The Church of Scotland

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Opportunity and Challenge for the Church: Resource plan

Session 3 – Robotics: When computers do things we normally expect a person to do

Learning outcome : Understand how robots are used in everyday life including different fields of medicine, transportation, weapons etc.

Summary paragraph: AI is being helpfully deployed in many instances to make the world healthier and more sustainable, but when machine learning algorithms attempt tasks that have up to now been considered the preserve of human beings, it raises many questions. What is special about being human and what is different about "machine intelligence" compared to "human intelligence"? Will machines outsmart humans one day? Some people foresee a future when super-intelligent machines, with cognitive abilities outstripping those of the human brain, become an existential threat to the human race.

Video: Session 3 - Human or machine?
Bible passage: Matthew 22:34-40

Discussion questions:

1. How aware are you that AI is used in the diagnosis of illness, processing test results e.g. COVID-19 tests, development of new drugs and reading medical images?
2. a. Would you be happy knowing that your operation was being performed by a robot?
    b. Do you think that AI has a place in mental health treatments? E.g. a chatbot therapist providing Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).
3. Who do you think is responsible when a car, controlled by driver assistance, is involved in an accident? E.g. car owner/car driver/manufacturer/designer of the software?
4. Semi-autonomous weapons, operated by computers running AI algorithms but with human oversight, are part of modern warfare. Fully autonomous weapons can be designed to identify and destroy a target without direct human oversight. Should we question the morality of these weapons?
5. As Christians how do we respond to all of these issues discussed in this session?

Prayer:

God of opportunity,
opening the doors of creativity
and inviting us to innovate and explore,
we give thanks for those clever minds
that build systems which can learn
and for the advances that has brought
in industry, in medicine, in transportation.
And we also raise to you the questions
discussed this session:
difficult questions about authority and responsibility,
and ask that you guide law-makers
and regulation-drafters,
to choose carefully what is allowable and what is not,
who is responsible and who is not.
May we continue to think about the issues raised,
and give us clarity to see around us
how AI and technology is being used.
We pray for those whose jobs are being displaced
by advancing robotics and autonomous systems,
and for societies to prepare for these shifts
amongst the working population.
Amen.