



HEARTH-led AI Integration: Balancing Efficiency and Flourishing Through Christ-Centered Human-Centric Leadership

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Abstract

Rapid artificial intelligence (AI) adoption across industries brings both unprecedented opportunity and intensifying tension between efficiency and human flourishing. This article explored the HEARTH (Human-Ethics Approach for Remote & Tech-Hybrid) Team Leadership Model as a Christ-centered, human-centric framework for guiding ethical AI integration in organizational contexts. Drawing on literature in values-based purpose, human-machine dynamics, algorithmic risk, human-centric leadership, and Christian business ethics, the HEARTH model bridges the gap between technological advancement and biblical principles of justice, compassion, stewardship, and human dignity. A case study from HEARTH implementations highlights measurable relational and cultural outcomes aligned with flourishing. Implications for ethical leadership, AI governance, and future research validation are provided.

Keywords: AI ethics, human-centric leadership, HEARTH model, flourishing, Christian leadership

For Christian leaders, the challenge is no longer whether to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) or not but how to do so in a manner that honors human dignity, promotes flourishing, and preserves ethical integrity. Many workplaces experience a growing tension: organizations deploy AI to increase efficiency, while employees report intensified workloads, depersonalization, and moral ambiguity surrounding automation.

The HEARTH (Human-Ethics Approach for Remote & Tech-Hybrid) Team Leadership Model offers a values-based response to this tension. Initially developed for remote and technology-integrated teams, HEARTH is deeply human-centric, placing the values and well-being of individuals at its core. It provides a competency-based approach for leading in virtual and AI-augmented workplaces. Although widely relevant in secular and corporate settings, its foundations resonate deeply with biblical principles of

justice, compassion, stewardship, and purpose. This article expands on the 2025 Regent Research Roundtable presentation and positions HEARTH as a path for leaders seeking to integrate Christ-centered, human-centric AI.

Literature Review

Values-Based Purpose in AI Adoption

Research has increasingly emphasized that meaningful AI integration requires alignment between organizational purpose and human dignity. Cheong and Lui (2025) argued that values-anchored innovation advances responsible AI and human-machine dynamics. Heslam (2021) highlighted the importance of aligning organizational purpose with human purpose, noting that flourishing is unattainable without clarity of intent in the use of technology.

Ethical Risks in Technological Acceleration

Scholars have warned that without ethical grounding, AI risks algorithmic bias, privacy violations, overautomation, and dehumanization (Kordzadeh & Ghasemaghaei, 202; Schultz et al., 2025; Sison, 2024; Thacker, 2022; van Wensveen Siker, 1989). As automation accelerates, it becomes crucial to maintain and empower human agency, especially when systems make decisions without transparent values.

Human-Centric Leadership Approaches

Human-centric leadership positions people at the center of organizational purpose and design. Reichenbach (2021) and Abbu et al. (2025) framed human centrality as essential for ethically integrating emerging technologies and mitigating alienation in digital environments. In contrast, deception and misleading leadership enabled by AI pose significant ethical risks (Scorici et al., 2024). Maintaining the centrality of human importance provides an anchor for Christian leadership.

Christ-Centered Business Ethics in Technology Integration

Christian ethics emphasize a moral anchor grounded in love, justice, integrity, and humility. Melé and Fontrodona (2017), Thacker (2022), and Mahoney (1989) noted that without such grounding, business ethics drift toward utilitarianism and moral compromise and risk introducing corruption. A Christ-centered ethic provides guardrails for leaders navigating the complex terrain of AI advancement. Together, these bodies of literature reveal a critical gap: organizations need leadership frameworks that combine a human-centric philosophy with ethical guidance suited to AI-driven workplaces.

The HEARTH Team Leadership Model

HEARTH was designed as a competency-based leadership model for remote and tech-hybrid teams – those integrating AI, robotics, and other technologies as a team member – and emphasizes the centrality of human dignity in technology-mediated work (Barresi, 2025). It incorporates seven core principles: human-centric ethics; culture of innovation and adaptability; communication expertise; empathy and compassion; technical literacy; connection, inclusion, and visibility; and transparency and trust. These principles collectively guide leaders to prioritize humanity while leveraging technology.

Although created for general organizational contexts, HEARTH aligns naturally with biblical teachings. De Villiers (2018, 2021) highlighted that modern secularization requires Christians to actively seek consensus on values that are human-focused, such as stewardship, a justice orientation, and the leader's ethical posture. By identifying alignment with biblical principles, the HEARTH model provides a bridge between AI integration and Christian leadership values.

Biblical Integration: A Bridge Between Technology and Faith

Justice

AI systems can unintentionally perpetuate bias. A HEARTH-aligned leader proactively identifies, audits, and corrects such inequities. This reflects Micah 6:8 (*New International Version*, 2011): “Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly.”

Compassion

Human-centric leadership ensures AI is used to lighten burdens rather than increase them. Compassionate design and deployment support Jesus' model of servant leadership.

Purpose

Ephesians 2:10 explains that humanity is created for good works and purpose-driven action. HEARTH frames AI and other modern technologies as tools to enable meaningful contributions rather than to replace them.

Stewardship

Christian stewardship calls leaders to care for people and resources responsibly. In AI contexts, leaders achieve stewardship through ethical data governance, transparency, and long-term systems thinking using person-focused foresight. These integrations

demonstrate that HEARTH offers a practical bridge between faith-based ethics and contemporary technological realities.

Biblical Integration: Biblical Principles and Alignment With HEARTH

Human-Centric Ethics

Human-centric ethics align with the principle of stewardship of creation and regard for human dignity, as humans are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27).

Culture of Innovation and Adaptability

Fostering a culture of innovation and adaptability using a human-ethics foundation aligns with the Christian principle of wisdom and discernment for new seasons (Is. 43:19).

Communication Expertise

Colossians 4:6 describes the Christian principle of speaking the truth with grace, requiring a practiced ethical and honest communication skill set for leaders. The integration of machine language introduces complexity and additional competencies that leaders must learn to succeed.

Transparency and Trust

Leaders must integrate new technologies with integrity and honesty (Prov. 11:3). With this framing, Christian leaders cultivate greater trust in human-focused outcomes.

Technical Literacy

Stewardship of gifts and resources (1 Pet. 4:10), challenges leaders to gain knowledge and awareness of how technology operates, the potential risks of AI design and use, and the deployment of these technologies for human benefit.

Connection, Inclusion, and Visibility

Unity in diversity and belonging in Christ (Gal. 3:28) are principles that align with the HEARTH element of connection, inclusion, and visibility, offering Christian leaders practical targets to incorporate when deploying AI in their organizations. Table 1 contains a summary of these alignments.

Table 1: Summary of HEARTH Principle Alignment With Biblical Principles

HEARTH principle	Biblical principle	Scripture
Human-centric ethics	Stewardship of creation and human dignity	Genesis 1:27
Culture of innovation & adaptability	Wisdom and discernment in new seasons	Isaiah 43:19
Communication expertise	Speaking truth with grace	Colossians 4:6
Compassion & empathy	Loving one another	Ephesians 4:32
Transparency & trust	Integrity and honesty	Proverbs 11:3
Technical literacy	Stewardship of gifts and resources	1 Peter 4:10
Connection, inclusion, & visibility	Unity in diversity, belonging in Christ	Galatians 3:28

Case Study: HEARTH in AI-Integrated Teams

The HEARTH principles were delivered to a cohort of 10 learners through a structured, multimodal leadership development experience. Participants engaged with the model's theoretical foundations through pre-reading and then applied these concepts during an intensive 3-day cohort experience that incorporated targeted exercises, case studies, guided reflection, and collaborative learning. Consistent with adult learning theory (Allen et al., 2022), the program's varied instructional methods, combined with a comprehensive final exam, supported multiple pathways for knowledge acquisition, practice, and transfer. Learners contributed self-report data, leader or team observations, and engagement indicators to capture both immediate and long-term developmental outcomes, offering a holistic view of the program's impact.

The multiparticipant qualitative case study revealed several relational and cultural outcomes when HEARTH was applied in AI-rich or remote teams:

- Significant improvements in psychological safety
- Increased trust between leaders and team members

- Reduction in stress related to automation and role uncertainty
- More transparent communication about AI’s role and purpose
- Strengthened empathy and relational connection despite digital mediation
- Improved ethical awareness in project decisions

These ripple effects demonstrate that human-centric leadership does not hinder technological adoption. Instead, it enables healthier and more sustainable technology integration. Table 2 contains a summary of key themes from the synthesized data collected.

Table 2: Summary of HEARTH Case Study Impacts

Theme	Summary of participant insights
1. Application of learning	Daily use of empathy, transparency, and inclusive behaviors in routine leadership interactions
2. Adaptability to remote/hybrid contexts	Adjusted communication, increased check-ins, and accounted for time zones and varied work arrangements
3. Empathy and understanding	Heightened awareness of remote team challenges; applied compassion even during complex virtual interactions
4. Support for team well-being	Expanded well-being practices through experience-sharing sessions, burnout awareness, and individualized support
5. Feedback integration	Increased willingness to seek and act on feedback, refining meeting structures and engagement expectations
6. Transparency and trust	Strengthened trust via clear communication, visibility, and consistent contextual framing
7. Facilitation of collaboration	Promoted collaboration through cross-departmental coordination and intentional facilitation in remote teams
8. Technical literacy	Proactive use and recommendation of digital tools that

Theme	Summary of participant insights
and tools	enhance connectivity and productivity
9. Encouragement of inclusion	Reinforced equitable participation and advocated for remote/hybrid members; used asynchronous channels effectively
10. Observable impact on team dynamics	Reported improvements in psychological safety, accountability, communication, participation, and cohesion

The Ethical Tension: Efficiency Versus Flourishing

A recurring theme in AI-focused workplaces is a mismatch between technological promise and lived experience (Burwell, 2025; Rayhan, 2024; Zirar et al., 2023). While AI promises more time, reduced burden, and increased creativity, many employees experience the opposite: higher expectations, reduced headcount (e.g., through automation of repetitive tasks), accelerated timelines (e.g., due to the need to keep up with rapid technological advancements), and pressure to “keep up.”

HEARTH principles challenge leaders to take responsibility for shaping the AI workplace culture with a human-centric focus. Leaders applying this approach exhort their organizations to resist efficiency-only mindsets and instead cultivate environments where flourishing, including relational, spiritual, emotional, and professional, is central to organizational success.

Future Research Directions

The HEARTH model is positioned for expanded empirical validation using larger datasets.

Qualitative Research

- Interviews with AI-adopting leaders
- Case studies of HEARTH in digital transformation initiatives
- Narrative analysis of ethical decision making under AI pressure

Quantitative Research

- Surveys linking HEARTH competencies to team engagement, trust, and flourishing
- Longitudinal studies of AI adoption outcomes under HEARTH leadership
- Statistical analysis of ethical indicators and performance measures

Long-Range Technological Considerations

HEARTH's relevance increases as organizations move toward the following:

- AI decision automation (2025–2030)
- Internet of things ubiquity (2025–2035)
- Quantum computing acceleration (2030–2035)
- Human-computer brain interfaces using AI (2035–2040)

These advancements require robust ethical frameworks grounded in human dignity.

Conclusion

The acceleration of AI adoption demands leadership approaches that safeguard humanity while embracing innovation. HEARTH offers a practical, Christ-centered, human-centric model for guiding this transformation. The case study data from leaders already employing these principles provide evidence of their roles in creating flourishing individuals and teams. As organizations navigate complex ethical terrain, leaders who prioritize justice, compassion, stewardship, and purpose can transform AI adoption from a pursuit of efficiency into a pathway of shared flourishing. Ongoing research and collaboration are essential to validate HEARTH as a biblically grounded, empirically supported model capable of shaping the future of ethical AI leadership.

About the Author

Dr. Emi Barresi is the creator of the HEARTH (Human-Ethics Approach for Remote & Tech-Hybrid) Team Leadership Model and a scholar-practitioner in human-centric, technology-integrated leadership. With more than 15 years of experience in project management, software and hardware development, and organizational leadership, she integrates ethical, future-ready, and faith-informed perspectives into her consulting and academic work. Her work focuses on AI ethics, remote teaming, human-centric leadership, and the intersection of faith and technology in modern workplaces.

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