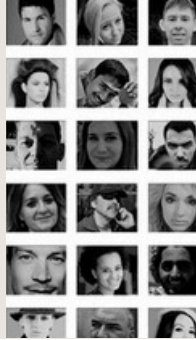


AI and the Church: Faithful Leadership in a Rapidly Changing World.



Facilitator's Guide Content Presented by: Matt Shandera, April 30, 2026

Navigating a Pivotal Moment in Human History.

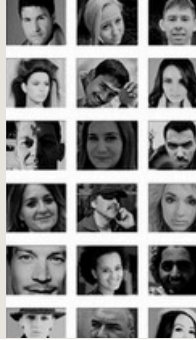
WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

This guide equips you to lead your staff, volunteers, board, or elders through a thoughtful, practical engagement with artificial intelligence and its implications for the church, ministry or business you are stewarding. The session is designed to inform, challenge, and mobilise faith leaders - not just to educate, but to move people towards action.

Core Objectives

- Participants understand the scope and speed of AI's impact on society and the church
- Participants grasp the three-pillar framework: Scale & Efficiency, Ministry of Presence, and Stewarding Truth
- Participants leave with a draft AI position statement and at least one concrete next step
- Participants feel equipped - not overwhelmed - and ready to lead their teams

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Suggested Session Timing

TIME	ACTIVITY
0 - 5 min	Welcome and Framing - Setting the tone for the session
5 - 20 mins	Section 1: The Landscape - Statistics, context, and opening discussion
20 - 45 mins	Section 2: Three Pillars - Content presentation with small group reflection
45 - 60 mins	Section 3: Framework Building - Group or individual AI policy drafting
60 - 70 mins	Debrief, next steps, and closing prayer

Materials Needed

- Printed participant worksheets (1 per person)
- Pens or pencils
- Projected slides
- Timer for discussion segments
- Whiteboard or flip chart (optional)

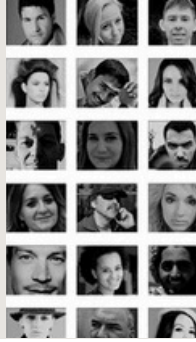
Room Setup

- Round tables preferred for discussion
- Seats for 6–10 per table maximum
- Ensure the projection is visible from all seats
- Consider name tags for larger groups

SECTION 1: The Landscape - Facilitator Notes

Goal: Orient participants to the real-world scale of AI's impact. This section is primarily informational, but should create a sense of urgency - not fear. Frame everything through the lens of opportunity.

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Opening (5 mins)

Before showing the slides or any statistics, ask participants to look around the room and consider: **How many people in this room have used AI this week?** Have them raise their hands. This activates the topic immediately and shows that AI is already present - even here.

FACILITATOR TIP

- Acknowledge that the stats are sobering, but lead with the idea that the church is called for moments like this.
- Tone matters here: curious and confident, not anxious.
- If participants seem defensive, validate their hesitation before pressing forward.

Presenting the Statistics

Walk through each statistic on the slide. Pause after each one. Do not rush. Allow the data to land.

STAT 1 - 20% of organizations / middle management (Gartner)

Frame: This is about economic disruption, not just tech adoption. Many of your congregation members may work in middle management. AI will affect their livelihoods. The church needs to be ready to shepherd through job transitions and identity crises.

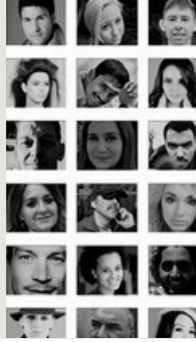
STAT 2 - 19% of teens in AI "relationships"

Frame: This one tends to generate the most visceral reaction. Let it. Don't minimize it. The key insight: if 19% are already in this category, AI is already in your youth group. The question isn't whether to address it, but how.

STAT 3 - 43% would trust AI over parents

Frame: This is a discipleship crisis. If teens trust AI more than parents - and by extension, youth pastors - then who is shaping their values? This is the church's opportunity to continue to build trust, authentic relationships, and its ministry of presence. Make clear: this isn't just a parenting problem. It's a community and ministry problem.

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STAT 4 - 64% daily usage (Pew Research)

Frame: This is the floor, not the ceiling. Usage is growing rapidly. This isn't a future problem; it's a current reality. The church must engage now.

DISCUSSION PROMPT

- Ask tables: Which of these statistics hits closest to home for your ministry context?
- Give 3–4 minutes for table discussion, then invite 2–3 groups to share.
- Listen for: overwhelm, fear, skepticism, or dismissiveness. Address each gently, anchoring them in Christ.

SECTION 2: Three Pillars - Facilitator Notes

Goal: Move participants from awareness to framework. The three pillars give language and structure to a church, ministry, or business's response. Each pillar should feel practical, not theoretical.

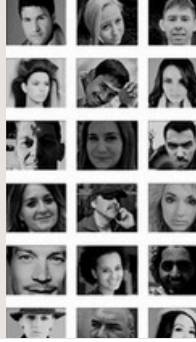
Pillar 1: Leverage AI for Scale & Efficiency

Key Message: Not using AI is itself a decision - and it has costs. If the church, ministry or business avoids AI, the people you serve are still encountering it everywhere else. Better to be informed, intentional, and present.

FACILITATOR TIP

- Expect some pushback here. Common objections: "It feels impersonal," "I don't trust it," "It could be wrong."
- Acknowledge validity, then redirect: "That's exactly why faith leaders need to be at the table - to use it wisely."
- Practical examples to offer: AI for sermon notes, outreach emails, social media captions, counselling appointment scheduling, and welcome communications for new attendees.

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Pillar 2: Grow Your Ministry of Presence

Key Message: AI cannot care. It can simulate empathy, but it cannot love. The church's irreplaceable asset is its people and its capacity for genuine, embodied presence. Make the connection clear: AI handling administrative load = more time for pastoral care, relationships, and presence. This is not a threat to ministry - it is a gift to ministry, if stewarded well.

DISCUSSION PROMPT

- Ask: What is one thing you do every week that only a human can do, and that you wish you had more time for?
- Then ask: What administrative task eats your time that AI could potentially help with?
- This creates the practical "trade" that makes Pillar 2 feel real and desirable.

Pillar 3: Steward the Truth

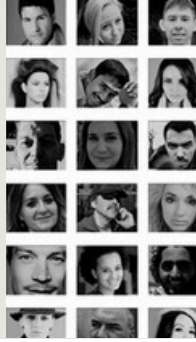
Key Message: The church, over thousands of years, has always been a custodian of truth. In a world of AI-generated content, deepfakes, and disinformation, that calling has never been more strategic.

Introduce the concept of verification protocols. Having a team process for checking whether a statement, quote, or piece of media is authentic is now a ministry necessity, not a luxury.

FACILITATOR TIP

- Ask: Does your team have a protocol right now to verify that something attributed to your pastor or organization is authentic?
- Most will say no. This creates immediate, practical urgency.
- Suggest a simple starting point: a two-person verification step before anything from a leader is shared publicly.
- Frame data privacy and data funnels as a stewardship issue - the church must be careful about what data it collects, stores, and how it uses predictive tools.

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SECTION 3: Framework Building - Facilitator Notes

Goal: Move participants from concept to commitment. This section is action-oriented. Participants should leave with something written - even if rough - that they can take back to their teams.

Four Foundational Questions

Walk participants through the four questions on their worksheets. Encourage them to write honestly and practically, not to produce a perfect policy document - just to begin.

FACILITATOR TIP

- Give real time for writing - at least 8–10 minutes for this section.
- Play soft background music if the room needs it.
- Resist the urge to fill the silence. Let people think.
- If a table is stuck, prompt them: "Start with what you believe. What does your theology of creation or human dignity say about AI tools?"

Question-by-Question Guidance

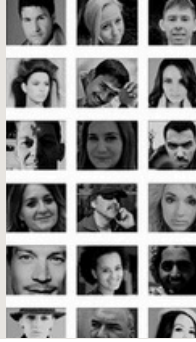
Question 1: What do we believe about AI as an organization?

- Encourage theological grounding: creation, human dignity, stewardship, truth
- Remind them: a belief statement doesn't require all the answers - just a starting point
- Example starter: "We believe AI is a powerful tool that, like all tools, reflects the values of those who use it."

Question 2: How do we intend to use AI in ministry?

- Get specific: communications, research, outreach, counselling support, operations
- Encourage them to distinguish between "AI-assisted" and "AI-generated" in their communication
- Ask: Where do you want a human in the loop - always?

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Question 3: How will we grow our ministry of presence?

- This is the strategic question: what do we do with the time and capacity AI gives back?
- Prompt: Name three relationships or pastoral touchpoints you'd invest in more deeply.

Question 4: What ethical boundaries will we put in place?

- Verification protocols for content authenticity
- Data privacy and donor/congregant information protection
- Transparency with the congregation about AI use
- Limits on AI use in pastoral care and counselling contexts

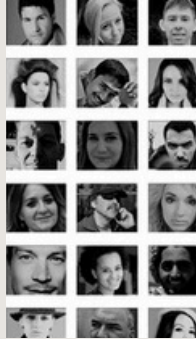
Closing the Session

Bring the room back together. Invite 2–3 people to share one thing they wrote or one insight they're taking home. Then close with one of the following framings:

CLOSING FRAME OPTIONS

- Option A (Commission): "The church has always carried truth into the world's hardest moments. This is ours. You are equipped for it."
- Option B (Prayer focus): Close with prayer for wisdom in leadership, protection of your congregation, especially young people, and courage to engage culture with grace.
- Option C (Next Step): Have each person share their "one next step" with someone at their table before leaving. Accountability starts now.

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APPENDIX: Quick-Reference Talking Points

Use these to anchor your language throughout the session:

- "AI is a tool. Tools are neutral. It's who holds them that matters."
- "What AI can never do: genuinely care for a person. That is your advantage."
- "Scale and efficiency aren't corporate buzzwords - they're ministry language for doing more with what God has given you."
- "Avoiding AI doesn't protect your people. It limits your reach."
- "The church has stewarded truth for 2,000 years. This season is no different - just higher stakes."
- "64% of teens are using AI every day. They're not waiting for us to catch up."
- "Data allows us to understand and serve - stewarded well, it's an extraordinary ministry tool."

Common Objections & Responses

OBJECTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<i>"It feels impersonal and inauthentic."</i>	"AI handles the logistics so you can be more personal, not less. The goal is more human time, not less."
<i>"It could say something wrong or heretical."</i>	"Exactly - which is why the human always stays in the loop. AI is a draft; you are the editor."
<i>"We're a small church - this doesn't apply to us."</i>	"Small churches may benefit most - AI gives you the capacity of a larger team without the overhead."
<i>"I don't have time to learn something new."</i>	"Start with one use case this week. Not a transformation - just one step. Time investment up front saves multiples later."