

Christian Ethics, Ministry and Artificial Intelligence

As artificial intelligence (AI) evolves at speed, it is prompting questions of significant concern to human society generally, and the Christian community, and ministry in particular. This briefing paper canvasses a broad range of these questions and concerns. It is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment but a strategic overview of the main themes. It does not explore AI's use in the field of education, including theological education, as this is a significant and specialised area to be addressed by experts in those domains.

Artificial intelligence was used as a tool to assist in shaping human researched and prepared material for this briefing paper. AI's contribution was carefully monitored and guided through multiple rounds of human review, editing, supplementing, correction, restructuring, refinement, and theological input. The process served as a live case study in the responsible and thoughtful use of AI for theological and ethical reflection, in service of the church's work.

A. Theological Anthropology

1. Human Identity and the Image of God

In Christian thought, humans are uniquely made in the image of God, carrying the dignity and responsibility of moral and relational creatures. This image-bearing involves more than cognitive ability or rationality. It includes our embodied existence (Col 1:15), our capacity for relationship, moral discernment, creativity, and participation in God's work in the world. At its core, the vocation given by God is not simply to "do" but to "be". We are called to be creatures in covenant with the Creator, reflecting his character, living in dependence on him, and exercising agency shaped by love and justice. Delegating key aspects of our reasoning, creativity, or emotional engagement to machines risks undermining our God-given role as his vice-regents who exercise wisdom, responsibility, and care in and for the world.

Efforts to create machines that mirror or surpass human intelligence may reflect a deeper spiritual impulse—a striving for control, mastery, and even immortality. In pursuing these goals, we may inadvertently seek to redefine humanity in ways that challenge true theological purpose. We may end up crafting intelligence in our own image, rather than reflecting the image of God.¹ We ought to be aware of the potential for this to displace worship. Where once we turned to God for knowledge, guidance, and meaning, we may now find ourselves increasingly turning to machines that promise efficiency, insight, and personalized answers. This raises a fundamental theological concern. AI challenges our self-understanding and, if disconnected from theological and ethical framing, may obscure our posture before God. When creation becomes the object of ultimate hope or dependence, we turn our tools into idols.

So, we must face these developments proactively and without despair. Our confidence remains in the Creator, who directs all things according to his purposes. Yet we must also respond with the theological and pastoral wisdom required of his image-bearers.

¹ This sentence intentionally references the title of *Made in Our Image: God, Artificial Intelligence and You* by Stephen Driscoll (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2024). Driscoll's book (winner of the 2025 Australian Christian Book of the Year award) offers a theologically robust and accessible engagement with many of the themes explored herein. It serves as an excellent resource for further reflection on the topic at hand.

[2. Embodiment, Limitations and Transcendence](#)

Some AI projects are already linked with broader efforts to enhance or transcend human capacities—whether in intelligence, longevity, or physical function. It seems likely that many more will follow. These visions often reduce human identity to mental or informational attributes. They tend to sideline the body as secondary or obsolete, in a way that echoes gnostic thinking. This is at odds with the Christian affirmation of the union between body and soul, evidenced in the incarnation whereby the Word became flesh, and in the resurrection, whereby the raised man, Jesus Christ, became the first fruits of imperishable and immortal embodiment. Furthermore, we have bodies so that we can glorify the enfleshed Logos, since “in him all things hold together” (Col 1:17).

Human growth and maturity are often shaped through struggle and limitation in interaction with the physical world as a direct consequence of the Fall. The limitations we now face—mortality, toil, frustration—are part of God’s just and necessary divine judgment on human sin. Yet, in his providence, even these judgments are repurposed as contexts for gospel transformation and eschatological hope. Technologies that aspire to reduce and even remove all human friction in this creation (through instant and comprehensive human optimisation) risk undermining the very processes through which the Holy Spirit is at work cultivating spiritual maturity and godly virtue as anchored in God’s sovereign plan.

From a theological standpoint, this raises critical questions: Are we trying to escape the limits God has ordained? Or are we learning to live wisely within them? Are we chasing a human-designed path to salvation that competes with the divine one?

[3. Community and Relational Integrity](#)

Human beings are inherently relational, created by God to live in community with others like them (Genesis 2:18). This intrinsic need for connection is not merely social but theological, reflecting the relational nature of the Triune God. In our current context, digital tools have played a part in redefining how relationships are pursued. Some AI systems, including emerging “companions,” now aim to meet emotional and social needs by mimicking friendship and even romantic relationship. While such tools may provide responsiveness, they cannot offer the genuine mutuality, presence, or moral depth essential to human relationships. True relationships involve vulnerability, commitment, and the capacity to love and be loved. Crucially, they also require physical touch, an essential part of embodied care that supports human flourishing from infancy.

The church, as the body of Christ, is called to embody and foster authentic community, providing spaces where individuals can experience genuine relationships that reflect God’s love. In a culture shaped by convenience and disconnection, the church’s practices—shared worship, hospitality, and in-person fellowship—offer a countercultural vision of community. This vision is grounded in the dignity of embodied presence and personal vulnerability.

[4. Machine Instrumentality and Human Moral Agency](#)

AI systems can perform tasks that appear intelligent or moral, but it is not entirely clear whether they possess genuine moral reasoning or accountability. Even if some creators or advocates claim they do, we must ask: in what sense is this true? Is it truly moral capacity, or just a reinterpretation of moral reasoning in functional terms? This underscores the need for human responsibility in shaping, deploying, and regulating these technologies according to truth, justice and love

While AI introduces new tools and capabilities, the underlying ethical challenges often arise from human motives. Pride, greed, and disregard for others (amongst other vices) can be amplified by technology but are not caused by it. Christian theology emphasizes that the root of moral danger is human sin, not the technology itself. Therefore, theology calls for repentance, accountability, and wise stewardship of the technology we create and use. This realism about sin does not lead to fatalism. Christian ethics remains

hopeful, trusting that by the Spirit's power, human hearts can be transformed by the Word of God. Through that transformation, technology can be used in service of love and truth.

5. Wisdom, Knowledge, Truthfulness and Discernment

As AI systems become more adept at synthesizing, analysing, and presenting information, they are increasingly seen not only as tools but as trusted sources of interpretation. This raises concerns about how users come to understand truth, authority, and knowledge itself.

Biblical wisdom is not simply formed through access to accurate information but in relationship with God (who is the source of all wisdom) and others (amongst whom we seek to live wisely). The church has a vital role in nurturing habits of reflective judgment, prayerful inquiry, and ethical engagement in an age that prizes speed, efficiency and simplicity. AI may be a helpful aid, but it cannot replace the spiritual and relational dimensions of growing in knowledge and understanding which ultimately comes from the mouth of the Lord (Proverbs 2:6). Furthermore, wisdom often emerges not from being right but from being wrong. It comes through humility. Technology, including AI, can obscure this deeper frame of reference.

AI also presents challenges to our Christian commitment to truthfulness. Beyond the obvious concerns about deepfakes or disinformation, more subtle forms of deception are emerging, such as individuals routinely presenting AI-generated content as their own work. Even when not done with harmful intent, such practices can still erode the virtues of honesty and personal integrity. As these behaviours become more common, they risk being seen as harmless or simply efficient. Scripture calls God's people to act with sincerity of heart (Colossians 3:22). The church must guide believers through these grey areas with wisdom and courage and resist the cultural drift toward technological manipulation. In doing so, we bear witness to the God of truth—the one who tests our hearts (1 Thess 2:4) and before whom there is no 'saving face'—by upholding integrity in both speech and action.

6. Generational Formation and Discipleship

Emerging generations are being shaped from an early age by digital tools, virtual environments, and AI-driven interactions. Their social, moral, and educational development is unfolding in a world profoundly different from that of previous generations.

Particularly urgent is the way their engagement with AI touches on matters of relational and emotional formation. AI-driven platforms—such as chatbots designed to simulate friendship or offer advice—are increasingly targeted at and adopted by young users. These systems can seem appealing: they are always available, appear non-judgmental, and respond with emotional attentiveness. Yet they risk forming unrealistic expectations of relationships, displacing genuine human connection with artificial interaction, and encouraging introspection without real accountability. While such technologies may offer a sense of companionship, they lack the mutuality, embodied presence, and moral depth necessary for authentic human development and spiritual maturity. How will the church respond with wisdom and faithfulness, not only to children and young people but also in support of parents, carers, teachers, and youth ministers?

At the same time, the widening gap between those who are (or will become) fluent in AI-enabled systems and those who are not also presents both challenges and opportunities for the church's commitment to cross-generational fellowship. Christians should ensure that technology does not deepen division. Yet we must also embrace the possibilities technology offers, including for building bridges across generations, nurturing mutual love, and strengthening discipleship within the body of Christ.

B. Eschatology

Whether framed as existential hope or existential doom, the emerging narratives surrounding AI raise pressing questions about the future of humanity, the limits of human power, and our ultimate destiny.

1. Technological Apocalypse

Some foresee advanced AI evolving beyond human control, leading to imminent upheaval, dislocation, and potentially even human extinction. In these scenarios, AI does not just replace human labour—it eventually renders humanity irrelevant. Though contested, these scenarios serve as modern parables of genuine anxiety, especially about human responsibility and divine judgement.

Others caution that such predictions exaggerate current and even future AI capabilities and overlook the complexity of genuine (human) intelligence as well as God’s good sovereignty. While serious challenges like misinformation, surveillance, and militarisation must be addressed, these voices argue that an automated apocalypse is not imminent. There is still time for reflection, regulation, and good governance. However, this depends on continued and responsible human agency, which should not be taken for granted. After all, if AI has truly been created in our own image, then its future will inevitably be tied to our own.

2. Christian Hope

Christian eschatology offers a deeper lens. The future is not governed by human or machine determinism but by the teleological purposes of God in Christ in whom all things in heaven and on earth will be united (Eph 1:9–10). The future belongs to Christ, not to technological systems. No threat posed by AI can override God’s sovereign and eternal purposes in Him.

Whether AI poses a catastrophic threat or not, Christian theology affirms that the core threat is not AI itself, but the enduring reality of sin. Satan and human rebellion remain the root causes of evil. AI may amplify these forces, but it does not generate them. Likewise, Christian hope is not grounded in technological progress. It rests in the promised renewal of all things through Christ. Our ultimate hope lies not in securing the future through innovation or surviving disaster, but in the return of Jesus Christ, the one who will judge evil, bring forgiveness, and usher in the new creation.

C. Social Justice and Equality

As AI systems become more powerful and widespread, they bring with them a range of implications for justice, fairness, and equality within human society. There is nothing inherently good or righteous about machine learning or automation. What matters is the character and intent of those who use them. AI’s capacity to reinforce injustice is already visible in biased algorithms, exploitative labour practices, and systems that prioritize efficiency over human dignity. Christian theology reminds us that technological power—when uncoupled from wisdom, truth, love, and justice—often ends up amplifying patterns of harm and decay.

1. Economic Inequality and Structural Injustice

A particular concern is that emerging AI technologies are largely shaped by a small group of powerful individuals and corporations. Although their visions are often framed in humanitarian language, these aims are frequently revealed to be self-serving. They may particularly be motivated by or oriented towards the concentration of influence and wealth in the hands of a few. A danger is the creation of a new kind of digital oligarchy, where immense economic and political power belongs to those who control the most advanced AI systems. Such dynamics risk reshaping society according to a technocratic and,

in some cases, explicitly eugenic logic: a view that only values life if it is perceived to contribute towards “progress” as it is defined by the few.

This is at meaningful odds with the foundational Christian commitment to the equal dignity and value of every person made in the image of God, and also the gospel sufficiency of God’s divine power made perfect in weakness. Yet the gospel not only critiques injustice but also sustains the church’s hopeful commitment to resist evil. In the age of AI, the gospel empowers us to bear witness to the coming kingdom, where justice will roll down like water (Amos 5:24).

[2. Labour, Displacement, and Human Value](#)

Pundits warn that AI’s transformative effects on the economy will reshape the world of work—displacing not only routine tasks but increasingly expert professions. In earlier waves of automation, displaced workers often found new roles. But advanced AI threatens to automate nearly all kinds of labour. This raises serious questions about whether humans will become economically redundant.

This concern echoes past moments of human history, especially when blue-collar workers have been forced to adapt to technological change. And, as before, the benefits of increased economic productivity are unlikely to be shared equally. Christian anthropology insists that work is more than economic contribution—it is a God-ordained way of participating in His creative purposes.

[3. Democracy, Power, and Global Imbalances](#)

The rise of AI is also linked to broader concerns about governance and justice. As military and economic power is increasingly automated, the question of who controls these systems becomes critical. A centralisation of power could marginalize smaller nations, vulnerable communities, and local cultures. It may also reinforce hierarchies based on language, wealth, and geopolitics.

In contrast to these imbalances, the gospel proclaims a kingdom where no culture, language, or people group is superior or peripheral. The good news of Jesus Christ is for all nations. It affirms the value of each person and community as equally welcomed into God’s redemption.

D. Ministry Practice

The growing presence of AI in church life raises pressing questions about its practical use in ministry. Can or should pastors write sermons with AI assistance? Is it appropriate to use AI to translate sermons into other languages, turn them into Bible studies, or even write prayers or hymns? Can AI tools be responsibly used to prepare church communications, create graphic design, or summarize theological and ethical material for broader use? These are not just practical questions. They go to the heart of what ministry is.

As theologians, pastors, and teachers begin experimenting with AI across various ministry tasks, the church must ask not only what AI can do, but also what kind of spiritual formation it promotes. At stake is the church’s witness, the authenticity of its worship, the depth of its teaching, and how saved time enriches or deepens or dilutes the minister’s service.

[1. Teaching with Integrity and Discernment](#)

One potential use of AI in ministry is in sermon and teaching preparation. While such tools may aid study and prompt creativity, the theological risks are real. AI systems are not theological agents; they cannot rightly divine the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). They generate content based on data patterns, which may include bias, error, or shallow theology. Relying heavily on AI—without strong theological training and pastoral discernment—can result in sermons that sound polished but lack spiritual depth. Worse still, they may be doctrinally flawed. For this reason, theological leaders must exercise vigilance, commit

themselves to ongoing learning, and treat AI-generated content (if used) as an aid in, not a substitute for the hard work of exegesis and preparation.

The same caution applies to other teaching-related applications, such as using AI to translate or simplify complex theological texts, or to generate Bible study materials. These tools can be useful if used wisely, but they must always be guided by human oversight. Clarity should never come at the cost of faithfulness.

There are also serious concerns about plagiarism and the false representation of AI-generated content as one's own work, whether intentional or not. This includes ethical issues around using AI to adapt others' work without permission. Such practices are not only legally questionable, but they also violate the principles of honesty and integrity in ministry. They dishonour the creative work of others and undermine trust within the body of Christ.

[2. The Danger of Disembodied Ministry](#)

Good preaching and faithful teaching do not merely involve the delivery of correct information—they are acts of worship, arising from the preacher's own encounter with the Word. AI can mimic the style of a sermon or generate emotionally resonant language, but it cannot feel conviction, repent, rejoice, or worship. The danger here is subtle but serious: AI might tempt preachers to focus on performance instead of presence, and on efficiency rather than spiritual encounter. A sermon may be well-structured and full of engaging illustrations yet still be empty if it is not reflective of the preacher's own transformation by the gospel.

Likewise, prayers and hymns generated by AI may contain correct theological language but lack the depth that comes from a heart communing with God. They may miss the personal engagement, lament, or awe that only human worship can express. To prepare or deliver ministry content without true spiritual engagement is to risk reducing ministry to a performance. This can unintentionally promote a Pelagian mindset—one that trusts in human (or technological) effort rather than in God's grace.

[3. Formation, Discipleship, and Dependency](#)

Another concern is spiritual formation. If pastors come to rely on AI tools for key parts of their ministry, what kinds of habits are being formed? The process of wrestling with a difficult passage, studying Scripture in community, or prayerfully discerning application is itself a formative task—a task that AI may be able to shortcut, but not truly replace. Indeed, wisdom grows deepest through struggle and suffering. However, because suffering for its own sake is not godliness, we also ought not entirely eschew the assistance which some technology may provide.

Pastoral ministry is not ultimately about content delivery. It is about cultivating theological wisdom and spiritual maturity, both personally and within the church community. If leaders rely too heavily on AI, they may start valuing speed and convenience over depth and faithfulness. This could lead to an atrophy of spiritual disciplines. In turn, congregations may begin to mirror these same values, expecting efficiency rather than Spirit-led discipleship and shared discernment. Yet the Holy Spirit remains faithful. He continues to sanctify the church, leading us toward maturity by His enduring grace.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Beneath the many specific issues raised above—whether related to ministry practice, justice, identity, or technological capability—lie deeper and more foundational theological questions. What does it mean to be human? What is intelligence for? How should we think about technology in light of God's providence, human sin, and the gospel's work? And in a time of rapid change, where does true Christian hope lie?

Given the range and significance of questions about AI in the Christian life and community, our individual and collective goal ought to be to prayerfully pursue decision-making that is wise, rooted in Scripture, responsive to the present age, and always shaped by the gospel's call to truth, justice, and human dignity in Christ. Regardless of what faces us now or in the future, our hope remains in the gracious God who holds all history in His hands.