ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

BEGINNERS FOUNDATIONS

About Us

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Thank you

For attending today.

For those who have engaged with us regarding this topic

Polls

Instructions

Go to

www.menti.com

Enter the code

7512 2820

Or use QR code

Our 'Why?'

Why this webinar exists

We Are....

Not experts.

Not ethicists

We're pastors, communicators and denominational leaders who care deeply about....

We care deeply about….

- Helping over-extended ministry leaders reclaim time for discipleship
- Our belief this technology could be life giving or dangerous
- Our belief that this technology is NOT a 'fad'. We think the church should be talking more about the implications as the technologies continues to improve and integrate
- Preventing the church from 'missing the boat' on this technology
- Engaging in the nuance of the perspectives, good and bad
  - Not dismiss things outright that are misunderstood
  - Not get caught on clickbait articles

We Believe….

- You should never attempt to replace human work, thought, Biblical study or spiritual discernment
- You should never attempt to let technology do your work for you (spoiler: It won't)
- Any output from technology use is the responsibility of the user, and requires stringent human oversight
- You should NEVER attempt to automate your calling

Not with a quill, a typewriter, a computer or an algorithm

From Blake Davis

"I believe the Church must have a relevant voice in how humanity interfaces with technology- offering loving discernment around ethics, relationships, and soul care. As we increasingly rely on these tools, we cannot leave the future solely in the hands of those building and profiting from them.

When used thoughtfully, technology can expand the reach of discipleship and relieve burdens from ministry leaders -creating more space for presence, rest, and meaningful connection. But this is only possible if we engage with training, testing, and discussion, so we can sit at the table with both wisdom and experience."

From Scott Hughes

"AI isn't about replacing people. Used well, it's a thought partner. On a macro level has the potential for human flourishing. For ministry, freeing leaders to lead with more clarity, presence, and care."

Outline for today

- Who we are (and why we're doing this)
- Why this matters now
- What's all the fuss about?
- Basic glossary
- Naming our fears
- The mirror metaphor
- Demonstrations
- Where do I start?
- Your questions
- What's next

This is a beginner session (what we're not covering today)

We aren't covering prompting techniques and templates, usage, advanced prompting, use policy creation, custom workflows, image generation

But we're covering those in the following courses if you are interested

Who this is for

- Those who are unaware or skeptical of the emerging technology
- Ministry leaders feeling overwhelmed and under resourced
- Leaders curious to learn but unsure where to start
- Skeptics who want to learn what we're learning

Wherever you are.... We're here to help you with the next step

Different Levels

- Introduction
  - From Skeptical to Curious

- Harnessing AI for Good
  - From Curious to Capable

- Advanced AI for Ministry Cohort
  - From Capable to Builder and Guidelines Creator

What is all the fuss about?

The AI Race ramps up

Some Context

- **Time to 1 million users**
  - Netflix
    - 3.5 years
  - AirBNB
    - 2.5 years
  - Facebook
    - 10 months
  - Spotify
    - 5 months
  - ChatGPT
    - 5 days

Basic Glossary

Overview of basic terms

Basic Glossary

- **AI** = *Artificial Intelligence*
Technology that performs tasks which normally require human intelligence (like learning, writing, or translating)

Basic Glossary

- **LLM** = *Large Language Model*
A type of AI technology trained on massive amounts of human data that can use statistical correlations to generate human language (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Grok)

Basic Glossary

- **Prompt** = *The instructions or task you give to a Large Language Model LLM* (Example: "Here are my notes for my sermon next week, can you suggest ways it might be received by someone in the congregation who is on the fence about church?")

Basic Glossary

- **Generative AI** = *AI that generates content* Text, images, music, code, etc. based on statistical patterns it has learned from large data sets (or often entire reservoirs of content from the internet)

Basic Glossary

- **Bias** = *Unintended patterns or prejudices learned from data*
Because humans are biased, and AI tools are trained on human created content, it can reflect the flaws it learned from us in the data it was trained on

Basic Glossary

- **Hallucination** = *When an AI confidently gives a wrong answer*
  Because the tool is trained to be as helpful as possible, it can give answers that are inaccurate, but SOUND true because it does so with confidence
- **Always double-check AI-generated content**

AI is a Term, Not a Thing

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not one tool. There isn't one singular "AI Entity" like a movie.
  - It includes thousands (millions?) of tools and platforms
  - Some are designed to be good at language, others images, others at support, others at summaries
  - It includes everything from Netflix recommendations to project management workflow assistance to autocorrect
  - It's not a sentient mind hiding in a datacenter- it's CODE built by humans

AI is a Term, Not a Thing

- Saying "I don't like AI, Google summaries are often wrong" is like saying…
  - "I don't like food because I ate a bad artichoke" or
  - "I don't like the internet because I saw something on Facebook that I didn't like" or
  - I don't like church because I heard a sermon that made me mad

Pause

Let's name our fears

Polls

The Triune God...

- Can work without the need of technology
- Is greater than any technology
- Is not threatened by AI
- Will always work through the community of believers
- Can warm a heart through technology

Juxtaposition

We are not waving any of these concerns away.

We want to engage in the nuance of these issues.

There are a lot of fear-based headlines, many are legitimate!

There are a lot of incredible benefits to these tools that can help us be better, healthier, more engaged humans!

Juxtaposition

We are trying to hold two parts simultaneously:

- The impact this technology can have to benefit the world and expand the reach and capacity for overwhelmed ministry leaders to increase sabbath, intentional discipleship and ministry reach.

- The legitimate concerns about the future of humanity, the workforce, truth, authenticity, ethical usage, copyright concerns and the potential isolation and bias confirmation these tools can support

Spiritual Concerns

"Pastors will get lazy"
→ Laziness is a human issue, not a tool

"It's evil"
→ It's a tool (created by us, trained by our content)

"Outsources discernment"
→ If YOU outsource discernment

"It's going to change us"
→ It is a mirror into ourselves

Spiritual Concerns

We shape the tools; they shape us. Humanity as we know it will look different as these tools continue normalize and grow.

From the utilization of Social Media and the internet and all the data saved on it, this indexing of human knowledge was inevitable, and the toothpaste is now out.

Just like the Bereans, it is our human decision whether we outsource discernment. By examining scripture to approach a governmental vote, fact checking what we share on Facebook, or how we utilize technologies

We may be required to look within ourselves and the scriptures to define what it means to be human, as we have always done.

We may have to examine 'art' and what it means to be creative, as we have always done.

This is an excellent space for the CHURCH to be a source of identity and belonging

Ethical Concerns

 "It's biased"

    → Because we're biased. It is our job to check for bias in everything we write, post, publish or generate

"It will replace people"

    → Very possible.

    Historically new technologies do, then created more jobs than were replaced. We can't know for certain.

    At the moment it can only automate *tasks*, NOT relationships, presence or discernment

    Replacing people is a decision made by HUMAN systems

Artist Concerns

"It's stealing the work of artists"
→ This is a real concern, and we take it seriously

Generative AI is trained on large sets of content -almost the entirety of the internet- which sometimes includes creative and/or copyrighted work

Copyright law is still catching up, and these decisions are being made NOW

Many creators opt in or opt out, but some don't get a choice

Artist Concerns

For the time being, my recommendation from conversations with professional creatives:

If you don't **understand the kind of work you're generating**, and can't responsibly edit or contextualize it with your own skills…

→ You're likely misusing it

If you present AI-generated work **as your own, without disclosure without credit**

→ That's misleading at best - and potentially exploitative

Practical Concerns

"Shallow output"
→ Prompting skills solve that

Many of the complaints I hear about the technologies are that they weren't helpful or accurate, or didn't give the desired results.

These technologies are not perfect, but USUALLY this opinion is formed due to a lack of training in context/prompting

Energy Concerns

"It consumes lots of energy, creating an environmental impact"

→ It's energy use is real, so is its potential.

It is comparable to many other technologies (breakdown in further article), the difference being it helping solve real problems

As models are trained, the cost declines drastically.

The race for clean energy has never been stronger

The Concerns

In Short…. If you choose to use it…

Do use technology to**:**

- Speed up, enhance, clarify, check, or refine
- ALWAYS double check what it generates.

DO NOT use technology to:

- Replace people
- Generate work you couldn't have done yourself to a point where you can't give knowledgeable refinement or oversight (double checking)
- Try to pass off mostly generated work as your own

AI is a mirror: It's not good, it's not evil

- It reflects the (human) data it was trained on
- It amplifies the assumptions of those who use it
- It shows us what we value, prioritize, and overlook
- It reveals both the beauty *and* brokenness in our systems, culture, and selves
- It has incredible potential to increase good or bad

Our Vision with AI

We believe the Church has an opportunity to engage with a technology that, if used wisely, can increase capacity, deepen discipleship, and free leaders for more relational, loving discipleship.

The continued development of AI WITHOUT the training, exploration, questioning, Biblical examination and relational discussion with Christ filled believers leaves the development, training and guidelines entirely up to the shareholder of the companies profiting from these tools.

What Blake is….

Excited / Hopeful about:
- Tools allowing more time for discipleship and sabbath rest
- The church being thought-leaders in this next phase of humanity
- Technologies that find new cures for diseases
- Tools that help level the playing field for those without access: empowering people with disabilities, limited resources, or systemic barriers to move toward greater wholeness and opportunity
- The Church's opportunity to help people rediscover meaning and purpose as emerging technologies force us to ask deeper questions about what it truly means to be human
- Robotic arms on my laundry room ceiling that can do the washing for my family of five

Concerned about:
- Yet another tool that can distract us (Tiktok, Social, Challenge) from the human souls next to us
- Ease of access making people turn to technology for answers before their peers or elders

What Scott is….

- Excited / Hopeful about:
  - Machines automating drudgery and dangerous work
  - Ability to do more human work
  - Capable thought partner to augment human intelligence
  - More creativity
  - Personalized education plans and learning
- Concerned about:
  - More privatized, narcissistic spirituality ("Write me a prayer…)
  - Energy issues in the short term
  - Job replacement/Job reskilling at scale
  - Outsourcing critical thinking
  - Relationship replacement

Demonstration

Demonstration

"Rewrite this article as if written in the tone of a sassy gen z'er:"

10 Ways Consolidation Can Strengthen Your Church's Impact

BY KEN SLOANE

Consolidation Can Be Good Stewardship

Local church leaders across the United Methodist connection are facing tough decisions. Declining attendance, aging buildings, budget shortfalls, and volunteer fatigue are more common than not. In this context, the idea of consolidation often surfaces—but it's usually met with anxiety and grief.

Demonstration

"Based on this article, create a sample agenda for a United Methodist church committee meeting focused on exploring this article with the idea of consolidation as faithful stewardship."

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Reminder

- You are responsible for ANYTHING output by your hand through technology
- This should not be used without rigorous human oversight/rewriting

Q&A

Survey

https://discipleshipm.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_09Cnt8rI1LtRRWu

Your Next Steps

- Try a Tool
  - ChatGPT (OpenAI)
  - Claude (Anthropic)
  - Perplexity
  - Gemini (Google)
- Sign up for more learning
- Give us feedback (Survey)
- Keep an eye out for the fall survey
- Talk about it, learn about it

What's Coming Next

- **Beginners Foundation (this webinar) - From Skeptical to Curious**
  - Recording will be sent out to all registrants

- **Harnessing AI for Good - From Curious to Capable**
  - Where we will cover:
    - Large Language Models and how they work
    - Prompting
    - Prompting template
    - Biblical and Spiritual examination

- **Advanced AI for Ministry Cohort - From Capable to Strategic Creator**
  - Where we will cover:
    - Persona creation and custom GPT's
    - Advanced prompting techniques
    - Ethics/Use Guidelines creation
    - Persona prompt creation
    - Ministry project development

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Belong: Suite of Resources

https://store.umcdiscipleship.org/product/belong-bundler/
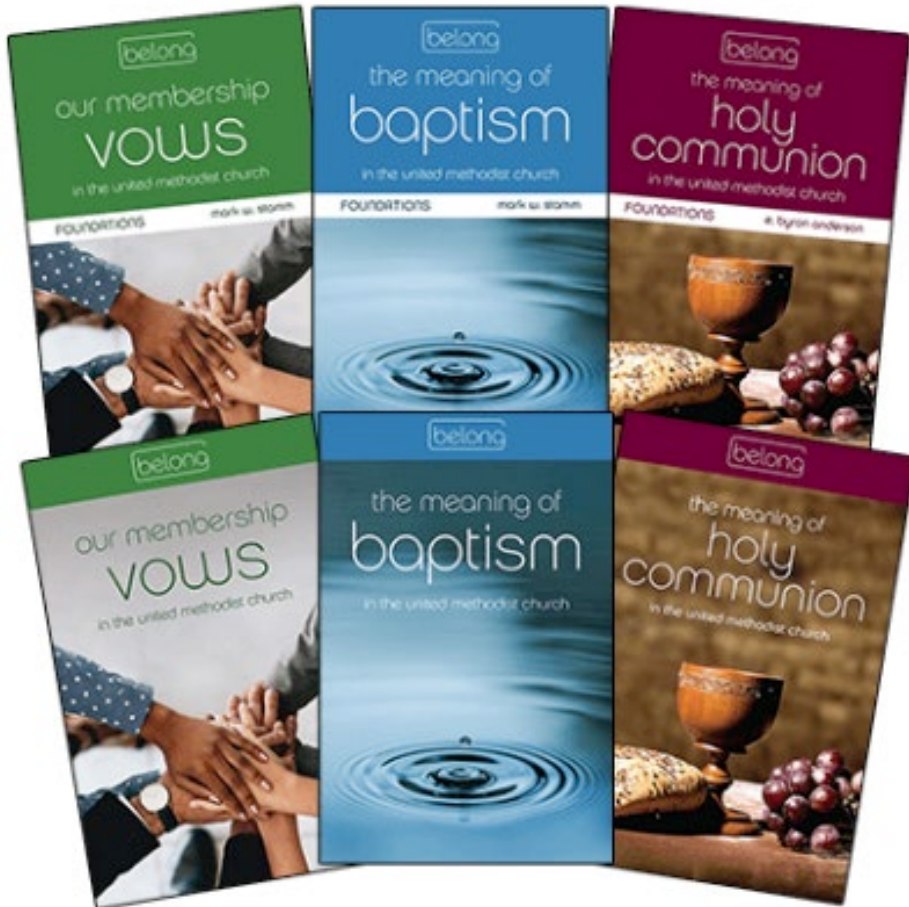
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