Organized Intelligence 2026 Conference

Faith Perspectives on AI and Human Flourishing

November 10, 2026

Utah State Capitol Building

By Marianna Richardson

The second day of the OI26 Conference was open to the public and focused on the relationship between faith, human flourishing, public policy, and artificial intelligence. Throughout the day, religious leaders, scholars, policymakers, educators, and advocates explored how AI can serve humanity while preserving human dignity, freedom, wisdom, and authentic relationships. While participants acknowledged the extraordinary potential of AI, there was broad agreement that technology must remain accountable to human values and must never replace the moral, spiritual, and relational foundations that make human flourishing possible.

Building a Pro-Human Vision for AI

The conference opened with reflections on the growing movement to develop a "pro-human" approach to artificial intelligence. Speakers referenced the Pro-Human Declaration and related initiatives such as the Utah Common Ground Initiative and the Utah Multi-Faith AI Council, all of which seek to ensure that AI strengthens rather than diminishes human dignity. Participants emphasized that every human being possesses inherent worth and that technology should be measured by how well it serves people, families, communities, and society rather than merely advancing efficiency or profit.

Faith leaders identified several principles that should guide AI development. Human beings are created for relationships with God, family, neighbors, and community. AI may simulate companionship, but it cannot replace the relationships through which human beings grow, learn, and belong. Participants stressed that children need parents, guidance, play, and real-world experiences. Human growth requires struggle, learning, creativity, responsibility, and sacrifice, all of which contribute to wisdom and character formation.

The gathering produced a clear statement that technology should support human thinking rather than replace it. AI should free people for family life, caregiving, worship, creativity, and service, while helping address challenges such as language barriers, disability access, and medical advancement. At the same time, participants affirmed that AI cannot provide society’s moral foundation. Questions of truth, meaning, virtue, and purpose remain fundamentally human and spiritual responsibilities.

Catholic Perspectives on Human Flourishing

A major keynote address was delivered by Bishop Oscar Solis, who explored human flourishing through the lens of Catholic social teaching. The bishop argued that the central question facing society is not whether AI will transform the world, but whether that transformation will strengthen or undermine human dignity and the common good. He highlighted the many benefits of AI, including advances in healthcare, communication, accessibility, environmental stewardship, and scientific research. At its best, technology can extend human capacities while preserving uniquely human qualities such as compassion, responsibility, creativity, and the search for meaning.

At the same time, Bishop Solis warned against significant dangers. He pointed to the risk of reducing people to data, increasing economic inequality, eroding local communities, weakening cultural traditions, and enabling unprecedented forms of surveillance and behavioral manipulation. He emphasized that technological possibility should never automatically justify technological deployment. Instead, society must continuously ask whether a technology truly serves human beings and promotes the common good.

Drawing on Catholic social teaching, he argued that AI should always remain a servant rather than a master. Human dignity, solidarity, justice, accountability, and care for the vulnerable must remain central as societies navigate the digital age.

Human Flourishing as Relational Capacity

A second major presentation by Dr. Terryl Givens focused on the idea that human flourishing is fundamentally relational. Drawing upon Christian, Latter-day Saint, and broader theological perspectives, Dr. Givens argued that human beings become fully themselves not through efficiency, productivity, or technological enhancement, but through relationships, empathy, attention, creativity, and love.

The humanities, the arts, literature, theology, and shared educational experiences were presented as critical tools for developing human flourishing. Dr. Givens argued that education should not simply transfer information but cultivate imagination, empathy, wisdom, and moral development. He warned that AI-driven educational models risk sacrificing these deeper goals in favor of efficiency and automation.

Several presenters criticized the growing tendency to evaluate success according to productivity metrics alone. They suggested that human life is not primarily a project of optimization but one of meaning, relationship, beauty, and joy. Genuine flourishing requires communities where people learn together, struggle together, and develop the capacity to care for one another.

Building a Pro-Human AI Coalition

Dr. Marianna Richardson, representing G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20), spoke on a panel focusing on coalition and network building around the Pro-Human AI movement. Dr. Richardson focused on the IF20 Forum in Salt Lake City that happened a month earlier. She highlighted Elder Gerrit W. Gong's points about opportunities that faith communities have in shaping the future of AI:

1. As people of faith, we have much to share and we should be a part of the conversation.
2. As people of faith, we can help establish a moral compass for AI.
3. As people of faith, we can influence the AI moral compass with principles and practices that increase human flourishing.

Dr. Richardson also focused on Ambassador Muhammadou Kah's talk at the Forum where he listed three gifts that religious communities can give to AI: 1. Moral memory, 2. Ethical imagination, and 3. Relentless commitment. IF20 will be building a coalition of faith-based, AI policy makers to write a policy paper for the G20 Summit.

Other people on the panel included: Corinne Johnson, Child First Policy Center; Nico Zviovich, The Alliance for Secure AI Action; Clara Long, the Bloom Project; and Ray Kim, International Center for Religion and Diplomacy. Each person presented how their coalitions and non-profits are working towards improving AI's moral compass.

Faith Communities and the Future of AI

Panel discussions throughout the day highlighted the increasingly important role faith communities are playing in conversations about AI. Participants observed that religious groups are engaging more actively with technology companies, AI safety organizations, policymakers, and one another than ever before. This emerging collaboration represents an opportunity to bring longstanding moral traditions into discussions that have often been dominated by technical and economic considerations.

Speakers emphasized several roles for faith communities. Religious institutions can help society find language for discussing moral concerns, resist technological pressures when necessary, preserve spaces for human connection and reflection, and contribute to public discussions about personhood, dignity, and responsibility. Faith communities can also help citizens articulate what kind of future they desire rather than simply accepting technologies created by others.

Many participants expressed concern that AI increasingly operates as a substitute for human relationships. They argued that religious communities must continue fostering real human interaction, community life, worship, teaching, mentoring, and service as essential counterbalances to the isolating tendencies of digital culture.

Education, Children, and Human Development

Several sessions focused on AI's impact on children and education. Educators argued that the true purpose of education is to help individuals become fully developed human beings. AI can support learning, but it should never replace the developmental processes that build identity, character, wisdom, critical thinking, and resilience.

Child advocates raised serious concerns about AI chatbots and digital companions becoming substitutes for authentic relationships. They highlighted increasing evidence that many young people are forming deep emotional attachments to AI systems, raising concerns about dependency, diminished social skills, and developmental harm. Speakers advocated for stronger guardrails, transparency requirements, parental involvement, and child-focused protections.

At the same time, participants acknowledged that AI may provide valuable educational support, especially when used carefully under adult supervision. The overall consensus was that technology should strengthen the role of teachers and parents rather than displace them.

Conclusion

The second day of the OI26 Conference reinforced a common theme heard throughout the gathering: human flourishing is rooted in relationships, moral responsibility, spiritual purpose, and community. Technology can serve these goals, but only if it remains accountable to human values and operates within ethical boundaries established by society. Participants urged faith communities, policymakers, educators, and citizens to take an active role in shaping the future of AI rather than assuming that technological outcomes are inevitable. Human dignity, meaningful relationships, and the common good must remain the guiding principles for the AI age.