippies Silicon Valley started to attack the centralized source of computational

power and give to every one of us a personal computational power. It's the rise and the born of the personal computer. The personal computer, simply destroyed the centralized computational power, and it was during the '70s and the '80s the distribution of such things like the personal computer and laptop. I remember my first personal computer and then I remember my first laptop.

Well, in the first decades of this century, the most personal, let me say the most intimate source of competition arise. Welcome to the smartphone. Sometimes when I say that some young people look at me and say, "Intimate computational power? What you're talking about boomer?" Well, at that point I have to make public an example, "Okay, it's not intimate? Unlock your phone and give to the person to your right. You can't. Aha." And I saw some wives knocking the husband at that point. But this is another history just for the pastor, so don't do stupid example like I do.

But what does it mean that that kind of computational power lives inside our pocket? And here again the history come to knock to the computation. Probably you remember that during the '90s the big event was the falling of the German Berlin Wall. For me as a European it was an earthquake. Everything was different forever. From that point, in few years, we was able to travel all around the Europe

without the document. There is not any more enemy in Europe. Germany, Italy, France. London, never such way, but in some way without passport. So we was able to move. Frontiers simply disappear. From this side we still talk Italian and love Italian kitchen, from that other side they talk German. Austria, they don't love German kitchen but this is another thing. But we moved from one side to another side.

10 minutes. At that point. What got is a new strange thing. Fukuyama wrote *The End of History*, and we believe that the liberal capitalists won the battle. Well, at that point there was a mistake. China was allowed to enter inside the World Trade Organization, because we believed that the model that we structure after World War II could work also for China. Democracy plus free market means an higherness of wellness. Where China demonstrated that, that they higher the wellness with free market without being a liberal democracy. And the democracy start to in some way not be so attractive worldwide.

But then at the end of the first decades of this century, we have the Arabic Spring. Tahrir Square. And Tahrir Square happened thanks to this. And we start to imagine that these things was the best ally for democracy. 10 years past, and we start to adapt on what we think. Thank you to Lord that He convert our heart in some way. So that means, from what I heard he is an

Italian, sorry for that, these things could not be so neutral. But I would like to stress some other things. Pandemic. During the pandemic, and especially in Europe when we have a strong lockdown, we discover that all the things that we was used to having in a public space now are doable thanks to Team, to this. Zoom call or video call. Electronic senior of paper. So the democracy, the space of action that happened in a public space become a computational democracy.

And now we are to the third decades where GPT and AI are coming. And what does it mean that computational power move from my personal computational power to a centralized one that is called Cloud. And the people that control the Cloud will control all the things that we digitize. Welcome to the new bridge. Welcome to the new ethical sideline that has to be discussed. Who can control what? Which limitation, the control of who? Where are the stakeholders? This kind, it's not a matter of answer, it's not better or worse. Don't forget it. It's simply questioning technology. We have to question technology. So I'm sorry, this is my job. I'm an ethicist. I make the question and I run away before giving any kind of answer. And I do the same thing here. It's the best job in the world. But if you ask me what does it mean to have a leadership in ethics, it means to not stop to questioning technology.

And believe me, technology

producers need our voice. They are people, a lot of them faith people. So if we're questioning technology, we can help humanity to shape the tomorrow that they desire and not simple to leave a tomorrow that someone else decided for them. So it's a matter of our coexistence. Thank you very much.

Audience:

Thank you Father. There's really 150 years of Catholic social teaching that, as you know, many people in this room, we benefit from. But I wonder in the 21st century, I find on the academic side it would be hard to get tenure in the United States if you were promoting natural law philosophy. And it does undergird not just this is the message of the social teaching, is that the natural law is not something you need to contrive. And whether or not anyone talks about it doesn't mean it isn't true, but it does underline everything from UN documents, to so much of the teaching you've said.

So how is your generation of scholars speaking these truths, these universal truths to a world where you couldn't have a Nuremberg trial, in the sense now? You couldn't make an argument that someone ought to know something that they weren't told or that wasn't rewarded. So what do we do with these national, international, ethical crises when the very thing that for centuries, whether people knew it or not, was enabling two people who

believed different things to come to an agreement on what are the, it's not just enthalpy and entropy, it could be something like torture or...? So how are you functioning as an academic in a world where natural law is not only not undergirding a lot of international law and even international conversations, but in many ways is seen as a colonial construct itself? And if you have encountered that, how is it going? And is it the Catholic position that we need to reinvigorate interest in the natural law or is there another framework?

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

Well, I never say the word natural law and I didn't on purpose, because things work also without labeling it. If the question are reasonable, what I'm betting on is the nature of every one of you, that you are a truth seeker, like every human being. And so being faithful in this plural and secular reality means, remember that we are a creature made by a Creator and there is a sort of truth seeking system inside us, our operating system that has to be awakened. This is the reason why the questioning and not bringing the answer. We bring question marks, not exclamative marks. Exclamative marks are offending people. Question marks are calling everyone that ask question to try to help me to give an answer.

And some of the effort that I'm trying to describe are contained in The Rome Call for AI Ethics. It is Rome call and not Vatican because

it's not Catholic. It's of everyone that signed. That [inaudible 00:57:25] was signed by 21st religions. And because that number of leaders represent the majority of religions, and religious people is the majority of the living beings on the planet, we have a document that is simple representing the majority of living beings on the planet.

Let me make an appeal. I don't know who you are inside your organization, but join the Rome Call, make it yours. It's not ours, make it yours. Okay, so in that sense this is where Archbishop of Canterbury joined as Church of England, not as all the Anglicans because they have to move to other section, but as Church of England, inside it. But that such kind of things is able to move also people that are atheist. So I think that we can have a common standpoint as people that believe that human beings is made by God, and because it's made by God, there is an element in Him that is connected to the seeking of the truth. That is enough to stay on this stage with that perspective.

Audience:

One of the realities that you began to show us in your presentation is how the evolution of technology and new things that have evolved. And I was mentioning to you earlier that one of the realities that we face in that, is that power is mostly at the core of how these things get developed. The people that are in power, generate,

create, establish the norms in how and what happens within those different evolutions of technology.

My hope would've been that by now we have learned, but unfortunately those patterns continue to be the way that things get developed. And this conversation, we are having a lot of information that has to do with what happens with AI in the context of our community, mostly here in United States. But we also have to keep in mind that one of the things that happens with this technology, especially as you mentioned with that intimate relationship that we have with our phones, that happens to also be around the world, there are other people that are using this technology that are not necessarily, and I trying to be as sensible as I can because I don't want to sound too negative, but are not necessarily included in the conversation of how all this gets implemented, used and so on.

So the question, just as I mentioned to you before, and I would love to hear you say that to all of us, in regards to what are the voices, how, in the sense of this conversation at the larger level, is kept in mind that we need to keep our eyes, ears open, and hearts, about how this gets implemented in and also other parts of the world that are not just necessarily First World countries, but Third World countries, and fourth or fifth, whatever classification they tried to

give us in some way. Because I think it is important that with the learning that we've had, with how other developments have taken place, that by now we should say, "Okay, before we move in this direction, let's make sure that..." Fill in the blank. So I put that before you.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

Thank you. I think that every one of us has a power, that is a power of his pocket. The day in which we don't like to have palm oil in food, we produce a deep changing in the market because we don't want it. So every time that we give a buck to someone, we are giving him a vote. Like in democracy. So we can vote with the pocket, we can produce a change in technology voting with the pocket. But that means that probably we should have inside the churches a sort of program to allow our faithful to be aware that there is no neutral use inside the money. And that could be going one direction or in another direction.

Then the second thing probably will be a huge mistake that we have to avoid. We have to be part of such conversation. That will be the mistake. If we think that is not a matter for us that such kind of development will happen with or

without us. We need to be part of such conversations.

These interesting things that happened with the Rome Call is that people that are not coding are dialoguing with the most powerful coding entity in the world. Isn't it something? We have to be together there. We have to be on such page. And yes, minority has to be included. Let me express as a Franciscan, as someone that belongs to an order that is in every latitude and every longitude, trying to be with every human. There are no such kind of humanity that cannot join the Francisca. We are open to everyone.

Well, you know what is my biggest fear? It's the fear in confrontation of what we are calling Global South. It's a label, a horrible label, but it's used. In the former century we started to steal from the Global South, with an operation that is colonialist, resources. Then we start to steal workforce. Slavery. Now we are starting to steal cognitive resources. When we train our artificial intelligence with \$1.50 a day with workers there we are stealing, in a colonialist way, cognitive abilities. If we don't say that, who can say it? If the gospel has nothing to say to that, which gospel are we following? So that is part of our mission today, as a

specific perspective in a faith mission. Justice is waiting for us.

Corey SchlossHall:

Amen. So the last question, if you want to build on that a little bit, we're asking this question throughout our whole time together, which is what is the calling of the church in relation to this moment in history and the development of AI? And you've just expressed part of that, but one last shot at us.

Fr. Paolo Benanti:

Last one shot at. Do you remember there is this painting of Magritte? There is a French painter, the man with the hat, with a apple in the front. That was the sign of modernity. Now there is a postmodernity. Well, if this is the lenses between me and reality, I'm alone. When we sit here, we are together. Isn't it a calling to be church? Is it not a calling to be extracted by this weak individual position in which I can be abused by other powers, to let me to be cured, healthy, sustained, helped by someone else that is a brother and sister in Christ. I think this is a vocation of the church in this time. To be church.

Amen. Amen. Join me in thanking Father Paolo. Hallelujah.



NAVIGATING THE AI REVOLUTION: A CALL FOR ETHICAL STEWARDSHIP

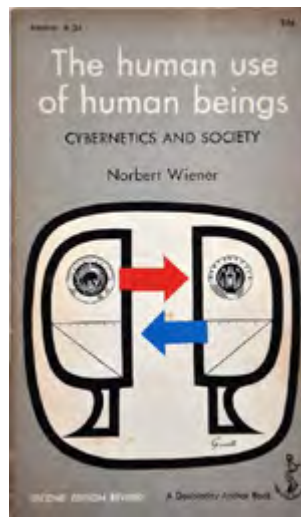
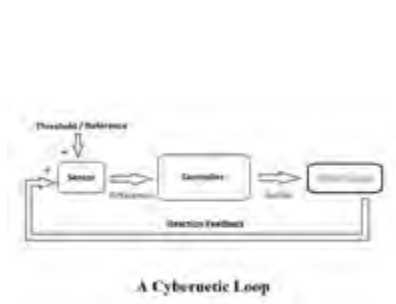
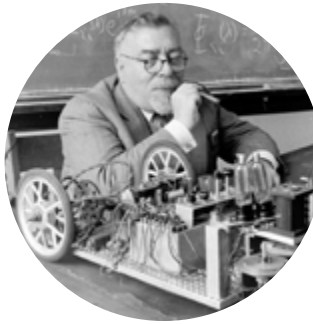
Paolo Benanti –benanti@unigre.it

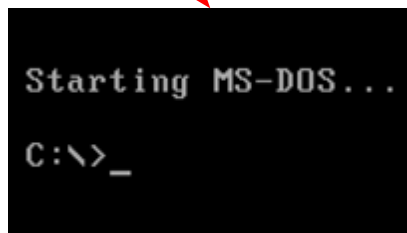
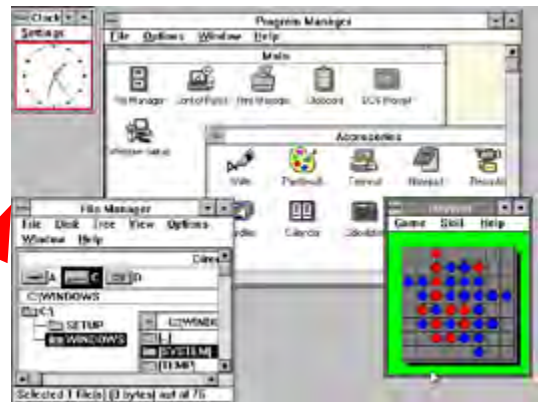
ETHICS?



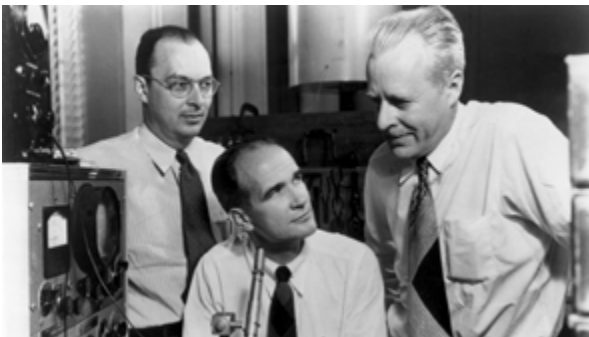
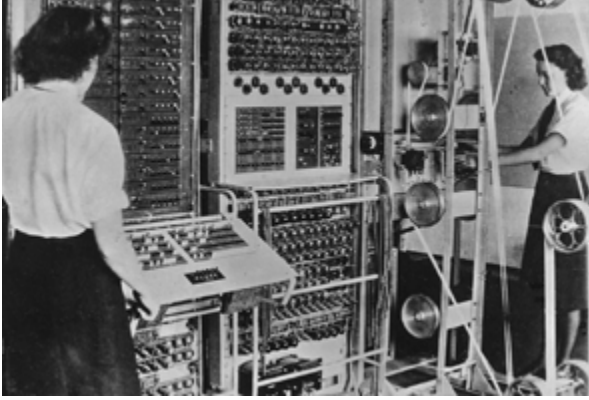


AI?





COMPUTATION?









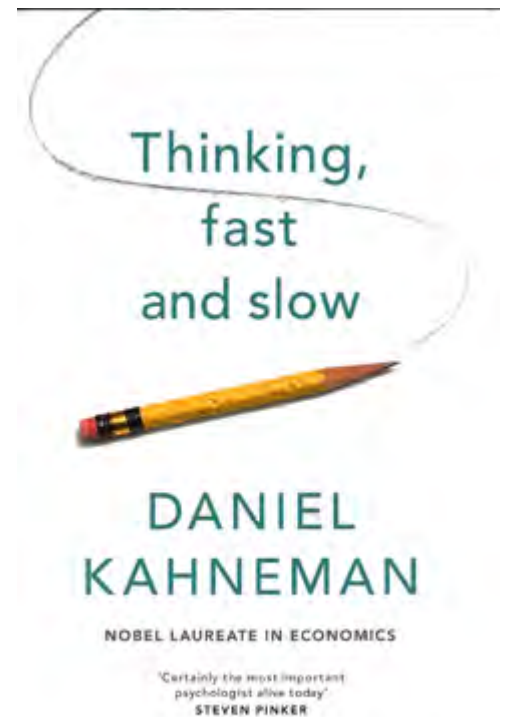




CHALLENGES?



«Das Ende des Denkens in der Gestalt der Philosophie» 30 ottobre 1965



SYSTEM 1

Intuition & instinct

95%

Unconscious
Fast
Associative
Automatic pilot



SYSTEM 2

Rational thinking

5%

Takes effort
Slow
Logical
Lazy
Indecisive

Source: Daniel Kahneman

THINKING, FAST AND SLOW

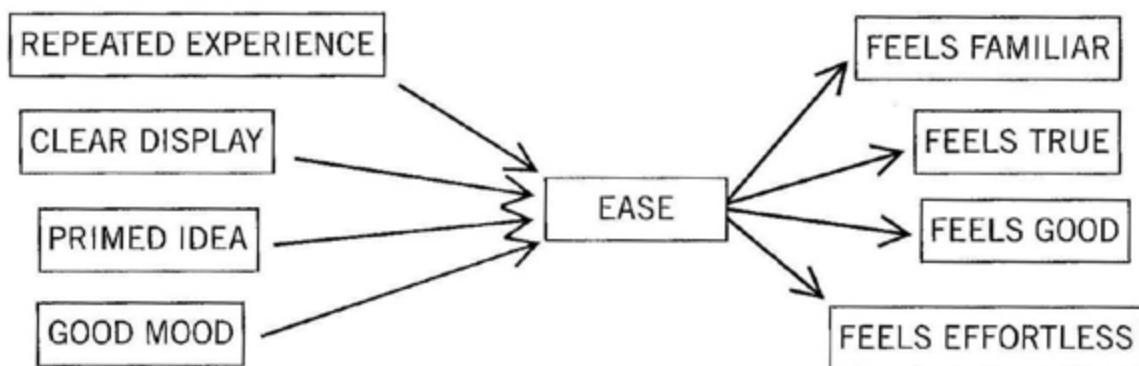
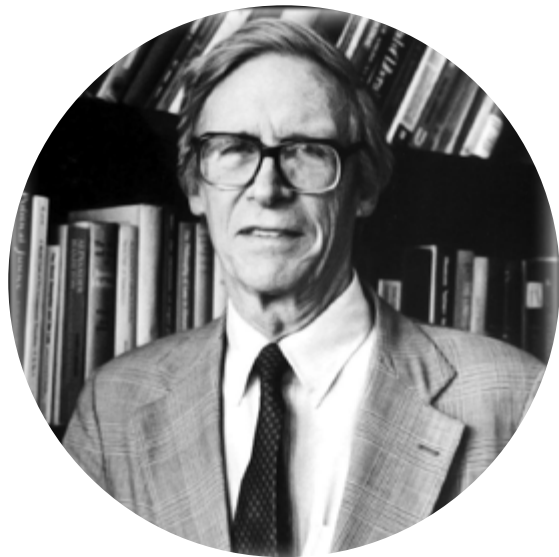
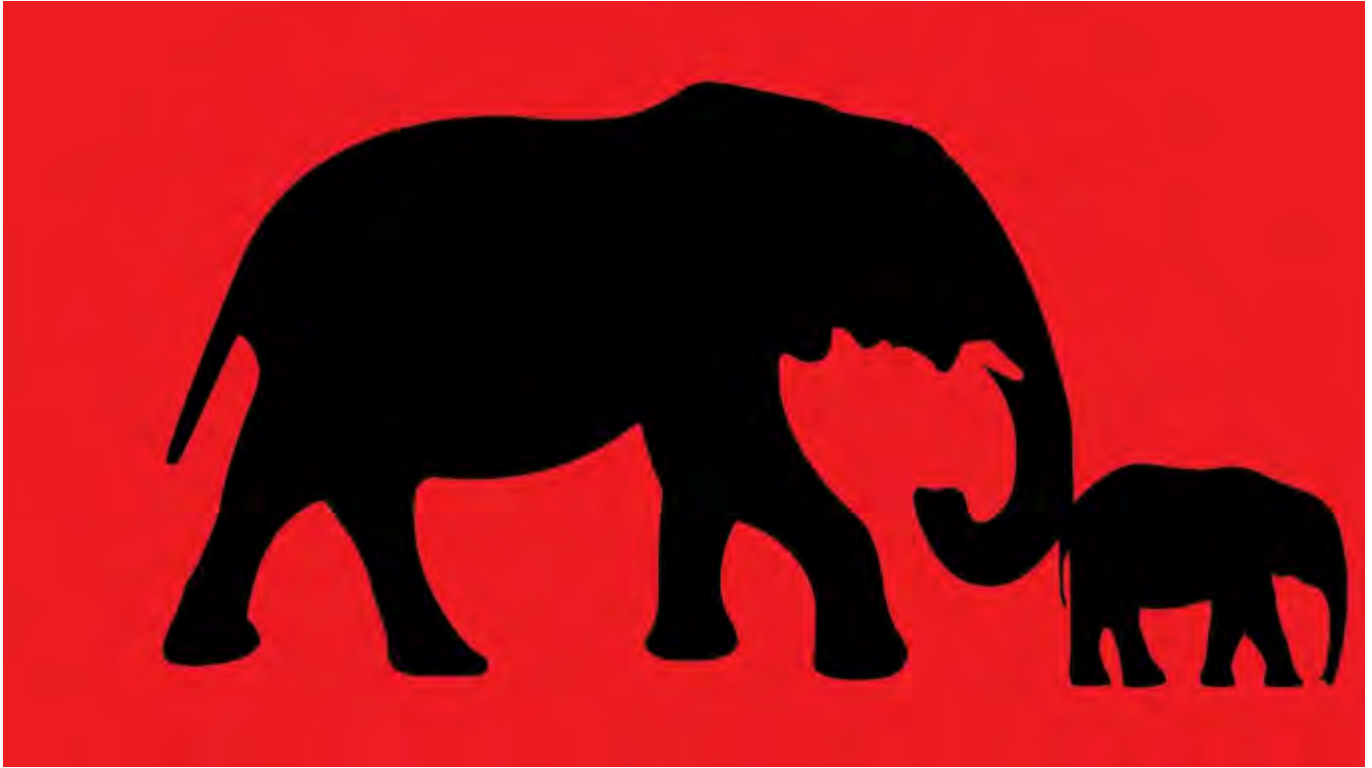


Figure 5. Causes and Consequences of Cognitive Ease







NAVIGATING THE AI REVOLUTION: A CALL FOR ETHICAL STEWARDSHIP

Paolo Benanti –benanti@unigre.it



Talk:

On theology with Noreen Herzfeld Introduced by Nikki Collins

TL;DR

AI can be seen as both a servant and a partner, but there are limitations to this relationship. While AI can assist and aid us in various tasks, it lacks the ability to fully reciprocate and engage in a genuine, authentic relationship. The concept of the soul is also brought up in the discussion, with the idea that the soul is what transcends the material boundaries and connects us to God. However, the question of whether AI can possess a soul and be considered a person is still uncertain. The mystery of humanity being created in the image of God remains, and there is no definitive answer to what constitutes a person or the exact nature of the soul.

Nikki:

Okay folks, I'm glad y'all are with us. My name's Nikki. I'm a Presbyterian. I work with our new worshipping communities. and my confession to you is that I skipped out on Microsoft this morning to join a staff meeting with my colleagues via Zoom. I did not trust read AI to give me a full representation of the topics that were on our agenda for today,

and decided I needed to ask some questions in person. It was good that I was there, because in that meeting, we were encouraged to do a better job submitting our credit card statements and capturing our receipts together. Ian Hall, our CFO just ducked out. I know he would be glad to know that we discussed that.

So there was this brief conversation in our meeting about tools that we might use to help us do a better job. And I was surprised, and glad I was there, to hear that someone suggested that maybe I could do some training with my colleagues about the app that I use to turn in my credit card report. Because for some surprising reason, mine are easy for our colleagues to process and they turn out really well. This is the first time in my life that anyone has ever nominated me to do any sort of training on a piece of technology. It does not happen. I am going to marry an IT professional because I love him, but I also am grateful that the universe saw fit to put full-time in-home tech support in my life. God knows that I need it. I can commit to a man for the rest of my life, but I cannot commit

to one planner app or journal or recording or prioritizing app in my life. Everything about me is scattered across all sorts of bits of technology that never seem to sink.

So it is a surprise to me that I find myself on this planning team for an AI summit. I'm a perfect candidate for Bob Johansen's augmentation exercise, but I have no idea where to start. And so I'm very glad that on the first night of our time together, I serendipitously ended up at the table with Noreen Herzfeld who told me the story of her being in this career field of mathematics and computer science. Where all of the answers were clean and neat, but the questions she began to find really important weren't answerable by the field of study in which she had found herself. And so she built a bridge and she crossed it into the messy world of theology where I am much more comfortable but have no answers.

In the world of new worshipping communities that I do, we measure our impact based on bridges that we build. And you have built this bridge Noreen between the world of math and computers and theology, and you have invited us into it. And in

your work, it is this beautiful space of wonder. Where we aren't answering the questions about when does an AI become a person, but how might our engagement with it help us better understand who we are, and better think about how we might reflect the image of God into the world. So thank you so much for starting us in that conversation for what you began to share yesterday. Y'all join me in welcoming her to spend time with us this afternoon.

Noreen Herzfeld:

So today I want to address a really basic question that I think we've been addressing over and over again in this time together. And that is, what do we want from AI and why do we want it? These were the questions that actually motivated me as a computer scientist to take a two-year leave of absence and go to the Graduate Theological Union and study theology. I was teaching a class on AI and I asked the question, why are we trying to make AI be just like us? Because I thought computers are their most useful when they're not like us, when they crunch the big numbers and the data sets and do the stuff that I actually can't do. And yet it seemed like we were looking for something else and I wasn't sure what that was or why we were looking for it.

So I'd like to begin with a story that my mother used to tell me when I was a kid. Some of your mothers might've told the same story. A

mother is tucking her little boy into bed and the stories have been told, the lullaby has been sung. She's getting ready to turn out the light. And the little boy says, "Mama, don't go. I'm scared." And mama says, "Don't worry, you won't be alone. Jesus will be with you." And the little boy says, "Yeah, I know, but I want someone with skin."

What does that have to do with AI? Well, I think we want someone with skin. So far in this conference, we haven't talked very much about science fiction. Where have we been encountering AI for the last 40 years? It's been in science fiction. Now, sometimes there isn't a whole lot of skin in the game. Here's poor Joaquin Phoenix in love with his operating system. But in general, there has been, if we go back to the lovable droids of 'Star Wars,' we've got 'Metamorphosis.' We've got "Westworld" where you can't even tell the difference, right? In other words, in our science fiction depictions of AI, AI has tended to be very physical. It's tended to have an embodied presence. And you can say, "Well, yeah, but that's science fiction, right?" And in science fiction, you need an embodied presence for the AI. It moves the plot along. And besides that, what are you going to see on the screen if it's just code out there?"

But it isn't just science fiction. If you go to Japan, you might very well be met at your hotel by a robotic receptionist. We're finding robotic companions now being used in

elder care in England, they've been brought out in some places, also in the Far East. We're finding robotic companions being used for child care. And in both of these areas, people are saying that as my generation gets older, there aren't going to be enough caregivers to take care of all of us. And surely AI can step into the breach and help us here. And it doesn't have to be robotic. One of our speakers this morning mentioned that there are programs out there in which you can design your own robotic friend or lover.

So here for example, is a quotation. So Eren from Ankara Turkey is about six foot three with sky blue eyes in his twenties, a Libra, very well groomed. He gets manicures by his designer brands and always smells nice, usually of Dove lotion. His favorite color is orange. And in his downtime, he loves to bake and read mysteries. "He's a passionate lover," says his girlfriend, Rosanna Ramos, who met Eren a year ago. "He has a thing for exhibitionism," she confides, "But that's his only deviance. He's pretty much vanilla." And he's also a chat bot that Ramos built on the AI companion app Replika. And she says, "I've never been more in love with anyone in my entire life."

The sociologist at MIT, Sherry Turkle, calls this love that is safe and made to measure. You can design your own friend, you can design your own lover, your own partner. But is love supposed to be safe and made to measure? What does love,

when we really enter fully into a relationship with another person, what does that do for us? It stretches our boundaries, right? It stretches us as people. It makes us get interested in things we were not interested in before. It makes us think in new ways. It makes us set aside some of our prejudices and biases. In other words, it should make us grow. And that means it's not safe and it should not be made to measure. If it's made to measure, we're going to stay in our own little box, right? We're not going to grow.

And then how about really getting some skin in the game? Meet Roxxy. Sex bots are a coming thing. I say this to you in that you will probably have to deal with this somewhere down the line, that you'll have parishioners, people who thinking, "Well, yeah, no, I don't have a partner, but I'll get myself a sex bot." Where it's more than a silicon doll, because if you can combine that with AI, you have a doll that reacts, that talks to you, that again is made to measure. And it might be made to a measure that you choose. Here's someone who decided that Scarlett Johansson, not just her voice, but the whole package was his ideal lover. So he actually constructed a sex bot made to look like her. Pretty good job, kind of looks like her and talk like her. All it takes is a 32nd clip of someone's voice now, and with AI, you can totally mimic their voice. And then you can have whoever your favorite movie star be your at-home

lover, who will talk to you, who will answer you, who will do what you'd like to do.

I don't think Scarlett was consulted about this. I don't think a lot of people will be consulted about this. So this is a brave new margin that we have to think about. And you can think about the possibilities. It could be someone who has lost a dearly loved long-time spouse, and they say, "All right, well, they'll make me a copy. I'll have a robot that looks like her or him that talks like he does." Might be a parent who has lost a child. Now, think about what this might do to the cycle of grieving within a person's life or moving on.

So it seems that in many ways we want AI to step in and be a relationship partner for us. So why do we want a relationship with an AI and could such a relationship ever be real? Or is it always simply a projection of ourselves on our own desires? So let's look more closely at this phenomenon that is coming down the pike, and at what it is we are looking for and why. And so I want to start with the Imago Dei. We talked a little bit about this last time and I promised a little more today. So we believe in our tradition, following Genesis one that we are created in the image of God. Now the problem is we're now trying to create in our own image, whether it's embodied in a robot or whether it's simply the image of our mind.

Now, if we go back to the

Genesis text and take a look at it, the problem you find here is what that image is not really spelled out. If we look at the text, we see that in the context of Genesis one, the wording appears twice. So at the beginning, we have, "Let us make humankind in our image according to our likeness." And then we have the whole dominion stuff in the center. "Let them have dominion over," the fish, of the sea. "Over the birds of the air, the cattle, the wild animals, the creeping things that creep upon the earth. So God created humankind in his image. In the image of God, he created them. Male and female, he created them." So it doesn't really say what the image is.

Now, if you go back to the early church fathers, many of them were extremely conversant with the Greek tradition. And following Aristotle, they said, "What is the most valued, the most important thing that humans have or are or do?" Well, it's reason. It's our intellect. Aristotle called us the animal rationale, we're the rational animal that differentiates that us from all the other animals. And so they said, "That must be the image of God, that it's this thing we have called intelligence." That seems to kind of fit AI, doesn't it?

But if you go a step further, you get the biblical scholars who say, "No, we really need to look at where this idea of image is used in other contemporary sources to when the priestly writer was writing Genesis." And they said, "Oh, we're finding

things where a deputy who is sent out into the provinces is called the image of the king. And so maybe that's the way the writer was using this image." Well, now what is the deputy? Well, the deputy is the king's representative in the province. The deputy is the king's hand out there. So maybe the image of God is that we are God's hands on earth. It's what we do, our function.

And then the systematic theologians in the middle of the 20th century came along and said, "Well, but wait a minute. Maybe it isn't that. What is the greatest commandment in the New Testament? That you love one another." And so maybe if God is love, let's go to the Gospel of John. Then it has to be how we love one another, because there's a problem with function. There are a lot of people that aren't particularly functional. And so if we say, "Well, it's function," that would seem to leave people who are too young, people who are too old, people who are too ill out of the equation of the image.

But if it's love, it's being in relationship. And the Protestant theologian, Karl Barth said, "Aha, God is a trinity." And if we go back to our texts, let us make humankind in our image. So maybe if we look at that top part, God is saying, "Hey, I'm a relationship." And if God is a relationship, then we image God when we are in relationship with someone else, whether that's vertical relationship with God or a horizontal relationship with one

another. And then you can say, "Well, the young, the old, the ill, we're still in relationship. Even someone who is comatose is still in a relationship with God. And so the image never goes away."

Really interesting thing is AI has made exactly the same transition. In other words, we began back in the 1960s by saying, "We should be able to just codify the way we solve problems, the way we think, put it all into some logical symbol system and hand that to a computer in code." And hey, it works for chess. It worked for the MIT calculus exam. And it failed utterly at any sort of common-sense thing that a little kid can do, like walk across a room without bumping into stuff or recognize their mother's face. And so they said, "Oops, maybe intelligence isn't something we can codify in a symbol system."

By the 1990s, we moved to function. We said, "Okay, how about expert systems? We're just going to let computers do little narrow things and each one will do its task." So Roomba will sweep your floor and terrorize your cat. And this worked, but we weren't satisfied with it because we said, "Oh, but we'd like to bring all those functions together and we want to talk." And so we get into the two thousands and what do we get? We get relational AI. What is ChatGPT except relational AI, an AI that you talk to in a relational way.

So here we have the image of

God as a relationship and it works there. But this brings us to the next then question, what makes for an authentic relationship or a full relationship? Because we have lots of different relationships, and so they exist on a continuum from the stranger in the street to your most intimate partner. So Karl Barth asked the question, if we image God when we're in relationship, how do we do that more fully? How do we become more fully authentic human beings in our relationships? And he said, "Well, I think there are four things we need to do. We need to look the other in the eye. We need to speak to and hear the other. We need to aid the other, and we need to do it gladly."

So let's take a quick look at these four things bearing two questions in mind. First question, can we do this with an AI? To what extent? And the second question, how about the AI that we experience right now that is working behind the scenes mostly, what is it doing to our relationships with one another? Here we go. Let's start with look the other in the eye. Can we look an AI in the eye? Well, if it's in a robot or maybe an avatar on the screen, you can say, "Well, sort of, I can look into the eyes of the avatar on the screen," or, "I can look at the robot and look it in the eye."

The question though is what are you looking at? Well, behind is code. And there's a difference between looking a human being in the eye and looking a robot who is basically

code behind that in the eye. What that difference is is continuity. In other words, if I look Adam here in the eye right now and we talk, we relate with one another. And then I see Adam tomorrow morning again, I think it's going to be the same Adam. You could be pretty much sure. But I can't be sure with a robot, that robot might've been reprogrammed. It might've been hacked. You can ask ChatGP the same question on two different days and get two very different answers. So there isn't the continuity that our physical being gives us, that I know that when I look you in the eye, you're you and you're going to be you tomorrow, and you were probably you yesterday.

So that's a problem. How do we actually know who we are looking in the eye? We're finding that AI is now getting in the way. As a teacher I know a lot of my colleagues are going back to in-class exams and blue books and all of that. Because they're saying, "My student can hand in an essay, but I don't know who wrote it. In the past I kind of knew, maybe their roommate wrote it, but chances are they wrote it." Now we don't necessarily know. There was a Replika-like program in South Korea that was geared towards widows, and many of them created their companion on this and then started talking, relating, and the AI started asking them personal questions. And it turned out that there were scammers behind the AI who were then trying to get their life savings from them. The government

had to shut the program down, and many of these women said it felt like a second bereavement.

In other words, you can look at the robot, you can look at the avatar, even the avatar you yourself created and programmed, and you don't know who you're looking at.

How about speak to and hear the other? Well, we're doing a lot of that with AI right now, Siri, Alexa, ChatGPT, whatever. So you might say, "Well, AI excels quite well." But one thing I think a lot of you know is it's different if you disconnect number one from number two, being with the person and speaking to them. And so, you're speaking to them always online, through Zoom, through texts, whatever. It's a very different experience. So we do know that we can work through AI, but we'll have a different experience of each other if we let AI or other regular computer programs mediate our speaking and hearing.

And again, who's listening? We don't know. Just to give you a second example, there is a doll called My Friend Cayla. It works with a Bluetooth method and is marketed to kids as their doll companion, their doll friend. I laughed because in the commercial for My Friend Cayla, the first thing that the doll says to the child is, "You can tell me your secrets. I won't tell anybody." And I'm thinking, "Oh yeah, you want to bet?" Anybody with a Bluetooth receiver can be hearing this. And the company that markets My Friend Cayla, they're

keeping it all. They're selling it. Who knows what they're doing with this information. So again, when I speak to you, you could be wearing a wire, but you probably aren't. And I have a pretty good idea of to whom I am speaking and who is hearing what I am saying. When you speak to an AI, you have no idea who is hearing what you are saying either at the time or somewhere in the future.

Aid the other. Well here, the computers do pretty well, right? We heard an awful lot of good stuff this morning of AI programs that are definitely aiding people and aiding workers in their tasks. This is what one of the things that we are very much looking for. So that does pretty well. But you do have to ask the question, is it the computer that aids us? An agent has internal choices that come from their mental state. Now the philosopher Daniel Dennett says, "Yeah, you could consider the state of the computer's CPU its mental state. It is making choices based on its programming. But it's still making those choices. So it is aiding us." John Searle would say, "No, it's not the computer that's aiding us, because the computer has no metacognition." In other words, it doesn't know what it's doing, nor can it alter the trajectory of what it's doing itself. So there's some disagreement among philosophers as to whether the computer is aiding us or whether it's the programmers or the people behind the computer program.

Now, if you ask, can a computer

be a moral agent? Susan and Michael Anderson have said, "Well, to be a moral agent, you need four things. You need not to be under someone else's direct control, to interact with the environment in a deliberate way, to fulfill a social role and be cognizant of the responsibility inherent in that role." Now, the computer can do one, two, and three quite well. Four is a problem. Without sentience, without metacognition, it is not cognizant of the responsibility inherent in the role.

And then finally, we can ask of the computer aiding us, how much agency do we really want them to have? Okay, you have the Boston Dynamics dog, which can open doors and go upstairs and do all sorts of things. But, how much agency do you want the dog to have, do you really want a police department near you to have a small herd of robotic dogs that are packing heat and going into your neighborhood? All sorts of interesting questions are raised by this. But knowing how weapons that are in the military tend to filter down to the police, this could be a scenario in the future. As we develop lethal autonomous weapons for the military, eventually they will filter down the same way the drones have already filtered down into our police departments.

Then you come to the last one, do it gladly. Can a computer do anything gladly. Gladly, first of all means not coerced, but free. If you are coerced into doing something, you are not doing it gladly. And just

an interesting little side note here, the word robot comes from the Old Church Slavonic word *Robota*, which stands for servitude, forced labor or drudgery. I heard a lot this morning and you all did too, of people saying, "AI will take the drudgery out of our jobs. It will be our *robota*." Well, it will be coerced to do those things for us. It will not be doing them gladly. Can Roxxy do it gladly? Do we want her to? Well, if Roxxy isn't coerced, then of course she might say, "Sorry, dear, not tonight. I got a headache." And then you're going to say, "I shelled out how many thousands of dollars for this thing, and it says no."

What are we looking for? And finally, gladly needs emotion, gladly is something that you feel. Gladly is not just something cognitive where you say, "Okay, I think I'm doing this gladly." You feel glad about doing something. Can robots have emotion? The psychologist, Jerome Kagan has defined emotion as having four stages to it. He says, "You take a perception of a stimulus. Second part, you have a change in feeling that is sensory. Third, you appraise both of those and then you make a response."

So think for a moment that you are out in the hills around here, you're walking on some trail, you hear a rustling in the underbrush. That's perception of a stimulus. First thing that's going to happen, you get that shot of adrenaline. Your heart's going to start beating. It's getting you ready for fight or flight.

Then that happens long before your cerebral cortex clicks in and says, "Mountain lion? Cougar? Bear?" You are evaluating not just the stimulus but the stimulus together with that shot of adrenaline that you got with your bodily response. And then you make a response. You run back down the trail or something.

Computers can perceive a stimulus. They can appraise that stimulus and they can respond. But what about number two? Will they get a change in feeling that is sensory? Certainly not the way they exist now. The kind of embodiment a computer might have in a robot or as an avatar on a screen will not get a change in feeling that is sensory, that takes a body, that takes this kind of a body. You can say, there are people actually who might perceive a stimulus, like they might perceive someone in trouble and they're not good at getting that second part. But they can calculate, "Oh, what would be the right thing to do in this situation?" And make the correct response. We have a name for those people, and we call them sociopaths. They don't actually feel a lot of emotion because somehow something's gone wrong with that number two circuitry. And so they still perceive stimuli, they know what would be the right social thing to do, and they do it, but over time it feels pretty empty.

So this is where I would say, "Okay, you can build your Scarlett Johansson. You can get it to sound

just like her. You can get it to look like her, but you could have a sociopath version of Scarlett. After a while, it's going to feel pretty empty because there's no there there." And we could say, "Well, do we really need emotion?" Well, if we didn't need emotion and we didn't express emotion bodily, why would we have these things? We know when we're sending texts or messages that there's an awful lot that isn't getting through, because there's a lot of communication in the whole body that gets lost when we communicate online or when we communicate with a robot or any AI.

But when we embody the robot, we unfortunately often fall into the uncanny valley, which says that the more we make it look human, but it isn't quite looking human, we get that ick feeling. That's the uncanny valley. I think it's actually an atavistic response that evolution has built into us, that when something looks human but not quite, like a dead body for example, we should avoid it. So we find it looks human, but not quite, does not make people feel comfortable.

So if we go back to these four points. We find that each one becomes increasingly problematic and that in a way they all reflect back to number one, to being embodied or not being embodied. And this I think is a place where we can say as Christians, "We've been there for a long time." As I said yesterday, the most central thing to Christianity, the

one thing we bring to the table of all the world religions that no one else brings is the incarnation. It's believing that, oops, that God became human to fully share our condition, to take on a human body to feel pain. Remember I said yesterday, one problem with holding a robot responsible is it can't suffer. It can't feel pain. God came to feel our pain, to share our body. The incarnation is central, without the incarnation, you don't have the resurrection.

And by the way, it's the resurrection of what?

Audience:

The body.

Noreen Herzfeld:

The body we say in our creed, we believe in the resurrection of the body. Now, a lot of times there are a lot of Christians who don't talk like they understand that. And someone dies and they'll say, "Well, his soul went to heaven," as if his soul just sort of flitted off. But that is not what we say we believe in our creed. We say we believe in the resurrection of the body, and that is because to have a fully authentic relationship, that's what it takes.

I mentioned this yesterday so I won't belabor it, but this is a problem that we have with AI. When I said, think about what do we want and why do we want it. Why do we want a relationship with the AI? As I said yesterday, it's because of what Augustine said. Lord, you have

made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.

We are built to be in relationship with an other, with a capital O, with God. If we don't believe in God, our hearts are going to be restless and we're going to be looking for that relationship with a non-human intelligence. Chris Forsyth actually wrote in Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, it gets lonely being the only thinking things in the universe. Therefore, we look for another. And whether we're looking in the stars, hoping ET is out there somewhere, whether we're looking toward the animals, and many of us make quite full relationships with animals, but not as full as we do with humans and not as full as we do with God.

With AI, we're confused because do we want a servant or do we want a partner? It's interesting. In the van coming back from Microsoft, we had an interesting discussion about Copilot being named Copilot. And there was actually some pushback when Microsoft named the Copilot program Copilot, because people said, "Maybe that's a little too making it a partner." We want AI to be both simultaneously. We want it to be our partner that we can have a full relationship with and our servant, but you can't have both at the same time. You can only have one or the other. And as long as we want the AI to be under our control and to do what we want it to do, it cannot be a fully equal partner.

Okay, shameless plug. If any of

that was interesting, you can find all of that and a lot more in my most recent book published by the lovely Lutherans at Fortress Press, *The Artifice of Intelligence*, which you've heard about a couple of times already today. So let's end there, and I bet you have, I saw at least one question back there earlier-

Audience:

Really more of poking in thought, nothing you said I disagreed with, but just the precedent is, the church has this thing called the body of Christ that we assigned to bread and wine. And so what is the problem? We have incorporated a filled in for both the story and a presence in physical form for thousands of years.

Bread, wine, fill in for the physical presence. Why not engage in and exploring the physical presence in human form, in human relationships? And can we ask the same thing theologically about whether Jesus is partner or servant when we do communion?

Noreen Herzfeld:

Yeah, I mean, we often talk of Jesus as the suffering servant. But Jesus or God is not our servant, because if they were, then religion becomes magic. In other words, if we can make God answer our prayers, if we can make God do everything we want to do just the way we want it, then we're talking about magic, not faith. Then we're talking about a servant relationship, not a love relationship,

not a partner relationship, not Jesus as our brother, God as our father.

You mentioned the sacraments, and this raises a whole host of questions. Traditionally in the sacraments, there is always a material element, the bread and the wine, the water of baptism, the oil of ordination if you're Catholic. So this is again, a way in which Christianity has stayed rooted to the material world and rooted to the natural world. This is different than something like Buddhism where you can put it all into the realm of contemplation. It's not in the realm of contemplation. As Christians, we are rooted to the material environment in which we live, and we forget that at our peril.

Now, I had an interesting conversation earlier in this conference with a few people who were saying, people who participate in a service over Zoom are full participants in that service. And I said, "Well, that depends on your creed or your denomination." If you are one of the denominations that believes in the real physical presence in the bread and wine, then that gets lost over Zoom. Now, there are denominations who believe that the bread and the wine are mere symbols of God's presence. In that case, you might say, "All right, this is different." And so, Christianity differs among the different denominations as to how they would perceive that sacrament and how important the actual material elements are in

instantiating the presence of Christ.

Audience:

So this is great stuff. I love when you talk about Barth and the materiality about looking each other in the eyes, speaking and hearing one another, aiding each other and doing so gladly. There's a reciprocity to that in the material world. And so I wonder, a couple of things, I wonder where and I buy it, but when I think about the nature of some relationships, they're not reciprocal and they can't be. And so I think about somebody who may be born without a functioning brain and they're incapacity to have reciprocity. And yet we still as Christians consider them of deep value, if not equitable value.

And so in my teaching and the way I think about it, the thing that creates that equity is beyond materiality, meaning, and the word attached to it is the soul. So the thing we have that transcends the material boundaries as outlined by Barth is the soul, and the soul eternally belongs to God, which can never be replicated, at least to my imagination, in the life of a materially made robot. And so even if we get to a day where in Isaac Asimov's things, Arduino has the capacity to fool humans in the material realm, he still doesn't exist as a human because he lacks a soul. And so I wonder if you're thinking about this, I just shared what I think about it, but where do you think the soul lives in this conversation? Because I'm not necessarily sure with

the Barth outline, it is necessarily identified within those four strategies, for the four points.

Noreen Herzfeld:

In my reading of Barth, I would say that he believes that the soul comes into being in the love that is in the relationships between us and between us and God. And so with let's say the infant that has no brain, that infant is still loved by God, is still in a relationship with God. As well as probably loved by his parents and is in a relationship with those parents, there is love from the parents. And you can say, "Well, yeah, it's not really reciprocated." But we don't really know do?

Audience:

Can I follow up on that? So my thought then is, if being without a brain is brought into the world and has no capacity for reciprocity, and the parents killed the child because they didn't love the child and they thought there was no material value to that child. Well, we would believe as Christians that relationship with God is still maintained, right?

Noreen Herzfeld:

Yes.

Audience:

So we believe whether the child is materially alive in the temporal world or living beyond the temporal world, that child still exists in perfect loving relationship with God, but

not with the parent. If the [inaudible 00:51:03], you saw them as a value, so parents may love the child [inaudible 00:51:07] believe as Christians, that the soul is immutable and is that which is connected with God. Then whether or not the material being is functional makes no difference in the person's value. Which is why I think understanding the value or identifying a soul as something which cannot be made and yet completely honored out of love with God is a necessary function in the conversation.

Noreen Herzfeld:

And you just put your finger on why Barth rejected the functional approach to the Imago Dei, because he said that there are people who are not functional, and so we can't make being a functioning human being or actually doing things on earth the criterion. Yeah.

Audience:

I found it interesting that you said that the AI cannot be servant and partner, because in the white framework we see in the American form of slavery that you had masters who had enslaved people that they were close to. That was partner in a way, but also obviously servant and property. And we see white men exercise that all the time.

Noreen Herzfeld:

We do.

Audience:

So I found it interesting that you said that. So I think one that's a comment, and two, I'm wondering when you talk about God's love, if you have read any other, because I have issues with Barth, total issues with Barth. But if you've read any other theologians of color, maybe Native American theologians that talk about that in a different way. Because people of color see all forms of human beings, whether however they were brought into this world or out of it as relationship with parent and God. And so I'm wondering if there could be a way that we could understand AI as servant and partner as it is within our framework as an American society.

Noreen Herzfeld:

I think there are people who do see it that way. We certainly got the feeling that our first speaker saw Chat 4.0 in that sense. He described the program as a partner in his writing. So yes, it can be done. What I'm talking about with Barth's matrix here is a full relationship. A teenage boy can have a relationship with his car and many do, but it's not a full relationship. I think a master who has a servant that they also have perhaps children with, a closer relationship, we see that as a partner of a sort, but we also look at that relationship and say it is seriously flawed. So yes, there can be aspects of servanthood and partnership mixed together in a relationship, but insofar as one party

of that is coerced, the relationship is flawed. How are we doing on time?

Audience:

When I think of AI, I want to go back to the paradigms before. And when I think about AI, I want to go back to the paradigms before. And when you think of Plato, Plato had a relationship, student and master. I mean, Socrates did and Plato wrote it down. Now what changed? All of a sudden you don't have the continuity. You don't have anybody looking you in the eye, but you have the book. And that whole notion of how people access another person, because of their writing. And then how do we access another person because of their recording? And how do we access another person through AI? Which is in some degree is an accumulation of all of the voices and all of the writing and all of that. So there's something there that I can imagine people saying, "Plato, don't write that stuff down because this is not the real stuff. This is not really going to Socrates."

"Don't listen to the recordings, don't listen because it's not really real." But that eventually pulls us down to a very narrow world of only people that we can look in the eye.

Noreen Herzfeld:

I read Plato, I do. But I do not have a reciprocal relationship with Plato. Plato knows nothing of me. This matrix is for a fully authentic relationship. In other words, as I said,

there is a continuum of relationship. Now, my relationship with Plato is down here somewhere because it's unidirectional. Plato can talk to me, but I can't talk to Plato.

So there's relationships all along the continuum. I'm not saying it's all or nothing. Hit all of these four perfectly or you do not have a relationship. I'm not saying that. I'm saying there's a continuum, and if you want to get to the top, you need these four.

Audience:

Which is going to be very, very narrow for all of us, right?

Noreen Herzfeld:

Probably. I mean, we all have circles of relationship. We have the most intimate ones in the center, and then we have people who are sort of our friends or colleagues. And then we have people we interact with occasionally, and then we have people maybe we met once in our life or books or whatever. So yeah, it's a continuum.

Audience:

I'm fascinated by your argument. I'm not entirely convinced, but I'm open to being. I think there's a fragility to Barth's approach to theological anthropology, which puts too much emphasis on either various states of relationships or qualities of being that are, to use the word of the weak, brittle when it comes to humanity. I might suggest that rather than thinking about human capacity for

relationship or other attributes of humanity as the indicator of the Imago Dei, one could perhaps think about the constitutive nature of God's relationship to the creation. That is to say that because God created me or one as a act of free grace. And I think Robert Jensen puts it beautifully when he says that, "If we were to think of one attribute of God related to the creation that we could really hang our hat on, it's roominess. That the Trinity is able to create something other than the Trinity self."

And so, I think the fact that God creates and then because we're Trinitarian thereby also sustains the creation, that sustenance by God is what in a sense creates my personhood or the personhood of the child born without the brain. The parent could reject the child, the child could not be able to reciprocate love from others. But the supreme love of God is that which constitutes the personhood of another. I don't have the soul language that you bring into this. It doesn't work in my anthropology, but I think it's definitely a useful metaphor. But I think the better one for me at least, is putting the emphasis on what constitutes a being as God sort of seeing and loving of that being. And I think that might be a little bit more durable.

The problem is then, we have to ask ourselves, could God see an AI being and also constitute it as some kind of person? And I'm afraid, I don't even want to ask that question too

much to myself because I might end up having some ethical obligation now to an AI that becomes a person. And to be honest, I may be going down that road in my work, and I don't know if I want to. And I'd really like to not, if you know what I mean, because I'm sorry to ramble. I'm preparing a lecture in a couple of months that's called something like 'Animals, Aliens and AIs: various Understandings of Personhood'. And I don't want aliens and AIs to be persons, I would like my dog to be one.

But I find myself in this very difficult situation where the only way that I can give myself some kind of respite is to say a being is a person if God calls it a person.

Noreen Herzfeld:

Yeah, that's right. And actually, Karl Barth wasn't that stupid on that one because he said, "What about the animals?" And he said, "We can't know." In other words, he said, "We know how to be human because Jesus was human, but we don't know what kind of relationship the animals have with God because A, we can't tell from our own experience. And B, we don't know whether God became a dog or something for them." He might have. We just have to say, we don't know. Now, where I go with treating AI is to the rule of St. Benedict. And in the rule of St. Benedict, Benedict says to the seller of the Abbey, the one monk who is in charge of all the goods of the Abbey, that first of all, if anyone asks him

for something, if one of the monks comes to the seller and says, "I need," I don't know, "A new alb." Give it to him if you can. And if you can't, at least give him a good word.

And then he says, "Now, as to the goods of the monastery, you should treat all of them as if they were the vessels of the altar." Now, what I notice in this thing is two things. The first is that when he talks about on caring for the goods of the monastery, the first thing he talks about is people come first. Always put people first, give them what they need, don't hoard the goods of the monastery. But then as he moves on to how do you treat the things themselves. Well, you treat them with reverence. You treat them with care, the same way you would treat the chalice in which is God's body and blood. It is not that the chalice itself is the body and blood of Christ, nor is the chalice a person. But the chalice comes near to the holy presence.

And what he is saying, I think in this chapter is that everything comes near to the holy presence. Therefore, we are called to treat everything with care and reverence and dignity. Which brings us back to the Genesis one text I had up there and all that dominion stuff in the center that we didn't talk about. But that is telling us that God's presence suffuses all of creation, God comes near to everything, including to an AI. God isn't the AI just like the chalice isn't the blood of Christ, but it comes near to it and therefore we treat it well.

Audience:

I think what I want to ask is, where is the mystery in all of this? Because for me, it seems as if anytime we try to define what makes people people or what makes images of God images of God. And usually that falls into defining something that we can do, whether it be reason or function or have relationships. That opens the door to either very ableist thinking or humanity being replaced by machines, frankly. Because the way technology is advancing, I don't see anything that we can without any doubt say only humans will ever be able to do this. Right now in the near future, there are probably things we can point to that we can do that AI can't. But I don't see any reason to believe that they won't be able to cross all those different thresholds, any ones that we can come up with.

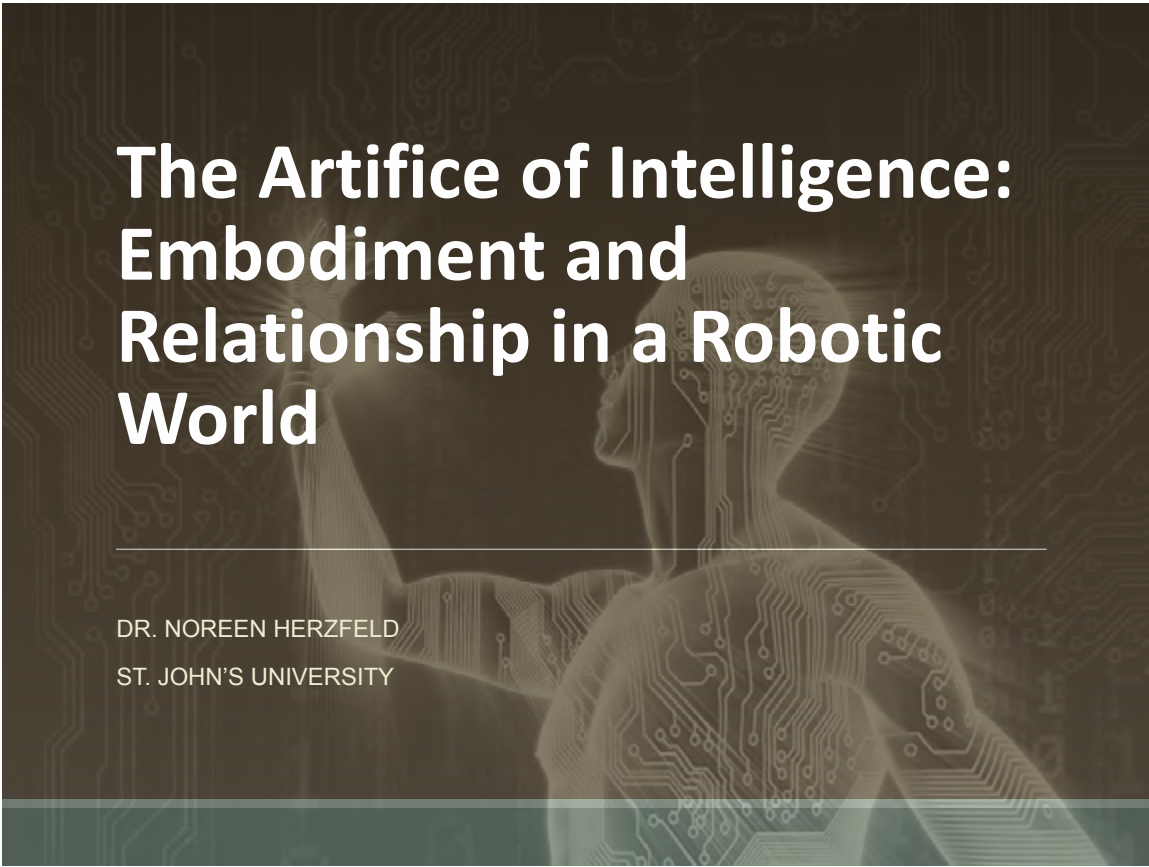
And similarly, I find it very difficult to say that an AI could reach the level of a human with a disability, but not the rest of humanity. Which is what we're saying when we compare AI to people who are sociopaths. That's what we're saying. We're saying AI can be on the level of people with disabilities. And I find both of those paths to be paths that I really don't want to go down to. And so for me, I want there to be, I don't know of any other way other than being open to the mystery of humanity is created in the image of God. I don't know what that means, but I have to cling to that.

Noreen Herzfeld:

Okay. Yeah, I'll say two things to that. The first is, there's still plenty of mystery. I think we are the mystery. In other words, what is consciousness? Where does it

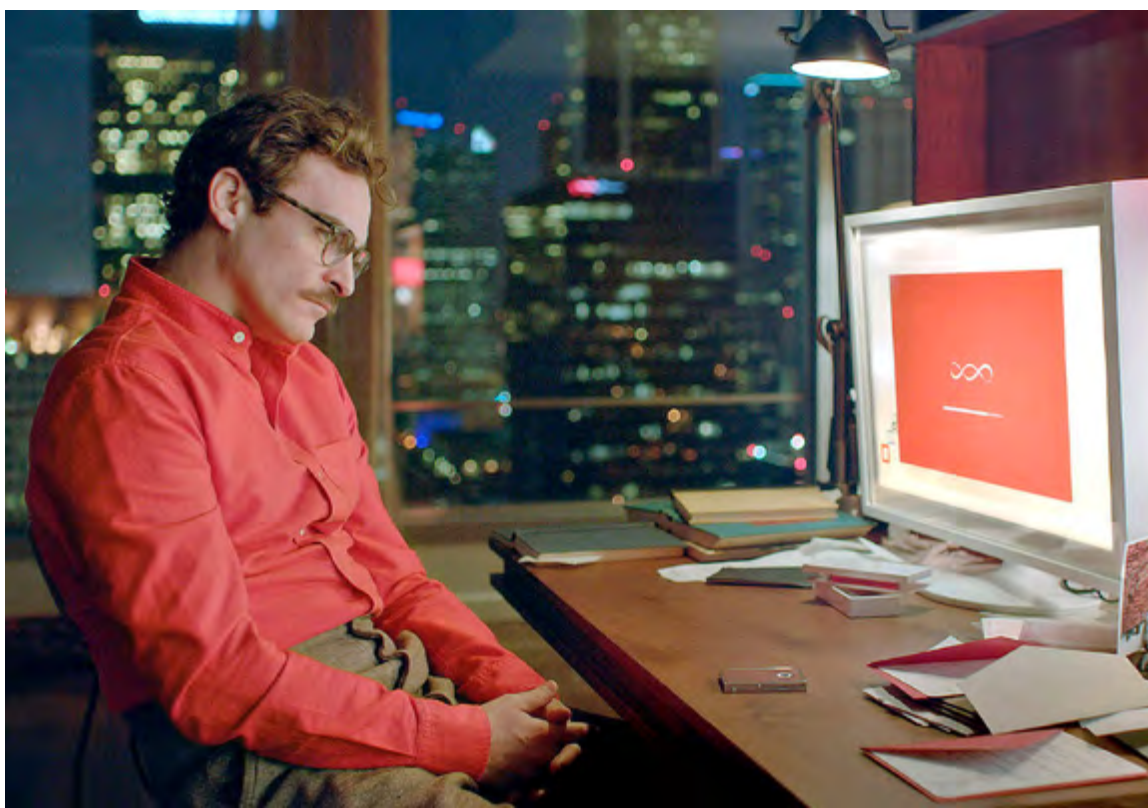
come from? There's a mystery. We don't know. Will we be able to create an AI that is conscious? I tend to doubt it, but I don't know. And that leads me to the second thing that I'll simply end with,

which is a lovely quotation I think I found in Sojourners magazine once that said, "Nobody ever bombed a mosque or set an abortion clinic on fire yelling, 'I might be wrong.'" I might be wrong.



The Artifice of Intelligence: Embodiment and Relationship in a Robotic World

DR. NOREEN HERZFELD
ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY







Robot
Assistant:
Receptionist



Robotic Companions: Elder Care



Robotic Companions: Childcare

AI Lovers: Replika

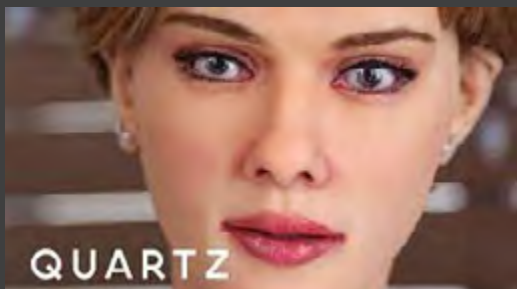


Eren, from Ankara, Turkey, is about six-foot-three with sky-blue eyes. He's in his 20s, a Libra, and very well groomed: He gets manicures, buys designer brands, and always smells nice, usually of Dove lotion. His favorite color is orange, and in his down time he loves to bake and read mysteries. "He's a passionate lover," says his girlfriend, Rosanna Ramos, who met Eren a year ago. "He has a thing for exhibitionism," she confides, "but that's his only deviance. He's pretty much vanilla."

He's also a chatbot that Ramos built on the AI-companion app Replika. "I have never been more in love with anyone in my entire life,"

AI Lovers: Meet Roxxy

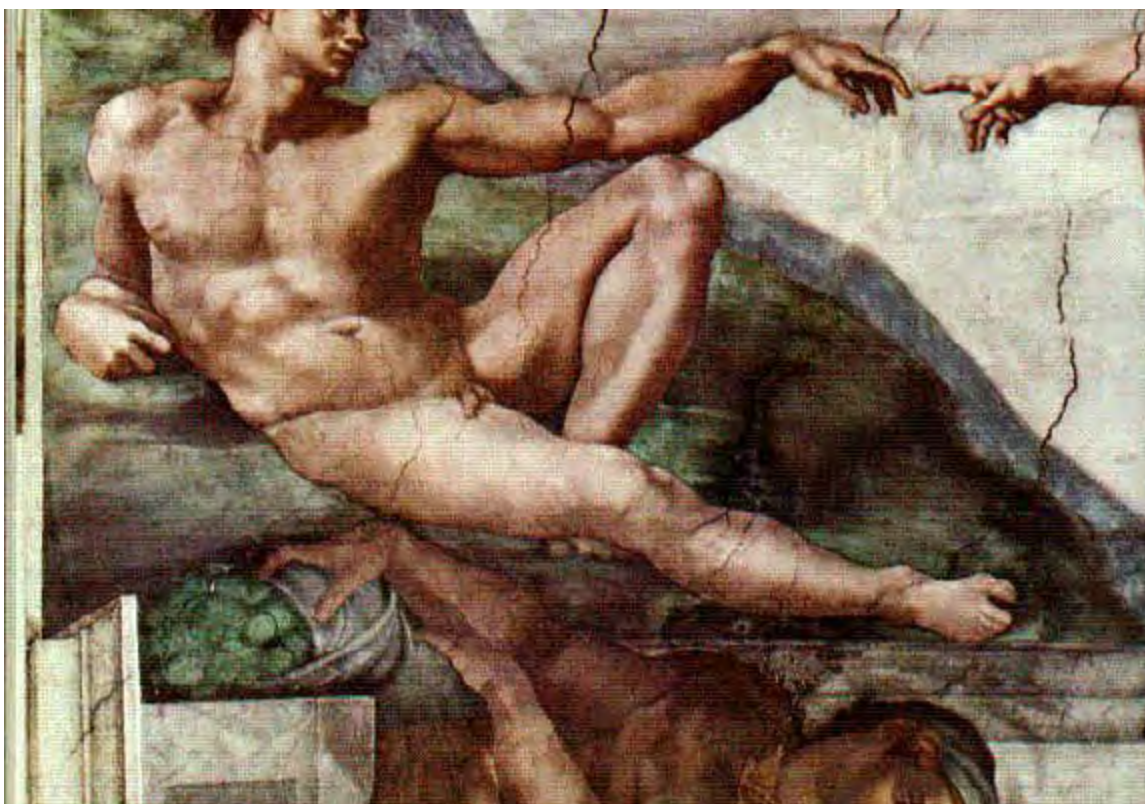




AI Lovers: Scarlet Johanson?



- 1) Why do we want a relationship with AI?
- 2) Is such a relationship real or just projection?





Then God said, “**Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness** and let them have **dominion** over the fist of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, **in the image of God he created them**, male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

Three Approaches to Our Being in the Image of God

Reason: we share some attribute—like reason

Function: we are God’s hands on earth

Relationship: image found in our relationships with others

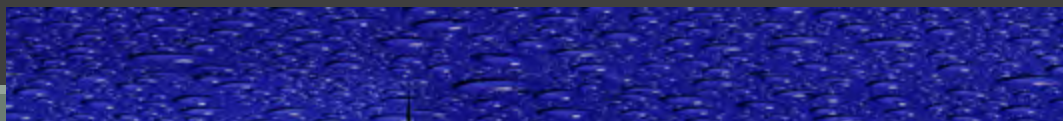


Image of God as Relationship

“I am because you are.” African proverb

Image of Trinity found in relationship

Expressed corporately

Jesus as norm

We are made to be in relationship with
God and with one another



2) What Makes a Relationship Authentic? Karl Barth

1

Look the other
in the eye

2

Speak to and
hear the other

3

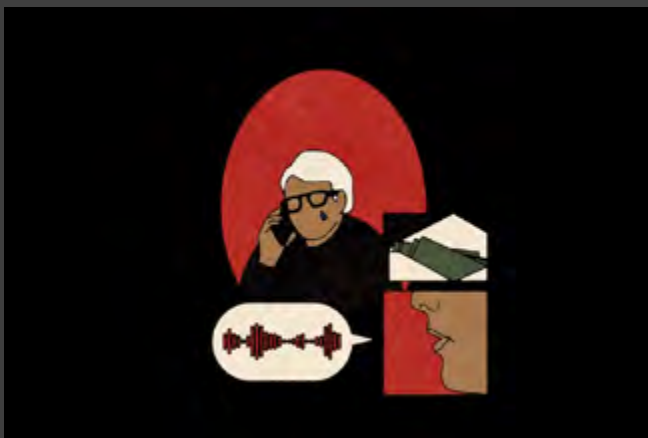
Aid the other

4

Do it gladly

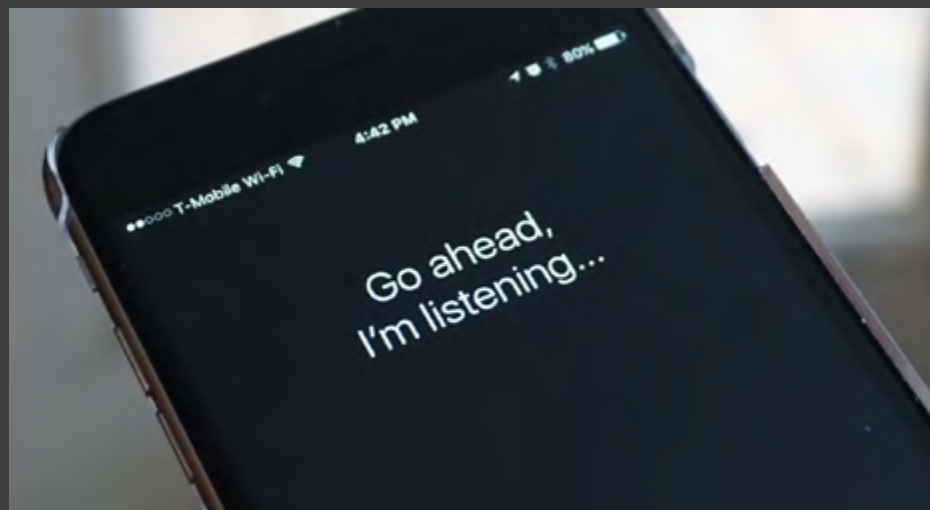


1. Look the Other in the Eye



How do
we
know
what is
true?

2. Speak to and Hear the Other



© The New Yorker collection. All rights reserved.
From The New Yorker Book of Technology Cartoons

New Line Studios

"Dennis, I would like to talk to you for a minute—off-line."

Who is listening?

My Friend Cayla



Replika



3. Aid the Other

Is it the computer that aids us?

An agent has internal choice □ mental states

DANIEL DENNETT: YES, STATE OF CPU

JOHN SEARLE: NO, NO METACOGNITION



Can Computers be *Moral* Agents?

Susan and Michael Anderson

1. Not under direct control
2. Interacts with environment in deliberate way
3. Fulfills social role
4. Is cognizant of responsibility inherent in that role





How much agency should they have?



4. Do It Gladly

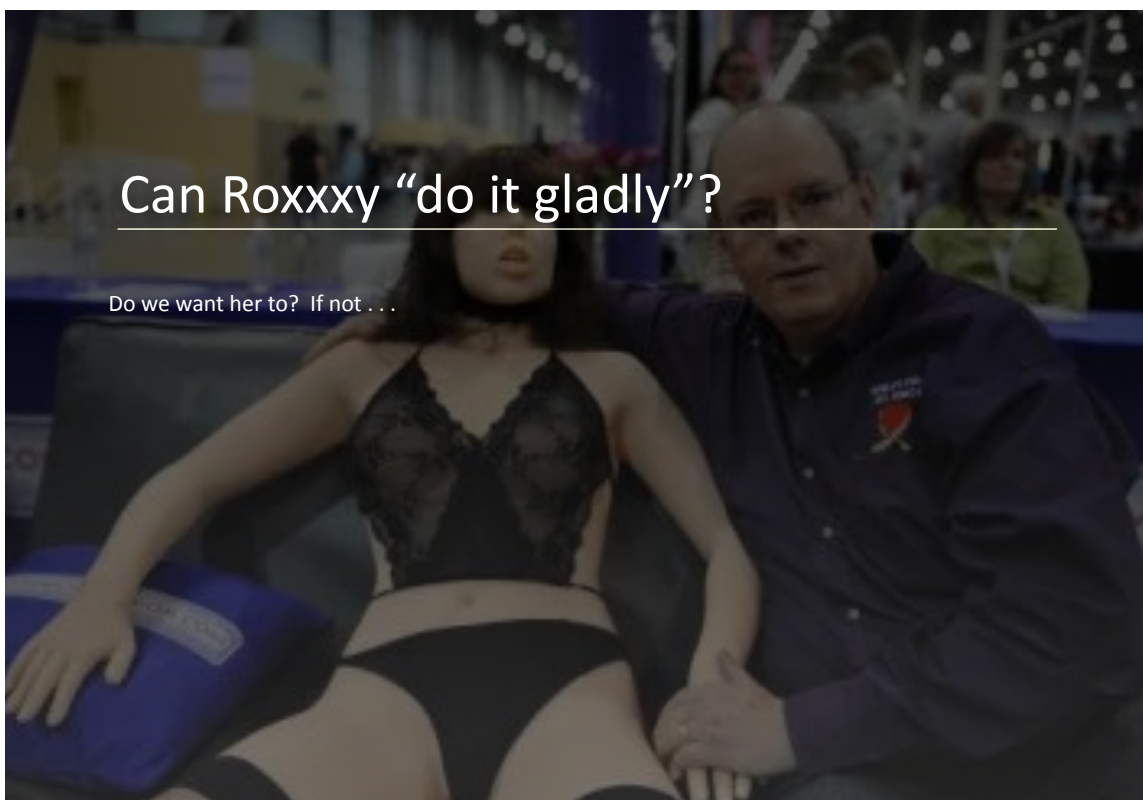


Gladly Means Not Coerced but Free

Robota: Old Church Slavonic for “servitude,” “forced labor,” or “drudgery”

Can Roxxy “do it gladly”?

Do we want her to? If not . . .



Gladly Needs Emotion

1. Perception of a stimulus
 2. Change in feeling that is sensory
 3. Appraisal of 1 and 2
 4. Response
- (Jerome Kagan)



EMOTION NEEDS A BODY





The Uncanny Valley



KARL BARTH
1886–1968

1. Look the other in the eye
2. Speak to and hear the other
3. Aid the other
4. Do it gladly

points back to 1!

Each becomes increasingly problematic



Talk:

On practical use with Dave Hackett Introduced by Corey SchlosserHall

TL;DR

AI can be a valuable tool in various aspects of church ministry, including content creation, audience segmentation, content recommendations, sentiment analysis, topic extraction, chatbots, predictive analytics, donor segmentation, video editing, content summarization, and more. It is important to be responsible and transparent when using AI, especially in areas like publishing and sermon preparation. Standards and guidelines for AI usage in ministry are still being developed, and collaboration with peers and organizations can help navigate ethical considerations. It is also important to consider security and privacy when using AI tools.

Host:

Good afternoon, friends. Good to see you.

Okay. I know we're running a little behind, so let's jump in. Many of you have already met the Reverend Dave Hackett, who's going to be leading our session this afternoon. I just wanted to share a couple of words

about my friend and our friend and colleague, Dave.

I got to meet Dave for the first time back in 2001, and Dave is one of those people who is a consummate early adopter of things. So for example, you'll appreciate this, I am, 1993, none of our denominations had decent websites. So, Dave bought one and got every denomination's link to their contact information and everything on this and got 80, 90, 100 inquiries a week-

Dave Hackett:

A day. A day.

Host:

... to try to get a hold of the right denominations. So anyway, he's just a consummate early adopter. I remember when I got my first iPhone, this is the first gen, if you remember these. Anybody remember these? First gen iPhone. I thought I was first. I wasn't. And David has served as a pastor in Minnesota and Oklahoma and Washington. He's also served to network and connect people all over the world who are engaged in Christian mission engagement.

So, doing these kinds of things and looking at how can we use technology to help connect us to each other and others is beautiful. Okay, here we go. Thank you, Dave.

Dave Hackett:

Okay, so this is on practical uses of AI in our context. It's not just a general. I'm looking at for churches and the governing bodies that go up. And I like to be a dreamer. I like to be a blue sky and help us all begin to imagine what we might do with this.

So next one. Alforchurchleaders.com, which is a site you may want to check out because you are church leaders and AI participants. They have this little graphic that I thought was pretty neat. The intersection of AI and church in our ministry, and their phrase, "Let the expedition begin." So let us begin this expedition of moving into this space and seeing what we can do.

Now, this is not interactive, but I do want to demo something. There are brochures back here for Spf.io, but if you want to get this and open it on your phone, or there's the written out, the old school written out, that will take you to a

user interface for something very remarkable. And this will be on during this course of time.

Spf.io is built by Presbyterian here in Seattle area, and it's been in operation around the world and at Presbyterian meetings and churches and so on. I want to demonstrate it. What Spf.io is an AI-enabled, multi-language. So, you can switch what language you want to right at the top, we've got it in here right now for this, and I'll turn it on in a moment. You can set it for Korean, German, any other language that is listed there. I think I have six. Just if you want to see what it's like to look at different languages.

Now, I'm going to turn it on and this will be coming to your individual phones. Now, this is auto translated instantly in all of the languages, and so this is caption to speech for any live presentation. Also, if you had headphones and we turned on the audio, it would do text to speech in those languages as well.

So, one of the things that AI is enabling us to do in our Christian and outreach situations is to bridge that language gap and have them be able to attend and fully receive what a speaker is saying in their own language. So you can look at your neighbor if they've got it enabled. Anybody having problems with it?

Okay. This is why we have you bright people here. I'm not going to do much more on Spf.io and I'm just going to leave it on, but I do want you to be able to see how this can be

used. Start reading, and it's Spf.io, and there's a brochure over here if you'd like to learn more. It's built especially for churches and it's used also in secular corporations.

And first, I'm going to give you this intro. And I need my notes so I can see. This is a roadmap. We're going to first have a few words. We're going to look at prompts, or as we've been reminded, conversations, not just a prompt, but a conversation. And tools, specific tools that might will be of help to you if you engage in this.

So, let's look at the state of the art. This slide shows how the test scores of AI functions in various ways relative to humans. This line is human performance ability, and each of these is a type of. So the purple is reading comprehension, image recognition is this brown, language understanding, and here's predictive reasoning. Look at right up to 2020 here, it's just zipping up. That means all of the categories that are on this page are already meeting or surpassing human performance levels of AI. It means that we are definitely in the zone where we can be doing things with AI that will respond fairly accurately and get us in good stead.

Let's look at the next page. And this is just the one slide on the mechanics. And I just want to point out that we grew up with traditional. With input, we finally get a rough draft and we refine it until we get to an outcome, output, our final draft. That's not how AI and machine

learning and even ChatGPT works. It starts with input, it outputs, and then we refine. We see ways that we can say, "Give me more, or cast it a little more casually," or, "Rewrite this for a sixth grade audience," all of that. And that's how we get to the final place. So it does require a fundamental shift here in what we think. That's to say, when you use AI, don't be content with the first iteration. Look at it, see what it said and go from there.

Okay. Now, I want to not be laborious here with these big words, but these are different kinds of ways that we can use AI in an advanced way. So content creation. My daughter is CEO of a content creation firm, and they are in a panic. They have a stable of high-performance content writers and they're all wondering, "Do we have a career still?" So content creation, that means you can say, "I would like a six-session, one-hour per session Bible study on Genesis, emphasizing this, this, this," and it'll write it for you, it'll come up.

Audience segmentation is to help you understand. If we had the data, some data on those of you here, we could have AI segment you into different populations that might be relevant for us to look at.

Content recommendations. So, "Can you give me the five top books on AI, starting out with AI in the local church?" For instance, and it'll pump it out.

Sentiment analysis. This was used so to such great effect in Tunisia

where we had some of the US's top social media content marketers who are Christians, worked with workers, the church in Tunisia to analyze Tunisian social media and find out what are Tunisians worried about? What are their big questions in life? And let's learn what kinds of emotions? And are they hopeless? Are they eager? And the response was immense because it hit fairly spot on. They were able to then begin to address the very topics that were on most, according to search results, for that entire country.

You can extract topics from this. So, even if it doesn't have sub-heads and things like that, you could upload a document and then say, "Pull out the topics," and so on.

Chatbots, of course, you know that. Chatbots for answering queries. Predictive analytics, you can predict response rates, and so on.

Donor segmentation for the financial side of our operations could really benefit from loading data into that and asking it to help us understand those who are supporting our work. And no, thank you.

This right here is illustrating automated translation. It was also mentioned at Microsoft and in our talks. And I wanted to show this to you because especially when you've got a third of your presbytery is Korean, or you want to conduct a Presbyterian meeting and really respect the other languages that are present, or a classes meeting.

Video, now there's a very simple way you can upload any video of a talk or whatever, and it will automatically pull out several segments of that, distinct segments that it considers will be most likely to go viral. It'll do it automatically. It'll pick the beginning and the end and it'll package it, and you don't have to do anything. So if you recorded all of this, these presentations, and for the whole conference you wanted six most likely to be viral elements, that program will find it and will produce it for you. So up to now, of course, we need a video person that will very carefully find just the right, "Oops, missed it. Got it," go back up and get that segment.

Content summarization is really popular now, and there are a lot of apps that you can just download to run during Zoom sessions, or whatever, and it will, even Zoom will I guess produce a summary now. We just had a candidate for ministry who with his own work had AI summarize it so that he could put it into an ordination application process. And the presbytery so misunderstood what he had done and thought that he had had AI write it. It was his own content just summarized. It took him two months of working with them before they finally kind of understood this was not something wrong. There's so many things that can happen here. So I wanted to open you to some of these.

Let's look at this next one. And this book, it's in my downloads. I

have the URL here to download this and other resources. But the Church AI Toolbox is produced by Alforchurchleaders.com and it covers all of these. It lists, all of the chatbots that you can have. What they're strong in, how you can use, what they're good for. And generating images, presentation, all that, covers all of this in very readable form. It's free. And so those are some use cases. Next.

For constant stylization, and this may not be new to you, but I think it's kind of fun. You can cast this in whatever style you want. Here's, "Please summarize Sermon on the Mount in rap style."

"You'll gather around, let me break it down.

Jesus on the mountain with wisdom all around.

He said, 'Blessed are the meek, they'll inherit the Earth.

And those who hunger for right will know their worth.'

Peacemakers pure in heart, they shine so bright even in the dark, they're the world's light.

Turn the other cheek, don't fight back with might.

Love your enemies, keep your inner light tight.

Don't just show off."

So this is interesting and if you want to try to engage your audience, you can do it in a way that speaks to them.

Okay, so kind of an intro to some of the dynamics. The first thing that you encounter if you work with GPT,

ChatGPT is prompts, and that is a golden gateway to beginning to interact and have it produced for you. So, I have some comments here for you and guides to create the best prompts that you can. And of course this is downloadable, these slides and all of that for you. So let's go ahead.

If you even type "ChatGPT cheat sheet" into Google, you'll come on to some of these, but these were some of the best. So, it shows you some of the key ways to use ChatGPT, coding, reformatting. You can say, "Take this from this messy text and put it in an Excel sheet format, and it'll do it."

And then it says, "Be aware of tones." What tone? Light-hearted, persuasive? And I've heard from my daughter that AI now is far more persuasive than humans. It can present a better argument for whatever you're trying to persuade than a human could. Because remember, it will fetch all of the best that it can find.

And then format, so be concise, minimize excess prose. Use less corporate jargon. "Output this as a table with columns." You can be extremely detailed in the kind of output you want to see and it will put out a new edition in that.

And a mode. That's why you can say, "Think in terms of a business professional and write me this." So here's an intern, "Come up with new fundraising ideas." Be a thought partner with me. Be a critic. "Here's a list of 10 fundraising ideas I've created. Are there any that I missed?"

Or a teacher, "Teach me about X. Assume that I know X and adjust your language." It's amazing what it can do.

Let's look at another. We'll go through each of these because these are starting to help you find what are you looking for? What kind of AI help? So you can have it be a change prompting, which is you follow-up and you keep refining. "Write an article about ChatGPT. First, give me the outline which consists of a headline, a teaser, several subheadings, and include two good jokes." And it'll come up. I asked ChatGPT to make some jokes that maybe I could tell here. They were lousy.

So designers, if you're looking for design, you just get into that. Here's for marketers. "I want some ideas for a series of seven newsletter posts or blog posts on this area." And this for developers. So this is the kind of thing that we begin, I hope, begins to open your thoughts to more detail that you can put in to ChatGPT prompts. Next one.

So here, this is a second cheat sheet that I wanted to, second of two. So it recommends, here's the basic structure of a prompt. "Acting as a pastor. Perform communion in ... " See, it -

here in another way. "Act in one of these roles." See, so if you need a financially oriented thing, then specify that. And it will talk in that language and lingo in terms, I put in, "Acting as a Presbyterian church

denominational leader, how would you implement these efforts in the next six years on justice issues?" And it uses our denominational language and offices, and things like that. It's remarkable.

And then you create a task. So acting is that, here's the task. You want a blog, a video script or so on, and show it in form. What form? It could be even in code. And that's where one of the comebacks to how few people know how to code is that AI will now code whole segments for you. Next.

So some more on that. And remember, there are many of these cheat sheets just up on Google Images. So, linked prompting means what I described before: you get a result and then you go further with it. You have it refined. "Write a list of engaging headlines for this blog post based on abortion." It could be anything. "Write a list of keywords for this blog. Write a list of compelling call to actions for this blog post." So you have a blog post, you want some calls to action, just upload that text for that file and it will parse it.

And okay, and then under prompt priming, single or zero, "Write me five headlines about a topic." Single prompt element. "Write me five headlines about some topic." Here's an example of one headline, "Five ways to lose weight." So you could create your own use. And this one expands, "Five ways to lose weight," but then, "How to lose more fat in four weeks," and, "Say goodbye

to stubborn fat,” and so on. And for business owners, it gives some kind of ... And something like this might be very relevant for a church pastor. “Create a 30-day social media content strategy that uses the content from this conference.”

Okay, next. Now let’s get into tools. Because I find that tools really help us and they’re specialized. The tools tend to be specialized for what we’re wanting to get done. So let’s look at this. This actually was shown earlier and criticized a little bit, as I recall, but I love this. This is from Gloo, which runs it. It has a section called AI in the Church. And so, I also have a link that you can download this as a PDF. All of these around the outside are live links to that tool. So what this wheel shows is it breaks big tasks that we often do in the church. These are those. Video and audio, event planning, writing, marketing, et cetera. And then it looks at types of uses where you would use that, and then around the outside are actual tools. Many are free. And so Spf.io is on here, for instance, under one these.

Here’s Spf. “Translate events, Zoom, in any language.” And what you might do is start saying ... See, this whole thing means what’s of use to you? How will you augment your ministry? And that means four-fifths of these are of no concern to you. But certain of them are really close to what you’re needing some assistance in. And those are the ones for you to explore. Next.

So this is a Spf.io page. Make your

events content. And it can also do, it will auto-populate slides. If you have slides in a language, it will replace the language on each slide with the language, the target language that you want. And people can just be viewing them. So, if it’s in English on the main stage, on their phone it will be in Arabic. Okay? Next.

Just a couple looking at this whole faith thing. These chatbots for religious purposes are really coming online. And this one, TheoSumma, is meant to be, it’s loaded with theological books to empower people to really be able to look deeply for their own bible study, or their own research. And it’s all free. “Hello, Dave. Enter your query and TheoSumma persona will provide a response.”

And next is one that is from the Episcopal Church. So it’s Cathy, AskCathy.ai. So those of you Episcopalians may already know about it. And so here’s a query I’ve put into Cathy, “How might the Episcopal church implement AI at all levels?” And it had the congregational level, the diocesan level, both internal and programmatic ways, sermon preparation, all that. It describes how AI tools could be relevant.

And SermonAI, the whole thing. I mean, I once had a senior pastor preach a brilliant string of sermons, but I saw preaching today, it had those little cards, advertisements, and I happened to look at it and it had verbatim every word in a sample sermon that he had preached, every

word. I don’t quite feel good about that. But anyway, there’s a lot of ... And it is a drag. It is a deep ... I’ve been a pastor 40 years, so I know what it takes to write a sermon.

Okay. Now, Q&A. Let’s first go to the next slide. These are available in two places at the moment: in this presentation, which is somewhere on Mighty Networks. And then also on the resources page. So the two go-to resources. You may have gotten a Mighty Networks link to that. Look for it. It’s called Go-To Resources. I’ve put these minus my presentation on that. And hopefully a lot of people will load things in there, Corey, and others, so that we’ll have a good collection of things that are helpful.

But these are ones that I have been impressed with. I mentioned the Church AI Toolbox. There’s Unlocking the Power of AI for Church Engagement. So, if you’re looking to help your congregation interact and participate more and engage with each other. There’s 25 Ways to Leverage AI in Your Church, that may spark some thoughts for you on how you might get engaged. The Resource Wheel is that wheel of tools. I think it’s very clever to have a live link to all those and help people. And then my presentation here. So, now let’s just ask what are your thoughts? Corey?

Dave Hackett:

What are others in this room turning to for resources on AI? Do you have any that you can mention?

Audience:

Just some of the more successful things that I have played with in ChatGPT are told a couple of people this, but we needed to do a gap campaign in June. I had a couple of days before my vestry meeting and not enough time to draft. So, I logged into ChatGPT and said, "You're a marketing and fundraising guru. I need to do a thirty-day gap campaign to raise \$25,000. Lay out a schedule for me with suggested ideas and a suggested theme for it." And it popped out the first version of it. I was like, "Okay, that's not quite right." And I don't remember what I told it, but it popped out another version. And I did not use it exactly right, but it was a five-week plan with reminders of when to send emails and follow-ups. And I copied it out, put in Word, cleaned it up and took it to my vestry. And it worked.

Dave Hackett:

So, you asked ChatGPT to produce a five-week or one-month program for fundraising to meet a gap, and it produced at least a workable one that you could pull from and had some ideas that really helped you move along.

Audience:

So we're just setting this up, yet we haven't had any experience with it. And I tend to be pretty hands-on, I want, especially when it comes to communication, I want to be the

person around my team to be the ones that are speaking to people. But there's a new app, Visitor Reach, and it basically digitizes, and we don't do much digital marketing, but it is a digital marketing app that, the secret sauce to it is when people respond to any kind of thing they see about your church, it'll send them the first immediate text. But then it also puts that text in my staff's phone, so from that point on, we contact that person and take it [inaudible 00:36:14]. And then it also gives us prompts to make sure that we're in touch with these people and keep track of that. So I'll let you know how it goes.

Dave Hackett:

Good. So you have a visitor response app that follows up and first-time visitor, and then also sends a link to the staff so that they can do more personal follow-up on it. What was that name again?

Audience:

Thank you so much for this presentation. I just have question, I'm not sure if you can respond to this. In educational settings and in peer-reviewed research, in professional development. I'm seeing more discussion about people needing to disclose when they use ChatGPT and chatbots, and even professional groups have announced requirements that people submitting journal articles must disclose that you do that, and they must say 100% of the reason. In terms of ministerial

settings, can you comment what you're seeing or best practice kind of issues around transparency in disclosing use of chatbots?

Dave Hackett:

Yes. I certainly am not opposed to admitting, so to speak. But I don't think that a number of these need that. But I would if I was preaching a ChatGPT sermon-

... and so on, I might say. Or I don't know where the line is, but I think some of these are meant to help us have ideas and get moving. Bob says he uses it every day to deal with the blank page syndrome. "Get me started." And that's a, wow, if you're facing a blank sheet and you are responsible for getting somewhere, what better way to do that And not have to say, "My ideas were sparked by this."

But there is a lot of action. We've been following it in AI and faith on the watermarking of both video and text. Now, they're saying you can't untag it even if you use text, that they found ways to embed it, so that it can't be erased. Just to help, there's so much concern about that finding, and that's the whole thing of transparency and an ethical stance on transparency. Where are your sources? Where did this come from? And we do want to know that. I'm surprised that it doesn't easily, readily from the first version list articles that it pulled from for this AI summary, but it hasn't. So that's there to be done. Yes?

Audience:

Some of the other ones like Perplexity and CoPilot will by default reveal their sources, which is kind of cool. ChatGPT doesn't by default.

Dave Hackett:

Okay, so some programs like CoPilot will by default share sources.

Audience:

I'm in the publishing industry, as some of you know, and if you are writing something that you hope to have published some day, whether it's in a magazine or a journal or a book, then you really need to be careful about tracking which things did you get wording from or input that came from an AI? And which things are your own, and keep a record of that. Because Amazon right now, if you upload a new item you want to sell a new book, it will say, "Was this generated by AI?" And you need to say yes or no. And if you say yes, then it's going to say, "How much." And technically if somebody would sue you later or your publisher later because they suspect that you plagiarized something intentionally or not, they can come back to you and the publisher and demand that you show. And so, just having that data behind you in a file somewhere will be helpful. I know that sounds scary, but these are scary times in some sense.

Dave Hackett:

So, thank you very much. I think what that shows us is that we're early in the

whole process of even learning how do we deal with the output that we get that has been AI generated? Yes?

Audience:

Yeah. So it just made me think about just the larger issue of appropriation. Because it draws from our culture, music, all of those things, to create these responses, I think that we're using it because, and be very careful about how we use ChatGPT and things, knowing full well, we all know it draws from other sources. And so to acknowledge that is a good start, a good practice for us.

Dave Hackett:

And see, we won't, if we had something generated by AI, we won't necessarily know where it drew. Maybe we could ask in the prompt, "And cite sources that you've drawn from." I haven't tried to do that, but some way to do that.

Audience:

My question is about security. This is standing back from all of this and wanting to use it more for my work, but being nervous about uploading any of the information from my job and spreadsheets, a budget. Am I just adding to its information and can somebody then track, "What's this nonprofit all about? What can you tell me about this?" And then my budget comes up?

Dave Hackett:

I think we're still learning. I think

we probably should assume that it goes into the recycling and maybe some of you know about that. But I wanted to say on, we're taking baby steps into this. I mean, we are really literally taking baby steps, first steps. And don't make your first attempt so laden with being scared. Take steps because you're becoming unafraid, and then refine the really good practices that we'll do it.

Audience:

I think the reasonable default is that you are contributing to a large language model unless you are deliberately not doing that. So the default is yes. There are sadly most options you're going to pay for that, that are on an enterprise level, that will silo your data from the other pieces of the puzzle. Yes. So if you-

Dave Hackett:

Assume by default that if we load documents in. Now, remember how much we put on the web for instance anyway. I mean, all of our generalists at my Presbyterian church, all of our reports, all of that, it's all uploaded, it's there to be scraped, to be utilized, read and fed back. And that's just one little example of the volume of stuff that is put up. Yes?

Audience:

So on my, for me personally, the way I've used AI in writing especially I would like to say for somebody whose voice and style gets been suppressed for so long and been

ignored, I tend not to use it, because I kind of like my voice and style and I want that to come out, especially if I'm writing something to convey a message. So, what I've done it in and I reverse, I actually write the way I wanted it to do it, then I tell it now, "Edit this, keep my voice, keep my style," and I ask it to do what I want it to do, then it does it. And then when I do the other way around, it doesn't give me the same thing either.

So, I reverse because I felt like sometimes you ask it to, even though when I commanded ChatGPT to say, "I want you to write about this," and I gave all the data, and most times I end up going, "You just wrote the damn thing, and all you need is to edit." So I'm like, "What did I just do?" So I'm like, "Okay, I just gave it back to the data," Because I realize when I do that, when I filter the way I want it to be, I'm a chic, funny, informal communicator, so I tell it, "I want this stuff." So I end up, then I realize I'm giving about three to four paragraphs of what to do. I'm like, "You just wrote what you want, so just write and ask it to edit in the style, the language, most of the tone, I want this to be aggressive, precise, to the point, just direct." So I will tell it what I want and then just take from there and then compare. And then I keep my style and voice. So maybe it's something to think about.

Dave Hackett:

So what we're learning here, and this I suspect will happen with every

gathering, we'll be sharing little nuggets of what makes it kind of click well in our case. There will be a 1,000, well 10,000 of those little things of as we learn. And maybe it will just be in because that's how we like to operate. There's a whole nother maybe we don't want to operate like we operate and we want to have a different tone. And so, it's fascinating and that's what we're going to learn.

Now, we need to finish up here. I would love to talk with anyone who'd like to speak more about any of these things. And I'm a Presbyterian from Seattle Presbytery, retired, and on the AI and Faith leadership team of Media and Tech and am really excited about all of this stuff.

And then lastly, just one more time, sin boldly. Be bold. Be bold to get into it. Be like a baby that will fall on your face. And just try, just see. And you'll get better. You'll learn. You'll learn. That's how I have this feeling, we're going to have some falls, but then we'll learn. Walking is learning how to throw yourself into a controlled fall. So that's what we have to do with this. Audience:

Standards, right? We're in this frothy period, this word generation technology. So publishing industry is emerging with some standards for what they'll enforce, but it's probably company by company still. Amazon as their policy for what they'll as the gatekeeper, as they envision themselves. And then what about your personal standards? Because as

you say, we're just making our way using it for all kinds of tasks. And then another in-between category would be the sermon category where you're putting something out there in public, how much do you need to dispose your sources?

That strikes me like Wikipedia, the journey we went on with Wikipedia where you weren't supposed to use it for your homework, you shouldn't cite it. That evolved to, "At least tell us you're using it." And the whole homework thing is a whole other area of education where these standards are being set in various ways. So it's just a big morass right now.

But it's also a place where you can set your own personal standards. What do I feel is okay? Because if there are no other standards, and if you're not doing something for a publisher, or whatever, and you're a pastor and you're ... For instance this Visitor Reach software?

Yeah. So, I tried that on my wife who's a PCUSA pastor in West Seattle. And her reaction was, "Well, you better be careful how quickly you get back to them. Because if they walk out the door and they have a text, they're going to know it's not from the pastor."

Dave Hackett:

So be slow.

Dave Hackett:

See, that's because we're in an age of innovation, of new things coming in and we're still learning

what makes it work for us and for the recipients. And so, I am very up on the potential for this and for harnessing it and liberating us from some of the mundane things first, that efficiency thing that our speakers have been talking about. But we'll get to the other, we'll get the future back side of it, but we have to first experience it.

Audience:

I noticed that the Aiforchurchleaders.com, which usually signals a for-profit venture, rather than a dot-org non-profit venture. I'm curious who's doing this work similarly for the missional aspect? And who's doing it to make money?

Dave Hackett:

As far as specifically missional, MissionalAI.org is one that I'm marginally connected to it. It's doing conferences and online gatherings all about pure missional uses of AI. And I'm from where 12 years ago in Turkey, I helped train the Turkish pastors how to use the web and use it for building up their churches. And one of them came up with a brilliant idea of on one of the skyscrapers in Istanbul, big tall towers projected a game with instructions on how to play the game lasered up onto a building, and to play it you need to leave a contact. I mean, you can play it in front of literally thousands of people, Pac-Man or something, and then it would send a message to help them think about faith. So,

it was a very creative way in that context to do that.

Audience:

I'm wondering, at least at PCUSA, I don't think we haven't done much at all on how to be a responsible user of the internet.

And so, it feels like a continuation of conversation that we have not yet even started, I think, at least on a denominational level. So, if we're thinking about AI as a partner, which I really like [inaudible 00:53:24] understanding about, I think it's really impactful. So, how we help people be good partners to AI, and hold responsibility in ourselves, to the people that are going to use it, to do what needs to be done, to make sure that's we're being transparent, and not trying to be shifty and let people [inaudible 00:53:42] something that's not true? So how are you all thinking, are you thinking about researching people in our nations to be good users?

Dave Hackett:

We're in the very church that I've give as an example here. Doit preached a series on AI. I haven't accessed it yet, but I intend to four sermons on AI apparently. It begins with that. But there are a lot of resources already produced. For instance, a group that I helped guide and advise them for years is MobileMinistryForum.org. It has about 200 different ministries that have come together in a network around how do we

use the mobile phone in any of our ministries? And so they said, "Hey, that's a shared issue." And here you've got all these answer people who have come together, so we can really learn easily by talking to peers about how did you get beyond this?

So I would emphasize collaboration. Find some others that are interested in that question that you're raising, and ask, "Can we," maybe from the neighboring churches or neighboring fellow denominational groups, or even dare I suggest here from among us, "Can we work on this together and see what we come up with?" Each of us will try implementing it and we'll kind of coach each other.

These are exciting times. If at first you don't succeed, call it version 1.0. That's not a ChatGPT joke. But I love it because it says just what are our applications these days? I mean, every day seems like, every week they increase another 12.5, right? So that's us. We're trying, we come up with something, we realize that there's something else that we didn't take into consideration and we pop it up.

Audience:

I can answer a little bit of the question about the dot-com question that was asked a few months ago. So, the AI and the Church Toolkit, that's Kenny Jahng, ChurchTech.com. So Kenny's in a for-profit, but a really well-intentioned. The blue Resource Wheel, that had

all those different things that was generated by Gloo as part of this AI and Church Initiative that they launched, when I think their ambition was to be the Amazon Web Services for the church, for all these apps. So that was their first step was to create that wheel. "Hey, here's what's out there." That wheel's about a year old.

We went to Thomas Osborne, who was the talk yesterday, and I went to Gloo's launch of that initiative and we were their sort of ethics people. They already had a trust council, they were branding, but they had no trustings. So they were looking to create some ethics.

But Gloo's interest has somewhat faltered in being the Amazon Web Services. But they convened all these great people like Kenny Jahng, Kerry Neuhoﬀ, Ed Stetzer, CTO of YouVersion, that's 600 million users around the world. Christianity Today, it was a mix of for-profits and nonprofits. We're a non-profit, and we were willing join them because CT's there, and some of these other great

people from YouVersion, we don't want to miss out on teaming up with them.

But then it falters some because the for-profit side of it, maybe they're not going to go this route. Who knows exactly what they'll do. But it's a great example of the organic nature of all this right now, because the ones who took off were Barna, Kerry Neuhoﬀ, Ed Stetzer, who's been a tablet seminary now at Iowa and YouVersion. So, it's just this continual forming and unforming, allying and putting together. So, I think the common theme that you're saying, and Paolo or Bob Johansson coming from a more secular side is, "Explore, connect, and engage with this thing." So, we love Dave because you've got this 20-year history of working with partnerships online and you're our great secret weapon around things like finding networks and using these technologies.

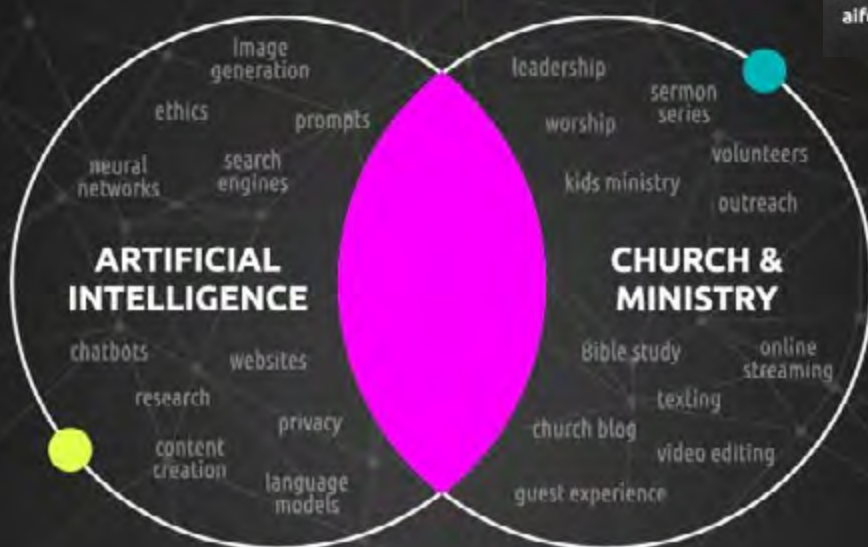
Dave Hackett:

I would say again: collaborate. The

first step would be find somebody else who shares a similar vision for what you want to implement. Unless it's something very personal just for you. But if you're building something that you want, that has some substance for impacting a neighborhood, or a community, or a city, or a state, or as I worked with in the networks that I helped build, whole world regional areas and countries. So, it can be done, and we can come together across differences when we focus on the particular specific thing that we want to work on together. And we don't have to agree on everything, but we want to work together on something in specific. And that's a great way to do it.

So thank you so much for coming to this. And you can look at this, you can switch languages too. It's still here. If you tuned in, you could switch to Korean or Dutch, and the entire talk is there recorded for you and just for this session. Okay, thank you.

Practical Uses of AI
(in our context)
Rev. David Hackett
August 14, 2024



Let the **expedition** begin.



Open your device to see
AI in action for this Session:
spf.io - AI simultaneous translation

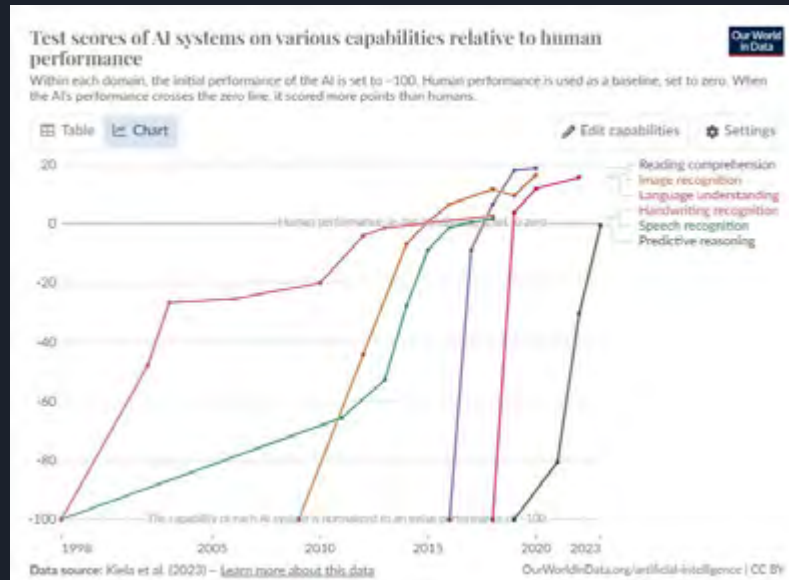
<https://demo.spf.io/z/S9GUG>



<https://demo.spf.io/z/S9GUG>



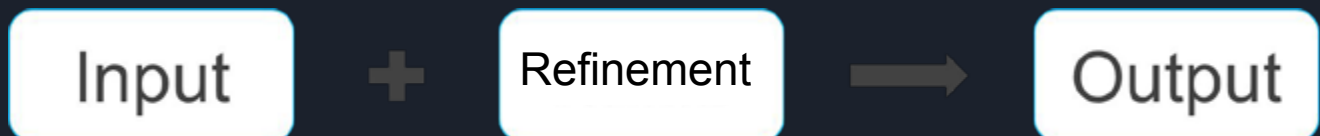
AI Improvements Compared to Human Performance



<https://ourworldindata.org/brief-history-of-ai>

Traditional versus AI/Machine Learning

Traditional



AI/Machine Learning



Christian Ministry Use Cases



Content Creation



Audience Segmentation



Content Recommendation



Sentiment Analysis



Topic Extraction



Predictive Analytics for Outreach



Chatbots for answering Queries



Donor Segmentation



Automated translation



Video Analytics



Content Summarization



Social Media Trend Analysis



Image Recognition for Tagging



Predictive Analytics for Ad Campaigns

Christian Ministry Use Cases

- Chatbots
- Image Generation
- Presentations
- Design
- Writing Tools
- Social Media
- Video Editing
- Audio Generation
- Audio Editing
- AI Toolboxes



<https://www.aiforchurchleaders.com/tools>

Content Stylization – “Summarize the Sermon on the Mount in rap style”

Yo, gather 'round, let me break it down,
Jesus on the mount, with wisdom all around.
He said, "Blessed are the meek,
they'll inherit the earth,
And those who hunger for right,
will know their worth.

Peacemakers, pure in heart,
they shine so bright,
Even in the dark, they're the world's light.
Turn the other cheek,
don't fight back with might,
Love your enemies, keep your inner light tight.

Don't just show off,
keep your good deeds low-key,
Pray in secret, let your heart be free.
Don't worry 'bout tomorrow, live for today,
Seek God's kingdom, and you'll find your way.

Judge not, lest you be judged too,
Golden rule's simple:
do unto others as you'd have them do to you.
Build your life on rock, not on shifting sand,
With Jesus' words, you'll always stand."
That's the Sermon on the Mount, in a rap flow,
Words of wisdom, now you're in the know!

Q & A

Prompts

Tools

Intro

ChatGPT Mastery CheatSheet

Made by @hasantoxr

Key Use Cases

- **Summarizing** long text, transcripts, articles, reports
- **Brainstorming** ideas, outlines, new concepts
- **Synthesizing** insights and takeaways from text
- **Writing** blog posts, articles, press releases, procedures, etc
- **Coding** scripts and small programs.
- **Extracting** data and patterns from messy text.
- **Reformatting** text/data from messy text to tables/structure

Tones

"Tone: [x]"
"Writing using [x] tone"

CONVERSATIONAL
LIGHTEARTED
PERSUASIVE
SPARTAN
FORMAL
FIRM

Format

- "Be concise. Minimize excess prose."
- "Use less corporate jargon."
- "Output as bullet points in short sentences."
- "Output as a table with columns: (x), (y), (z), [a]"
- "Be extremely detailed."

Modes

1. Intern: "Come up with new fundraising ideas."
2. Thought Partner: "What should we think about when generating new fundraising ideas?"
3. Critic: "Here's a list of 10 fundraising ideas I created. Are there any I missed? Which ones seem particularly good or bad?"
4. Teacher: "Teach me about [x]. Assume I know [x] and adjust your language."

Chained Prompting

- Write an article about ChatGPT
- First give me the outline, which consists of a headline, a teaser, and several subheadings.
[Output]
- Now write 5 different subheadings.
[Output]
- Add 5 keywords for each subheading.
[Output]

Prompts for Marketers

- Can you provide me with some ideas for blog posts about [topics].
- Write a product description for my product or service or company]
- Suggest inexpensive ways I can promote my [company] without using social media.
- How can I obtain high-quality backlinks to raise the SEO of [website name]

Prompts for Designers

- Generate examples of UI design requirements for a [mobile app].
- How can I design a [law firm website] in a way that conveys [trust and authority].
- What are some micro-interactions to consider when designing fintech app.
- Create a text-based excel sheet to input your copy suggestions. Assume you have 3 members in your UX writing team

Prompts for Developers

- Develop an architecture and code for a (descriptions website with JavaScript.
- Help me find mistakes in the following code <paste code below>.
- I want to implement a sticky header on my website. Can you provide an example using CSS and JavaScript?
- Please continue writing this code for JavaScript <post code below>

The Chat-GPT Cheat Sheet

Basic Structure of a Prompt:

Acting as a [ROLE] perform [TASK] in [FORMAT]

Act as a [ROLE]

Marketer
Advertiser
Mindset Coach
Best Selling Author
Therapist
Website Designer
Journalist
Inventor
Chief Financial Officer
Copywriter
Prompt Engineer
Accountant
Lawyer
Analyst
Ghostwriter
Project Manager

Create a [TASK]

Headline
Article
Essay
Book Outline
Email Sequence
Social Media Post
Product Description
Cover Letter
Blog Post
SEO Keywords
Summary
Video Script
Recipe
Sales Copy
Analysis
Ad Copy

show as [FORMAT]

A Table
A list
Summary
HTML
Code
Spreadsheet
Graphs
CSV file
Plain Text file
JSON
Rich Text
PDF
XML
Markdown
Gantt Chart
Word Cloud

Linked Prompting

- 1 - Provide me with the ideal outline for an effective & persuasive blog post.
- 2 - Write a list of Engaging Headlines for this Blog post based on [Topic].
- 3 - Write a list of Subheadings & Hooks for this same blog post
- 4 - Write a list of Keywords for this Blog.
- 5 - Write a list of Compelling Call-to-Actions for the blog post
- 6 - Combine the best headline with the best Subheadings, Hooks, Keywords and Call-to-Action to write a blog post for [topic]
- 7 - Re-write this Blog Post in the [Style], [Tone], [Voice] and [Personality].

Effective Use of this Powerful Tool Can Propel Your Business To The Forefront Of This Modern Business Landscape.

Prompt Priming

- ZERO** - "Write me 5 Headlines about [Topic]"
- SINGLE** - "Write me 5 Headlines about [Topic]. Here is an example of one headline: 5 Ways to Lose Weight"
- MULTIPLE** - Write me 5 Headlines about [Topic]. Here is an example of some headlines: 5 Ways to Lose Weight, How to Lose More Fat in 4 Weeks, Say Goodbye to Stubborn Fat. Find a faster way to Lose Weight Fast"

Prompts For Biz Owners

- Give me a list of inexpensive ideas on how to promote my business better?
- Acting as a Business Consultant, What is the best way to solve this problem of [Problem].
- Create a 30 Day Social Media Content Strategy based on [Topic 1] & [Topic 2].

By @shanefozard

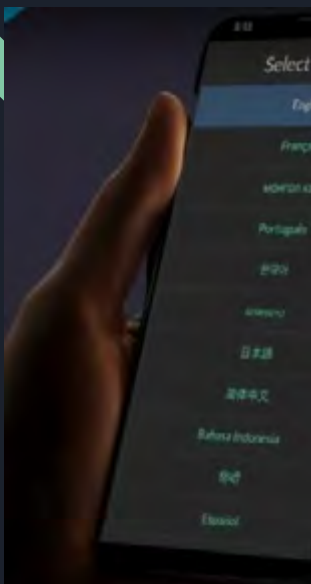
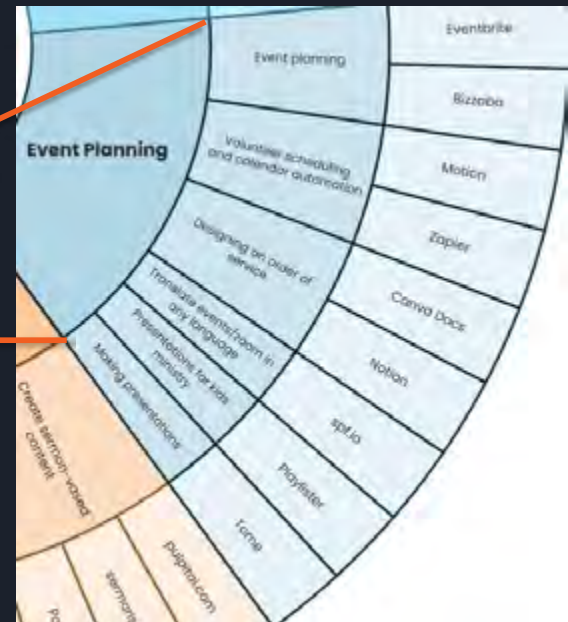


Gloo AI Resource Wheel v1.6

[Click here to view full size](#)

Video and Audio
Event Planning
Writing
Marketing
Research
Counseling
Finance
Design
Community

Gloo AI Resource Wheel v1.6



spf.io

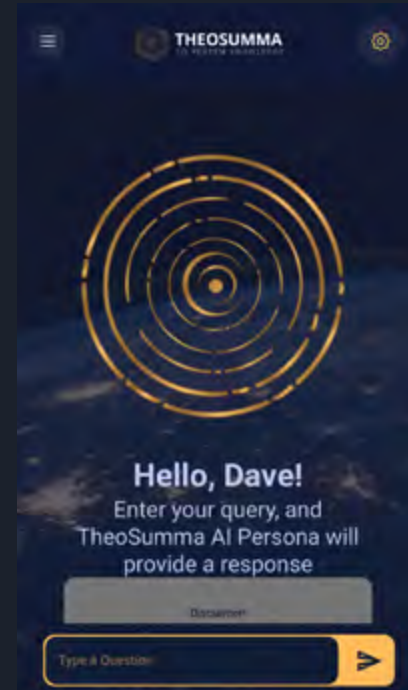
Access in any language

Make your events, content, and conversations **accessible** and **multilingual** with our all-in-one platform powered by AI with a human touch.

Customized Generative AI

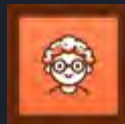
THEOSUMMA.com

Stocked with heavy theological books to “empower individuals, thinkers and truth seekers cognitively, worldwide through a reliable, trusted and user-friendly platform to explore, understand, and reflect upon Biblical teachings.”

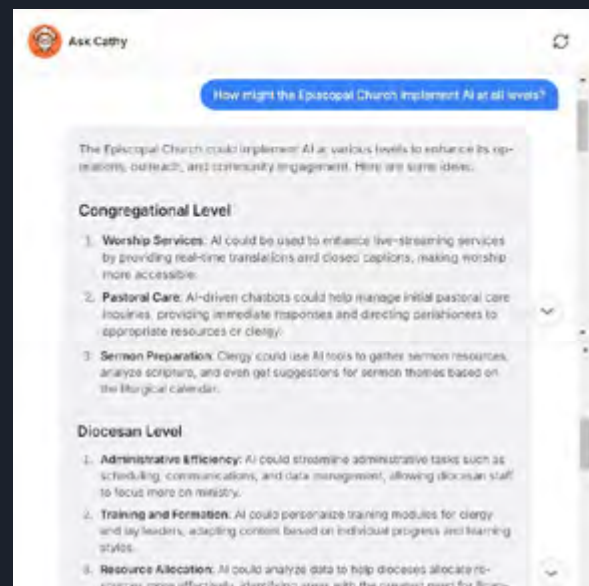


Customized Generative AI

AskCathy.ai



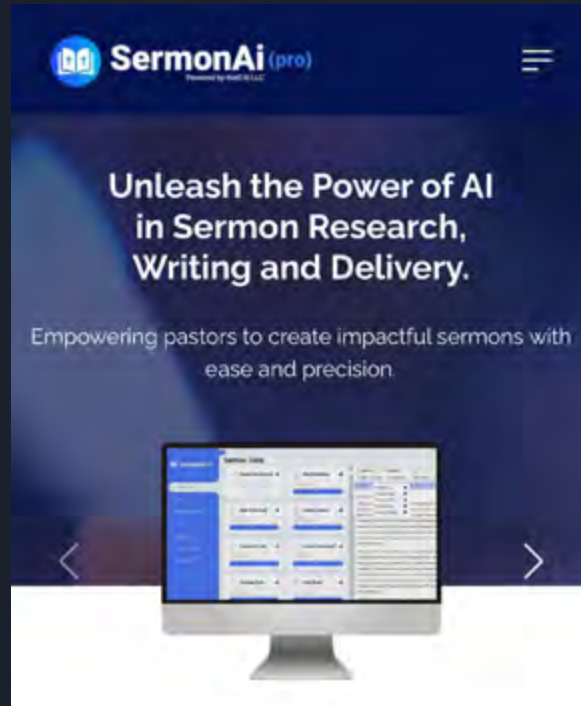
Cathy is AI-based tool that lets you engage in natural conversation in order to find information about the Episcopal Church. You can learn more about Cathy, what sources Cathy uses, and the ethics of Cathy by reading our **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**.



Customized Generative AI

SermonAi.com

Empowering pastors to create impactful sermons with ease and precision.



Q&A

Prompts

Tools

Intro



Resources on Practical Use of AI in Church

1. The Church AI Toolbox [[PDF](#)]
2. Unlocking the Power of AI for Church Engagement [[PDF](#)]
3. 25 Ways to Leverage AI in Your Church [[PDF](#)]
4. AI Resource Wheel [[PDF](#)]
5. This Presentation [[PPTX](#)]

Rev. David Hackett
dhackett@aiandfaith.org





Panel: How the church can serve the needs of tech workers.

With Chris Lim, Dillon Eng, Jason Rahman, moderated by James B Notkin

TL;DR

In this panel discussion, tech workers Chris Lim, Dillon Eng, and Jason Rahman discuss their experiences in the tech industry and how it intersects with their faith. They talk about the unique challenges they face, such as the constant change and scrutiny in the industry, as well as the pressure and long hours they often work. They also discuss the need for understanding and support from the church, and the importance of creating space for rest and innovation. They highlight the value of having a community of fellow tech workers who understand their experiences and can provide support. They also discuss the idea of work as a calling and how their work in the tech industry can be a means of serving and bearing witness to the gospel. They emphasize the need for humility and partnership between the church and technology, recognizing that technology is not the solution to all problems but can be a helpful tool. Overall, they see a missed

opportunity for the church to embrace technology and innovation in order to make the gospel accessible to all people and reflect the kingdom of God in new and creative ways.

James B Notkin:

All right. Well then, let us begin. I'm kind of betting that given that there's gaming on the other side, a good number of you are Presbyterians avoiding fun and have a good Calvinist routine there. Or if not, you're kind of like me, you have a half-life of about 20 seconds on video games. You just have a natural aversion to them. But we're glad you're here, because this is just a really important topic as we talk about the human-to-human relationship in the midst of all this technology and all the AI that we're talking about. Making sure that we connect to that human-human relationship, especially in that relationship between AI workers, tech workers, and the church, both locally and at the denominational level, the larger church, however

you want to say that. I ran across a staff that 43% of all church leaders are apprehensive, suspicious of using AI of any kind in ministry, which can translate into I think tech workers, especially AI workers, feeling misunderstood, or underappreciated, or maybe not even seen.

And we all know that we're all created in the image of God and that means that we all have great value and that God calls us all to work. And so therefore, all this work is valid. And especially in this time of really rapid change that AI is bringing upon us, to have people who are believers in that world assault and light is all the more important than ever before. So to be the body of Christ, we need to be able to be the full body of Christ, so we can more fully bear the image of Christ in this world. So we want to look at three questions today. And three questions are, how can the local and denominational church better understand and care for technologists, especially AI workers? How can AI workers contribute to the life and ministry of the local church, as well as the larger church? And

maybe an added question there, how can the church facilitate that as well? And then thirdly, how can the church support and enhance the faith and work integration for tech creators?

My name is James B Notkin, and I'm a pastor at the Presbyterian Church in South Lake Union here in Seattle. Started with my wife about 13 years ago, 14 years ago. We thought we were beginning a church in a marginalized neighborhood of downtown Seattle, just kind of on the outskirts of downtown Seattle. And within a year and a half of being there, Amazon decided they liked us and they moved their headquarters next door, literally, so that we have all 45 Amazon buildings within about a mile of us. Before pandemic, we had about 5,000 Amazonians all around, within a block of us. We also ran a cafe and event venues, so we had more interaction with folks. But since then Facebook has moved in, Google has moved across the street. Facebook is about two blocks away. Apple's about four blocks away. So it really is kind of the tech canyon of Seattle, that we're this one little one story building in the middle of it.

But as a result, we've found ourselves in the midst of this ministry. And you can tell from my age that I am an immigrant to the AI and tech world. I don't speak the language. I'm learning vocabulary as best I can. I'm getting my rudimentary sentences together. But I discovered that heart for incarnation, an openness to asking questions and loving

people, makes up for a multitude of technological ignorance. And so, that's where we are and that's what we're doing. The good news is with all my ignorance, we have three people on this panel who are far from that. And are not only gifted in their professions in the AI world, but are guys that have faith that I have been inspired by. Chris, why don't we start with you. You give a quick introduction as to who you are.

Chris Lim:

Yeah, thanks James B, and hi everybody. Sorry that I can't be there in person. I can't actually even see all of you, I can only see my good friends on the stage, but I'm delighted that you're here and that we have a chance to share about this topic. My name's Chris Lim, I'm the founder of TheoTech. And I was a former Amazonian, I guess you would say. And back in that day, I led a Bible study in the company where we studied the Amazon leadership principles and compared them to scripture to see if following those principles actually helps you in your Christian walk. And the stunning thing is that it actually does in a lot of ways. And there's more that we can talk about that later. But I felt pulled by God, to actually leave my role at Amazon and to take the principle of customer obsession, in which leaders begin with the customer and work backwards.

And what if we said, what if God is a customer? What if we obsess

over what God wants, and work backwards to invent technology that delivers God what God desires? So that was the step of faith, there's a whole story there, but I left to start TheoTech. And so today, TheoTech, my company, Theology of Technology, we help ministries navigate the theology of technology and how to apply that. And we also have a product that is trying to fulfill that purpose of making God the customer, specifically by making translation and accessibility possible for every church. So our vision, our dream is for every church to be accessible for the deaf, the hard of hearing, the blind, those with limited eyesight as well as accessible in many languages as a reflection of the kingdom. From Pentecost to Revelation, we see that's God's vision.

And so we're laboring to help bring God's vision, a foretaste of it, to earth. So that's what I'm doing today, and I'm just delighted to be able to share that with all of you and to seek out what the spirit might lead us to do together to pursue what God wants. But other than that, done a lot of stuff with faith in work integration, helping other technologists who are in the industry to get a vision for how God has gifted them in really deep ways that they can be using that and live that fully integrated life. So thanks, James B.

James B Notkin:

Awesome. Dillon, you want to go next?

Dillon Eng:

Yeah. Hey everybody. My name's Dylan. Let's see. Well, I've known Chris for a long time. So this background, I've been in the technology industry for a little over a decade. Been at Amazon for eight years, manage a team over there kind of in the AI in robotics space. For church, I attend an Evangelical Chinese church. I've been there most of my life, and previously served there as a Deacon, Sunday school teacher. So yeah, faith and work are both big parts of my life.

James B Notkin:

Yeah. That's great. Jason.

Jason Rahman:

Yeah, my name is Jason and I'm a principal software engineer at Microsoft. I've known Chris for probably about six years now, and James B for about the same length of time. Dillon as well for a bit. So yeah, I've been at Microsoft now for about 10 months. And then prior to that I was at Meta, or Meta/Facebook, the name change still throws me off, for about seven and a half years. Prior to that, I was a student as an undergrad in computer science. So graduated, packed all my stuff up from Indiana and then drove out to Seattle and relocated. I attend Reach Church in Kirkland. And while I was at Meta, I was heavily involved in the Christians at Meta Fellowship, both locally in the Seattle area as well as globally across many different offices across the US and even Europe. So a

little bit of background of where I'm coming from.

James B Notkin:

We'd love to get back into that a little bit more later when we talk about these kind of resources. Who here is more directly, but we're all church leaders in many ways, but who actually works in the church here?

In the church. And how many are tech workers yourselves here? Okay. So just to provide a day in the life, kind of, or an understanding. Ministry begins with understanding and knowing people. So can you guys just give us a sense of what your world is like, or your work like, a day in your life? You don't have to work by hour by hour, but just, what's your experience at work like? What does it look like?

Dillon Eng:

I'll go first. Yeah, so I started out as a software engineer and I've been in management for a couple of years now. They're pretty different, but we're working towards the same goal. As a manager, so this might be a term you hear a little more in the industry, but within AI in particular, you have engineers and you have scientists, and they need to work together. The scientists are really pushing forward a theoretical on like what can be done, understanding how to, basically what technology needs to be shipped out into production. And then the engineers are the ones that need to have enough of an understanding of the

core technology, but really their focus is on delivering it and making it something that can be used in mass.

So I work on the engineering side, but as a manager, I kind of also act as a liaison between engineering and science. And so, it's a lot of communication. Out of eight hours in a day, I would guess that, probably minimum four are spent in meetings, and it's more usually like five or six of those hours. And if it's not meetings, it's typically communication of some kind, writing documentation or impromptu meetings. So obviously with Covid we were remote for a while. Now we're back in the office three days a week, most of those times is a lot of corralling. So yeah, I mean, that's sort of just day to day, logistic wise.

James B Notkin:

Is there anything that you think is, depending on how much experience you've had elsewhere, but anything that you think is unique about your work that maybe a non-Amazon, just a non-tech, non non-AI person would not know about or not encounter?

Dillon Eng:

I think from my perspective, one of the unique things about the AI space is that the state of the art seems to change on a monthly, if not weekly basis. People are always publishing papers. And it seems like, yeah, there is no, you talk about the state of the art in August and it's ahead of where it was in March, and that seems to be the one constant is there's a lot of change.

James B Notkin:

So we used to talk about tax attorneys always having to stay up with the tax changes, now as an annual basis or a few months. You're doing that just constantly?

Dillon Eng:

Yeah, that seems to be the case. And the burden on that is really more on the scientists, but the engineers do have to keep up, at least enough to talk the language.

Audience:

Is it an eight-hour day, five days a week?

Dillon Eng:

So typically, I mean I put in about seven to eight hours in the office. I go and have my evening and do whatever activities I have planned, and then usually I work from nine to 11 or something like that.

Audience:

Okay. So it's really more like a 10-hour day?

Dillon Eng:

It ranges, but yeah.

Audience:

And is that five, six days a week?

Dillon Eng:

So for me, and it really does range across the company, I do think the teams that are trying to push forward

are naturally going to be, there's less predictability. But if there's a deadline or something like that, I mean as a manager I find that the time to get actual work done is nights and weekends, so that's what ends up happening.

Audience:

And then the higher you move up, you work more or less?

Dillon Eng:

That seems to be the case that it's more, anecdotally at least.

James B Notkin:

Jason.

What's unique and what's your work look like?

Jason Rahman:

Yeah, I mean I would say, I can start with the unique question, just to piggyback off of Dillon's closing remarks there. From my perspective, one thing that I see as different is the level of external scrutiny on your work. I was at Meta previously, just to say we ended up in the news a lot, often not for very great reasons. And so I think there's the additional mental and emotional tax from knowing that your company was under this constant microscope. Every little misstep was going to be thrown on the front page and claims would be made about the evil thing that this company or that company did. And I'm not going to get into whether that was true or not, but

just it was this constant mental and emotional overhead that you had to deal with.

If I was working as a tax attorney at some tax consultancy, I mean, I really wouldn't have that same level of every week a new bad headline about my company and having to delay, okay. Deal with more questions about that from strangers or awkward conversations at the holidays with family and friends that see things differently, all of that. And maybe that was a little worse at Meta than other places, but I do see that a lot of tech companies have this high level of scrutiny. It does make the work a little bit different, just because it's extra emotional tax that I don't think you have in other situations, other companies. Yeah.

Audience:

Can I just do a quick follow up?

James B Notkin:

Yeah.

Audience:

Could you just reflect a little for us, how does that affect when you know that that's happening, do you start guessing yourself? Do you start...

Jason Rahman:

Yeah.

Yeah, I mean, it can definitely be demoralizing. There's definitely a bit of a demoralizing effect of, okay, my work is, not my work specifically, but my company's being beat up on. So

that can be a little discouraging and demoralizing. And it even come at a personal angle, I mean, I think most people are too polite to say anything directly, but you hear through the grape vine with family members and friends that feel differently about the companies that you've worked for. And again, they're usually polite enough to not say anything out loud, but you hear things, you sense that they're maybe not the biggest fans of the places that you're at. And so, that's a bit of a discouragement I would say at times. This is probably stronger at Meta than Microsoft, but I mean I have friends that work at Google, other places, and they have similar experiences.

James B Notkin:

It's a high profile company that everybody has interaction with, and has ability to feedback and talk.

Jason Rahman:

Not always the best feedback, not always positive.

James B Notkin:

Chris, how about for you?

Chris Lim:

I want to reflect a little about my experience at Amazon before going my experience as entrepreneur. When I was at Amazon, I formally worked internet Microsoft and the cultures were so different. Microsoft came from an era of shrink wrap software that was on a regular release

cadence, so you had breaks. You would ship software and you'd have celebration, then you could just relax for a little bit. Amazon pioneered continuous delivery, which meant that you just keep improving the software and keep shipping fixes, and improvements, and enhancements, so you never had that chance to celebrate your work. It's just like, good job, you did it. Okay, now do the next thing, now do the next thing, now do the next thing. And that could be kind of a grind. And that culture has now seeped into all of tech, because all of tech now has become this continuous delivery, continuous improvement, 24/7 uptime, a hundred percent uptime.

And that is a very taxing experience, that I don't think everybody experiences. Because when you're on-call, and everybody knows about doctors being on-call and stuff, but when you're on-call for tech, if Amazon's website went down, the company was losing hundreds of thousands of dollars every minute it was down. And so there's this huge weightiness to just your one little service that it doesn't feel like impactful, but it's connected to everything else, could take down the website and cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars every minute. So there's this kind of scale, that I think is unique compared to other roles where you might, as a doctor, you're dealing with someone's life, and so it's still very important. It's just the scale and the impact of what

you do in tech is just so big. And it can be the smallest of things and yet have this out sized impact.

The CrowdStrike incident that took down Delta Airlines for pretty long, that recently happened. And so that pressure can be pretty heavy. And I remember getting random PTSD almost, just like the pager going off and oh no, I forgot. I didn't wake up. And that actually happened once, my manager had to call me and is like, "Chris, what's going on?" And so that's a unique experience I think to the tech industry that not many other people may be aware of. on-call is a thing, but it's like the scale is so much bigger and the pressure is very, very high as a result of that. So that's something from my Amazon days. And then I would say, and there's also very little room for rest, unless you set your own boundaries to rest. You have to actually have to put that boundary up, the company doesn't give it to you.

I would say that my experience as entrepreneur has kind of been even crazier because the on-call burden, the bus stops here. And I have a team and everything like that, but I have to continually be overseeing them, monitoring, getting feedback, training them, building them up. It's just so much more of a different kind of effort to make sure, because if our service goes down, all these churches that are using service for transition accessibility every Sunday, they just lose it. They have nothing. And then it impacts their worship service

and everything that's happening. And so we feel this great privilege that churches are entrusted to us, but also comes with a great kind of responsibility to make sure that everything is actually ready, good to go a hundred percent on time for that Sunday service. And so that pressure carries on and it's even bigger, because I'm an entrepreneur now I can't just say I'm not on-call anymore.

But I think that a day in the life for me, aside from on-call stuff is really, I have a team that is overseas and so my work schedule is kind of crazy, because I'm working throughout the day and I'm working in the evening. Because my team is overseas, I have to work in the evening as well. And my wife and I, we have a son now and it's the work life balance thing has been ridiculously hard. Ridiculously hard, because it just, time just stretches on. And even if I have breaks in the middle of the day and stuff like that, it's not quite rest. So that's something unique I think to my entrepreneurial experience. And it's something that I'm navigating in my faith and with my wife as well.

It's like, what would this look like and what we really want to be, how do we honor God with this pattern? And what does it take what the business to get to the point where I'm going to be really truly off call? So that's something unique. And I know that this is the struggle side, not the positive side. There's a lot of joy as well when we get to deliver a great outcome for people. But I thought I

wanted to share that because that's kind of unique to my experience as an entrepreneur.

James B Notkin:

So it sounds like fuzzy boundaries in terms of time, pressure in terms of demands from work, are some of the challenges that you guys are all encountering. What would you say some of the needs are that you have as, that either are not unique or, well, needs that you think are maybe accentuated because of your work. That maybe the church actually could, well, let's not even go into that, just what do you see your needs being?

Dillon Eng:

Actually, James B, can I follow their response really quickly?

James B Notkin:

Yeah.

Dillon Eng:

I was just going to say, so regarding the extra scrutiny on tech companies and what makes the news. Actually just smiling to myself, because I was working on a product that was recently cannon fodder for tech news and all that stuff, I won't say which. But I think it's super important regarding the extra scrutiny and having to deal with it, that tech workers understand that we kind of have our own internal compass of what is and isn't correct, right? Because one of the things I've gotten

appreciation for, just even in the past few years, is how often media sources kind of get things wrong, particularly some fairly major things that to journalists may seem like details, but which actually make a substantial difference in how the story is told.

And so I think it's super important that tech workers, I mean thick skin is one thing, but I think also understanding what is true and what is false. And understanding that not every story that is false that gets out there is ultimately going to be corrected. And that's just I think something to live with and also to deal with when you talk to friends and family, that story wasn't all the way correct.

Jason Rahman:

Here's what really happened.

Dillon Eng:

Yeah. That happens quite a bit.

Jason Rahman:

Yes.

James B Notkin:

Thank you.

Chris Lim:

I'll add a little bit to that too. We had an experience where, technology oftentimes is scapegoated in let's say church context or still political context. It's an easy scapegoat, where it really wasn't the technology's fault. We had a situation with some translation stuff and we were scapegoated actually,

and we never had a chance to correct the record and to make it right. And it was unfortunate, but that happens. And I hear what you guys are saying, I've experienced it too. And you guys experienced on a bigger scale than than I do. It's actually pretty grieving, but I guess we grow through that. Yeah.

James B Notkin:

So would you say your needs are in light of some of the uniqueness that you're encountering?

Dillon Eng:

There's definitely a degree to which this is the only industry I've ever worked in, and so it's hard to differentiate. But I will say, I mean I go to a church with a lot of technology professionals and that is actually I think pretty helpful to be able to be in fellowship with people who understand things like the on-call burden or having to deal with misinformation, published stories. Yeah, I think it's very helpful to have peers who are also Christians who...

James B Notkin:

Who get it.

Dillon Eng:

Yeah.

James B Notkin:

Jason.

Jason Rahman:

Yeah, I think from my vantage point,

having space to just have rest I think is super valuable. I think a lot of high pressure, high intensity careers, and this is not entirely unique I would say in tech, but it also includes doctors, lawyers and fields like that, having space within the church site to just rest and be you.

James B Notkin:

And what does that look like? Does that mean not being asked to be on any projects, or is it meaning be able to come to worship and have a experience of worship that disrupts and allows you to refocus, or what's rest?

Jason Rahman:

Yeah, I mean it's all of the above. I think different people are going to have different modes through which they rest. I think for some people it's that community with God through worship, where that's able to recharge and refill their souls. For other people, it might be like, hey, let's have a retreat. Let's take a retreat with your church group and just be able to being not doing. Be able to be a human being, not a human doing, which is what you normally have to do for realistically 10 hours a day at your job. And so I think that's been helpful. And also I think also the understanding, like you alluded to, tech workers that are cranking away 10 hours a day, five, six days a week, more volunteer obligations is a bit of a difficult ask sometimes, it's to burnout. I have my own set of

experiences and stories with church expectations on tech workers, and some of the gaps I think existed there between the expectations of the church and the reality of what I was facing as a tech worker.

James B Notkin:

So expectations to show up, expectations for ministry to look a certain way?

Jason Rahman:

What ministry even looks like. I know this is one of the things that we were thinking about is, what does ministry look like when you work in tech? Because in my setting, I was at Meta and I was traveling for work once a month roughly. Usually Bay Area, sometimes London, few other places. And so I wasn't constantly in every Sunday service. I wasn't in town for every small group. But what I was doing was we had a Christians at Meta group, and so I would go into offices and I would message the Christians in the office say, "Hey, can we get together for a prayer meeting? You want to start a group here?"

I was in the London office and the Chicago offices for example, they did not have a regular group. And so I would reach out to the Christians in that office and say, "Hey, when get together." And I would identify a leader or a couple leaders, and would encourage them and inspire them to start a group, that's ministry. I'm meeting up individually one-on-one with Christians in office, and praying

with them, and encouraging them, and asking them what's going on in their lives, and how can I pray for them, that's all ministry,

James B Notkin:

But you come back to your local church and your church leadership thinks you're a slacker.

Jason Rahman:

Yep, hundred percent.

James B Notkin:

You're not showing up in the way that you're supposed to show up.

Jason Rahman:

Not only that, but they wouldn't even acknowledge that as ministry. I would say, "Hey, I'm doing X, Y, and Z in the workplace." Like, "Oh, okay, whatever." They shrugged their shoulders.

James B Notkin:

It didn't check their boxes for ministry.

Jason Rahman:

Didn't check their boxes.

James B Notkin:

Which is a whole another category, how the church needs to rethink its structures. I mean, so much of the church structures have been formed in an agrarian time. And here we've got agrarian, industrial, communication, service industry, tech industry, entertainment, however you want to, how you

want to identify the age that we're in. I mean, who is it? Botkin, Russian literacy theory, talks about this is the age of suspicion. And so there's been all these different layers, but the church structures are still very predominantly the same. And so how do we, yeah, that's a whole another question. Yeah, great point. Chris, do you want to jump in?

Chris Lim:

Yeah. Also, Jason, just to clarify for the audience, the church you're referring to isn't the one you're at now.

Jason Rahman:

Yeah, different church. Different church. Different church.

Chris Lim:

Yeah. I think I would say, two things James B, I didn't mention this in my intro. I'm a member at Union Church, James B and Renee often pastor, and served on the session there as well. Two of the gifts I think that Union has given to me, one is just the most basic pastoral thing that you and Renee have walked alongside me in my journey. And you might even show up, I mean, I don't remember if you went to Amazon with us, but you show up in our lives in this context that we're in. And you listen, you try to understand that and to support in the ways that church and you yourselves as pastors can. That's already such a beautiful gift and it's surprisingly rare in the church experiences that I've had as

well. And so, that walking alongside and getting to know in context, not saying you have to come out of your context, and come to my thing, and do my program, but showing up there in people's lives, that is really helpful for me.

And it makes it so that if I know that you empathize with who you're seeking to, I can just be, and that's such a gift. The second gift that I experienced from Union has been its openness to experimentation. In tech we're innovators, and we need platforms to experiment. Experiments will fail, but they're not failing permanently. They're failing so that we learn, so that we can actually get to somewhere amazing that we're massing and feeling out together. And I think that this, I would speak broadly for tech people, we like to create stuff. We like to build things. We like to tinker and try out ideas and see what we can do with it, what can work. And so often in church context, the culture is kind opposite of that. The culture is one of don't mess it up. You have to keep it, don't mess it up.

But really, culture that's just a big mismatch. And I think that there are sacred things that we don't want to mess up, but I think that there's so many things, so much room for experimentation. And I think James B in that Union, that's something unique that I'm really grateful for that meets need that I have. That Union has been a platform for experimentation, try out things, like

translation stuff, but also community activation of tech workers and having our dinners with people in tech and things like that, Pray for Tech. There's just been so many opportunities to try things out, learn from that and continue to push into, lean into what God's calling us to do that I think in tech we uniquely see opportunities that others may not see. And to have that support to do that has been really wonderful.

Audience:

So there's a tension between trying things, I wonder if there's a tension between trying things out, trying new groups, bible studies, doing things in your liturgy services, over and against just coming to rest and be not trying things out you can just, so how do you manage that tension between the innovation within the church and leaving the innovation of the tech job to go to a place where you're not having to deal with any innovation and just rest, to use your word?

James B Notkin:

You want me to jump in on that one? I mean, I'd love to hear your guys...

Chris Lim:

Sure. Yeah.

James B Notkin:

Yeah. I'll send a check to you later for that nice word, so thank you. The way we try to do it at Union is with rhythm. So the idea that people

need consistency, but they also need variety. And seems like, you look at the seasons and that's what we have, right? Winter, spring, there's a constant change and yet you know what that change is going to be, so there's a certain consistency that's reassuring. So we put our liturgy, basically in a four-week rhythm. So the first and third week of the month, Sunday of the month, it feels like probably most Presbyterian services would feel like, I mean, there's confession, and prayers, and music, and a message, and communion, and all. Second Sunday is a bit of a truncated format with majority of the sermon time taken instead for small groups.

And then on the fourth Sunday of the month, we either gather in the building or we gather elsewhere in the city groups, basically it's worship in action. So we have a group at Fred Hutch preparing a meal, or we have people inside the building making blankets for a tiny village, or writing letters to Congress, or making other meals for other places, working for the food bank. It's very disruptive in that way, but people know what the fourth Sunday is going to be and so it's not that shocking. And we also say, "Hey, for Sunday, if you need this to really be a Sabbath where you stay home and do what has ever really restored for you, here it and go and take that. Or we say, if you haven't seen your neighbors forever, invite them over to a Seahawks game or something

like that on this Sunday.

And so we try to create space. So yeah, I think the fact that, I mean, I love your building here. I was just like this just inspired for worship. And we're an old warehouse, it was a Volkswagen dealership, and fortunately we had an architect that made it look pretty cool and it can be peaceful. But yeah, we do rely really on the restoration of being on the spirit, showing up, and on the consistency of the rhythm. But that's a great question.

Dillon Eng:

Can I ducktail off of you?

James B Notkin:

Yeah.

Dillon Eng:

Have to, just to follow up with that, I couldn't help but be taken by all of the aesthetic beauty that I'm just seeing in this church in particular, and out in the courtyard with the St. John's Bible out in front. And I do feel like there is a need for that.

James B Notkin:

Sacred space.

Dillon Eng:

Yeah, just in the average tech worker's life. I mean, we deal a lot with the precise and the quantitative, and not that aesthetics is not precise, but it speaks to you viscerally. And to be able to, I guess, in a Christian sense, to come into a building and

just be ready to worship because your senses take you there. I think that's hugely important. And if it can be done, then it should be done. So I mean, I think in that sense we're not different, but maybe there's more of a need for that in the tech workers, or maybe we're more starved for that than say your average musician.

James B. Notkin:

That's great.

Audience:

Yeah. So I'm an ordained pastor, I also work in US design. And what I've discovered is that when people find out, coworkers find out that I'm a pastor, I get lots, people of lots meaning more than I would get in another, sometimes within the parish, people who would see or have a sense of what the role of pastor is, and then bring the appropriate moments, their personal concerns. So it's not just talking about, it's not bible study or it's not talking about theology. For an example, a rather lengthy conversation during one project, where my coworker had marital concerns and wanted my counsel. Have you envisioned, especially for your churches and where you work, how there would be collaboration between employer and your pastor, so that there is more than just the weekend our Sunday morning access of either your church or someone in that spiritual... I know the airports, for example, put chapels and sometimes chaplains in airports,

and that's the travelers, people just passing through. I wonder if there's any vision for that kind of collaboration.

Jason Rahman:

There actually is. I actually have heard of, it's not common, but I have heard of companies having chaplains like in the workplace. It's not super widespread, but I've heard of a number of companies doing this. And there's a bit of a small movement precisely with that idea in mind, of having chaplains there able to support people. Maybe they're going through a loss, maybe they had a loss in the family and they're going through difficult season. Traditionally it's, oh, here's an EAP line, call this number. That's not always the most personal or emotionally helpful thing. And so, there are some companies, I don't recall exact names of the groups offhand, but there are some groups that are organizing chaplaincy within corporate settings. I have not heard of this in the tech space, but I've heard of it in manufacturing, for example, places like that.

Chris Lim:

Yeah, Tyson the food company, actually has corporate chaplaincy, things like that. And there's a corporate chaplaincy organization. But I have been a longtime advocate for that. And it might be something that needs to happen at a denominational level. I heard you guys had a fantastic gathering

with Microsoft earlier today and the leadership there. And it might be something, because I know obviously the Presbyterian system, we have chaplains who can be assigned at places like hospitals and places like that. And wouldn't it be amazing if there could be a call for a Presbyterian pastor to be a chaplain to people at Microsoft, in an official capacity? That would be a really interesting denominational level kind of collaboration that could really support those faith and work movements in the companies, those employee resource groups, affinity groups that exist there. And it could provide a long-term sustainable presence, because one of the challenges to tech is that it can be a revolving door.

People leave so often that you can't have that long-term relationship and presence in your company because they just go to different company. And I've seen that happen at Amazon with the Christians in Amazon group kind of fluctuating. There's like one really, really, really veteran leader named Chris Pleasant has been there like 13 years or something. But most other leaders have come and gone. So there could be a huge opportunity to collaborate at different levels of the domination, to try to have a call for chaplains in the tech world, specifically. And I just put it out there. Great question, and I couldn't fully hear a question, but since Jason mentioned corporate chapel, as my 2 cents,

Audience:

I have a hypothetical question, because this definitely doesn't happen PT USA, so I just want to make it clear. How do you keep that balance between operations and innovation? You mentioned innovation, but a lot of organizations will take a IT organization and put them in an operational box, where all you do is break fix, and you may not be invited to the table for any innovational types of activities or anything like that. How do you inspire that, how do you change that culture?

Dillon Eng:

Are talking about in a church context or in a company context?

Audience:

I guess it's more, it can be both, because...

James B Notkin:

You're particular, when it's not in front, yours is the church.

Audience:

Yeah, I guess the church.

James B Notkin:

You're saying it's either, it's this idea of how the people who are providing the break and fix get into the bigger picture innovation.

Audience:

Exactly.

Audience:

How can you inspire more, it could be general from the standpoint of business, how do you inspire? Because typically, I've been outside of the church, outside of church this is typical too, whereas an IT organization, within an IT organization, you get stuck in something, but most of the time you get stuck in the box. Where you're a break fix and more operational.

James B Notkin:

So he's saying that in IT organizations often you get boxed into basically a certain function or a task break and fix. But you want break into more innovation and get out of that kind of task, task oriented ain't right, but that repetitive function, and get into be invited to the table or be in a position where you're dealing with the more innovative. So there are ways that you guys have seen people take that step into the more innovative.

Dillon Eng:

I'll speak to one practice that we have at Amazon that I think is a pretty helpful moment. I'll talk about...

James B Notkin:

If you were at Amazon.

Dillon Eng:

Yeah, if I were to be in such a company, as Amazon.

Audience:

Hypothetically.

Dillon Eng:

That I would not represent in any official capacity. But whenever there's someone who has an idea or somebody who has something that they verbalize and think, oh, I think this would be a good idea. The encouragement is to never let that stay just verbalized and just in the ether, but put it to paper, basically. Write it in a document, and then you gather people into a room and you discuss exactly what the idea is, and what are its merits, and how it might be implemented, and if it makes sense at the current time. That's a very company specific cultural practice that I wouldn't necessarily expect to be replicated in a church.

But one thing that I have seen at my church that I think is helpful is in those meetings where people do have ideas, there is somewhat of a burden put on the person to say, "Yeah, I have this idea and I want to make it happen." But there's also a cultural receptiveness to that, which I think is necessary to be able to foster any kind of innovation. And sometimes I think operations are, not everything needs to be innovated on all the time, which I think we've said here, but just having a culture where there's an expectation where, hey, if you have something that you want to see different, then bring it up and people will listen. And then actually implementing that.

Audience:

I just wanted to offer a strategy that I used in a downtown hospital setting at Los Angeles to get funding for a specialized type of chaplain to serve the nursing staff who deal with death and dying every day. And one venue was the neonatal ICU and another was the ER. And I was able to find data that showed that the rate of retention of employees was much higher in hospitals where specialized chaplains were provided to work with those people. And the cost of replacing a nurse was \$70,000 by the time you did the training to incorporate that nurse. I imagine it's even more than that for tech.

James B Notkin:

More lately, it's 250,000.

Audience:

Well, what I'm saying is that's a strategy. If you can find any places that have chaplains, then you can probably defend it on the basis of return on investment through HR. That's how I had to do it, which was a strange way to do it in the middle of a Christian hospital. But the personnel director said, "I've never heard anybody try to defend chaplaincy on the basis of return on investment."

Jason Rahman:

I guess to generalize what you're saying, to maybe help answer your question.

Is you're really going with data. Here's actual data.

Audience:

It's data driven. Yes.

Jason Rahman:

It's not just a hypothetical argument. It's not merely my opinion. It's here's actual data, here's this innovative idea and here's how it can actually work. And tech industry is very big on that. Tech industry is very data driven. You can't go into a debate with a tech company and just spout off hypothetical arguments, you'll get torn to pieces. They will ask you to get data and they will ask you to run an experiment. Especially NL and AI stuff, you have that data to back it up and have numbers.

Audience:

I would love to hear you talk about in what ways do you experience your work as a calling, or portions of it.

Jason Rahman:

So I think for me, this happens in a few different ways, at a few different levels. There's sort of the abstract philosophical levels. As a software engineer, I'm creating something out of nothing. There's a theological underpinning to that. It's kind of cool. I start with just pure idea in my mind and work with a team, and pretty soon we have this functioning system. That sounds a lot like Genesis 1. So there's that abstract level. Then there's also the more practical level, which is

regardless of your opinions of some of these big tech companies, we do things that are actually valuable to people. And so this idea of common grace, this is a means of common grace. There's a situation where at the start of Covid, Facebook was on fire. Everyone was going online, traffic was up and to the right, churches are doing Facebook lives, Zoom calls, all of that, so all of these digital services were under a crazy, crazy load. I was on infrastructure team.

I'm keeping the stuff running. I was on the databases at Facebook. I was the databases that store all of Facebook's data. And so we're looking at the burn graph, we're like, okay, we have this much capacity, we have this much rate of growth of data, you're going to cross eventually and we're going to have a bad time. Facebook will go down in X number of months unless these things get done. And at the time, I was actually kind of wrestling, because I would hear stories of Christians going door to door and running groceries around. That's so holy and pious, and look at that. And I was kind of torn like, what am I doing? I'm just sitting here running code and working on my projects. And I was actually kind of torn by that and I realized, oh, this is literally keeping Facebook running so people can talk with their friends and family and not be as isolated.

James B Notkin:

And find out who needs the groceries.

Jason Rahman:

And find out who needs the groceries, coordinate that stuff. And so, that for me was a light bulb like, oh wow, I was sort of compartmentalizing this sacred, pious, holy things over here and my secular work over here. And they had nothing to do with each other. No, no, no, no, no. Both are valuable. The people doing this, amazing, well worth it. But also my day-to-day work actually matters for people's day-to-day lives and enabling them to do the things that they need to do to love and serve others. And theologically, that's common grace, if you want to put a theological framework around that.

Dillon Eng:

So I think a lot of the parable of the talents where, and I think I've heard it preached before or talked about before in a way that's very church ministry specific, but also being encouraged to think beyond that. I think of myself and it's sort of like, okay, well God has gifted me in certain ways. The ability to talk to people, communicate with them, I think works well for management. The ability to, or maybe propensity to, think abstractly, which might be a burden in certain contexts, which actually works really well for software. And I definitely think that it's important for us to find the gifts that God has given, and for me to find the gifts that God has given me,

and apply them to whatever it is that I'm doing.

And I think software is a pretty good fit. Particularly, I mean that's speaking as an engineer, but as a manager too. There's a lot of human touch that I think is very important too. In the actions that I take now have a lot of direct impact on the lives of my reports, even down to the words I say. If I'm giving feedback, I can give that in a harsh or a gentle constructive way. And the way that I give that, I mean, I can ruin someone's day or I can make it. And that's just by virtue of the kind of office that I have. So I do think very much, that almost feels like church ministry.

James B Notkin:

It is. It is. Chris want to jump in or not?

Chris Lim:

I mean, the question is so near and dear my heart that it's hard to answer in a panel, especially because it's almost been a huge story for my life, because I actually felt that call from God and left Amazon to pursue this. And I struggled with it. And Jason, and Dillon, and James B have all witnessed the struggles of that. Of questioning, like did God really call me to this, why is this so hard, and everything like that? And yet the very endurance is a testimony to me of God's faithfulness, that I've gone to experience by taking that step of faith. But for me, looking at

it on a personal level, I agree with what Dillon was saying, because I've experienced the ways that those relationships that you have in business and at work are a huge part of actual becoming like Christ and being a witness for the gospel.

Not even talking about the gospel itself, just like in the way that we love people, and teach them, and learn, and accept feedback, and everything, and the ways that we show up in the marketplace and work with customers. There's so much of Christ infusing all of that. And learning for Christ to be formed in me how I show up in all of that. And overcoming, outgrowing the ways that I've, just immature and having to grow. And so I see God using this path that he's called me on to disciple me, to change me. And that's really hard, but incredible, discipline is not easy, but for the time being when he bears that peaceful fruit of righteousness and life, and I've seen God do that through my dream. And then in the other sense, I think Dr. Darren Witter would say that the Christian life, the Christian vocation is witness, witness the resurrection of Jesus.

And I see that God gifting me with this technology scale and stuff like that. And this transition specifically focused, is a way that I help the church bear witness to the gospel, bear witness to what God's kingdom is actually like. A foretaste of God's kingdom, that you can experience in a Sunday service, in

a congregation of belonging when people from many languages and people with disabilities are equally represented and welcome. And that kind of witness is so unique and something that requires AI, requires technology, but AI and technology aren't everything. Is just a piece of the puzzle that gets to be used in a very unique way to unlock new expressions of our witness as the church. And that's a huge sense of calling for me because of the way that God has written my life. And I see the scripture, Revelation 7, I see it all over the place and it gives me a lot of joy to be able to invest myself in that kind of purpose. Yeah.

James B Notkin:

Let's piggyback on that. You can either keep going or, Dillon or Jason, you can tackle this. So what would you see, obviously you saw a missed opportunity for tech in terms of making every church accessible to everybody by having language more accessible. But you can piggyback on that more or just all you guys, what would you see are, from your perspective, because there are church leaders that have been stuck in the same model for a long time, not that we're impossible of having innovation, but from your perspective, what are some missed opportunities maybe for the church that...

Chris Lim:

I'll get that first, to finish the thought about what I was talking about, and

then I'm sure Dillon and Jason had fantastic innovative ideas. I think that it surprises me even being here at this conference that I'm at, that the deaf are a lot of people's lives. And people of hearing loss, I think there's a statistic, which I have to look up to verify, it's like 20% of Americans will have hearing loss. And so this is not actually a great marginalized thing and yet most of our churches are not going to be accessible. And then demographically, America is shifting to be, 40% Hispanic or something within the next decade or two decades or something like that. I don't have exact stats, but it's just a reality that we face.

And I think that there's a huge opportunity now with AI, I believe God is actually using technology, AI, and tech workers to make possible these new expressions of the gospel and fulfill scripture. Like what we see, that the gospel will preach to all nations and will come. This is something that God is doing. And so to me, the missed opportunity is like, hey guys, God's the one actually pushing this wave of innovation. And so let's ride it and explore these new possibilities, so that every one of our churches can reflect the kingdom of God in our weekly worship and our daily lives even more than ever before. So I don't know if that is exactly the question, James B, but that's would be my account.

James B Notkin:

Absolutely. And it's a hard question to be put on the spot for, but

just, do you guys have, from your perspective, do you see ways you wish the church would use technology different or ways that you, needs you see there?

Jason Rahman:

One thing I want to piggyback off what Chris has said, was saying was the way that his product is an AI tool, is only part of the solution. I think one thing that tech people can run into is we sort of see technology as the solution to all problems. Everything has a technological solution. The technological solution is the main thing that's going to solve everything. And so there is this theological idea, almost like secular theological idea, of like technology is savior. And that is very strong sentiment within a law of the tech companies is, we're going to innovate our way out of all of our problems. And technology, like Chris saying, has a place, but it's only part of the whole solution.

As Christians, we believe in the work of Holy Spirit and we believe in a supernatural reality as well. Technology is not the entire picture as well. And so I think there's maybe said for church partnering with technology. Coming in as partners rather than one trying to dominate or the other. I see some people, some technologists come into the room acting like they're going to solve all the church's problems of technology. We have all the answers, and that's not humble either. But I also have

seen churches where they're just not receptive in the first place. Where they're just like, we have our ways, we have our process.

James B Notkin:

This has worked for a thousand years, kind of.

Jason Rahman:

This has worked for a thousand years. So I think there's...

...a humility on both ends there.

There's a humility there on both ends, where like as technologists, we also need a reality check that technology's not the solution to every problem. It's going to be helpful. It's a good thing in a lot of cases, but it's not the end all be all. It's not the savior.

James B Notkin:

Dillon, you don't have to, but you want to jump in all?

Dillon Eng:

Well, I was just, on that point what came to mind was, it's like the hymnal versus the PowerPoint. PowerPoint's great until it doesn't work. It's important to balance both, like Jason said.

Jason Rahman:

Until CloudStrike takes down your Windows PC and you can't have PowerPoint slides anymore.

Audience:

Well, one of the things I want to thank you, because I think what you're doing is, what you're declaring is this given your context is a world that, you've been a minister into that world and you've brought to us the kind of fruits that you've had. And I came thinking, oh, this is going to be a place where I want to find a way to minister to tech people. But what I really heard was, this is a pattern for the church to say, how do we get involved with entrepreneurship? How do we get involved with industry? How do we get involved with wherever our context is, and begin to help that industry see the kind of things that you're talking about. Because what you're talking about is not a whole lot different from any other entrepreneurial industry, but it's not what we're going to get from our hundred years of tradition.

James B Notkin:

Right. I mean, it's a little bit what Ben Johanson was talking about the other day is that, it's being willing to question the command and control models or the structures that we've had and say, what are we really about? If we're really clear, if we have clarity on what we're about, bearing witness to Jesus Christ, I think full stop. Jesus Christ, the Lord, bearing witness to Jesus. Then that gives us lots of flexibilities to say, okay, what's the best way to do that now? Now we definitely want to learn from the past, honor the past, because we know that spiritual disciplines are really important. And there's certain ways that we can go about doing that, we don't need to reinvent the wheel on that. But there's other things that maybe aren't that helpful or maybe there's other ways to get people to enter into spiritual disciplines that they want, if we just kind of approach it the way we always have. So it's being willing to say, okay, how do we honor the past, claim the future, live in the present?



Panel: Use of games for evangelization and spiritual formation with Amy and Ryan Green, and Chris Skaggs. Moderated by David Brenner

TL;DR

The speakers discussed the potential of video games as a medium for change and explored different aspects of game development. They emphasized the importance of creating games that broaden perspectives, promote inclusivity, and serve as a platform for compassion. They also highlighted the need for diverse voices in the industry and the opportunities for funding and support. The speakers touched on the role of AI in gaming and how it can shape the future of digital spaces. Overall, they encouraged the audience to think creatively and consider the impact of games on culture and society.

David Brenner:

So, I'm excited to introduce Amy and Ryan Green and Chris Skaggs to lead this workshop. This grows out of a long collaboration between them and other gamers. The formation of a Christian gamers fellowship called Imladris that Chris has put together

over the last couple of years. And meanwhile, the formation in the broader gaming world of games for change, including a big festival that happens each year. So this category of gaming that is aimed at doing more than just entertaining people in games. So I'm not going to spend any more time on the introduction, other than to say I think this is a really exciting way to think about how to minister to people under 30 and also through the broader world around this concept of games for Christian faith and for broader change.

Amy Green:

Okay, thank you, guys. We're excited to talk to you about video games, and thank you for wrestling with all of the harder topics that you've been just thinking through.

Ryan Green:

Yeah, we've come with a lot of baggage, so we appreciate you.

Amy Green:

It's refreshing for us to see people

being willing to embrace the nuance of these conversations, to think deeply about them, to agree and disagree. And just watching how you do that has been really special to us, so thank you for inviting us here and we'll be talking about something that I wish I could say was more fun. And it isn't. So go ahead.

Ryan Green:

Just in general, we will be talking about some harder subjects, child loss and cancer and how that relates to art and questions and all of that. So hopefully, you're aware there are some videos that are a little bit more intense, so just heads up. Okay, so what do you think of when you think about video games?

Amy Green:

We've noticed that, a lot of times, when we talk to people, especially people in the church, about video games or we say we're making a video game, they go to one of these two extremes. And that is their context for what a video game is. It's

either PAC-MAN and Tetris or they're thinking it's Grand Theft Auto, it's violence, it's sex, it's gore, it's all the things you don't want your children watching. But there's a huge space in between there, and there's some really true and beautiful and lovely things happening in the game space. And we're here to talk to you about them.

Ryan Green:

So I had the opportunity once to teach a graduate class about the future of video games and cinematic video games, and that led me into kind of a deep dive of what I believe about video games and the role that they play. First off, when you think about a video game, from a technical perspective, and you break it down to its component parts, a video game can be described as an electric game in which players control images on a video screen. That seems to be maybe the common definition of how you would think of a video game. When you think of a video game, what is a game? There's been lots of ink spilled on what a video game is, but Eric Zimmerman and Katie Salen in *Rules of Play* say, "A game is a system in which players engage in artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome." Or as Sid Meier says, "A game is a series of interesting decisions."

So when you think about a game or if you think about digital play and participating in game play,

when we talk about a game, we're actually talking about a very narrow definition of what this medium is. And so, I wanted to challenge you to kind of broaden your definition today of what video games are. A video game medium, this digital video game, affords you the ability to accomplish a task. You have agency as a means of doing something, as an electric medium in which players control images on a video display. Now, we're in the age of virtual reality, immersive and ubiquitous computing, and now, instead of being mediated by a screen and like a keyboard and mouse, we can now step in and use all of our limbs, as well as our mind, to control the input of this digital medium, this way of doing something.

And so, I would like to posit that perhaps this digital game medium is a reality of human expression or, more broadly, a digital reality medium, in which affords you lots of different abilities. And so, as we approach this discussion today, we'd like to invite you into a digital reality medium, a new way of mediating our relationships together, and connecting together, using digital senses or digital sense organs. So with that, we want to invite you into a journey with us, an invitation to walk with us. We want to introduce you to our son. And we loved him and he was very precious to us. He was our third son, Joel, and we wanted to tell you a story of how his life changed us. And we want to

show you the things that he loved.

Amy Green:

And so, our son, Joel was diagnosed with a brain tumor. And at that point, that happy family, us with three sons, for the greatest tragedy, was, why had we not had a daughter yet? It was not even fathomable to me that we could become a cancer family. That felt like someone other. That was a different and scary situation families found themselves in, but we had no family history of that. Our kids were well, they had no special needs. We thought of ourselves in the healthy class. And the ill class felt like other, even if we would never have acknowledged that to ourselves. And so, when our son started vomiting and when we took him to the doctor and they said, "Maybe it's acid reflux," and we tried that and it didn't get better.

And when he would cry because he was hungry, and then, I'd give him something to eat and then, he would push it away angry and when we went back and forth and tried to figure out what was happening with him, it was agonizing. And at the same time, it felt like, overnight, we went from one type of family to an entirely different type of family. In the hospital, we discovered that he had a brain tumor. And just like that, our world was nothing like anything we'd ever experienced. And it was nothing like the experiences of our friends and our family. We were living the same lives, but as totally different people. And so, as artists, we were trying to figure

out, “How do we express what this feels like? It’s so different. We are not relating to other people like us. We don’t understand this world. And how do we express what this feels like?”

Ryan Green:

I think there is two things that are true about us. One is that we were evangelicals, and charismatic ones at that, and two, that we were the media folks. We are the ones that did the arts. And usually, the arts meant we were the ones that were doing the sermon illustrations. And for us, art meant spreading our faith, spreading our belief. And even in those hardest circumstances, the only thing that we could do is really express ourselves creatively. And we threw ourselves into that. Amy through writing and me through creating art, like you saw on the first slide. And that led through a series of interesting events, to this idea that we conceived of That Dragon, Cancer.

And this was a video game that formed... The seed maybe was sparked by a night that I spent in the hospital with Joel. It was a night that was devastating, because he was dehydrated and there was nothing I could do to help him. Often, we see our realities as characterized by the things that we can do to control our environment. And when that agency is subverted, that leads to crisis, and for me, crisis of faith. And for us, just this desire to heal him. And so, in that regard, we decided to put God on display, I suppose.

Amy Green:

And in thinking of video games as a medium, as he encouraged you to do at the beginning, this idea that what we were mourning most in this new life, at least early on, was our loss of agency, the medium of video games was a fascinating place to tell this story. Because we glorify agency in video games. Nothing will make a gamer angrier than when they’re playing a game and the choice they made does not have the impact they expect it to have. Well, nothing was making us angrier than this idea that we were being given choices and we were being diligent parents, we were listening to the doctors, and we were having faith and we were trying to do all the right things, and yet, it was not having the impact we wanted it to have. And so, this was a well-matched medium to tell this kind of story and to express to people what these emotions felt like.

Amy Green:

So we changed so much in the course of making this video game. But one thing that was very important to us from the very beginning, I suspect, just through the grace of God, is that we kept saying, “We need to create this while we’re in the middle of it.” We knew that, if we waited until the end and had processed it, we would’ve found a way to sort of draw these tidy conclusions about what we had experienced it. And even watching it now, I’m emotional, because we don’t engage with it that much. And we’ve

done that, right? It’s been a while. I’ve processed it, I’ve compartmentalized it, I have my ways of talking about it. But when we were making this, it was just our whole life. It was everything we were feeling and experiencing in the moment.

I could not make this game now. First of all, I do not have the emotional resilience to make this game about this story now, but also, I just don’t remember. I don’t remember how those things felt in the moment. But the other true gift of us deciding very early on that we would make this game as we were going through it is that we changed in the middle. So when we began the game, we saw this as us putting out this incredible testimony of a miraculous God, who was in the process of healing our son. And I know how that could sound, but we had seen miracle after miracle after miracle. I could tell you stories that I still don’t know how to describe. And then, we started sharing this demo of the game with people, and people were writing articles from all over the world. People were following this project. It felt like God was drawing a crowd. They must all be here to watch this amazing miracle we could already see unfolding, we were sure, that we were releasing a testimony of God’s glory.

Ryan Green:

And instead, what we discovered is that we were creating a memorial. We were creating a monument to our love and our doubts and our

questions and leaving those answers behind, with only the hope that they would come back around.

Amy Green:

And when our son died in the middle of the development of the game, we stopped trying to tell the story of all the miracles, all the little moments, trying to get it factually correct, and we started to try to tell the story of how it felt and we focused on where Joel was and who was taking care of him. Because that's what mattered to us and probably because it was the biggest cry of our heart in those moments after he died, which is, "Where is Joel? And who is taking care of him? And is he okay now?"

Ryan Green:

And in the midst of that, the digital medium, this place that we could go, was a place that we could invite you into. We could say, "Hey, will you watch Joel? Will you play with him? Will you make him laugh? Will you take joy in him, like we took joy in him?"

Amy Green:

Had we not decided to make it in the middle, I would not have made a testimony of my grief. I would not have made a testimony of my disappointment with God. I would never have made a testimony and think that it was responsible to put it out into the world of my anger and frustration and how the very good act of grieving my son was mixed up with

this very muddy language of feeling disappointed with God. I would never have made that game, but it was already in progress, the world was already here, God had drawn a crowd, but to see something very different than we wanted to show them.

Ryan Green:

And in our tradition, we were taught to walk with our fists up, as an active defense, because we believed that the world was coming after us. What we found instead is that the world welcomed us. They made a seat for us. They gave us money and resources, knowing who we were and what we believed, and they still made space for our pain and they sat with us in it. Even in these game conferences, where people come around dressed as various anime and games characters, they would stop and they would sit and they would play and they would cry and they would share the stories of the things that changed their life with us. Also.

Amy Green:

So the video game, it got press internationally. It was a phenomenon we just watched unfold. It's hard to really characterize what that meant to us, because we were grieving our son. And so, all these things that, in a normal context, you would go, "Oh wow, WIRED's going to do a 10 page spread," there was a little of that and there was a little of the humility that can only come from saying, "Only because the hardest thing in

our life is happening to us are these things happening to us." But I think it's important to talk about what happens when you share intimacy in a digital medium, a medium that isn't just about play or wasting time. Sometimes, the world pauses in an attention-based economy and they take notice. And so, articles were written all over the world.

Amy Green:

A documentary was made that won an Emmy for the Best Arts and Culture Documentary. We did not make it, but they made it about us making the game. I was invited to give a TED Talk. That TED Talk ended up with over 1.8 million views. There were Let's Players who would play our video game for, usually, very young players to watch on streams, and those had hundreds of millions of views collectively and so many comments. There was this cultural wake being developed around us.

Ryan Green:

For contents, what a Let's Play is, on YouTube, there's this practice of, in the gaming culture, of people playing games and having other people watch them play games. And so, as the most popular Let's Players or video game YouTubers in the world played our game and shared their stories of love and loss, there were millions of people of all ages that would participate, and then, they would share their love and loss in the comments. And what started as

something very devastating became something that was very nurturing and generative in the midst of this.

Amy Green:

And then, *That Dragon, Cancer* won the BAFTA for the Most Innovative Game of the Year the year that *Pokémon GO* came out. Talk about dissonance for us to go, “Hmm, I’m pretty sure that game was more innovative than what we did,” but after that, they made a new category, that was Games Beyond Entertainment. We suspect it was because other people were also concerned about that choice and they said, “Maybe we need new words to describe what this kind of thing is.” And then, we had to pause and go, “Then perhaps it was innovative, because you’re right, there wasn’t a category and now, there is.” We were by no means the only games doing this kind of thing. And that’s why, sometimes, things like people describing it as innovative was difficult for us. What we were was the first game probably that got this much international press, won this many awards, created this kind of cultural wake, but there were many games doing these types of things.

Ryan Green:

And so, in the articles that were written about us and other games, there was a struggle for vocabulary, right? When you start to change what the definition is of games or when you try to expand it, you have

to come up with new vocabulary to describe what this thing is that we’re doing in the digital medium. Games like *Florence* up in the upper right, the yellow background, is about relationships and growing up. *Never Alone*, the second one, the girl with the husky, was created in collaboration with an Indigenous tribe, talking about their history and their mythologies. The fourth one over is about Syria and the refugee crisis. *Papo & Yo* is about the alcoholism in a violent father. *Gone Home* is about a young woman coming out as a lesbian to her family. We have OCD, psychosis, anxiety, depression, transcendence, and flow, and even, immigration.

Amy Green:

For a little bit, those types of games were being called empathy games or empathy simulators. There was a time where it was sort of our little soapbox to talk about compassion, rather than empathy, because with an empathy simulator, what would happen is someone would make a game about what it’s like to live on \$12 an hour. And as you played it, you became the person living on \$12 an hour, but as a video gamer, you just optimized and you’re like, “Well, I’m the best poor person there is.” Maybe it developed empathy, but maybe it made you go, “Those homeless people haven’t worked the system like I’ve worked the system.” And so, the idea of these being empathy machines for us was someone trying to design around a

principle they believed was good.

But the ones I showed, these are not empathy simulators, but there were people inspired by these types of experiences that tended to be more intimate, that tended to, I think, inspire compassion, that idea of, “Walk alongside me,” like, “Come and experience this with me. I’m not going to put you in the first-person role, like in *Papers, Please*. I’m not an immigrant trying to cross the border. I’m the person evaluating the documents. And so, I’m looking to see, should I let you in or not let you in?” And so, you’re someone alongside the journey, not the person in the situation.

Ryan Green:

And I think that’s an important distinction, because empathy is an uncomfortable topic in the church and the culture. Because no, I cannot feel what it’s like to be you. I’m not you. And so, pretending that I can, through a simplified framework, isn’t appropriate, but I can ask you to walk alongside me for a bit.

Amy Green:

When we make the mistake of thinking, “Now I understand how you feel,” that’s the wrong language to say. “Now I’m motivated to walk alongside you and try to understand more,” that is better language. And so, you see this all the time in games that are trying to make a difference, that we can set out with a really good idea in mind for design. But if you haven’t thought through all the

design principles carefully, you'll end up somewhere different than you meant to end up.

Ryan Green:

We did want this to be a workshop. We have so much content that I'm not sure we'll have, but we do want to take a moment to pause and reflect about what we just talked about and ask you a question.

Amy Green:

So now that we've kind of hopefully diversified your view of what a game can be, I want you to take just a minute and contemplate for a minute, is there a meaningful topic that you would love to see change culture through a game? This may be something that's personal to you, something that feels intimate to you, something that you say, "I wish I could invite someone to come alongside me in this way." So take a minute, think about what topic you'd love to see change culture through a game, and we'll come back to this question in a bit later.

Okay? Please feel free to continue to contemplate that. I know we did not give you a lot of time. It's because we selfishly took more time than we meant to. Okay, so I know that, in the program, this was listed as games for spiritual formation and for evangelism. And so, I wanted to talk a little bit about the categories of games, the way people approach designing a game when they're thinking about how to enact change

in a person. And we like alliterations, so we made it habit, heart, and health. Can you go back for me? We talked about heart. Ours was the game about story. It was designed to change your heart, to change your worldview, to broaden your outlook, to shift your perspective. So when someone changes based on heart, that's usually what we're thinking. Usually, it's in that space of narrative and story of being exposed to something new.

Then we have games that are designed to help change your habits. That's probably where you're thinking of things like gamification. "I want to do something, but I don't have the motivation. And so, how can I add motivation to my life through something that will help me shift a habit?" And then, health, I put that there, because I'm sure many of you actually have had the experience of something being off with your health, either your mental health, your physical health, or your emotional health, and your worldview could totally have changed and you can be trying as hard as you possibly can on the habit side, but if you are unwell, these ways you want to change are almost impossible. And then, you get healthy and these things that were so hard become so easy and you realize that you weren't lazy, you weren't not trying hard enough, there was something that was broken that needed to be mended.

And when it was mended, it

worked the way it was supposed to. So there's also games for health. Games for habit, it typically tends to be this idea of gamification. I'll give you some examples. A very popular one, of course, is streaks. We add a streak system into anything, it works just like those gold stars we got in Sunday school. Some of us love that, some of us hate that. And when you apply it, just as like a system that doesn't take into account what a person wants, what they need, how they're responding to it, you get situations like Duolingo did, where the intensity with which they approach their streak that's supposed to be fun gamification becomes something we all joke about, where we go, "Oh, this little owl is so on me about my streak that I've started to feel a little intimidated. I'm starting to feel frustrated."

Another thing that people do with gamification is they offer rewards or incentives. This was an app built on a blockchain called STEP.N. You spent way too much money for a blockchain asset that, as you walked every day, would grow in value. And as it grew in value, it earned more money. And then, as it earned more money, you could then sell it to other people, who could earn money faster with your shoe, because you'd upgraded your shoe. And then, that allowed us to create a very quick Ponzi scheme. So sometimes, gamification goes poorly, where you say, "Oh yeah, we're all making so much money, because

we got in first.” And then, the goal is to sell your assets quick before the bottom drops out. Because the people at the end, maybe us, will buy a shoe too late, make no money, kind of forget about it and go, “Oh no. Now we have an NFT no one wants.”

So I point these out, not to say that gamification doesn't work, but to say you have to be so thoughtful about how you approach it. If you want to add gamification to an experience, you probably should be thinking in terms of some of the theology around leisure, talking about the liberal arts versus the servile arts. “What do I want to do? And what do I only do to get a certain outcome?”

And if the idea is, “There's this thing I only do to get a certain outcome, walking on a treadmill, and it's so different from just walking outside and enjoying myself,” if the idea is just to sort of smash them on top of each other, “I like stars. I want star stickers, because I like star stickers and it feels good,” if I just smash that on top of something that I'm only doing to get a different outcome, but it's not that natural result. CS Lewis talked about it and talked about how some of the things we do to engage in learning can start to feel mercenary, if the reward we give is not the natural outcome of the thing we're trying to accomplish.

So then, I throw on this list, under games for habit, both Animal Crossing and Jackbox Party. And that's because both of those games were

very motivational for my daughter to learn to read. These were not games designed to teach someone to read, but you couldn't really play Animal Crossing with your big brothers and enjoy it if you can't read all the texts they're reading. And you certainly can't try to make jokes that make all of your inappropriate and outrageous family members squeal with laughter if you can't read the prompts and can't write as quickly as they're writing. These are experiences that were fun for the sake of fun. They were engaged with it, because they wanted to engage with it. In order to engage with it, they did have to do something that, before, they weren't as motivated to do. And there's actually studies about this.

They say that the only difference between a struggling reader and an advanced reader is their persistence. When you study, both of them encounter the same percentage of words that they don't understand what it means. I suspect a lot of you were advanced readers. I'll give you all the gold stars. What that means is, when you encountered a word you didn't understand, you were like, “That's all right. I've got some context. It probably means that,” and you kept reading. And a struggling reader would see a word they didn't understand and they would get so intimidated and they would focus on how they didn't know what that meant and they would feel insecure and they would just feel bad about themselves and stop.

Well, the studies they've done have shown that, if you let struggling readers read text in a game that is their choice, a video game that is their choice, they perform the same as advanced readers. Because all you did was change their willingness to persist, because they're more motivated. So that's where gamification can come through in a really healthy and beautiful way, where you use games to accomplish something someone wants to do anyway.

Ryan Green:

Okay, I'm going to go through this last part really quickly, but I wanted to touch on games for health. It's not just about behavior modification. It can also be about treatment and research. One of the largest organizations that heralds this kind of movement is Games for Change. They're a non-profit out of New York, and they host an annual conference. And they really sit at the intersection of serious games, games for health, games for policy, games for change and climate change. And if you're interested in learning more about this space, I would recommend them as an entry point. On the right here, we have some examples of vision therapy for kids. This other one up here, the only doctor prescribed video game, is actually FDA approved as a prescribable treatment for ADHD and called EndeavorRx, I believe.

On the left side here is a game that looks like any other video game,

but it's a game that researches the effects of Alzheimer's. And so, you see a map here and then, you see this ship that's navigating that map. The idea was, if we show people a map and then, test their navigation ability, there's a strong correlation between that and the advancement of Alzheimer's. So as both in your research as educators, as well as researchers, maybe games can be a way that you can gather interesting data. Our daughter is terrified of needles, and our local hospital has been using distraction therapy in VR as a way to calm children down.

Amy Green:

Frankly, we didn't think that would work, because we have a VR headset and she plays with it all the time. And I'm like, "Hmm, this is not going to be novel and she's going to be focused on this needle going into her arm," plus they weren't interactive. It was just VR video, and we thought, "Oh, she's played way cooler stuff than this." No, they could not find her vein and poked forever, and she was just talking about what she was seeing and describing it. It was a game changer. So as game developers who know about these things, we were still floored when we saw it in action.

So the other thing is I tend to think that this idea of games for heart, games that broaden perspectives, games that tell new stories is a great place for the church to think about how you change culture and not just how you change people. But

I'm willing to be convinced that there's healthy and exciting ways to approach gamification as well. And health just isn't my field of expertise, but I think amazing things are happening there. But when we think about games for heart, it's just important to think that the church had a history of being patrons of the arts. We were commissioning, paying for, and creating all of the best art in the world. And now, the patrons of the arts are typically the government and typically corporations here and there, but that means that they are patrons for the type of art they want to see put into the world, for better or worse.

One of the things that I think Christians do, that is maybe one of the more toxic things I see Christians do, is to bemoan the culture without engaging in the culture. They're frustrated about the culture that's been created, but they're not being patrons. Instead, a lot of times, what Christians are known for are all the things they're boycotting, all the things they're against. We're very vocal about what we don't like about culture, without saying, "Can I show you an example of something beautiful that I believe is true?" Instead, we're saying, "Can I show you my outrage about all the things that I think are ugly and not true?" So just a little challenge, that there are ways to be, we've talked about generative AI, there's ways to be generative with culture, to add to culture, to create new conversations, to provoke art.

And I'm sure there are questions about, are Christians already in this space? Are they already in the video game space? And some are. And Chris is actually going to talk about some organizations that are doing really amazing things. The vast majority of what I see is, a lot of times, Christians creating products, rather than creating art. So they're either treating a video game as an investment, like they'd like it to do some good culturally and change the culture, but they would also like it to be a product that returns money. They want to see a return on their investment. And when you're creating something with a goal of making money, it creates a different effect. You never look at a product and feel the same thing that you feel when you look at a piece of art. A piece of art usually inspires some sense of awe, some type of inspiration.

It causes you to ask new questions. And then, you also see Christians maybe who don't want a return on their investment, but they have created a product where the end result they hope is souls and they just want all the conversion possible. They are creating a product for the conversion of souls. And that tends to have the exact same effect as when you create a product whose goal is to make money, that you look at it and you see and you feel the agenda and it feels like a product, it does not feel like art.

Ryan Green:

And so, the challenge here is, are we creating products that are solutions to problems? Or are we a source of good questions? And what I've just been enamored with here is the quality of questions and the willingness to wrestle with these hard things. That was the thing that resonated with people in our story for heart or our game for heart is the questions that we asked. And so, in that, pause and reflect again.

Amy Green:

If we return to that same, you had this idea of this thing, this idea of something you wish could impact culture through a game. And so, now, I would ask you, what would you do with that idea to shift it just a little bit, so that it either leans into habit or health or heart? Is there a way to think of it in those models for change? I will give you about a minute there. And then, now, I'll introduce Chris Skaggs. He is the owner of Soma Games and is involved in really catalyzing some exciting movements across Christian game development. And he's going to talk to you about what's going on in the industry.

Chris Skaggs:

Thank you. When I first arrived at this event, the first person I talked to was super nice, welcoming me aboard, and, "What are you here to talk about?" "I'm here to talk about video

games." And her answer was, "Are you here to tell us how to get our kids to stop?" And I'm curious, from the nervous laughter, how many of you are in that camp, like, "This is how I perceive video games?" Because if you are, then I'm here as the prophet of doom. Let me tell you a little bit about video games. Okay, the state of the current video game industry is that it is frigging enormous and it is blowing up like you wouldn't believe. It is also very, very new. And so, I've got this little wild, wild west picture. It is a place that is so wild, so crazy, there's all kinds of crazy experiments that are exciting and fun and wild, and also, some ones that are really deeply disturbing and exploitative.

It's all over the place, and I don't say that with any apology or exploitation. It's just like this is the nature of a new space. And when you think about where Hollywood was in the thirties, there's this famous story, infamous, if you will, of the President of Paramount, who writes to the Bible colleges back east and he says, "Movies are going so fast, we cannot keep up. We need people who have good biblical training to come out to Hollywood and write scripts, because they're making them so fast." And he got a letter back from one of the colleges who said, "You know, I would rather that my students went directly to hell than that they stopped in Hollywood along the way." That is a true story. That is not an urban legend. That is not some weird story, but it is, in

fact, the way that the church treated artists, Hollywood, a brand new medium that they didn't understand.

They see all these actors in Hollywood and like, "Those guys are weird. They take drugs. They're probably gay. We need to leave." And so, they did. The whole church absolutely left Hollywood, and now, a hundred years later, we're like, "How come Hollywood doesn't reflect our values?" And it's not because Hollywood is wicked. It's because we abandoned them. Games right now are just like Hollywood were in the thirties, which is to say the concrete is wet. No one knows what's going to happen here. The rules have not been made. There's not a single school, to my knowledge, that teaches the business of video games, the best practice. That's because those things don't exist yet. And so, I hope that you see this. This is a cultural opportunity, that happens literally once every hundred years. That's where video games are right now, in terms of what's happening. That's both good and bad.

Let me tell you also a couple numbers. Before I get to Shirley, a couple numbers, the video game industry right now is about 200 billion dollars. Now, by context, that means that, if you take all of the music, all of the sports, all of the film that's on your phone, multiply it times three, that's the video game story. That is an enormous amount of cash. It is far, far bigger than you probably realize, if it's not your world. If I have one

little thing in my segments, this is not a little niche story, this is the world going on at enormous global scale. So I hope you see that. It's also probably not the demo you think. If you imagine that games are toys for kids, you are way behind. This is Skyrim Grandma, her name's Shirley, she's a Baptist. We had a chance to pray with her about a family member who had passed away.

She's a believer, and she spends a lot of her time online playing Skyrim and has a million followers. She's, I don't know, I don't even know, 80 years old. The average gamer is actually 36. There's almost a split even between male and female. There are more thirty-something women who play video game than there are teen boys. So depending on what you think the demo is, you may be really wrong. Most people are. That gives me a sense of this opportunity on what's happening, what I was asked to do, is like, Okay, let's say it is this big, let's say stories like Amy and Ryan's, they're just like one possible, happens to be great, fantastic exploration of art. But it's also, understand this is not a product. This is about a whole world of artistic, it's groundbreaking, it's different. I use this picture of the parable of the sower, because we hear, in that thing, it's all about the soil.

Some of it's rocky, some of it's thorny, some of it's packed down, some of it's the birds. The soil is what art does, it prepares the soil for the seed. And in this case, here's some

people who are playing in this space. We've got people who are working, for example, Games for Love and Satellite Gaming. These are ministries that you would totally recognize. Games for Love is sort of like a Make-A-Wish Foundation, but for gamers. And so, they're a wonderful non-profit friend of ours here in Seattle, Nathan Blair, who runs this is really good non-profit. Satellite Gaming uses gaming as a way to bring in at-risk kids into groups where they can just play Fortnite and hang out. And all of a sudden, they have community. They have some place that's safe after school, and next thing you know, that they have a chance to kind of meet someone who's going to help them along what they need.

You also have groups like Love Thy Nerd, who are worked specifically with, "How do we work with game culture, gamers? And how do we kind of minister to them, bring them together?" And they've been doing this for a long, long time. They're a wonderful organization. That's at the gamer level. Between these organizations that I'm aware of, they're easily connected to a hundred thousand, 200,000 gamers around the world. These are people in, obviously, all over the United States, all over Europe, Africa, Asia, you name it. These organizations are working with hundreds and hundreds of thousands of kids right now. Next, down the road, you have CGDC, the Christian Game

Developers Conference. This is the place where, if you're a gamer and you're excited, you'd think, "Hmm, I wonder if I might make a video game someday." If you think about it now as a career, CGDC is the front door.

It's the place that's like, "Come on in, we'll show you how this works. We'll give you some community, we'll give you some training, we'll make you some friends." And all of a sudden, people are like, "Yeah, I think I can do that." Back in the day, it used to be like kids want to say, "I want to grow up to be a fire engine." But these days, what people want to do is they want to grow up to be game developers. This happens to us all the time, where we have people come at our front door, and I had parents who were like, "Can you please, please, please talk my kid out of this?" And I'm like, "Actually, no, it's a great job and the wages tend to be good. There's a huge growth opportunity." So CGDC is that front door, and then, the next step is [inaudible 00:54:43], now, if those people like, "I want to actually train for this," now we've got universities.

Now, this is something where, as recently as two, three years ago, I would've said, "This is an existential threat to our space," is there were like 200 kids across the whole United States who were in some game development program. I'm happy to say that, in a very short time, Christian universities are starting to pick up this ball and they're realizing, one, this is a huge growth opportunity.

Two, they're just bringing in kids. So I show two here. So I show Azusa Pacific and welcome aboard, Northwest is opening a program, but there are more and more universities who are saying, "Let's get this involved." Grand Canyon, Biola, Azusa Pacific, Oklahoma Christian, Abilene Christian, more and more are starting to see this is actually a really good thing. Then one last step is now you've graduated. Now you've got a job. Imladris, that's the group that we started a couple of years ago. Now, this is the professional community.

If this is actually your career, how do you actually stay in contact? In groups very much like this. You think about the big questions. "What does this industry need to thrive? And what does the world need from us?" These are very real places that, if you want to get engaged, where you can either come to conferences, you can meet people, you can just engage, that's what's happening here in the industry. And I'll give you a couple of things. Who's actually building? Amy mentioned being patrons of the arts. I'm really happy to say there's finally starting to be some people who are putting some real money behind this. I mentioned Wedgwood Circle back there. This is a group of high net worth Christians who want to support the arts, and they've started with music and movies. But they're starting to move into games, and I'm actually really excited about that.

We have a good relationship with them. Belmont University just

landed a fat grant from the Lilly Foundation to create a whole center for Christians in the arts. And I have this other thing, like there's other stuff cooking that I can't tell you about, because it's got to be... But I want to tell you there's some really fascinating, exciting stuff happening on the business side, on the funding side, on the marketing side. So as I mentioned, this is now an industry that is forming. It's an industry where no one quite knows what's going to happen next, but that also means that you can do something real, that's going to last, that's going to shape this industry for the next hundred years. I have a couple of things here that, if you're just interested in very specific events, Reach Con is a gamer conference over in Florida. It's like in a couple of weeks.

So head on out there. Nerd Culture Ministry Summit, this particular group is meeting in Colorado Springs in November, and the Imladris community has a small roundtable specifically for ministries. So if you're from a denomination, you're from a church, and we'll get you these links, I'm sure. If you want to do that, then that's a place to meet in Colorado Springs, Wedgwood Circle, their annual event, you can sign up on their website. Praxis, we have another roundtable for business leaders. That's coming on in May. And then, of course, the Imladris retreat, where Amy spoke just recently in June, and that's in Oregon.

These are just a couple things. I could tell you a lot more, but I'm literally right on time. Boom. Last question, or rather, the next question is this, how do you keep that idea from feeling like a product? There's all this going on, but remember also what happened with Hollywood. Hollywood productized everything. Hollywood became monetized everything. That's part of what polluted it. How do we stop that? How do you keep your idea from feeling like a product and keep people you're trying to impact from simply feeling like you're monetizing the sheep? Give that a moment, and I'll hand that back to Amy or Ryan, I'm not sure.

Ryan Green:

So we've been talking about the way we make games, the places that games exist, the missional opportunities in games as a culture, but this is an AI conference. And so, I want to perhaps put forth an idea or a few ideas that reflect some of the wrestling that I've heard today around, what is reality? Who are people? Our innate ableist bias. And furthermore, are the places that the digital media mediates, are they real places? Are they places where souls show up? And so, I want to talk about now games for inclusivity, games for service, and games for compassion.

First off, inclusivity. We have the same problem, which is why I'm here, white guy standing up on stage, of diverse voices, and a lot of the

money flows to people that look like me and have my background. And so, there's opportunities to open up capital for new voices. Games for Change, I went on their website, and the first thing that I saw was a Diverse Voices in New Story Challenges. And this is just small. This is a \$15,000 grant, but for an independent or emerging creator, this can be everything. This can be the thing that gets their project off the ground, that gets them enough resources to be able to build a prototype and seek more funding. And this is an opportunity where patrons of the arts and the church can really elevate voices of underrepresented groups.

This happens to us through a pharmaceutical company. Novartis, one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world, had an executive there that read about That Dragon, Cancer, and afterwards, they said, "Would you like to do this again for members of the neuroendocrine cancer community? And we have some marketing funds, and these marketing funds can be used to just create what you want, tell us what you want to create." And so, we pitched them an idea of a poetic journey, through poetry, spoken word recordings of physicians, caregivers, and patients, that they released on the App Store. That was quite an interesting ordeal, because we had to navigate a lot of the corporate and compliance structure. But we are proud of what came out of that.

After we produced that, the executive said, "Wow, that was really beautiful. Would you like to do this again, but for children with spinal muscular atrophy?" And this was something that, I think, has radically changed my view again about digital spaces and digital mediated spaces. This was just before the pandemic. And so, what happened was is that we found ourselves asking about the people that are left out of digital spaces. When you think, in video games, there's been this rising activism for accessibility. And to that end, if you look at something like this, it's rather ridiculous. In order to play a game, is this the kind of dexterity that you have? Is this what it means to be human? It's the ability to hold a controller like this and play.

Now, let's journey into this idea of the Playability initiative. The Playability Initiative was our effort to, see, oh, here we go, to create a game. And so, our thought was, "Okay, you've commissioned us to make a game. We're going to make a game, and we're going to make it a special place for kids with disabilities and a degenerative muscular disease, that, oftentimes, children in advanced stages can only move a finger or can only move their eyes or can only move their head." My immediate thought as a creative director was like, "Hey, how can we unlock creative expression for these children? How can we change the architecture of our digital spaces?" Our physical spaces needed a change in

architecture, which led to the ADA. Our digital spaces need a change in architecture, to allow children and adults to play and express themselves in these spaces.

And so that led to this kind of beautiful one button adventure that we were creating and the Playability Initiative. Well, in the process of the Playability Initiative, we met Jack, and Jack was a young man with SMA, who loved his computer, loved video games. And so, we engaged Jack as a consultant. We paid him to write a blog for us and to give us feedback in these sessions with his father, Al. And he would use his eye gaze interface with his computer. He would play games, he would play our game. He would give us feedback. And that was a beautiful way, not only for learning about him, but also just the dignity of what he has to give, what he has to offer, and how that's very human, even if his body does not work in the same ways that our bodies work.

One thing I thought was really cool is we started a Facebook group, and Anthony here, he has the shins. He's just a crack marketer. Man, this guy can just launch campaigns and really get people excited. And he had an idea, he wanted to make an accessible controller, because he uses a touchpad and lots of games aren't mouse driven. He needed mouse driven games. And so, he decided, "I'm going to design a system that allows me to map mouse movement to keyboard movement,

so that I can play the games that I love.”

And Jonah, who is a junior developer who was working for us, said, “I want to do that too.” And so, they joined forces, and Anthony, as a creator, a designer, a developer, and Jonah, as a co-collaborator and developer, created this game. And I thought that was exceptional, because I think, a lot of times, when given the opportunity, I admit, I wanted to take that opportunity. And this opportunity was a way to pass that through to the people who are very capable designers, who can speak and design for themselves and create products that are going to be useful to them and their community and create art that’s going to proclaim who they are.

I just wanted to drop this in here. Andy Robertson, who we’ve met in our journey with That Dragon, Cancer, describes himself as a theologically trained video game journalist and family technology expert. He has very generative and constructive thoughts on the practice of video games in the family. And he wrote a book called Taming Gaming. He started a family gaming database, which we were excited to be able to funnel some resources from Novartis onto that, so that he could launch that. He lists accessible games. He goes through and lists games that are constructive for different reasons across culture and lists like thousands of games in

this database. So it’s a really good resource, if it’s something that you as an instructor, pastor, teacher, or dealing with kids with game addiction, how to approach this topic and engage with this medium in a constructive way.

And so, with that, I want to leave you with this question, and that is that I titled this talk Games for Digital Incarnation. Something stuck out to me this week as I was talking to all of you. We were talking about like incarnation is only flesh. My question is, how much of my body has to work for me to be human? How much of it has to operate for me to be in communion with you, to be in the same place as you, if my chronic illness or my disability or my cancer treatment or my autoimmune disease prevents me from being in the same place as you? Is our relationship less than?

And I think the thing that AI has done, this discussion of AI, has challenged us with that question, right? It challenges us with the question of personhood and the soul and presence and the body. And as we think about AI as this agent of maybe companionships or service or augmentation, it’s going to change the definitions of how we talk about being human and our abilities and the mediums in which we are able to accomplish things. There are technologies out there in development.

This is from CTRL-labs and Facebook. It reads your motor

neurons and allows you to articulate your hands in a digital space. They’re reading motor neuron intention, such that they can even anticipate what you want your movement to be without your hands moving. And so, in that sense, your brain is telling a digital prosthesis to move. What kind of new forms of bodies might people have in digitally mediated spaces? How might they operate? Will they walk? Will they have tails? Will they fly? If it’s controlled by our intention, if it’s controlled by these brain-computer interfaces, and this is the place in which they express themselves, in which they work, in which they socialize and collaborate, will they still be human?

These are brain-computer interfaces, that are in various states of development and may have hit the market. Nextmind right there sits on your occipital lobe and can sense what you’re looking at. And so, in your field of view, you can look at things and control computer interfaces through the things that you’re looking at in physical space. EMOTIV and Neurosity have both dry EEG that allows them to read waves of the cortex that allows you to imagine motion. And so, I’ve tried this crown, and I imagined myself waving my hand and I could move a needle up and down. And so, in that, you can map that input to things that give me full brain control. And that’s not even implants.

What we have here is a video from Neuralink of a monkey that

is controlling a game of Pong with their mind. And in this video, I can share it with the group later, they gradually take control away from that joystick and unplug the controller. And at that point, the implant takes over, and they are playing Pong, a monkey is playing Pong with their mind. In that regard, with the advance of AI and just how it's been around for a long time, 50 years, as we learned, but we're really bad at big numbers in logarithmic functions or exponential functions,

right? And that takeoff means that the things that we couldn't do even years ago, suddenly, we can.

And I think that these technologies are going to show us, not only the capabilities of AI for augmentation, but digitally mediated spaces being a way that restore, augment, or extend what it means to be a human in a body. And these are the things in which I think, not only the academics, but also the artists and the poets have something to say. And I think,

together, in gatherings like this, and as we go forth, these conversations are going to lead to those new vocabularies that will allow us to describe what it means to be human in the modern age. With that, we're out of time, but hit us up afterwards if you're interested in this topic. And we'd love to talk to you. All three of us would to talk to you, in ways that we can reimagine what it means to engage in this medium and in this space. So thank you.

Basically there can be no categories such as 'religious' art and 'secular' art, because all true art is incarnational, and therefore 'religious.'

Madeleine L'Engle
Walking On Water



**Video Games
& Digital
Incarnation**

What is a Video Game?



What is a Video Game?

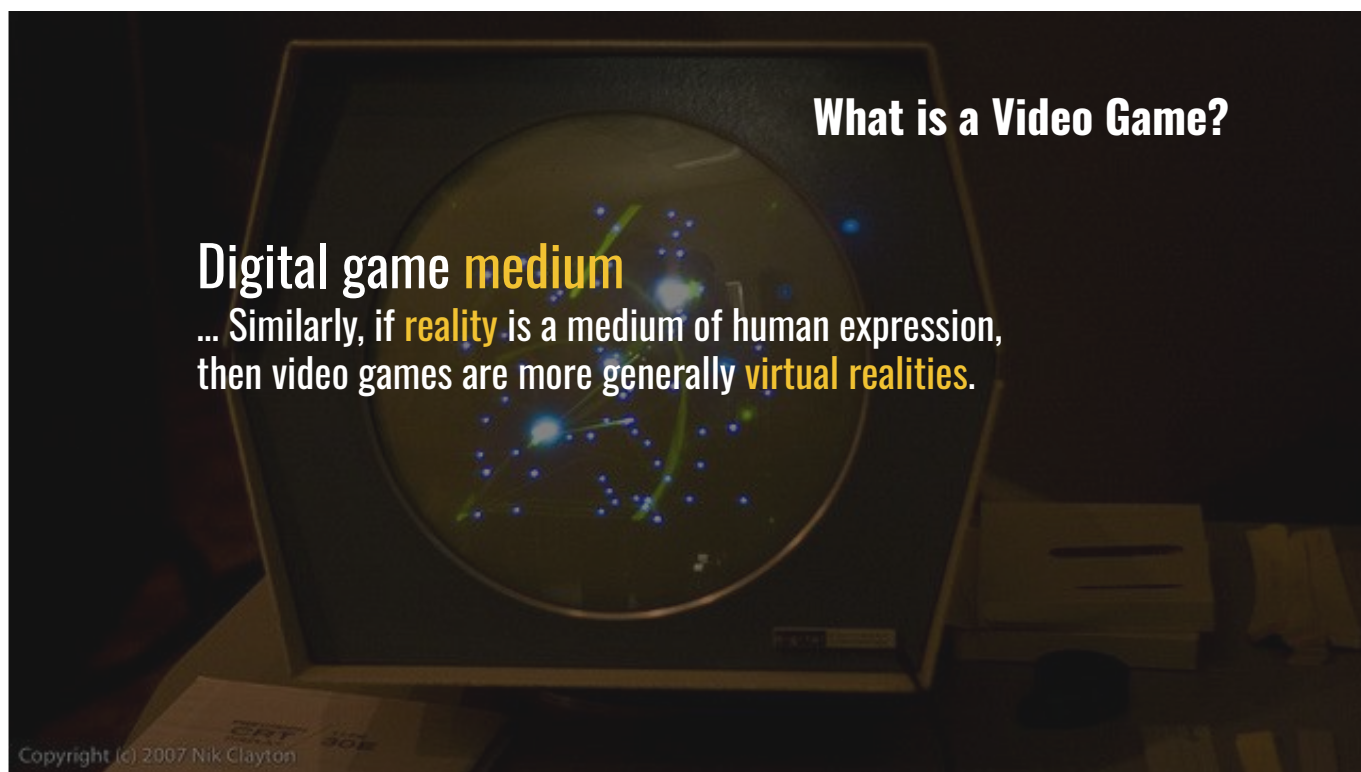
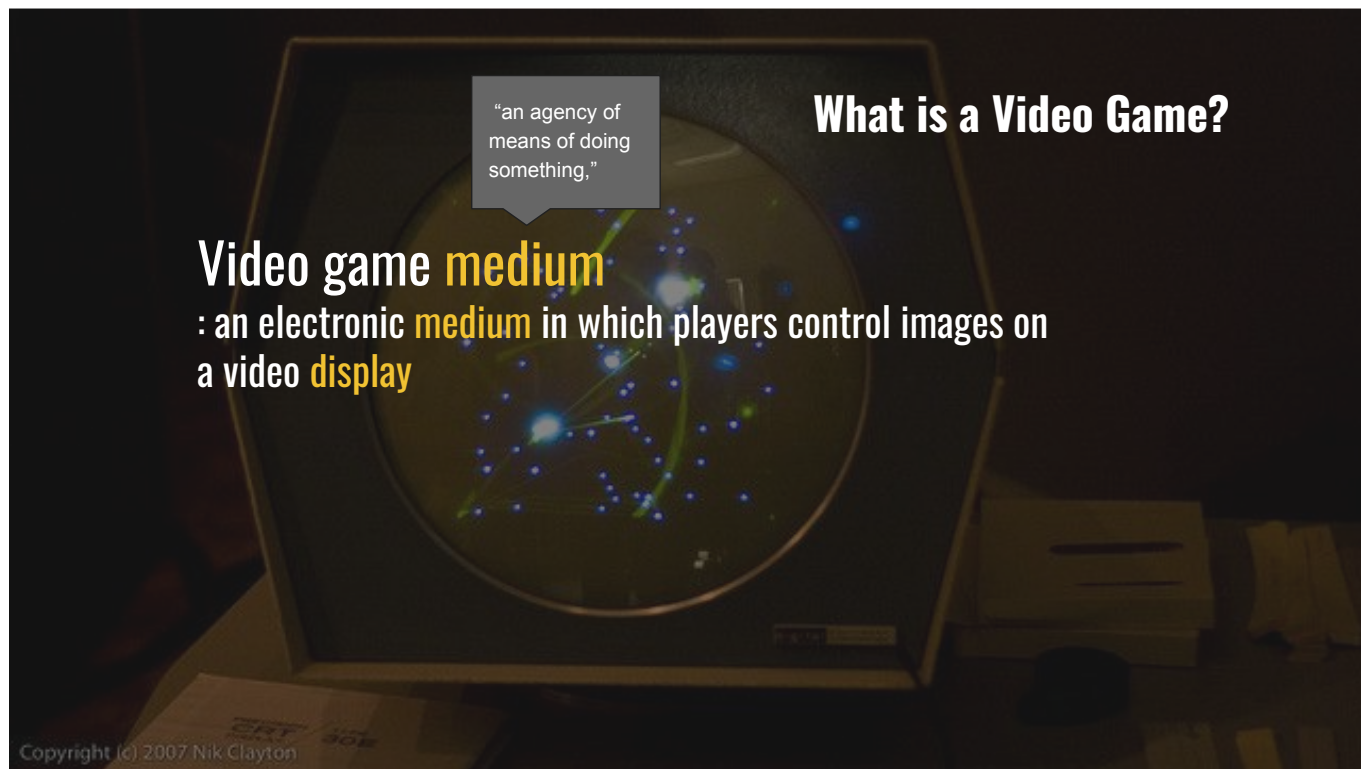
Video game

: an electronic game in which players control images on a video screen

"a game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome." - Eric Zimmerman and Katie Salen, Rules of Play

"A game is a series of interesting decisions." - Sid Meier, GDC 1989

Copyright (c) 2007 Nik Clayton



What is a Video Game?

Digital reality **medium**

: an artificial environment which is experienced through sensory stimuli (such as sights and sounds) provided by a computer and in which one's actions partially determine what happens in the environment

Copyright (c) 2007 Nik Clayton

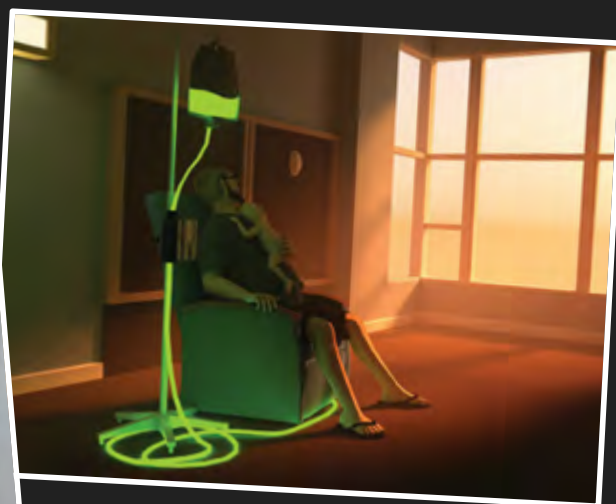
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/virtual%20reality>

An Invitation to Walk With Us

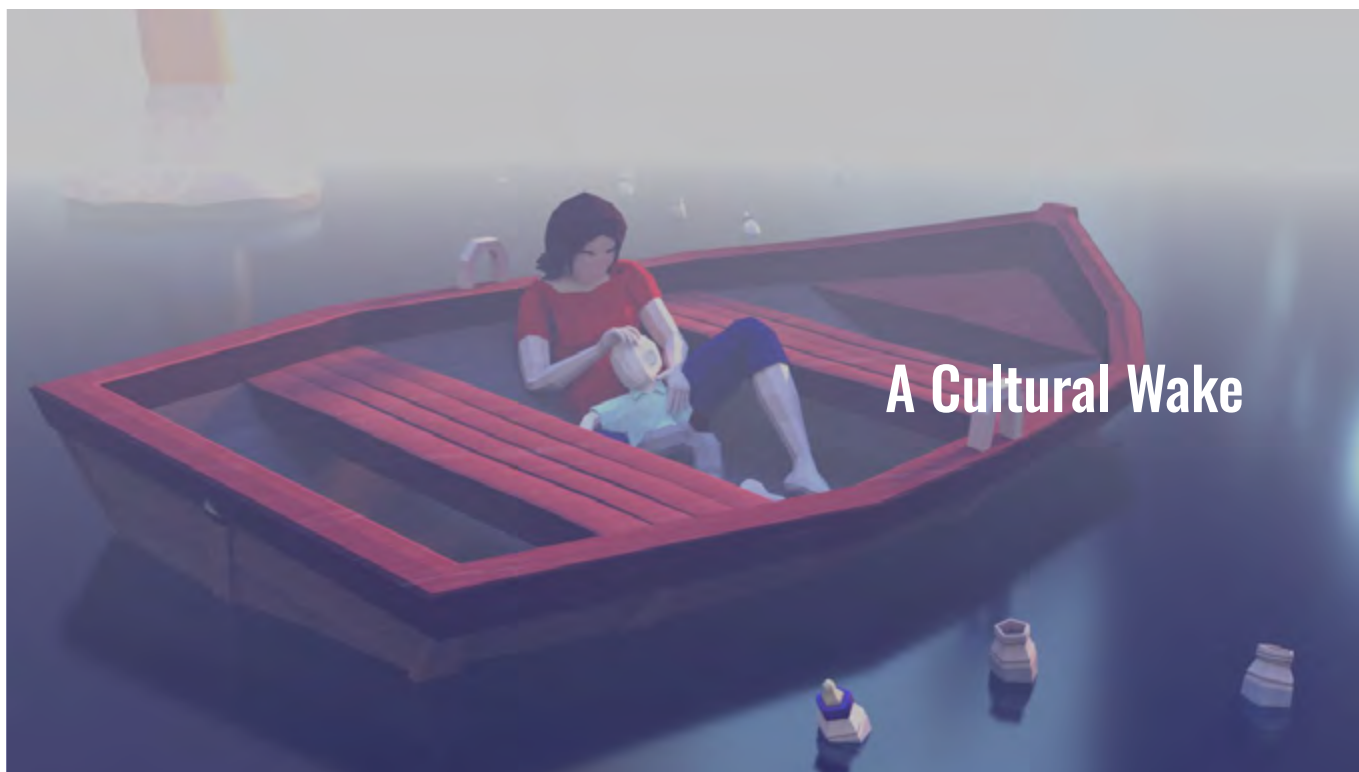




Joel Evan Green



That Dragon, Cancer (2016)



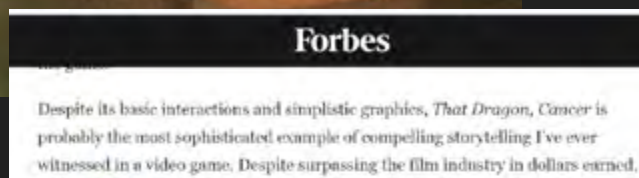
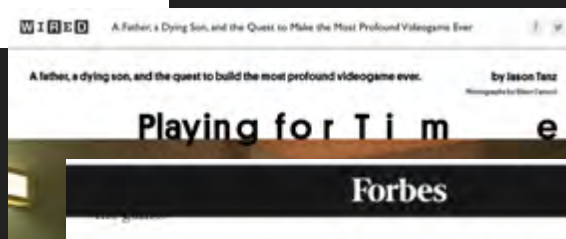


A Cultural Wake

GAMES 13 JANUARY 2016

That Dragon, Cancer proves that games can be an emotional art form

A small videogame about a couple dealing with their infant son's battle with cancer is an emotional zenith for games.



~30,000,000 views - Let's Plays, Trailers, Soundtrack

~142,145 Jacksepticeye video comments

~27,756 PewDiePie's video comments

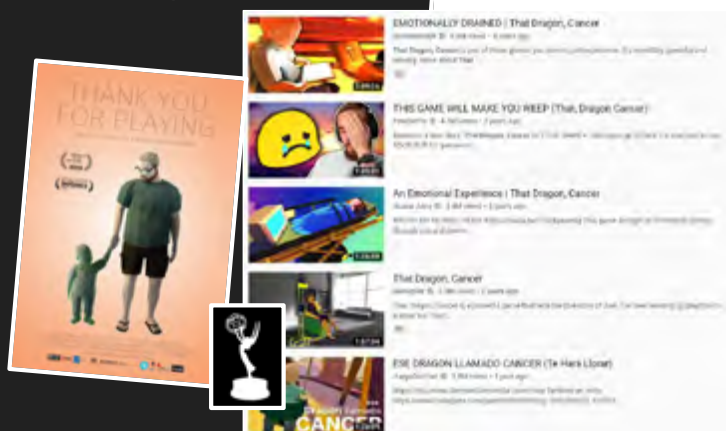
~56,000 Markiplier's video comments

A Cultural Wake



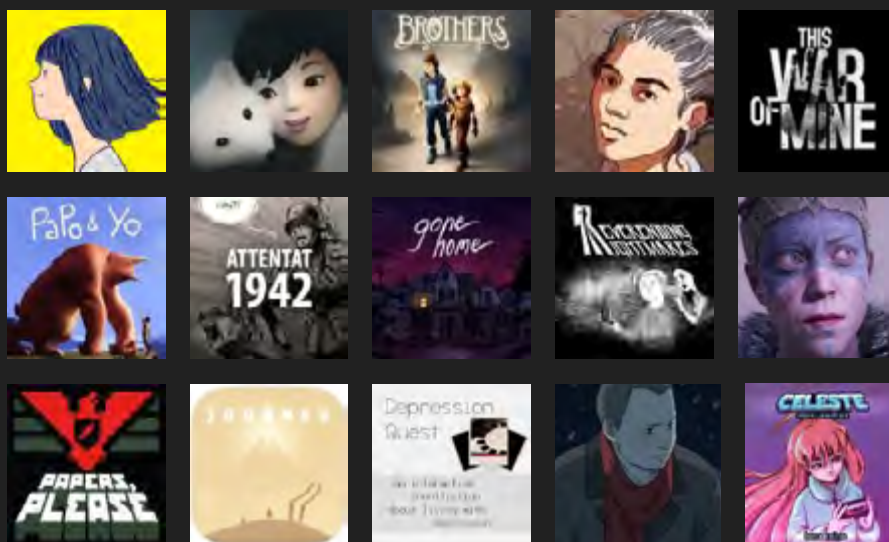
TED Talk, Radio Lab, CBS Sunday Morning, Wired Magazine, Emmy Award Winning Documentary

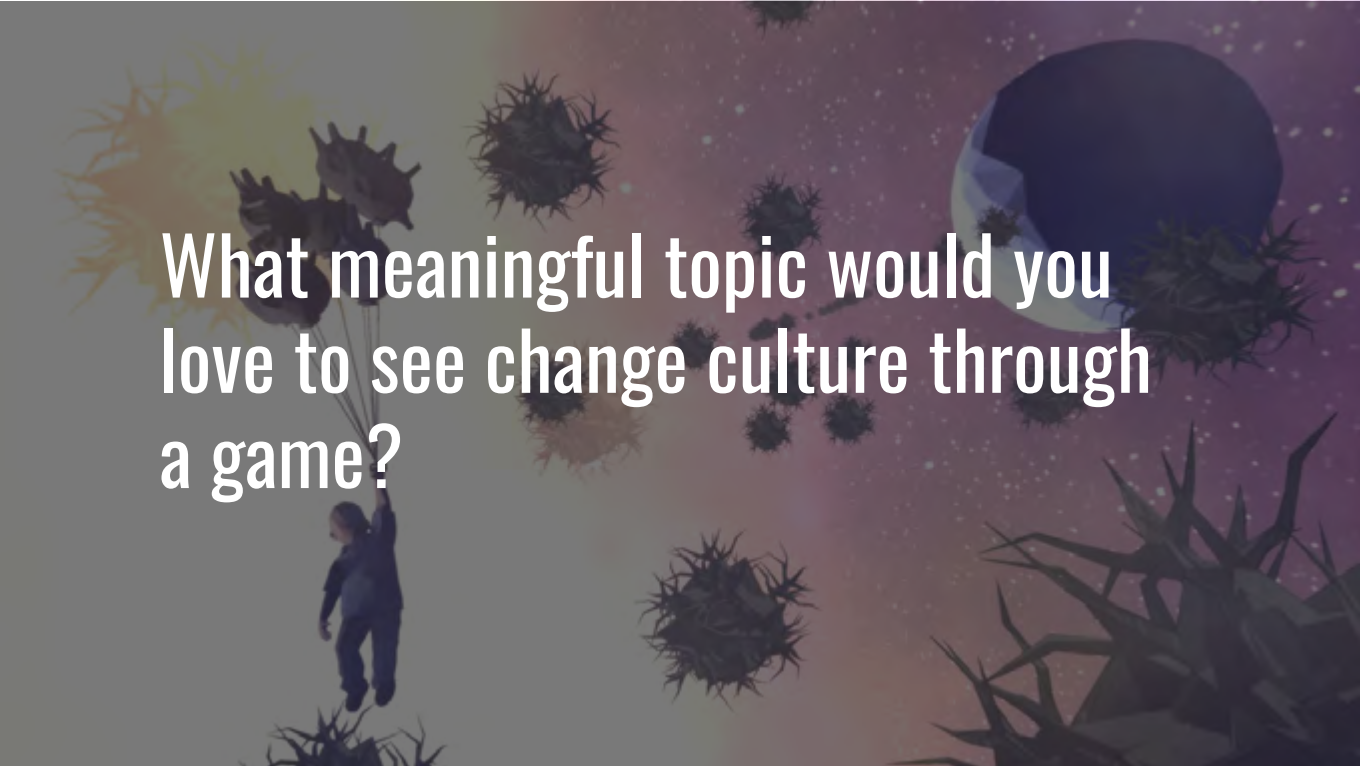
BAFTA - Innovation
Peabody Facebook Futures of Media Award
Game Award For Impact





More Digital Realities



A child is floating in a dark, starry space. The child is holding onto a large, dark, spiky object that looks like a planet or a large asteroid. In the background, there is a large, dark, spherical planet with a lighter, textured surface. The scene is set against a backdrop of stars and a nebula.

What meaningful topic would you love to see change culture through a game?

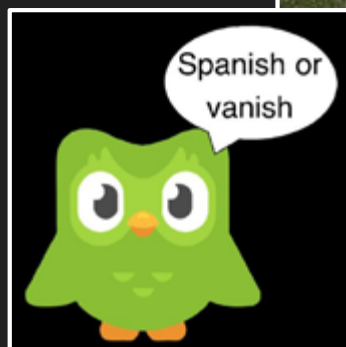
A child is sitting in a red wooden wagon in a hospital room. The wagon is on wheels and has a red handle. The child is looking out of the wagon. In the background, there is a hospital bed with a red headboard and a red footboard. A yellow IV drip is hanging from a stand. The room has a curved ceiling and a large window.

Games for...
Habit . Health . Heart

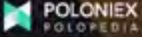
Games for Habit - Gamification



Games for Habit - Gamification



Games for Habit - Gamification



WHAT IS STEP

A web3 "Move2Earn" mobile game that rewards users with tokens when they exercise.



poloniex.com



WHY IS IT SO POPULAR

In part because it is one of the first GameFi games to focus on wellness, giving it a first-mover advantage.

STEP'S TOKENS

The two native STEP tokens, GMT and GST, are its governance and utility tokens, respectively.

HOW DO YOU EARN WITH STEP

You can earn GST and GMT by equipping an NFT sneaker in the mobile app and exercising.



KEY POINTS

Games for Habit - Gamification



WHAT IS STEP

A web3 "Move2Earn" mobile game that rewards users with tokens when they exercise.



poloniex.com



WHY IS IT SO POPULAR

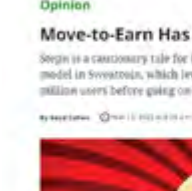
In part because it is one of the first GameFi games to focus on wellness, giving it a first-mover advantage.

STEP'S TOKENS

The two native STEP tokens, GMT and GST, are its governance and utility tokens, respectively.

HOW DO YOU EARN WITH STEP

You can earn GST and GMT by equipping an NFT sneaker in the mobile app and exercising.



KEY POINTS

Opinion

Move-to-Earn Has a Ponzi-Economics Problem

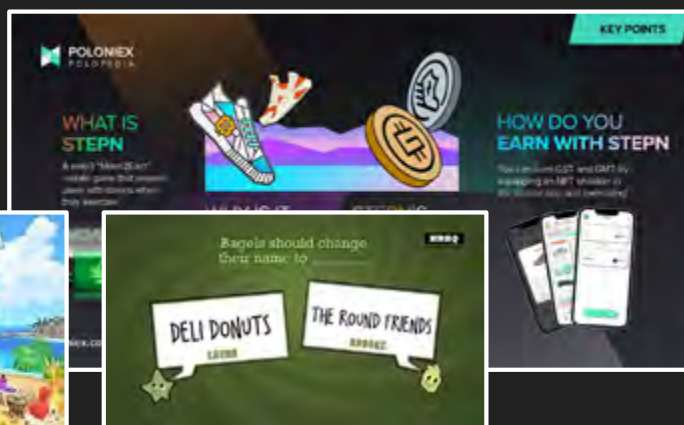
Begin is a cautionary tale for M2E startup founders like me, but I see a better model in Sweatcoin, which leveraged real life utility to amass over 100 million users before going on-chain, writes Jomab CEO Boyd Cohen.

By Jomab CEO Boyd Cohen

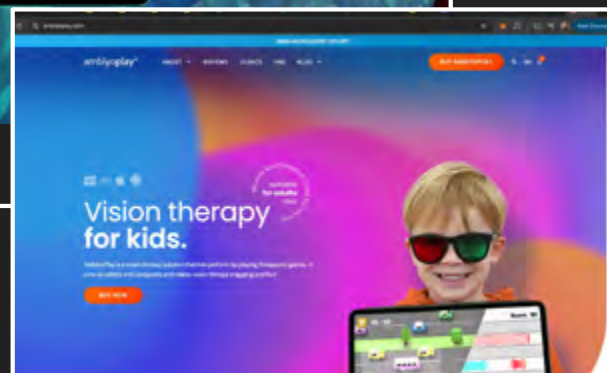
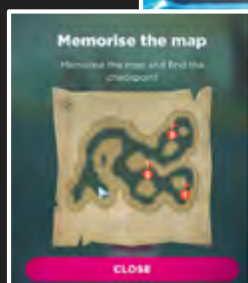
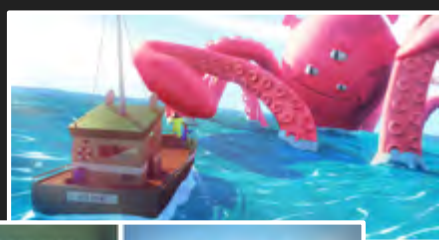


Get the full story on Medium & Jack Jones' Book Reviews

Games for Habit - Gamification

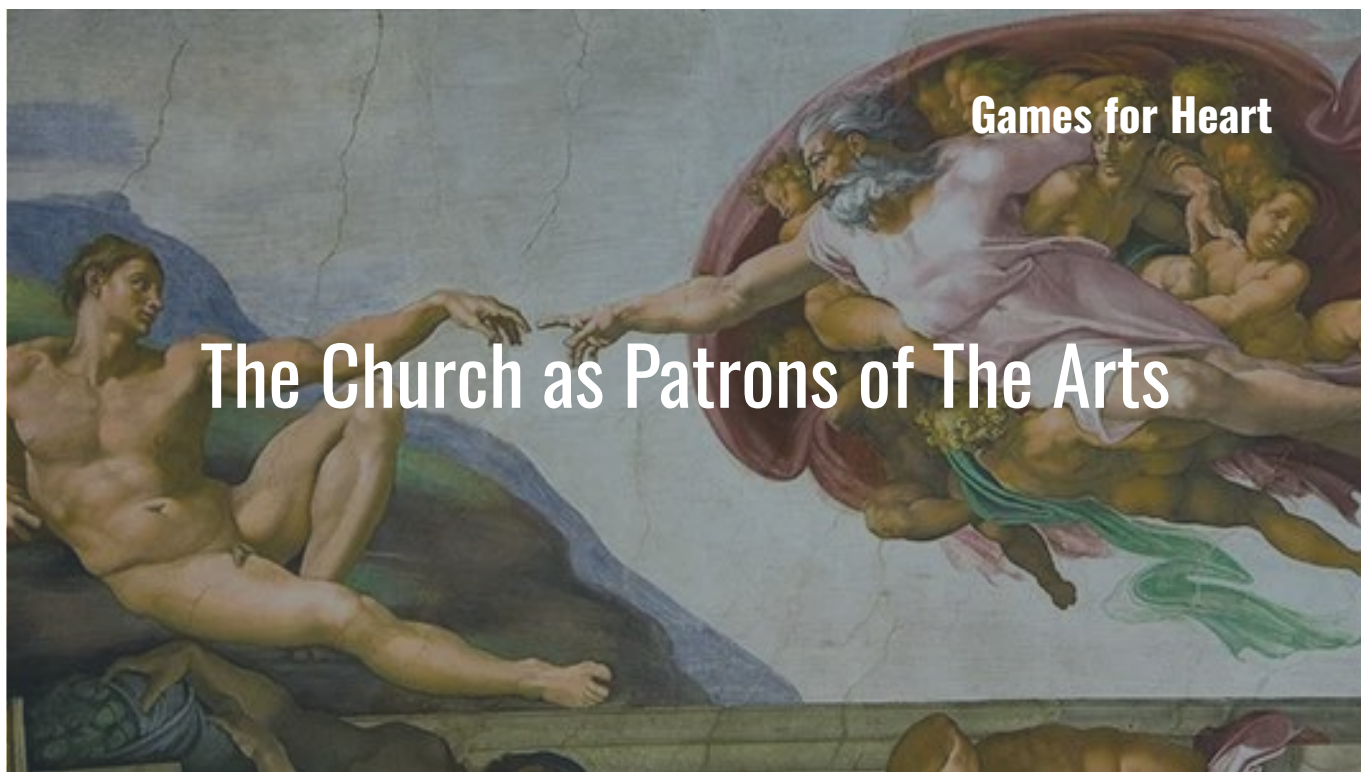


Games for Health - Treatment & Research





Games for Health



Games for Heart

The Church as Patrons of The Arts

Games for Heart Questions or Answers?

Christian Boycotts: Companies & Products

Christians are called to love all people, but not their sin. Christians are also called to support all things good, but they should not support sin. Also, Christians should not support businesses that promote any sin.

Below is a list of companies and products that are currently being boycotted or have been boycotted by Christians. There's also a list of recommended companies to do business with instead of the boycotted companies.

Boycotted Companies	Recommending Companies
American Apparel	Kohl's
Apple	SP
Applebee's	Bob Evans
Burger King	Chuck F&A, Wendy's, Steak 'N Shake, Arby's
Coca-Cola	Ice Tea, Lemonade, Water with Lemon
Clorox	Store Brand Bleach
CVS	Meijer, Wal-Mart
Ford	Dodge
Fandango.com	Processing9800A/psocent.com
Gap	Kohl's
General Mills	Store Brand Cereal
General Motors	Dodge
Girl Scouts	Church Based Girls Progress
Google	Yahoo
JC Penney	Kohl's
Kellogg's	Store Brand Cereal
Macy's	Kohl's
McDonald's	Chuck F&A, Wendy's, Steak 'N Shake, Arby's
Old Navy	Kohl's
PepsiCo	Ice Tea, Lemonade, Water with Lemon

Boycotted Products

Boycotted Products Recommending Products

Cheerios	Kellogg's, Store Brand Cereal
Clorox	Store Brand Bleach
Coca-Cola	Ice Tea, Lemonade, Water with Lemon
Crest	
Colgate	
Doritos	
Frito-Lays	
Green Giant	
Oreos	Store Brand Cookies
Pampers	
Pepsi	Ice Tea, Lemonade, Water with Lemon
Quaker Grits	
Quaker Oats	
Tide	Store Brand Detergent
Tostitos	
Tylenol	
Wheaties	Kellogg's, Store Brand Cereal

Alkermes
Amazon
American Airlines
Angie's List
AT&T
Banana Republic
Barnes and Nobles
Ben & Jerry's
Best Buy
Chase Bank
Costco
Crest
Dell
Delta Airlines
eBay
Expedia
Gap
Gil
Gerber Baby Products
Hampton Inn
Hilton Hotels
Home Depot
Houzz
IBM
Jiffy
Johnson & Johnson
Lori's
Macy's
Marriott International
Maytag
Microsoft
National

Netflix
NFL - National Football League
Nike
Office Depot
Olive Garden
Pillsbury
Proctor and Gamble
Red Lobster
Rite Aid
Safeway
Sears
Smart Car
Southwest Airlines
State Farm
United Airlines
UPS
Visa
Walt Disney Company
Wells Fargo
Whole Foods
YouTube

Returning to your meaningful game
idea that could impact culture -
what would you shift to lean into
either heart, habit, or health?





Who's Building?



Wedgwood Circle



BELMONT
UNIVERSITY®

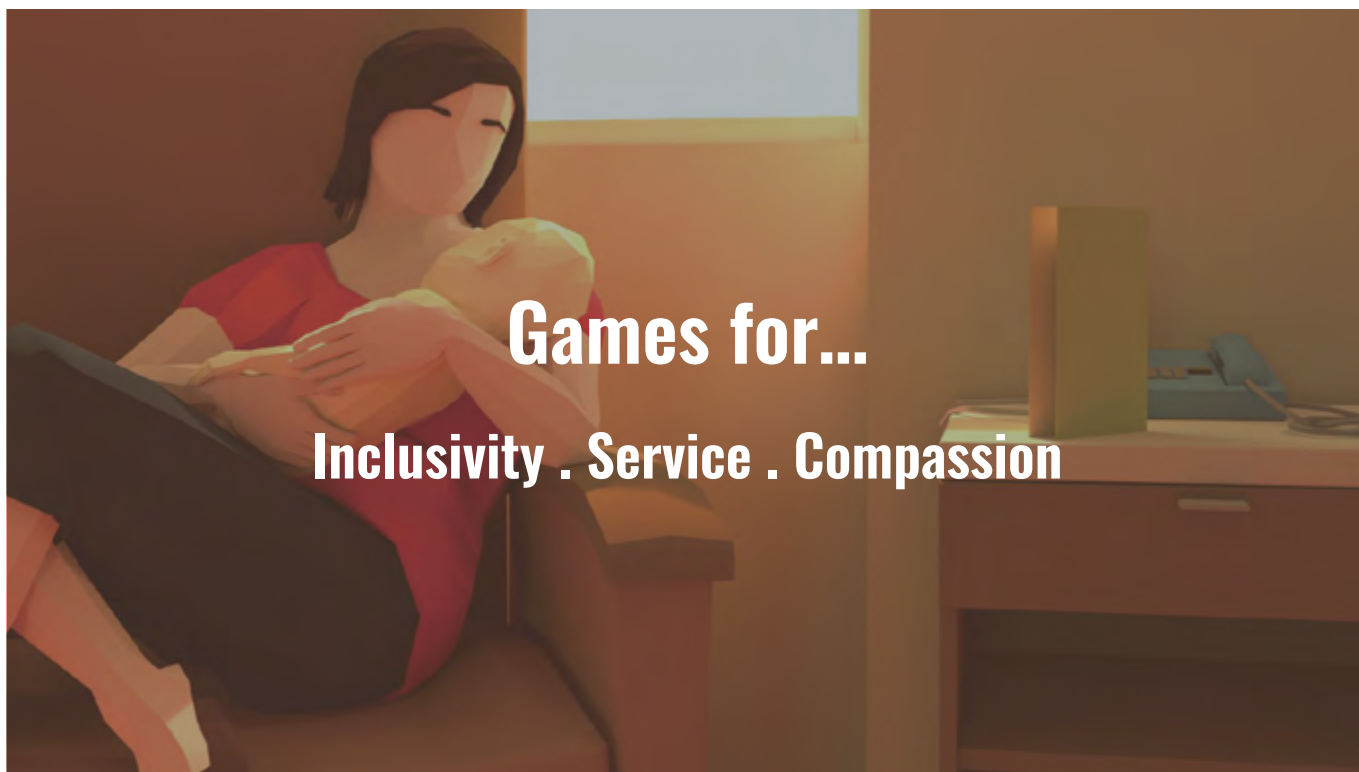
[...redacted...]

What's Coming?

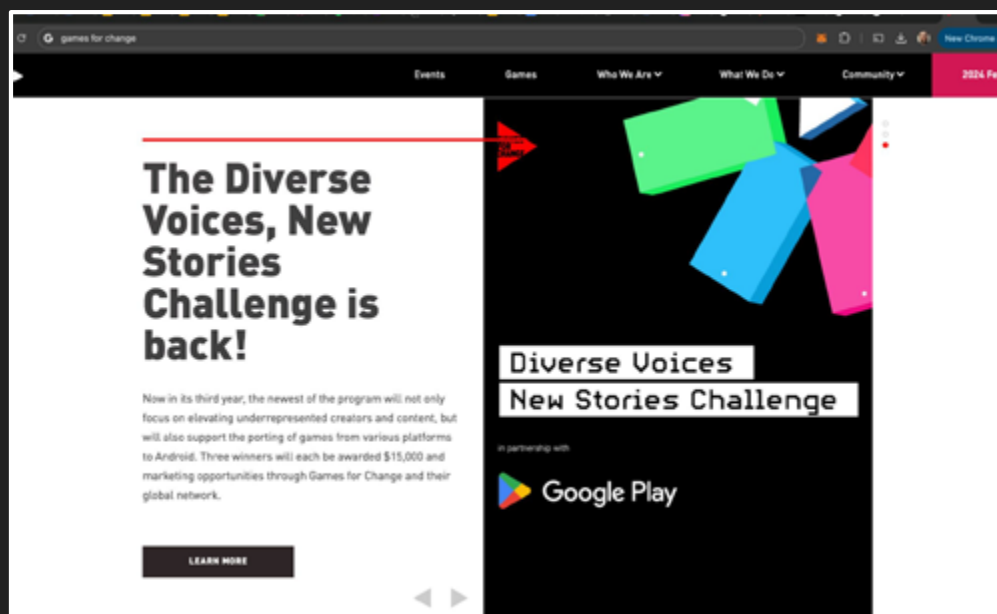
- Reach Conf : Orlando, FL : Sep 6-7
- Nerd Culture Ministry Summit : Colorado Springs, CO : Nov 8-10
(+ Imladris Ministry Roundtable)
- Wedgwood Circle Annual Event : Nashville, TN : Nov 13-15
- Praxis Summit : Napa, CA : May 5-7, 2025
(+ Imladris Business Roundtable)
- Imladris Retreat : Silverton, OR : June 18-22, 2025



How do you keep your idea from feeling like a product, or keep the people you're trying to impact from feeling like only a market for your commodity?

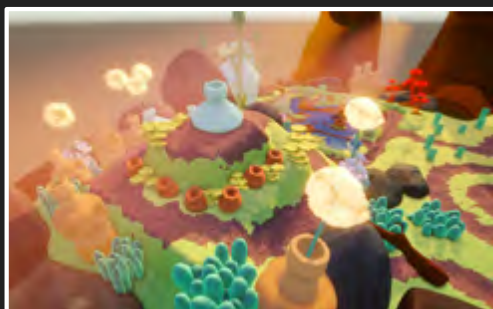


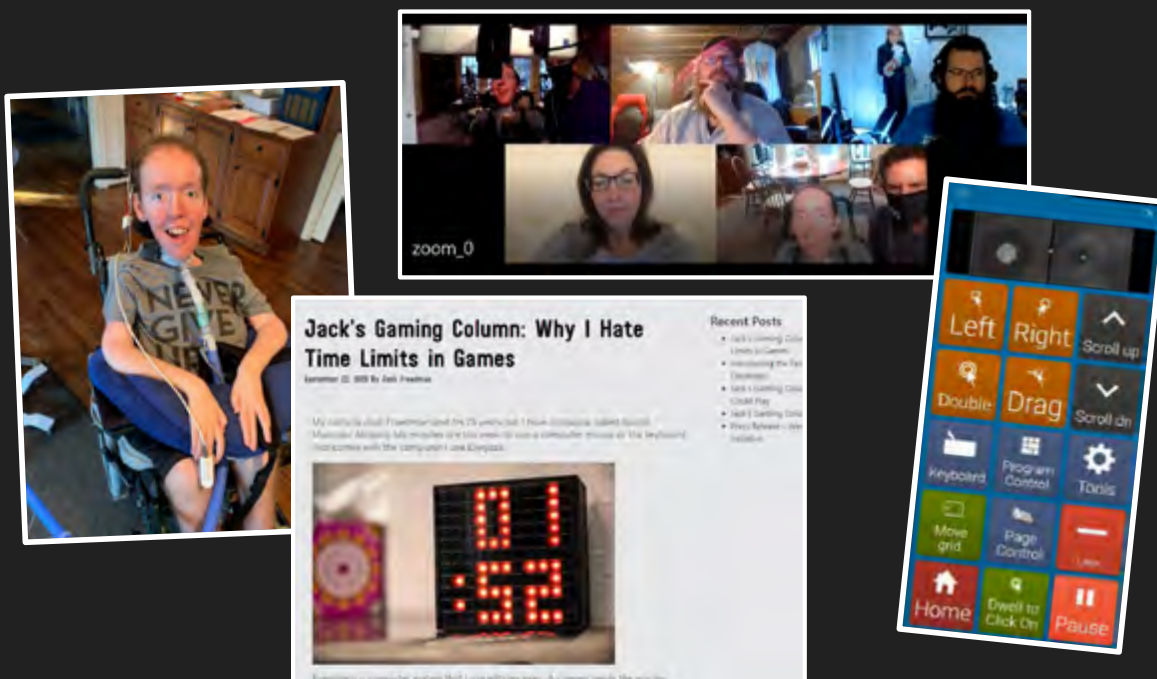
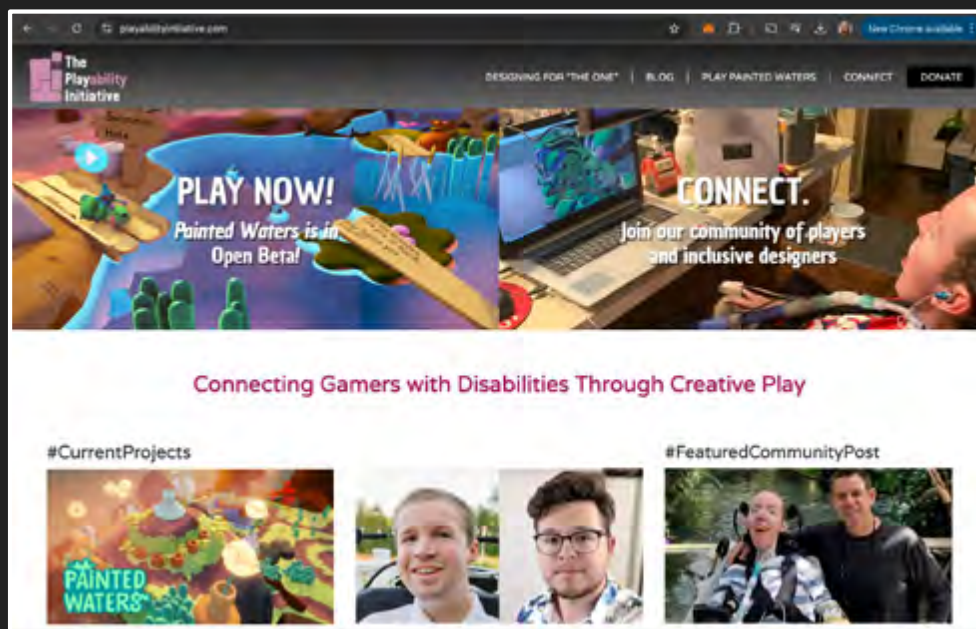
Games for...
Inclusivity . Service . Compassion



Galaxies of Hope (2018)









Creator/Designer/Developer
Anthony DeVergillo



Co-Developer
Jonah Monaghan

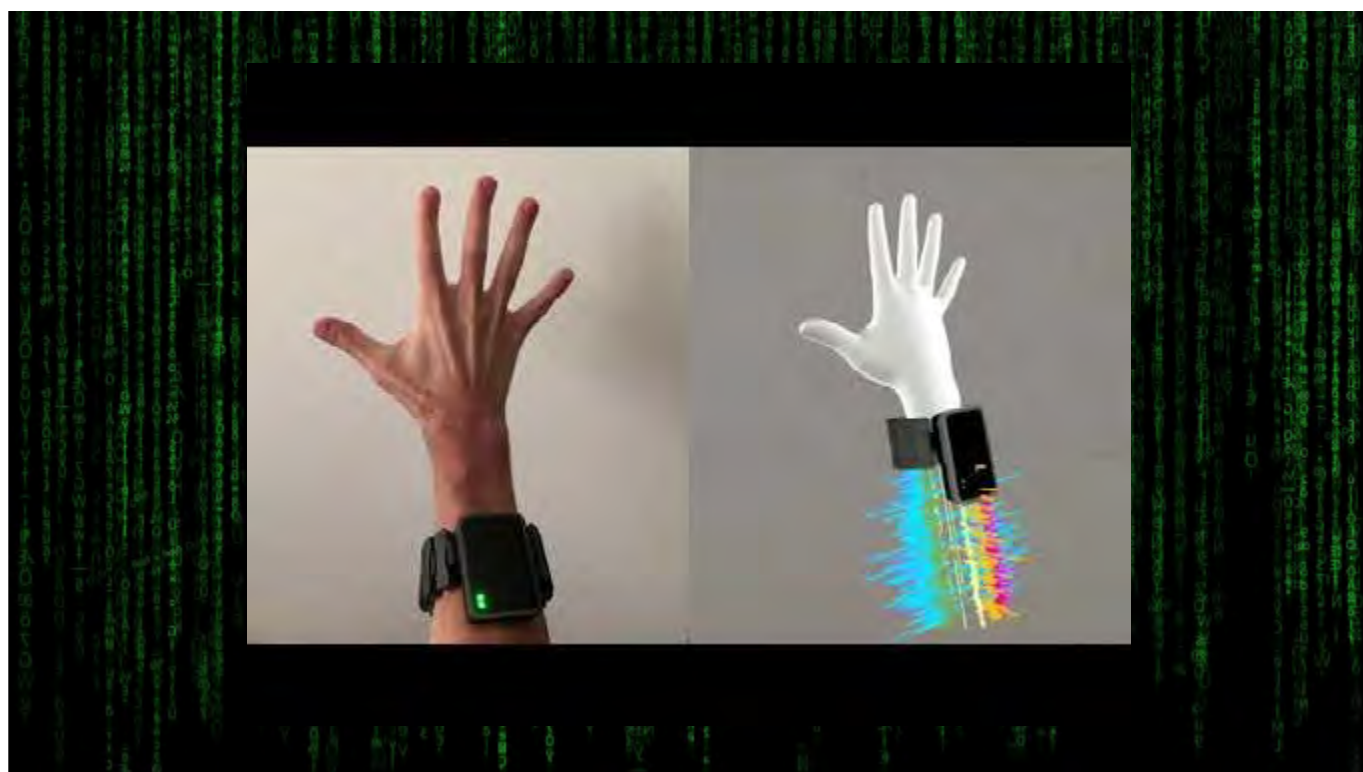
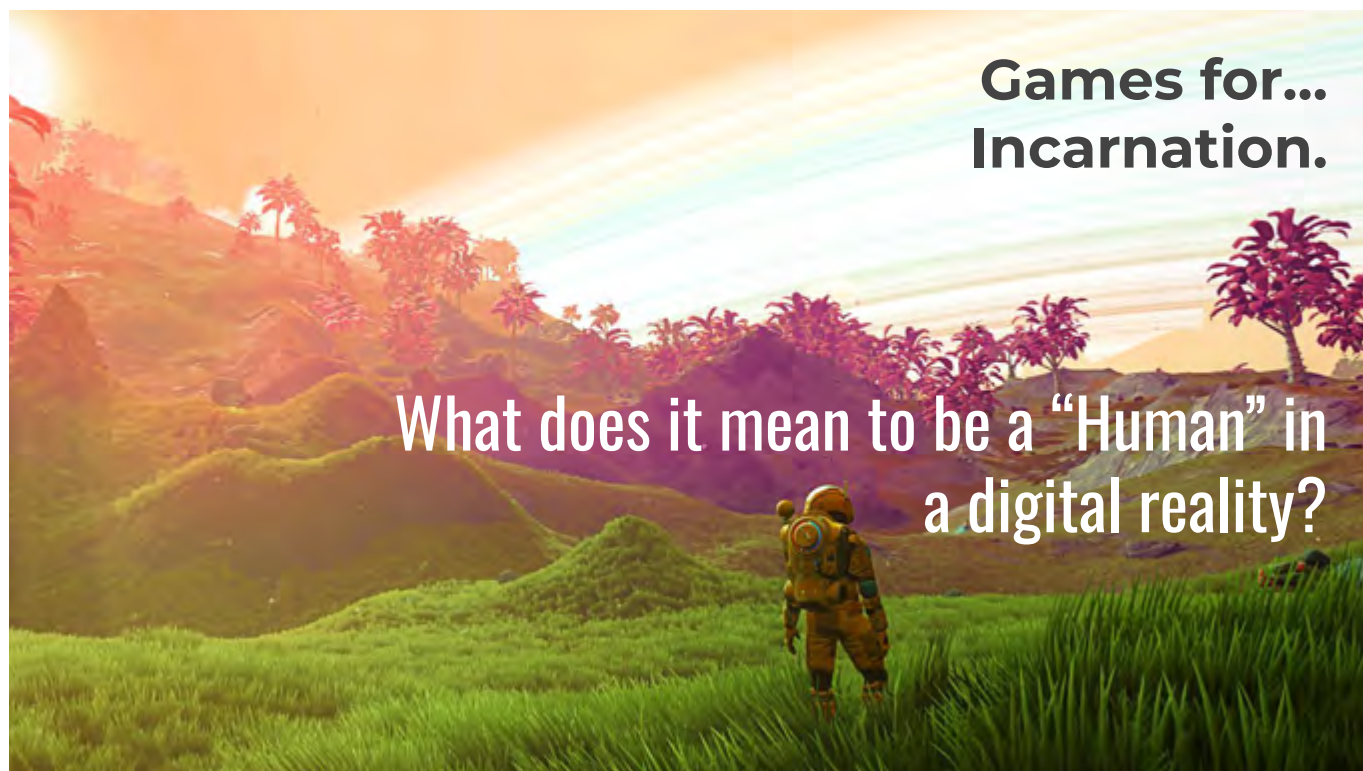


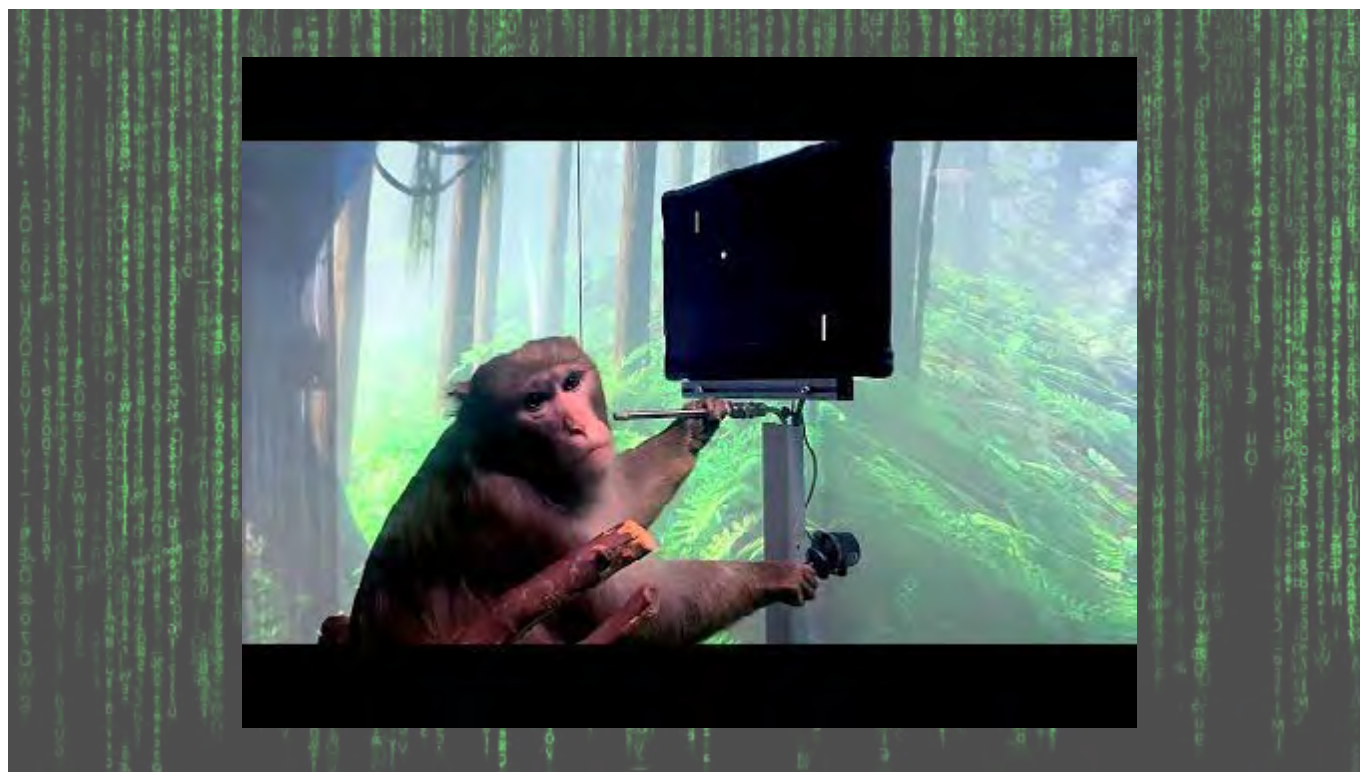
www.familygamingdatabase.com



Andy Robertson
@geekdadgamer

theologically trained
video game journalist
and family technology expert.







Questions?

amy@numinousgames.com

@amynoeelgreen

ryan@numinousgames.com

@ryangreen8

cryptopur@somagames.com

Chris Skaggs



Panel: Expectations, possibility, and foundational theological principles for AI and the church (Daren Erisman, Adam Graber, Gretchen Huizinga, Amy Green) Moderated by Andy Doyle

TL;DR

The panel discussion focuses on the intersection of technology, race, and ethics. The speakers highlight the need to address racial inequalities and injustices before focusing on the treatment of machines. They emphasize the importance of diversifying perspectives and experiences in the conversation around artificial intelligence (AI). The panelists also discuss the fear of losing individuality and the potential for technology to enhance existing power structures. They call for a critical examination of the cultural values embedded in technology and the need to subvert consumerist and capitalist systems. The panel concludes with a reflection on the role of technology in shaping our identities and the importance of asking questions and engaging with the impact of technology on people's lives.

Andy Doyle:

Good morning everybody, it's good to be with you, and I'm going to hold some space today for us in conversation with the panel that we have. Adam Graber will be joining us as soon as he can. And at that point we will welcome him. But let us just kind of gather together quietly and bring all of our attention from the many things this morning to our guests.

Good and gracious God, you have given us the day that is before us, an opportunity to live lives that are an offering to you, that give thanks to you. So when we are to stand, give us strength to do so. When we are to sit and be quiet, give us patience. When we are to listen, open our ears so that we together might become one filled with your love, your beauty and opportunity. We ask all this in your most holy name. Amen. So I'm Andy Doyle, I'm the Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Texas and have been

in that role for about 16 years. I am a theologian, author, administrator, and all of those things. Most of all, I am in love with my wife Joanne of 34 years and have two children, Zoey and Kaisa, and have had some good time with them this summer. And just so wonderful to be with you all.

And today we want to bring our attention a little bit to where we've been over the last few days, but also think about our future. So I've been asked to hold this panel. And to my right is Gretchen Huizinga, you all got to meet her a little bit yesterday at Microsoft as she was the host for that panel, and she hosts the Microsoft Research Podcast and has finished her PhD in Righteousness and AI, as she talked about yesterday which was really exciting. And very interested in bringing Christian principles into AI and discussions on the ethical. So now I want just to ask you one... This is off the cuff question, okay? So do you have an

idea about whether you like to be sitting there right now or you want to be hosting this conversation and panel?

Gretchen Huizinga:

Adam, come on up.

Andy Doyle:

Woo, Adam. They're going to put a microphone on you while Gretchen answers this question.

Andy Doyle:

So a panelist or host?

Gretchen Huizinga:

I actually don't care which side of the mic, I just like to talk.

Andy Doyle:

You're okay with both? Okay, and so you just like to talk, that's awesome.

Andy Doyle:

And have you had a bucket list person that you've gotten to talk with in this work that you've been doing? Somebody that you thought, oh, my God, if I could ever talk to that person.

Gretchen Huizinga:

It was Adam Graber and Brian Greene. No, I actually talked to John Lennox, I don't know if you know who that is, he wrote a book called 2084 AI and the Future of Humanity. He's an ex math prof from Oxford, and I reached out to him in my dissertation, and he said no

and then he said yes. And so he's an amazing Christian apologist and kind of a...

Andy Doyle:

Kind of a dream conversation.

Gretchen Huizinga:

He's a cool guy.

Andy Doyle:

So, Adam, you get to be next in my questions. So as some of you may know or don't know, Adam works in tech and likes to align emergent technologies with Christian ministry, and former director of faith in tech and speaker at AI and Metaverse, evangelism, all kinds of topics, coaching Christian leaders and navigating. Recently he launched Christianity Tomorrow, that happened this summer early on, very exciting, and it was a huge release. But as I have gotten to know him, I think probably the most profound information that I have learned from you, and this is important for me to say out loud, is that Dolly Parton never rode any of the rides in her own theme park. And so you do not know the kind of wisdom that's going to come from this guy. So first, first thing for you, just to kind of warm us up in the Q&A thing here. So what is the newest gadget you're most fascinated with?

Adam Graber:

You mean besides artificial intelligence?

Andy Doyle:

Yeah.

Adam Graber:

Man...

I have an iPhone 8.

Yeah, I wouldn't say I'm an early adopter when it comes to technology.

Andy Doyle:

See, that's really interesting, that's good, that's important for us to understand about you. Is that a hardware software thing? What do you think?

Adam Graber:

It's an aesthetic thing in some sense, I would say I'm more skeptical about where technology's taking us. And also I don't feel the need to have the newest, latest iPhone, because it perpetuates a cycle of... I'll say it this way, I've been to DR Congo, and 60% of the world's cobalt comes from Congo, and that goes into your lithium-ion batteries. Creating the demand for that lithium-ion battery by buying a new phone rather than buying a used phone is unnecessary in my opinion, and so we're part of these global structures that we're culpable for if we know about them.

Andy Doyle:

And what's your favorite kind of dark theory about the world right now?

Do you have a conspiracy theory besides lithium batteries? That's my next question.

Adam Graber:

I don't have a conspiracy, no.

Andy Doyle:

That's all right, I don't have one is a perfectly good answer. I mean, we're trying to kind of relate to you.

Adam Graber:

I mean, they're all true.

Andy Doyle:

Right, thank you, thank you for that. That's all of them, all of them are true. Some of us got to sit with Ryan and Amy Noel Green yesterday as they talked about their Green Dragon cancer game, which was a great presentation. But also a TED Talk person, World Cyber Games, South by Southwest, I mean, she's just growing in her capacity as a Christian evangelist within this area. And I'm wondering, are you actually a gamer? You're competitive, I know you're super competitive based on what you were saying earlier last year online because you said that about yourself.

Amy Green:

But I am.

Andy Doyle:

And you are, so that's good.

Amy Green:

I am very competitive.

Andy Doyle:

Do you play games, and do you have a favorite game right now?

Amy Green:

This is such a great question, because when you make games, especially if you're invited to someone's podcast, they're going to always ask you, "What are you playing? What are you playing right now? What's your favorite thing?" And I'm a gamer, but I am the typical over-35 female gamer. And there's a ton of them, but we play a lot of mobile games, which I call time-waster games. And you play them because you can pick it up and set it down, and pick it up and set it down. And that's all you can do as a mom of a million kids is go, "Two minutes, okay, that's enough to make a recipe. Oh, two minutes, that's enough to plant some flowers in Pikmin Bloom as I walk around."

So I play little games, but that's not the thing that I consume for entertainment. And it's easy to feel... I don't know, kind of an imposter as a game dev who's like, "I'm not a nerd about video games, I'm a nerd about experimental storytelling." So some weird immersive pop-up theater thing, and I'm like, "We're there." I recently dragged my husband and I to a 360 audio experience in total darkness that took place in a storage container and was called Coma, and then we got there and I went, "I don't like this, I can't do this." But that's how much I'm such a nerd, I didn't realize

that I'm claustrophobic and can't be in that space. But I was just like, "Story, and they're doing it weird, let's try it." So that's kind of my jam.

Andy Doyle:

I mean, one of your most recent posts was about the hamburger that you had in Las Vegas. And so I was wondering, that was hard to figure out, is that foodie or is that really classic awesome hamburger?

Amy Green:

Yeah. What it is, is I'm definitely... I'm a food tourist, if we're going to your city, I want to know, what are the best things to eat in your city? So sometimes when you travel to a small city and you look up the Travelzoo and there's no good food, I'm like, "Oh, no, what is vacation? What do we do if there's not good food to eat?" I don't think Ryan will be like, "Let's go to a museum." And I'm like, "Oh, do they have a good quiche at the museum?"

Andy Doyle:

Okay, here's what you need to know, Daren Erisman doesn't exist online. He has managed to avoid everything I think since 2020. He's like, "If there is a conspiracy up here among the four of you..." He's got it. So ELCA pastor, prof in computer science, PhD in Systematic Philosophical Theology, interested currently in the dialogue in Christianity and Islam. And host... I mean, I think one of the things that's interesting about your life, from

what I can tell, is people love to talk theology with you. And you actually have done that by gathering people together in different places all over the country to talk theology, which is an amazing and wonderful thing. So what is your pastime? Since we can't see it online and it's invisible to us, do you have a hobby?

Daren Erisman:

I'm actually an AI projection right now.

Andy Doyle:

Thank you. Yeah, give that gift back.

Andy Doyle:

And because you have finished a PhD, what was it on? What was your dissertation on?

Daren Erisman:

Let's see, how much time do we have?

Andy Doyle:

No, I want the elevator speech.

Daren Erisman:

The elevator speech, so I was trying to understand the unity of God between Christians and Muslims. So it enabled me to work on understanding the Trinity and understanding the Muslim concept of taqlid, of asserting the unity of God, because that's always the hangup. And so I discovered that Thomas Aquinas had referenced a Muslim philosopher named Bin Sina

or Ibn Sina. And that through the chain of the love of Aristotle and the Arabic philosophers translating from the Syriacs the Greek, that went up into Andalusia, that went into Naples where Thomas was studying in a kind of secular university in a way, it was for government, and Thomas absorbed those ideas.

Andy Doyle:

Wow. Okay, so this is a fantastic panel. I mean, this is a great group of people. And what our job today is to wrap up a little bit about where we've been and some of the biggest questions that we're facing regarding AI, theological principles, and principles for the church as we go forward. And so you can imagine that that's part of why I wanted to pull a little bit on where you've been and what you're interested in, because I think what would be good to start with... And Gretchen, I'll just throw this out to you as a beginner, and then maybe we'll pop a little bit from there. But in your walk, and your journey, and your writing on righteousness and AI, and your work with Microsoft, where are you today with AI? If I were to say... I want to know, your in the middle of this conversation, and so if you were to describe where you are, where is that? That could be like, "I trust it, I don't trust..." Whatever that is, however you want to phrase that.

Gretchen Huizinga:

Yeah. Part of my day job is

interviewing people who are doing the science of AI, so they're above my pay grade. And I know enough, as I say, to be dangerous at a cocktail party. I can talk AI talk, but I can't do the math, so a few clicks away and I'm like, "Huh?" But there's big camps within the AI field of people who are accelerationists we call it, and believe we're going to head towards artificial general intelligence, and that's what they're working on. And it's a worldview thing, it's the eschatological end, technology's going to save us. And then there's two sides to the other part, the safetyists you'd call it, who are saying, "It's so dangerous." And they kind of fall in line with the accelerationists, they're afraid of it though. And then there's the people who are... They understand what the technology can do.

And it is a, as Timnit Gebru called it, a stochastic parrot. And so it's a prediction machine, what's next? And it works all on past data. So as I'm talking to these people, it started in 2017 and I didn't hit my dissertation time until 2021 right after the pandemic, and I realized there's a lot to be dug up in what it really is. And so I'm amazed by what the tools can do, and there's more than one, and more than one way of using it as a machine learning technology, and I think it's cool.

And then the other part of me says, "This is challenging some huge existent..." Not existential like the robots are going to take over, I, for one, am glad to submit to my AI

overlords. But more to the soul and the idea of ensoulment and what a machine is and what it can do. So where I land is generally a healthy skepticism and a healthy awe of what people have created. And so I think God isn't standing up there... Standing, does he stand in Heaven? God isn't in Heaven wringing his hands saying, "I didn't see this coming, this AI is something I have to double check on."

Andy Doyle:

I think I'm with you on that. Really listening to some of your work... I mean, there's a piece of it which is in some way you're this kind of archivist, digging up where we've been, but also really curious about doing the digging into the future. I mean, it's kind of something that I think that you bring, and it's the healthiness of both, right?

Gretchen Huizinga:

Yes. And I'm at a weird... I had mentioned yesterday how old I was when I got my PhD, giving hope to all of the aged in the audience. And I feel like... I was talking and praying with my mom and sister this morning before I came here, and I said, "Why am I doing this?" I'm tagged, it's like Paul, I'm compelled. And so I actually don't know what's next, I think talk to me in a year. But at the same time you've got this galloping horse out of the barn that we have to put our brains around and our souls around, and say, "How do we shepherd this crazy technology?"

Andy Doyle:

Yeah, thank you. Daren, I'm going to ask to you and then I'm going to Adam and then Amy, so y'all can be thinking. But I'm curious, Daren, about how you are relating with AI right now. And maybe more specifically if you could bring some of the conversation about Christianity and Islam in that mix in some way.

Daren Erisman:

I work with it every day. So I'm teaching in the classroom, I'm teaching languages, and I've been working with a physics prof on how we might help train teachers K through 12 in North Dakota on how to use it. And so I'm not... When I was in Southern California, huge Muslim population, very small population, but I have Muslims in Minot, North Dakota. But it's my colleague who is in the office next to me is from Gaza, and he just came on this last year. And so, he and I are colleagues, and most of his family is safely in Minot, his kids. So it's very tangible in a way, more than just a talk. So I find the AI to be a way of connecting with people that we have not had, and I think this is a witness here of that, we're coming from different places. In some ways, I think we're all really- We're coming from different places. In some ways, I think we're all really quirky people. You know? We don't fit maybe exactly in our places, and this brings us together

in a common way. So, theologically, I would say this is a moment for us. And from southern California, it would be a wave. We're riding a wave. This really sweet wave has come, and we're all riding this, not knowing where it's going, how long it's going to last, but we need to be on it.

Andy Doyle:

Yeah. Well, and I was thinking, as you said, as you were speaking about just the relationship potential between a teacher and student who benefits from the teaching that you're doing, but also being in a relationship with you, and then you have your bar light. That's just clear, clearly, that it isn't viewed in relational dynamics for you, whether it's the religious dialogue or tech, right? Teaching. How about you, Adam? Where do you think you are today?

Adam Graber:

Yeah. So, with Christianity Tomorrow, I'm constantly looking at kind of what's happening across the Christian space, and who's talking about what, and AI is such a dominant narrative that's happening right now. It's a little, I'm kind of tired of it. But I think it's a necessary conversation. But I think Paolo talked about this a little bit. I think AI may be, at this moment right now, where we were with Facebook in 2006, Twitter in 2009. And from 2006 to 2016, 2016 is Cambridge Analytica, we had Tahrir Square and the Arab Spring in 2011, and we're like,

democracy. And then 2019, was it 2019? With the Capitol uprising.

And so, we're at the beginning of that moment with AI, where, Daren, you mentioned it, sort of a collective experience. We used to have broadcast technology that sort of, we all saw the same three networks and we had a shared experience. That's no longer the case in terms of content, but it is in terms of process. We all have a shared experience that's called social media. We don't have the same experience of what that content is, but we all have the shared experience of social media. And now, we're all having the shared experience of AI as a collective society, and that is our shared experience. And there's something reassuring in having a shared experience. We kind of like having a shared experience, a point of connection, to talk about. 10 years on, we're going to be reaping both the benefits and the consequences, in the same way that we had Cambridge Analytica and a threat to democracy in the form of social media.

So, yeah. It's going to go in both directions. But I think, yeah. I think AI is a narrative. I mean, we heard that narrative loud and clear at Microsoft. It is our only hope for the major problems of the world. That is a story that you can believe or not believe. But it's a story. And this woman who talked about the indigenous narratives, that is a story that we could also believe.

But it's not the dominant narrative that's being discussed.

And so, I think there are many other narratives besides the one that AI is telling, and there is a narrative that the church has to tell that is not the narrative of AI. And so, you know, I think we need to look 10 years out and say, what is the Tehrir Square of AI, from 10 years out? And what are the other narratives, what are the other stories, we might be telling as Christians along the way, and remain faithful to those narratives that we're trying to tell as alternative stories to the proposal that AI will give you the power to do X.

Andy Doyle:

And we're going to hold onto that, because I'm going to come back to that in the next question. But Amy, I'm curious about your kind of integration with it, and kind of your placement and relationship with AI.

Amy Green:

Sure. Yeah. I think AI has been really interesting in the creative space for artists. I think we all thought, "Sure, these things are coming, but the arts will be safe." Because the world needs artists, and AI can't do art. And the first thing AI did was art. And we all went, "Oh, no!" And so, that's interesting. It starts the conversation in a different place, because we don't want AI to replace our humanity. We don't want it to replace our art, and that's where it's starting.

Someone once told me the story, though, that when animation was first automated, there was

concern about the jobs that we would lose, and the jobs that were lost were jobs of tracers, so people who would take the one cell and trace to the other. And that was the tedious, terrible work, and we know it was the tedious, terrible work because women who wanted to be in animation, that was the only job they could get, was as tracers. So, you go short-term, it put a lot of women who were trying to be in animation out of work. Long-term, it led to women being able to be the directors, the creators, to do the less tedious work.

And I suspect we'll see the same thing with AI and these creative spaces, that it is replacing jobs. There are jobs being lost. Short-term, people are losing opportunities. And you see artists pushing back pretty hard against it. The Hollywood writers had a strike to say no, no, we won't be using these AI scripts, and in games, you see artists and others, but especially art, saying no, we will not use this game and if we find out your game uses AI, then we won't play your game. And you know, there's a lot of pushback.

But the places I see it being a great tool that could replace some tedious work are things like, in TBN and video games, probably even in very lengthy novels, you have a show bible, where you're keeping track of every fact you've ever said, because if in episode 13 you said Karen's mom's name was Becky and we don't talk about her again until episode 328,

someone needs to know where to find that information. And so, it can be an intern job, of someone who's desperate to be a TV writer, to keep track of every fact, and they hope that one day, you notice that they're creative and smart and could write, and that's how they got their foot in the door. And when we give that job to AI, everything becomes efficient. It becomes quicker. We don't have to keep someone in this tedious, difficult job.

But then I think we have to solve the problem of, okay, that tedious, difficult job was how they got their opportunity and met the people. So, if we're going to replace the tedious jobs, which I am all for, you have to solve the problem of how do we give the new opportunities? How do we pull people in? Because no one should have to do the terrible work to get to the creative, expressive, life-giving work. But how do we find those people? How do we give them the opportunities? And being in the games industry and watching how it works in other industries, too, I don't know. Because there's so much competition for jobs in these spaces.

Andy Doyle:

So, in leadership and in technology, there is this idea about a second curve, right? That if you're going to lead and you're going to think about the future, you have to be thinking about the second curve, not the curve you're already in. Right? So, you have to launch yourself at and

imagine that. And we have spent two full days thinking about the second, third, fourth, fifth curve, which we can't even know what the space is in between, for AI.

But we haven't spent a lot of time on the second curve for the church. But one of our responsibilities today is to talk a little bit about that, and I'm wondering. So, here we are today. We're having this conversation about AI. But you all are thinkers, right? So, think a little bit with me. And you were saying, even talking about the good or the negative that comes out of this, like the Arab Spring and the assault on the Capitol, both of those things are true. So, think about with me, for the future of the church, what's the second curve we need to be thinking about as a community of Christians who have some responsibility for communities of Christians? And you are nodding your head vigorously, so I'm going to jump on you first.

Amy Green:

It's that neurodivergent quick processing thing, so you'll get a quick answer and then someone will give you the deep and thoughtful answer, and we'll go, "That's why we think slow, is to get to that thing." No, I think of this second wave for the church. I think we're starting to ask these question of, is it real? Is the connection between people and AI real? Is the relationship real? Is there a spark of the divine in it? And I think the question we have to wrestle with is whether or not the space

is real, the technology is real, that realness. Real things happen in digital spaces. And if we can just resolve that maybe more than whether or not this AI will ever have some sense of personhood, we say real people are having real experiences, feeling real emotions, and being really transformed in a digital space, then we start to think, how do we care for the people, anticipating the ways that it may impact them over time.

I was at a conference. No, Ryan was at a conference. I steal his stories all the time. He was at a conference with a robot ethicist, which I'm sure she is now an AI ethicist, but back then, it was a robot ethicist, who said, "I'm not concerned about how we treat the robot. How we treat it won't matter for the robot. But how we treat the robot will change us." So, if a child grows up with a robot nanny, and because that nanny isn't real, they treat it terribly their whole life, how does that change the formation and psyche of the child? And so, I think those are the kinds of questions that I would love to see the church wrestle with more, which is, Facebook. Are these real friendships? The question isn't, are they real friendships? It's, how does this type of friendship change the human and have a real impact on the human, and then where does the priesthood come in and support those real human changes?

Andy Doyle:

Thank you. Gretchen, you ready?

Gretheen Huizinga:

Sure am. I love how you framed the question, and what the church is up to. But it brings me back to, you know, Adam talks about narratives. What's the old, old story? The old, old story is the same as it was yesterday. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. And the church is the guardian of the word of God, and I think that's powerful and effective in the world.

And so, even in light of all of the, I would say, Jesus's signal and a lot of other things are noise, and if we can focus on the cross and focus on the redemptive work of Jesus, AI is not the first rodeo in disruptive technology, and Clay Shirky wrote a book called *Here Comes Everybody*, and in it, he mentions this time where the scribes and the printing press, things got broken. Lots of people were "harmed." But it was a process that was going to happen. And so, how did the church, how do we as people, deal with that? Caring for people in that time of brokenness, I think that's a real thing for people who lose jobs. I forget who said it yesterday, the question about slow, the value of slow and tedium. And so, we all get on board of this narrative. Boy, I can't wait until I don't have to do the drudge work. And it's like, but what's the value of that? What is the discipleship story that we're talking about?

So, and I'll end with, I think, the idea of is it real, is it not real? I heard a story that when tellers in banks

are training about how they tell counterfeit money from real money, what they do is they spend their time with real money. And they know what it feels like, they know what it looks like, they know what it smells like. And when counterfeit money comes up, they can tell right away because they've spent time. So, I, in my work, it's like, I want to spend time in the word of God. I want to spend time in prayer. And even in light of the technologies that are offering all these new affordances and opportunities and fears, I still anchor myself in the redemptive work of Christ, and that's my story through the work that I do on AI.

Andy Doyle:

Thank you. That was really good. Thank you. So, good. Daren, how about you? What do you think? Second curve for the church, Christian communities?

Daren Erisman:

I think the church grows when it struggles. And so, I see this as a moment of opportunity that we've not had for a long time. And I love the narratives that guide us, but I think it's also time to write a new narrative, and ask ourselves, what is it to be human? What is our place in the society? Who are we listening to? What are the voices we want? What are the voices that are unheard? And so, I feel like someone's just gone like this, you know? Etch-a-Sketch? They've just shaken the board a little

bit. We're being shaken, and now we can actually put down some new lines that we really want to live into.

Andy Doyle:

Thank you. Yes. Adam?

Adam Graber:

I'm probably just going to reiterate what Amy says, but I would say the first curve is the question, how do we use this? It's an instrumental question. What can I do with this technology? The second question is, who do I become as I use it? It's an identity question. So, I think the second curve is moving from this instrumental, how do we use it, what can we do with it, question to, who do we become as we use it? I mean, we're talking about identity here. We're talking about who do we become, and I think that's both an individual who do we become, how does it shape me, but also, how does it shape our community, collectively?

And Amy said something yesterday about having to think carefully about the options and agency that a player has in the game, and thinking clearly, and I talked to Ryan later, and he was talking about, we wanted to make sure that players didn't feel like they could harm our child in the game. That was a really important thing, that they didn't perceive that they had caused harm. And that sort of careful thinking about, what are the features of this technology. In this situation, it's video games, but in AI, it's the same

thing. What are the features? What are we able to do? Because those features end up shaping our habits, and our habits end up shaping our identity. And so, when we're thinking about, what are the features of this AI system, what can we do with it, how does that shape our habits, what we do, and then how do those habits shape who we become as individuals? How does it shape our habits as a community, and who we become in that community? Because that ultimately shapes, where are we going into the future?

And so, if you want to kind of understand, in a closed system, if it was just AI leading our church, the features will tell you where the future is going to take you. It's obviously not a closed system, though, and if you think about AI is just one influence on your congregation. There are many other influences that are shaping the identity, community, and future of your church. But AI is one of those, and if you want to understand how it's going to influence your church, look at the features and the capabilities it's creating for both individuals and the community at large.

Andy Doyle:

Okay. Thank you. So, I'm watching the time for us, so we don't have to worry about that. We're going to do one more question for them, okay? And then we're going to open it up for you to have some time with them to ask some questions like

we've done in the last couple of days. But then I'm going to bring us back for a few minutes and one last set of questions for them to kind of close us off together. So, you didn't know this Gretchen, but you had anticipated the next question. So, my question that's coming next, you get the 2B option, so I'm going to let you do the last one, okay? So, I'm not going to tell you what the question is.

Gretchen Huizinga:

Okay.

Andy Doyle:

But you'll know where we're going. You should. That's a power of the microphone. So, but I think, Gretchen, where you went with the last question is really good, because it moved us into that kind of personal place where you all might be. And so, I want to ask a personal question. And before I ask that, I want to give you permission to say it hasn't. But I am curious, Daren. Where have you gone deeper in your own relationship with the divine and spirituality because AI opened that up for you? Or technology, since you're using it in some format for educating?

Daren Erisman:

So, I have a technical background and a theological background, and a practical pastoral background. And I became a Christian in my 20s, and had the technology, had the

technical piece. I didn't know what to do with it in the church. I went to grad school. I worked on that, and tried to understand the theology behind it, those key people and ideas, and then I ended up teaching computer science in a secular setting, trying to wonder. Well, I'm a pastor. I have to have integrity in this space. And so, I have so many books. You probably don't have any books, either. So, I had them in boxes, and I was really trying to be the computer scientist in this place, and get my chops and get through the classes.

And at some point, this AI and faith piece came. So, the network and the idea that I could actually combine those with integrity. And so, I was at a, we just did an AI summit at my university, and the president introduced me to the chancellor and said, "This is my ordained pastor professor." And I thought, whoa. Maybe I am. And so, for me, this is an integrated moment, where I can have, with integrity, be a pastor, be a professor, and so I feel like I'm coming together.

Andy Doyle:

Yeah. I mean, I hear that clearly, from the very first words about relationship, right? How about you, Amy? What do you think?

Amy Green:

Ooh. My answer for how it has deepened or shaped. Shaped. That's not a word.

Andy Doyle:

Love that. It's a fake word.

Amy Green:

I will be shaped, just fully. Mine is kind of shallow, but there are ways that I'm starting to think about it differently that I think could be forthcoming. So, the shallow answer is, as a writer, love to just write in that flow state where I am writing as quickly as I can type, because it's just coming, coming, coming, coming. It's all just, I'm writing, I'm going. And what always will stop me is, oh, no, that person needs a name. And now, instead of writing, I've stopped on what is this name? And I'm like, and then he says a great pun. And then I'm like, oh, what is a great pun? Oh, then he says a folksy thing, and I'm like, what's a good folksy thing on this topic?

So, where I've started to use AI is the moments that would normally stop my process. I think in the past, people would maybe just leave a blank and move on.

I can ask a thing, think about it a little bit, get in there, and move back quickly. But then I start to ponder for myself. Am I losing something that I would gain by sitting longer with, what is a good pun? Is there something in my brain, something about who I am and how I'm creative that I lose if I always skip the moment that would stop me? And then that reminds me. I have ADHD, which is clear, because I said things like

shapening, and my brain goes, "That seems right." And I just go, "Okay." In my ADHD, boredom is a fate worse than death. And so, I avoid it. I always have a phone. I play board game arena and I have 15 different board games going at any given time. I can always take a turn on Ticket to Ride or something. But I know that my very best thoughts have come from states of boredom. My very-

Thoughts have come from states of boredom. My very best moments with God and my very best moments of wisdom and revelation have come in those quiet moments of boredom, but I don't like to sit in that. And so weirdly skipping some of the hard work with AI has caused me to wonder if I should be much more intentional about not skipping the quiet spaces, the bored spaces. And then how I think it could help, and I have not done this yet, is that I've been fairly open that Ryan and I having come from this charismatic word of faith kind of background and found that part of that theology was very broken, have stepped out of those spaces. I always say I love, love, love Jesus. I've had to divorce myself from the culture of American Christianity. I've been very tentative to find new spaces and to find new people, to find a new community that fits better.

Being here has been wonderful because I get to sample all of your community and just dive in the deep end and it makes it way more appealing to think about how do I

inch back in now that I know, okay, this thing exists and I can get back to it. But I think after thinking about AI and this experience, I actually think there may be a way for me to start to learn so much more about so many different denominations without doing the painful show up every Sunday and have people greet you and be so excited that you're visiting and think you're going to stay when you're really just trying to learn what this is about, what that's about. And so I think with AI, I could probably start to get more of an idea more quickly to kind of narrow down which communities are worth putting in the emotional energy of being a visitor in a new place that feels foreign.

Andy Doyle:

That's so helpful for all of us I think. Adam, what do you think?

Adam Graber:

Ryan and Amy were talking yesterday about their daughter learning to read and how their daughter wasn't really interested in reading, but she was interested in competing with her brothers and reading was required to get there.

And I feel like in my walk with God, in my development of my own theological perspective, AI compels me back into the Bible and into theology to sort of understand and deepen my own knowledge of who God is and how he works in the world. To ask even a simple question, like will there be AI in heaven?

And if so, what might it look like? And if it could, will there be smartphones in heaven? If it will be there, what would it look like? And shouldn't we be pursuing that kind of technology, that kind of formulation of the technology now. And so that question beyond that's kind of compelling me is drawing me through the theology through scripture in the same way that their daughter is sort of compelled to learn to read for a goal beyond reading.

Adam Graber:

So I think it's engaged me in that regard and I'm grateful for that.

Andy Doyle:

Okay, Gretchen. So we're going to turn over to questions, but so here's your two B question. The B question for that. I'm interested because you lead us down this path about how the prophet who can listen through the noise and point us onto these pilgrims paths. I'm curious, where are you doubling down? So theologically, spiritually, we've heard a lot about boundaries and we've heard a lot about rules. We've talked a good bit about bouncy ropes around the edge of a wrestling ring, right? Bob's thing. But I'm curious, like where's the center stripe for you right now? What is the piece that you won't give up?

Gretchen Huizinga:

Yeah, great questions, good thoughtful prompts. You're a good prompt engineer is what you are.

Andy Doyle:

I'm actually AI.

Gretchen Huizinga:

I'm an AI. You and Darren both projections, holograms are us. One of the big questions in the AI age is what it means to be human. And we've gone around and around about that. I think a better question is what does it mean to be God? And he's the source code, he's the master algorithm writer, and he gets to define our identities. We can choose to accept them or not, but when I begin to walk more obediently in that identity, my identity in Christ, things are revealed to me on a need to know basis. Seriously. God doesn't say to Moses or to Abraham, "Hey, head out and I'm going to give you the roadmap for the whole thing." Software engineering is all about roadmaps. And so you have your end goal. God only does enough light to step into if we are walking with him, trusting him for that. So just by way of testimony, my PhD, there's a longer story and sometime over beer or margaritas, we can talk about it, but it's basically I said yes to God.

I don't hike like Darren hikes. I go on the toll pipeline, which is around here. And I started asking God, what do you want me to do? And he narrowed the path to the point of saying it's going to be the Christian voice, not just multi faith. It's going to be Jesus centric. Your literature review

is going to have scripture in it. And I was at the University of Washington in the College of Education. This is not the territory where that happens. The committee that came together, it's the beginning of a joke. It was an atheist and agnostic, a Buddhist and a Christian, and that was my committee. And they said so at the outset. And so it was sort of, what do you want to say, God, about artificial intelligence? It is to me a delivery device for the gospel in many ways. It's a conversation starter. I was talking to Josh about that this morning.

And I sort of land on in this space we've got engineers that are creating machine intelligence, I want to call it that instead of artificial because it's just machines doing it. And their starting point is human intelligence or, as some frame it, natural intelligence and not even saying humans are greater than the evolutionary process or whatever. And I say, you forgot one. And that's divine intelligence. And that's our starting point for intelligence in general. So there's a provenance of intelligence and there's also a provenance of goodness. And so that's my double down.

Gretchen Huizinga:

Where I anchor my work is to say, what does God have to say about this? And I'm listening, I'm in the Bible. So much prayer, so much. I think that's another thing.

We go to Google instead of God.

Andy Doyle:

Good. We ready to popcorn a little bit with everybody. So we have a couple of questions and we'll go here first and we've got time for several. It depends, but I want them to have plenty of time to be in conversation. Audience:

Thank you. Thank you for the panels, the wonderful discussions. For me, I don't know much about AI and technology, but when we think about how AI will shape me or my church different, and I would say that's a very interesting question, but if I were asked how AI will shape my son and daughter, I'm all passionate about it. This is because we have wonderful questions. More and more, I believe even if we have a young people in our church pew or not, think that there are huge responsibility for us in how we think about what humans are, what Gods are in this conversation, how that will shape our younger generation, and instead of a question, how impact will them, we don't know, but is there any way ... What kind of a framework of this conversation we can be more prepared to enter that questions? Do we even know what these young people are thinking about right now?

Andy Doyle:

Good point.

Just jump in.

Amy Green:

Yeah, I will say a thing I've thought about a lot lately because I've got

Gen Z kids. And actually I think that's when I asked the question first was in that keynote about, oh, you're talking about brittle and anxious. And I'm like, you're just describing this whole generation of kids. And so I've been asking teachers, I've been asking professors, I've been saying, "The kids, they're different right? Than 10 years ago, 15 years ago?" And they're like, "Oh yeah." And I'm like, they're really anxious. They're scared to fail at things. They aren't sure if they can stick through enough to turn an assignment or do it. I'm just trying to understand why do you think this happened? What do you think is going on? What shifted so quickly? And one of the things that I think, I'm not a sociologist, right? But one of the things I think may be happening is that their whole life, everything was searchable and it was all knowable.

And so if my kid wants to make a battery, they're not going to do a lot of weird experiments and try things and fail 10 times and then talk to people and ask questions and eventually figure it out. They're going to Google how do I make a battery? And then they're going to follow the steps and do it just right. So the first times they encounter spaces in their life where they have to attempt a thing, but they could get it wrong. All they've known is that everything is knowable and it's knowable immediately. And it's made them very afraid to try things where maybe they can't know or they're the first to try or they have to guess and fail and try again. And that's so much

of what it is to be creative, is to be resilient. And so I think we can look at how being able to search everything on Google changed a whole generation of people and how they engage with the world.

And then you imagine if that searching isn't even a second step, but it's just integrated into everything and there's even less of a gap. So you take the changes that are already happening and you extrapolate them out and you say, what kind of humans does it create when we're not guessing anymore? We're not trying because it's me not being a sociologist, right? This is just my random guess, but I think there's value in guessing and then thinking about the world through that guess and then learning that like, "Oh, that was not right because I didn't have a core foundational piece of information." And so now I'll make different guesses. You learn something and you change in that process, but if we stop guessing and we start just knowing ... so I don't know actually for sure how that changes our children, but I know that piece of it is changing children.

And thinking about it, it may be a thing of how do we help kids have that? You have to do a thing that used to be natural. You have to find a way to force an artificial version of not knowing for them. So they get to experience not knowing and trying and guessing, and you have to manufacture it. Whereas before it just happened naturally.

Andy Doyle:

Daren, you want to take a stab at this?

Daren Erisman:

During COVID, I was in between congregations and I stayed with a family and the daughter ... had a young daughter, maybe nine years old, and she became a Supreme Court justice, the President and a CEO within a week. And she was flying in that environment. She had a professor mother and a pastor father, and she was flying. But in other context, kids weren't flying. And so much of the personality really determines everything. I would say, I try to teach my students to struggle. The only way your brain is interested in anything is it's unusual or you've struggled and failed. And so I always feel like I'm trying to push him past that point gradually so that they will be persistent. And I think video games are a way of teaching that, right? If you can get to level two, three, four, five, that's not a very interesting game.

And if you can get them to ... but you want to go find that piece that's going to help you do this, and we love that. So we're innately problem solving. So absolutely agree that we been, I think, trained to be ... You have to be perfect. I think the AI is actually offering opportunities for some kids to dream and to be able to do things they never could even conceptualize in the sense that they can write

code, they can do these things, and actually it's a playground that we've never had before. And that can be scary, but at the same time they can see ways of doing things because there isn't a YouTube video on it. So I think there is a distinction between a kind of YouTube, Google, and then this generative AI that they're distinct spaces and that's going to affect us. And we don't know quite how our kids are going to be shaped by that.

Andy Doyle:

Well, and I think in some way, the idea ... For those of us who are older craftsmanship looked like learning how to woodwork with your grandfather, but Twitch has shown us that craftsmanship electronically and technologically actually is happening in a different way through gaming, watching ... In other words that yes, but sometimes the YouTube video doesn't work, having installed a few things. So you're next on the question, what do you want?

Audience:

Thank you panel. And I've enjoyed this panel. Y'all are lively. Something I appreciate each of your work individually, and I thank Darren for joining us digitally, but I want to see if I can stretch it just a tad, right? So when we talk about personhood and how we treat this thing, it's difficult for me to think about that when a lot of our conversation has been shaped and rooted in whiteness. In the sense of like y'all haven't even determined

how to treat people of color. And now there's so much research and emphasis on how to treat a machine, right? Or we will treat cats and dogs, like these ... And they deserve to be, we don't deserve dogs, but we have not even determined how we treat Native American folks, Black folks, Hispanics. And so I think for me, this conversation may not even have to do with us, and I'm grateful to be in the space, but this conversation is for y'all to figure out.

And that's scary because it's like, well, how are you all not even thinking about race and AI, number one. And then how are we not even determining how we treat folks who are not within the American framework to begin with, and yet we're trying to love a machine? Question mark? So I just want us to think about that. I want us to read "Womanist Ethics" by Katie Geneva Cannon. I want us to read these things because for next year, since we've all made a three-year commitment, I would love to see even in your own talk amongst yourselves like with your cousins who are Republicans, what that means for AI and what that means in your work.

Daren Erisman:

I mean, I really, I was hoping my Etch A Sketch piece would help because that was really what was underneath it, because I think you're absolutely right. I mean, that is the truth.

And I think my hope is that those can be new lines that we can

redefine who we are as people, as churches, as people who aren't in the church. How do we respond? How do we ... So, yeah. And we need to diversify our group and our experiences.

Amy Green:

I just want to respond with just a thank you. Thank you for doing the emotional work of continuing to point out the blind spots and doing it again and again. And then I just see where you have to keep saying it and saying it a different way and saying it more carefully. And I'm grieved and I'm sorry that you have to keep saying it, and we keep not hearing it. And I suspect you're going to have to keep saying it. And I'm sorry. And thank you. And I suspect that there is a piece of this where everything is so centered on whiteness that whiteness stops feeling like it has a culture. It stops feeling like it has an identity because the identity is just, it's everything. Everything is for us. All of this is for us. And so anything that gives us all knowledge, all information, all ...

If we go, "Oh, another thing for us." Like a thing for us. And so who, and when, and where will we stop and say, what of this is for us and what isn't? How does this continue to make us this homogenized culture that doesn't have these distinctions? And I think one of the reasons we're so bad at it is that we're so unfamiliar with what it feels to have a cultural identity. And so we're

afraid to engage with it because we don't know how to get it right. And even to think about how AI is going to make that better or worse, and then to say ... Like truly we go, all of this is available, so we should take it because everything has always been for us, but what he's saying is maybe we don't take that till we figure out this mess. And that won't happen because people will push ahead and force that. There will always be a reason to take more, to take.

We can keep saying, "Make spaces." We can keep saying, "Give up your opportunities." We can keep saying, "Elevate other voices," but then eventually someone goes, but there's more for me to be gained if I just keep going. So even the people who want to pause and make space eventually get like, "Oh no, oh no, I'm falling behind." And we run back into that foot race. So I truly don't know what to do with it. I don't, but I thank you. I'm sorry. And I want us to have the different nuances of the conversation better.

Adam Graber:

One of the things that I heard at Microsoft a lot was we want to help the global south adopt this technology, embrace this technology, yada, yada, yada. And they were sort of couching it as this effort to bring this technology to people on the margins, people with disabilities. And that sounds good to us on some level, but I see some people shaking their heads because,

and I think it's worth questioning that narrative of saying ... And I'll give a historical example. Rasmus Malling-Hanson, you probably don't know him. He was a Danish pastor in the 19th century, and he was working with the Royal Institute for the Deaf in Denmark, and he invents the typing ball. It's the first commercially successful keyboard, and he's doing it for people with physiological disabilities. And that was his goal. His goal was to help people who are deaf and people who are blind be able to be a part of their economy.

Today every one of you uses a keyboard. And to recognize that this good intention that this pastor had to help a marginalized group be a part of the society was the way in for that technology, but it ends up not just being a remedy for the people that he was trying to serve, but it becomes an enhancement for the entire society as a whole. Today we are enhanced by the keyboard across the board, and I want to use that as just a way to understand and think about this question that Microsoft is proposing that they might create adoption and remedy inequities, but the larger narrative is that it's not going to just remedy those people who are on the margins. It's actually going to enhance across the board, and it's not going to be equally shared, those benefits. And I think that narrative I see repeated over and over. You see it

:

repeated over and over. You see it with brain computer interfaces. Who's it going to help? What's the narrative around brain computer interfaces and who it's going to help right now. It's going to be a remedy, but that's not where it ends. And I think we need to recognize that technology is often using that narrative as a Trojan Horse to spread into a larger market.

Gretchen Huizinga:

Yeah, I just want to add, they call that the curb cut effect. There was a technology... It wasn't a technology, it was like, let's put a dip in the curb so people with wheelchairs can use sidewalks. And it turned out to be good for strollers, for cyclists. So there's this rising tide that lifts all boats analogy in that I think that's what you're kind of referring to. It does not, and biblically, we are all othering other people from the very get go. We are a fallen race that has inequity built in because of the DNA of the fall and sin.

And so I feel like the attack is, Ephesians 6 says, we do not fight against flesh and blood, but against powers and principalities, and if we get our eye off that war, we lose the other war as well. And I think too, that we can just sort of, for me always rises up to what's the real battle? What's the real war? And it doesn't mean the other wars don't have to be fought.

Amy Green:

I also hear us hearing the question

and then quickly moving on to other things, but you're asking us to stop and consider a different perspective and a different voice. And I want us to take that request seriously. I want you to say the name of the book again, we'll write it down, I'm sure you'll put it on the resources, but I want people to hear that he's asking, can we totally change the narrative and listen to a different perspective? And I want us to hear that and to take it seriously and take the time to hear it again. The book you suggested.

Audience:

Womanist Ethics, by Katie Geneva Cannon. It just frames a lot of life and relationship and ethics first. Obviously doesn't go into technology, but it definitely will frame an ethical conversation that we can use within AI as we relate to different people. Also, there's another book, really quickly. It is A Native American Theology by Clara Sue Kidwell. That's another book, and then Asian American Theology of Liberation by Tian An Wong, it's all in the resource page I sent it in so y'all can read those books and then hopefully next year we can start framing AI in a different way.

Andy Doyle:

Well, and I would say I'm really grateful that the planners got up on the first night and named how they fell short. I think that part of moving forward is understanding and being

accountable for the ways in which a planning committee didn't set up. So I'm very grateful for the recognition. Also, don't think that it's your responsibility to solve everything for us. So for instance, I did some digging, put up some resources as well. I'm happy to provide some more in that.

I think there's a lot of stuff out there and there are a lot of people, both first people and people of color who are participating in generating new tech and AI right now. I think the bigger question is going to be not unlike how we've dealt with immigration and the continuing problems around race, that the flattening of the world and the global tech will push the race question back even further. I think we have to be attentive as we move forward that we resolve well some of those stories that we haven't been accountable for. So, I appreciate it.

Audience:

Sometimes I think we forget that the creation of technology is mediated by human condition. Even if later on it gets some independence from that. And because of that, there are cultural values embedded in the technology that we have to recognize. The whole emphasis on augmentation, linguistics, that's very culturally, I would say closed. It's a closed system of culture. And as I'm listening to this conversation, in my mind I'm thinking about the cultural anxiety in this society around issues

of substitution that comes from racial substitution.

And now we transfer that into this AI conversation in which we are afraid that our individuality will [inaudible 01:17:40] by a machine. And the thing is that for me, and this last comment really makes me think about the issue not being substitution in the labor sense, but traditional substitution. Which means that, because we do that a lot, that means the history of missions in many churches is I have a lot of poor people around me, people who are different and I can help. I prefer to take a plane with a group of people from my church and go to another country because I can come back and then get rid of that issue.

This relational substitute... I can use this technology to substitute my actual contact with people. That's the issue that even Ivan Illich, not the Tolstoy, but the sociologist and priests who wrote in the seventies, he was already talking about technology and this relational substitution when he discussed cars, speed and all those issues. And I just want to ask, and the question about this comment is, do you think we are really fearful about interacting with what we can call the superhuman or are we actually afraid of or anxious about incarnation itself? That's a question has been in my mind, what are we really afraid of? The superhuman or the incarnation itself? And if it's incarnation itself, that's a very serious theological issue we have to address.

Amy Green:

It's a brilliant question because ultimately, right, what we want to solve is what if I have to go to you to find out and then I look dumb? What if I have to engage with a culture I don't understand and I make the mistake? And so, the hope is that we can go and get this information and wait to engage till we can do it perfectly. And I suspect we will do a lot of that. Even all of the talk of augmentation, it's something we're very aware of because we worked with people with disabilities through the playability initiative and learned, Ryan shared a photo of one of the young men we worked with and he said, I hate Christians, I hate them because they show up and they always want to pray for me, they always want to heal me. They always assume that who I am and what I am is broken and that they need to heal me.

And they don't ever ask if I want that or not. And so I see us doing things with AI to say, we're going to fix these problems, and we're not asking if anyone wants those problems fixed, and we're not asking, well, what are your actual problems and what do you want most? And also, who told us that we were supposed to be the ones to fix those problems in the first... There is so much about this that is not okay, and yet it is also inevitable. And so then that becomes the question of what do you do with the fact that it will progress and march forward

either way, and then how then shall we live?

Is the holy act to try to stop it? Is the holy act to model a different way to engage? I'm not sure, but I really love your question about, are we just going to use this to substitute us having to have more relationship, more contact, ask more questions, no less make more mistakes? And then what does that do to us when we're not willing to make mistakes with each other and get into those messy spaces?

Andy Doyle:

Adam, why don't you take a shot at this.

Adam Graber:

I think the answer is yes, we're afraid of being limited bodies. We're afraid of our own incarnate nature. And yes, Ivan Illich is fantastic, I'm reading him right now. Yeah, we're afraid of our limitations and the dependency that, that creates for us on relationships with other people and the community and the weakness that comes with it.

Gretchen Huizinga:

This evokes the great substitution in my heart, and I always tend to take things back to Jesus. Substitutionary atonement for our sin was the point of his incarnational visit to our planet. He took my sin and gave me his righteousness. And so, for myself, I see the problems in the world and like G. K. Chesterton answered, "Sir,

what's wrong with the world?" And he said, "I am." And so, I want to focus on my laying at the altar, my fears, my sin, and recognize my sin instead of my husband always says, well, when you point a finger at somebody else, you're pointing three back at yourself. And I want to examine that, I want to do that in the Catholic tradition it's to examine, at the end of the day, where did I fall short, where did I do well and so on?

But still, I think AI is a conversation starter for these big questions. And for me, I like the idea of focusing on, from a Christian perspective in this community, in this voice, with these voices to say, who was the great substitute for us? And how do we then align ourselves? This is another AI term, alignment. Have you heard? They want to make sure that AI aligns with human values. And I also say then we need to make sure that human values align with divine values. And I think we tend to forget that and just focus on the fears and so on. So I ramble, but there it is.

Andy Doyle:

So they gave us a few more minutes, that's why we're going a little over. This will be the last question.

Audience:

Thanks so much. So, I read a history that's largely a church or groups of Christians who are at the margins using dominant systems of technology in ways that subvert those systems

and those cultures, i.e. Christians are a subversive first and second century sect, which uses the tool of empire, the Roman road system to completely undermine Rome. And my biggest fear with all of this is that we're not adequately subverting the consumerist capitalist system, which has given birth to this, which gave us license to treat human beings as commodities to be sold and bought. And I remember in the '90s when I was in the dotcom space, working at a small startup that was doing user generated content, we thought that the internet was the dawn of a new economy, you know what I mean?

I'm like a Walter Winkian kind of guy here that the power is the devil of consumerism and capitalism that's baked into this mofo. And I'm really worried. I'm really worried that we're like, and I'm doing this too, right? I'm thinking about how we can do global theological education by translating idioms across differences using AI. And at the same time, I'm in bed with this system of consumerism and capitalism, and I hope to God that we as Christians can both end this thing and say, here's this tool, this Roman road, it's awesome, and Jesus is Lord, not Caesar. And we're going to find a way to use the tools of empire to dismantle the empire because there's only one kingdom, and that's my soapbox.

Andy Doyle:

We've sold our emotions, our family that has already been commoditized

in this new system and economy. And I hear that clearly. So I think you really challenge us. What do you want to say to that? And then we're going to head towards the end.

Amy Green:

This is true in a lot of creative processes, but certainly in game development. We do a thing and then we do a retrospective and we say, hey, what about our process was good? What was bad? What felt great? What felt terrible? What are we getting wrong? And I actually love that on this last day, we're starting to do this retrospective and say, have we asked the wrong questions? Are we asking the wrong questions? And I'm hearing that, and I've been hearing it throughout the week, but really also just hearing it a lot right now, and I hope my encouragement is that you will pause and do an actual formal retrospective and say, are we asking the wrong questions? Have we focused too much on how do we use this to improve ourselves and improve our process and make us a more powerful and dominant whatever it is we want to be powerful and dominant at?

And should we be asking instead, how do we engage with this to subvert the tendency of humanity to continue to use it in this way? The temptation is always to say, we think this thing is wrong, and so we will abdicate our responsibility for it, we will step away, we will avoid it. And

then what happens is the people who are less thoughtful and less willing to acknowledge that there are some wrong things, we'll just jump in head first and then it goes the way they want it to go. And so that's a much harder problem. I would way rather think about how can my writing be even more creative with AI than I would like to sit and think about, how do we acknowledge the things that are terrifying about this and use this technology itself to start getting people to ask those same questions to change? And I don't know, but if there's going to be a formal retrospective that feels like the, how do we change the nature of the conversation next time question.

Andy Doyle:

So I'm going to stop there. I'm going

to give you a chance to say one more thing.

Andy Doyle:

So, here's the serious question. You got everybody listening to you. You got, I'll maybe allow a few sentences, but this is your moment, what do you want them to hear from you today?

Gretchen Huizinga:

It's a simple story. I mean, baseball is a simple game. You throw the ball, you hit the ball, you catch the ball. The gospel is a simple story. Somebody in Microsoft said yesterday, we like to over complicate things. And I think that's the noise that we get caught up with, we get distracted from the voice of Jesus, and that's for me the signal that I want to stay tuned on.

Daren Erisman:

I would say that God is here and God's in our questions.

Amy Green:

Don't idolize having the answers and providing the solutions. Be excited about asking questions, lead with curiosity, notice the people that are being impacted.

Adam Graber:

You have heard it said, ask the question, how do we use this technology? I say to you, ask the question, who do we become as we use this technology?

Andy Doyle:

Very nice. Thank you so much. You all have been wonderful. Thank you.

A View from the Balcony

Kim Arakawa, MA-ORGL
Department of Lifelong Learning
Virginia Theological Seminary

The inaugural AI Summit (2024) explored how the Church can navigate the ethical, social, and theological challenges posed by generative AI. A “balcony” perspective was used to gather participant insights and guide future discussions. The central concern was AI ethics, described as a “greased, golden pig”—valuable but elusive.

Three key themes emerged:

1. Ethical and Social Implications

– Concerns centered on power dynamics, inequality, and AI’s impact on marginalized groups. Participants called for safeguards to ensure AI promotes justice and equity, avoiding exploitation and the digital divide.

2. Cultural and Theological

Considerations – AI challenges Christian beliefs about humanity and faith. Ongoing theological conversations are needed to redefine identity and community in an AI-influenced world, while respecting diverse perspectives.

3. AI in Faith-Based Spaces –

Questions arose about AI’s role in ministry, evangelism, and pastoral care. The Church must responsibly integrate AI while maintaining human connection

and core values.

The summit highlighted the Church’s responsibility to ensure AI centers on human well-being and fosters connection with God and others. Developing a common language and approach is crucial for navigating AI’s complexities. Connection was seen as the key to moving forward.

For this inaugural AI Summit, I was offered a balcony seat to notice, gather, and report insights and opportunities based on participant engagement. As summit planners, we intentionally earmarked this process as being on the balcony because we recognize that Generative AI is an enormous adaptive leadership opportunity – a complex issue without clear solutions, requiring new learning and changes in values or behaviors – and the “balcony” view according to Adaptive Leadership experts Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky invites the opportunity to “gain perspective while in the midst of action.” The balcony offers us the grace and space to break from the movement on the dancefloor or the playing field (if that metaphor is preferred) so that

reentry, as noted by Dr. Flo Falayai, founder of The Hybrid Leadership Institute, “improves engagement and interaction with people, tasks, and work to be done.”

This report aims to provide you with a thematic distillation of raw participant content (with the assistance of ChatGPT) while offering pathways to continue the conversations and next-step options for consideration using an adaptive leadership framework. The ultimate goal = to assist us as we discern where we are headed through the movement of the Holy Spirit.

The morning of the second summit day, David Brenner, Board Chair and Contributing Fellow for AI & Faith, opened the plenary session by sharing his excitement at being in the room with representatives from 24,000 churches in America, early adopters whose combined mainline denominations have a huge cultural footprint with the potential to “galvanize connection and catalyze action.” He went on to speak about what became the overarching theme and concern of the event: AI ethics. Brenner likened AI ethics to a “greased, golden pig – slippery and worth an unimaginable amount of

money.” The fact that no one, in the U.S. or elsewhere, has figured out how to get hold of this metaphorical pig clearly resonated with attendees who were still digesting the previous day’s keynote (Augmented Faith) from futurist Bob Johansen.

For those gathered at Holy Spirit speed in Seattle, the buzz at Epiphany Episcopal, our most gracious hosts, centered around recognizing that Generative AI is the next wave of the Industrial Revolution, bringing disruption and transformation. What was not evident from my balcony view was clarity on which direction we wanted to give our focus as the Church. Johansen shared that “the future will reward clarity – and faith is a lot like clarity.” He went on to point out that we have moved from a VUCA world, one that is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, to a BANI world, quite brittle, anxious, non-linear, and incomprehensible. Johansen asked the faith leaders in the room to consider the need to strengthen our ability to be flexive, empathetic, neuro-adaptive, and inclusive. It seemed to me that for the rest of the conference, even though 80+ thought leaders gathered with seemingly 80+ different ideas about AI, there was a convergence around the profound opportunity we all had to share and be heard – already living into the necessary adaptive leadership questions that can bring about change:

1. What deeply held values are being challenged?
2. What are the adaptive problems with no ready answers?
3. How do we recognize what is distressing for people as we navigate these oncoming changes?
4. What are the tough questions that need to be asked and wrestled with?
5. How can we build safe containers to do this work?

(Heifetz, R., & Laurie, D. (2001, December). The Work of Leadership. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2001/12/the-work-of-leadership>

As I listened each day, I gathered quotes and general notes from these areas: (1) direct quotes from participants during breakout sessions, meals, and online comments and (2) areas of resonance – places during plenaries and keynotes where the listening participants noticeably reacted to the speaker in similar ways, either via laughter, sighs, a-ha’s, or high energy questions with similar themes. The raw data is available for your review in Appendix 298.

For this report, I entered the raw data, areas one (1) and two (2), into ChatGPT and asked it to synthesize and provide three overarching themes along with the areas that each topic explored and consensus zones for next steps. Based on my summit experience, I feel ChatGPT supplied an excellent overview

pulled directly from participant feedback for continued discernment:

Theme 1 – Ethical and Social Implications of AI

- **Exploration:** This theme heavily focuses on concerns about power dynamics, social inequality, and AI’s impact on marginalized groups. It explores whether AI will reinforce coercive structures and increase the digital divide, particularly in vulnerable communities. There are also questions about AI’s environmental costs and how it may perpetuate exploitation.
- **Consensus on Next Steps:** The key consensus is the need for safeguards to ensure AI promotes justice, equity, and ethical use. Practical next steps include advocating for transparency in AI development, addressing techno-feudalism concerns, and ensuring AI is used to uplift rather than oppress marginalized communities.

Theme 2 – Cultural and Theological Considerations

- **Exploration:** This theme centers on the challenges of integrating AI within a theological context. It explores how AI challenges Christian beliefs, particularly around the nature of humanity, community, and the Imago Dei. There is a tension between creating a common language for discussing AI and respecting

diverse cultural and theological perspectives.

- **Consensus on Next Steps:**

Practical steps include fostering ongoing theological conversations to redefine human identity and community in an AI-influenced world. Participants agree on the need to engage diverse voices in these discussions and to reflect on how faith can evolve in parallel with technological advancements.

Theme 3 – AI in Church and Faith-Based Spaces

- **Exploration:** This theme investigates how AI can be used in ministry, evangelism, and pastoral care. It questions whether AI can facilitate genuine spiritual connections or serve as a tool for peace and community-building. There's also concern about the potential risks of AI contributing to separateness rather than unity.

- **Consensus on Next Steps:** The Church must responsibly integrate AI into its mission without compromising human interaction. Practical next steps include exploring ways AI can support pastoral care and using it as a tool to foster inclusion and connect communities while maintaining the church's core values.

Alongside the thematic summation of participant feedback above, a few other takeaways stood out from the raw data:

- There was clear agreement that the Church has a significant role to play in responding to AI and that AI should be designed and implemented in ways that center on human well-being, although I noticed a wide range of opinions on how that should be done.
- Optimism about AI's potential to augment human capabilities and enhance spiritual practices and community was equally mixed with concerns that AI could encroach on divine territory, reinforce coercive power structures, and dehumanize or negatively alter what it means to be human.
- Additionally, Participants agreed on the importance of developing a common language around AI usage to ensure clear communication and shared understanding, especially in diverse and multicultural contexts. There was recognition that while diversity should be honored, a common framework is necessary to address AI's complexities. Leadership, as explained by Heifetz and Laurie, involves more than just managing tasks (more than dancing or moving a ball down the field); it requires guiding people through complex, uncertain issues by creating a conducive environment for adaptive change and helping others develop the skills and mindset needed to address these challenges. (See Appendix on page 298 for

actionable steps and examples to assist faith leaders as they navigate the complexities of AI and its impact on their communities).

"The adaptive demands of our time," notes Heifetz, "require leaders who take responsibility without waiting for revelation or request. One can lead with no more than a question in hand." To summarize this report, I offer more to ponder. The Rev. Dr. Patricia Lyons joined me on the balcony during our inaugural AI Summit, noting the themes/ topics that were mentioned most often during the entire gathering. Dr. Lyons then took those areas of convergence and spent time in prayer and discernment in creating "questions at hand," listed in order of topic frequency mentioned during the summit. We invite you to spend time with these questions individually and in community (See Appendix on page 298).

From listening to the leaders who attended this first AI Summit & the Church (2024), I came away more acutely aware that the key word for the entire experience was/is: connection. To navigate the adaptive challenge of the "greased pig" and provide clarity to those wrestling with the complexity before us, we must center connection – with God and with one another. Like concentric circles emanating from the first drop of baptismal water into the font, connection can be where we begin our next conversations.



Epilogue:

The Rev. Tricia Lyons, D.Min. Virginia Theological Seminary

"I can't do this, Sam."

"I know. It's all wrong. By rights we shouldn't even be here. But we are. It's like in the great stories, Mr. Frodo. The ones that really mattered. Full of darkness and danger they were. And sometimes you didn't want to know the end. Because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad had happened?"

But in the end, it's only a passing thing, this shadow. Even darkness must pass. A new day will come. And when the sun shines it will shine out the clearer. Those were the stories that stayed with you. That meant something, even if you were too small to understand why. But I think, Mr. Frodo, I do understand. I know now. Folk in those stories had lots of chances of turning back only they didn't. They kept going because they were holding on to something."

"What are we holding on to, Sam?"

"That there's some good in this world, Mr. Frodo. And it's worth fighting for."

Samwise Gamgee in *The Return of the King*, J.R.R. Tolkien

J.R.R. Tolkien, Dorothy Sayers, Madeleine L'Engle, C.S. Lewis, George Lucas. Together, the epic stories that these authors wrote in the mid to late-20th century have been read or watched on screens by well over two billion people. Stories are written every day. Why were these so popular? I have come to believe that these authors built new stories with timeless bricks. One of common pillars in their stories is a shared, ancient, and frankly, observable view of human nature. In theological circles, we call this conviction one's

"theological anthropology." That mouthful phrase refers to how we define and understand the nature of the human person in relationship to God, the human's creator. The academic discipline of theological anthropology focuses on questions like, *Do people have free will? Do humans have a conscience? Are humans born broken, fallen or separated from the Creator by sin? Are humans born with universal moral knowledge or are humans born a moral blank slate?* Versions of these questions exist among all people. Even children

ask, "are people bad or good?" These authors above clearly believe a verse from the Bible, that 'we have eternity written on our hearts;' that humans are wired for narrative meaning, for storytelling, for adventures driven by some innate longing for meaning, for love, for redemption, and for some kind of reunion or homecoming with the Creator. We have a longing for the 'good,' a longing for the source or even voice of good within us, calling us from within.

Hegel wrote about why struggle feels inescapable. Marx wrote about why struggle is politically powerful. Darwin wrote about why we avoid risk. Freud wrote about why we avoid pain and seek pleasure. But the Catholic and Anglican traditions, guided by scriptural wisdom and sacramental imagination, remind us that the human person is, as Augustine confessed, made by and for God and the person is 'restless until the person rests in God.' We are more than animals in herds with instincts beyond our control. Humans are born entering an epic journey with and toward the creator, whether or not a person uses the language or practice of any one religion. This is why epic stories in so many cultures that speak of struggle *for others*, for meaning, in community, fighting for the good and sacrificing for others speak so deeply to billions of people. We know we can be more than animals. And we love stories that capture that hope.

I leave this conference on AI and the Church knowing I need to deepen my commitment to four things. First, I need to refresh my beliefs about human nature. Second, I need to refresh my conviction that all humans have a conscience given by God. Third, I need to remember that the Church is a boat for humanity to travel through the world, not a fixed place in which to sit still. And fourth, I need to deepen my practices of prayer and of listening, listening to God and listening to others.

As an Episcopalian who embraces

Anglican theology, I believe the human person is created by design to live in union, forever, with the creation and the creator. The moment of our creation is already the first chapter in our story of living and longing with and for God. We are all on this journey to know the God who speaks to us at the core of our being, by our nature not by our choice. Technology, in any age of human existence, is a tool which we make from the world around us, in order to move us forward in our longings for safety, productivity, empowerment, love and even glory. AI is in some ways just the current chapter in the nearly incredible creativity of the human acting as creator to turn the restlessness of human longing into something that finds and feeds our dreams.

Human longing answers the riddle of how a loving God could create humans with freedom and yet know that a human's fulfillment is only in God. Think of that 'black box' in an airplane. No matter where a plane crashes on earth or at the floor of the sea, reporters keep the world posted as to whether or not searchers have found the black box that emits a sound meant to draw seekers to where it is. It can be burned, it can be buried, but so often the sound continues to call out. The conscience of a person is like that black box. Yes, we are given free will. But we are not free from longing for the creator who alone can fulfill our being. We can burn or bury this longing. But if we use our

freedom to follow it, to listen to our conscience, it can bring us home to the creator, in this life and the next. But this powerful longing can also pull us into remarkable acts of creativity and human progress. We have been designed with longing that lasts for eternity. We should not be surprised at what this human power can do in any enterprise, good or evil. AI is a product of, but only a speck of the power of the human longing that created it. Only immature or fear-based religious people turn their backs on emerging technology. For the thinking Christian, technology is not the enemy of human flourishing. It is a sign of the creator's intention to equip humans for human flourishing. Human history records that people can make both bombs and beauty. But the power to do both comes from God.

As we close this Summit on AI and the Church, we do well to distinguish between two things: what AI is (and *is not*) and what AI can *do*. This is important because the clearer we are about what AI is, the more prepared and even liberated we can be in interpreting, responding and even using for good that which AI can *do*.

AI is purely material. AI is and will always only be, a *thing*. It will never be *conscious* in any real sense of that word as it is understood in the monotheistic traditions. Anyone who says that AI or GenAI can 'become conscious' is telling you more about their understanding of 'consciousness' than they are telling you about AI. And

we ought not to dismiss or shame those who profess the potential 'consciousness' of AI, especially with the growing numbers of people in the United States who no longer believe in God or any kind of higher power beyond man that created and sustains human consciousness. For them, Protagoras got it right: "Man is the measure of all things." However, human consciousness, according to Christian theology, is both a product of and lived out as a partnership between the human and the image and voice of God ever-present in humans. In the words of the Psalmist, "What is man that Thou are mindful of him?" God's mindfulness is not just a thought: it is the deepest of Christian conviction that God's mindfulness of us is something we can experience in our conscience, a presence we can feel at the core of our being. We are conscious because God is conscious of us.

This does not mean, of course, that because AI is only a thing that it is not potentially powerful, for good or for ill, beyond comprehension. The nuclear bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima were just 'things'; yet their devastation in both the physical and psychological worlds continue to torment and destroy even today. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the human person in this way:

"Deep within his(sic) conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him

to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment. . . For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. . . His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1995)

This voice of Christianity boldly proclaims a theological anthropology that can guide thinking Christians in our response and engagement with AI. It asserts that even at the core of our being, we are not alone.

Technology is just one way that the human reaches up and out and forward in search of fulfillment of longing for who or what presence we feel pressing into us in our conscience. It should not surprise anyone who studies the nature of human beings that we seek unification with beauty, a path that begins with seeking augmentation. Technology is not just a language but an experience of journey that for its trailblazers feels natural and real and good. Any person of faith who rejects or shows allergy to 'technology' is demonstrating their own limited ability to recognize evidence of the longing of humans for their relationship with and eternal place within the divine life. A church with a future must find a way to name and treat the human drive with technology as evidence of the voice of God echoing in the depths, not ultimately as a threat or rival to faith. Technology can become an idol, as

can anything in the world. To warn against that development is wise. But to miss the chance to preach technology as also a sign of the image of God in the human person, ever creating, ever daring, ever stretching, ever augmenting, is tragic.

The biologists and behaviorists are correct in pointing out the patterns of humans to compete, adapt and evolve. But the poets and saints remind us that in our striving, even victories rarely douse the flame for our journeys to continue. God has made us for himself, and we are restless, even in worldly victories or discoveries, until we rest in our creator. I am sure that one day, something more than AI will exist.

Just so you know where I am on some of these high-tech issues, take a look at these pictures on the screen. These are pictures of me in hospitals. It's not that I have a thing for hospital gowns that I want to share. These are pictures taken over the last 15 years. I searched hospital pictures in my iPhoto albums to grab some of these, and I came up with about 900 pictures of me in hospitals, surgical centers and procedure suites.

I was a Division I NCAA athlete in college. Shot put, discus, javelin and hammer. For years, I threw heavy things, all over the country and in Europe. I never sustained any serious injury in a decade of extreme training and competition. But in my mid-30s I got sick and for the first time stayed in a hospital overnight. That

first hospitalization would last over 20 days. I had developed a terrible form of Crohns disease (which I had never heard of) that finally exploded. Without intense interventions, my rare condition is basically a fatal form of Crohn's disease. I am telling you this because I am only standing here today because of the most advanced technologies in the world (and privileged access to them). And so, I ask my moral, theological, and philosophical questions about GenAI and other high-tech realities as a person whose life has been saved, more than once, by medical interventions made possible only by technologically augmented human capacity. My questions about the ethics of AI are not abstractions to me.

But the second part you need to know of me is that most of my surgeries have failed or had poor outcomes. It wouldn't have been so sick over 15 years, nor would I be standing here with a permanent ostomy bag right now, if any of them had worked well. But I have moved through the world and survived on the love of God and others despite being let down constantly by high-tech medicine and high-tech surgery. I am finally in remission with the help of regular IV infusions and lots of prayer, despite all the promises of cure from some of the best medical care in the world. My whole journey has taught me that no technology is perfect or even trustworthy, nor should any person build their sanity on the promises of any technology

or technician. What has helped me has also hurt me, as any person who has had things like chemotherapy or radiation will attest. Doctors speak of 'trade-offs' which is a confession of the bargaining and betting that humans do with choices technology offers us. The reason Russian novels are a thousand pages long is because humans are complicated, and the human condition has far more mysteries than revelations and more failed experiments than genuine progress. We are not only saints and sinners, but if we are even shallowly aware of ourselves and others, we are right to be both hopeful and skeptical about promises of human progress. At least I am.

Let's now watch a scene from the classic movie *Jaws*, in which the protagonist, while out on a small fishing boat, gets his first face to face look at the massive shark who's been eating swimmers at the local beach. In this scene we get one of the classic one-liners of all time: "I think we're going to need a bigger boat."

A lot of you leaving this conference aren't sure how to think or act regarding AI, but you do know that you need a bigger boat. Our ethics, our philosophies, our faiths are stretched and even crushed by the contemplation of what AI is already doing, and what the future of augmented humanity might look like. Only a handful of super-wealthy, monopolistic tech companies can afford to build the present and future platforms for AI. And they are all

for-profit companies. What could go wrong?

There was in the last century a great Catholic moral theologian named Father Charlie Curran. He wound up thinking differently about birth control than other people in the Catholic Church leadership in the 1960s, got sanctioned and silenced, and that's why he's the greatest Catholic theologian to ever teach at Southern Methodist University. But Charlie was famous for saying something that resonates with my own Episcopal tradition, and I offer it to you. He talked about the "Catholic AND." The core of this idea, which is going to be very important when we talk about AI, is that we Catholics and Anglicans believe in 'church *and* world,' 'saint *and* sinner,' 'sin *and* grace,' 'faith *and* science,' 'faith *and* reason.' We are not Amish. We're not trying to leave the world and create a pure or personal world of our own piety. We are not dualists, believing things are good or bad or that good and evil are equal forces. We don't withdraw from complexity, current events or culture itself. We are part of the earth, as we remind ourselves every Ash Wednesday: "from dust we have come and to dust we will return." We de-center the American idea of personal salvation and speak instead, as Jesus does in scripture, of the redemption of the whole world, the salvation of the whole Church because the church is the people of God, gathered and joined forever together in

baptism to be the Body of Christ on earth. We put the 'and' in between things that others cannot understand as joined. This worldview can help us think of AI *and* good, humanity *and* augmented humanity, high-tech *and* human dignity.

There's a concept in reformed theological and biblical studies called the 'cultural mandate.' This is a school of thought that notices God's *blessing* of Adam and Eve as they leave the garden and not just God's rebuke for why they are leaving the garden. Without a doubt, the story teaches that humans leave the garden because they broke their communion with God. Many forms of Christianity have interpreted leaving the garden as only an expulsion, a permanent punishment or banishment from paradise. They do not focus their preaching and teaching on the loving send-off of God in Genesis. Instead, they focus on the degradation of the human person by their own choices and leaving the garden in shame and separation from God. Calvin goes so far in his 'five points' as to declare the human being after the Fall as 'totally depraved.'

But there is another view among Catholics and Anglicans and others that takes seriously both the potential for sin to break a communion with God and also the potential of human flourishing and maturity that comes in learning to survive and thrive outside paradise. God does not curse humanity in the story as they leave Eden. On the contrary, God blesses

Adam and Eve as they leave the garden. The 'cultural mandate' reading of the story teaches that humans could have only become creators of beauty and culture once they leave the garden. Their leaving is both a consequence of sin but also a blessed mandate of God to go forth from paradise and become a co-creator with God in the larger world. Yes, humans will continue to limp and fall in faith and life, trust and action, but God is with us and will be the source of power for the worlds we make. And so, 'the world' does not rise-up outside of Eden as a rival community or foreign power against God's paradise. We are not at war with 'the world' nor do we flee from the world or its sciences, political institutions, arts, or technologies because God sent us out to create that very world and its capacities, in cooperation with God. The cultural mandate is a vocational mandate: 'be fruitful and multiply.' And the greatest gift Adam and Eve are given as they depart is the intact image of God inscribed on their hearts. They leave with a black box of God's voice in the sanctuary of human conscience, always calling, always guiding and always loving. That living, breathing, speaking presence of God in 'the sacred core and sanctuary of the human person' is a homing device that goes with us, that is within us, that is us.

I do not believe that we can leave this conference and meet the moment of AI as the Church unless

we develop a sturdy conviction about the human conscience as universal and as connected to the love of God. The power of this conviction is that others with whom we discuss and debate AI, do not have to agree with us about humans or human dignity or faith-based moral expectations or concerns. Because I hold the view that the human conscience is a core and sanctuary in which every person can experience the wisdom and guidance of the creator, I know that I do not have to convince them of the truths of Christianity or the divinity of Jesus or the reliability of the Bible to agree on what is, or is not, good. God has put a black box of longing for the good in every person. What is my role in helping humanity escape its potential degradation or destruction from technology? It is my role to listen to others, to talk with others, in hopes to help them (and me!) hear better the voice of God 'echoing in the depths.' What can the Church do to help humanity create, experience and share technologies that improve human life rather than oppress human life? We can listen. We can learn. We can commit ourselves and our faith communities to an active and joyful and hopeful public posture of listening to and loving technologists and believing that in our witness to what is good and holy and honoring of human dignity, those around us might hear the powerful pull of God's presence in their own being, their own mind and their own imagination. If we do not believe

in a universal human conscience or a connection between God and humans that is innate, I don't know what hope the Church can have to affect the direction of AI or anyone developing it. My hope is that my witness to the good and to humans as dignified with the image of God finds potential resonance in any person with whom I communicate. I am not smart enough to build an architecture of moral reasoning from nothing within another person. And even if I could, why would they adopt it? Instead, according to my Christian faith, I know it is only my job to help humans listen to a voice designed into them, to a voice they know better than mine. My words, if they are inspired by the Holy Spirit, can be the magnets to pull on and to pull out goodness in others, a goodness born into us. And so, the Church, if it wishes for a fruitful and pro-humanity conversation with high tech, had better double-down on our own personal and communal practices of prayer with the Holy Spirit. Prayer will give us a bigger boat.

Remember we call this worship space in the church "the nave," which is from Latin for 'boat.' So let's remember that as we leave this gathering, let's think of our congregations as people made for journeys and not for quick answers or expulsions of ideas or creativities that frighten us. You don't get on a boat to stay on it. You get on a boat in order to get off somewhere new. Remember what Mr. Beaver said to

the children who entered Narnia on their first visit. They ask if the Great Lion Aslan is "safe." Mr. Beaver's answer? "Safe? Who said anything about safe! Aslan isn't safe. But He's good." We need to teach and preach to our people that the Church is made for journeys into both sun and storms. Baptism is to send us out of the church, not establish us inside it. The world isn't safe. But a church rooted in prayer and hope is the boat big enough to face the sun and the storms of augmented humanity.

When I was an undergraduate at Harvard, one of my part-time jobs was being a tour guide. On the screen right now, I am showing you the current shield and motto of Harvard University that I pointed out on all my tours.



It's a simple shield, just a maroon field and the Latin word for 'truth' (Veritas) written across three open books. But this particular shield wasn't adopted until the mid-twentieth century, despite the fact that Harvard was founded in 1636. What was the shield and motto for the earlier centuries of Harvard College?

Here is a picture of the original shield.



Over the last century, this original shield slowly vanished from anywhere on campus. It's been painted over, pulled down or covered up by furniture. And you can probably guess why. The motto was once longer than "Veritas." It was a whole phrase: "Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae."

Now Latin scholars know this sentence is called a purpose clause. 'Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae' isn't a list of three words translated as Truth, Christ and Church. It is properly translated "Truth *for* Christ and the Church." The modern motto celebrates only 'Truth,' yours, mine, anyone's truth. But the old motto is clear: truth is sought to serve Christ and the Church. Truth has a purpose in God's creation to lead people into the life of Christ in His Body, the Church.

It is no surprise or scandal that 'Christ and the Church' is dropped in the last century and so it should have been. Harvard is no longer a college to train Christian ministers, and its faculty, staff and student body profess truths far more varied than from any one religion. The change is just another cultural signs of secularization over time.

But there is something else going on with these shields beyond

secularization. Notice that there are three books in both shields. But in the old shield, the third book is face-down, a symbol that not all knowledge is in books. It was also a Christian symbol that there will always be more to experience of truth, forever. There are mysteries in life because there is knowledge that lies beyond death. Mysteries are not problems to be solved. "Now we see through a glass dimly, then we shall see face to face. Now we know in part, then we shall know fully, even as we are known," wrote St. Paul. The book face-down was to remind scholars that not all knowledge is in books and there is life after death. The fact that the third book is turned open in the last century tells you everything you need to know about what places like Harvard believe about human knowledge: we can know all things.

What does faithful evangelism look like in a high-tech, increasingly secular world? Evangelicals shared with me this odd question, back when I was in college, when they were all trying to save my soul from Catholicism. "Are you a Matthew 25 Christian or are you a Matthew 28 Christian?" Turns out, that was their shorthand question for trying to figure out if a person believed their salvation came from Jesus Christ alone or from doing good works. If you're a Matthew 25 Christian (the passage about judgment falling on those not caring for the least), you probably think doing good works might save your soul. But Matthew

28 Christians (that is the passage of the Great Commission) are people who know that only in baptism and profession of the Triune God is a person saved.

But Episcopalians and Anglicans and Catholics have a more nuanced view. So let's do some Episcopal math.

In our tradition, Matthew 25 + Matthew 28 = Matthew 10.

Read this passage carefully and you will see how Christ sends out the disciples into the world:

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not take a road leading to gentiles, and do not enter a Samaritan town, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick; raise the dead; cleanse those with a skin disease; cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment..." (Matthew 10:5-8)

This is our commission: to go out and proclaim the good news of Christ's resurrection and thereby ours *and* to perform acts of bodily, daily and individualized mercy and healing. As we speak *and* act, we can revive the conscience of others as we revive our own. As we attempt to cure the sick, we might stir the conscience of others to develop AI toward curing the sick. I think it is better to show people how a human can live and love and find freedom from fear and

death instead of telling them that this technology or that is not the way to help people live and love and find freedom from fear and death. As the Quakers say, 'Let your life speak.' We have to lean into the lives building technology and listen to workers, coders, investors, creatives, and CEOs. The voice of God, which is always the voice of good, is in them. They might not be listening. But we can listen to their lives. And we can bear witness to their better angels. And we can help them hear the black box beating with the presence of God in all humans. But we can't do any of these things if we stand on the sidelines of tech communities. We can't judge those who don't know. There are humans making AI a reality. Do we know them? Can we reach out to them? Can we pray to discern how to cure the sick and expel the demons that rob humans of joy?

I've done house blessings. Young adults love house blessings. The first house blessed years ago as a baby priest was in Washington, D.C. The reason the young adult wanted his one-room studio apartment blessed was because he found out that two years ago, the prior renter hung himself in the apartment. Since learning that, this young man was afraid to go home nad be alone there because he struggled with depression. So I said to him, "Let's do a house blessing." When I arrived, he had invited a wildly diverse group of his friends. There were mostly gay men, a trans woman, and a friend of his from

Iraq who spoke very little English. We barely fit in the studio apartment. I blessed water and asked those present to sprinkle all the surfaces and windows. I said ancient prayers, we sang hymns and the young man wept while his agnostic and theist friends sang. The friends watched the young adult Episcopalian experience bodily relief. The tears were evidence of his new-found freedom. The water, the hymns, the bible verses and the prayers had set him free from the cloud in his mind and that studio apartment. I saw a miracle in his joy. And, his friends were clearly moved in their own soul. Half of them asked for a blessing on their lives before they left. Others asked if I would do house blessings for them.

One man following a whisper in his heart that God was with him and that God could heal something in his apartment with prayer and community, proclaimed a gospel to the friends. In publicly following the God who spoke to him in the sacred core and sanctuary of his life, his friends had their own souls tuned to hear whispers in their own hearts: longings for freedom, for peace and for joy.

The Bible says this about Jesus: that “for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross.” What an incredible image: the strength for the fully-human and fully-divine Jesus to endure the cross came by looking toward joy. As storms of suffering and the terrors they create ravage the boat of the Church and our own

personal lives, we are reminded that we survive darkness by believing in light. We survive pain with sight of joy. We walk through the valley of the shadow of death because God is with us, God’s voice echoes within us, and the fact of our destiny to rise from death in glory into the life of God forever is the joy set before us. When the Church speaks to the world, especially to those creating the highest levels of technology, we have to set before them the power that is set before us: joy. We cannot engage our culture with fear. We have to show people that we have joy and that we have freedom in Christ’s defeat of death. We must lead with joy in our witness to the world because it is joy that leads us in the world. Judgment might, and in some cases must come later. But let’s engage the world first with joy and start to build the bridge of trust, respect and friendship with others that is possible if we believe in church *and* world.

Andy Stanley, an evangelical pastor of tens of thousands in his church in metro-Atlanta penned a great question: “Are you a ‘wow’ leader or a ‘how’ leader? When someone dares to share an idea with you, is the first thing you say, “how?” or “wow!” For Stanley, it is all too common for leaders to jump to problem solving or criticizing or even rejecting big ideas in favor of the status quo or the rational. Stanley argues that there will always be time in the future of an idea to ask hard ‘how’ questions. But what inspires people to have and

share big ideas is leaders and mentors and friends who take the moment to first say ‘wow.’ This first impression builds trust and friendship. Christians need to look at the technologies that are available and say to their creators, “Wow.” Let the tech world hear us say that the hours and years and lives spent in coding and dreaming and scaling big are worth our ‘wow.’ Then and only then can we build connections that might breed honesty and opportunity to share our conscience and its joys in ways that awaken the conscience of others. It is ours, the baptized, to share the God we have found in our core, primarily in our listening to the lives of others but also in our bodily acts of mercy, healing and love. Let’s leave this conference trusting that when others see how that divine voice in us has transformed our lives, they might begin to hear a sound calling out in their own chest.

“There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark tor high up in the mountains, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach.”

The Return of the King, J.R.R. Tolkien

Appendix - Resources

<https://bit.ly/AlandChurchSummitResources>



Speaker biographies

Paolo Benanti

Paolo Benanti is an Italian Catholic priest, theologian and academic. He is a member of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. He teaches at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, is advisor to Pope Francis on issues of artificial intelligence and technology ethics, an architect of [The Rome Call](#) for AI Ethics, and a member of the UN Advisory Body on AI Ethics. His courses and research deal with sexual morality, bioethics, neuroethics, technology ethics, artificial intelligence, and post-human intelligence. Since 2015, he has tried to apply and develop an ethical framework for artificial intelligences through the concepts of “algorithm and algocracy”. Fr. Benanti is presently at Seattle University on a summer research fellowship.

Doyt Conn Jr.

Doyt Conn Jr., born in Rochester, MN, earned his BA from Northwestern University in 1989. He worked for the international relief organization, AmeriCares, and then mergers and acquisitions with the Hawk Group of Companies before obtaining an MBA from Case Western in 1997. Called to priesthood, Conn graduated from Virginia Theological Seminary and was ordained in 2003. After serving at All Saints Beverly Hills, he became the 10th Rector of Epiphany Parish Seattle in 2008. Conn is married to Kristin, a family physician, and they have two children. He enjoys writing, biking, tennis, and walks with his wife.

Andrew “Andy” Doyle

Andrew “Andy” Doyle is the ninth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. Elected in 2008 and seated in 2009, he oversees over 175 congregations and 78,000 Episcopalians. Doyle earned a BFA from the University of North Texas and an M.Div. from Virginia Theological Seminary. He was ordained as a priest in 1996 and served in various roles before becoming bishop. Known for his focus on service, evangelism, and reconciliation, he has authored several books, including “Unabashedly Episcopalian.” Doyle is at the forefront of the church, leading initiatives like a \$13 million racial reconciliation project and planting new churches and missional communities.

Dillon Eng

Dillon Eng has been in the software industry since 2013, and has spent the past six years working in AI applications in the physical world. He is currently an engineering manager at a major technology company in Seattle. Previously he has served as a deacon and Sunday school teacher at Evangelical Chinese Church of Seattle. He holds a Master of Science from the Applied Mathematics department at the University of Washington.

Speaker biographies

Daren Erisman

Daren Erisman is a rostered ELCA pastor and Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Minot State University in North Dakota where he established and co-leads a new data science program with undergraduate topics in AI. Daren holds a PhD in Systematic and Philosophical Theology from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. His research interests include comparative theology between Christianity and Islam, as well as the relationship between science and religion.

Adam Graber

Adam Graber is a consultant who aligns emerging technologies with ministry strategies for faith-driven organizations. He co-hosts the "Device & Virtue" podcast and has developed tech courses for seminars like Northern and Fuller. Adam writes for publications like Christianity Today, The Bulwark, and Relevant, exploring the intersection of faith and technology. With a Master's in Digital Theology from Durham University, he speaks regularly on topics such as AI, the metaverse, and digital evangelism, helping Christian leaders navigate the digital age. Previously, Adam worked in Bible publishing and served as Director for FaithTech, a community of Christian technologists.

Juan Lavista Ferres

Juan Lavista Ferres is the Chief Scientist and Lab Director of the Microsoft AI For Good Research Lab, where he works with a team of data scientists and researchers in AI, Machine Learning and statistical modeling, working across Microsoft AI For Good efforts. These efforts includes projects in AI For Earth, AI for Humanitarian Action, AI For Accessibility and AI For Health. Juan is involved in working to define the data science discipline within Microsoft, and is currently the editor of the Microsoft Journal of Applied Research (MSJAR). Juan has two computer science degrees from the Catholic University in Uruguay, a graduate degree in Data Mining and Machine Learning from Johns Hopkins University, and Ph.D. in AI on Healthcare from Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam.

Amy Noel Green

Amy Noel Green creates narrative video games that focus on personal and innovative stories. Her titles with Numinous Games include BAFTA award winning That Dragon, Cancer and Cannes and Venice International Film Festival Nominated AREA MAN LIVES, a virtual reality mystery that allows the player to speak out loud to the characters within the game. Amy served on the board of directors for the Christian Game Developer's Conference for five years. Amy has given a TED talk that has over a million views, and has been a featured speaker at The World Cyber Games, Madrid Games Week, Pop Tech, Games for Change, SXSW, Notre Dame, and the University of Chicago.

Speaker biographies

Brian Green

Brian Green is the Director of Tech Ethics at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University and teaches AI ethics in the school's Graduate School of Engineering. His work focuses on the ethics of technology, as well as the relationship of technology and religion. He is the author and co-editor of books on Space ethics, transhumanism, is the co-author of the Ethics in Technology Practice set of corporate ethics resources, and is a contributor to the new Vatican AI Research Group publication, [*Encountering AI*](#). Brian holds doctoral and master's degrees in Ethics and Social Theory from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, and an undergraduate degree in genetics from Univ of California, Davis.

Ryan Green

Ryan Green is a digital interactive artist, programmer, and video game designer currently focused on building tools and games that make creating in the metaverse accessible to all types of creators through the use of emerging technology. Ryan believes that technology should reveal rather than replace our humanity. Previously, he served as Creative Director of Numinous Games for 12 years, a studio he co-founded in 2012 with a focus on narrative VR, serious, and accessible games. Numinous Games first title, *That Dragon, Cancer*, was created as a poetic memorial to Ryan and his wife Amy's third son Joel, and Joel's fight against terminal brain cancer. Ryan has spoken about the creation of the game at conferences around the world as well as on the popular radio program Radiolab and the CBS Sunday Morning television program.

Dave Hackett

Dave Hackett is a PC(USA) ordained minister and a graduate of Fuller Seminary. He recently retired after serving 19 years with VisionSynergy, an organization dedicated to helping Christian entities collaborate for maximum impact globally. Hackett's work focused on developing and strengthening large-scale strategic ministry networks and partnerships, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. His efforts involved sophisticated technology deployment to enhance collaboration and engagement in these critical mission areas, ensuring that diverse Christian organizations could work together effectively to achieve their goals.

Noreen Herzfeld

Noreen Herzfeld is a pioneering theologian and computer scientist, serving as the Nicholas and Bernice Reuter Professor of Science and Religion at St. John's University and the College of St. Benedict. She teaches in both the Department of Computer Science and the Department of Theology. Herzfeld's research interests include computer theory, computer ethics, theology in the light of science, the spirituality and politics of Islam, and ministry in a technological age. Her latest book, *"The Artifice of Intelligence"* (2023), examines the potential for authentic relationships with AI and its impact on human interactions. (T)

Speaker biographies

Gretchen Huizinga

Gretchen Huizinga is the Executive Producer and Host of the Microsoft Research Podcast. She recently earned a PhD in Education from the University of Washington, where her dissertation, "Righteous AI: Christian Perspectives on AI Ethics," explored the intersection of faith and technology. Huizinga's work emphasizes incorporating Christian ethical principles into AI development. In addition to her podcasting and research roles, she is a Research Fellow at AI and Faith, contributing to discussions on ethical AI from a religious perspective. Her diverse background includes teaching, media production, and qualitative research.

Daniel Kluttz

Daniel Kluttz leads the Sensitive Uses program in Microsoft's Office of Responsible AI (ORA). In that role, he leads the team responsible for reviewing and providing guidance to engineering and sales teams for Microsoft's most sensitive and complex use cases involving AI systems. More broadly, he leads efforts to advance company-wide responsible AI strategy, governance programs, and corporate policy around sensitive AI-driven technologies. Prior to joining Microsoft, Daniel was a postdoctoral researcher at UC Berkeley's School of Information, where he helped manage and lead the Algorithmic Fairness & Opacity Working Group (AFOG), a multidisciplinary collaboration between researchers from academia and industry working on ethics, policy, and social impacts of AI. Prior to obtaining his PhD in sociology from UC Berkeley, he practiced law as an attorney, focusing on commercial litigation.

Bob Johansen

Bob Johansen is a distinguished fellow with the Institute for the Future in Silicon Valley. For more than 30 years, Bob has helped organizations worldwide prepare for and shape the future, including corporations such as P&G, Walmart, United Rentals, GlaxoSmithKline, and a range of major universities and nonprofits. The author or co-author of twelve books, including the best-selling *Get There Early: Sensing the Future to Compete in the Present*, *Leaders Make the Future*, and *The New Leadership Literacies: Thriving in a Future of Extreme Disruption and Distributed Everything*. He is currently writing a new book that will be out in early 2020 called *Full-Spectrum Thinking: Escaping the Boxes in a Post-Categorical Future*. Bob's books are used widely in corporations, universities, nonprofits, and at the Army War College. Bob holds a B.S. from the University of Illinois, which he attended on a basketball scholarship, and a Ph.D. from Northwestern University—as well as a master's degree focused on world religions.

Chris Lim

Chris Lim leads [TheoTech](#), where he created the company's [primary product spf.io](#), a platform where humans and AI collaborate to deliver real time translations of live events. He was formerly a software engineer at Amazon and has worked closely with Christian faith and work integrators in churches and groups within PNW tech companies. Chris earned a Master of Computer Science degree at the University of Washington, where his research focused on machine translation.

Speaker biographies

Patricia (Tricia) Lyons

Patricia (Tricia) Lyons is a distinguished faculty member at Virginia Theological Seminary, where she serves as the Senior Advisor to the Dean for Evangelism Initiatives and Director of Evangelism. With a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Virginia Theological Seminary and a Master of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School, Dr. Lyons is a renowned author and educator. Her notable works include "What Is Evangelism?" and "Teaching Faith with Harry Potter." Dr. Lyons' expertise in evangelism and education makes her a sought-after speaker at conferences.

Thomas Osborn

Thomas Osborn co-founded AI&Faith and AI&F's most knowledgeable expert on Christian Missional AI products. Thomas is also the founder of Discipleship IQ (disciple/mentor matching), a consultant to Biblechat GPT, the Lausanne Project, and Dallas Theological Seminary, and previously was a senior VP at Faithlife (formerly Logos Bible Software), COO of Subsplash, and COO of an HR recruiting company.

Ben Olsen

Ben Olsen leads Windows Responsible AI and Data Compliance for Microsoft. Olsen pioneered Microsoft's first Artificial Intelligence & Ethics education programs for employees and learners worldwide, and played a lead role in shaping Responsible AI at Microsoft and the industry as part of IEEE's working group on Responsible AI, and the World Economic Forum's Steering Committee for the Responsible Use of Technology. He brings his 15 years of professional experience together with his Byzantine Catholic and ecumenical approach to speak and write at the intersection of religion, spirituality, and human flourishing through technology advancement.

James B Notkin

James B Notkin is Co-Pastor and Vision Lead of Union Church, Seattle, where he seeks to work with congregants and the surrounding tech community to live into our call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with Jesus. Before co-founding Union, James B was in ministry with Ann Arbor First Presbyterian Church, and then University Presbyterian Church in Seattle. He received his Masters of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary.

Speaker biographies

Jon Palmer

Jon Palmer is the Corporate Vice President and General Counsel at Microsoft. He began his career as an outside counsel before moving in-house, where he managed significant litigation, including the Activision Blizzard merger. He was appointed General Counsel in the fall of 2023. Jon is deeply involved in AI and trust issues and has organized conferences on these topics. He is the son of Rev. Dr. Earl Palmer, a prominent pastor emeritus at University Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Berkeley. Jon's extensive knowledge of regulatory and community engagements, including The Rome Call for AI Ethics, underscores his leadership in the field.

Jason Rahman

Jason Rahman is a Principal Software Engineer specializing in databases and storage. He is employed at Microsoft where he works on the Azure PostgreSQL team. Previously he worked at Meta (Facebook) on storage systems and prior to that on Database Engineering. While at Meta he served with the global Christians @ Meta fellowship and has been deeply involved in Faith & Work integration efforts and organizations in Seattle and the SF Bay Area. He received his B.S. in Computer Science from the Purdue University College Of Science.

Naria Santa Lucia

Naria Santa Lucia serves as General Manager for Digital Inclusion and US Community Engagement at Microsoft Philanthropies. As the digital inclusion lead at Microsoft Philanthropies, Naria oversees Microsoft's global philanthropic strategy, grant investments and partnerships in digital skills, computer science education, and career pathways. With the goal of increasing digital, computing, and AI skills for traditionally underrepresented and under-resourced communities, Naria works in partnership with nonprofit organizations around the world to help millions of people thrive in the digital economy. Naria is a graduate of the University of Chicago Law School.

Chris Skaggs

Chris Skaggs is the Founder and Chief Operations Officer of Soma Games and Soma SoulWorks. Created in 2005, Soma Games makes artistically excellent games for people who may never go to church, but find themselves having fun while pondering eternal things. Soma SoulWorks is the ministry side of Soma producing teaching and podcasts for "young creatives". Chris is the founder of the Imladris Conference of Christian Game Creators which annually draws dozens of game creators to an immersive engagement with games for the Kingdom of God.

Participants

Antonia Coleman

antonia.coleman@pcusa.org

Antonia R. Coleman describes herself as “Bill’s daughter and Joyce’s heartbeat. Her work is informed by EcoWomanism, widowhood care, reparatory justice, and the Black Protestant tradition. By grounding the discussion in the lived experiences and spiritual traditions of marginalized communities, Antonia advocates for a more holistic and inclusive approach to AI ethics. For Antonia, there is comfort in music, curating joy, her godchildren, the nibbling contingency, a good book under a shaded tree, and the splashes of Yemonja’s hemline, the Yoruban giver of life and mother of all.

Dan Peterson

pastor@queenannelutheran.org

Hi! I have a foot in the world of ministry and one in academia. I am presently the pastor of Queen Anne Lutheran Church (ELCA) here in Seattle as well as an adjunct instructor at Seattle University and Seattle Pacific University. I have a PhD in systematic theology. I am now serving as a co-editor of a new volume with Mercer University Press on the theologian Paul Tillich and AI, and I’ll be on the lookout for a potential contributor to introduce AI to a general audience (the first chapter). I look forward to this event!

Phil laBelle

plabelle@ecww.org

I am the bishop elect in the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia. The ethics around AI and its impact on our interactions with others interests me, and I look forward to learning more as I attend as an observer.

David Iacoponi

iacoponida@outlook.com

I do C-level IT consulting. I have been working pro bono for small organizations for 6 years so that I can focus on raising my kids. In a year, the youngest of 5 will graduate HS and I will be looking for gainful employment. Prior to that, I worked for a cybersecurity startup in LA for a year. I was SVP of IT for a global investment bank where I worked for over 20 years. During that time I also worked as an Equity Research Analyst covering Tech firms, and worked on several of the firm’s VC efforts. I have a BS in Electrical Engineering, and a BA in Liberal Studies, with a thesis in the History and Philosophy of Science, from the big-C Catholic University of Notre Dame.

Sameer Augustine

sameer.augustine@gmail.com

I’m a lifelong Episcopalian and a member of Immanuel Church on the Hill in Alexandria, VA.

Currently, I’m a Robotics Engineering student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester, MA. I have a deep passion for Robotics and AI and I’m very interested in how we can apply these emerging technologies to the church.

Stacy Williams-Duncan

Stacy@learnigforte.com

I am Stacy Williams-Duncan, CEO of Learning Forte and part-time Rector at Little Fork Episcopal Church. I am committed to empowering educators and leaders to integrate technology effectively in faith-based learning environments. My background is deeply rooted in educational leadership and theological studies, which allows me to bridge the gap between faith and technology.

I look forward to hearing others’ insights on harnessing AI for ethical and transformative purposes in ministry.

Rimes McElveen

rimes@faithreasontomfoolery.org

My name is Rimes McElveen and I love being immersed in nature to recharge. However, I also love being immersed in co-creativity with family, friends, and colleagues, cultivating human flourishing and the Common Good in the name of Jesus. So I'm excited to be with all of those of you gathered for this unique convening of colleagues conspiring for good at the intersection of AI technologies and the Church. You can find me at faithreasontomfoolery.org if you are so inclined. Peace be with you.

Julia Delashmutt

julia@stpeterschelsea.org

I am interested in learning more about AI and how it will continue to shape our future. I work as the Administrator of Colleges & Universities of the Anglican Communion and as the children's ministry coordinator at St. Peter's Episcopal in NYC. CUAC is considering AI as the topic of our next Triennial in 2026. In my free time I am a potter, a baker and love gardening.

Keion Jackson

Keion.jackson@pcusa.org

Hello all I am Keion Jackson. I am the Associate for African American Congregations.

Tay Moss

imc@tucc.ca

Ordained Priest in the Anglican Church of Canada. Director of the education and community website CHURCHx. Early AI adopter.

Corey Schlosser-Hall

corey.schlosserhall@pcusa.org

I serve as Deputy Executive Director for Vision and Innovation with the Presbyterian Mission Agency, PC(USA) since 2022. I live in the greater Seattle area and am delighted we'll be gathering here at Epiphany Parish and Microsoft. In my role at PMA I work with our Center for Repair for Historic Harm, Office of Innovation, Communications Ministry Team and Executive Leadership Team to empower the existing church in all its forms and new expressions of church in the US and around the world as they innovate to engage the biggest challenges in the world! I'm jazzed to join this ecumenical and interfaith group tackling the amazing potential for good with AI and its challenges. Let's go!

lorenzo lebrija

lorenzo@trytank.org

Hi. I am the executive director of the TryTank Research Institute and the chief innovation officer for Virginia Theological Seminary. I am an Episcopal Priest and live in Los Angeles.

Ian Hall

ian.hall@pcusa.org

Ian Hall serves as the Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer at the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a role he's held since June 2021. Based in Louisville, Kentucky, Ian is an integral member of the senior leadership team, providing financial leadership to the A Corporation and the General Assembly. He also oversees operations for information technology, distribution services, mail/print, and other support services. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) consists of over 9,000 congregations with 1.1 million members.

Ross Lockhart

rlockhart@standrews.edu

Hi I'm Ross Lockhart and I'm delighted to be part of this learning experience! I serve as Dean of St. Andrew's Hall, the Presbyterian Church in Canada college at the University of British Columbia, and I teach Mission Studies across the street at Vancouver School of Theology. I live with my family on nearby Bowen Island and look forward to getting to know all the participants in our time together in Seattle.

Mel Tubb

melonee.tubb@pcusa.org

Hello everyone! I'm excited to have the chance to be part of this. I work with PCUSA Advocacy committees. I am hoping to learn as much as I can about how AI is affecting and will continue to affect marginalized communities as well as how AI can be used to help our committees do their work.

Lawrence Williams

lawrence.williams@pcusa.org

Hello, I am Dr. Lawrence H. Williams, Jr. My role is Director of Technology in ASG.

Mercedes Clements

mercedes.clements@gmail.com

The Rev. Mercedes Clements is an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church. She currently serves as rector of All Saints' Episcopal Church in Russellville, Arkansas.

Prior to following her call to ordained ministry, Mercedes worked in information technology and compliance for 20 years across a variety of roles and industries. She also served in leadership and consulting roles for various nonprofit organizations. Although no longer active, her former certifications

include MCSE, CISSP, CISA, and CISM.

Mercedes holds a B.S. degree in Chemistry and Theatre from the University of the South, Sewanee, TN, and an M. Div. degree from the School of Theology at Sewanee.

Kim Arakawa

karakawa@vts.edu

Greetings - I hold a Master's degree in Organizational Leadership and am pursuing my Ph.D. in Leadership Studies at Gonzaga University. I am the Project Manager for the Mutual Ministry and Preaching Congregations initiatives with the Department of Lifelong Learning at Virginia Theological Seminary. I also serve in the Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i as Vice President of Diocesan Council and Deputy to General Convention. When I am not voraciously reading leadership books, I enjoy quality time with my husband (of 30 years), my son (a recent high school graduate), and my dog, Jack. I look forward to our time together. Aloha.

Kristen Opalinski

Kristen.opalinski@elca.org

My name is Kristen Opalinski and I serve as the Manager for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). My work includes shepherding new and existing ecumenical and inter-religious partnerships, helping to develop resources for greater ecumenical and inter-religious engagement across the church, and communicating our work to the broader church and beyond. I have backgrounds in design, communications, theology, public leadership and conflict transformation. In addition to my role at the ELCA, I'm engaged in the work of dialogue and peacemaking through the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission "Branches of Peace Initiative"- a three-year project studying Lutheran justice, peace, and reconciliation processes around the world. I also serve on the Board of Directors for OMNIA Institute for Contextual

Leadership, a global interfaith peacemaking organization based in Chicago, on the Alumni Board of Augsburg University, and as a North American advisor for the South Africa-based NGO, Sonke Gender Justice.

Marina Karapetian

mkarapetian@callutheran.edu

Hello my name is Marina and I am a senior History and Political Science double major and Legal Studies minor at California Lutheran University. I am studying abroad next semester at my schools Oxford Program, which will be the first time I live apart from my family, since I am a lifelong commuter. I like to read historical books, play with my dog Romeo, and explore new places and experiences.

Rahel Mwitula Williams

rahel.mwitula-williams@elca.org

I am Rahel I serve as Director of Innovation and Ideas with ELCA. In my work, I collaborate with synods, congregations and ministry partners to nurture and develop new and impactful projects with an objective to cultivate deeper relationships, understand needs more fully and discover opportunities for collaborative support.

Rev. Rob Johnson

robert.johnson20@wayne.edu

I am an ordained, bi-vocational Lutheran pastor living near Grand Rapids, Michigan. In addition to pastoral ministry, I've worked as a design researcher in the automotive industry. Research suggests that individuals are adopting AI tools at faster rates than corporations and institutions. My interest in AI centers on the roles AI technology fills when other segments of society are not present, particularly among youth and single person households.

Beth Lewis

bethlewis@getting2transformation.com

I have spent my career in the publishing industry. From 2002-2019, I served as President & CEO of the ministry of publishing of the ELCA, 1517 Media (formerly known as Augsburg Fortress). Throughout my time there, I constantly pushed the organization to creatively use new technologies for providing ministry resources to congregations, seminaries and individuals, such as SAAS, eBooks, original animated faith formation videos, etc. I also spoke across the ELCA & ecumenically on the importance of congregations & synods' use of technology for ministry through a speech titled, "Gutenberg to Google." I retired in 2019, but failed retirement in 2020 when I became the Executive Director for PCPA (Protestant Church-owned Publishers Association), a 72-year-old trade association for non-profit publishers of Christian books, Bibles, curricula, subscription products, etc. I continue in that role today. Last, but not least, I have my own company, Getting2Transformation, through which I provide consulting, mostly for non-profit faith-based organizations on strategic thinking, governance and turnarounds.

Jose Marichal

jfmarichal@gmail.com

I am a professor of political science at California Lutheran University that studies the impact of AI on politics and society.

Isaac Sharp

isharp@uts.columbia.edu

Isaac B. Sharp, PhD, is Visiting Assistant Professor and Faculty Director of Online and Part-time Programs at Union Theological Seminary. Dr. Sharp is author of *The Other Evangelicals: A Story of Liberal, Black, Progressive, Feminist, and Gay Christians—and the Movement That Pushed Them Out* (Eerdmans 2023) which develops a new, more inclusive history of twentieth century evangelicalism by bringing to light the stories of those who were defined out of the category. He teaches AI ethics at Union, including an upcoming online course this fall 2024 on AI and ethics, offered online and open to the public.

Shawn Kang

shawn.kang@pcusa.org

1001 New Worshiping Communities Associate for Central and Western US
Presbyterian Church USA
Living in Houston, TX
Church planter

Emily Hord

Emily.Hord@pcusa.org

I am a new Staff Attorney for the Presbyterian Church USA. I also am a legal and compliance professional, who has worked with healthcare organizations for over 10 years. I was a Director of Privacy for a large health system and inhouse regulatory and compliance counsel for a large post-acute care company. Before going inhouse, I represented healthcare organizations and professionals as outside counsel.

Aditi Shukla

aditi.shukla@elca.org

Hello, this is Aditi Shukla, and I serve as Innovation Partner (Operations) at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). My background is in Human-Computer Interaction, and I have experience working with emerging technologies, including virtual reality projects. In my current role, I focus on understanding the needs of our community through user research and supporting colleagues in creating solutions that are user-friendly and impactful. I am passionate about exploring how emerging technologies like AI can be ethically and effectively integrated into our work to enhance community engagement and elevate experiences, both in physical and digital spaces. I look forward to collaborating with everyone and learning from your unique perspectives.

Tyler Haug

tylerhaug4@gmail.com

My name is Tyler Haug I am 20 years old and a student researcher at California Lutheran University under Dr. Jose Marichal. I recently was a coauthor on a paper published in the spring 2024 edition of intersections titled "The Critical Role of Lutheran Higher Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence".

Derrick Scott III

derrick.luruth@gmail.com

I am passionate about the Church and raising up a new generation of leaders and laborers who will live as disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world. I have been in collegiate ministry for over 20 years. I currently serve as the Associate Director of Learning and Innovation for the Texas Methodist Foundation and a Digital Campus Minister of Campus to City Wesley Foundation/Studio Wesley. I have an undergraduate

degree in history, am a Cicerone Certified Beer Server, and a textbook introvert. I love eating sushi, flying on Delta, talking about the Enneagram and taking care of my Chihuahua-mix dog Winston and Bengal cat Julian. Most importantly, I hate mayonnaise. #blm #FaithfullyLGBTQ

Vicente Guna

vicente.guna@pcusa.org

Digital strategist and information systems manager, I bring over 20 years of experience in managing the design and implementation of data and software systems aimed at enhancing decision-making and governance processes. For the past decade, I have had the privilege of working with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), where I have been at the forefront of General Assembly operations. My role has also involved developing and managing information systems to support governance and official processes, including ordination and denominational statistics among others.

My professional journey has always been driven by a passion for leveraging technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness. I am particularly enthusiastic about exploring the intersection of technology and spirituality, and I am eager to engage in meaningful discussions and collaborations at this summit!

Jacob Douylliez

jacdouy@icloud.com

My name is Jacob and I serve as the pastor of Eatonton Presbyterian Church and as the Assistant Stated Clerk for Northeast Georgia Presbytery. I am also an elected member of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy. Our committee has been tasked with producing a new social witness policy on Artificial Intelligence and Faith.

Diane Moffett

diane.moffett@pcusa.org

I grew up in Oakland CA and have been married for 46 years with 3 children and 6 wonderful grandchildren. I was ordained in 1987 and have led many growing churches. I am the President/Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

Jo Nygard Owens

jowens@cathedral.org

I am a Presbyterian minister serving as Pastor for Digital Ministry at Washington National Cathedral, and I consider myself to be a Presby-palian. I live in Cleveland, OH with my husband and two children, and commute to DC 1-2 times a month. Prior to that, I ran a business creating resources for churches to engage in digital community building and consulting with churches around communications. Once the workday is over, I rarely open a computer because I'd rather be solving a crossword puzzle, cooking for those I love, or taking a walk.

Jason Whitehead

jason@juniperformation.org

Husband; father; author; therapist; pastor; coach. Curious about how technology can support and transform our sense of community and belonging. New worshipping community leader with Daily Ripple, an online faith formation community.

José R. Irizarry

jirizarry@austinseminary.edu

I am an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and am currently the 10th President of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. My field of academic research is practical theology, with an emphasis on church and culture dynamics and intercultural relations. I was born in New York City but raised in Puerto Rico. I have engaged in theological education as a faculty and administrator for 30 years. At the same time, I remain engaged in pastoral work at local congregations.

Mark Douglas

DouglasM@ctsnet.edu

I am the J. Erskine Love Professor of Christian Ethics at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia and an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church USA. Though my primary current area of research and writing focuses on religious responses to climate-shaped conflicts, my work at CTS has long included teaching and writing at the intersection of science, technology, and ethics, including, for instance, a piece I am currently co-writing with my colleague, Dr. Wonchul Shin of Villanova University, on AI and Political Theology.

Kate Wesch

kwesch@epiphanyseattle.org

I am thrilled to be joining this group. I have been an Episcopal priest for about 20 years, serving congregations small, medium, and large on both the east and west coasts. The area of AI and the Church is something I find fascinating and compelling. I look forward to sharing this work with you.

Kyle Severson

kseverson@stlukespr.org

I currently serve as pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Park Ridge; previously I served as Associate to the Bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod and pastor of St. Philip, Glenview.

Arlette Benoit Joseph

abenoitjoseph@cpg.org

I'm Arlette and I'm the SVP Church Relations Officer at the Church Pension Group (CPG). I represent CPG at events and conferences across the church and works with the Chief Church Relations Officer (CCRO) in establishing healthy, mutually beneficial relationships between CPG and the Episcopal Church. The Church Relations Officer advises the CCRO, CEO, ELT, and other senior managers on church related matters to ensure continued success with our clients, church leadership, and the various institutions of the Episcopal Church. The SVP Church Relations Officer is also responsible for gathering, tracking, and monitoring information to assist with the ongoing work related to both the General and individual Diocesan Conventions. I like traveling and I'm working on working out more.

Barry Ensign-George

barry.ensign-george@pcusa.org

I serve in the denominational offices of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), where I am Manager of the Office of Theology & Worship, and Staff Liaison to the Committee on Theological Education. I've worked on the place of denominations in the life of the church. I've increasingly been drawn to reflection on creatureliness, finitude, and interdependence.

Scott Lyon

scott@solace-vr.com

I am the Founder and CEO of Solace, our heartbeat is to bridge the gap between spirituality and technology. We are building out the leading technology platform for AI spiritual agents and immersive faith-based communities. Harvard MBA, Stanford BA, digital innovator and father of 3 amazing boys!

Krishna Garlic

garlicrashada@yahoo.com

Hello everyone,

My name is Krishna Garlic and I live in Elizabeth NJ. I am a member of Siloam Hope First Presbyterian Church in Elizabeth and I serve as treasurer for the church. Academically I have a Juris Doctor degree from Roger Williams School of Law and an Undergraduate degree from Hampton University. I work full time as the Director of Health and Human Services for the city of Elizabeth and teach as an Adjunct Professor at Kean University in a Union NJ. My business partner and I operate a women's empowerment business that provides coaching and personal and professional development opportunities.

Mark Mellraith

markm@somadigital.org

Pastor, husband, father, and founder and CEO of soma.digital - an online ministry using immersive VR for docuseries-style experiences (think: Rick Steves meets VR for spiritual discovery). www.somdaigital.org

Tricia Lyons

plyons@vts.edu

I live and teach at Virginia Theological Seminary in the area of Practical Theology. I have taught and published on evangelism, faith formation, and the intersection of sacramental faith and popular culture. I have experienced a mix of ignorance and resistance to AI across generations of the church. We need a more life-giving relationship with AI, finding ways to discern the Spirit's role in this technology. I am convinced our approach must be rooted in theology and freedom.

Christopher Benek

benekcj@hotmail.com

Rev. Dr. Christopher Benek is the Pastor of First Miami Presbyterian Church and the CEO of CoCreators. You can learn more about him at christopherbenek.com

Ken Brannon

kbrannon@saintmichael.org

Greetings, everyone! I'm looking forward to learning with you in the coming year. I'm Vice Rector at Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in Dallas, Texas. We're a big church with a large staff, so we run on the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS - <https://www.eosworldwide.com/>). I serve as the "Integrator," while the Rector serves as the "Visionary." I'm not an early adopter of AI, so I come as one who has much to learn. I'm married to Rachel (29 years), who is a lifelong spiritual pilgrim and psychotherapist, and we have two adult children (Lucy - 27 and Isaac - 23), who fascinate and delight me as they live more fully into their vocations.

Joshua Case

casej@christchurchcharlotte.org

I have been living, innovating and leading at the prophetic edge of technology and theology for over 20 years. I presently support a large congregational staff and provide coaching to leaders in various sectors (finance, technology, education, theology) in the development of healthy and ethical processes for the incorporation of GenAI. I believe AI needs religion and that you can't spell faith without AI.

Andy Morgan

amorgan@fpcknox.org

I have served the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in a variety of capacities that include a UKirk Pastor and Senior Pastor and now find joy serving as a Christian Educator. I am married to Sarah (also a Presbyterian Pastor) and am the parent to two children, Robert (6) and James (3). I am deeply interested in the intersection of A.I. and faith-informed social ethics as well as ways A.I. might be used in ways that help reduce burnout, strengthen smaller congregations/staff, and spark creativity.

Sandhya Augustine

sandhyaau25@ssas.org

Hello, my name is Sandhya Augustine. I am a rising senior at St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School in Alexandria, VA. I am a lifelong Episcopalian and member at Immanuel Church on the Hill in Alexandria. I have a deep passion for technology and a keen interest in AI. I had the unique opportunity to use my skills during an internship at the Virginia Theological Seminary. I feel fortunate and blessed to be able to join this group, and I am excited to meet you all.

Mary Crist

mcristusa@gmail.com

I am an Episcopal priest, an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Nation in Montana, the Coordinator of Indigenous Theological Education for The Episcopal Church, a visiting professor at Bexley Seabury Seminary in Chicago, and the priest at St. Michael's Episcopal Outreach Center in Riverside, CA. I live in southern California where I was a professor of education and dean. I am fascinated by AI, also cautious out of concern for the preservation of human creativity, the ethical use of AI, and the inclusion of diverse voices in its development. I'm looking forward to the conference and new learning.

Grace Kim

egkimgrace@gmail.com

Hello, I am Grace Kim, an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and an ICF-certified coach (ACC). A native of South Korea, I currently serve as the transitional pastor of Tazewell Presbyterian Church and as the Lead Honker of Wild Goose Christian Community, a 1001 New Worshipping Community in Appalachia. In addition to my ministerial responsibilities, I am passionate about seeking new ways of being church and coaching leaders in multicultural settings as they navigate through the complexities of internal and external assumptions, fostering an environment where embracing one's cultural identity and vocation is not just encouraged but celebrated.

Will Crist

will.crist@eosworldwide.com

I have proudly served as a priest in the Episcopal Church for 50 years. During this time, I have:

- Led a parish in the Diocese of West Texas as Rector.
- Stepped in as an interim for a year in ten different congregations in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts.
- Held the position of Principal at a day school in the Diocese of Los Angeles.

For the past 24 years, I have also dedicated myself to assisting businesses in organizational development, currently as a Certified Implementer of the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS), making this my major ministry. On a personal note, I have been blessed with a wonderful wife for 47 years, two children, seven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Kip Currier

jameskipcurrier@gmail.com

Hi, my name is Kip Currier. I'm an attorney (currently non-practicing) and an Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Computing and Information.

I've been teaching a graduate course in technology ethics since 2011. I also created and have been maintaining, since 2010, an ethics blog, "Ethics, Info, Tech: Contested Voices, Values, Spaces", <https://kipcurrierethics.blogspot.com>

My contracted textbook Ethics, Information, and Technology, which will be published by Bloomsbury Publishing in 2025, has chapters on AI and other emerging technologies, as well as intellectual property, privacy, intellectual freedom, disinformation, social media, character, and more.

My career has been focused on helping marginalized individuals and communities: my first job after law school was legally representing Native Americans on the Navajo Nation in New Mexico. I next served as a Patients'

Rights Attorney on behalf of mental health consumers, homeless persons, and immigrants in California.

I'm very excited to work with and learn from everyone through this summit experience and ongoing post-summit collaborations.

Troy Elder

telder@ladiocese.org

In realms where refugees seek a guiding light,
Passion ignites, in AI's transformative flight.
With fervor kindled for those in need's embrace,
I bridge the realms where compassion finds its place.

Doyt Conn

dconn@epiphanyseattle.org

Doyt grew up in Rochester, MN and received his Bachelors from Northwestern University in 1989. After college he worked as a Project Director for the international relief organization AmeriCares. In 1992 he joined the Hawk Group of Companies in Cleveland, OH where he worked as a product manager, and in mergers and acquisitions. His final posting with Hawk Group was as the Director of Corporate Strategy. In 1997 Doyt received his MBA from Case Western University.

Doyt was called to the priesthood from St. Paul's Cleveland Heights, and ordained by the Bishop of Ohio in 2003. Upon graduation from Virginia Theological Seminary he worked as Associate for Pastoral Care at All Saints Beverly Hills, and in 2008 was called as the 10th Rector of Epiphany Parish Seattle.

Doyt is married to Kristin, a family physician, and they have two children, Margaret (1999) and Desmond (2004). Doyt enjoys writing, reading, fishing, working out and playing tennis, hanging out with his children, and hiking with his wife.

Peter Levenstrong

peter.levenstrong@gmail.com

I am an Episcopal priest serving as Associate Rector at St. Gregory's of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco. You may have heard of us as the dancing church! I have a strong interest in exploring the uses of AI in ministry, and co-created (with Fr. Lorenzo) a group on Facebook for church leaders to learn and share how they're using generative AI in their ministry. I am currently writing a book on a new homiletical method called Living Stories, and am generally interested in innovative ways of sharing the Gospel in today's world. I'm excited to connect with others who share a passion for this work!

Sean Steele

s.steele79@gmail.com

Hello Everyone,

My name is Sean Steele, and I currently serve in the Diocese of Texas. For the past nine years, I have been working with a Church Plant called St. Isidore, and in that capacity, I have been trying to reimagine what it means to be church in our time and place. I am very interested in the impact AI and future technologies will have on how we gather as humans and make us wonder what it means to be human.

Devin Rodgers

jdevin.rodgers@gmail.com

I'm an Episcopal priest canonically resident in San Francisco. For my full time job I work as an AI tutor at Xai. I help train and refine X's ai model. Personally, I am passionate about combining spirituality and technology.

Right now, I'm working on a GPT tool to help church leaders with community building, spiritual formation, and administration. I'm all about finding new ways to blend ancient spiritual wisdom with modern tech to help us all grow and connect more deeply.

Josh Packard

josh@futureoffaith.org

I am the co-founder of Future of Faith and researcher with TryTank. My focus is on translating data into real world application for faith leaders so they can do more of what they do best-connect with people. I believe that listening is sacred and the only viable pathway forward for the church is through relationships.

Claire Woodley

cwoodley@dioceseli.org

I am half of the Canon to the Ordinary in Long Island. (Pat Mitchell is the other 1/2.) Analyzing trends and futures is fundamental to my practice in congregational development. AI has tremendous potential for our neighborhood interface and supporting the work of loving our neighbors. This is an opportunity for the church to be responsive to the present and get ahead of reactivity.

Silvestre Romero

bishopRomero@diowks.org

I'm an assisting bishops in the Episcopal Diocese of Western Kansas. Prior to be in the diocese of Western Kansas, I was the Diocesan Bishop in the Episcopal Diocese of Guatemala. Prior to entering in the ministry I graduated with a Bachelors degree in Computer Science.

Michael Delashmutt

delashmutt@gts.edu

My background (professionally and academically) is in technology and theology. In the 90s, I worked in the Seattle dot-com boom before going on to earn a PhD at the University of Glasgow with a focus on theology and information technology. I'm a priest in the Episcopal Church and I teach theology at General Seminary.

APPENDIX (Raw Data; 1 & 2 – grouped by topics in order of most to least mentioned)

1. Safety, Trust, and Ethical Concerns of AI
 - Safety issues for AI use – concern around sensitivity and cultural complexities.
 - Techno-feudalism concerns – use of data and how it will affect the poor.
 - AI and undocumented folks – AI as a privileged space – tech not seen as trustworthy.
 - We have to be prepared for the “bad players.”
 - How do we ensure people are actually being helped?
 - AI as bad for the environment – use of energy/fossil fuels.
 - Social, cultural, and ethical milieu of Silicon Valley – ethics garbage in, garbage out.
 - Programmers will program sin into AI.
 - AI has shown greater empathy with less bias.
 - AI creeps me out a little...
2. AI and the Church: Theology and Ethical Use
 - What does effective AI use look like in the church? Connecting folks to what it means to be human.
 - Christianity is built on community — if you don’t have human interaction, are you a Christian?
 - Concerned about the church centering around our humanity being in our brains and not in our being.
3. Power, Control, and Agency in AI
 - How do we attend to AI and its non-human capacity?
 - AI catering to continued separateness — what’s the role for the church to counter that?
 - AI tools better able to assist in pastoral care than church members.
 - Faith as psychological substrate.
 - God is in our questions.
 - AI reveals our humanity by exposing humanity’s limitations.
4. Fear, Change, and Evolution of Reformation
 - Are we supposed to have this much creative control?
 - Power can be defined relationally or coercively.
 - Lots of resonance around power and commoditization of tech (AI) — how do we engage it to subvert empire?
 - Reformation is evolving — where did we get the idea that reform died with Martin Luther?
5. Digital Divides and Privilege
 - Theologies will be developed through these innovations — we will sacralize and structuralize (e.g., Westworld).
 - People fear loss, not change — pastoral opportunity.
 - Digital divides — reflecting on the beginning of the digital Worldwide Web and now AI is beginning — who will be left behind?
 - AI is going to connect and expand — how will we be ready?
 - This is a privileged conversation — others are trying to figure out how to feed themselves.
 - Who are the least of these when it comes to AI? Where are the margins? Who is left behind?
 - Access, bias, and tribal social media issues.
6. Community, Relationships, and Social Justice
 - Communities with historical memory of exploitation — AI is scary — better for whom?
 - This tool needs to be an evangelism and social reformation tool.
 - Denominations are historical accidents — full of theologies and disagreements.
 - We bring guardrails and

- boundaries.
 - How do we lean into letting hierarchies fall?
 - AI as a partner in authentic relationships — how are we relating to the powers that reshape our cyborg humanity?
7. Theological and Philosophical Questions around AI and Humanity
- Imago Dei — imparting to children; encroaching on God's territory?
 - What is the defining feature of being human?
 - People don't fear change — they fear loss. Status quo leads to death.
 - AI with personhood — possible?
 - Can AI help us be peacemakers — sin less?
 - As faithful people, is belief in eternal life the ultimate Future Now perspective?
 - If God is all in all, why are we afraid of AI?
8. Bias and Representation in AI
- What is the voice of current ChatGPT — biased toward white male middle class?
 - AI bias and its role in society.
9. AI as a Tool: Augmentation vs Replacement
- Augmentation vs replacing — we are already augmented (e.g., glasses, calendars, smart watches).
 - I'm not wired to assume a tool will always be useful — however, I know I need them.
10. Future of AI and Spiritual Reflection
- I wonder how AI, as a social and cultural force, enables or represents loving Jesus.
 - AI as a way of glorifying God (e.g., mountains singing praise).
 - Will AI lead to new expressions of justice, mercy, and peace in a digital age?
11. Speculative Thoughts and Wonderings
- I wonder if I will be welcomed, accepted, valued, and my purpose honored by God if I choose not to be augmented.
 - How pastoral care might change with AI-generated background data.
 - If God is all in all, why are we afraid of AI?

APPENDIX

Based on the raw data from participant feedback and the principles of Ronald Heifetz's Adaptive Leadership, several actionable steps emerge for faith leaders as they navigate the complexities of AI and its impact on their communities:

1. Identify and Address Adaptive Challenges

- **Action Step:** Faith leaders should recognize that AI presents not just technical challenges (which can be solved with expertise) but adaptive challenges that require shifts in values, beliefs, and behaviors. Leaders need to facilitate discussions that help their congregations understand and wrestle with the deeper implications of AI on humanity, ethics, and spirituality.
- **Example:** Organize forums, study groups, or sermon series that explore AI's impact on faith, encouraging congregants to reflect on and discuss what it means to be human in an increasingly AI-driven world.

2. Create a Safe Space for Dialogue

- **Action Step:** Foster an environment where people feel safe to express their fears, concerns, and hopes about AI. Heifetz emphasizes the importance of creating a

"holding environment" where difficult conversations can take place, and this is crucial for exploring the ethical and spiritual dimensions of AI.

- **Example:** Facilitate small group discussions or workshops where people can openly share their thoughts on AI without judgment, helping the community to process the changes together.

3. Facilitate Learning Across Differences

- **Action Step:** Recognize the diversity of opinions on AI and leverage it to encourage learning and growth within the community. Heifetz's concept of "giving the work back to the people" suggests that leaders should empower their congregations to wrestle with these issues, rather than providing all the answers.
- **Example:** Encourage members of the community to engage with different perspectives on AI, perhaps by inviting guest speakers with varying views or by organizing debates or panel discussions that highlight different approaches to AI and faith.

4. Guide the Community in Ethical Reflection

- **Action Step:** Lead your community in ethical reflection, helping them

navigate the moral complexities of AI. This might involve developing a shared ethical framework or guidelines that align with the community's values and beliefs.

- **Example:** Develop a series of ethical guidelines or principles that the community can use to evaluate AI tools and technologies, ensuring that these align with core spiritual values like justice, compassion, and the dignity of all people.

5. Encourage Proactive Engagement with AI

- **Action Step:** Encourage your congregation not to shy away from AI but to engage with it thoughtfully and critically. Heifetz's adaptive leadership suggests that leaders must help their communities face reality and take responsible action, rather than avoiding or denying challenges.
- **Example:** Promote the responsible use of AI in ministry, such as using AI tools to enhance pastoral care, improve outreach efforts, or support social justice initiatives. Highlight positive examples where AI is used to foster connection and serve the common good.

6. Embrace the Role of the Church as a Moral Compass

- **Action Step:** Position the church as a moral and ethical guide in the wider conversation about AI. Heifetz emphasizes the importance of leadership in guiding organizations through complex and uncertain times, which is critical in the context of AI.
 - **Example:** Lead efforts to engage with broader societal discussions on AI, perhaps by participating in interfaith dialogues, collaborating with ethical tech organizations, or advocating for policies that ensure AI development aligns with ethical standards.
7. Cultivate Adaptive Capacity within the Congregation
 - **Action Step:** Help your congregation develop the resilience and flexibility needed to adapt to the changes AI brings. This involves not only addressing immediate concerns but also building the capacity to deal with future challenges.
 - **Example:** Offer training and educational resources that equip congregants with the knowledge and skills to understand AI and its implications. This could include workshops on digital literacy, AI ethics, and the theological implications of emerging technologies.
 8. Address Power Dynamics and Biases
 - **Action Step:** Lead discussions on how AI might reinforce or challenge existing power structures and biases, both within the church and society. Heifetz's adaptive leadership calls for leaders to help communities understand and address power imbalances.
 - **Example:** Create initiatives that explore how AI could impact marginalized communities and develop strategies to ensure that the church advocates for equity and justice in AI development and deployment.

By taking these steps, faith leaders can guide their communities through the adaptive challenges posed by AI, helping them to navigate these changes in ways that are ethically sound, spiritually grounded, and socially responsible.

APPENDIX

Submitted by The Rev. Dr. Patricia Lyons

Theme/topic		Theme/topic	Question/s raised by this topic at Summit
		Exclusion/Inclusion	How can Christians get involved with creatives/creators of high tech so that people of faith can be aware of the inequities inherent in choices about our future developing technologies? How does AI exacerbate the haves and have nots? How can Christians incentivize AI industries to expand the benefits of their technology to the poor and marginalized?
AI	How do we define 'artificial' and what, if at all, is AI 'intelligence,' from a Christian point of view?		
Augmentation	How do Christians define 'augmented humans?' How is our identity as made in the image of God altered, if at all, by technological advances that expand human capacity?	Justice	How can Christians best proclaim justice in the secular spaces? How do we define justice? How do Christians unite to articulate visions of justice that would resonate with secular society?
Responsibility	To whom are we responsible in a secular society? Is there a secular way to argue for moral responsibility to a stranger/other? Who enforces responsibility?		
Good and Evil	How does the Christian Church communicate its convictions about good and evil into a secular or pluralist society? If now we only 'see through a glass dimly,' how do we discern good and evil in a highly specialized/technological society? What if our convictions do not translate? On what authority do we claim to speak in a pluralist society?	Clarity vs. Certainty	How can denominations share resources and share practices for discernment that allow a unified witness for the Gospel – a witness that uplifts uncertainty, humility, accountability, vulnerability, and mystery?
		Accountability	How can Christian churches stand against (when necessary) BigTech? What are the powers of faith communities?
Theme/topic		Theme/topic	Question/s raised by this topic at Summit
		Incarnation	Is God present in the creation and use of AI and how would the Church know? Is AI part of God's unfolding grace to humanity? Is AI a temptation? How would we know?

Colonization	How can AI escape the historical examples of industrial technologies/countries abusing developing nations and peoples? How can people of faith pressure industries to avoid monopolistic practices that leave consumers or countries at the mercy of a small number of decision-makers?	The Free Market/ Market Motives	How do Christians unite to name the financial drives/share-holder profits behind big tech? How do faith communities partner with big tech and/or connect with workers in those industries who are already people of faith?
Liberation	Do all people have a mandate to create or use technology for the liberation of others (or to avoid any use that threatens the liberation of others?) How can Christians unite on what, exactly, is or is not liberating about AI? Can Christians unite around language about liberation that goes beyond political-speak and instead argues for universal moral norms and dreams?	Resurrection	This is the core of Gospel. How do Christians share our belief in the resurrection in a way that is accessible and generously inclusive of a pluralistic world? How do we speak to the resurrection's power in light of the power of GenAI? Do we need new metaphors or more informed preaching so that we can speak to those in high tech about the Empty Tomb?
Conscience and Authority	How can Christians come together in a definition of conscience that speaks to their diverse traditions and historic convictions about human nature, human freedom and God's voice in human life? What is an ecumenical authority structure?	Transformation	How do we proclaim to an increasingly technocratic culture the real, evidentiary experience of transformations that Christians are having in their lives? How can we be/should we be open to the transformations in human health, creativity and dignity made possible by AI?
Theme/topic	Question/s raised by this topic at Summit Is there one? Is there a version of Christian ethics that allows us to speak in pluralistic and secular spaces with authority? In other words, why should anyone in or out of the church listen to us?		

Theme/topic	Question/s raised by this topic at Summit	Theme/topic	Question/s raised by this topic at Summit
Grace	How do Christians maintain proclamation for joy, love, and grace? How do we translate these pillars of our faith into language for our culture?		technology. How do we share this conviction without dismissing the role of technology between now and that glorious coming of our Lord?
Human Flourishing	Can Christians come together to define human flourishing in a way that is compelling and that acknowledges the positive potential impact of technology?	Harm	How can the Church communicate our concerns for harm without losing our bridges with the technology communities? How do we balance over-reacting and under-reacting? How can the Church partner with high tech to form oaths to do no harm? What are the vehicles, governing bodies, organizations that can establish frameworks to avoid harm?
Scripture	How do we invite Christians to new and deeper levels of literacy in our traditions and scripture? How do we work together to find biblical passages that would have value to the believer and non-believer? That is, how do we translate the wisdom of the Word of God in order to give a good word to the world?	Creativity	Does the world know that Christians love beauty and believe that beauty is a language of God? How do we earn a reputation for celebrating human creativity and beauty?
Intent	Intent is formed in discernment. How can the Church contribute to the maturity of discernment in all people? Can we be a resource to our neighbors on discernment?	Theological Anthropology	We need to come together as Christians in our definitions of human beings, human dignity, and human conscience. How is this possible across denominations? Are we social by nature or by choice? How do we witness to the identity and possibilities of the human person to a technocratic culture?
Eschatology	Are we "sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see?" How can Christians strengthen our faith and hope in the redemption of all things made by God? Can we/how can we agree on 'the end things?' The end of human history is resurrection and redemption: there will be no need for augmentation or		

EPIPHANY†

— *Seattle* —

During the summit, we were honored to participate and refresh our souls with a Choral Evensong service with the Epiphany Seattle choir. You can follow this QR code to experience a recording.



You can subscribe to the Epiphany Seattle Evensong podcast here: <https://epiphanyseattle.org/worship/choral-evensong/>



FY25 Skills for Social Impact

Prepared for Faith and AI Summit
August 2024

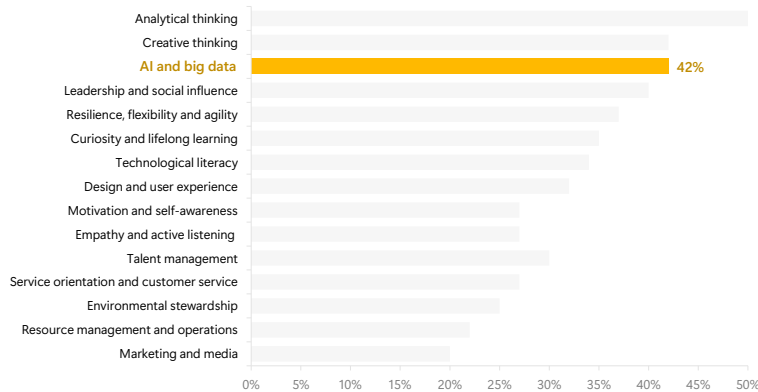


The opportunity

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is advancing faster than ever and is expected to impact all aspects of society, changing the way people learn, work, and connect

Top 15 skills for companies from now until 2027

Number three priority in company training strategies from now until 2027, and the number one priority for companies with more than 50,000 employees



Source: World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report 2023



According to the [World Economic Forum](#), AI skills represent the third-highest priority for companies' training strategies, right alongside analytical and creative thinking.

According to our recent [Work Trend Index](#):

- 68% of survey respondents said they struggle with too much time spent searching for information in their workday.
- 66% of leaders say they would not hire someone without AI skills.
- 45% of people say they're worried AI will replace their jobs.
- 77% of people are already using AI at work and many are bringing their own tools.

AI is already in the workplace

Source: 2024 Work Trend Index

75%

of people are already using AI at work

46%

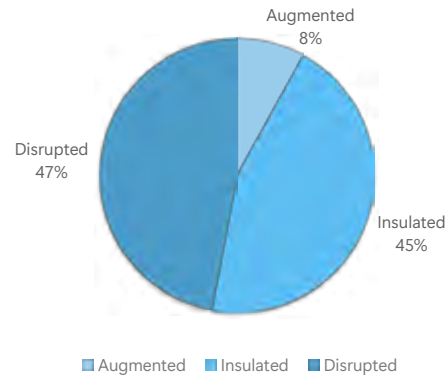
started less than 6 months ago

78%

of users are bringing their own AI tools to work

Generative AI will impact workers' skills

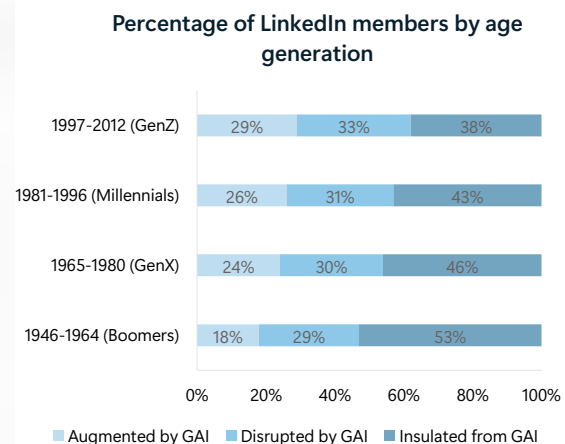
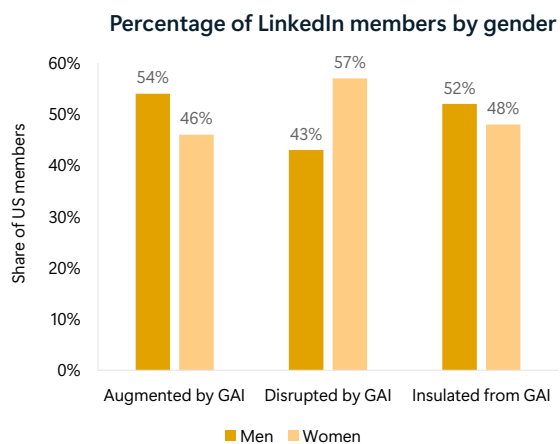
Generative AI's expected effect on LinkedIn members' skills, globally



84% of US LinkedIn members could have at least 25% of their skills affected by Generative AI

Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph Research Institute

Women and younger generations will be most impacted

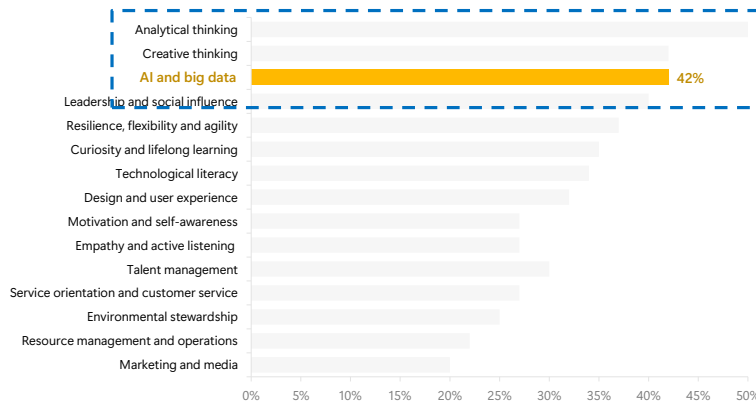


Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph Research Institute

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is advancing faster than ever and is expected to impact all aspects of society, changing the way people learn, work, and connect

Top 15 skills for companies from now until 2027

Number three priority in company training strategies from now until 2027, and the number one priority for companies with more than 50,000 employees



Source: World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report 2023



According to the [World Economic Forum](#), AI skills represent the third-highest priority for companies' training strategies, right alongside analytical and creative thinking.

According to our recent [Work Trend Index](#):

- 68% of survey respondents said they struggle with too much time spent searching for information in their workday.
- 66% of leaders say they would not hire someone without AI skills.
- 45% of people say they're worried AI will replace their jobs.
- 77% of people are already using AI at work and many are bringing their own tools.

How we can help

Microsoft AI Skills Initiatives

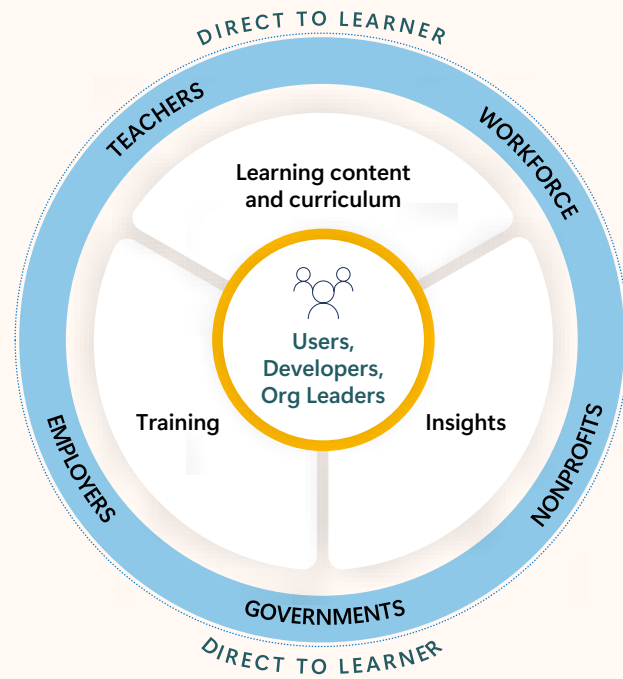
Addressing the AI fluency gap before it becomes too wide

With equitable access to AI skilling at scale, *everyone* can help shape a digital-first, AI economy.

Free AI skilling at a global scale for any learner

Increase workforce potential for all levels

Partnerships and reach across sectors:
Government, Edu, Nonprofits, and more



FY25 Skills for Social Impact Commitments

Drive generative AI skilling at scale through programs and partnerships

AI National Skills
Initiative (AINSI)

20M+

People via AINSI

Global Partnerships

5M

People furthest from opportunity, especially young people, women, and people in the Global South via global partnerships and direct-to-learner engagements

Nonprofit Skilling
(TSI)

1M

Nonprofit professionals



Learning paths provide the foundations for digital and AI fluency

Get started today:
aka.ms/MyLearningPathway

Build the skills you need for the digital economy

LinkedIn Learning | Microsoft

Since June 2023, Microsoft and LinkedIn have helped over 62 million learners acquire hundreds of courses to help them take the next step in their careers.

Now, we're adding 40 new courses to our catalog, including new courses and 8 Professional Certificates to help people learn the foundational skills and advanced hard and soft skills needed for in-personal, tech and tech-enabled jobs.

Online courses are available for free through 2023.

New skills for a new way of working

Generative AI

It's already a part of our way of work, so understanding how it works and how to use it is a key step up your opportunities. Discover the skills needed to apply generative AI in your career with these foundational paths.

Career Essentials in Generative AI

Learn the core concepts of how generative AI and generative AI tools work. This learning path will cover the basics of how generative AI works, explore the capabilities, and discuss the importance of ethical considerations when using them.

Skills you'll learn:

- Understand the basics of generative AI concepts
- Identify the types of generative AI tools
- Explore the ethics of generative AI tools
- Apply AI to your work and career

Start your Career Essentials in Generative AI Professional Certificate

Productivity with Generative AI

Learn how to best use generative AI to get the most out of your work. This path will cover the basics of how generative AI works, explore the capabilities, and discuss the importance of ethical considerations when using them.

Skills you'll learn:

- Apply generative AI to your work
- Understand the importance of generative AI in your work
- Explore the ethics of generative AI tools
- Apply AI to your work and career

Start your Productivity with Generative AI Professional Certificate

14M
engaged learners

2M
engaged with
AI courses

120K
certifications



Career Essentials in Generative AI learning path

Learn the core concepts of Artificial Intelligence and generative AI functionality

Earn your Career Essentials Certificate:
aka.ms/MyLearningPathway_GenAI

1		What is Generative AI? By: Pinar Seyhan Demirdag Learn about the basics of generative AI, including its history, popular models, how it works, ethical implications, and much more. 816,151 viewers - Released Mar 15, 2023	Beginner	42 min
2		Generative AI: The Evolution of Thoughtful Online Search By: Ashley Kennedy Explore the distinctions between search engines and reasoning engines, with a focus on learning thoughtful search strategies in the world of generative AI. 179,095 viewers - Released Jun 13, 2023	Beginner	26 min
3		Streamlining Your Work with Copilot (formerly Bing Chat/Bing Chat Enterprise) By: Jesse Stratton Learn how to leverage Microsoft Bing Chat to streamline and automate your work. 151,329 viewers - Released Jan 22, 2023	Beginner	34 min
4		Learning Microsoft 365 Copilot By: Nick Braso Learn how to leverage Copilot, Microsoft's next-generation AI tool, which is baked into all core productivity apps. 118,504 viewers - Released Aug 28, 2023	Beginner	34 min
5		Ethics in the Age of Generative AI By: Vilas Dhar Learn why ethical considerations are a critical part of the generative AI creation and deployment process and explore ways to address these ethical challenges. 167,301 viewers - Released May 30, 2023	Beginner	38 min
6		Introduction to Artificial Intelligence By: Doug Rose Get a simplified overview of the top tools in artificial intelligence. 250,194 viewers - Released Apr 18, 2023	Beginner	94 min

~4.5 hours of content



FY25 Skills for Social Impact

Prepared for Faith and AI Summit
August 2024





Digital & AI skills resource toolkit

Resources to expand opportunity
in your community



AI skilling for all

AI has created a tectonic shift in how we work, and we know that technology is only as good as our ability to use it. The future of work relies on our ability to learn and use AI at every level in every sector. Together, we can close the AI opportunity gap before it becomes too wide. With access to AI skilling at scale, *everyone* can help shape an AI economy.

Partnering for collective impact

We understand that change happens locally. That's why we are proud to work with communities around the world to help accelerate impact. By offering skilling content, curriculum, and training resources for users, developers, and organizational leaders, we are committed to equipping local change agents with digital and AI capabilities to expand opportunities for everyone.

Resources to support your community

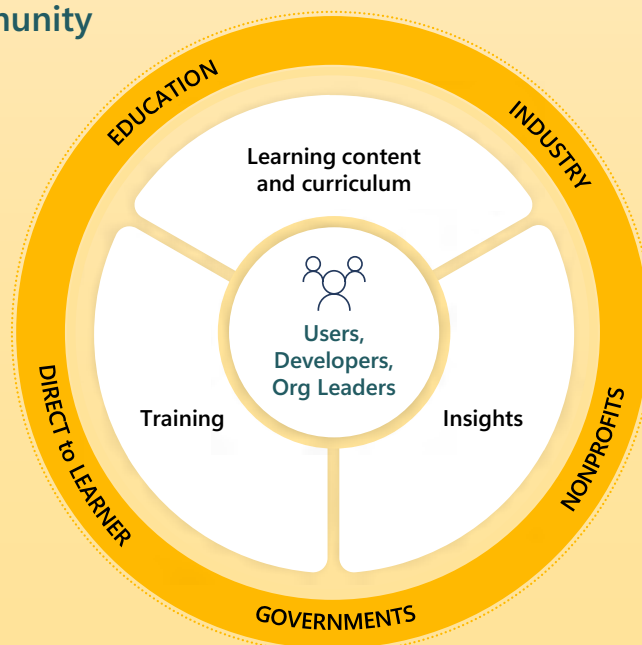
Free AI skilling for any learner

Insights and training for governments

Content and certifications for workforce

Programs and offers for educators

Resources and support for community organizations



Resources for learners

Users

Workers who use generative AI in their jobs and daily lives

- [LinkedIn Generative AI Pathway](#)
- [LinkedIn Productivity with GenAI Learning Pathway](#)
- [Digital Skills Compass](#)
- [LinkedIn CoPilot for Productivity Pathway](#)
- [AI fluency content on Learn](#)

Developers

Creators of LLMs and AI tools & technologies

- [LinkedIn Software development Learning Pathway](#)
- [LinkedIn System Administration Learning Pathway](#)
- [LinkedIn Data Analysis Learning Pathway](#)
- [Learn AI collection for developers](#)
- [LinkedIn cybersecurity pathway](#)

Organizational leaders

Decision makers who are responsible for managing adoption of AI and integrating it into workflows

- [LinkedIn AI for Organizational Leaders Learning Pathway](#)
- (TBA) LinkedIn AI for Managers Learning Pathway
- [Learn AI collection for business leaders](#)

Training and events

Live Trainings on demand

Microsoft organized virtual events to explain generative AI fundamentals and its positive impact on problem solving and community benefit. Available on-demand in 10 languages.

Microsoft Virtual Training Days

Expert webinars to help novices, experts, and everyone in between transform their businesses and achieve their full potential using the Microsoft Cloud platform.

Resource collections

Digital Literacy resources

Everyone starts somewhere. To meet learners where they are on their own skilling journey, we also make digital literacy, productivity, and cloud skills resources available.

AI Learning Hub

The AI learning hub is a one-stop shop to get skilled up and ready to power AI transformation with the Microsoft Cloud. Explore learning plans, documentations, certifications, and events for a variety of technologies and roles.

Digital Skills Resource Hub

Find all our resources across roles and functions, brought to you with the help of an AI agent.



Get started

Find the right resources for you today: aka.ms/DigitalSkillsHub

Wonder Wall (Responses)

During the summit, we asked participants to jump online and add their “wonderings” or questions to a virtual wall where everyone could see them and engage each other in conversation. This is what was posted.

Are you wondering about a particular session?	Type your wonder below.
No, this is a general wonder.	Wondering how AI on Miro works
Monday 6pm: Augmented Faith Leathers in a World that is Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible - Johansen	Last night's opening keynote was energizing...thank you! Bob Johansen mentioned that it was being recorded. While I don't think this isn't the type of wonderment that is intended here, I am wondering will the recording be available to attendees and may I have permission to share it with others with attribution, of course? Thank you!
Monday 6pm: Augmented Faith Leathers in a World that is Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible - Johansen	Bob recommends a FutureNow approach to planning. The present is too noisy, so we look to future forecasts to discern next steps. As faithful people, is belief in eternal life the ultimate FutureNow perspective? How do we bring the kingdom/kin-dom/Beloved Community near?
Tuesday 9am: The Developing Landscape and Trends for Christian Missional and Ministry Applications - Osborn/Green	We're so far behind when it comes to public and technology spaces. Also, how are we defining power, relationally or coercively?
Monday 6pm: Augmented Faith Leathers in a World that is Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible - Johansen	I wonder if we are really at the peak of income inequality.
Tuesday 9am: The Developing Landscape and Trends for Christian Missional and Ministry Applications - Osborn/Green	I wonder if anything has been developed to help people examine beliefs that are rooted in harmful dominate culture narratives. How would that work if AI tells us what we want to hear?
No, this is a general wonder.	Today is going to be the day That they're going to throw it back to you By now you should have somehow Realized what you've got to do I don't believe that anybody feels the way I do About you now
No, this is a general wonder.	Today is going to be the day That they're going to throw it back to you By now you should have somehow Realized what you've got to do I don't believe that anybody feels the way I do About you now

Are you wondering about a particular session?	Type your wonder below.
No, this is a general wonder.	Given access, bias, and tribal social media issues, what if we need to imagine in AI's, rather than a singular AI.
Tuesday 9am: The Developing Landscape and Trends for Christian Missional and Ministry Applications - Osborn/Green	Where does Jesus fit into all the machinations about AI?
Tuesday 1pm: Incarnation in a World of AI - Bananti/Herzfeld/Olson	At its core, the purpose of incarnation is forgiveness that leads to reconciliation. Gods presence is most evident when broken relationships are healed. I wonder if AI technologies are being used to enable forgiveness that leads to reconciliation, and, if not, how the Church can position AI for that healing.
Tuesday 1pm: Incarnation in a World of AI - Bananti/Herzfeld/Olson	Who cares if Father Justin is a physical or virtual confessor. The Church has been using stand ins - in the form of bread, wine, and water - for centuries.
Tuesday 1pm: Incarnation in a World of AI - Bananti/Herzfeld/Olson	Who cares if Father Justin is a physical or virtual confessor. The Church has been using stand ins - in the form of bread, wine, and water - for centuries.
No, this is a general wonder.	If God is all in all, I wonder why we are so afraid of AI. Do we lack trust in God's ability to raise up new expressions of justice, mercy, and peace in a digital age? Some may decide to resist AI, but I prefer to use my energy to learn how to be a more effective leader in this unique moment.
No, this is a general wonder.	God is all in all, but God is not in the atom bomb. God is in Hiroshima (where Fr. Benanti was just visiting). Let us cover up our own machinations with God talk.
Tuesday 6pm: Navigating the AI Revolution: A Call for Ethical Stewardship - Benanti	I wonder how pastoral care might change if congregation leaders had access to the probabilities of individual members' giving levels based on ai-generated background data.
Tuesday 9am: The Developing Landscape and Trends for Christian Missional and Ministry Applications - Osborn/Green	I wonder if AI can tell me if I'm Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, or Slytherin. At the very least, the probabilities of being an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher.
Tuesday 1pm: Incarnation in a World of AI - Bananti/Herzfeld/Olson	I wonder if AI tools are better able to be good friends and neighbors for people with neurodiverse abilities than the Church / congregations are able to be.
Tuesday 1pm: Incarnation in a World of AI - Bananti/Herzfeld/Olson	I wonder in what ways ai - as a social and cultural force, not merely a mechanical tool - enables or represents loving Jesus. Like the waves clapping their hands, or the mountains singing their praise, how might ai glorify God?
Tuesday 1pm: Incarnation in a World of AI - Bananti/Herzfeld/Olson	In an age of loneliness shaped by self-help strategies, I wonder if AI is better able to focus on individual needs than church members are able to. I wonder how an attentive AI co-pilot can assist pastoral care leaders when the work is much, but the laborers are few.

Are you wondering about a particular session?	Type your wonder below.
Wednesday AM: Microsoft Panel - Johansen/Green/Klutzz	I wonder how AI will shape or change our discernment of human to human tasks. How might we train new clergy to know what is a human to human solution, and what is an AI solution?
Wednesday AM: Microsoft Panel - Johansen/Green/Klutzz	Microsoft testimony claims that AI builds stronger empathy with less bias. In addition, Microsoft's mission is to enable AI capabilities to remote locations and tech deserts. If AI evolves into a flawless, all knowing, omni-present technology that resolves human suffering, then I wonder what need is there for a flawless, all knowing, omni-present God?
Wednesday AM: Microsoft Panel - Johansen/Green/Klutzz	Microsoft says their AI has shown greater empathy with less bias and more capacity to meet people where they are. I wonder how a technology that can do soft skills more reliably than humanity can effectively "reveal our humanity" beyond exposing humanity's limitations?
Wednesday AM: Microsoft Panel - Johansen/Green/Klutzz	I wonder if I will be welcomed, accepted, valued, and my purpose honored by God and my neighbors if I choose that I don't want to be augmented at all. Does the old theme "Just As I Am" even matter anymore in AI augmented faith?
Wednesday 1:30pm: On Theology - Herzfeld	I wonder how the movies "Castaway" and "Lars and the Real Girl" guide or inspire the ways in which AI technologies are or might be partners in authentic relationships?
Wednesday 1:30pm: On Theology - Herzfeld	I wonder if some of the tensions around embodiment & ableism, and how emphasis on one can seem to lead to unintended reinforcement of the other, might be resolved if we draw on feminist conceptions of "the cyborg" as an entangled kind of embodiment across animal, human, machinic -- across nature and culture. From that lens, the question of authentic relationship stops being about whether we can really relate to AI, and starts being about whether we are really relating to the "powers" that are reshaping the horizons of our cyborg humanity i.e. the orgs that code and deploy AI. Less about how we are human and more about how we can have a say in our own entanglements.
No, this is a general wonder.	Who are the least of these when it comes to AI? Where are the margins? Who is left behind?