

# Faith In the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Assessing Impacts, Risks, and Future Directions

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## Abstract

This paper, *Faith in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Assessing Impacts, Risks, and Future Directions*, explores the transformative influence of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, on faith-related practices. The rapid integration of AI into everyday life has begun to shape human interaction, knowledge production, and decision-making, raising critical questions about its implications for spirituality, worship, and religious ethics. While AI technologies present opportunities for innovation in theological reflection, pastoral communication, and interfaith dialogue, they also bring significant risks, including concerns about authenticity, human agency, and the potential reduction of spiritual practices to algorithmic processes. The problem under investigation is the lack of systematic analysis of how AI reshapes faith-related practices and the ethical challenges it introduces. The guiding research questions are: (1) What impacts does generative AI have on contemporary faith practices and spiritual engagement? (2) What opportunities can AI provide in strengthening religious communication, community building, and ethical reflection? (3) What risks and ethical dilemmas arise when AI intersects with faith? (4) What future pathways can ensure the responsible integration of AI into spiritual and religious life? The objectives of this study are to examine both the opportunities and challenges AI brings to faith practices, to assess the theological and ethical implications of these changes, and to propose strategies for ensuring that technological innovation supports rather than undermines spiritual integrity. The research employed a qualitative methodology, combining literature review, document analysis, and thematic

interpretation of contemporary debates in theology, ethics, and technology studies. It highlights the need for ethical and innovative frameworks that balance technological advancement with enduring spiritual and human-centered values.

**Key concepts:** Artificial Intelligence, faith practices, ethics.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The 21st century has witnessed the rapid emergence and integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a defining force in human society. From healthcare and education to finance and governance, AI is increasingly shaping how people live, work, and interact. In recent years, this technological revolution has also begun to influence religious life, faith practices, and theological reflection. Generative AI systems, such as ChatGPT, Bard, and other large language models, have entered domains once reserved for human creativity and spirituality, including the writing of sermons, the composition of prayers, the translation of sacred texts, and the facilitation of online pastoral counseling. While these developments open new possibilities for religious engagement, they also raise profound ethical, theological, and existential questions regarding the meaning of faith, human agency, and divine inspiration in an age dominated by intelligent machines.

Nowadays, theologians, pastors, and lay believers are beginning to confront how digital technologies shape spiritual formation, moral education, and community life. The intersection of faith and AI, therefore, presents both an opportunity and a

challenge: an opportunity to renew the Church's mission through technological innovation, and a challenge to ensure that such innovation remains anchored in the principles of human dignity, moral responsibility, and divine guidance.

The paper is organized into five main sections. The first introduces the research background, objectives, and questions. The second reviews literature on AI and faith, focusing on theological and ethical perspectives. The third section presents the methodology and data analysis. The fourth discusses findings in relation to contemporary scholarship, while the fifth proposes practical recommendations and future directions for faith communities engaging with AI.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Although AI offers significant benefits in enhancing communication, education, and innovation, its application to faith raises important theological and ethical concerns. Religious communities increasingly rely on AI for administrative tasks, sermon preparation, and online outreach, yet there is limited reflection on how these tools influence spirituality, authenticity, and moral discernment. Furthermore, the absence of clear ethical frameworks and theological guidelines creates risks of misuse, distortion of doctrine, and erosion of pastoral authority.

The core problem this paper investigates is the lack of systematic analysis of how AI reshapes faith-related practices and the ethical challenges it introduces. Without critical engagement, faith communities risk either uncritically embracing or completely rejecting technological change.

## **1.3 Research objectives and questions**

This study aims to explore the relationship between faith and artificial intelligence by assessing the opportunities, risks, and future directions of AI in spiritual and religious life. Specifically, it seeks to examine the impact of generative AI on contemporary faith practices and spiritual engagement, to identify the opportunities AI

provides in strengthening religious communication, theological education, and community building, to analyze the ethical and theological risks associated with AI use in spiritual contexts, and to propose future strategies and frameworks for the responsible integration of AI into faith-based and pastoral practice.

To achieve these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions: What impacts does generative AI have on contemporary faith practices and spiritual engagement? What opportunities can AI provide in strengthening religious communication, community building, and ethical reflection? What risks and ethical dilemmas arise when AI intersects with faith? What future pathways can ensure the responsible integration of AI into spiritual and religious life?

## **1.5 Motivation and Significance of the Study**

This study is motivated by a growing awareness that faith communities, especially in Africa, are entering an era where technology and theology must be harmonized rather than separated. As a theologian and ethicist, the researcher observes that many church leaders and believers are already using AI tools such as ChatGPT and Google Bard to prepare sermons, translate scripture, and communicate across linguistic barriers. However, few reflect on how such practices affect theological authenticity and ethical responsibility. The significance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary contribution at the intersection of theology, ethics, and technology. The findings will inform the ongoing debate on whether AI can support or replace human creativity and moral reasoning. By highlighting both the opportunities and dangers of AI in faith settings, the study equips religious communities to engage technology thoughtfully and theologically.

## **1.7 Methodology**

This research employed a qualitative approach anchored in interpretive and ethical analysis. The study design integrates three primary methods:

Literature review, document analysis and interviews.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Impacts of Generative AI

Generative AI is reshaping contemporary spirituality by transforming access to sacred texts, devotional practices, and theological interpretation. AI-powered tools offer personalized prayers, commentaries, and meditations, which can deepen spiritual engagement but also shift how believers understand revelation and spiritual authority. Theologian (Brueggemann, W., 2010) argues that faith formation requires an encounter with the “living word,” raising concerns about whether AI-mediated interpretation can genuinely support such transformative experience. African theologian John Mbiti emphasizes that spirituality in African contexts is relational and embodied; therefore, AI-based spiritual tools may enhance accessibility but risk weakening communal and narrative-based approaches to knowing God. These developments demonstrate that while AI can support spiritual growth, it also reframes the pathways through which believers experience Scripture, tradition, and community (Mbiti, J. S. , 1990).

At the same time, generative AI raises deep ethical and theological challenges for global and African churches. Some individuals increasingly rely on AI systems for moral guidance, potentially displacing human pastoral wisdom. Kwame Bediako reminds us that Christian spiritual identity in Africa is grounded in lived community, cultural memory, and the human experience of the Spirit, dimensions that AI cannot replicate (Bediako, K. , 2004). Similarly, Desmond Tutu’s reflections on human dignity (Tutu, D., 2011) highlight the irreplaceable spiritual value of empathy, presence, and moral responsibility, qualities absent in artificial systems. These concerns align with global scholarship; theologian Noreen Herzfeld warns that AI lacks relationality and cannot embody the *imago Dei*. As such, faith communities must develop ethical frameworks that ensure AI remains a supportive

tool rather than a substitute for authentic spiritual encounter rooted in human community and divine presence (Herzfeld, N., 2017).

### 2.2 Challenges to Authenticity and Authority

Generative AI presents significant challenges to spirituality by reshaping how believers encounter Scripture, divine revelation, and communal worship. One major concern is the potential displacement of traditional religious authority as individuals begin to rely on AI systems for spiritual guidance. Noreen Herzfeld (2017) argues that AI cannot embody the *imago Dei*, because it lacks relationality and the capacity for moral intuition—qualities essential for true spiritual counsel. Likewise, Walter Brueggemann (2010) warns that spirituality is nurtured through encounters with the “living word,” which demand imagination, struggle, and discernment, elements that cannot be automated. African theologian John Mbiti (1999) emphasizes that African spirituality is rooted in community, oral tradition, and embodied relationships; thus, AI-generated prayers or sermons risk weakening these communal expressions and replacing them with individualized, technologically mediated forms of devotion.

AI also challenges core theological understandings of human dignity, moral agency, and the nature of divine encounter. African ethicist (Magesa, L., 2013) stresses that spiritual life in African Christianity is grounded in the sanctity of human relationships and the moral responsibility to uphold life, values AI systems, guided by algorithms rather than empathy, cannot uphold. Similarly, Kwame Bediako (2004) argues that Christian identity in Africa emerges through cultural memory and lived faith, which AI cannot authentically replicate. Desmond Tutu’s theology of dignity and Ubuntu (Tutu, 2013) further highlights the irreplaceable role of compassion and solidarity in spiritual life, dimensions absent in AI. As these scholars show, AI may unintentionally create a spirituality that is efficient but shallow, informed but not transformative, and connected yet lacking

authentic human and divine presence. Therefore, churches must respond with theological and ethical frameworks that preserve the sacredness of human spiritual experience in the age of artificial intelligence.

### 2.2.5 Core Theological Risks of AI

AI poses core theological risks by challenging foundational Christian doctrines such as the *imago Dei*, divine revelation, and the nature of spiritual authority. Noreen Herzfeld (2017) argues that comparing AI to human intelligence undermines the uniqueness of the human person, who alone bears the image of God through relationality, moral agency, and the capacity for communion with the divine. Walter Brueggemann (2010) adds that AI's tendency to produce quick, reductionist information threatens the biblical tradition's call to slow, imaginative engagement with Scripture, which requires human struggle, lament, and hope. African theologian John Mbiti (1999) warns that African spirituality is deeply communal and embodied; therefore, technological mediation risks creating a disembodied spirituality that detaches believers from community, ancestors, and lived religious experience. These challenges suggest that AI may unintentionally redefine what it means to be human before God.

AI also threatens to distort theological ethics, moral discernment, and the understanding of divine encounter. Laurenti Magesa (2014) emphasizes that African Christian ethics is rooted in the sanctity of human life and the interconnectedness of the community, values AI cannot uphold because it lacks empathy, conscience, and spiritual intuition. Kwame Bediako (2004) notes that Christian identity in Africa grows through cultural memory, storytelling, and lived holiness, yet AI risks replacing experience-based wisdom with algorithmic outputs lacking spiritual depth. Furthermore, Desmond Tutu's theology of Ubuntu (Tutu, 2013) highlights human dignity as inseparable from compassion and mutuality; AI, driven by data and prediction rather than relational

morality, cannot contribute to this sacred human vocation. Thus, the theological risk is that AI may shape moral decision-making while possessing none of the spiritual or ethical qualities that Christianity requires for genuine discernment.

### 2.3 Future Directions and Theological Reflections

Future developments in generative AI present both opportunities and challenges for theology, ministry, and spiritual formation. Scholars such as Noreen Herzfeld (2017) suggest that AI can serve as a tool to enhance theological research, biblical exegesis, and pastoral education, provided it is used with discernment and ethical oversight. Walter Brueggemann (2010) emphasizes that technology must complement, not replace, the human encounter with the divine word, urging faith communities to cultivate imagination, reflection, and moral reasoning. African theologians, including John Mbiti (1999) and Kwame Bediako (2004), highlight that any integration of AI into spiritual practice should respect African relationality, community-centered worship, and lived expressions of faith. By approaching AI as a supportive instrument rather than a substitute for human spiritual engagement, churches can harness its potential while safeguarding the integrity of theological formation.

Theological reflections on AI also call for careful ethical discernment and pastoral guidance. Laurenti Magesa (2014) underscores that African Christian ethics prioritizes human dignity, communal solidarity, and moral responsibility, principles that should guide AI deployment in ministry. Desmond Tutu's Ubuntu theology (Tutu, 2013) reminds faith leaders that compassion, empathy, and relational engagement are irreplaceable in spiritual care, areas where AI cannot intervene. Globally, theologians such as Stanley Hauerwas (2011) caution that technological progress should not supplant discipleship, prayer, or moral discernment. Therefore, the future of AI in spirituality requires frameworks that integrate innovation with deep

theological reflection, ensuring AI supports human flourishing, ethical integrity, and authentic engagement with God and community.

### **3. Data presentation, interpretation and Commentary**

#### **3.1 Understanding the Context of AI and Faith**

The findings of this study reveal that faith communities, particularly among pastors and young Christian leaders, are increasingly aware of the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in shaping human life and spirituality. With 55.6% of respondents reporting that they are very familiar with AI and 38.9% somewhat familiar, it is evident that the Church is not isolated from technological advancement. The demographic profile, dominated by individuals aged between 18 and 30 and a large proportion of pastors (77.8%), suggests that these perceptions emerge from a generation that is both digitally literate and spiritually engaged. Their perspectives represent a pivotal moment in Christian history, where faith and technology converge to redefine ministry, communication, and human relationships in the digital era.

This awareness marks a critical shift in how religious communities understand their mission and theology. The Church is no longer merely a physical institution but a spiritual network influenced by digital technologies that reshape communication, worship, and discipleship. The results indicate that most respondents (55.6%) view AI as both positive and negative for humanity, suggesting a nuanced and reflective understanding rather than simplistic acceptance or rejection. This balance shows that faith leaders are aware of AI's capacity to improve ministry efficiency and reach, while remaining cautious about its moral and theological consequences.

#### **3.2 Positive Impacts: Opportunities for Ministry and Mission**

The study reveals that the vast majority of participants (94.4%) have already used AI tools for faith-related purposes such as sermon writing,

teaching, and research. This high level of engagement signifies that AI is already playing a transformative role in Christian ministry. Respondents highlighted several ways AI could strengthen faith practice, most notably through translation and accessibility (38.9%) and online evangelism (27.8%). These results suggest that AI technologies can enhance inclusivity, allowing people from different linguistic backgrounds and abilities to access religious resources more easily. They also point to the increasing significance of virtual and digital evangelism in reaching new audiences.

Such findings align with global trends in the digitalization of religion, where churches are adopting AI-based tools to analyze Scripture, manage congregational data, and facilitate communication. However, while these innovations improve efficiency, they also challenge traditional understandings of ministry as a relational and incarnational practice. The study demonstrates that technology can serve as a powerful tool for expanding ministry, but it should remain a means rather than an end. Pastoral leaders must therefore ensure that AI complements human compassion, discernment, and empathy rather than replacing them.

#### **3.3 Ethical and Theological Concerns: Ambiguity and Moral Anxiety**

Despite the optimism about AI's usefulness, the data also reveal deep moral and theological concerns. A striking 61.1% of participants identified "all of the above" when asked about challenges AI poses to the Church, including reduced human interaction, dependence on technology, ethical confusion, and distortion of doctrine. This comprehensive anxiety reflects the fear that excessive reliance on AI could depersonalize faith, weaken communal worship, and blur the boundaries between divine inspiration and machine-generated output.



Equally revealing is the uncertainty expressed regarding fundamental theological questions. Over half of the respondents (55.6%) were unsure whether AI challenges the Christian doctrine of *imago Dei*, the belief that humans are created in the image of God, and the same proportion were uncertain whether AI could replace human roles in the Church. These responses demonstrate a theological vacuum: while AI is rapidly entering the life of the Church, theological reflection on its meaning and limits remains underdeveloped. There is an urgent need for theologians and church leaders to articulate a theology of technology that clarifies human uniqueness, moral responsibility, and divine creativity in a world increasingly shaped by intelligent machines.

### **3.4 Cautious Engagement: The Ethical Stance of the Church**

One of the most significant findings is that 70.6% of respondents believe the Church should “engage with caution and ethical reflection” regarding AI. Only a small minority advocate rejecting AI completely (5.9%) or embracing it without reservation (11.8%). This consensus reflects a mature and discerning theological posture, neither technophobic nor naïvely enthusiastic. It suggests that the Church recognizes its responsibility to provide moral and spiritual guidance in a world where technology often advances faster than ethical reasoning.

This cautious engagement aligns with broader Christian ethical principles, such as stewardship, discernment, and justice. It reflects the belief that technology, like any human innovation, must be subject to moral accountability and directed toward human flourishing. The Church’s role, therefore, is not to resist technological progress but to shape it through ethical reflection and prophetic witness. Faith leaders are called to help believers use AI responsibly—promoting justice, truth, and dignity in the digital environment.

### **3.5 The Role of Theological Education and Ethical Formation**

Another key insight is the participants’ recognition of the importance of theological education in addressing AI. Two-thirds (66.7%) indicated that discussing AI in theological training is “very important,” while the Church’s top priorities were identified as developing ethical guidelines (30%), teaching digital literacy (30%), and promoting responsible innovation (30%). This distribution reflects a holistic understanding of the Church’s mission in the technological age—one that combines moral reflection, education, and innovation.

These findings emphasize the urgent need for curriculum reform in seminaries and theological institutions. Future pastors and theologians must be equipped not only to preach and teach but also to engage critically with emerging technologies. Integrating digital ethics into theological education can empower the Church to respond proactively rather than reactively to the ethical dilemmas posed by AI. It will also ensure that faith leaders are not passive consumers of technology but informed stewards who can guide their communities with wisdom and discernment.

### **3.6 Future of Faith: Transformation and Uncertainty**

When asked how faith might evolve in a world dominated by AI, 40% of respondents predicted that faith practices would be transformed, while 35% feared that faith might weaken. Only 10% believed AI would strengthen faith. This mixture of hope and apprehension captures the dual nature of technological progress: it can enrich spiritual experience but also risk reducing it to algorithmic performance.

Participants seem aware that AI will reshape how people pray, worship, and interpret Scripture. Virtual worship, automated sermon generation, and digital counseling could change the dynamics of spiritual life. Yet this transformation must be guided by theological discernment. If the Church fails to engage critically, AI could trivialize sacred

experiences and weaken authentic faith expressions. Conversely, if the Church embraces innovation responsibly, AI could open new pathways for inclusivity, creativity, and global mission.

### 3.7 Overall Reflection

In sum, the findings portray a faith community standing at a moral and spiritual crossroads. The data suggest a Church that is technologically aware, ethically cautious, and theologically uncertain. There is widespread recognition that AI will continue to influence Christian faith, but also a strong call for moral leadership, ethical education, and theological renewal. The most urgent task for the Church is to build ethical and theological frameworks that uphold human dignity, protect authentic spiritual engagement, and ensure that technology serves, rather than defines, humanity. AI must be understood not as a replacement for divine wisdom or human compassion, but as a tool to be guided by ethical discernment, prayer, and communal reflection.

Ultimately, this study underscores the need for a faith-informed ethics of technology, an approach that integrates theological anthropology, moral responsibility, and spiritual integrity. Faith in the age of artificial intelligence must be rooted in the conviction that technological progress, when guided by wisdom and love, can become a means of serving God's purposes rather than competing with them.

## 4. FINDINGS DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Understanding and Awareness of Artificial Intelligence

The survey results indicate that the majority of respondents are familiar with AI concepts, with 55.6% claiming to be "very familiar" and 38.9% "somewhat familiar." This awareness aligns closely with the academic definitions of AI, which describe it as the capacity of systems to perform tasks associated with human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, natural language processing, and decision-making (Russell, S. J., & Norvig, P.,

2021). Notably, 94.4% of respondents reported having used AI in faith-related contexts, demonstrating that their engagement is both conceptual and practical. This pattern mirrors findings in the literature which suggest that familiarity does not guarantee critical literacy; users may understand AI's functionality while remaining cautious about its implications (Alkhouri, K. I., 2024). The respondents' ambivalent perception of AI as both positive and negative (55.6%) underscores an informed but nuanced engagement, consistent with scholarship emphasizing the dual-potential of AI in spiritual and religious life (Universal Life Church, 2025).

### 4.2 Impacts of Generative AI on Faith Practices

Respondents identified several practical benefits of AI for ministry, including supporting online evangelism (27.8%), enhancing accessibility and translation (38.9%), and producing materials for sermons and Bible study (11.1%). These observations confirm literature asserting that AI can enhance accessibility, personalize religious content, and provide 24/7 scriptural guidance (Alkhouri, K. I., 2024). However, the respondents also emphasized that spiritual transformation cannot be delegated to AI, noting that "*good literal text cannot transform lives; the Holy Spirit does.*" This insight resonates with ethical concerns in the literature, which caution that AI-mediated spirituality risks diminishing relational and transformative aspects of faith (Alkhouri, 2024). Hence, while AI can serve as a valuable tool, pastoral discernment remains central to maintaining spiritual integrity.

### 4.3 Challenges to Authenticity and Authority

In our research, 61.1% of respondents identified multiple challenges, including reduced human interaction, dependence on technology, and ethical/moral confusion. Respondents' insistence that AI should be used only for essential tasks underscores their caution against allowing technology to replace human spiritual leadership. These empirical insights confirm the literature's argument that AI's simulation capabilities, while

impressive, cannot replicate authentic spiritual presence or divine inspiration (Calderero Hernández, J. F., 2021).

#### **4.3.1 Bias, Homogenization, and Ethical Concerns**

Respondents expressed concerns about potential distortions of doctrine and moral confusion, reflecting the literature's warnings about bias amplification and the homogenization of interpretations (Zhang, J., Song, W., & Liu, Y. , 2025) (Munibi, A. Z., 2025). This suggests that while AI tools facilitate access and efficiency, they may also inadvertently privilege dominant theological perspectives, marginalizing minority voices and limiting interpretive diversity. Furthermore, respondents' uncertainty about AI's impact on human uniqueness (*imago Dei*) and its ability to replace pastoral roles (both items dominated by "not sure") highlights a critical gap in theological literacy that echoes academic discussions about the ethical and moral risks of AI (Graves, M., 2022) (Karshi, N., 2025)

#### **4.3.2 Theological and Spiritual Implications**

Key theological concerns raised in the literature, including challenges to the *imago Dei*, potential devaluation of worship, and algorithmic authority, were reflected in the empirical data. Respondents emphasized that prayer and ministry must remain Spirit-led, and that AI should serve as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for spiritual discernment. These findings support Langford's (2022) assertion that theological reflection should focus on AI as an instrument for enhancing human formation, rather than replacing human moral and spiritual agency. Similarly, the respondents' cautious optimism aligns with scholarship urging the Church to adopt AI as a tool for ministry while safeguarding authentic spiritual practices (Malik, 2025; Chaudhary, as cited in Malik, 2025).

#### **4.4 Future Directions and Responsible Engagement**

Respondents highlighted priorities for the Church, including integrating AI into theological education (66.7%), developing ethical guidelines (30 %), promoting digital literacy (30 %), and ensuring responsible innovation (30 %). These recommendations closely align with the literature advocating for explainable AI (XAI), responsible AI governance, and ongoing oversight to mitigate risks (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), n.d) (Gartner, Inc., 2025). The convergence between empirical data and scholarly prescriptions underscores the need for ecclesial institutions to adopt structured governance frameworks, provide pastoral training in AI literacy, and maintain human oversight in all faith-related AI applications (UNESCO, n.d.; Langford, 2022).

#### **4.5 Policy and Practical Implications**

The findings point to an emerging imperative for church leaders and policymakers to establish institutional guidelines for AI use, mirroring best practices in secular and educational contexts. Respondents emphasized limiting AI use to essential functions and ensuring that spiritual formation remains human-centered, supporting the literature's argument for embedding AI within ethical and theological governance frameworks (UNESCO, n.d). Practical strategies include appointing designated AI stewards in churches, auditing AI-generated content for doctrinal accuracy, and designing curriculum modules that foster AI literacy among clergy and laity.

#### **4.6 Research Gaps and Future Studies**

While the survey provides insights into perceptions and self-reported practices, it does not assess the quality, accuracy, or bias of AI-generated content in ministry. Future research could:

- Conduct content audits of AI-generated sermons and devotional materials to evaluate doctrinal fidelity and bias.



- Develop and test AI literacy programmes for clergy and seminary students, assessing their impact on ethical decision-making.
- Explore cross-cultural theological perspectives on AI to ensure that minority voices are not marginalized by algorithmic homogeneity.
- Examine the integration of AI with Spirit-led ministry, exploring how technology can support rather than supplant authentic spiritual formation.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, respondents' messages call for a balanced, ethical, and faith-informed engagement with Artificial Intelligence. AI should be used *with wisdom, discernment, and humility*, as a tool serving the Church's mission, not replacing the human and divine dimensions of ministry. Drawing on African scholarship underscores the importance of contextual ethics, cultural awareness, communal accountability, and theological depth. The church, through thoughtful leadership and critical engagement, can transform AI from a potential threat into a meaningful ally for mission, education, and spiritual formation in the digital age.

## 6. Recommendations

The data from this study reveal that respondents view artificial intelligence (AI) as a powerful tool when used well, and a significant risk when misused. The messages emphasize that AI can serve vital functions in ministry, but must not become an all-encompassing solution. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for theologians, policymakers, and church leaders.

### 6.1 Promote Responsible and Ethical Use of AI

Church leaders, theologians, and policymakers should approach AI as a tool endowed with potential for good, yet demanding moral oversight. Africans, such as (Ogore, F. M., 2024) in Kenya, have stressed the importance of translating ethical AI principles into practice within African contexts.

Similarly, the work of (Barrett, T., et al., 2025) highlights the need for African-grounded data ethics frameworks that center communal values, data self-determination, and human dignity. Theological institutions should therefore establish ethical frameworks that ensure AI usage aligns with Christian values, respect for human dignity, social justice, relational accountability, and African values of ubuntu/community. For instance, (Mokoena, K. K., 2024) argues for an "ubuntu artificial intelligence ethics approach" that emphasizes interconnectedness, spiritual-relational being, and contextual moral frameworks.

### 6.2 Encourage Limited and Purposeful Application

Respondents urged that AI be used for *essential practices only*, for example, administrative support, translation accessibility, online evangelism, and not for every facet of ministry. The church must remember that spiritual transformation is rooted in human encounter and divine agency, not algorithmic substitution. In African higher education environments, (Sangwa S. et al, 2025) report that while AI infrastructure is expanding, governance remains weak, indicating the need to preserve human judgment and spiritual authenticity alongside technological innovation.

### 6.3 Integrate Theological Reflection with Technological Advancement

As one respondent referenced a statement by the Vice Chancellor of the Protestant University of Rwanda that "AI is the future," relevant for church leaders and theologians alike, theological education must move to integrate critical reflection on AI. The African context demands more than imported frameworks: (Goffi, Emmanuel R., 2023) points out that AI ethics taught in Africa must engage cultural values and communal perspectives rather than simply applying Western models. Seminaries and theological programmes should incorporate modules on digital literacy, AI ethics, theological anthropology, and the *imago Dei* in the age of machines.

#### 6.4 Develop Clear Policies and Training Programmes

There is a pressing need for institutional policies and capacity-building programmes to guide the ethical use of AI in ministry. In Kenya, for example, Ogore's work (2024) outlines how policy, regulation, and organizational culture must merge to create an "ethical AI culture" in churches and theological institutions. These policies should address: (a) boundaries for AI use in sermon preparation, pastoral counselling, and worship; (b) criteria for human oversight; (c) guidelines for avoiding doctrinal distortion, over-dependence on technology, and reduced human interaction; (d) mechanisms of accountability and review.

#### 6.5 Foster Spiritual Discernment and Dependence on the Holy Spirit

While AI has the capacity to generate well-composed texts, sermons, or Bible-study materials, respondents emphasized that *true* spiritual transformation arises from the work of the Holy Spirit, not algorithms. Church leaders must therefore maintain a posture of prayer, spiritual discernment, and theological vigilance. In other words: "AI is the created tool of human inspiration; the Bible is the inspired Word of God", a distinction respondents urged. Theological reflection must accompany every technological engagement to avoid replacing divine revelation or pastoral sensitivity with machine output.

#### 6.6 Appoint Qualified Personnel to Oversee AI Engagement

To ensure responsible implementation, churches and theological institutions should appoint trained persons to oversee AI usage, especially in communications, social media, teaching, and digital ministry. These oversight roles will ensure that AI-generated materials are accurate, ethically vetted, theologically sound, and context-sensitive. Oversight helps prevent misuse, doctrinal distortion, or dependency on technology for pastoral relationships.

#### 6.7 Prepare for Future Generations

Respondents expressed concern that the upcoming generation will inherit an AI-shaped world. Accordingly, theological and educational institutions must prepare youth through curricula that teach digital ethics and technology use from a Christian and African framework. This preparation involves not just technical skills, but ethical reflection, digital literacy, and spiritual maturity. In doing so, the Church equips new leaders to wield AI responsibly and for the flourishing of faith communities in Africa.

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