

Eastern Synod Artificial Intelligence Fast - Season of Creation 2026

Pray before you AI-generate

The Season of Creation is a global ecumenical season to give thanks, pray, and act for and with God's Creation, stretching from September 1st to October 4th. This year, the Eastern Synod Climate Justice Committee invites all members of the Eastern Synod congregations, and anyone beyond who feels called to participate, to engage in **a fast from personal use of artificial intelligence**. As this season invites us to contemplate and give thanks for God's Creation, humanity must remember to include itself in that term. To revere Creation is also to revere the image of God present in every human. This interconnectedness between Creation and humanity is made all the more palpable by recent technological advancements that, in striving to emulate the latter, may cause serious harm to the former.

As of this summer, [96 hyperscale data centers are in development in Canada](#), with 5 having already been built. While proponents argue that the construction of these data centres is necessary to reap the benefits of artificial intelligence, such as in the fields of medicine, science, and innovation, others have voiced concerns about the exorbitant amounts of water, land, and energy that are often required to run the facilities.

From a Creation care lens, the issue goes beyond putting strain on our water systems; in some cities, even places in our Synod like Ottawa, proposed data centres could eventually [almost double energy consumption](#), which is counterproductive as we as a society strive to reduce energy consumption in order to tackle the climate crisis affecting all of Creation. At a time when a fair phase-out of fossil fuels is paramount, the vast majority of planned hyperscale data centres are set to be built in Alberta, relying on the province's natural gas power supply instead of its renewable energy capacity, likely to the detriment of local environment and air quality, as well as contributing to the climate crisis.

Beyond data centres themselves, AI presents a flurry of challenges to consider, including in the realms of labour, cybersecurity, democracy, mental health, and copyright concerns.

The ELCIC is currently engaged in a process to discern the appropriate usage of AI in the church context. In the meantime, we are inviting people to take a months-long fast from AI not in order to reject the technology, but in order to take time apart in order to faithfully and prayerfully consider all dimensions to the issue, contemplating both its benefits and its negative consequences. A collateral advantage of taking an AI fast is that, as Christians around the world strive to be more mindful of Creation in their personal choices this month, fasting from AI is a way to reduce one's individual environmental footprint.

Why fast from AI?

- **Fasting invites us to feel gratitude.** In depriving ourselves of something, we appreciate it more. Fasting from AI can help us contemplate where it tangibly provides meaning and where it serves God's purpose, both on an individual and a societal scale.

- **Fasting invites us to slow down.** Developments in AI technology and new data centre construction are moving at a breakneck pace, at times even [outpacing technology companies' ability to handle the consequences](#). Pope Leo XIV has warned that a lack of guardrails for how AI gets used in society could have serious consequences, especially for the poor and marginalised. By taking the time to disengage from the rising tide of AI, we can better engage with the topic from the increased perspective offered by viewing it from outside, not within, as well as embodying the careful and measured approach that our society should take in such matters.
- **Fasting invites us to interrogate excess, appreciate necessity.** In fasting from AI, we may realise that some of its applications are unnecessary or even undesirable, and we might consider continuing to refrain from those applications even after the fast has ended. By the same token, the fast may make us realise where in our lives is genuinely helpful and fruitful, increasing our gratitude for those aspects of the technology at the conclusion of the fast.
- **Fasting invites us to recenter our focus.** Fasting isn't about creating a void; it's about exploring what fills the space that has been created. As part of this fast, the Climate Justice Committee invites you to explore a variety of resources that interrogate AI from various lenses, as well as providing Biblical passages that invite reflection.

How to Fast from AI

- Refrain from using any AI chatbot, including ChatGPT, Claude, Meta AI, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, or others.
- **Instead:** When you have a question or request you would otherwise direct to an AI Chatbot, consider alternate ways to gain the information. For example:
 - Use a **search engine that does not have an AI feature built-in** or allows you to opt-out of the technology, such as DuckDuckGo's ["No AI" version](#), [Startpage](#), or [Ecosia](#). While there are many other search engine options available, we recommend Ecosia given it not only allows users to opt out of AI-generated search results, but also donates most of its profits toward environmental initiatives, such as planting trees.
 - Your **local library** gives you access not only to physical books and records, but usually also allows you to access online databases. Libraries are a free resource providing reliable information, and using them helps to support a service that is essential for equal access to information in democratic society.
 - **Ask a nearby human** if they can help. Technology is great at providing information; humans are better at providing wisdom.
 - Consider whether **prayer** would help. As with any type of fast, refraining from use of technology opens up new opportunities to connect with God.
- Disable AI in your Google account
 - Google has introduced AI features that can read your emails in order to provide suggestions on how to reply to messages or to suggest phrases as you write. While these features may speed up email writing for some, it is estimated that AI consumes [half a litre of water to write a 100-word email](#). If you write many emails a day with this feature on, the AI powering your Gmail might be consuming more water than you! Here's how to disable AI in your Google account:

- Open Gmail
- Select “Settings,” the gear icon near the top right of your screen.
- Select “See all settings”
- Scroll down in the “General” tab and do the following:
 - Set Smart Compose to Writing suggestions off.
 - Set Smart Compose personalization to Personalization off.
 - Set Smart Reply to Smart Reply off.
 - Uncheck Smart features (Turn on smart features in Gmail, Chat, and Meet).
 - Click the Manage Workspace Smart Feature settings button, and then turn off both Smart features in Google Workspace and Smart features in other Google products. Click Save.
 - For instruction on how to do the same on either an Apple or Android device, see the following (also the source for the above instructions):
www.idownloadblog.com/2026/01/30/turn-off-smart-ai-features-gmail/
- As much as possible, avoid social media, or choose platforms with less AI built in. Instagram, for example, now automatically provides an AI-generated response when you use the search function. It also provides an AI-generated summary when you click on the caption to a reel. In addition, a lot of the content, both in terms of posts and ads, are now generated by AI, so using the platform helps encourage the creation and proliferation of such content.
- Microsoft Word also now has AI features built in that you can opt out of.
 - To disable Microsoft Copilot, select File > Options > Copilot, and then uncheck “Enable Copilot”
 - In addition, Word may also be using your documents to train AI models, but there is an option you can deselect in order to opt out of this. Select the following: File > Options > Trust Center > Trust Center Settings > Privacy Options > Privacy Settings. Here you will find a section titled “Optional connected experiences.” Be sure to uncheck “turn on optional connected experiences” and then hit “Ok.” Word may then need to reboot to implement this change.
- Avoid music streaming services that use AI, especially Spotify. Spotify now uses AI extensively in its song recommendations, in its playlists curated by AI, its AI-powered DJ feature, as well as its AI-generated song descriptions, not to mention helping to develop and proliferate AI-generated music. It also uses the technology to aggregate user data for its “Spotify Wrapped” feature.
 - **Instead:**
 - Listen to downloaded music, which does not involve AI and also has a lower carbon footprint.
 - Enjoy physical media such as CDs, vinyls, or cassettes that you already own or that you purchase second-hand.
 - Attend live music events, especially those held in small-scale venues featuring local or small artists.

- You can even explore new opportunities around making music with your church. Join your church choir or try starting one, or host a music night where members of your community can share their diverse musical gifts.
- Avoid AI-chatbots or features embedded in many websites.
- Do not engage with AI-generated images, videos, music, writing, advertisements, or resources that you encounter anywhere online.

Get resources and Biblical passages for informed and theologically-grounded reflection on AI

Apart from refraining from using AI, we also encourage you to expand your knowledge on the issue, and to consider it from multiple lenses, including from a theological lens. To this end, the Climate Justice Committee invites you to subscribe to a weekly, month-long newsletter. Every week during the Season of Creation, the committee will send you one email with two components: first, it will provide a resource or article providing an exploration into the implications of AI from a variety of different lenses, including those that consider the environment, social relations, health, mental health, the health of democracy, and the economy. Secondly, it will provide a suggested Bible reading, along with discussion questions and contextual notes, to encourage theological reflection on the issues presented in order to more faithfully discern the role AI should or shouldn't play in the context of the various lenses. This will amount to no more than five emails in total.

To indicate your interest in this fast and receiving these emails, please fill out this brief form: forms.gle/LT3UmGbQohbz5h1q9

An official Synod position on appropriate use of AI in church and society?

Every Synod Assembly is an opportunity for our church as a collective body to assert its position on various social issues. This helps the Synod in providing credible guidance toward rostered leaders and congregations in their approach to issues, as well as enabling it to openly voice its position in the public sphere, including in the media. As one of the defining social issues of our time, presenting both new opportunities and potentially devastating consequences, the Climate Justice Committee is exploring presenting a motion to help define the Synod's position and perspective on AI at the upcoming Synod Assembly in 2027. If you have thoughts on AI and how it should or shouldn't be used in the church that you would like to have taken into consideration, please indicate so in this form: forms.gle/usdi9v2Qdf5CDRs27

When you select "yes" to the second question, a dialogue box will show up in the next section of the form where you can let us know your thoughts.

Other activities to take on while you fast from AI

- Host a conversation about AI in your congregation.
 - This doesn't have to be a formal presentation. It can be as simple as inviting people in your congregation to have a conversation during fellowship hour, guiding the conversation with facts and discussion questions. You may choose to

serve coffee and cake, or soup and bread, to foster a convivial atmosphere where people feel at ease to share their thoughts on this at-times contentious topics. Here are some tips on how to go about hosting a conversation:

- **Preparation:**
 - Put an announcement in the church bulletin or newsletter a few weeks before. Announce it in-person during worship as well. If you'll be providing food, communicate that.
 - Do some research beforehand, especially on the aspects of the issue that most interest you or your congregation. Come to the conversation prepared with sources you can point people toward. Consider your local context when doing research: are data centres being planned in your area? Is anyone in your community losing jobs because of AI?
- **During:**
 - Bring a soup and some bread, or just cookies/cake, and make a pot of coffee.
 - Start by going around the circle, inviting each to briefly share how they, in general, feel about AI.
 - Share some basic information about technology and its impacts. If you need help finding some basic resources, get in touch by filling in the form below.
 - Structure the conversation with some basic discussion questions:
 - Where is AI genuinely serving the common good? Where is it introducing harm or excess?
 - Think about the church context. Does your church use AI for any purpose? Has your congregation weighed the adverse environmental and economic impacts of the technology with the usefulness of the AI function being used?
 - Would you (the members of your group) ever consider consuming AI generated art, such as AI-generated music or novels?
 - If a data centre were to be constructed in your community, what conditions should have to be met, taking into account human health, environment, water and energy use, and local economy? What policy constraints could or should your municipality introduce?
- **After:**
 - What came up during the discussion? Where did you see hope, what was cause for concern? If your church uses AI in some way, did the conversation indicate a desire on the part of your congregation to define what constitutes appropriate/inappropriate use of AI in the church? If the discussion revealed concerns or opportunities around policy shaping AI and data centre development, is there interest in your congregation to pursue advocacy along those lines?

For resources to share during a discussion, and/or for guidance in organising a conversation, indicate your interest in this form: forms.gle/T1AYxzkTdAPwvSx56

- Research proposed hyperscale data centre projects in your area
 - If you are in Ontario, you can use this map to see data centres being discussed, proposed, constructed, and operated in the province: ontariodatacenters.ca
 - If you are in New Brunswick, the provincial government is soliciting feedback on its AI policy framework. [Participate in the public consultation here](#). The deadline is Oct. 2nd.
 - If you notice one being proposed or discussed in your community, do some research online, and consider reaching out to local officials, such as your city councillor, to get more information. Here are some questions you and your congregation should be asking:
 - Who is building the data centre, and which companies will it serve?
 - How much water will this data centre consume? Where will it be getting the water from? How will this affect the municipal water supply, utility rates, as well as aquatic ecosystems?
 - How much energy will the data centre consume? How does this compare with the energy that your municipality currently consumes? Will the energy come from clean sources or fossil fuel-based ones? What impact could this increased energy consumption have on household hydro bills?
 - What sort of environmental impact assessment or other regulatory processes have been completed or will be completed to ensure an accurate picture of health and environmental impacts is captured and communications *before* construction begins?
 - Are there any health impacts that could arise due to air pollution? This will depend in large part how the data centre will be powered. If the data centre uses gas or diesel-powered generators, the resulting nitrogen dioxide emissions could cause adverse health impacts such as respiratory and cardiovascular issues, cancer, diabetes, dementia, and other issues. ([Source](#)).
 - What tangible benefits does the data centre provide to the community? Will there be any employment opportunities beyond the construction phase? Is a robust taxation scheme in place to ensure that the space, water, and energy that your community is giving up to this data centre will be compensated for with money that can go toward the common good in your community?
 - **If the answers to any of these questions cause concern, or amount to a risk to your community's health, environment, or economy, see what your congregation can do about it. Look for online or in-person public consultations, express your concern to your local city council, your MPP/MNA/MLA, and your MP. Work with whichever officials will listen to your concerns to ensure that the needs of your community, especially the most**

vulnerable, and the needs of your local environment are uplifted in the decision-making process.

- **Overall, what we as people of faith can contribute to decision-making processes are our beliefs around the sacredness of Creation and the Biblical mandate to center the needs of the poor and marginalised.**

Biblical Approaches to Fasting

- [Mark 2:23-3:6](#): Jesus was willing to break the Sabbath if it meant serving the common good. In that spirit, this fast does not apply to uses of AI that tangibly serve the common good. For example, if you use AI in the context of a medical or scientific profession in which the technology improves your ability to care for patients or to improve our understanding of Creation or to develop technologies that will reduce suffering, such responsible uses of AI are consistent with the intentions of this initiative.