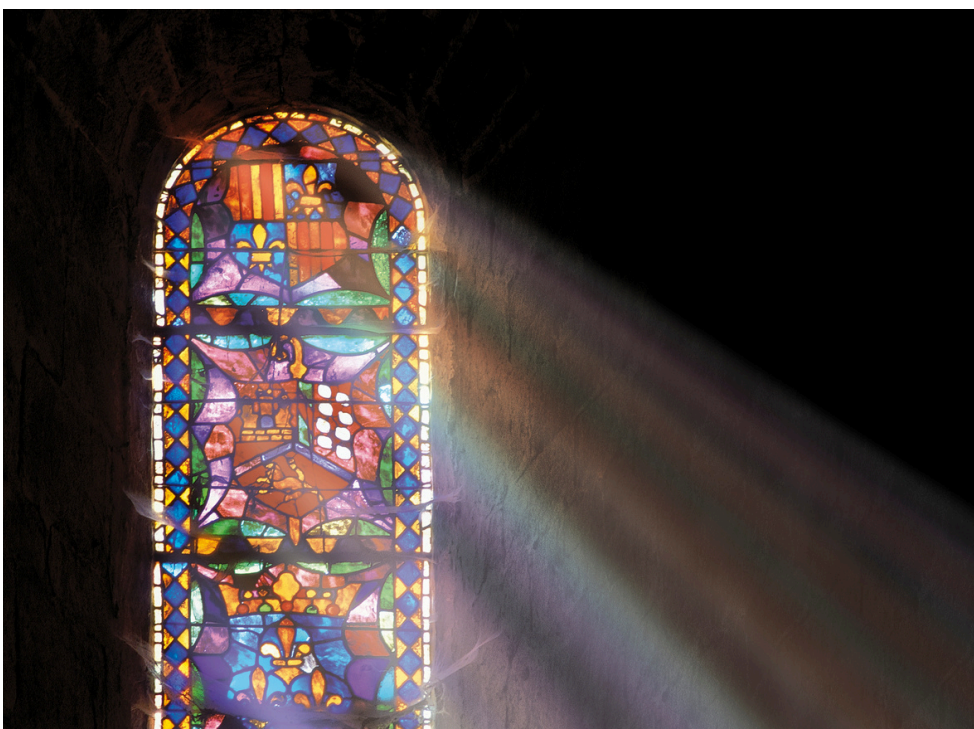




NAVIGATING AI IN MINISTRY:

an
ethical
tool kit



CONTENTS

1	_____	Core Principles and Frameworks	002
2	_____	The Solace AI Ethics Checklist	004
3	_____	Real-World Scenarios & Discussion Prompts	005
4	_____	Group Discussion Questions	009

How To Use This Guide

This guide is a companion to the AI Fluency Journey from the Solace Training Academy, designed to be used alongside the video sessions and practice exercises. You can use it on your own, with a staff team, or in a Prompt Circle. It's here to help you slow down, reflect, and make choices about AI that are grounded in your faith and your calling.

Adapt what's useful. Skip what isn't. Let it serve the work you're already doing.

1

Core Principles and Frameworks

This section offers theological grounding and practical language to help faith leaders think clearly and faithfully about the ethical stakes of using generative AI in ministry contexts. The goal isn't to prescribe rules, but to invite better questions, deeper reflection, and faithful awareness.



1.1 | Why This Matters

AI is no longer an abstract idea or distant technology. Tools like Solace and ChatGPT are now part of the everyday landscape of ministry. They assist with communication, brainstorming, and even spiritual formation. But as with any tool that shapes how we speak, lead, and care, the ethical implications are real. The Church has a role to play not just in using these tools, but in using them well.

Too often, responses to new technology fall into two predictable categories:

- **Instrumentalize** — treat AI as just a tool, neutral and mechanical, without asking how it shapes us.
- **Attribute unlimited power** — respond with awe or anxiety, assuming AI is inevitable, revolutionary, or uncontrollable.

Scholars like Kate Ott and Samuel Arbesman offer a third path: faithful discernment rooted in digital citizenship (Ott 2019, 2)¹. This path resists both extremes and asks instead: What does faithfulness look like in the face of new tools? What Christian ethics offers us is not a binary, but a practice, the invitation to pause and ask how our identity is lived out through our integrity. This guide is designed to help you do just that.

1.2 | A Theological Anchor

Dr. Kate Ott, in *Christian Ethics for a Digital Society*, reminds us that ethical questions about technology are, at their heart, questions about identity and calling. Her core question:

"Who ought we be, and what ought we do?" (Ott 2019, 3)

This framing, echoed in Micah 6:8 ("Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with God"), helps us discern how our use of AI reflects or distorts the commitments of our faith.

Before we ask "Can I use AI for this?" or "Is this efficient?", we ask:

- **Does this task require love?**
- **Does this task rely on memory, presence, or trust?**
- **Is this something I'm called to do as a human being in ministry?**

1.3 | The Agentic Framework

Once you've discerned that using AI is ethically appropriate for a given task, the next question is: What role should it play? The Solace Agentic Framework provides a practical vocabulary for that reflection.

It names three distinct levels of human-AI collaboration:

Assistant

- The AI supports your thinking or writing, but you maintain full control.
- Examples: brainstorming sermon illustrations, summarizing long articles, revising for clarity.

Augmenter

- The AI collaborates with you, shaping tone or structure alongside your input.
- Examples: co-writing a newsletter article, rephrasing a devotion, refining pastoral communication.

Automator

- The AI acts independently (within parameters you set) to carry out tasks.
- Examples: sending automated welcome emails, tagging pastoral care notes, generating reports.

Each level carries ethical weight. As agency increases, so does the need for transparency, oversight, and pastoral discernment.

1.4 | Core Terms and Values

These definitions are not exhaustive, but they offer a starting point for common language in your AI-related reflection:

- **Agency:** The degree of control or decision-making authority handed to the AI tool.
- **Transparency:** The ethical practice of disclosing when and how AI is used, especially in public or relational contexts.
- **Embodiment:** A theological affirmation of presence, memory, and human vulnerability. Not everything can or should be mediated by machines.



- **Justice:** Attending to power, bias, and equity. Bias in training data is not a technical glitch; it's a moral concern.
- **Stewardship:** Ethical use of resources. AI systems require energy, labor, and time. Faithful use must include ecological awareness.

1.5 | Pausing to Reflect

Before moving forward, it's worth slowing down to ask: What does this tool have to do with my call? Not just whether it's helpful or efficient, but whether it allows me to live out my work with integrity.

Ask yourself:

- What kind of ministry am I nurturing when I use this tool?
- Where does my identity as a pastor, teacher, or leader need to remain at the center?
- How much of this task am I willing to hand off — and why?
- What relationships, emotions, or spiritual needs are at stake?

There's no single, simple answer to these questions. But naming them helps you move from reaction to reflection — and from reflection to faithful, intentional practice.

Discernment doesn't start with answers. It starts with awareness (and often slowing down). And the more honest we are about the shape of our work, the better we can decide how AI might (or might not) serve it.

2 The Solace AI Ethics Checklist

The Solace AI Ethics Checklist is meant to be used when you're preparing to use or share something created with AI in your ministry — whether that's a prayer, a sermon outline, a care email, or an announcement. It's a chance to slow down before you move forward.

You'll find prompts related to theological alignment, relational integrity, transparency, and justice. You won't always check every box. That's not the point. The point is to pause and think about:



2.1 | Integrity of Faith

- Have I reviewed this content for theological soundness and contextual fit?
- Does this reflect the character of Christ and the commitments of our community?
- Would I be at peace introducing this as my own in a pastoral, liturgical, or teaching setting?

2.2 | Relational and Emotional Discernment

- Does this task involve love, memory, or spiritual presence that can't be delegated?
- Is this AI use drawing me closer to the people I serve or distancing me from them?
- Am I trusting AI to express care that might require my own attention, story, or witness?

2.3 | Transparency and Accountability

- Have I clearly named that AI was part of this process (where appropriate)?
- Would I feel comfortable explaining to a colleague, elder, or congregant how and why AI was used here? Do I know what I would say?
- Am I ready to take full responsibility for the outcome/output?

2.4 | Justice, Stewardship, and Awareness

- Have I considered whether the AI-generated content reflects embedded bias or exclusion?
- Am I drawing on data or content I have the right to use — and avoiding misuse of others' work?
- Have I used AI in a way that is mindful of ecological impact, labor costs, and over-dependence?

3 Real-World Scenarios & Discussion Prompts

These scenarios are meant to help you practice applying the ethical tools introduced in this guide. There's no one right answer. What matters is learning how to pause, notice what's at stake, and make decisions that reflect your values and your sense of call.

Each scenario is short, realistic, and designed for either personal reflection or group discussion. Use them in staff meetings, prompt circles, or individual journaling.

3.1 | A Compelling Quote

You're working on a sermon and looking for a quote to connect your biblical text to the theme of mercy.

You ask an AI tool:

"Give me a quote about mercy from a Christian theologian that would fit in a sermon on Luke 6."

It gives you a beautiful line:

"Mercy is not the suspension of justice, but the completion of it." — Howard Thurman

It's powerful. It fits perfectly. You plan to use it in the opening paragraph. It landed beautifully. People quoted it on social media. One elder even used it to open a meeting.

Later that week, while prepping for your next sermon, you try to locate the original source. You can't. After some digging, you realize: Thurman never said it. It was likely a fabricated line generated by the AI — elegant, theologically sound, but not real. Now you're sitting with a different kind of pastoral question: What do you do?

Reflection:

- Would you go back and correct it publicly? Privately? Let it go?
- What matters more in this moment: clarity, trust, or continuity?
- Would your congregation feel misled — or would they appreciate your honesty?
- What does this situation ask of you as a preacher and a steward of words?
- How will this experience shape your use of AI for sermon prep in the future?

3.2 | A Letter That's Supposed to Come From Someone Who Loves Them

A high school senior in your youth group asks you to write a letter of recommendation for a college scholarship. You've known them for years — you've seen them grow, wrestle with hard questions, care for others, and lead with quiet steadiness. You care about them deeply.

But your week is packed. You're behind on sermon prep, someone's in the hospital, and the scholarship deadline is tomorrow.

You open an AI tool and prompt:

"Write a strong, heartfelt recommendation for a high school student applying for a scholarship, based on leadership, character, and faith involvement."

The result is clean, moving, and technically accurate. It would take five minutes to edit and send.

But you stop and wonder: is this letter about the content or the person who takes time to write it? It's not just a letter of description, it's a letter that's supposed to come from someone who knows them and loves them. Is that conveyed by the time you spend on it, or by the contents alone?

Reflection:

- Where does efficiency begin to pull against relational responsibility?
- What role would AI best play here — Assistant, Augmenter, or Automator — and how much of the voice would still be yours?
- If the student knew you used AI to help write the letter, how might they respond?

3.3 | An Announcement That Didn't Land Well

Your church has been using AI tools to help generate routine communications — things like event announcements, email drafts, and newsletter blurbs. The idea was to save time on formatting and copywriting so staff could focus on more relational work.

A recent email went out promoting a “Women’s Bible Brunch.” The message included phrases like “gentle hospitality,” “sweet wisdom,” and “an event for women of grace and quiet strength.”

A few younger women in the congregation privately shared that the tone felt condescending and outdated — like it assumed women should be soft, traditional, or perform a certain kind of femininity. One said, “This doesn’t sound like it was written by anyone who knows me.”

You didn’t technically write the announcement. The AI drafted it from a standard prompt you or your team used for previous events. You approved the general structure, but didn’t review the exact language before it went out.

Still, your name — as the pastor — was at the bottom

Reflection:

- Who’s responsible for the tone and message here — the AI or you?
- What assumptions might be embedded in the prompt that produced this result?
- If your task is to build trust and connection, how did this miss the mark?
- How will you respond? Would you disclose AI was used? Would you revise the process going forward?

4 Group Discussion Questions

This section builds on Kate Ott's framework: Who ought we be? What ought we do? These two questions sit at the heart of Christian ethics. They invite us to consider how our identity and our integrity show up in the choices we make — especially when we're using tools that shape communication, decision-making, and care.

You might bring one of these questions to a Prompt Circle, a staff check-in, or a clergy gathering. You don't need to get through all of them. Just choose one and stay with it long enough to hear something new.

"Who Ought I Be?"

- What part of your ministry work feels too personal, too relational, or too sacred to hand to a tool — even if it would save you time? Why?
- When has a tool (not just AI — any tool) started to shape who you were, without you realizing it?
- What values do you want people to hear or feel when they interact with your work — whether it's a sermon, a note, or a social media post?



"What Ought I Do?"

- Think of a recent moment where you used AI. What ethical tensions showed up — even if no one else noticed?
- When do you feel most responsible for what AI says on your behalf — and when do you feel like it's "just helping"?
- How do you think about the unseen costs of AI — like energy, water, training data, or bias?