

# EQUIPPING PASTORS TO BUILD TRUST IN THE AGE OF AI

## Early learning & next steps



### Our moment in time

We are witnessing another transformation in technology. The rise of AI tools, led by Natural Language Processing models such as ChatGPT, has ignited a shift how we interact with information.

AI tools have surged in popularity with their ability to understand language and convert simple prompts into high-quality content. ChatGPT gained over 100 million users—the fastest mass adoption of any new technology in human history—two months after launching in November 2022.

### What about the use of AI in ministry?

Church leaders are wrestling with important questions as the world adopts these tools. On the one hand, AI technologies present opportunities to save time, enabling ministers to focus on the more relational aspects of their work. On the other hand, AI tools can come with privacy and security risks and can even be used to replace human interactions. Regardless of a church leader's approach, these decisions require thoughtful consideration and dialogue.

Gloo and other key leaders and organizations are committed to facilitating this meaningful conversation.



### Research

To advance that purpose, Gloo partnered with Highland to conduct in-depth research with church leaders, faith-based AI leaders, and prominent technology experts to get a better understanding of how these leaders think about the potential impacts of using AI in ministry—the opportunities and the risks.

We anchored our conversation in trust, particularly the trust between leaders and their congregations, and how the use of AI tools might impact that trust.



### Key Findings

#### Usage

Most church leaders—even AI skeptics—are experimenting with with AI tools and are becoming comfortable using them for routine administrative tasks.

#### Awareness

While most church leaders are able to identify a few risks of using AI, they generally demonstrate low awareness of AI risks, even when their awareness of AI opportunities is high.

## Sentiment

At the same time, the feelings and thoughts around AI are extremely complex. Everyone feels compelled by the desire for greater efficiency and the opportunity to increase their gospel reach. But church leaders and AI experts have concerns about the impact of AI on authenticity in communication, the misuse of power and data, and even the loss of pastoral skills over time through over-reliance on tech. Participants made comparisons to the dark sides of other recently emergent technologies like social media and smartphones and had questions about AI tools and their potential impact on the sacred work of caring for people's souls.

## Guiding values for the use of AI

Three value sets became clear when we explored what guides participants in their thinking about AI and ministry.

### 1. Non-negotiable values grounded in human rights

AI leaders stress the importance of privacy, security, and legal concerns like bias, fairness, and discrimination, while church leaders generally don't have these issues on their radar. Awareness in this area is becoming crucial for any leader who wants to be confident in the vendors they choose, the tools they select, and their approach to handling a congregation's data.

### 2. Values driven by opportunities for growth, efficiency, and the reach of the Christian message

Some participants highlighted AI's potential to improve efficiency, scale systems, and support gospel-centered content creation that can reach more people in more personalized ways. You could call these leaders *Maximizers*.

***We will do all things, but sin to build the kingdom.***

- A *Maximizer* Church Leader

### 3. Values driven by preserving the 'authentic heart of ministry'

Some participants underscore the need to stay rooted in authenticity and personal connection and were concerned about losing what they believe to be the essence of ministry. They saw specific uses of AI as a threat to the slow, intimate, Spirit-led process of preparing a sermon or writing a personal letter to a congregant. You could call these leaders *Essentialists*.

***We're not a business. We're dealing with peoples' eternities here."***

- An *Essentialist* Church Leader

# Navigating complexity

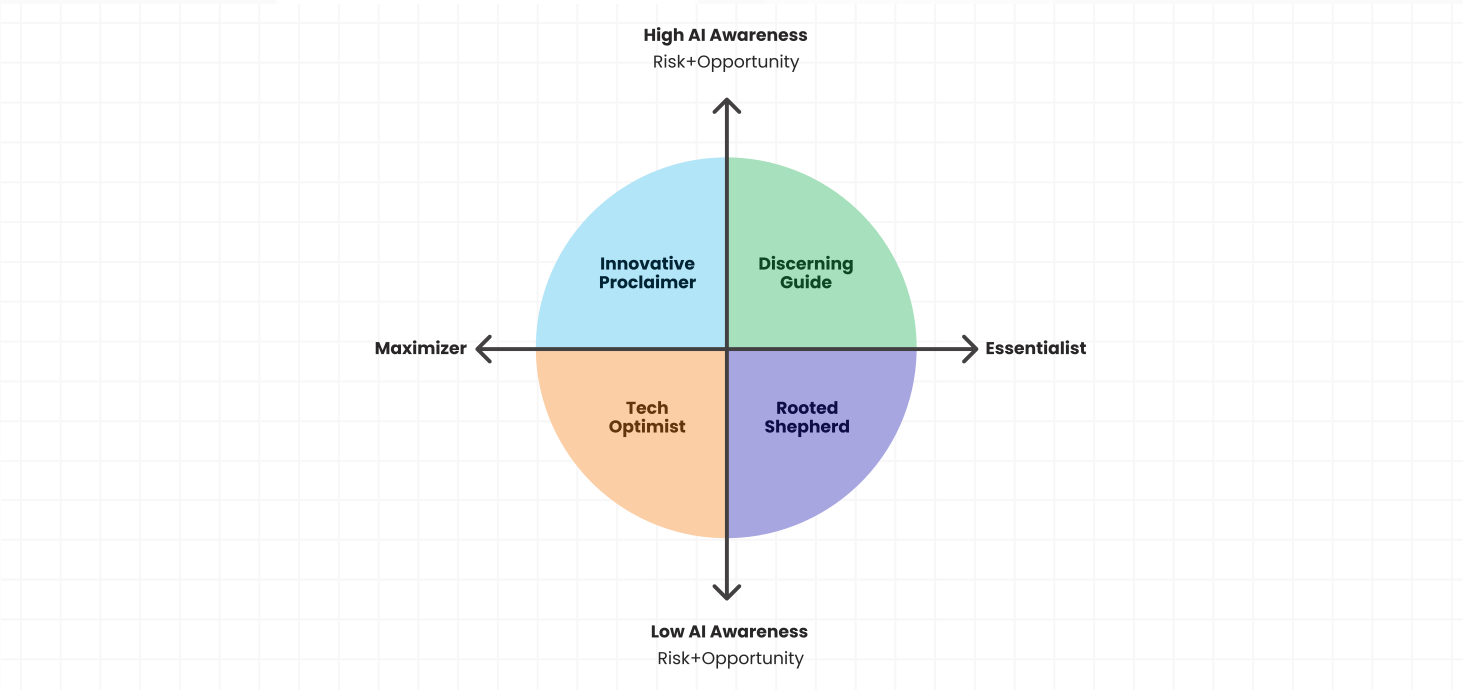
Nearly all participants express feeling a tension between Maximizer and Essentialist values. One church leader captured the sentiment well when he said:

*“I want to scale what I can do from 10 to 10,000, but I want it to stay authentic. And I can’t do it authentically at that scale.”*

Another church leader asked a question that might capture the challenge of our day:

*“How do you embrace efficiency but still champion the people element?”*

As we heard people of faith wrestle with this tension and communicate their needs, the following framework emerged:



## Overall, church leaders see a need to:

1. Grow in their awareness of AI—both the opportunities and the risks
2. Gain clarity on the values that shape their approach to using AI in ministry
3. Have transparent, trust-building conversations with their church about what tools they decide to use and why

We hope the Church Leader AI Personality Type Quiz and related resources help you with all three steps so that you can build trust with your congregation and minister with greater clarity and confidence in this emerging age of AI.

Click [here](#) to discover your Church Leader AI Personality Type