



Majority of Pastors Use AI in Ministry Amid Concerns and Caution, New Research Finds

June 16, 2026

Only 13% of pastors don't use AI at all, with brainstorming, biblical research, and graphic design among the most common uses

BOULDER, Colo.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Jun. 16, 2026-- New [research](#) from [Barna Group](#), in partnership with [Gloo](#), reveals that most pastors are already using AI in ministry — only 13% say they don't use it at all. Part of the [2026 State of the Church](#) series, the findings show that at the same time, 71% of pastors describe feeling cautious about AI, and 40% say they feel conflicted about the technology — shaping not just whether they use AI, but how they allow AI into their ministry work.

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“Pastors are predominantly using AI for behind-the-scenes work — as a thought partner, a visual aid,” said Daniel Copeland, Barna’s Vice President of Research. “They’re using it to prepare for ministry, not to replace what happens when they’re actually with people.”

Pastors primarily use AI for brainstorming or idea generation (50%), graphic design or visual creation (37%), biblical or theological research (36%), generating small group discussion questions (34%), and administrative tasks like scheduling, emails and document preparation (34%).

AI-assisted sermon work is growing, with 24% of pastors actively using it today to write or edit sermons, compared to just 12% who felt comfortable doing so in early 2024. However, this emerging pattern indicates that AI is being used for research and preparation, to surface commentary, explore theological angles, or create a structural outline, rather than to generate the message itself.

“The pattern of pastors using AI for preparation rather than people-facing ministry makes sense,” said Nick Skytland, Vice President of Gloo Developers and AI Research. “Other Barna data shows that administrative tasks often dominate a pastor’s schedule, keeping them from their most meaningful work — like teaching, discipling believers, and developing their teams. AI is helping them reclaim those hours so they can focus on ministering to people. It’s encouraging to see leaders adopting these tools while keeping a clear line between the technology and their calling.”

Despite their willingness to use the tools, pastors remain significantly more hesitant about the technology than practicing Christians. When asked to identify their emotional response to AI, the top response chosen by pastors was “cautious” (71%). While more than half (52%) reported feeling curious about AI, this is coupled with feeling conflicted (40%) and skeptical (40%).

Though pastors may be willing to experiment with AI in low-stakes, preparatory contexts, the researchers say that these emotional tensions may cause reluctance to use it for the relational and spiritual aspects of their work. The majority of pastors (79%) worry about AI acting as a replacement for God, and nearly two-thirds (63%) worry about AI replacing the role of pastors or spiritual leaders entirely.

This month’s [research release](#) is part of a yearlong Faith & AI series produced by Barna in partnership with Gloo, as part of the State of the Church initiative. Learn more about the 2026 State of the Church initiative at gloo.com/stateofthechurch.

About the Research

Data are from two surveys conducted by Barna Group. The U.S. adults survey (n=1,514) was conducted online in November 2025, utilizing representative quotas for age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, and income. The U.S. Protestant pastors survey (n=442) was conducted online in December 2025, utilizing representative quotas for church size, denomination, and region.

[Gloo](#) (Nasdaq: GLOO) is a leading technology platform serving the faith and flourishing ecosystem. Gloo helps missional organizations amplify their impact by powering their technology and expanding their reach, so that people flourish and organizations thrive. The company’s values-aligned, AI platform modernizes systems, workflows and data, while its marketing and donor solutions expand reach, awareness, and long-term giving for mission-based organizations. Based in Boulder, Colorado, Gloo serves over 140,000 faith, ministry, and nonprofit leaders.

[Barna Group](#) is a leading research organization focused on the intersection of faith and culture. Since 1984, Barna has conducted more than two million interviews over the course of thousands of studies and has become a go-to source for insights about religion, leadership, vocation and generations. Barna is an independent, privately-held, nonpartisan organization based in

Dallas–Fort Worth, Texas.

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