ISSN 2633-6723

Preach.

Where the world meets the Word.

Issue 40

TENTH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

AI AND THE CHURCH

INTERVIEW

THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK – STEPHEN COTTRELL

PAGE 16

NEW REGULAR COLUMN: ALL-AGE PREACHING, BOB HARTMAN
PAGE 8

THE ETHICS AND PRACTICE OF AI, CHRIS GOSWAMI
PAGE 10

THE TRUTH AND AUTHENTICITY OF AI, JOHN WYATT
PAGE 20

THE LIMITATIONS OF SERMONS PRODUCED BY AI, TIM BULL
PAGE 36

Pray through the year with the **Methodist Prayer Handbook 2024/2025: Praise and Protest**

> "learn to do right; seek justice and defend the oppressed"
>
> (Isaiah 1:17a, NIV)

31 days of prayer with a daily lectionary

Ideal for individual prayer, small groups and for devotions at church meetings

£4.50 each, £4.15 each for 10 or more

eBook and lectern large print also available

ORDER NOW

£11

The **essential diary** for **Methodists**

- Runs from **September 2024 to August 2026**, with blank interleaving pages each week during 2025
- Includes **key dates** for the Methodist Church **calendar** and **lectionary**
- Identifies **Special Sundays**

Available in **blue, green** or as **personal organiser** inserts

The **Methodist** Church

methodistpublishing.org.uk

CONTENTS

ISSUE 40

RESOURCES & REGULARS

6 News and correspondence

8 NEW! All-age preaching: Bob Hartman

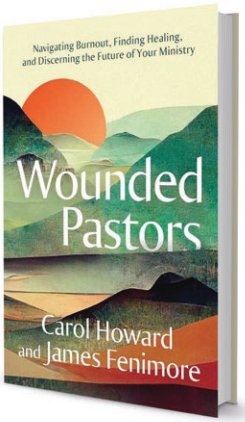
30 Preaching encouragement: Loaves and fishes by Jo Swinney

34 Wellbeing: For every church by Ruth Rice

39 Classic book review: Sam Wells

40 Book reviews

44 10th anniversary of *Preach* by Jonathan Hustler



FEATURES

Interview with Archbishop Stephen Cottrell

Charmaine Yip

Worship and the digital church

Mark Cartledge

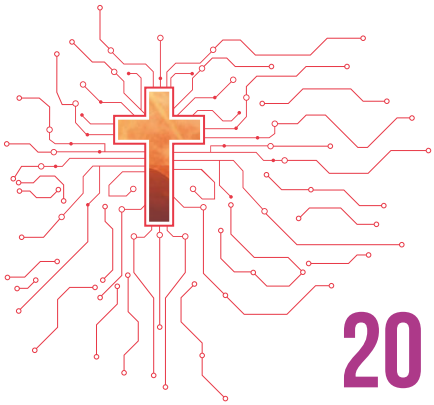
The limitations of sermons produced by AI

Tim Bull

36

The truth and authenticity of AI

John Wyatt



COLUMNISTS

26 Roof parapets by Helen Paynter

45 Resilience part two by Rick Lewis

48 AI and natural wisdom by Dave Bookless

54 What does AI know about me? by James Catford

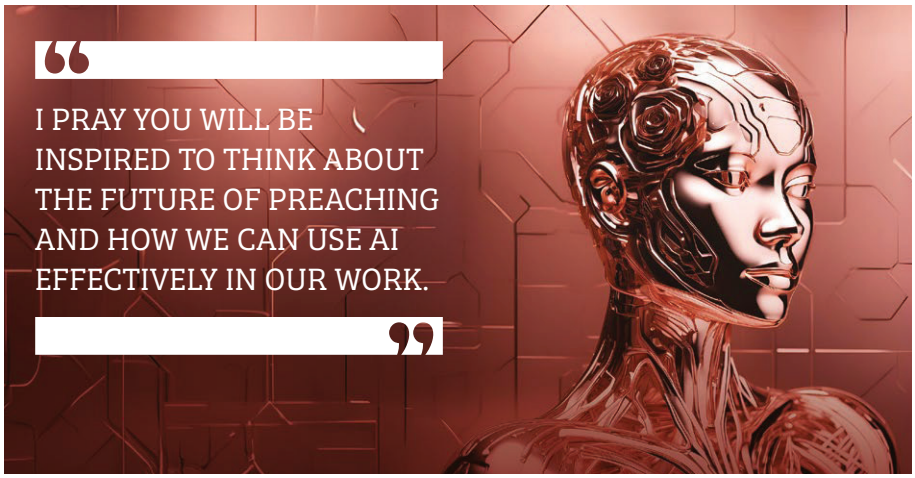
56 AI and being human by Ian Paul

58 Books for life by Krish Kandiah

with Chris Gillies

51

From your editor...



We are constantly being told that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is going to have an ever-increasing impact on our world and on our lives. What does this mean for our faith, and our role as preachers and leaders? Would our congregations recognise an AI-generated sermon? Does AI pretend to do something that can only be done properly by humans, in the power of the Holy Spirit? As leaders in our churches, how can we ensure the tools we use in our ministries are beneficial to our mission? In this issue of *Preach*, we delve into the use of AI in ministry, featuring insights from members of the AI Christian Partnership.

I am also delighted to introduce a new regular columnist, the very talented Bob Hartman. Following on from his recent interview for us, he will be offering practical tips on how to address congregation members across a range of age groups. His first article provides advice on how to preach in bite-sized pieces.

We've also had the privilege of interviewing the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, who challenges the constant mantra that nobody can concentrate for longer than 20 seconds. Chris Gillies and Peter Crumpler also discuss Chris' book, *On the Way to Work*, and how God wants us to think about the workplace, sacred or secular.

Finally, and importantly, this issue marks our 10th anniversary! We have a special contribution from *Preach*'s founding editor, Jo Swinney, encouraging us to persevere as preachers. Jonathan Hustler, the Secretary of the Conference at the Methodist Church and longtime supporter and friend of *Preach* magazine and LWPT, joins in the celebrations.

As you read through this issue, I pray you will be inspired to think about the future of preaching and how we can use AI effectively in our work.

Every blessing,

Tanya Stead
Editor
editor@lwpt.org.uk

Tanya

EDITORIAL BOARD

Bob Bartindale
Officer for Worship and Local Preachers, The Methodist Church **methodist.org.uk**

Dotha Blackwood
Chaplain and tutor at Spurgeon's College **spurgeons.ac.uk**

Ian Buchanan
Chief Executive Officer at LWPT **lwpt.org.uk**

Tobi Olujinmi
Public speaker and producer
X **@Tobispeaksout**

Mark Woods
Head of Communications at Bible Society and Baptist minister **biblesociety.org.uk**

Preach.
Issue 40, Autumn 2024
AI and the church

Sign up for your own copy of *Preach*, in print or digital, at **preachweb.org/membership**

Editor
Tanya Stead

Book Editor
Ali Hull, **bookeditor@lwpt.org.uk**

Advertising
Michael Welch, **ads@lwpt.org.uk**

Marketing and Membership
Ken Gibson, **membership@lwpt.org.uk**

Design
Adept, **adeptdesign.co.uk**

Cover photo
Cover image was produced by Artificial Intelligence

Printing & distribution
Printed on 100% recyclable paper using vegetable-based inks by an ISO 14001-accredited printer. Mailed in compostable bags for garden or food waste bins.

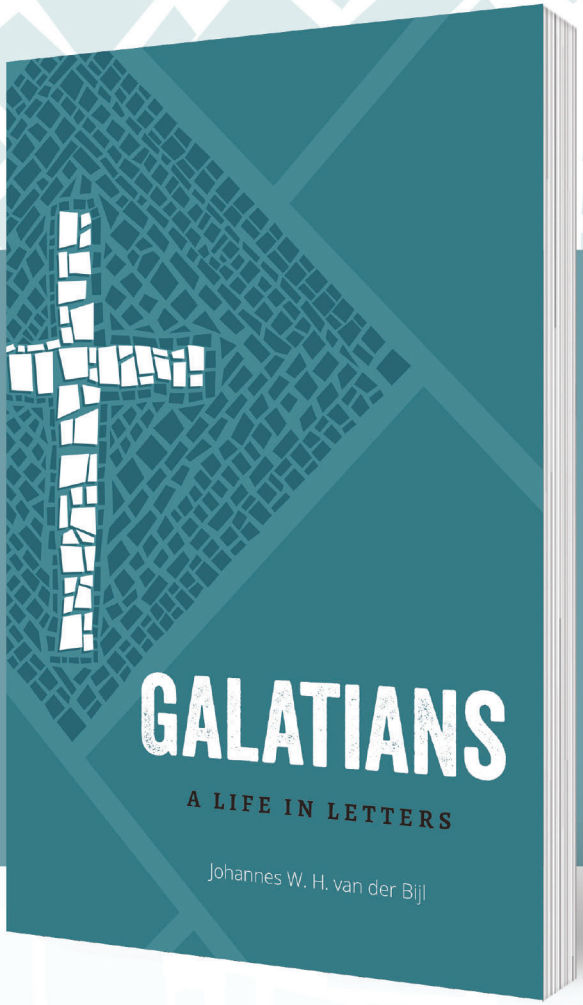
Editorial office
The Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust
Unit 14, Orbital 25 Business Park,
Dwight Road, Watford, WD18 9DA

T 01923 231811
E lwptoffice@lwpt.org.uk
W preachweb.org

The Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust was created to shape emerging leaders in UK churches. (Charity No. 1107967, CLG No. 5247784)

Copyright the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust 2024. All rights reserved. Permission is granted for the reproduction of text from this publication for the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust promotional use only. For all other uses, please contact us.

Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version, NIV. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



Perfect for small groups and study groups

GALATIANS

A LIFE IN LETTERS

Johannes W. H. van der Bijl

A narrative commentary that immerses you in the context of the first-century church, giving a glimpse into the life of Paul and his story!

This book is beautifully written. Through a rich narrative, it brings us closer to Paul's world and straight into the struggles of the early church, we feel part of the team that Paul and Barnabas led. We are clearly shown the powerful message of Paul's letter to the Galatians and how it is still relevant today.

—Dwi Maria Handayani, PhD
Bandung Theological Seminary, Indonesia

Bulk discount offers are available, scan to find out more!

Langham PUBLISHING

langhampublishing.org

Worship and the digital church:

Making the 'faceless' visible

by Mark Cartledge

Mark Cartledge explores the different forms of digital churches, both in-person and online congregations, and considers how to *include* the 'faceless' members of our churches.

Our faces are important, not just to us but to other people as well. When I stand in front of a congregation to speak or lead an act of worship, I am keen to look at the faces of people before me.

I want to know that I am connecting with them as people. However, it is hard to connect with people online, who may be watching the service via the Zoom platform. Typically, I cannot see their faces and know their reactions to what is happening in the congregational space. How can we pay more attention to them, and create a closer sense of connection with them?

INCLUDING EVERYONE

It could be stated that the church is fundamentally a body of believers, called out of the world (the *ekklēsia*) to be a people for the praise and worship of God. Indeed, the first mark of the church is the declaration of the wonders of God (Acts 2:11). People who know each other, and have fellowship with each other, experience the grace and mercy of God flowing to them from others in the body of Christ. The idea of the body is very important, both literally and metaphorically. God has given each of us bodies and our faces, in a sense, 'present' ourselves to the world through expressions and speech. We know people by hearing them, seeing them or sensing them. In the interactive and hybrid digital mediation of worship, I believe that we need to pay more attention to people on the other end of the Zoom platform. How can we include them more into our worshipping practices?

There are several ways we can do this. We can project their faces onto screens so that we can see them; and they can see us. We can allow their voices to be heard as they speak to us via the audio function of the software. We can include them in our prayers and allow them to participate vocally in our times of prayer. When we pray for folk to be healed and we place our hands on their foreheads, we can at least stretch our hands towards their images to signal that we too are reaching out to them physically, not just vocally. And when we practise the rite of Holy Communion, we can include images of them both eating the bread and drinking the wine, so that visible expressions of their participation become part of our visible expressions of Holy Communion.

In this way, their faces and their embodied experience of worship are part of our experience of worship. These changes to how we worship require intentionality, but if we are to grow in our inclusion of the 'faceless' people on Zoom then surely this is one of the important things we need to do. I am reminded of the text in 2 Corinthians 4:6, which states that the glory of God is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. May we experience something of God's reflected glory in the faces of our brothers and sisters in Christ as they join us via digital media in our worship.

For people who are watching a worship service at home, there is a blurring of the boundary between the public space of a church building and the private space of their own home. Of course, the internet and its use within the home means there is a public dimension to our private spaces, as social media intrudes and is intertwined with our private spaces. Indeed, many of us have accepted it with alacrity. Our world is now saturated with digital interfaces. However, these technological developments raise all sorts of issues for the church and its worshipping practices.

CHURCH IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Ecclesiology for a Digital Church which is edited by Heidi A. Campbell and John Dyer considers the relationship between digital technology and the theology of the church. In his discussion, John Dyer identifies various types of engagement with different types of media.

First, *online church* tends to use a variety of digital media (email, text, video chat etc.) but only meets online and has no physical presence.

Second, *broadcast church* delivers a service through a one-way medium, a bit like radio and TV. In this mode, worship can be observed via platforms such as YouTube and Facebook but there is no interaction with the service participants in the physical setting in which the worship is being broadcast.

Third, there is what is called i*nteractive church*, where two-way interaction is used. This interaction can be via message boards, chat box next to a video stream, while Zoom allows for 'face-to-face' synchronous interactions.

Fourth, there are *virtual environments* in which individuals have established church communities. These virtual reality platforms include Second Life and Roblox and the metaverse. The virtual reality allows individual to adopt an avatar and participate in worship activities. This is a somewhat niche mode of engagement and requires addition equipment, such as headsets to participate to the full.

Fifth and finally, Dyer notes the idea of *hybrid church*, which refers to a local church congregation that uses both digital and in-person experiences. It allows people who might not be able to attend in person to be present and interact via Zoom or Facebook. I have found these categories useful in beginning to find a language to express the different types of digital church experience.

ONLINE OR OFFLINE

My own experience of participating in worship includes a mixture of broadcast and hybrid. I have never been involved in a totally online church and I have only visited Second Life a couple of times to explore what it is and what it does. During the pandemic, we at the London School of Theology experimented with the interactive model. The service or event was broadcast usually via YouTube, but the interaction was made possible through Zoom. For obvious reasons, we needed to restrict who came into the Zoom room and only allow those folk who genuinely belonged to our educational community. Since the pandemic, our chapel services continue to be broadcast for our student and staff community, but we no longer maintain the level of interaction that we once did. We have reverted to broadcast mode.

In many ways, this is very similar to the church that I attend on a Sunday morning. Congregational members can watch the service, but they rarely interact with what is going on in the worship service in the building, that is until recently. Now we are beginning to insert their comments and prayers from the chat box function of Zoom, and these are communicated from the tech team to the service leader so that people on Zoom can be included. However, as yet, we do not have the technical capacity to project their faces onto screens at the front of church building. For obvious reasons, they remain 'faceless' in the worshipping context of the physical building. They can participate but not fully. Their singing, prayers, dancing and kneeling are missed by the body of believers in the church building. So, how do we include people in a way that makes sense for them and for us? This is a challenge.

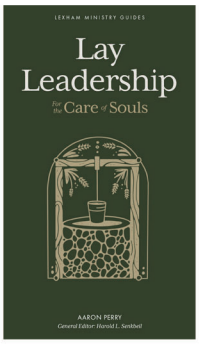
> THE INTERNET AND ITS USE WITHIN THE HOME MEANS THERE IS A PUBLIC DIMENSION TO OUR PRIVATE SPACES.

Mark J Cartledge

Prof Mark J Cartledge is the principal of the London School of Theology and professor of practical theology. His most recent book is entitled, *The Holy Spirit and Public Life: Empowering Ecclesial Praxis* (Minneapolis, MN: Lexington Books / Fortress Academic, 2022)

LEXHAM MINISTRY GUIDES

The Lexham Ministry Guides, edited by Harold L. Senkbeil, offer practical, proven wisdom for the church. You will find hands-on tools, lessons from years of ministry experience, and an array of resources to apply to your own ministry context.



LAY LEADERSHIP

FOR THE CARE OF SOULS

Aaron Perry

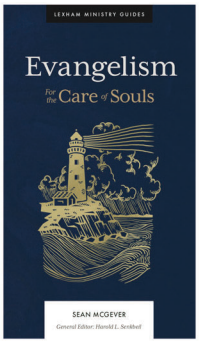
RELIGION / Christian Ministry / General, 978-1-6835-9778-0, Hardback (4.25 x 7), 240 pages,
$19.99 | £16.99
On Sale: January 22, 2025

CHURCH MUSIC

FOR THE CARE OF SOULS

Phillip Magness

RELIGION / Christian Ministry / Pastoral Resources, 978-1-6835-9710-0, Hardback (4.25 x 7), 304 pages,
$19.99 | £16.99

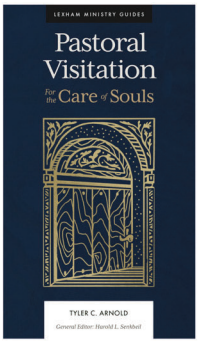


EVANGLEISM

FOR THE CARE OF SOULS

Sean McGever

RELIGION / Christian Ministry / Evangelism, 978-1-6835-9689-9, Hardback (4.25 x 7), 248 pages,
$19.99 | £16.99

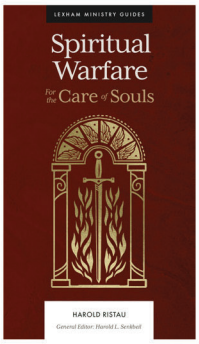


PASTORAL VISITATION

FOR THE CARE OF SOULS

Tyler C. Arnold

RELIGION / Christian Ministry / General, 978-1-6835-9623-3, Hardback (4.25 x 7), 232 pages,
$19.99 | £16.99

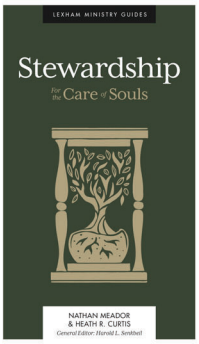


SPIRITUAL WAREFARE

AND THE CARE OF SOULS

Harold Ristau

RELIGION / Christian Living / Spiritual Warfare, 978-1-6835-9621-9, Hardback (4.25 x 7), 296 pages,
$19.99 | £16.99

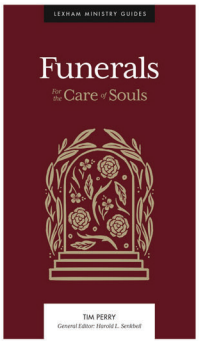


STEWARDSHIP

FOR THE CARE OF SOULS

Nathan Meador & Heath R. Curtis

RELIGION / Christian Living / Stewardship & Giving, 978-1-6835-9495-6, Hardback (4.25 x 7), 144 pages,
$19.99 | £16.99

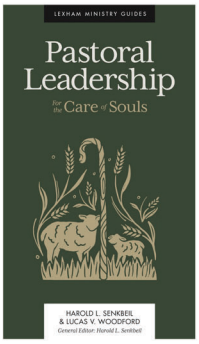


FUNERALS

FOR THE CARE OF SOULS

Tim Perry

RELIGION / Christian Living / Death, Grief, Bereavement, 978-1-6835-9473-4, Hardback (4.25 x 7), 280 pages,
$17.99 | £14.99



PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

FOR THE CARE OF SOULS

Harold L. Senkbeil & Lucas V. Woodford

RELIGION / Christian Church / Administration, 978-1-6835-9475-8, Hardback (4.25 x 7), 208 pages,
$17.99 | £14.99

Find these books at your favourite bookseller.
Learn more at LexhamPress.com

LEXHAM PRESS

Request your
FREE
special edition
Best of Preach
below

Preach.

The magazine for **Bible teachers** who have a **PASSION** for **applying the Bible** to **daily living**

The Preach archive is a treasure trove of **interviews, practical advice, book reviews and more – membership** gives you easy access to **ALL** of it.

Annual membership

Digital £30
Digital + Print £39

The **Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust**

LWPT supports local church-based leaders through Bible-based preaching, resources and tuition grants.

Scan the QR code or visit
preachweb.org/best-of-preach