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Bridging Cultural Barriers through AI: Toward a Scalable Model of Christian Leadership Multiplication

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Abstract

The global mandate of leadership multiplication within the Missio Dei framework faces a systemic crisis where the demand for trained leaders outpaces the capacity for spiritual formation, primarily due to linguistic barriers on the Unreached and Unengaged People Group (UUPG) regions. This study explores the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a strategic accelerator to transcend these barriers through a scalable model for Christian leadership formation. Employing a qualitative conceptual approach, the research utilizes theological-sociological analysis and the DELTA ethical framework while evaluating technical implementation data from the IFGF College Artificial Intelligence (AI) project. The findings reveal that AI integration achieved a thirty-fold acceleration in leadership multiplication, successfully adapting theological curricula into 33 languages in just 1.5 years. However, the discussion highlights critical risks such as the "deification of the algorithm" in high power-distance cultures and the ontological limitation of AI in performing sacramental and relational duties. This paper concludes that the "Human-in-the-Loop" model is essential, positioning AI as "scaffolding" to manage linguistic and administrative tasks while reserving character formation and spiritual impartation for human mentors. By adopting a posture of "Bold Humility," the church can achieve "Scaling Intimacy," leveraging the digital technology without compromising the incarnational depth of the Gospel.

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INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Within the framework of missional theology (Missio Dei), the great commission to make disciples of all nations is not merely a static command, but a dynamic movement that necessitates the continuous multiplication of leadership on a global scale. The Church, as the embodiment of the body of Christ in the world, is called to expand its ministry beyond geographical and socio-cultural boundaries. The foundation of the Church's existence is rooted in the mandate given by Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19-20, which transcends administrative obligation and serves as an ontological imperative for the Church to move across cultural and linguistic barriers. According to Niemandt & Niemandt, this rapid proliferation of AI serves as a significant techruption those challenges theologians to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit within digital transformation, marking the emergence of the Digital Word as the latest iteration of God's unfolding mission. (Niemandt & Niemandt, 2025).

The advance of technology helped bible evolves from manuscript becoming digital version what we have today. Philips identifies three waves of what being called as digital theology: 1) digitization 2) born-digital tools/data analysis/distant or close reading 3) computational analysis, coding, big data, AI (Phillips, 2018).

However, the historical development of global Christianity reveals that the primary obstacle to such expansion is not a lack of missionary zeal, but rather the limited availability of trained leaders capable of guiding emerging communities in cross-cultural contexts. This process involves not only the transmission of theological knowledge but also the formation of character and the communication of contextualized spiritual revelation. Previous studies suggest that in regions like Africa, where religion is a fundamental component of social identity and cohesiveness, disruptions in spiritual leadership can impact communal structures and moral unity (Oyasor, 2024).

One of the most critical challenges in this global expansion is the systemic issue of language barriers. Leadership training materials are often confined to the source language of the sending organization, while empirical observations point to a data cliff, where the availability of digital theological resources drops significantly beyond the world's 30 dominant languages. In such contexts, access to theological materials in local languages becomes both crucial and severely limited. Christian teaching, which inherently requires relational depth and intimacy, is often reduced to technical

transmission when mediated through inadequate linguistic forms. Standard solutions such as captions or subtitles frequently fail to bridge this gap, as they introduce psychological distance and lack the incarnational dimension essential to effective discipleship. This is exacerbated by the fact that contemporary society self-organizes as a visual culture, where the ubiquity of video content now stands at the center of how humanity perceives reality (Phillips, 2018).

Conventional approaches to overcoming language barriers often described as "brute force" methods have reached their practical limits. Prior to the adoption of advanced technologies, mission teams were required to manually reproduce teaching materials in multiple languages, a process that demanded extensive time and financial resources. Such inefficiencies often resulted in delayed access to quality theological training, causing the momentum of newly planted communities to stagnate. According to Shanahan & Parker, while manual methods are slow, the strategic use of AI in education has shown the potential to increase the efficiency of the learning process by up to 30% (Shanahan & Parker, 2026). This challenge is further intensified by the ongoing global transition from digitalization to what may be termed AI Transformation, which is expected to reshape communication and education paradigms in the near future.

In this context, Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerges as a potentially transformative solution, particularly through AI-mediated cross-cultural communication frameworks. Advances in AI-driven audiovisual adaptation enable teaching content to be translated and localized in real time, including voice and expression synchronization in target languages. This technological capability significantly accelerates the distribution of theological content, enabling broader and more equitable access across linguistic boundaries. Savio & Fernandes wrote that, AI-powered platforms have the potential to enhance personalized spiritual formation and facilitate global outreach in restricted areas where human resources are limited. AI, in this sense, functions as an initial catalyst providing foundational infrastructure for theological education even in regions where such resources were previously inaccessible (Savio & Fernandes, 2024).

Nevertheless, this technological efficiency introduces profound theological and anthropological tensions. AI, by its very nature, is non-relational. Christian leadership is inherently sacramental, relational, requiring embodied presence, empathy, and personal character formation dimensions that cannot be replicated by machines. From an ontological perspective, AI lacks the Imago Dei and is not guided by the Holy Spirit. While it may accurately transmit doctrinal information, it cannot provide pastoral presence, spiritual discernment, or the lived example necessary for authentic relational discipleship. As noted by Shanahan & Parker, the presence of a human teacher creates a

unique relational dynamic that AI cannot replicate (Shanahan & Parker, 2026). Furthermore, because AI relies on probabilistic pattern-matching, it often lacks the historical consciousness and empathy essential to deep theological inquiry (Papakostas, 2025). Consequently, there is a significant risk that overreliance on AI may shift the focus of leadership multiplication from character formation to mere content consumption, particularly given that spiritual formation is inherently a "slow and messy" process.

Furthermore, specific leadership paradigms such as sacrificial and custodial models of leadership that emphasize fidelity, integrity, and self-denial highlight the irreplaceable role of human mentorship. While AI can disseminate information about such values, the verification and cultivation of these traits require relational engagement within embodied communities. Additionally, the integration of AI is not culturally neutral. In high Power Distance Index (PDI) contexts, there is a heightened risk of algorithmic deification, where AI-generated outputs may be accepted uncritically as authoritative truth. Geli stated, in high-PDI cultures, hierarchical inequalities are generally accepted, making followers more likely to accept decisions from perceived authorities without critical reflection (Geli, 2025). This underscores the necessity of critical oversight and contextual sensitivity in the deployment of AI within theological frameworks.

To mitigate these risks, structured and contextually grounded AI systems are required. The development of internal, controlled AI platforms offers a means to ensure doctrinal consistency while avoiding the inconsistencies often associated with open, general-purpose AI systems. According to Maluchnik, a faith-based governance framework emphasizing stewardship and moral accountability is paramount to ensure that technology does not displace the spiritual judgment required for leadership (Maluchnik, 2025). Such platforms also enable decentralized content distribution, including offline delivery mechanisms, thereby extending access to regions with limited or no internet connectivity. These developments demonstrate that technology has begun to level the global playing field, enabling churches from non-western contexts to contribute meaningfully to global mission efforts.

In light of these developments, a critical gap emerges between the scalability offered by AI and the depth required for authentic spiritual formation. This study argues that the solution does not lie in rejecting or uncritically embracing AI, but in developing an integrative framework namely, the Human-in-the-Loop model. In this approach, AI functions as a scaffolding system that addresses administrative and linguistic burdens, thereby enabling human leaders to focus on non-automatable dimensions such as prayer, character formation, and pastoral care. Previous studies from Rahmatiah, suggest that to complete this integration, the moral character of the educator must remain the

fundamental anchor for effective teaching (Rahmatiah et al., 2022). This model facilitates what may be described further on as "scaling intimacy," where technological expansion is balanced with relational depth.

The urgency of this study is reinforced by the inevitability of AI transformation within the global mission landscape. The church is therefore called to adopt a posture of bold humility, embracing technological innovation while safeguarding human dignity and theological integrity. Through the application of ethical frameworks such as DELTA (Dignity, Embodiment, Love, Stewardship, Transcendence), this research seeks to propose a model of leadership multiplication that is not only scalable, but also contextual, transformative, and rooted in the love of Christ in the emerging post-AI era.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background outlined above, the research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

1. How do the limitations of conventional methods in distributing Christian leadership curricula contribute to unequal access to theological resources in cross-cultural contexts?
2. To what extent can AI-driven adaptive video integration effectively bridge language barriers without compromising theological accuracy and cultural contextualization?
3. What are the theological, anthropological, and practical implications of AI usage on the authenticity of spiritual formation and the relational dimension of Christian leadership?
4. How can a Human-in-the-Loop integrative model be conceptualized to balance technological scalability with relational depth in global Christian leadership multiplication?

Literature Review

Missio Dei Theology and AI-Mediated Gospel Communication

In contemporary missional theology, the integration of technology into ecclesial life cannot be reduced merely to administrative efficiency; rather, it should be understood as part of the Church's participation in the Missio Dei. God's mission begins with creation, and humans as image-bearers are

co-laborers in the stewardship of technological developments. The Triune God continues to work within history and creation, including through technological developments that shape how humans communicate and interpret reality (Niemandt & Niemandt, 2025).

Church history demonstrates that every major advancement in communication technology has been accompanied by corresponding adaptations in the transmission of the Gospel from the Incarnation of the Word became flesh, to the dissemination of Scripture through the printing press, to proclamation via broadcast media. Within this trajectory, the emergence of digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), may be interpreted as a continuation of the evolving mediums through which the Gospel is communicated.

The concept of the "Digital Word" seeks to contextualize the message for homo digitalis (Taneo, 2024), whose identity is shaped between virtual and physical spaces. Nevertheless, this conceptualization requires theological caution, particularly in distinguishing between the medium of communication and the essence of divine revelation itself.

Language Barriers and AI as a Strategic Accelerator

Language barriers constitute a major obstacle in distributing theological resources. Savio and Fernandes wrote that previous research suggests that AI-powered tools, such as those used in machine-assisted Bible translation, have significantly accelerated access to Scripture in minority languages (Savio & Fernandes, 2024). AI offers a transformative solution through natural language processing, enabling the translation of training materials across multiple languages in significantly shorter timeframes. Kia and Majesty wrote that AI-based platforms also allow for personalized modules that prepare a generation that is both technologically savvy and spiritually strong (Kia & Majesty, 2025)

Spiritual Formation and the Limits of Relationality

Theological literature consistently emphasizes that spiritual formation is inherently relational and embodied. According to Shanahan & Parker, Christian anthropology is grounded in the belief that humans are made in the image of God, a dignity that machines cannot replicate (Shanahan & Parker, 2026). AI lacks moral consciousness and spiritual discernment. Over-reliance on AI risks reducing faith to transactional interactions, potentially weakening spiritual depth and authentic discipleship (Savio & Fernandes, 2024)

Human-in-the-Loop as an Integrative Model

In response to the tension between scalability and relational depth, the Human-in-the-Loop approach is proposed. Within this framework, AI handles technical tasks while human leaders retain responsibility for relational dimensions. According to Maluchnik, strategic leadership in AI-integrated environments depends on combining visionary innovation with ethical discretion and spiritual accountability (Maluchnik, 2025).

Cultural Intelligence and AI Literacy

The effectiveness of AI depends on Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and AI literacy. CQ is a dynamic, learnable capability that enables leaders to interact effectively across cultures (Geli, 2025). Similarly, institutions must help students develop AI literacy, a fusion of technological expertise and theological discernment (Papakostas, 2025)

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Analytical Framework (State of the Art)

This study is grounded in the observation of a significant technological shift. As of 2025, AI has transitioned into a fundamental component of leadership practices. AI's role is now defined by its capacity for personalization, scalability, and real-time analytics (Papakostas, 2025). This transformation compels faith communities to renegotiate concepts of authority and human identity. Recent studies emphasize that AI should assist educators in monitoring spiritual development through reflective tools rather than replacing the instructor (Kia & Majesty, 2025). This transformation represents not merely a technical advancement, but a profound theological and sociological development, as it compels faith communities to renegotiate concepts of authority, creativity, and human identity within the *body of Christ.* In light of this, Alva argues that *"The church needs to be humble in order to learn from experts and be patient before making any moral decisions about these new developments"(Alva, 2019).*

Recent trends indicate a shift in leadership multiplication from labor-intensive administrative processes toward data-informed strategic oversight. AI technologies have evolved beyond static text processing to include automated audiovisual transformation of sermons and training materials across digital platforms.

The most recent innovations enable real-time adaptation of teaching content from a source

language into target languages in mission contexts, functioning as an initial catalyst for accelerating curriculum dissemination in linguistically underserved regions.

However, emerging research identifies a critical gap between technical efficiency and depth of character formation. While technology enables massive access to information, some theological institutions emphasize that authentic discipleship remains a slow-and-messy process.

The rise of the *Digital Word* therefore necessitates critical awareness, as overreliance on algorithmic systems risks producing leaders who are technically competent but spiritually underdeveloped. Furthermore, cross-cultural sociological findings suggest that excessive exposure to automation may correlate with declining religiosity when human agency is diminished.

B. Technical Research Procedure and Validation

To ensure the accuracy and integrity of the proposed model, this study is supported by a structured technical research procedure:

1. Platform Audit

   Under the direction of an AI expert and a technical team, an extensive evaluation of 18 AI platforms was conducted to identify the most suitable technologies for mission contexts. Platforms such as HeyGen, SmartCat, CheckSub were selected due to their high-accuracy audiovisual synchronization (lip-sync) capabilities and cost-effectiveness. Kohler stated that previous studies confirm that choosing specific technologies must be aligned with pedagogical goals to be effective (Koehler et al., 2013).

2. Iterative Learning and Validation

   Validation was carried out through iterative processes involving native speakers in target context. Through machine learning mechanisms, translation accuracy improved significantly from approximately 70% to 95% within a relatively short timeframe.

3. Acceleration Metrics

   Empirical implementation data indicate that AI adoption resulted in a significant acceleration of leadership multiplication up to 30 times faster compared to manual methods. This was evidenced by the successful translation of curriculum materials into 33 languages and the production of over 11,000 videos within approximately 1.5 years.

Method of Analysis

This study employs a qualitative conceptual approach using a theological-sociological analytical method to examine the dynamics of leadership multiplication in the digital era. A qualitative literature study approach allows for an in-depth exploration of concepts and implications regarding changes in the delivery of teachings and their impact on spiritual values (Kia & Majesty, 2025). The methodological framework is structured as follows:

1. Pragmatic-Realist Analysis

This study is grounded in a pragmatic-realist perspective, which assumes that contemporary leadership realities are constructed through the interaction of social and technological forces. Previous studies suggest that a pragmatic paradigm is particularly well-suited for exploring the complex integration of AI, as it bridges theological reflection with pedagogical innovation to shape the educational and spiritual experience of students (Shanahan & Parker, 2026). Accordingly, secondary data from academic literature and ecclesial documents are systematically analyzed to interpret current trends in AI integration within leadership and ministry contexts.

2. TPACK and Faith Development Theory (FDT) Frameworks

The analysis utilizes the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework to evaluate how AI integration supports doctrinal teaching and engagement with Scripture in an effective and pedagogically sound manner. According to Shanahan and Parker, the TPACK framework assists in examining how AI tools can be crafted to meet specific pedagogical needs within doctrinal learning and theological reflection. Furthermore, recent scholarship suggests that for this framework to be complete, the moral character (*akhlak*) of the educator must remain the fundamental anchor for effective teaching (Rahmatiah et al., 2022). In addition, Faith Development Theory (FDT) is applied as an interpretive lens to assess whether AI usage facilitates or hinders the formation of conscience, faith identity, and spiritual maturity among emerging leaders. According to previous research, this lens helps determine how technology affects the movement of students through moral and spiritual development stages (Shanahan & Parker, 2026).

3. Cultural Lens: Hofstede's Power Distance Index (PDI)

This study integrates Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, particularly the Power Distance Index (PDI), to examine how AI-mediated teaching authority is received across different cultural contexts. According to Geli. the PDI serves as a structured lens to understand how underlying cultural values such as the extent to which unequal power distribution is accepted influence leadership behaviors and expectations across different regions (Geli, 2025). This perspective is critical in identifying potential risks such as *algorithmic deification*, particularly in high-PDI cultures where

technological outputs may be accepted uncritically as authoritative truth without reflective engagement.

4. Development of the Human-in-the-Loop Model through the DELTA Framework

This study proposes an integrative Human-in-the-Loop model, in which AI is positioned as a foundational support system (*scaffolding*) that manages administrative and linguistic burdens *(drudgery)*, while human leaders retain primary responsibility for character formation and relational guidance. As noted by Papakostas, a "*Human-in-the-Loop dialogic model*" preserves human agency over interpretation while utilizing AI to generate balanced prompts and surface diverse viewpoints (Papakostas, 2025).

The model is evaluated through the DELTA ethical framework:

- Dignity: Upholding the intrinsic worth of human persons beyond their reduction to data points. This ontological foundation asserts that all humans bear the image of God, requiring the non-negotiable protection of human agency and justice (Maluchnik, 2025),

- Embodiment: Prioritizing embodied community and sacramental presence over purely digital interaction. According to Niemandt and Niemand, while digital spaces are part of our lived reality, the Gospel must be incarnated in ways that meet people where they are without losing the richness of embodied presence.(Niemandt & Niemandt, 2025).

- Love and Stewardship: Ensuring that technology is used to alleviate suffering, promote justice, and serve others responsibly. According to Maluchnik, leadership is a moral responsibility entrusted by God, where tools of immense power must be deployed with care and accountability (Maluchnik, 2025).

- Transcendence: Preserving space for moral discernment and spiritual guidance under the work of the Holy Spirit, resisting purely deterministic technological paradigms. Papakostas wrote, previous studies affirm that while AI can assist in the organization of information, it lacks the capacity for spiritual discernment and the expression of the Holy Spirit (Papakostas, 2025)

Through this methodological approach, the study aims to construct a balanced synthesis that leverages the speed and scalability of AI while preserving the relational integrity that lies at the core of Christian leadership.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Accelerating the Digital Word: Reframing AI as Missional Infrastructure Rather than Ministerial Replacement

One of the most significant findings of this study is that Artificial Intelligence substantially reduces the linguistic barriers that have historically limited equitable access to theological education. The implementation of AI-assisted audiovisual technologies enabled the translation and contextual adaptation of IFGF College curricula into thirty-three languages within approximately eighteen months, representing a dramatic acceleration compared to conventional manual translation methods. While these empirical findings clearly demonstrate improvements in speed and operational efficiency, their theological significance extends far beyond technological performance. The central contribution of AI is not that it makes translation faster, but that it reshapes how the Church participates in the *Missio Dei* by expanding access to theological formation among communities that have traditionally remained underserved because of language. In this sense, the findings should be interpreted primarily through a missiological rather than a technological lens.

Existing scholarship has generally approached AI within Christian ministry from the perspective of educational innovation. Savio and Fernandes (2024), for instance, argue that AI-powered technologies increase opportunities for evangelism and discipleship by improving access to biblical resources, particularly in regions where human resources are limited. Likewise, Shanahan and Parker (2026) emphasize AI's capacity to enhance learning experiences through personalization while maintaining that teachers remain essential to meaningful religious education. These studies provide valuable insights into the pedagogical potential of AI; however, they primarily evaluate technology according to its educational effectiveness. The present study extends this conversation by proposing that AI should also be understood as missional infrastructure-a strategic resource that reduces structural barriers preventing churches from participating more fully in God's mission. Rather than asking whether AI improves education, this study asks how AI changes the Church's ability to reach people who previously lacked access to theological formation because of linguistic inequality.

This distinction is theologically important because the challenge addressed by AI is fundamentally older than digital technology itself. Throughout Christian history, language has consistently shaped the boundaries of theological accessibility. The translation of Scripture into vernacular languages during the Reformation fundamentally transformed Christian discipleship because believers were finally able to encounter biblical texts within their own linguistic and cultural contexts. Likewise, modern missionary movements have invested enormous resources in Bible translation because genuine discipleship requires more than exposure to Christian teaching; it requires

understanding. Consequently, language should not be viewed merely as a communication issue but as a theological concern directly related to the Church's calling to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19-20). The command itself assumes that the Gospel must become understandable within every cultural context without losing its theological integrity.

The findings of this study therefore suggest that AI contributes to the continuation of this historical trajectory rather than introducing an entirely new theological paradigm. AI does not replace the missionary task of contextualization; instead, it significantly accelerates one component of that task by reducing the time required to translate, synchronize, and distribute theological materials across multiple languages. This observation aligns with Niemandt and Niemandt's understanding of digital missional praxis, which argues that technological developments should be interpreted as part of the Church's ongoing participation in the *Missio Dei* rather than as external phenomena existing outside God's redemptive work in history. Every major communication technology, from handwritten manuscripts to the printing press, radio broadcasting, television, and digital media, has influenced how Christians communicate the Gospel. Artificial Intelligence represents another stage within this historical development, yet it remains a servant of the mission rather than its source.

Viewing AI as missional infrastructure also reframes how success should be measured. Contemporary discussions surrounding AI frequently celebrate metrics such as speed, productivity, automation, or scalability. While these indicators are undoubtedly valuable from an operational perspective, they remain insufficient within Christian mission. The mission of the Church has never been defined by technological efficiency alone but by faithfulness to God's redemptive purposes. Consequently, the true significance of AI is not that it produces more translated videos within a shorter period of time. Rather, its significance lies in whether those translations enable previously excluded communities to receive sound theological formation in languages they naturally understand. The empirical evidence presented in this study indicates that AI substantially improves such accessibility, thereby contributing to a more equitable distribution of theological resources across diverse linguistic communities.

This finding also challenges a long-standing structural imbalance within global theological education. Historically, the production of theological resources has largely remained concentrated within institutions located in North America and Europe, where financial resources, publishing infrastructures, and academic networks have been more readily available. Churches throughout Africa, Asia, and the Middle East have often depended upon translated resources produced elsewhere, resulting in significant delays before theological materials became locally accessible. The implementation of AI significantly reduces this dependency by enabling churches outside traditional

theological centers to generate multilingual educational resources with considerably greater efficiency. Consequently, the present findings support the broader movement toward a genuinely polycentric global Christianity, where theological contribution is no longer restricted by geography or language but increasingly emerges from diverse cultural contexts.

Nevertheless, greater accessibility should not automatically be interpreted as deeper discipleship. This distinction represents one of the central theological arguments of the present study. AI effectively addresses the problem of access; however, it does not independently resolve the problem of formation. These two realities are frequently treated as though they are interchangeable, yet Christian theology consistently distinguishes between the transmission of knowledge and the transformation of character. A believer may gain immediate access to biblical teaching through AI-assisted translation while still requiring years of spiritual guidance, communal accountability, and pastoral mentoring before demonstrating the maturity expected of Christian leadership. Information can be accelerated through technology, but spiritual formation cannot simply be compressed into an automated process.

The literature strongly supports this distinction. Shanahan and Parker (2026) argue that although AI contributes positively to educational engagement, it cannot reproduce the relational dynamics established between teachers and learners. Likewise, Papakostas (2025) emphasizes that AI lacks the moral consciousness and spiritual discernment necessary for authentic theological reflection. The present findings reinforce these observations while extending them into the context of leadership multiplication. The issue is not merely that AI lacks empathy or emotional intelligence; rather, AI lacks participation in the spiritual reality that shapes Christian discipleship. Machines process information through computational probability, whereas Christian formation emerges through relationships, worship, repentance, prayer, suffering, encouragement, and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit within believing communities.

This distinction becomes clearer when viewed through the doctrine of the Incarnation. Christian theology affirms that God's ultimate self-revelation occurred not through abstract information but through the embodied life of Jesus Christ. Divine truth entered history within a human relationship rather than as detached knowledge. The ministry of Jesus consistently demonstrates that transformation occurs through presence, imitation, correction, compassion, and shared life. Likewise, the apostolic pattern of discipleship repeatedly emphasizes imitation of faithful leaders rather than the passive consumption of information alone. Therefore, while AI may faithfully reproduce doctrinal explanations, it cannot embody holiness, demonstrate sacrificial love, or cultivate the relational trust through which Christian leadership is formed. These dimensions remain inseparable from human

participation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Recognizing this incarnational pattern prevents two equally problematic responses toward AI. On one hand, technological optimism assumes that increasingly sophisticated AI systems will eventually replace many aspects of Christian ministry. Such optimism risks reducing discipleship to information management while neglecting the relational nature of ecclesial life. On the other hand, technological skepticism rejects AI because it cannot perform pastoral ministry in its fullest sense. This criticism, however, evaluates AI according to responsibilities it was never intended to fulfill. The findings of the present study suggest a different perspective. AI should not be assessed according to its capacity to imitate pastors or missionaries but according to its capacity to remove repetitive linguistic and administrative burdens that prevent those leaders from investing more deeply in ministries requiring uniquely human presence.

The implementation of the IFGF College project provides a practical illustration of this principle. The rapid production of multilingual theological resources significantly reduced the time devoted to repetitive translation processes while simultaneously increasing opportunities for local pastors and missionaries to concentrate on contextual discipleship, pastoral visitation, mentoring, and leadership development. Rather than diminishing the importance of human ministry, technological assistance increased its relative significance. As routine linguistic tasks became increasingly automated, the value of pastoral wisdom, theological discernment, and spiritual accompaniment became even more apparent. Ironically, the more efficient AI became, the more indispensable authentic human leadership proved to be.

This observation leads to the central theological contribution of the present study. The role of Artificial Intelligence in Christian mission should not be evaluated according to whether it can replace ministers, pastors, or missionaries. Such a question begins from a technological framework that misunderstands both AI and Christian ministry. A more appropriate theological question asks whether AI enables the Church to participate more faithfully in the *Missio Dei* by removing barriers that unnecessarily consume human time, energy, and resources. When evaluated through this framework, AI emerges not as a competitor to the Church's ministry but as a form of faithful stewardship that strengthens the Church's capacity to proclaim the Gospel while preserving the incarnational character of discipleship.

In synthesis, the empirical findings demonstrate that AI substantially transforms access to theological education by reducing one of the oldest structural barriers within global mission: language. However, the significance of this transformation lies not primarily in technological acceleration but in its missiological implications. AI enables the Church to redistribute missionary effort away from

repetitive linguistic tasks and toward relational ministries that remain essential for authentic Christian leadership formation. Consequently, this study proposes that Artificial Intelligence should be understood as missional infrastructure rather than ministerial replacement. Such a framework preserves the theological priority of embodied discipleship while acknowledging that faithful stewardship of emerging technologies can meaningfully strengthen the Church's participation in the *Missio Dei*. This theological reinterpretation provides the conceptual foundation for the following discussion concerning the cultural risks that accompany AI-mediated ministry, particularly within high power-distance societies where technological authority may unintentionally replace critical theological discernment.

Cultural Navigation: Power Distance, Epistemic Authority, and the Risk of Algorithmic Deification

The expansion of Artificial Intelligence into global Christian ministry introduces opportunities that extend beyond technological efficiency while simultaneously creating new theological and cultural challenges. Although AI significantly improves the accessibility of theological education across linguistic boundaries, the findings of this study suggest that technological accessibility alone does not guarantee faithful theological reception. The same digital systems that enable wider participation in theological learning may also reshape how authority is perceived within Christian communities. Consequently, the central issue is no longer limited to whether AI produces accurate theological content, but whether Christian leaders and local congregations continue to exercise spiritual discernment when engaging with AI-generated knowledge. This distinction becomes particularly significant within cultures characterized by high levels of respect for hierarchical authority, where technological outputs may unintentionally acquire an authority that exceeds their intended role.

The empirical observations from this study indicate that AI-generated theological materials are often received with remarkable confidence because they present information fluently, consistently, and with apparent certainty. This characteristic creates significant educational advantages by improving accessibility and reducing confusion arising from inconsistent translations. However, the same characteristics may unintentionally encourage users to perceive AI-generated responses as inherently authoritative rather than as resources requiring theological evaluation. Such a tendency becomes increasingly concerning within Christian ministry because theological authority has historically been grounded not merely in accurate information but in faithful interpretation under the guidance of Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and the believing community. Theological truth has never been

understood as the mechanical reproduction of information alone but as the faithful discernment of God's revelation within the life of the Church.

Previous scholarship has increasingly recognized that AI systems are capable of reproducing existing knowledge while simultaneously reflecting the assumptions embedded within their training data. Papakostas (2025) argues that although AI provides valuable support for theological education, it lacks the moral consciousness, spiritual awareness, and historical sensitivity required for genuine theological discernment. Likewise, Oyasor (2024) warns that algorithmic analysis may reduce religious texts to informational datasets while overlooking their sacred, communal, and spiritual dimensions. These observations reinforce an important theological distinction. AI can organize, summarize, and reproduce theological knowledge with remarkable efficiency, yet it remains incapable of participating in the spiritual reality from which Christian theology emerges. Consequently, computational confidence should never be mistaken for spiritual authority.

The present findings extend these discussions by introducing a cultural dimension that has received comparatively limited attention within existing AI theology literature. The challenge is not simply that AI may produce inaccurate theological responses, but that different cultures respond differently to perceived authority. Hofstede's Power Distance Index (PDI) provides a valuable framework for understanding this phenomenon. According to Geli (2025), societies characterized by high power distance generally accept hierarchical authority as a normal aspect of social life. Decisions made by recognized authorities are less frequently questioned, while obedience and respect toward leadership are often regarded as important cultural virtues. Within such contexts, AI-generated content presented through realistic audiovisual technologies may unintentionally acquire a level of credibility that exceeds appropriate theological boundaries. Rather than evaluating AI responses through Scripture and communal discernment, users may simply assume that technologically sophisticated answers are inherently trustworthy.

This observation should not be interpreted as criticism of high power-distance cultures themselves. Respect for leadership has long served as an important strength within many Christian communities by encouraging unity, organizational stability, and faithful pastoral relationships. Nevertheless, every cultural strength may become a theological vulnerability when transferred uncritically into new technological environments. Within AI-mediated ministry, respect for authority may gradually shift from trusted spiritual leaders toward algorithmic systems that appear objective, neutral, and intellectually comprehensive. The resulting danger is not merely technological dependence but what this study describes as **algorithmic deification**-the tendency to attribute an unwarranted level of epistemic authority to AI-generated theological judgments.

The phrase *algorithmic deification* requires careful clarification. This study does not suggest that Christian believers consciously worship artificial intelligence or intentionally replace God with technology. Rather, the concern is considerably more subtle. Deification occurs when AI begins to occupy a functional position that properly belongs to Scripture, the Holy Spirit, or the discerning community of faith. Instead of asking whether an interpretation faithfully reflects biblical teaching, users may increasingly ask whether AI has confirmed it. Over time, confidence shifts from communal theological discernment toward computational certainty. The danger therefore lies not in idolatry in its classical form but in the gradual relocation of interpretive trust.

From the perspective of Christian theology, this represents an epistemological rather than merely technological crisis. Christianity has never understood knowledge of God as the product of information alone. Biblical knowledge emerges through revelation, faithful interpretation, participation within the believing community, and illumination by the Holy Spirit. Throughout church history, theological authority has therefore been distributed across Scripture, tradition, reason, and lived ecclesial experience rather than concentrated within a single informational source. AI, however, naturally encourages centralization because users typically interact with a single interface that produces immediate, confident, and apparently comprehensive responses. Without intentional theological formation, convenience may gradually replace discernment as the primary criterion for evaluating theological truth.

This concern becomes even more significant when AI-generated audiovisual technologies create highly realistic representations of respected Christian leaders. The findings of this study demonstrate that AI can successfully synchronize speech, facial expressions, and local languages with remarkable accuracy. While this capability dramatically increases accessibility, it also blurs the distinction between authentic presence and technological representation. A digitally generated sermon delivered in a local language may communicate theological information effectively, yet listeners may unconsciously associate the authority of the original speaker with every translated expression, even though significant interpretive decisions have occurred throughout the translation process. Consequently, technological realism may unintentionally strengthen the perception that AI-mediated communication possesses unquestionable theological reliability.

The literature concerning digital theology increasingly recognizes that technology is never culturally neutral. Niemandt and Niemandt (2025) argue that digital mission requires continuous theological reflection because every technological medium influences how Christian communities perceive and communicate the Gospel. The medium itself inevitably shapes patterns of participation, authority, and community formation. The present study supports this observation while arguing that

AI introduces a particularly significant challenge because it simultaneously functions as translator, editor, educator, and conversational partner. These overlapping roles create a level of epistemic influence that exceeds previous communication technologies such as printed books or recorded sermons. AI therefore requires a correspondingly stronger theological framework governing its responsible use within Christian ministry.

One practical implication emerging from the implementation findings concerns the development of controlled theological ecosystems such as IFGF GPT. Unlike public AI systems trained upon heterogeneous datasets representing diverse theological traditions, internally governed AI platforms may provide greater doctrinal consistency because they operate within clearly defined theological parameters established by the sponsoring ecclesial community. The significance of such platforms extends beyond organizational efficiency. Their primary contribution lies in strengthening theological accountability by ensuring that AI functions under the authority of the Church rather than independently of it. In this model, AI becomes accountable to theological governance rather than becoming a substitute for theological governance itself.

Nevertheless, private AI systems should not be regarded as complete solutions. Even doctrinally consistent AI remains incapable of exercising spiritual discernment or pastoral wisdom. Internal platforms reduce the risk of doctrinal inconsistency but do not eliminate the need for mature Christian leaders capable of interpreting Scripture within changing cultural circumstances. Theological governance therefore cannot be delegated entirely to algorithms, regardless of how carefully those algorithms are trained. Human responsibility remains indispensable because Christian leadership involves moral judgment, pastoral sensitivity, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit-dimensions that remain beyond computational capability.

These observations ultimately redirect attention toward the role of the Church as a discerning community. Rather than encouraging passive consumption of AI-generated theological content, churches should intentionally cultivate AI literacy as a spiritual discipline. Within this context, AI literacy refers not simply to technological competence but to the capacity to evaluate algorithmic outputs through biblical theology, ecclesial accountability, and communal discernment. Mature Christian leaders should therefore model critical engagement with AI by demonstrating that theological authority originates neither from computational sophistication nor institutional prestige but from faithful participation in the truth revealed through Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In synthesis, the greatest theological risk introduced by AI is not technological error but the subtle transformation of epistemic authority within Christian communities. High power-distance

cultures may unintentionally amplify this risk because deeply rooted patterns of respect for authority can extend toward algorithmic systems that appear objective and intellectually comprehensive. Consequently, faithful AI adoption requires more than technical excellence; it demands intentional theological formation capable of preserving the Church's practice of communal discernment. AI should therefore function as a servant of theological reflection rather than its final authority. Only when technological innovation remains accountable to Scripture, ecclesial oversight, and the continuing work of the Holy Spirit can the Church faithfully steward AI without surrendering the interpretive responsibility entrusted to the body of Christ.

Relational Crisis: The Tension Between Optimization and Spiritual Formation

The findings presented thus far demonstrate that Artificial Intelligence substantially enhances the accessibility of theological education by removing linguistic and administrative barriers that have historically constrained global leadership multiplication. Nevertheless, these achievements simultaneously expose a deeper theological tension. As access to theological knowledge becomes increasingly scalable through AI-assisted technologies, an important question emerges: Can the acceleration of theological information also accelerate spiritual formation? The findings of this study suggest that the answer is fundamentally negative. While AI effectively increases the speed with which doctrinal knowledge is distributed, Christian leadership formation remains rooted in relational processes that resist technological optimization. Consequently, the primary limitation of AI is not the quality of its computational performance but its inability to participate in the relational reality through which Christian character is historically formed.

This distinction represents one of the most significant theological implications of the present study. Contemporary discussions surrounding AI frequently evaluate technological success according to measurable outcomes such as efficiency, productivity, scalability, and automation. These indicators are undoubtedly appropriate within engineering, business, and educational administration. However, they become insufficient when applied to Christian leadership. Leadership within the New Testament is not primarily measured by the quantity of information transmitted but by the quality of lives transformed. Therefore, the governing principle of Christian leadership is not optimization but formation. While optimization seeks to maximize efficiency, formation seeks to cultivate Christlike character through faithful participation in the life of God and the community of believers. These two goals occasionally overlap, yet they should never be confused with one another.

Existing scholarship increasingly recognizes this distinction. Shanahan and Parker (2026) argue that AI can enrich religious education by supporting personalized learning experiences while

simultaneously emphasizing that authentic Christian education depends upon meaningful relationships between teachers and students. Similarly, Savio and Fernandes (2024) acknowledge that AI contributes significantly to evangelism and discipleship by expanding educational accessibility, yet they caution against reducing Christian formation to technologically mediated interactions. Papakostas (2025) likewise argues that although AI demonstrates remarkable capabilities in organizing and generating theological information, it lacks the moral consciousness and spiritual discernment necessary for authentic theological judgment. Collectively, these studies converge upon an important conclusion: AI excels at facilitating knowledge acquisition but remains incapable of reproducing the relational conditions under which spiritual maturity develops.

The present findings support these observations while extending them through a theological interpretation of Christian leadership multiplication. The limitation of AI should not be understood merely as the absence of emotion, empathy, or social intelligence. Such descriptions, while accurate, remain largely psychological. The deeper limitation is ontological. Artificial Intelligence processes information through computational probability, whereas Christian leadership emerges through participation in relationships that are simultaneously human and divine. Throughout Scripture, leadership is consistently formed within covenantal communities where truth is embodied, practiced, corrected, and witnessed rather than merely communicated. Knowledge becomes wisdom only when it is lived. Consequently, the formation of Christian leaders cannot be reduced to the successful transfer of theological information because leadership itself is fundamentally relational before it is instructional.

This distinction becomes particularly clear when viewed through the doctrine of the Incarnation. The Christian faith affirms that God's ultimate self-disclosure occurred through the incarnate Christ rather than through abstract propositions alone. The Gospel was not merely announced; it was embodied. Jesus did not simply communicate truth; He lived among His disciples, ate with them, corrected them, prayed with them, suffered alongside them, and ultimately entrusted His mission to them through a relationship cultivated over time. The Incarnation therefore reveals that God's preferred mode of forming disciples is profoundly relational. Christian leadership has historically followed this same pattern. From Jesus and the Twelve to Paul and Timothy, theological formation consistently occurs through shared life rather than detached information transfer. The significance of this pattern extends beyond historical observation; it establishes a theological model that continues to shape Christian discipleship today.

Consequently, the effectiveness of AI should not be evaluated according to whether it can imitate relational ministry but according to whether it strengthens the conditions under which

relational ministry can flourish. This distinction fundamentally changes the conversation surrounding AI in Christian leadership. The question is no longer whether AI can become a pastor, missionary, or mentor. Such comparisons misunderstand both the nature of AI and the vocation of Christian leadership. Instead, the more appropriate theological question asks whether AI enables pastors, missionaries, and mentors to devote greater attention to ministries that require embodied spiritual presence. When evaluated through this framework, AI's greatest contribution lies not in replacing relationships but in protecting them. By assuming repetitive linguistic and administrative responsibilities, AI allows Christian leaders to invest more deeply in pastoral care, mentoring, prayer, discernment, and character formation-ministries that remain irreducibly relational.

The implementation findings from IFGF College illustrate this distinction in a particularly compelling manner. The rapid production of multilingual theological resources significantly reduced the organizational burden associated with curriculum translation and distribution. However, the implementation process also demonstrated that translated content alone was insufficient for leadership multiplication. Local pastors and mentors continued to provide contextual interpretation, pastoral accountability, communal encouragement, and spiritual guidance. These relational activities proved indispensable because leadership formation required considerably more than intellectual comprehension. It required trusted relationships through which theological knowledge could be observed, practiced, questioned, and embodied within everyday ministry. In this sense, AI accelerated access to theological education without altering the fundamentally relational nature of Christian formation.

The findings therefore suggest that theological information and spiritual transformation should be understood as related but distinct realities. Information may be delivered almost instantaneously through digital technologies, whereas transformation unfolds gradually through the work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believing community. The speed of communication should never become the measure of discipleship. Indeed, one of the central paradoxes emerging from this study is that the faster theological information travels, the slower authentic spiritual formation must be allowed to grow. Character cannot be automated because Christian maturity develops through sustained practices of obedience, repentance, worship, suffering, forgiveness, accountability, and faithful service. These dimensions require time precisely because they involve the transformation of persons rather than the accumulation of knowledge.

This distinction also provides an important corrective to contemporary assumptions regarding leadership development. Modern educational systems frequently prioritize measurable competencies, standardized outcomes, and accelerated learning pathways. Such approaches have undoubtedly

contributed significant improvements within many professional disciplines. Nevertheless, Christian leadership cannot be evaluated exclusively through competency-based metrics because spiritual maturity exceeds measurable performance. A leader may successfully complete theological modules, demonstrate excellent doctrinal knowledge, and effectively communicate biblical teaching while still lacking humility, integrity, compassion, or pastoral wisdom. These qualities emerge not through cognitive achievement alone but through the ongoing work of sanctification within Christian community.

The IFGF leadership philosophy described in this study offers a valuable illustration of this principle. The concept of eunuch leadership emphasizes sacrificial stewardship rather than personal advancement. Such leadership cannot be fully understood through theoretical instruction alone because its credibility depends upon observable patterns of faithful living. AI may accurately explain the historical origins, theological foundations, and organizational expectations associated with sacrificial leadership. However, it cannot model costly obedience or inspire trust through personal example. Leadership credibility ultimately emerges from embodied faithfulness rather than informational precision. This observation reinforces Kia and Majesty's (2025) argument that religious educators remain irreplaceable because authentic spiritual values are transmitted through lived experience as much as through formal instruction.

Perhaps the most compelling illustration of this theological reality emerges from contexts where Christian discipleship involves significant personal risk. The findings include examples of ministry contexts in which local Christian leaders continued pursuing pastoral ministry despite persecution and the possibility of martyrdom. Such decisions cannot be adequately explained by information acquisition alone. They reflect convictions shaped through years of communal worship, faithful mentoring, spiritual encouragement, and the observable witness of mature believers. Individuals who remain faithful under persecution are rarely formed by content alone. They are formed by communities that embody the Gospel through everyday acts of sacrificial love. This observation demonstrates the limits of technological mediation. AI may distribute theological knowledge with unprecedented efficiency, but only embodied Christian communities can cultivate the kind of character that remains faithful when faith becomes costly.

Theologically, this finding also reflects the biblical understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ. Christian maturity develops not in isolation but within relationships characterized by mutual encouragement, correction, service, and accountability. The Apostle Paul consistently describes believers as members of one body, emphasizing that spiritual gifts function within communal participation rather than individual autonomy. AI may support communication within that body, yet it

cannot become the body itself. Neither can it replace the work of the Holy Spirit, whose ministry includes conviction, sanctification, discernment, and empowerment for faithful witness. Any theological framework for AI must therefore preserve the distinction between technological assistance and spiritual agency. Confusing these realities risks reducing Christian leadership to information management rather than participation in God's transforming work.

In synthesis, the present findings demonstrate that the central limitation of Artificial Intelligence is not computational capability but relational ontology. AI excels at distributing theological knowledge, yet Christian leadership is formed through embodied participation within communities shaped by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the future of leadership multiplication should not be understood as a choice between technological innovation and human relationships. Rather, technological innovation should be intentionally directed toward protecting and strengthening those relationships by removing tasks that unnecessarily consume human attention. Artificial Intelligence may dramatically accelerate theological education, but it cannot accelerate sanctification. Christian leaders are therefore called to steward AI in ways that maximize access to sound doctrine while preserving the relational practices through which disciples become mature leaders. This theological tension naturally leads to the question of how technological efficiency and embodied discipleship may coexist within a coherent framework, a question addressed in the following section through the proposed **Human-in-the-Loop** model.

Human-in-the-Loop: Integrating Technological Scalability with Embodied Discipleship

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that Artificial Intelligence substantially expands access to theological education while simultaneously revealing its inability to reproduce the relational processes through which Christian leadership is formed. These findings suggest that the challenge facing the contemporary Church is not whether AI should participate in ministry, but how it should participate without displacing the theological priorities that define Christian discipleship. This study argues that the most appropriate response is neither unrestricted technological adoption nor categorical technological rejection. Instead, it proposes a Human-in-the-Loop framework in which Artificial Intelligence functions as a supporting instrument under continuous human and ecclesial oversight. Within this model, technology performs functions that are computationally efficient, whereas Christian leaders remain responsible for ministries requiring spiritual discernment, moral judgment, pastoral presence, and relational formation.

The concept of Human-in-the-Loop has been widely discussed within computer science and artificial intelligence governance as an approach that preserves meaningful human oversight over

automated decision-making systems. Existing literature generally presents the model as a mechanism for reducing algorithmic error while maintaining ethical accountability. Papakostas (2025) similarly argues that AI should function dialogically by assisting theological reflection without replacing human interpretation or moral responsibility. Although this perspective provides an important ethical foundation, the present study extends the concept beyond algorithmic governance by locating Human-in-the-Loop within the theological framework of *Missio Dei*. The primary purpose of human oversight is not merely to improve technological accuracy but to preserve the incarnational and communal nature of Christian leadership. Human involvement is therefore not an operational safeguard alone; it is a theological necessity.

This distinction fundamentally changes how AI is positioned within Christian ministry. Much of the public conversation surrounding AI assumes an implicit competition between technological capability and human responsibility. As AI becomes increasingly sophisticated, concerns naturally arise regarding whether machines will eventually replace educators, pastors, translators, or missionaries. Such discussions, however, often begin from assumptions inherited from technological discourse rather than Christian theology. The Church has never understood ministry primarily as the execution of tasks. Instead, ministry is understood as faithful participation in God's redemptive work through relationships shaped by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, replacing human labor cannot become the ultimate objective of technological innovation within Christian mission. The more appropriate objective is to remove unnecessary burdens that prevent Christian leaders from fully exercising ministries that only human beings can perform.

The empirical findings strongly support this perspective. Throughout the implementation of multilingual theological education, Artificial Intelligence proved exceptionally effective in automating repetitive activities such as audiovisual translation, language synchronization, subtitle generation, and curriculum localization. These processes previously required extensive financial resources, technical expertise, and long production timelines. By significantly reducing these burdens, AI released valuable human capacity that could be redirected toward mentoring emerging leaders, contextual theological reflection, pastoral visitation, prayer, and community building. The implementation therefore demonstrates an important theological principle: technological efficiency achieves its greatest value when it creates additional opportunities for embodied ministry rather than replacing it.

This redistribution of responsibility reflects a broader biblical understanding of stewardship. Scripture consistently portrays faithful stewardship not as maximizing productivity for its own sake but as wisely managing resources entrusted by God for the benefit of His people and the advancement of His kingdom. Time, energy, knowledge, finances, and spiritual gifts are all presented as resources

requiring faithful management. Within this theological framework, Artificial Intelligence may itself be understood as one such resource. Its ethical value depends not upon its computational sophistication but upon the wisdom with which it is stewarded. Human-in-the-Loop therefore represents an expression of Christian stewardship because it intentionally allocates technological and human responsibilities according to their respective strengths. Machines perform repetitive computational processes; Spirit-filled leaders cultivate spiritually mature disciples.

This complementary relationship also preserves an essential aspect of Christian anthropology. According to the biblical doctrine of the *Imago Dei*, human beings possess a unique vocation that cannot be reduced to functional productivity. Humanity reflects God's image not merely through intellectual capacity but through relationality, moral agency, creativity, responsibility, and covenantal participation within creation. AI may imitate certain cognitive processes associated with human intelligence, yet it does not participate in the ontological reality of bearing God's image. Consequently, Christian leadership cannot be evaluated solely according to informational competence because leadership ultimately involves persons whose lives become visible witnesses to the Gospel. Human-in-the-Loop preserves this distinction by ensuring that technology serves human vocation rather than redefining it.

Existing scholarship increasingly supports this understanding. Maluchnik (2025) argues that strategic leadership within AI-integrated organizations depends upon ethical governance capable of preserving human dignity and moral accountability. Likewise, Rahmatiah et al. (2022) emphasize that technological competence alone remains insufficient because the educator's moral character continues to function as the primary foundation of effective teaching. These observations reinforce the central argument of the present study. AI may strengthen educational delivery, yet the credibility of Christian leadership continues to depend upon the integrity of those who teach, mentor, and shepherd God's people. Technological excellence can never compensate for spiritual immaturity.

The Human-in-the-Loop model also offers an important response to the epistemic risks discussed in the previous section. By maintaining continuous human oversight, theological interpretation remains accountable to Scripture, ecclesial tradition, and communal discernment rather than becoming dependent upon algorithmic authority. AI may generate draft translations, summarize theological literature, organize educational materials, and facilitate multilingual communication, but final theological responsibility remains within the believing community. This distinction prevents computational efficiency from gradually becoming computational authority. Instead of allowing AI to determine theological truth, Human-in-the-Loop positions AI as an instrument that assists the Church while remaining accountable to the Church's theological convictions.

From a practical perspective, this framework also contributes to contextual theology. Global Christianity encompasses remarkable linguistic, cultural, and ecclesial diversity. No single AI model can adequately account for every historical experience, pastoral challenge, or cultural nuance encountered throughout worldwide Christian communities. Human oversight therefore becomes indispensable because local Christian leaders possess contextual knowledge unavailable to algorithmic systems. They understand cultural assumptions, historical wounds, political realities, religious sensitivities, and communal relationships that inevitably shape theological communication. Human-in-the-Loop ensures that AI-generated materials are not merely linguistically accurate but also pastorally appropriate within their intended contexts.

The implementation of IFGF GPT provides a practical illustration of this principle. Rather than functioning as an autonomous theological authority, the platform operates within clearly defined doctrinal boundaries established by the organization itself. This design demonstrates that AI can significantly strengthen organizational consistency while remaining accountable to theological governance. Nevertheless, even internally governed systems require continual evaluation because no database, regardless of its theological quality, can anticipate every pastoral circumstance encountered by Christian leaders. New ethical questions, cultural developments, and ministry challenges continually emerge. Consequently, faithful ministry requires leaders capable of exercising wisdom rather than merely retrieving information.

Theologically, this distinction reflects the relationship between wisdom and knowledge found throughout Scripture. Knowledge concerns the acquisition of truth, whereas wisdom concerns the faithful application of truth within complex human situations. Artificial Intelligence demonstrates remarkable competence in organizing knowledge. Wisdom, however, develops through spiritual maturity, moral discernment, lived experience, and dependence upon God. Christian leadership therefore requires far more than accurate information. It requires the capacity to recognize when compassion should temper justice, when patience should replace efficiency, when silence communicates more faithfully than speech, and when pastoral care demands presence rather than productivity. These dimensions remain fundamentally human because they arise within lives continually transformed by the Holy Spirit.

The findings therefore suggest that Human-in-the-Loop should not be understood as a temporary compromise until Artificial Intelligence becomes more sophisticated. Such an assumption misunderstands the theological basis of the model. Human participation remains essential not because current AI systems are imperfect but because Christian ministry itself is irreducibly relational. Even if future AI systems eventually achieve greater linguistic fluency, emotional responsiveness, or

contextual awareness, they would still remain incapable of participating in the covenantal relationships through which Christian discipleship is historically transmitted. Human oversight is therefore not a technological limitation awaiting future innovation. It is a permanent theological principle grounded in the Church's understanding of ministry.

This observation naturally leads toward a broader theological insight. Human-in-the-Loop is not itself the final objective of AI integration within Christian mission. Rather, it establishes the necessary conditions through which technological scalability and relational discipleship may coexist without undermining one another. By preserving human presence at the center of leadership formation while allowing AI to remove repetitive barriers, the Church becomes capable of expanding its global reach without sacrificing its incarnational identity. Technological scale and relational depth no longer function as competing priorities but begin to reinforce one another.

In synthesis, the Human-in-the-Loop framework provides a theological model through which Artificial Intelligence may participate responsibly in Christian leadership multiplication. Rather than replacing pastors, missionaries, or theological educators, AI functions as a stewarded instrument operating under continuous human, ecclesial, and theological oversight. This model preserves the Church's commitment to embodied discipleship while enabling significant expansion in multilingual theological accessibility. More importantly, it demonstrates that faithful technological stewardship is not measured by the degree to which machines imitate human ministry, but by the degree to which technology enables human leaders to devote themselves more fully to the relational work entrusted to them by Christ. Human-in-the-Loop therefore should not be understood as the destination of AI integration, but as the necessary bridge toward a new paradigm in which technological scalability serves rather than diminishes relational discipleship. The following section develops this paradigm through the concept of Scaled Intimacy, which this study proposes as its primary theological contribution to contemporary discussions on Artificial Intelligence and Christian leadership multiplication.

Scaled Intimacy: A Theological Paradigm for Leadership Multiplication in the AI Era

The preceding discussion has argued that Artificial Intelligence should neither replace Christian ministry nor function as an independent theological authority. Instead, AI serves the Church most faithfully when it removes repetitive linguistic and administrative burdens while preserving the relational dimensions of discipleship. These findings naturally lead to a broader theological question: Can the Church expand globally without sacrificing the relational depth that has historically defined Christian leadership formation? This study proposes the concept of Scaled Intimacy as a theological

response to this question. Rather than viewing scalability and relational discipleship as competing priorities, Scaled Intimacy argues that technological expansion should intentionally create greater opportunities for embodied relationships rather than replacing them. Accordingly, the success of AI within Christian mission should not be measured by how many processes become automated, but by how effectively technology enables the Church to remain relational while serving increasingly diverse communities.

Within contemporary organizational literature, scalability is generally associated with the capacity to increase productivity while minimizing proportional increases in human effort or institutional resources. Such an understanding has shaped much of the public enthusiasm surrounding Artificial Intelligence because AI appears capable of extending organizational capacity beyond traditional human limitations. Although this perspective offers valuable insights for business and technological innovation, it cannot simply be transferred into Christian ministry without theological reflection. The mission of the Church differs fundamentally from commercial organizations because its central objective is not operational expansion but the formation of faithful disciples. Consequently, Christian leadership multiplication cannot be evaluated according to numerical growth alone. Theological success must also consider whether expanding ministries continue to cultivate mature believers whose lives increasingly reflect the character of Christ.

This distinction represents the conceptual foundation of Scaled Intimacy. Rather than opposing technological scalability, the present study argues that scalability should be redefined according to theological priorities. The purpose of AI is not to maximize automation but to maximize the availability of relational ministry. Every administrative task delegated to technology should create additional opportunities for prayer, mentoring, pastoral visitation, theological dialogue, communal worship, and personal discipleship. In this sense, technological efficiency becomes spiritually meaningful only when it contributes to deeper human relationships. AI therefore serves intimacy indirectly by protecting the time, emotional capacity, and pastoral attention required for authentic Christian formation.

The empirical findings strongly support this interpretation. Throughout the implementation of multilingual theological education, AI substantially accelerated curriculum translation, audiovisual localization, subtitle generation, and content distribution. These technological developments enabled educational resources to become available in linguistic contexts that previously lacked access to formal theological instruction. Nevertheless, leadership multiplication did not occur simply because more educational materials became available. The implementation consistently depended upon local pastors, mentors, and ministry leaders who interpreted theological content within their own cultural

contexts while accompanying emerging leaders through ongoing relationships of accountability, encouragement, correction, and spiritual guidance. Technology expanded access, but relationships remained the primary environment in which leadership matured.

These observations suggest that scale and intimacy should not be understood as mutually exclusive realities. Historically, Christian organizations have often perceived a tension between organizational growth and relational discipleship. As ministries expand geographically, personal relationships frequently become more difficult to sustain, leading many leaders to assume that increasing scale inevitably reduces intimacy. The findings of this study challenge this assumption by demonstrating that the relationship between scale and intimacy depends largely upon how institutional resources are allocated. When technology absorbs repetitive operational responsibilities, Christian leaders recover time that may be reinvested in ministries requiring embodied presence. Properly stewarded AI therefore does not compete with intimacy; it protects the conditions under which intimacy becomes possible.

From a theological perspective, this argument reflects the biblical pattern of stewardship rather than technological determinism. Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly entrusts human beings with resources intended to serve His redemptive purposes. Wisdom consists not merely in possessing resources but in ordering them according to God's priorities. Artificial Intelligence may therefore be understood as one such resource. Like language, writing, printing, transportation, or digital communication, AI possesses no independent theological value apart from its faithful use. Scaled Intimacy insists that technological resources should always be evaluated according to whether they strengthen the Church's participation in God's relational mission rather than merely increasing institutional productivity.

This perspective also reframes contemporary discussions concerning digital ministry. Much of the existing literature evaluates online ministry by asking whether digital interaction can adequately substitute for physical presence. Such discussions frequently produce polarized conclusions, either celebrating technological innovation or defending exclusively face-to-face ministry. The present study proposes a different approach. Rather than asking whether digital ministry replaces embodied ministry, Scaled Intimacy asks whether digital ministry creates greater capacity for embodied ministry. This subtle shift significantly changes the theological conversation. Technology is no longer viewed primarily as a substitute for human relationships but as a servant of those relationships.

Theologically, this framework resonates strongly with the doctrine of the Incarnation. The ministry of Jesus demonstrates that God's mission consistently moves toward human presence rather than away from it. The Incarnation represents God's ultimate affirmation that relational proximity

matters. Consequently, no theological model for AI should diminish the importance of embodied community. Scaled Intimacy therefore rejects any vision of technological progress that gradually renders human relationships unnecessary. Instead, it argues that technological advancement reaches its highest theological purpose precisely when it strengthens the Church's capacity for incarnational ministry. AI expands communication so that human beings may deepen communion.

This distinction becomes particularly important when considering global mission. The Great Commission calls the Church to make disciples of all nations, a task requiring both extraordinary geographical expansion and profound relational commitment. Historically, these two priorities have often appeared difficult to balance because missionary resources remain limited. Artificial Intelligence significantly alters this dynamic by reducing many of the logistical burdens associated with multilingual theological education. Nevertheless, the Great Commission itself has never been fulfilled through information alone. Jesus did not command His disciples merely to distribute teaching but to make disciples through baptizing, teaching, and ongoing communal participation. Scaled Intimacy therefore recognizes that technological expansion remains incomplete unless it ultimately strengthens the Church's ability to cultivate faithful communities in which disciples learn to follow Christ together. The implementation findings also reveal an important organizational implication. As AI increasingly assumes repetitive operational responsibilities, the competencies expected of Christian leaders inevitably change. Future ministry leaders will require more than theological knowledge or technological literacy alone. They must become relational architects capable of intentionally cultivating trust, accountability, spiritual discernment, and community within increasingly complex digital environments. Leadership therefore shifts from managing information toward nurturing relationships. Ironically, the more advanced AI becomes, the more valuable uniquely human capacities such as compassion, wisdom, humility, and pastoral discernment become. Technological progress thus elevates rather than diminishes the importance of Christlike leadership.

Existing scholarship indirectly supports this development. Maluchnik (2025) argues that responsible AI governance depends upon preserving human dignity within technologically mediated decision-making. Likewise, Niemandt and Niemandt (2025) emphasize that digital mission should remain firmly rooted within God's ongoing mission rather than becoming captivated by technological novelty. The present study extends these insights by proposing that faithful stewardship of AI requires an explicit commitment to preserving relational depth as ministries expand globally. Organizational growth should therefore be evaluated not merely according to numerical indicators but according to whether Christian communities continue to embody the love, mutual care, and spiritual accountability characteristic of the Body of Christ.

Accordingly, Scaled Intimacy should not be understood as a technological strategy but as a theological paradigm governing the Church's engagement with emerging technologies. It rejects two opposing assumptions that frequently dominate contemporary discussions. First, it rejects technological determinism, which assumes that increased automation inevitably reduces human significance. Second, it rejects technological isolationism, which assumes that preserving Christian identity requires minimizing technological participation. Instead, Scaled Intimacy argues that faithful stewardship enables the Church to embrace technological innovation while simultaneously intensifying its commitment to embodied discipleship. Expansion and intimacy therefore become complementary rather than contradictory realities.

The conceptual contribution of this study emerges most clearly at this point. Existing literature generally evaluates AI according to educational effectiveness, ethical governance, or technological capability. While these perspectives remain valuable, they do not fully address the theological relationship between scalability and discipleship. The present study therefore proposes Scaled Intimacy as a new interpretive framework through which AI may be understood as serving rather than threatening the relational identity of the Church. This framework suggests that the future of Christian leadership multiplication does not depend upon choosing between technological innovation and incarnational ministry. Rather, it depends upon faithfully integrating both within a coherent theological vision grounded in the *Missio Dei*.

In synthesis, Scaled Intimacy represents the primary conceptual contribution of this study. It argues that the Church should measure technological success not by the quantity of automated activities or the speed of information distribution but by the degree to which AI enables deeper, more intentional, and more sustainable human relationships. Artificial Intelligence becomes the servant of discipleship rather than its substitute. As linguistic and administrative burdens increasingly shift toward intelligent systems, Christian leaders gain greater capacity to invest in ministries that cannot be automated: prayer, pastoral care, mentoring, communal discernment, sacramental life, and the formation of Christlike character. The future of leadership multiplication therefore lies not in replacing human presence with technological efficiency, but in stewarding technological efficiency so that embodied Christian presence may flourish at a global scale. Within this framework, Scaled Intimacy offers a theological paradigm through which the Church may faithfully embrace AI while remaining deeply rooted in its incarnational identity and its enduring participation in the *Missio Dei*.

DELTA as a Theological Validation Framework for Scaled Intimacy

The preceding discussion has argued that Artificial Intelligence should be understood as missional infrastructure rather than ministerial replacement, that Christian leadership remains fundamentally relational, and that the Church should pursue Scaled Intimacy by using technology to expand access while preserving embodied discipleship. These arguments, however, naturally raise a practical theological question: How can the Church determine whether AI is being used faithfully? Technological innovation alone cannot answer this question because efficiency, scalability, and computational accuracy do not necessarily reflect theological faithfulness. Accordingly, this study proposes that the DELTA framework should be understood not merely as a collection of ethical principles but as a theological framework for evaluating whether AI genuinely serves the mission of God while preserving the identity of the Church.

Unlike many contemporary AI governance models that prioritize legal compliance, transparency, fairness, or algorithmic accountability, the DELTA framework begins with theology rather than technology. It assumes that the ultimate question is not whether AI functions efficiently, but whether it enables the Church to participate more faithfully in the *Missio Dei*. Consequently, every technological implementation should be examined according to five interrelated theological commitments: **Dignity, Embodiment, Love, Stewardship, and Transcendence**. Together these principles provide a practical means by which Christian communities may evaluate whether technological innovation strengthens or weakens the Church's witness in an increasingly digital world.

Dignity: Protecting the Image of God Beyond Digital Efficiency

The first principle of DELTA affirms that every human being possesses inherent dignity because humanity bears the *Imago Dei*. Christian anthropology therefore rejects every technological system that reduces persons to data, productivity metrics, or algorithmic outputs. This principle has become increasingly significant as AI systems acquire unprecedented capabilities to analyze behavior, predict preferences, and automate communication. While such capabilities undoubtedly improve organizational efficiency, they also introduce the temptation to evaluate ministry primarily through measurable outcomes. Churches may begin emphasizing completion rates, engagement statistics, or digital participation while unintentionally overlooking the spiritual reality of the individuals represented by those numbers.

The findings of this study suggest that this danger is particularly relevant within leadership multiplication. AI enables ministries to distribute theological education to thousands of learners simultaneously. Yet numerical expansion alone cannot become the primary measure of success because Christian mission ultimately concerns persons rather than statistics. Every translated

curriculum, generated subtitle, and localized video ultimately exists for the purpose of serving individuals created in God's image. Dignity therefore requires Christian leaders to remember that technology remains accountable to persons rather than the reverse. AI should always expand opportunities for pastoral care instead of replacing personal attention with automated interaction.

This understanding aligns closely with Maluchnik's (2025) argument that faith-based AI governance must remain grounded in the protection of human dignity. The present study extends this observation by proposing that dignity should function as the first evaluative question for every AI implementation within Christian ministry: Does this technology strengthen our ability to love people as persons, or does it gradually encourage us to manage them merely as information? The answer to this question determines whether technological efficiency remains faithful to Christian anthropology. Embodiment: Preserving the Incarnational Nature of Christian Community

The second principle recognizes that Christianity is fundamentally an incarnational faith. The Gospel entered history through embodied presence rather than disembodied communication, and the Church continues to participate in God's mission through communities gathered around worship, fellowship, sacramental life, and mutual service. Consequently, digital technologies should never be evaluated independently of their impact upon embodied Christian relationships.

The findings consistently demonstrate that AI successfully expands access to theological education but cannot replace the relational environment in which spiritual maturity develops. Translation technologies, multilingual educational platforms, and AI-assisted communication significantly improve accessibility, yet they remain preparatory rather than sufficient. They invite participation in Christian community; they cannot become that community.

This distinction fundamentally reshapes the evaluation of digital ministry. Rather than asking whether online technologies are equivalent to face-to-face ministry, Embodiment asks a different question: Does this technology ultimately encourage believers toward deeper participation in embodied Christian community? If digital engagement gradually replaces fellowship, accountability, pastoral care, or sacramental participation, then technological success has simultaneously become theological failure. Conversely, when AI removes practical barriers that allow pastors to spend more time visiting families, mentoring leaders, praying with believers, and strengthening local congregations, technology fulfills its proper theological role by serving embodied ministry rather than competing with it.

Love: Evaluating Technology According to the Great Commandment

The third principle shifts attention from technological capability toward Christian motivation. Throughout Scripture, love functions as the defining characteristic of faithful discipleship. Christian leadership therefore cannot be evaluated solely according to organizational competence or educational effectiveness because ministry ultimately exists to reflect the self-giving love of Christ.

Within this study, love emerges not as an emotional sentiment but as the governing purpose of technological stewardship. AI becomes valuable insofar as it enables Christian leaders to love more faithfully by removing repetitive burdens that unnecessarily consume time, emotional energy, and institutional resources. Every hour saved through automated translation potentially becomes another hour invested in pastoral conversation, intercessory prayer, mentoring, or compassionate care. Technology therefore serves love indirectly by protecting the conditions under which love may be personally expressed.

This principle also provides an important safeguard against technological triumphalism. Churches should not adopt AI simply because it is innovative or efficient. Rather, every implementation should be examined according to a simple but demanding theological question: Does this technology enable us to love God and our neighbors more faithfully? If technological innovation increases organizational capacity while diminishing compassion, patience, hospitality, or personal care, then efficiency has exceeded its proper theological limits.

Stewardship: Ordering Technology Under the Mission of God

The fourth principle integrates the previous discussions concerning Human-in-the-Loop and Scaled Intimacy. Christian stewardship has never implied maximizing efficiency for its own sake. Instead, stewardship concerns the faithful management of every resource entrusted by God in service of His kingdom. Artificial Intelligence should therefore be understood as one resource among many, neither inherently sacred nor inherently dangerous. Its moral significance depends entirely upon the purposes toward which it is directed.

The findings presented throughout this study consistently support this understanding. AI demonstrates extraordinary competence in performing repetitive computational tasks while simultaneously revealing its inability to exercise spiritual discernment or pastoral wisdom. Stewardship therefore requires Christian leaders to assign responsibilities according to the strengths of each participant. Machines manage computational repetition; human leaders cultivate spiritual maturity. Such allocation does not diminish either participant but enables each to fulfill its proper role within God's mission.

Viewed in this light, Scaled Intimacy becomes an expression of faithful stewardship rather than organizational strategy. Technology extends the Church's communicative capacity so that pastors, missionaries, and mentors may invest more deeply in ministries requiring wisdom, discernment, compassion, and embodied presence. Stewardship thus evaluates success not according to automation itself but according to whether automation ultimately strengthens the Church's participation in the *Missio Dei*.

Transcendence: Preserving Dependence upon the Holy Spirit

The final principle distinguishes Christian engagement with AI from every purely secular framework of technological governance. Christianity affirms that authentic spiritual transformation originates not from human ingenuity but from the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, no technological advancement, regardless of its sophistication, can replace divine agency within Christian leadership formation.

The findings repeatedly demonstrate that AI effectively distributes theological information while remaining incapable of producing repentance, conviction, spiritual discernment, or sanctification. These realities belong to the work of God rather than the operation of algorithms. Transcendence therefore reminds the Church that every technological achievement remains subordinate to divine grace. AI may prepare the environment in which discipleship occurs, but only the Holy Spirit transforms the human heart.

This principle also protects the Church from subtle forms of technological determinism. As AI systems become increasingly capable, Christian communities may gradually begin expecting technology to solve problems that are fundamentally spiritual. Transcendence resists this temptation by insisting that the deepest needs of humanity remain beyond computational solutions. Sin cannot be automated away. Repentance cannot be generated through machine learning. Faith cannot be manufactured by predictive algorithms. Christian leadership therefore remains dependent upon prayer, worship, Scripture, and the continuing presence of God.

Accordingly, the final evaluative question becomes the most important of all: Does this technological implementation deepen our dependence upon the Holy Spirit, or does it quietly encourage dependence upon technology itself? The answer ultimately determines whether AI functions as faithful stewardship or subtle idolatry.

Synthesis: DELTA as the Theological Test of Faithful AI Stewardship

Taken together, the DELTA framework provides more than a set of ethical recommendations. It functions as a theological validation framework through which the Church may continually evaluate whether Artificial Intelligence remains faithful to its identity and calling. Each principle safeguards one essential dimension of Christian ministry: Dignity protects the *Imago Dei*; Embodiment preserves the incarnational nature of discipleship; Love ensures that technology serves persons rather than institutions; Stewardship orders innovation under the *Missio Dei*; and Transcendence maintains the Church's dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Within this framework, Scaled Intimacy becomes measurable rather than merely aspirational. A ministry successfully practices Scaled Intimacy only when technological expansion simultaneously strengthens human dignity, embodied relationships, Christlike love, faithful stewardship, and spiritual dependence upon God. If any one of these dimensions is compromised, numerical growth alone cannot be regarded as theological success. The future of Artificial Intelligence in Christian leadership therefore depends not upon developing increasingly sophisticated technologies, but upon cultivating increasingly mature theological wisdom capable of stewarding those technologies for the glory of God and the flourishing of His Church.

CONCLUSION

The rapid emergence of Artificial Intelligence has fundamentally transformed the conditions under which Christian leadership multiplication takes place. While existing scholarship has primarily examined AI through the lenses of educational innovation, ethical governance, or technological capability, this study argues that the more significant theological question concerns how the Church should faithfully steward Artificial Intelligence within its participation in the *Missio Dei*. Consequently, the contribution of AI should not be evaluated according to its capacity to imitate pastors, missionaries, or spiritual mentors, but according to its ability to remove structural barriers that have historically limited equitable access to theological formation.

This study demonstrates that AI possesses extraordinary potential to accelerate multilingual theological education by reducing linguistic and administrative obstacles that have traditionally constrained leadership development across diverse cultural contexts. Nevertheless, the findings equally demonstrate that increased accessibility does not automatically produce spiritual maturity. Christian leadership remains fundamentally relational because it is formed through embodied discipleship, communal accountability, pastoral guidance, and the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. Artificial Intelligence therefore functions most faithfully when it supports these relational processes

rather than attempting to replace them.

Theologically, this study proposes a reinterpretation of AI as missional infrastructure rather than ministerial replacement. This perspective shifts the conversation away from the increasingly common question of whether AI can replace human ministry and toward a more constructive theological inquiry concerning how technological innovation may strengthen the Church's participation in God's redemptive mission. Such a framework recognizes that translation, localization, and administrative coordination may increasingly be entrusted to intelligent systems, while discernment, spiritual formation, sacramental ministry, and pastoral care remain permanently entrusted to the believing community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The principal conceptual contribution of this research is the development of Scaled Intimacy as a theological paradigm for Christian leadership multiplication in the age of Artificial Intelligence. Contrary to the widespread assumption that organizational expansion inevitably weakens relational discipleship, Scaled Intimacy argues that faithful technological stewardship enables the Church to expand its global reach while simultaneously protecting the embodied relationships through which Christian leaders are formed. Within this paradigm, Artificial Intelligence does not diminish the importance of human ministry; rather, it increases its significance by releasing Christian leaders from repetitive linguistic and administrative responsibilities so that they may devote greater attention to mentoring, pastoral care, communal discernment, and the cultivation of Christlike character.

To operationalize this paradigm, the study further proposes the Human-in-the-Loop model as the practical mechanism through which AI remains accountable to human leadership, while the DELTA framework serves as a theological validation framework for evaluating whether technological implementation remains faithful to Christian anthropology, ecclesiology, and the *Missio Dei*. Together, these concepts provide an integrated theological approach through which churches may embrace technological innovation without compromising their incarnational identity.

Ultimately, the future of Christian leadership multiplication will not be determined by the sophistication of Artificial Intelligence but by the theological wisdom with which the Church chooses to steward it. The calling of the Church in the AI era is therefore neither technological enthusiasm nor technological resistance, but **Bold Humility**—the willingness to embrace emerging technologies as gifts of common grace while remaining deeply dependent upon Scripture, embodied Christian community, and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Only through such faithful stewardship can technological advancement become an instrument that expands the Church's participation in the *Missio Dei* while preserving the relational heart of the Gospel.

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