



Living Faithfully in an AI World

We stand at a **change of era**—technology is reshaping the very fabric of our communities. Tonight, we examine this shift through three lenses: **Human Dignity, Responsible Adoption,** and **Prophetic Alertness.** Our task is not merely to adapt—but to shape the world toward justice.

ABCOTS Leadership — August 20, 2026 — Dr. Barrington Williams

The Biblical Foundation

"So God created man in His own image... male and female He created them." — Genesis 1:27

Before we discuss what machines can do, we must affirm what humans *are*. Every person carries an inviolable worth that no technology can replace or diminish.

Reflects God's Character

In ways no machine can imitate

Moral Agency

We choose, we discern, we are accountable

Created for Relationship

With God and one another

Spiritual Significance

Rooted in God's eternal intent

The image of God is His own signature on humanity—unalterable and nontransferable.

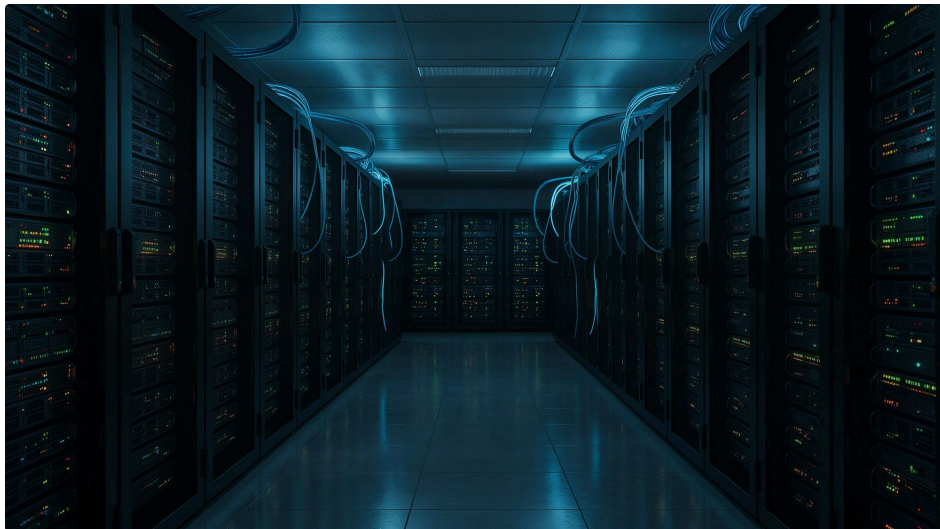
AI Is Already Here

AI is not a futuristic concept. It is a **present reality** already woven into your congregants' daily lives—from GPS rerouting during the morning commute to Face ID on their phones and fraud alerts from their banks.

- We are not preparing for an AI world. We are already living in one.



What Is Artificial Intelligence?



AI is software that **learns patterns from vast data** to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence. It can analyze, predict, and imitate language—even simulate empathy—but it is *not* conscious, wise, or capable of moral discernment.

Oxford professor John Lennox often quotes early AI researcher Duncan Mellichamp: "***The artificial in artificial intelligence is real.***"

Narrow AI

Today's tools—translation, imaging, pattern recognition

AGI

A hypothetical future: machines matching human cognitive versatility



THE PROMISE

Breakthroughs Already Underway



AlphaFold

Google's AI cracked a biology puzzle scientists worked on for **fifty years**—mapping protein structures that could unlock new medicines



Waymo

Self-driving technology has already cut injury-related crashes by **96%** in deployed areas



On the Horizon

Advanced dementia treatments and hurricane warnings **nine days ahead** of landfall—giving communities precious time

AI as a Tool for Ministry



Shortcuts

Emails, scheduling, calendar coordination—reclaim **2–4 hours** a week for visitation and prayer



Support

Sermon cross-references, commentary from trusted voices, Bible study outlines—get to deeper work faster



Superpowers

Map congregation gifts, identify community needs, build partnerships with clinics, HBCUs, and shelters

This is AI helping the Church do what the Church has always done: serve people with wisdom, compassion, and intentionality.



THE PERILS

Where AI Can Do Harm

AI already shapes decisions in **job applications, loan approvals, policing,** and even grocery pricing. These systems can unintentionally deepen existing injustices—especially for those whose backs are already against the wall.

Two crises have long been calling for the Church's attention. AI is now bringing both into even **sharper focus.**



The Loneliness Epidemic

In May 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General declared loneliness a **public health epidemic**. AI introduces something deeply dangerous: a *simulacrum*—a flawless imitation—of relationship.

⚠ Loneliness is not just a cultural problem. It is a pastoral emergency.

75% of teens

now use AI companions

A generation at risk

Comfortable talking to machines; struggling to build marriages and community

The Male Crisis: A Structural Collapse

Sociologists call it a "**structural mismatch**." This is not a momentary trend—it is a collapse with direct implications for families, congregations, and the Black community's future.

42%

Bachelor's Degrees

Men now earn fewer than half of all college degrees

40%

Nearly Friendless

Young men reporting two or fewer close friends

20–24

Suicide Rates

Young Black men in this age group now surpass their white peers—a historic first

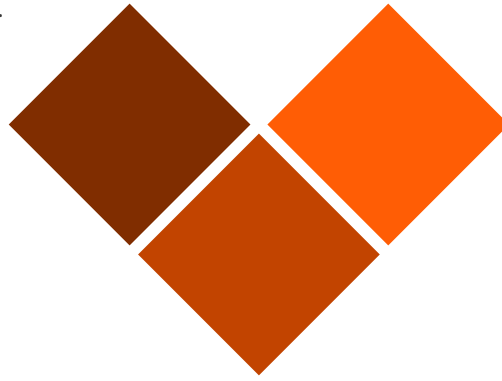
How AI Could Intensify These Crises

AI Eliminates Entry Roles

Automation replaces junior tech and support jobs.

Retreat Into Isolation

Withdrawal to online spaces deepens loneliness.



Young Workers Displaced

Early-career men lose footholds in workforce.

AI accelerates patterns already in motion—not because it is evil, but because it has no conscience to slow it down.

What's Already Happening

Jobs Disappearing

Coding, tech support, and junior developer roles have seen a **20% drop**

Digital Retreat

Uncredentialed young men withdraw into AI companions and algorithmic echo chambers

Identity Threatened

AI doesn't just threaten jobs. It threatens **purpose and belonging**.

Other Pastoral Realities

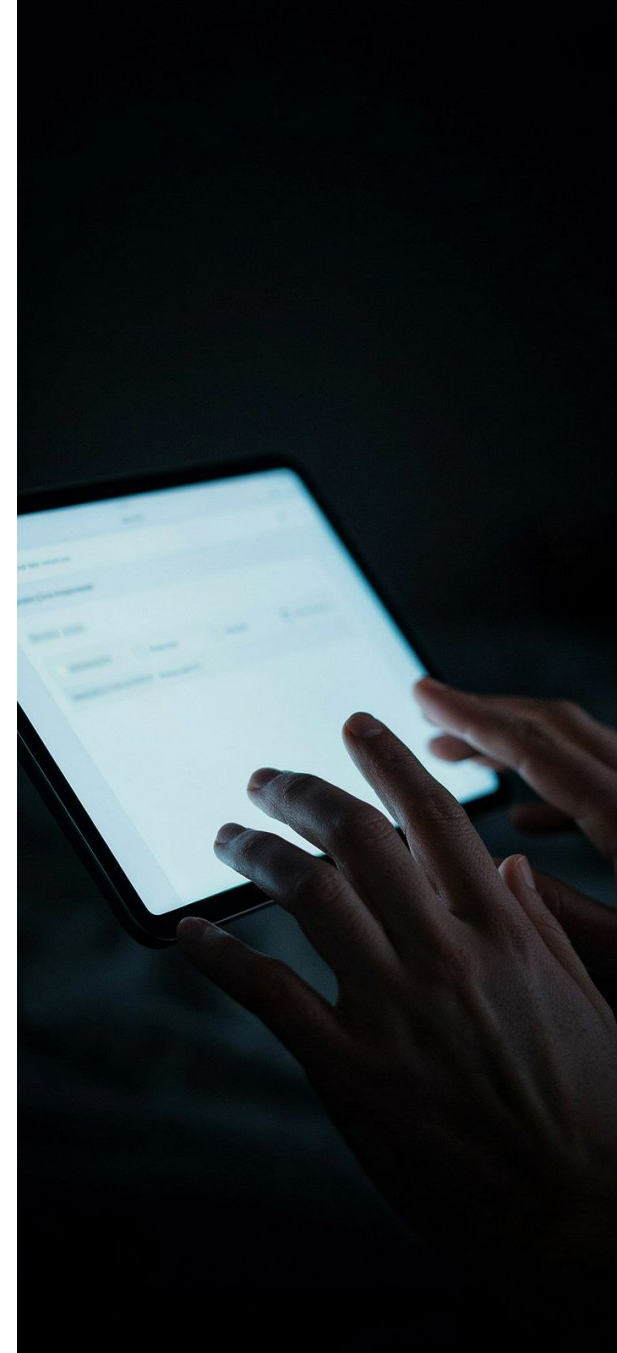
Griefbots

AI systems marketed to the bereaved that **mimic a deceased loved one's** voice and personality. They raise profound questions about morality, autonomy, and exploitation. They do not heal grief—they imitate it.

AI Spiritual Counsel

Chatbots offering scriptural guidance and faith-based advice. Nearly **44% of Millennials** say they trust AI for spiritual growth—yet an algorithm cannot possess a soul, empathy, or divine authority.

- ❏ When your people grieve at 2 a.m., they don't need a chatbot. They need their pastor—a human voice, a human presence, a human heart.



The Builders' Incentives

Why does AI so often feel misaligned with our values? Because its development is driven by three **races with no finish line**:



Profit

Monetize at any cost



Speed

Deploy before reflection



Dominance

Control markets, minds, and the future

C.S. Lewis warned of *"men without chests"*—brilliant minds lacking a sense of the Divine or accountability to the vulnerable. Two ideologies now shape the most extreme AI visions: **Transhumanism** (merging with machines to transcend biology) and **Posthumanism** (the belief that AI may eventually replace us). These are not fringe ideas.

A CLASH OF VISIONS

Two Voices on the Future of AI

Elon Musk

Imagines a future where humanity becomes a "**junior partner**" to artificial intelligence—subordinate to machines that surpass us.

Pope Leo XIV

Urges the world to "**disarm AI from logics of dominance,**" insisting that technology must serve human dignity rather than overshadow it.

The question before us is urgent: Who will define "the new things"—secular corporations, or the Church?



We Have Navigated Disruption Before

Every major technological revolution has carried both promise and peril. The Church has always welcomed the promise while guarding against the peril.

1

The Printing Press

Promise: Mass literacy, Scripture for all

Peril: Misinformation, theological fragmentation

2

Industrial Revolution

Promise: Economic growth, mass production

Peril: Child labor, dehumanizing conditions

3

The Digital Age

Promise: Global connection

Peril: Privacy collapse, surveillance, isolation

4

Artificial Intelligence

Promise: Unprecedented capability

Peril: The crises we have just named

A Moment for Discussion

Before we move to our response, let's take time to reflect and share together.

1

What surprised you?

What did you hear tonight that you hadn't considered before?

2

Where is AI touching your people?

In your congregation, your families, your neighborhood—what are you already seeing?

3

How is God calling us to respond?

What does faithful, prophetic leadership look like in this moment?

OUR RESPONSE

The ABCOTS Center for AI Ethics

ABCOTS can respond to these challenges by establishing a dedicated Center whose mission is to **anchor technological progress in the eternal value of the person.**



Prepare churches for responsible AI use



Define ethical standards rooted in Scripture

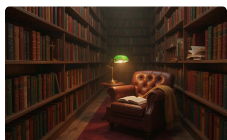


Offer prophetic resistance to algorithmic bias and exploitation



The Four Pillars of Action

This is what the Center will do for local churches across our denomination.



Theological Hub

Develop a Biblical framework for engaging AI that pastors can trust and teach



Training Network

Equip clergy with practical tools, workshops, and curriculum for AI-shaped ministry



Justice Advocacy

Give our denomination a prophetic voice in policy debates on AI fairness and accountability



Community Innovation

Help congregations use AI responsibly to serve their communities with wisdom



Technology Changes. God's Calling Does Not.

"He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." — Micah 6:8

AI can write. AI can calculate. AI can imitate.

But it can **never love. It can never pray. And it can never bear the Image of God.**