

# Reimagining AI for Missions

## A Discussion Forum Primer

Originally posted to the World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission [website](#), June 01, 2026.

*Alongside the expansion of the Church in the Majority World lies a crisis so urgent and spiritually consequential that it threatens to undermine the very foundations of its growth. This crisis is the overwhelming lack of accessible, affordable, and contextually grounded training for those called to shepherd these burgeoning congregations. This report represents a synopsis of the talks presented to the Online Forum for this topic combined with notes from break-out groups and content subsequently collected via a feedback site.*

**I**n the contemporary missions landscape, the global Church finds itself at a historic crossroads, where the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is fundamentally altering how we perceive and perform our sacred mandates.

The conversation has shifted decisively from whether the Church should engage with these technologies to how it can do so faithfully. In the recently released [Encyclical Letter, Magnifica Humanitas](#) by Pope Leo XIV on “safeguarding the human person in the time of artificial intelligence”, he notes, “AI can be a valuable tool and, at the same time... it calls for a measured and vigilant approach.” Among his deep reservations he notes,

*“The apparent objectivity of the responses and suggestions these systems provide can lead us to overlook the fact that they reflect the cultural assumptions of those who designed and trained them, with all their strengths and limitations. The artificial imitation of positive human communication—words of advice, empathy, friendship and even love—can be engaging and at times genuinely helpful. However, for less discerning users, it can also be misleading, creating the illusion of a relationship with a real personal subject. When words are simulated, they do not build genuine relationships, but only their appearance. The artificial imitation of care or support can become particularly risky when it enters contexts where real relationships and emotional bonds are lacking. Here, the danger is not so much that a person may believe they are communicating with another person, but rather that they may gradually lose the very desire to form genuine human connections.” (para 100)*

In all that is written below and discussed further, we must keep in the forefront of our hearts and minds that generative or agentic artificial, augmented, or assisted intelligence is not and cannot create an interpersonal relationship. As Pope Leo has eloquently stated, it is an

artificial imitation. Real, embodied, interpersonal (human) relationships are challenging at the best of times, exponentially more so when we shift into cross-cultural relationships, but that tension and relationship friction is precisely the mechanism God has hardwired into our human being to mature us.

The epistles attest to this, with Paul stating the objective is to mature us into the full stature of Christ (Ephesians 4:13, see also Romans 12:1-2), while James calls us to rejoice in such interpersonal trials because they are the pathway to completion/maturity (James 1:2-4). We simply cannot shift our relationship allegiance to an artificial interface. Our allegiance must always be to Jesus and Jesus requires that we build community with other embodied believers, finding our care and support there, while offering care and support to others—lest we lose the fundamental sense of what it means to be human, made in the image of our present and personal God who became enfleshed in Christ and lives eternally in that state through the resurrected Jesus.

All that said, we still have a mandate from Jesus to fulfil the purposes of God and make disciples of all nations. Our commission to be witnesses to Jesus’ rule and reign, to demonstrate and declare his lordship continues. Since the time of Jesus, technology has always assisted the spread of the good news. Pax Romana and the Roman roading systems that accelerated communication at that point of history, through to the printing press, telegrams, radio, television, the internet, social media, and now

generative large language model artificial intelligence (and whatever supersedes it) all assist followers of Jesus to communicate biblical truth more efficiently. As tools they can be used with potent effect for good, but even more so for ill.

As we begin to explore and discuss these issues from a missions perspective—seeking to establish the gospel and live out New Creation, the shalom Kingdom of God, in contexts where the gospel is least represented—AI is emerging not merely as a tool of technical efficiency, but as a providential instrument for the acceleration of the gospel. Our overarching concern, however, is that its use remains anchored in deep theological reflection and rigorous ethical guardianship.

Most of what follows was gleaned from discussions about AI at the 2025 World Evangelical Alliance General Assembly in Seoul, South Korea. Sources are not cited specifically here, but some who presented at the General Assembly on this topic will join us for our online forum discussion and we anticipate links to source material will be confirmed in those presentations.

## 1. The Digital Frontier of Missions

The global evangelical community, at least that which is visibly apparent across the media spectrum, seems to have arrived at a consensus: that technology is no longer a futuristic concept but a pervasively present, every-day lived experience. Survey data collected from a diverse array of leaders across the globe indicates that approximately seventy per cent are already early adopters, integrating AI into their personal lives or ministries. Furthermore, eighty-six per cent of these practitioners perceive Generative AI as a providential gift for this specific era. As noted above, this collective sentiment invites us to reimagine AI for the twenty-first century as significant as the "Roman roads" were for the first.

Just as the infrastructure of the Roman Empire provided the physical pathways for the early Church to spread its message across the known world, modern digital infrastructure (now supercharged by AI) offers unprecedented access to the unreached. Through social media and AI-enhanced content delivery, ministries are now able to reach hundreds of millions of individuals, bridging gaps in language, culture, and physical accessibility. The potential for exponential growth is

staggering. The global body of believers can now be mobilized to share stories of transformation, leveraging technology to ensure that the message of hope is tailored to the specific needs of every recipient community.

## 2. Catalysing the Reach: AI in Bible Translation

Perhaps the most tangible evidence of this missional power is seen in the realm of Bible translation. Historically, the wave of mission focused on language and culture has been the most challenging. Ensuring accurate "dynamic equivalence" translations with robust exegetical precision has traditionally taken years, if not a lifetime to achieve.

While a vast majority of the world speaks major languages of commerce and education, nearly one billion people represent minority language groups that are often institutionally silenced. For these communities, Scripture access is not merely a religious task but a restoration of human dignity, and an affirmation of their cultures as precious to God, whose "purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us" (Acts 17:27 NLT).

Recent breakthroughs, such as the completion of initial scriptural portions in minority West African dialects like Jalgo, demonstrate a new, transformative paradigm. This model, described as "AI-assisted, human-centred, and church-approved"—uses technology to catalyse progress while maintaining the highest standards of linguistic and theological fidelity. By leveraging AI to accelerate initial drafting and ensure consistency, tasks that were once estimated to take thirty years are being reduced to just two. This creates a unique threshold in history, where providing access to God's Word for every remaining language group is now an achievable goal within our lifetime.

## 3. A Foundational Biblical Framework

Reimagining AI for missions requires more than strategic enthusiasm; it demands a robust biblical worldview that prevents the Church from falling into the binary extremes of naive optimism or prohibitive fear. We must view this technology through a four-part evaluative lens based on the overarching biblical narrative:

1. **Creation:** We begin by affirming the unique dignity, agency, and relational capacity of humanity. While AI is a product of human sub-creativity, it can never possess the Imago Dei (Image of God). It is a tool, not a person.
2. **Fall:** We must soberly acknowledge that all human endeavours, including the algorithms we create, are subject to sinful distortion. AI systems can "hallucinate," produce sophisticated misinformation, and embed the cultural and ideological biases of their creators.
3. **Redemption:** We are called to redeem technology for Kingdom purposes. This involves actively seeking ways to use AI to serve the vulnerable, advocate for justice, and advance the demonstrating and declaration of the gospel throughout the world, the making of disciples, and the establishing of local believing communities we call "churches".
4. **New Creation:** We must maintain an eternal perspective. While technology shifts rapidly, our ultimate security is anchored in the unchanging promise of Christ's return and the restoration of all things.

This framework acknowledges that while we live in a "BANI" world (Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, and Incomprehensible) the Lordship of Christ extends over the digital realm just as surely as it does over the physical.

## 4. Ethical Guardianship: The TRUST Framework

A core requirement for the faithful integration of AI is the development of clear ethical guardrails. To this end, a practical roadmap known as the TRUST framework provides a vital guide for leaders:

- **T— Theological Alignment:** Does the application of this AI enhance our primary call to love God and our neighbours? A clear line of integrity must be drawn, particularly regarding the pulpit. While AI is an excellent research assistant, it should never replace the prayerful, personal wrestling with Scripture that is the hallmark of a pastor's integrity.
- **R— Relational Impact:** Does the technology strengthen or erode authentic human connection? We must guard against a "digital displacement" that replaces embodied presence with curated fragments. Discipleship is fundamentally relational—a "slow cook" process to maturity in Christ that requires time

and presence. It is not a "microwave" solution. Anything less than a relationally interpersonal with other human beings will stunt maturity and hinder full human development, let alone growth into the full stature of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).

- **U— Utility and Justice:** Does the AI serve the vulnerable, or does it merely provide more privilege to the already powerful? Biblical justice requires that we prioritise technological applications that empower under-resourced regions and marginalised communities. Technology in the hands of believers must have a liberative effect if it is to be considered useful to the Body of Christ. In contrast, it is now well supported, especially with regard to young people, that screen devices and social media are more likely to have a bondage effect on users.
- **S— Sustainability and Guardianship:** Are we considering the long-term environmental and social costs? Responsible innovation requires us to be wise guardians of the resources consumed by the massive computing power AI requires. What negative effect is AI generation having on the environment and the energy resources required to provide such computing power? This should be a serious creation care consideration for us.
- **T— Transparency and Accountability:** Are we being honest about when and how AI is being used? Human leaders must always retain final accountability for technological outputs. Practising "multi-model verification"—using different AI systems to critique one another—is a vital practical safeguard against inaccuracies. We are called to be people of truth, in relationship with the Truth. We need to become much more adept at verifying what we see, read, hear, and create.

## 5. The Human Identity Crisis and Transhumanism

As AI becomes more sophisticated, it forces the global Church to address a looming human identity crisis. Pope Leo XIV has set a robust theological standard within the Roman Catholic Church. Protestants of all kinds would be wise to learn from that and adopt similar theological commitments as regards what it means to be human.

The rise of transhumanist thought, which seeks to transcend human limitations through technology, challenges our understanding of what it means to be human. Reimagining AI for missions means proactively reinforcing the God-given value of the embodied human person.

We must reject the internalised idea that our value is dependent on our productivity or practical contribution to society. In a world that prizes marketable outputs and efficiency, the Church must lead by asserting that human value is inherent, rooted in our status as image-bearers of God.

Technology should be an enabler of our humanity, not a replacement for it. This is especially critical in our engagement with younger generations, who often experience "digital displacement" and a sense of spiritual numbness. Our witness must focus on moving people from being "well-known and lauded" in digital spaces to being "known well and loved" in authentic, unhurried, mutually supportive Christian communities.

## 6. Rupture and Repair

The concept of "rupture and repair" provides a powerful lens for our engagement with AI in missions contexts. Technological shifts of this magnitude cause a societal rupture, breaking old patterns of work, trust, and communication. This rupture manifests as an epidemic of superficiality, hurry, and the erosion of genuine community.

The Church's role is to enter this disrupted space with a ministry of repair. By offering a counter-cultural alternative rooted in the gospel, we provide a moral compass and a sense of purpose to those displaced by change. This involves "leading from being" rather than "doing," intentionally carving out space to be present with God and our communities. The most effective response to the chaos of the digital age is the cultivation of deep, authentic *koinonia* (mutually supportive/submissive fellowship) and the intentional practice of life-giving rhythms, such as the discipline of Sabbath rest, communal reading of Scripture, corporate worship, and sharing the eucharist (among other sacraments).

## 7. Vocational Discipleship and the Marketplace

Reimagining AI for missions also extends into the marketplace. There is a critical need to equip

"marketplace missionaries" who can navigate the ethical complexities of the professional world with integrity. Believers in the technology industry and across all sectors are called to represent Christ by demonstrating the ethical, redemptive, and just use of AI.

This involves fostering what we might call a "kingdom culture", living out biblical values that prize integration over assimilation. Where faith and work are not separate spheres, but a unified witness.

By applying the TRUST framework in their professional lives, Christ-following technocrats and business leaders can model a form of innovation that honours God and upholds human dignity. The Church must support these leaders, recognising that excellence in their work is a powerful form of evangelism, lending credibility to our verbal witness in an increasingly sceptical world.

## 8. Guarding the Soul of Ministry

One of the most profound tensions in this digital era is the danger of "outsourcing our thinking." There is a deep-seated fear that the rush for speed and efficiency could short-circuit the essential process of spiritual formation. As we have seen, AI is a valuable tool for ministry tasks, but it cannot provide spiritual discernment.

Summarising data, translating text, and answering practical questions can free leaders to focus on the relational and spiritual aspects of their calling. However, the heartbeat of discipleship—the life-to-life transfer of values and character rooted in biblical precedent—requires a human soul.

We must emphasise the spiritual discipline of wrestling with ideas and Scripture collectively and personally, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide our understanding, often in the contexts of tension around what it really means in a particular space and time, rather than defaulting to the easy answers provided by an algorithm.

## Conclusion: A Call to Discernment and Action

As we look toward the future, the global Church is called to a "courageous convergence"—a strategy that is simultaneously global and local, digital and incarnational, and deeply Spirit-dependent. AI is an integral part of this convergence.

The primary call to action is for Christian leaders to move from uncertainty to active, informed, and discerning engagement. We must educate ourselves and our communities, equipping a new generation of digital-native disciples to lead the charge. We must use the tools God has provided to accelerate the harvest, yet we must remain vigilantly protective of the human relationships and spiritual depths that are the true essence of our faith.

Reimagining AI for missions is not about replacing the Holy Spirit with an algorithm; it is about using well every resource at our disposal to ensure that no nation, no tribe, no tongue, and no individual is left without the life-giving message of Jesus Christ. If we lead with wisdom, courage, and an unwavering commitment to biblical ethics, AI can indeed become a powerful instrument for the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom in this complex and rapidly shifting world.