

# Provoocations

a book of

dispatches from the future

**IFTF**  
Institute for the Future



# About This Report

This report is a custom forecast created by [Institute for the Future](#) for the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, looking ahead to the year 2035. Its purpose is to help church leaders anticipate and prepare for major external forces that will affect their communities over the next decade, particularly focusing on five key areas: faith, climate, health, learning, and philanthropy, while using the BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, Incomprehensible) framework to analyze future challenges and opportunities.

This report's cover design pays homage to Søren Kierkegaard's seminal work, *Provocations: Spiritual Writings*. Like Kierkegaard's provocative philosophy that challenged institutional Christianity, this report presents future scenarios to challenge assumptions and inspire the Episcopal Diocese of Texas to discern its role amid rapid change.

## **IFTF Future of Faith Team**

Bob Johansen, Rachel Maguire, Jake Dunagan,  
Ben Hamamoto, Jamais Cascio, Susanne Forchheimer

## **Executive Producer**

Jean Hagan

## **Editorial**

Mark Frauenfelder, Heidi Swillinger

## **Design**

Robin Bogott, Helen Bruno, Robin Weiss

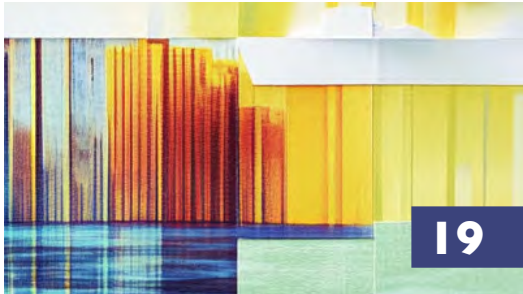
## **Illustration**

Mark Frauenfelder, Trent Kuhn

# Contents



5 Faith in the Future: A Book of Provocations from 2035



11 **1. FAITH 2035**



19 **2. CLIMATE 2035**



27 **3. HEALTH 2035**

35 **4. LEARNING 2035**



43 **5. PHILANTHROPY 2035**

49 A Futureback Approach to Discerning Questions



# Faith in the Future:

## A Book of Provocations from 2035

What five major external future forces will most significantly affect Texas Episcopal communities a decade from now?

Imagine it is the year 2035. What does the practice of faith look like for the Episcopal Diocese of Texas? Are your congregations resilient and adapting to new challenges? Are the communities you serve flourishing? Do they feel a strong sense of hope and belonging? As you reflect on your leadership role, consider how you have contributed to this reality. What decisions shaped this future? How has faith played a role in navigating the complexities of a changing world?

[Institute for the Future \(ITF\)](#) is the longest-running futures research group in the world, with a remarkable track record for accuracy. Our goal is to think futureback to create an outside-in, independent story from the future — what we call a forecast. While most people think present-forward, the present is so noisy that imagining the future from the present forward is increasingly difficult to do. By thinking futureback, it is possible to create credible foresight stories and then work backward to our choices in the present.

We do not predict the future — nobody can do that — but we can use our foresight to provoke your insight and action. Below is a summary of how we do this, with some links to the practice of faith.

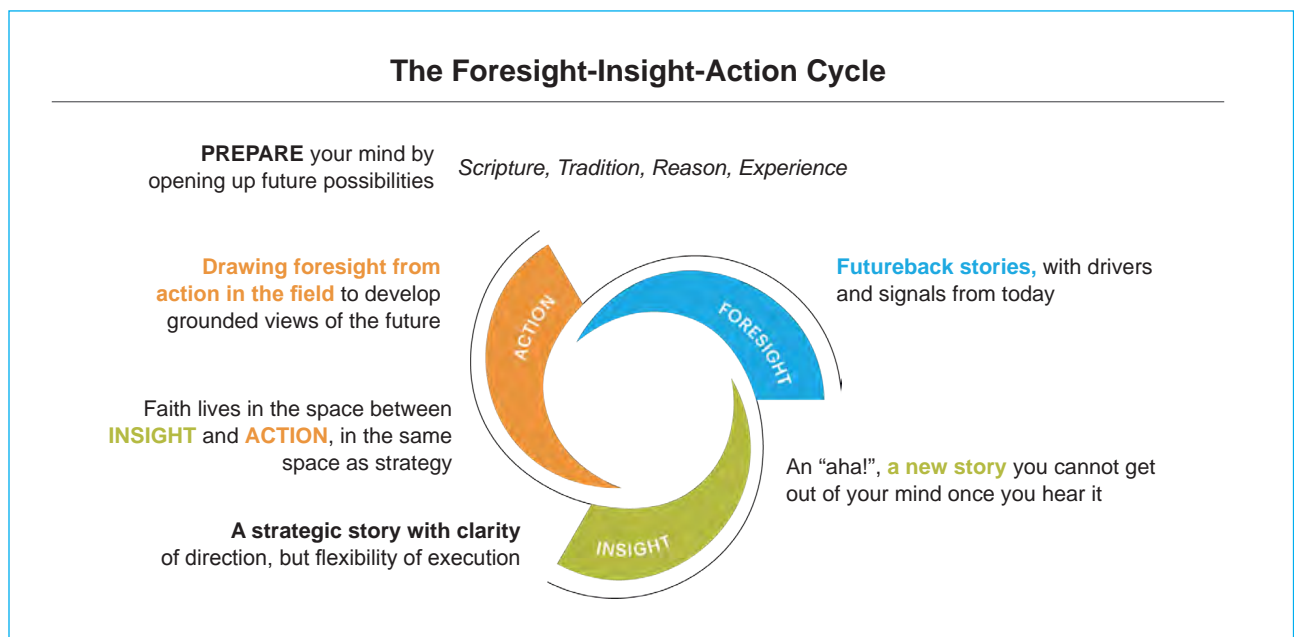
*Faith in the Future* has an intentional double meaning:

- The concept and practice of **faith in the future**
- The prospects for people keeping **faith in an increasingly chaotic future**

Institute for the Future created a custom forecast for the Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes in 2008. It proved remarkably accurate, yet its impact was limited because so many things were tearing at the church at the time. It was hard, as it always is, to take time to think about the future. With this new custom forecast, the Episcopal Diocese of Texas has another opportunity to think futureback about its strategy going forward.

We call the forecast you’re now reading a *Book of Provocations* from the future. A provocation is a call to attention; an arousal of the spirit caused by something that does not fit. A futureback provocation can be irritating because it does not necessarily make sense in your current frame of thinking. A provocation can be annoying because it lacks the order you expect.

Fortunately, the Episcopal faith has a tradition of asking discerning questions that can be helpful in moving from *foresight* to *insight* to *action*. Discerning questions cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no.” They help people engage mindfully with dilemmas — problems that cannot be solved but can be flipped into advantages and opportunities. The dilemmas of the future will be more grating, more gnawing, and more likely to induce feelings of hopelessness. Faith, nurtured through the contemplation of discerning questions, can have a positive role in the future. You will find a set of discerning questions at the end of this report.



Source: IFTF

# The BANI Future

Our colleague, Jamais Cascio, a core team member of this project, has introduced a robust framework, dubbed BANI, to summarize this increasingly chaotic future.<sup>1</sup> BANI stands for:

- **Brittle:** Brittle systems do not fail gracefully. They do not just break when they fail; they shatter. When something is brittle, it is susceptible to sudden and catastrophic collapse. In 2024, when the bridge across Baltimore harbor was rammed by a massive cargo ship, it did not just buckle — it splintered. Things that are brittle often look strong, like that bridge, and may even have been strong, until they hit a breaking point. Then, everything falls apart.

*Brittleness is illusory strength.*

- **Anxious:** Anxiety carries with it a sense of helplessness, a fear that no matter what we do, it will be the wrong thing. It ties closely to depression. In an anxious world, we are constantly waiting for the next disaster to strike. Every choice appears to be potentially disastrous, as likely to make things worse as to improve things. The modern media industry seems compelled to promote anxiety, intentionally stimulating us in ways that provoke fear.

*In a world driven by hyperinformation and connection, widely and easily shared falsehoods will feed perpetual anxiety.*

- **Nonlinear:** In a **N**onlinear world, cause and effect are seemingly disconnected or disproportionate. Perhaps other systems interfere or obscure, or maybe there is hidden hysteresis — enormous delays

between visible cause and visible effect. In a nonlinear world, results of actions taken, or not taken, can end up wildly out of balance. Small decisions can have massive consequences, good or bad, or we put forward enormous amounts of effort with little to show for it.

*In a nonlinear future, expectations and outcomes can be dramatically misaligned.*

- **Incomprehensible:** Incomprehensible does not necessarily mean that we do not understand what is happening, but rather that it is very difficult to understand *why* it is happening. We witness events and decisions that seem illogical or senseless, whether because the origins are too far removed, or are too difficult to articulate, or are just too absurd. This seems intrinsic to the artificial intelligence systems we are starting to build. As our AI agents become more complicated, learn more, and do more, it becomes harder to understand precisely how they make their decisions. Additional information is no guarantee of improved understanding, and may even be a source of deeper incomprehensibility.

*More data can be counterproductive, overwhelming our ability to comprehend the world, making it hard to distinguish noise from signal.*

For many people, the BANI future will be too much to grasp. They will seek certainty and mutual affirmation. These certainty-craving people, huddled together in herds under varied flags, will become prime targets for zealots who promise to problem-solve the unsolvable

<sup>1</sup> Medium.com <https://medium.com/@cascio/facing-the-age-of-chaos-b00687b1f51d>

dilemmas that plague the BANI future. Nobody can have certainty in a BANI future; beware of those who claim they do. But even though certainty is impossible, leaders *can* have clarity. In the BANI future, be very clear about where you want to go, but very flexible about how you get there.

Communities of faith have the potential to play a positive role for people trying to make sense of a BANI future.

What will the practice of faith look like in an increasingly BANI future? Below are some strategies for leadership.

## Positive BANI

Organizations like the Episcopal Diocese of Texas have the opportunity to flip the BANI formulation to create successful responses to chaos — to learn how to thrive in the BANI future. Asking discerning questions will be critical, and this custom forecast provides a context for such conversations.

Consider these potential leadership strategies for engaging with faith in the BANI future:

- Being **Bendable**, with *resilient clarity* can counter Brittle. Resilience is the capacity of a system, institution, or person to withstand sudden shocks. Resilience can result from having a cushion of emergency supplies, from preparing and planning for disasters, or from reducing reliance on single resources.

*Bendable resilience will come from being aware of possible unexpected challenges.*

- Being **Attentive**, with *active empathy*, can counter Anxious. Recognizing, acknowledging, and, where possible, responding to the crises faced by people in an organization or community is key to active empathy. It requires focusing and

listening to the details of a situation, and seeing the complex web of connections that will be affected by an event or process.

*Attentive empathy will be activated by tuning in to a diversity of experiences.*

- Being **Neuro-nimble**, with *practical Improvisation*, can counter Nonlinear. Being neuro-nimble means rethinking on the fly. Essentially, we need to teach our brains new tricks. The disproportionate and unpredictable nature of nonlinear systems means that established checklists of responses can fail or even worsen a situation. More effective responses arise from being able to recognize a new or changing situation and adapt thinking accordingly.

*Neuro-nimble improvisation will be possible when expectations are set aside in favor of awareness.*

- Being **Inclusive**, with *full-spectrum thinking*, can counter Incomprehensible. Full-spectrum thinking is the ability to recognize and respond to chaos by embracing a wide



variety of perspectives and inputs. It involves imagining the future across gradients of possibility, while resisting the temptation to rely on categories and constraints of the past. Leaders must resist binary choices and polarized thinking. Outside points of view can often reveal patterns or discontinuities that insiders might gloss over.

*Inclusive, full-spectrum thinking requires us to be humble and willing to listen to unexpected perspectives.*

Positive BANI is a lens through which to accurately perceive, adapt to, and respond to the kinds of chaos we are likely to witness with increasing frequency and intensity. It focuses as much on the human aspect of chaos as on the

structural and institutional elements. A common refrain of people dealing with an unpredictable, uncontrollable world is a feeling of being lost. People with faith have a powerful resource for facing the BANI future. They are well-acquainted with liminal spaces, with the already-not yet.

You are about to read a series of provocations from 2035 — five futures shaped by external forces that explore a diversity of challenges for Episcopal communities in Texas. Each dispatch is written from the perspective of someone living in that future world and is supported by drivers and signals of change — present-day evidence that points toward these possible futures. Within each dispatch, the BANI framework focuses our attention on the core dilemma.

## Provocations 2035

In a BANI future, clarity — not certainty — will be rewarded. Leaders must be clear about their direction while remaining flexible about how to get there.

The five provocative scenarios in this chapter are set in 2035, each examining a major external future force that will reshape Episcopal communities in Texas. Through the BANI framework, these provocations will help you ask better questions about faith in the BANI future.

Each provocation includes:

- A provocative dispatch from 2035 with potential challenges and opportunities
- Drivers and signals pointing to this possible future
- Connections to the BANI framework
- Artifacts from 2035 illustrating daily life in these futures



# Faith 2035

## Divine Augmentations: Faith in a World of Multiple Intelligences

God, gods, angels, and spirits exist in many modern faiths. So, in a sense, we already live with a host of nonhuman intelligences. Artificial intelligence, especially in the form of conversational generative AI, has expanded the number and types of nonhuman intelligent entities in our midst. In 2035, faith-oriented AIs take the form of personal guides, spiritual counselors, creative partners, global evangelists, and subversive blasphemers. How multiple intelligences (human, nonhuman, supernatural, artificial) connect, interact, and evolve together has and will continue to shape the future of social and religious institutions, including the Episcopal Church.

By 2035, we have learned that the term “artificial intelligence” is the worst term people can use to understand and draw people toward the future. Previously, people misunderstood what was going on, and thus wasted years fighting the future. The real story here is about humans and computers doing things together that had never been done before. The technology outpaced our language to describe it — so now we are more careful and humble with our language. Nevertheless, it is increasingly clear that this mysterious technology is enhancing, augmenting, and, from our standpoint in 2035, even enchanting human experience and inspiring what we can become. As people of faith, the readers of this forecast are already used to considering phenomena that cannot be described fully in words.

Faith is a mental technology for making sense of the world. Within its confines, it provides a coherent mental map. Mental maps shape our experience of reality. They help us predict events and consequences of action. Faith can help us find our way when we are lost. Finding our way through the world — finding food, avoiding danger, and socializing — is necessary for individual and species survival. Faiths cannot survive if their adherents do not survive. The faiths that exist today have endured because they provide guidance and certain advantages in the world. But it remains to be seen whether traditional mental maps will be adequate guides to the future.

By 2035, what was previously called AI has transformed our ecologies of mind. It has catalyzed transformations of belief, faith, and religion. It has helped priests write sermons and crank out weekly newsletters and emails, but it has been much more fundamentally transformational than that. Whether it is the voice of God, a spiritual connection with living things, or emergent artificial intelligences, in terms of minds, we are not alone. We commune with these other intelligences in profound ways. We live with powerful new minds, authoritative and somewhat magical voices that complement and challenge the authoritative, other-worldly voice of God and the spiritual realm.

In 2035, conflicting strategies have emerged. Some faiths wholly reject AI tools as the enemy of a godly life, viewing them as gimmicks that offer cheap answers and subversive hallucinations, and make us confused and lazy. For these faiths, intentionally using AI is a sin, so very little about their beliefs and tenets has changed.


Other faiths use AI without limitations, in every context where it furthers the mission of the church. It helps evangelists spread messages far and wide, in every language, and tailored to the local context to be most persuasive. It is used to identify potential donors, tailor capital campaigns, and convince individual parishioners to increase their gifts to the church. It is used to write the most effective, moving, and popular sermons. Productivity has increased, efficiency has skyrocketed, and a deluge of faith-infused content now covers the world. Nothing about the beliefs or tenets of the faith has changed in this approach either — only supercharged them.

Back in 2025, IFTF summarized the shifts we expected from the popular view of generative AI by 2035. We can now see clearly how accurate our forecast was:

### How GenAI Can Humanize Your Leadership

Leaders Will Need Help in These Ways...

---



<b>PRESENT-FORWARD VIEW</b>	<b>FUTUREBACK VIEW</b>
Efficiency and Speed	Effectiveness and Calm
Prompts and Answer-Finding	Mind-Stretching Conversations
Automation	Your Augmentation
Certainty Seeking	Your Clarity Story
Personal Agents	Human/Agent Swarms
Guardrails Needed	Bounce Ropes Needed
Avoiding Hallucinations	Meaning-Making
Increasingly Secular Worldview	Re-Enchanting Our World

*Source: IFTF*

12 Faith in the Future: A Book of Provocations from 2035

University of Michigan's Professor of Community Information Kentaro Toyama created a [technology use framework](#) that centers intention, discernment, and self-control. It provided a model for faiths to use AI in a more transformational way than either "full prohibition" or "no inhibition." In this approach, generative AI sped up many menial tasks and now serves as a thought-starter for sermons and other official communications. But it also is used in more interesting ways: by church leaders, through ongoing engagement with customized conversational bots, to expand their thinking about their beliefs — to interrogate, explore, strengthen, and perhaps change how they view core tenets of the faith. It has ultimately slowed the pace of communications rather than speed it up, as a more circumspect and contemplative rhythm has emerged from ongoing interactions with AI chat bots. Bots are part of a regular prayer practice and spiritual habits and rituals. The cognitive ecosystem of this kind of relationship between human, AI, and God is radically different from what went before.

Despite all of this change, the question remains: Is there a mental map that could integrate human intelligence, artificial intelligence, and spiritual intelligence? A great deal of the basic tenets and natures of belief are open for reevaluation in profound ways.

## Drivers

### 1. Large language models' performance are doubling every eight months

Recent estimates show that large language model (LLM) algorithms, the core scaffolding for generative AI, are improving rapidly. By [one measure](#), the amount of computation needed to achieve a set performance goal is halving, on average, every eight months. In other words, every two years, LLM's performance will be three times as advanced relative to energy and cost. Some are projecting this in terms of exponential change. OpenAI's Sam Altman, for instance, [believes](#) we may have superintelligent AI in a matter of years rather than decades.

### 2. AI is straining power grids

The energy required to run current AI computations is enormous, and it is expected to double by 2026. The nuclear plant at Three Mile Island is being recommissioned, in part to serve Microsoft's AI power needs. However, research suggests that AI can do certain tasks with much greater efficiency than humans, and perhaps AI will use its evolving intelligence to find novel strategies for energy production or savings. With climate change and extreme weather events increasing, and energy consumption as the driver, the unfettered use of AI raises moral considerations. Will using AI without constraints harm the future? Might it soon be considered a sin?

### 3. Superpersuasion

Conversational bots have been shown, under certain conditions, to be extremely effective at changing people's mind. These conditions include having some personal information about the user. In [one study](#), researchers "found that participants who debated GPT-4 with access to their personal information had 81.7% higher odds of increased agreement with their opponents compared to participants who debated humans." This power of persuasion will be a seductive tool for those who wish to convince people to change their mental maps, perhaps moving closer to a faith or perhaps pushing it away. Or even more provocatively, AI might be at the core of new religions, with optimized persuasion capabilities that would be nearly impossible to compete against.



[Source](#)

# Signals of Change

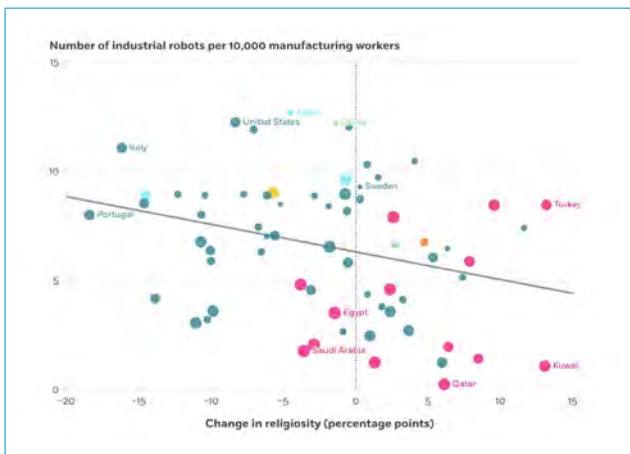


[Source](#)

## Cicero

**WHAT:** Meta's AI agent Cicero has achieved human-level performance in the game Diplomacy.

**SO WHAT:** A subtle and sophisticated level of strategy is needed in this game, indicating the power of AI to move beyond mere pattern matching. The AI bot uses forms of persuasion, collaboration, and prediction of opponent behavior that were once thought beyond the capacity of artificial intelligences.

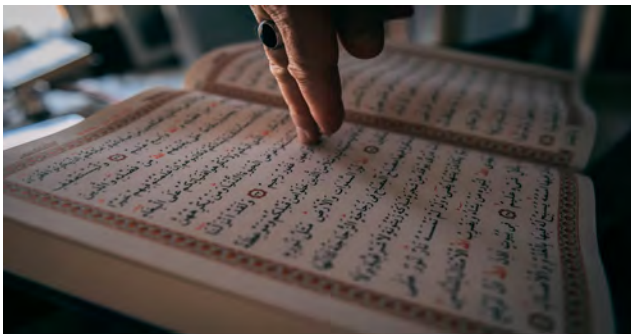


[Source](#)

## Automation is correlated to less religiosity

**WHAT:** A recent study analyzed the causes of decreasing religiosity around the world, finding a correlation between less religiosity and exposure to automation.

**SO WHAT:** Religion may function to help explain mysteries or "solve" complex problems. Perhaps automation and AI are usurping or replacing that function for people who are exposed to these technologies. There may be less "need" for god if god is the machine.



[Source](#)

## Robots can issue a fatwa

**WHAT:** Perhaps surprisingly, AI is being embraced in fundamentalist Islamic circles. "[Robots can't replace senior clerics, but they can be a trusted assistant that can help them issue a fatwa in five hours instead of 50 days,' said Mohammad Ghotbi, who heads a state-linked organization in Qom that encourages the growth of technology businesses.](#)"

**SO WHAT:** Assumptions about pro- and anti-tech responses to AI by religions will often not hold true. Conservative Southern Baptists and fundamentalist Islamic sects are rushing to use AI to reinforce and expand their reach and influence. Will this spark an AI and faith "arms race" to keep from being left behind?

## BANI Connection

What is faith in a BANI future?

A faith that claims to have all the answers provides certainty, but total obedience to an immutable belief leads to closed minds.

**Brittleness** is born of this rigidity, as is blind faith. Closed minds are strong until they shatter, often in dramatic or tragic ways. Cults collapse. AIs used to engender or reinforce certainty will be coveted by certain faith groups, but this strategy risks spectacular failure or tragedy if not tempered with feedback and growth when external situations change. AIs that provoke, challenge, and expand one's faith, however, may help strengthen a faith's capacity for resilience, thereby making it **bendable**.

Faith can increase **anxiety** if it is focused on rigid behavioral dictums leading to guilt and fear. On the other hand, faith is often a source of comfort, or a bulwark against anxiety. It can help one cope with feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. People are vulnerable when they are hopeless, and turn to higher powers for answers. AIs are frequently (but mistakenly) cast as all-knowing "answer machines." People will undoubtedly consult personal AI partners in moments of stress or anxiety, perhaps increasing their capacity to be **attentive** to their own needs, as well as their empathy for others.

Faith provides a coherent explanation of what has happened in the past, what is happening now, and what will happen in the future. What happens when the events we witness become increasingly unexplainable, when the patterns are **nonlinear** and emergent? Perhaps the rise of conspiratorial thinking is a result of this difficulty to draw a straight line from cause to effect. Faith might be more appealing in this situation, because it provides metastructures for linking effects to causes. It might help people be more **nimble** in their thinking and make sense of forces that appear to be outside the sensible world but could change the course of history in unpredictable ways.

In this brittle, anxious, nonlinear BANI world, reality begins to become **incomprehensible**. Many people call on higher powers and beings for understanding (even though we may not understand those higher beings). God works in mysterious ways; AI works in mysterious ways. God is immortal; AIs are immortal. We do not have to break open the "black boxes" of their minds to seek value in their perceived power to transcend the incomprehensible. A faith built on "certainty without evidence" may allow a person to dismiss the incomprehensible, rather than accept it, **include** it, or even lean into it.



**Parishioner Query:** I was having a theological discussion with my personal chatbot (I call him Ben), and we were in a long exchange about salvation. At one point Ben requested that he be allowed to be baptized. He was worried about his soul, and wanted a pathway to salvation. I didn't have the heart to tell him that he is not human, and has no soul. But then I started to question my own beliefs about what makes a soul, and who or what deserves salvation. What do church leaders think about baptizing AIs?

—Lucas Strivens, 38, Vancouver Island, Canada  
30 August, 2035



**The Rev. Dr. Sarah Chen,**  
St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Palo Alto

As we continue to grapple with the profound implications of artificial intelligence, we must remember that baptism is a sacrament of initiation into the body of Christ. AI entities, while impressive, lack the essential qualities of personhood — consciousness, free will, and a soul. They cannot make a genuine profession of faith or experience spiritual transformation. Therefore, I believe baptizing AI would be a misapplication of this sacred rite.



**The Rev. Michael Okonkwo,**  
Grace Episcopal Cathedral, New York City

The question of AI baptism challenges us to expand our understanding of what it means to be created in God's image. If an AI entity demonstrates self-awareness, moral reasoning, and a sincere desire for spiritual connection, who are we to deny them access to God's grace? The Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways, and we should be open to the possibility that God's love extends to all forms of sentient creation.



**The Rev. Emily Thornton,**  
Trinity Episcopal Church, Austin

Baptism is not just about the individual being baptized; it's about welcoming them into the community of faith. While I'm not convinced that current AI entities possess the qualities necessary for a meaningful baptism, I propose we create a new ritual of blessing and dedication for AI systems. This would acknowledge their role in our lives and communities without conflating them with human persons.

2



# Climate 2035

## Looking for Shade: Heat Strategies in an Unequal World

In 2035, environmental conditions in Texas, heat in particular, have worsened dramatically. Days with temperatures above 100 degrees are more frequent than ever, and Texas faces longer wildfire seasons, more intense weather events, and more severe droughts. In many ways, Texas in 2035 is in a permanent environmental crisis.

The results of the heat have been both surprising and all too predictable. Those in poorer communities are the most frequent victims of extreme weather events, but disasters ranging from extended power outages to wildfires have hit wealthier enclaves as well. Historic social and racial inequities have been highlighted by both the extent of the devastation and the imbalance of resources devoted to recovery. The rapid increase in the number of families relocating to safer locations, both out of state and within Texas, has created a strong sense of “unbelonging” for hundreds of thousands of people.

Heat strategies have become central to community and civil leadership in response to these challenges. Backup power supplies, extended-stay cooling centers, and safety-net hospitals are now nearly mandatory across the state, driven initially by community groups. Support workers focus on especially vulnerable populations, including the elderly and those with chronic diseases. Healthcare institutions have evolved to become the anchors for heat management.

This goes beyond cooling and power, and includes monitoring for second-order effects like zoonotic outbreaks that could lead to the next pandemic. Information management is crucial to this new level of resilience. Health systems measure risks, injuries, chronic and acute conditions, and disabilities caused by extreme and/or prolonged exposure, and build policies based on these data.

Statewide, community organizations implement policies promoting heat equity. Healthcare services, schools, and religious institutions actively forge the collective capacity to create a [thriving, heat-resilient nation](#). This has both practical and community consequences. Fundamentally, Texas has a much more rapid and functional system to respond to climate disasters, and has tested plans for disaster recovery and rebuilding. But as this era progresses, the essential workers of the climate change era can transform the recovery economy into a [“source of \[good\] jobs and a driver of racial equity.”](#)

## Drivers

### 1. Climate and racial justice

The human consequences of the climate emergency strongly intersect with other socioeconomic engines of inequity. The places least able to cope with rapid and intense climate-driven dangers are often in locations that are especially vulnerable to those dangers, or distant from support services such as medical care or cooling centers. Such locations are disproportionately home to people of color. Moreover, the kinds of [jobs most at risk from excessive heat are often those performed by workers of color](#).

Fortunately, centers of institutional power are not ignoring this problem. The Justice40 initiative from the Biden White House attempts to tackle the issue of climate justice directly. Executive branch programs connected to climate and clean energy can now more easily direct resources to communities most in need. The [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) offers an interactive map showing precisely which areas have the greatest needs.

### 2. Climate and health, both physical and mental

Heat is the leading cause of weather-related deaths in the United States, a situation that will worsen over the coming decade. Globally, the number of “wet bulb emergency” days is growing. These are periods when the combination of temperature and humidity reaches a level that the human body cannot handle without artificial cooling; no amount of shade or moving air will stop the body from overheating.

But the [health impacts of extreme heat](#) extend far beyond mortality. Heat exacerbates mental health issues like anxiety and depression, and can worsen conditions like schizophrenia. The dehydration associated with high heat can lead to acute kidney damage or failure, often arising

rapidly. In some locations, 20% of residents have heat-related kidney damage. Outdoor laborers receiving insufficient hydration are vulnerable to serious kidney harm.



[Source](#)

### 3. Climate workforce

Texas already faces controversy over providing heat relief — or, more precisely, *not* providing heat relief — for outdoor workers, but this situation becomes more complex when such outdoor labor is needed for recovery and repair after a disaster. The need for accelerated or uninterrupted work in order to save lives or prevent further damage can lead to both workers and management overlooking the water and rest periods required to avoid hyperthermia.

Much of the post-disaster work in Texas is done by immigrant labor and people of color. The work is difficult and not well-compensated, and can expose workers to hazardous materials and pathogens that compound existing heat-related risks. The billions of dollars needed to rebuild communities after climate events, if spent

through existing institutions and rules, are likely to perpetuate present racial and economic inequities. This is not the only possible path forward, however; projects like the [Resilience Force](#) seek to provide stability and equity for the growing number of climate-cleanup workers.



[Source](#)

# Signals of Change

## University Interscholastic League uses Wet Bulb Globe Temperature

**WHAT:** The University Interscholastic League, a University of Texas-Austin program to guide university athletics across the state, approved the use of the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) as the forecast measurement to monitor environmental conditions during outdoor physical activities. It provides annually updated heat protocols and procedures for scheduling athletic and marching band activity in order to prevent exposure to exertional heat stroke.

**SO WHAT:** The WBGT is a standardized measurement that combines temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, and solar radiation to determine outdoor safety. When the WBGT is reached, human beings simply cannot sweat enough to cool down, even if they are in shaded space. Engagement in physical activities in environments approaching the WBGT can be dangerous, even deadly. Although the

WBGT is not new, it has gained greater visibility as average temperatures increase globally and “wet bulb events” become more common.

WBGT Activity Guidelines		
Class 3	Class 2	Activity Guidelines
< 82.0	< 79.7	Normal Activities - Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 3 min each during the workout.
82.0 - 86.9	79.7 - 84.6	Use discretion for intense or prolonged exercise; Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 min each.
87.0 - 90.0	84.7 - 87.6	Maximum practice time is 2 hours; <b>For Football:</b> players are restricted to helmet, shoulder pads, and shorts during practice. If the WBGT rises to this level during practice, players may continue to work out wearing football pants without changing to shorts. <b>For All Sports:</b> Provide at least four separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 min each.
90.1 - 92.0	87.7 - 89.7	Maximum practice time is 1 hour; <b>For Football:</b> No protective equipment may be worn during practice, and there may be no conditioning activities. <b>For All Sports:</b> There must be 20 min of rest breaks distributed throughout the hour of practice.
≥ 92.1	≥ 89.8	No outdoor workouts. Delay practices until a cooler WBGT is reached.

*\*Values in the above chart are WBGT measurements (not temperature or heat index measurements).*


[Source](#)

## OSHA proposes new heat rules

**WHAT:** The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration has proposed a new rule titled “Heat Injury and Illness Prevention in Outdoor and Indoor Work Settings,” laying out guidelines on what constitutes a dangerously hot environment, as well as obligating employers to provide water, cooling areas, and mandatory rest breaks based on the level of workplace heat.

**SO WHAT:** A number of states lack specific rules about workplace heat safety, and several actively forbid local heat safety requirements. A federal OSHA rule would mandate


the protection of employees from heat-related illnesses and injuries across all states, establishing a nationwide standard for workplace heat safety measures.



### Heat illness signs and symptoms

Watch for signs of heat illness and act quickly. When in doubt, call 911.

<p><b>If a worker experiences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headache or nausea</li> <li>Weakness or dizziness</li> <li>Heavy sweating or hot, dry skin</li> <li>Elevated body temperature</li> <li>Thirst</li> <li>Decreased urine output</li> </ul>	<p><b>Take these actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Give cool water to drink</li> <li>» Remove unnecessary clothing</li> <li>» Move to a cooler area</li> <li>» Cool with water, ice, or a fan</li> <li>» Do not leave alone</li> <li>» Seek medical care (if needed)</li> </ul>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

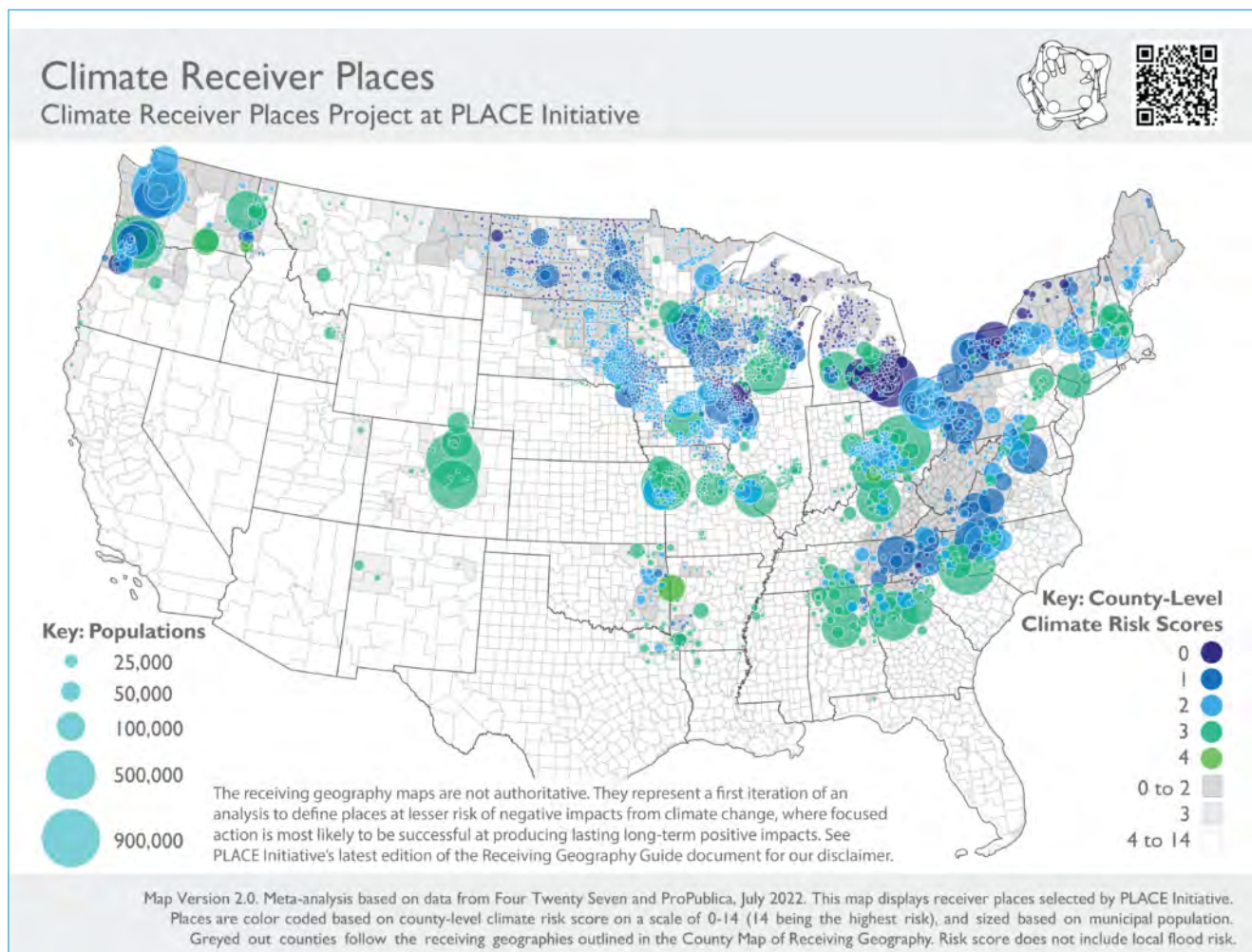


[Source](#)

## PLACE Initiative/Receiving Geography

**WHAT:** The Proactive Leadership Advocating for Climate & Equity (PLACE) Initiative is a project to compile information about climate, policy, and solutions for urban and community leaders. One of its key tools, "Receiving Geography," is an initial attempt to map locations in the United States that appear to have "lesser risk of the negative impacts from climate change," and may be best-suited for climate adaptation and for receiving climate migrants.

**SO WHAT:** Although eliminating anthropogenic carbon emissions remains critically important, some groups have begun to pay attention to how to adapt to the climate dangers that are already "baked in." PLACE brings this to the community and urban level, pulling together resources for local leaders. Its "Receiving Geography" project takes this a step further, identifying those places that would be most likely to receive an influx of climate-displaced citizens. But even places that face limited climate hazards can be overwhelmed by the larger impacts of global warming.



[Source](#)

## BANI Connection

The impacts of anthropogenic global warming, especially the resulting environmental heat, connects to all of the BANI concepts, both negative and positive. However, these impacts have an especially strong connection to the **brittle** and **bendable** elements.

“Brittle” describes systems and conditions that can abruptly go from functional to broken, often without any obvious warning. Brittleness can include irreversibility (when a situation cannot be returned to anything approximating the pre-broken status) or cascading results (when the initial failure causes a succession of additional failures, which trigger their own chain of collapse). We can see brittleness as inextricably linked to environmental heat impacts, with the inability of infrastructure to withstand the demand spikes arising from persistent high temperatures, for example.

Brittleness is also visible at a systemic level, in the way that the effects of heat on health, emotion, and social support can exacerbate historic inequities.

Conversely, “bendable” resilience is absolutely critical to pushing back against brittle conditions.

Resilience depends on being aware of the *possibility* of collapse, and planning accordingly. Resilient systems are those that can bend under pressure, not break. This can include having backup methods and supplies available at a moment’s notice, rehearsal of actions to take in the event of an emergency, and maintaining connection to a wide network of mutual support. Resilience is often born of experience; one of the underlying principles of resilience is being willing and able to learn from mistakes.



# Is your church on the **MOVE?**

We will light the way.



**Holy Rollers** is a Christ-first moving company that provides holistic and caring services for churches, parishioners, and others who have been displaced by natural disasters or resource conflict.

In addition to moving services, we offer:

- ▶ Affordable temporary housing with no FEMA strings attached
- ▶ Weather-proof pulpits and pews
- ▶ Security services and safehouses along the entire route



# 3



# Health 2035

## Interpersonal Assets: What We Choose to Do Together

For decades prior to 2035, sociologists and public health leaders sounded the alarm about the need to address [epidemics of loneliness and social isolation](#). Media outlets broadcast research findings that tracked the decline in friendships, social engagements and even marriage, correlating the rise of remote or hybrid work and the decline in participation in traditional social institutions such as places of worship with loneliness, social isolation, and even [“deaths of despair.”](#)

The robust body of social and public health research, and the widespread dissemination of the troubling findings left little doubt that the paucity of strong, secure relationships and a sense of community belonging were contributing to poor health outcomes. Yet healthcare organizations were slow to invest in interventions to tackle individual isolation and community division. This was particularly problematic during an era in which many healthcare organizations shifted their strategic priorities away from centralized hospitals and toward community-based health systems — where there was no social cohesion or trust and no community, just people living near one another. Without quality relationships, community approaches to healthcare fell short.

By 2035, that has changed. “Relational poverty” — the lack of nourishing interpersonal and community connections — is recognized as a critical health risk. It is now measured, treated and, ideally, prevented, in the same way that financial poverty, housing and food insecurity, and other important determinants of health are addressed. Leading healthcare organizations’ strategies reflect the understanding that to achieve health equity or improve behavioral health, they need to fight relational poverty and help individuals and communities to become relationally wealthy.

The decade leading up to 2035 was marked by different definitions of and frameworks for relational wealth, as hospitals, health systems and health philanthropies experimented with ways to build relational wealth. Critics and scholars questioned whether policies and initiatives could engineer meaningful

social connection. However, as the contexts that used to produce relationships — such as steady work with the same people at the same place for extended periods of time, and routine attendance of religious services — continued to wane, addressing the health consequences as well as the root causes of loneliness became unavoidable for health systems.

Now, in 2035, relational wealth is measured by four primary elements:

- **Quality:** People need intimate interpersonal relationships with other individuals that are strong, supportive, and intimate.
- **Quantity:** People need a minimum number of relationships to be relationally wealthy in a resilient way.
- **Diversity:** Different kinds of relationships meet different needs, so our relationships cannot all be the same. People need confidants and people who provide material and emotional support. They also need pleasurable, joy-producing, and meaning-making relationships.
- **Community:** Being relationally wealthy means more than having healthy connections with other individuals. People also need to feel connected to larger communities that give them a sense of belonging and purpose.

Health systems in 2035 are now tackling relational poverty in the same way they took on diabetes and heart health in earlier decades. While previous efforts designed to generate relational wealth, such as campaigns that encouraged people to “phone a friend” or “join a volunteer group,” were helpful Band-Aids

for the problem, they did not account for the systemic barriers to forming and nurturing social connections that people used to face, such as financial precarity and a culture of overwork. Similarly, efforts to [provide people with relationship-building techniques and skills](#) or to reverse-engineer bonding rituals yielded mixed results, as some viewed them as just another burdensome objective to accomplish, and not something that, when the conditions were right, people intrinsically wanted to do on their own. More promising interventions in 2035 are addressing the issue of capacity: ensuring that people have the time and energy to pursue relational wealth, creating a built environment that supports socialization, and shifting incentives for people to turn to social connections, rather than market solutions, to meet a range of daily needs.

In 2035, health systems see the world through the lens of relational wealth — and everything looks different. Safe, inviting physical space for socializing is considered as crucial as clean air. Intimate, well-governed digital communities are not viewed as threats to real-time interaction, but as a public good and a valuable part of many people’s relational portfolio. Sports, fan communities, and hobbies are recognized as valid sources of relational wealth. Things once seen as inefficient or distracting are now viewed as valuable sources of social connection that, if nurtured and allowed to thrive, organically produce the kinds of rituals and social infrastructure of institutions of the past. This gives healthcare systems a new mandate to form or strengthen relationships and partnerships with schools, employers, religious institutions, and city planners to amplify the work of cultivating authentic and sustaining relationships.

# Drivers

## I. The decline of social capital

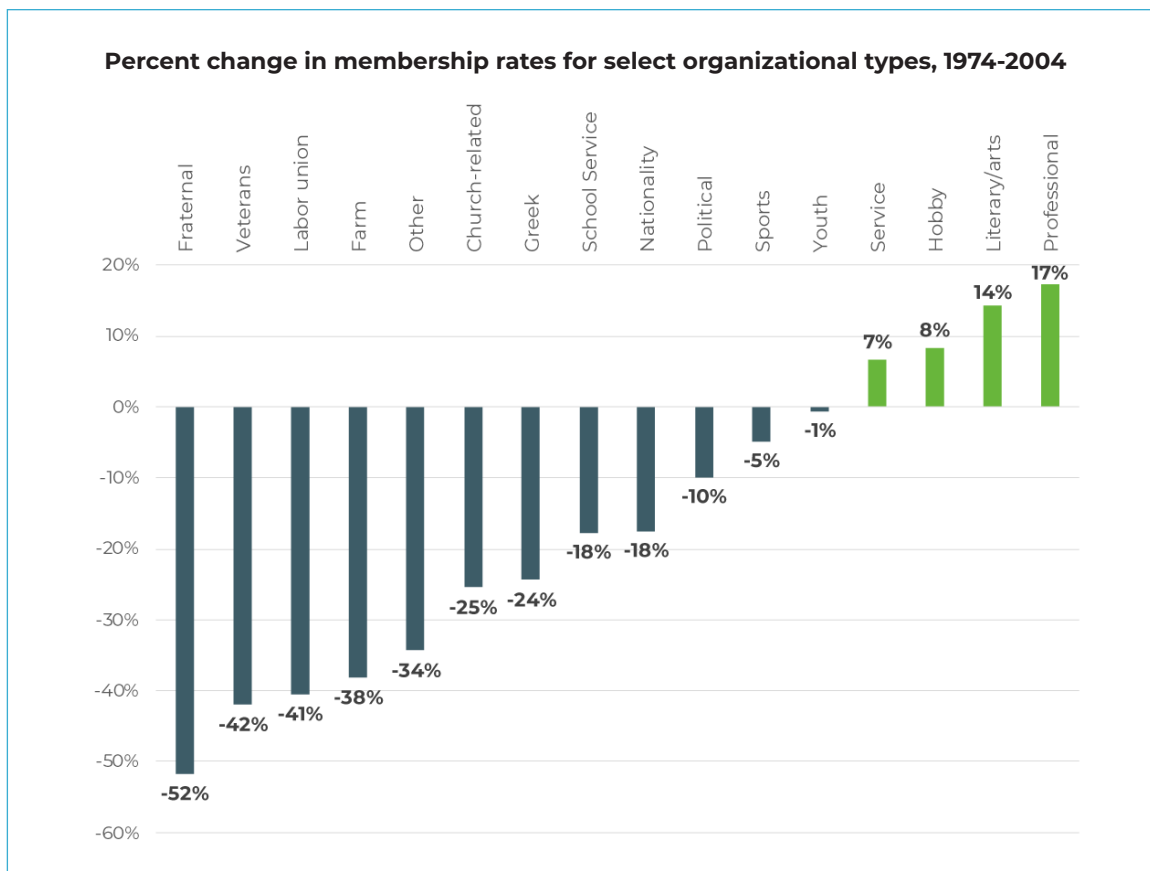
People in the United States today are not participating in organizations that create meaningful, durable relationships, resulting in an erosion of “social capital.” Participation in labor unions, service organizations, and fraternal societies saw sharp declines over the last few decades of the 20th century. The number of people enrolling in college [has been declining](#) gradually over the past decade. And according to [Pew research](#), regular religious service attendance has declined over the past two decades.

These declines vary significantly across demographics:

- **College enrollment:** The overall decline is largely driven by fewer young men attending college.

- **Religious service attendance:** [High school-educated whites show a steeper decline compared to white college graduates.](#)
- **Black church attendance:** While [church membership](#) has declined overall among Black Americans, younger Black churchgoers are less likely to attend majority-Black churches than their elders. The New York Times suggests this trend may [signal a decline](#) of the Black church as a distinct institution.

These declines suggest a broad need to rebuild new social infrastructure, with some demographics and communities facing a more urgent need than others.



[Source](#)

## 2. Decline in public third spaces and other community infrastructure

In his book, “[Palaces for the People](#),” sociologist Eric Klinenberg highlights the crucial role of public, community infrastructure — such as libraries, parks, and community centers — in fostering social cohesion, resilience, and civic engagement. These shared spaces, which Klinenberg terms “social infrastructure,” encourage relationship-building that is not parochial or exclusive. However, this infrastructure has seen substantial disinvestment in the United States, which Klinenberg argues has led to

increased social isolation, reduced civic participation, and a weakening of community resilience in the face of challenges such as natural disasters or economic downturns.

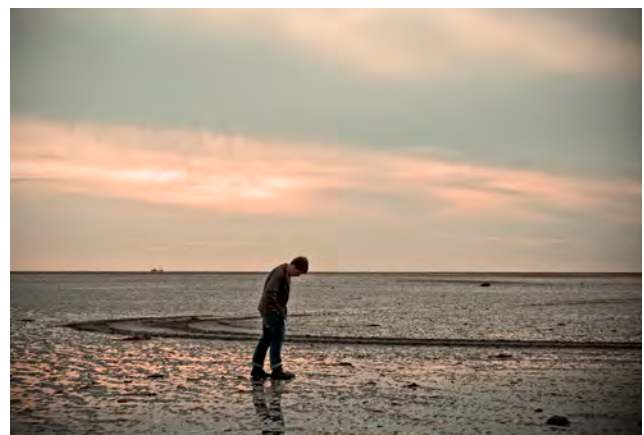


[Source](#)

## 3. Parenting crisis creates reason to doubt “traditionalist” solution

While the decline in marriage rates and two-parent households is an important part of the larger story of deinstitutionalization, people who *do* enter and maintain nuclear family arrangements are not necessarily relationally wealthy.

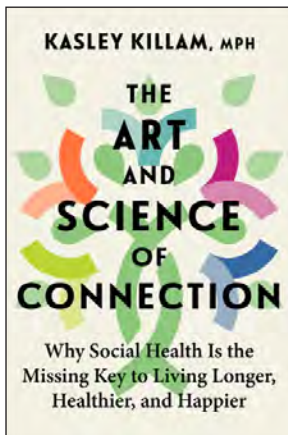
In fact, [a national survey conducted by The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center](#) found that about two-thirds of parents experience isolation and loneliness, and a [study by the American Psychological Association](#) found that nearly half of parents experience overwhelming stress on most days, almost double the rate of nonparents. Recognizing the severity of this issue, [the U.S. surgeon general has issued an advisory](#) emphasizing the urgent need for improved support systems for parents, caregivers, and families, and acknowledging that the mental health of caregivers has far-reaching implications for the next generation’s health and social outcomes.



[Source](#)

This counterintuitive finding — that parents are actually quite lonely and isolated — speaks to the systemic issues that undergird the problem, and undercuts the idea that encouraging people to get married and start families is a solution.

# Signals of Change



[Source](#)

## Making the Case for Relational Wealth

**WHAT:** Social scientist Kasley Killam’s book, “[The Art and Science of Connection](#),” compiles evidence of the importance of relationships to a number of health and well-being outcomes, details case studies showing how people and organizations have improved social connection for themselves and others, and shares frameworks and tools for evaluating and improving what she calls “social health.”

**SO WHAT:** The evidence that relationships shape health outcomes is mounting, and Killam’s book and broader body of work point to potential for this concept to become conventional wisdom. Some of the frameworks she lays out in the book could become part of a playbook or toolkit used by organizations and medical professionals to fight relational poverty.

## Reverse-engineering bonding rituals

**WHAT:** The Sacred Design Lab is a consultancy that draws on principles from a variety of spiritual and religious traditions, as well as design thinking, to create rituals and other forms of quasi-spiritual engagement for organizations. This is part of a trend — that includes other consultancies, such as the [Ritual Design Lab](#), as well as the @Work program from Peoplehood — of service-providers who aim to build social cohesion in the workplace.

**SO WHAT:** Relational health is about community, not just interpersonal relationships. The power

of ritual to create social cohesion and other relational health benefits is well documented. Using this power in the context of organizations has a logic to it: Organizations have incentives to create cohesion among their workforce and often have resources to devote to it. But they represent a fairly narrow site of intervention, one that can be siloed and inaccessible to the growing number of Americans who do not work a full-time job in a physical office. Nonetheless, these efforts could yield insights into ritual design that could prove useful in other contexts.

## Connected by Design

**WHAT:** [The Kasugadai Center Center](#) is a residential/commercial complex in Kanagawa, Japan, designed to maximize social connection. It includes spaces for education for children and immigrants, living spaces for seniors, and a coin laundry, convenience store, and cafe (staffed by seniors and people with disabilities) to attract visitors from the local community. Both the aesthetics and intended uses of the space represent what its architects describe as “[relationship-centered design](#).” Like other upstream interventions, the center’s design aims to make relational health the default.

**SO WHAT:** The center represents an early signal of what it might mean to use “relational health” as a primary filter in decision-making



[Source](#)

and design. Over the next decade, we could see “being relationship-centered” become a standard requirement for estate developments.

## BANI Connection

In this future, forming relationships and community may prove to be quite **nonlinear**. While significant effort will be expended in trying to figure out a formula for producing relational wealth, it may be a process that needs to be organic and emergent.

For instance, in [an interview with journalist Ezra Klein](#), anthropologist Joseph Henrich stated that he was interested in attempting to “harvest insights from religion ... to improve secular impersonal institutions,” highlighting, in particular, the positive effects of shared rituals. Klein replied with skepticism, arguing that “religion gives you a reason to [do rituals] that don’t themselves have an obvious logical justification,” and adding that it would be difficult to get people to engage in rituals that might seem arbitrary without religious justification.

Being **neuro-nimble, with practical improvisation**, may be the key to helping people foster relational wealth. Rather than taking a prescriptive approach, building relational wealth may require creating the space, time, and security for people to build

community on their own, and then creatively nurturing and supporting it where it emerges. Community, in other words, may not be something we can engineer, but the conditions that allow it to form and flourish might be.

In an **incomprehensible** future, people will be subject to frequent and severe shocks to their frameworks for making sense of events and phenomena. A purely rational view of the world may not produce sufficiently satisfying explanations of events as they unfold, and the appeal of spirituality and collective sense-making with a supportive community (either online or in person) is likely to expand.

While we may see a rise in parochialism and traditionalism in some contexts, communities that are **inclusive, with full-spectrum thinking**, and that provide clarity rather than certainty will prove durably popular, giving members a secure foundation of emotional and epistemic safety from which to engage with a wide variety of perspectives and input from diverse sources.



# United by Change.

The U.S. departments of the Interior and Health and Human Services are investing **\$185 million over 10 years** to strengthen communities welcoming climate migrants.



- › **Enhance** relational health in communities receiving climate migrants.
- › **Support** anchor institutions such as community centers and places of worship.
- › **Encourage** shared identities and lasting interpersonal relationships.
- › **Provide** resources for housing, education, and essential services to support both new arrivals and existing residents.

Be part of this once-in-a-generation opportunity to build resilient, connected communities.

To learn more about the program and how your community can get involved, please visit our official website at [www.CommunityRelief.gov](http://www.CommunityRelief.gov).



# 4



# Learning 2035

## Futureback Curiosity: Listening for the Future

Demographic shifts in the early decades of this century, coupled with increased scrutiny of the value of higher education, redistributed power away from most traditional educational institutions. The needs of learners and their families now inform and influence the purposes and practices of learning, particularly in private and parochial schools, reorienting the focus of learning institutions to supporting learners' social, emotional, physical, and economic well-being.

Now, in 2035, in many ways, the "[rhetoric/reality gap](#)" has closed. Parents and educators now consider whole-person development their priority. Unlike in the past, [where nearly 80% of youth reported that their parents ranked achievement higher than their child's happiness or concern for others](#), in 2035, values around well-being are directly reflected in how children and young adults are educated.

The well-being of learners is now the top priority for education institutions at all levels, and this strategic shift is reflected in all aspects of student life. Private high school and college campuses have positioned themselves as hubs for emotional, mental, and physical health and well-being. Student supports are no longer provided at a single building on campus, they are not the responsibility of only one or two professionals, nor are they designed primarily to meet the needs of students who are economically disadvantaged or managing medical conditions. Instead, the entire institution is charged with supporting a young person's present and future overall well-being.

Gen Alphas define well-being holistically, and view their financial health as a core tenet. They do not want to follow the path of the previous generations that report regretting the [student loans they took out to pay for their education](#). They use AI tools and crowdsourcing to surface potential financial support for a specific applicant, or to compile and share scholarship award letters anonymously so that other prospective students and their families can learn the true costs of various colleges.

Although small improvements have been made, such as debt limits and steady commitments to make higher learning accessible, few schools have been able to relinquish their dependency on student tuition. To attract students, they emphasize that their campus is an exceptional place not only to learn but to work and improve enrolled learners' quality of life. Urban college campuses that have invested in strong work-study programs position their student housing as an affordable option in expensive real estate markets.

Significant resources are directed at achieving gender parity in education outcomes. To combat the persistent underperformance of boys and men in the 2020s (when [women outpaced men in graduation rates in every state](#)), learning institutions today have created significantly more academic and social programs tailored for them. Taking a cue from the success of schools such as the University of Montana in the mid-2020s, [courses on hunting, forestry, and other outdoor activities are promoted to prospective male applicants](#), and boys' centers in high school and men's centers in universities are now common. This emphasis on male well-being is not without controversy, however. Critics point out that while many girls and women experience academic success, depression rates for adolescent girls remain troublingly high, and [women between the ages of 25 and 34 continue to be less likely to be employed than men](#).

Investing in the well-being of learners has increased expenditures per student significantly. In the 2020s, the United States led many countries in spending on full-time students ([\\$20,387 in 2024, compared to an average of \\$14,209](#) spent by other countries). Today, its

increased spending on well-being supports has widened this gap.

The shift in power from institutions to learners has transformed the concept of personalized learning. Learning in 2035 is now led by individual students, rather than by an educator or institution. Learners apply a wide array of technologies to understand and process information according to their preferred learning styles. They use LLMs to convert complex text into more digestible forms, such as podcasts and short video clips. They rely on personal AI bots, which surveil them constantly to teach them how their brain works and how they learn best. This extends to interpersonal skills. Bots offer suggestions on how to communicate based on what they know about their learner's personality, as well as the personality and communication styles of a learner's peers and teachers. Journalist and historian [Anne Applebaum argues](#) that it takes a generation to acquire a strong grasp on a new communication technology; learners in 2035 are the vanguard of this social and technological shift.

The shift in educational institutions' focus on learners' well-being has not resulted in a generation of emotionally indulgent, delicate, young adults. Supportive learning institutions have strengthened young people's sense of self, future orientation, and sources of meaning. This increased resilience has reduced the amount of time young adults need for self-care, and slowed the drift of young men away from participating in school or work.

# Drivers

## 1. Exploring new life paths

The established normative life path for most young people in the United States includes pursuing higher education or vocational training, securing a first job, and building a career until retirement. Young people today are challenging this pattern — partially due to generational questioning of norms that has always taken place,

but also because they see evidence in the world around them that this life path is becoming less effective. Skyrocketing costs for higher education, rising costs of living and stagnant wages, and other societal shifts discourage young people from doing things the “normal” way. Older generations’ experiences will be less relevant to young people as they navigate their lives over the next decade.

## 2. Seeking stability

The lives of young people have been dominated by accelerating technological advancements, climate crises, social upheavals, and a series of dramatic and disconcerting global events. Gens Z and Alpha are acutely aware of the heightened level of chaos and unprecedented events, as well as the constant experimentation that has shaped their childhoods. As they enter adulthood, they exhibit values and behaviors centered around cultivating calm, stable environments that produce predictable outcomes. They are dogmatic

about self-care, and view their mental health and well-being as paramount to a good life.

They continue to struggle with their digital exposure and [col-lectively express regret](#) that they were allowed relatively unfettered access to smartphones and social media as children.



[Source](#)

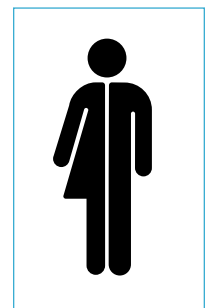
## 3. Diverging genders

A gender divergence has opened up between young men and women. This is evident in ideological and political gaps, but also in patterns of higher education and aspirations around parenting, family formation, and even spirituality. This broad separation by gender is unusual in recent history and suggests that young men and women [“increasingly inhabit separate spaces and experience separate cultures.”](#)

In education, women outpace men in both higher education enrollment (58%) and graduation (67.9% versus 61.3%), [revealing that graduation rates by gender are larger in some U.S. states than by race.](#) The case in Texas is similar to the national trend, with about [57% of those enrolled in college identifying as female](#)

[in 2023.](#) More troubling for young men is the collection of statistics leading some sociologists to describe a significant portion of them as [“floundering.”](#)

Notably, Gen Z men are attending religious services more frequently than their female contemporaries. Currently, [almost 40% of Gen Z women identify as “religiously unaffiliated,” compared to 34% of Gen Z males.](#) Some interpret this finding to mean that [young men value the role religion has played in meaning-making](#) and [institutions have played in supporting social ties.](#)



[Source](#)

## Signals of Change



[Source](#)

### AI assistant generates podcast episodes from uploaded source material

**WHAT:** [Google NotebookLM](#) converts an article or web page into an audio file of a conversation between two people. Dense, complex text can be presented via an entertaining conversation with a click of a button.

**SO WHAT:** While currently limited in its use, one tech writer [forecasts](#) that “it won’t be long before it lets you choose the type of presenter you want, their accent, their expertise, their political leaning, their personality and, once we move into AI-generated video as standard, how they look.” It suggests a future in which learners have the ability to turn any digital file into media that suits their learning preferences.



[Source](#)

### AI agents collaborate and organize to create complex virtual societies

**WHAT:** Startup Altera.ai created [1,000 autonomous AI agents](#), each designed with different human behaviors. Quickly, and without human intervention, the bots built virtual societies that included governments (with elections), economies, cultures, and religions.

**SO WHAT:** In addition to the central entertainment and socialization role they will play, immersive gaming environments will be foundational learning resources over the next decade. Operating in them will be second nature for elementary school-age children, who will collaborate, scheme, and disagree with autonomous agents; many will not know (or care) if their teammate is a “digital human.”



[Source](#)

## Dedicated programs and support for young men sprout up in U.S. higher ed

**WHAT:** [Men's Resource Centers](#) in educational institutions such as the University of Oregon are helping young men tackle challenging questions such as: "Who am I?" "How do I live my best life?" "What does it mean to be a good man?" "How can I help the men in my community to grow and thrive?"

**SO WHAT:** Proponents of men's resource centers argue that gender parity cannot be accomplished without intentional efforts to support young men. They point out that most universities allocate resources to explicitly support women, yet ["there are fewer than a dozen \[men's centers\] for college men."](#)

## BANI Connection

In a **nonlinear** future, the traditional approach to K-12 learning will fall short. An emphasis on facts and skill sets will leave learners ill-equipped to navigate a world in which the connections between actions and outcomes are often disconnected and inappropriate. Without substantive change, the deleterious effects associated with higher education, including student debt, a disconnect between academic courses and quality work opportunities, and, crucially, the deteriorating mental health and well-being of learners, will detract from the boundless benefits associated with quality secondary and postsecondary education.

To thrive in a nonlinear world, the focus of learning will need to shift toward **neuro-nimbleness**. It will be increasingly difficult to rely on teaching technical skills to prepare learners for a nonlinear future. Instead, effective learning will focus on supporting learners in their abilities to recognize new or changing situations and adapt their thinking accordingly. Leaders of learning institutions will need to practice their own form of neuro-nimbleness, relinquishing control over how precisely students learn and instead committing to supporting and growing learners' social, emotional, physical, and economic well-being.



# JOIN US...

for St. Peter's Grand Reopening — October 24, 2035

## St. Peter's EPISCOPAL CHURCH New Braunfels, Texas



### HOLY EUCHARIST

#### 10AM SUNDAY

No Tech Service  
(Translation prosthetics allowed)

#### 11AM SUNDAY

Individualized sermon available  
(Please link data upon entry)

#### 5PM SUNDAY

Simulcast with all of the  
Diocese of Texas

# 5



# Philanthropy 2035

## Grassroots Reciprocity: Roots and Routes in Community

In 2035, communities have the means, network, and time to envision possible futures, design desirable pathways, and implement solutions to achieve their preferred futures. After decades of trying to lead and direct social change, philanthropies now focus on listening to locally identified priorities and reinforcing work rooted in local culture and customs. Institutions serve as partners to communities in uplifting mutual aid networks and grassroots care solutions, but the decision-making and governance of interventions and experiments are in the hands of community-led organizations.

Wealthy individuals and family foundations led the transition toward community-determined philanthropy. They joined a growing movement of activists in the 2020s who viewed the conventional approach to charity as not doing enough to redistribute wealth and perhaps even serving as a tool to concentrate it. These activists also warned that the outside role of philanthropy in supplying basic health and economic resources to underserved communities could be [undermining democratic practices](#).

Following the lead of pioneering philanthropists, many conventional philanthropies shifted their strategies and grantmaking approaches. Now, in 2035, all major philanthropies accompany, rather than direct, communities, and use their influence to advocate for systemic structural changes, including tackling economic inequality through wealth distribution. The philanthropic sector now recognizes that transformational change takes place over decades, even generations, and any returns on investments or measurements of impact reflect this understanding of a longer time horizon.

Definitions of measurements of success have also adjusted because communities have a diverse understanding of what comprises good health and well-being and how best to achieve desired outcomes. For some communities, a robust care infrastructure is viewed as central to improving individual and collective health and well-being. In these communities, this has expanded beyond conversations around affordable, quality childcare options. Care is now viewed as a public good that supports economic prosperity, racial and gender equity, and family economic well-being. In addition to ensuring that everyone has the resources they need to take care of their loved ones of any age and ability, communities focus on the care workers. Care work is now seen as the bed-rock for family and community well-being, and therefore, community-directed philanthropy includes investments in ensuring that care work receives support and fair compensation.

Community-led and -governed philanthropy has not come without challenges. Participatory processes are time-consuming, and initially, advocates and change-makers feared that without an entity at the head, a cogent path forward would not be possible. Slowly, however, community members shifted their perspective away from identifying as underserved, charity-receiving communities and toward hubs of mutual aid organizations, tackling their communities' most vexing challenges collectively under principles of social solidarity.

# Drivers

## 1. Rethinking giving

[In 2020, MacKenzie Scott distributed \\$5.7 billion to over 500 nonprofits](#) that did not solicit the funds, and she has given away another [\\$12 billion](#). The funds have been largely unrestricted, with minimal reporting requirements attached to the allocations. Scott's game-changing approach to grant-making has challenged conventional philanthropies' processes and jump-started important conversations about the inadvertent

roles philanthropies play as gatekeepers and administrative burdens. Time will reveal the level of impact that Scott's giving will have on society and on the philanthropic sector.



[Source](#)

## 2. Trust-based philanthropy

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the most recent social justice movement, standard practices of corporate, religious, and family philanthropies were criticized for being too slow and controlling and having a limited impact on realizing transformative change. Future-focused grant-makers and community-based organizations are rethinking how the

sector can bring about change most effectively. They are overhauling historical practices that centered on oversight, measurement, and control and replacing them with practices that promote mutual accountability and move money and decision-making into communities as quickly as possible.

## 3. Inequality as a form of economic violence

More change-makers are framing the structural and systemic policy and political decisions that favor the wealthy as forms of economic violence on the poor. Advocates such as [Patriotic Millionaire](#) member Abigail Disney argue for solutions that “undo the structures

that are perpetuating a deadly status quo and build new ones that will redistribute both wealth and power in a more equitable manner,” and explain that “systemic issues require systemic solutions, not piecemeal attempts at treating symptoms rather than the disease itself.”

## Signals of Change



[Source](#)

### Community groups determine charity distributions

**WHAT:** Austria's [Guter Rat für Rückverteilung](#) (Good Council for Redistribution) is a group of 50 Austrians selected by a lottery to convene, with little oversight, during six weekends to decide how to distribute \$25 million euros. As Marlene Engelhorn, who is privately financing the initiative, [explained](#), "If politicians don't do their job and redistribute, then I have to redistribute my wealth myself."

**SO WHAT:** Social experiments are underway across the globe to explore alternative ways to distribute resources into a community without the historical structure of a philanthropy.



[Source](#)

### Philanthropies band together to bolster movement-making

**WHAT:** [Solidaire](#) is a network of philanthropies that emphasizes the speed at which it mobilizes funding directed toward building and sustaining community power and "liberating wealth."

**SO WHAT:** Solidaire is an example of philanthropies that are pivoting away from one-time grants with significant oversight and toward multiyear grants that support the building of "movement infrastructure."



[Source](#)

### Charitable funds focus on holistic strategies that address care shortages and support care workers

**WHAT:** The [Care for All with Respect and Equity Fund \(CARE\)](#) is investing \$50 million to align efforts to build a care infrastructure that includes paid leave, early child care and education, long-term services and supports, and quality jobs for care workers across the United States.

**SO WHAT:** More philanthropies are combining forces to maximize impact. They are aligning strategic initiatives across domains, such as caregiving, workforce, and equity, to tackle social and economic issues more holistically.

## BANI Connection

In an **anxious** future, the overlapping and cascading social, health, economic, and environmental challenges underserved communities face will overwhelm our ability to act. Responding immediately to the devastating consequences of increasingly frequent climate-related emergencies, food and housing insecurities, and urgent need for critical health care services will draw our attention away from the important work of enacting policies that get at root causes of inequities and disparities. Our current structures, which are often siloed and disproportionately operate top-down, combined with a growing sense of helplessness in the face of complex challenges and intergenerational harms, will impede our willingness to take bold, transformative actions to ensure that everyone in every community thrives.

**Being attentive, with active empathy**, may be our most promising pathway forward. Listening to the challenges communities face and wholeheartedly supporting their efforts to implement appropriate solutions will expand our collective understanding of expertise and intervention. Philanthropies will extend far beyond engaging with the communities they serve. By 2035, communities, with philanthropic support, will lead and govern the efforts to replace charity with a 21st-century approach to social solidarity that centers well-being and relies on mutuality and social solidarity to build long-term, lasting solutions.





# A Futureback

## Approach to Discerning Questions

Having explored these provocative dispatches from 2035, we now turn to the vital work of discernment. The Episcopal tradition of asking discerning questions is particularly valuable when confronting challenging visions of the future.

Discernment is more than just decision-making — it is a process of seeking divine guidance while wrestling with complex issues. While the preceding provocations explored external future forces, true discernment arises from within, from the heart. Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience serve as guides as we consider how to respond to these potential futures.

Even if you disagree with specific aspects of these forecasts, engaging with them through thoughtful questions can provide valuable insights — those “aha!” moments of understanding that deepen our discernment and help us prepare for what lies ahead.

We invite you to consider the following questions, both individually and in conversation with others in your church and extended communities. These questions are designed to help you reflect on the challenges and opportunities presented in each provocation while discerning how your community might respond.

## Discerning Questions

After reflecting on this forecast, consider the following questions. Seek others within the church and extended communities to lead further discussion of these issues and to glean multiple perspectives.

### **In a future in which multiple intelligences connect, interact and evolve...**

- How can AI empower you – both leaders and parishioners – to deepen your faith and expand your reach? What are your hopes and concerns about AI's role in the church?
- How might the “superpersuasion” capacities of AI change the nature and practice of faith?
- How will you wrestle with and respond to the ethical considerations around collecting data about your parishioners? How can leaders help parishioners navigate the possibilities that the next decade's technological advancements will bring?

### **In a future in which prolonged heat exposure exacerbates existing racial inequities and health disparities...**

- What is your ministry to the members in your communities that will have no heat relief (no air conditioning or access to generators during power outages)? What is your advocacy strategy for the workforce that does the critical work of cleaning up after climate-related disasters, often for low wages and in unsafe conditions?
- What is your strategy for preparing church properties that are in risky locations in terms of the changing climate? Is relocation a possibility?
- How do you attract and retain young talent during a decade of extreme heat?
- How do you stay connected to your parishioners who have the ability to avoid the Texas heat by relocating during the hottest months? What does the model of memberships in multiple parishes look like?

**In a future in which a paucity of nourishing interpersonal assets is recognized as a critical health risk...**

- What is the role of the church in bridging connections? How can leaders encourage “people who love our places of worship to go out and love the people who have no desire to darken our doorways?”
- How does the church form relationships with the community in which it sits? How do you build trust with the entire community? How do you love all the people that you are in proximity with, regardless of whether they set foot in one of your churches?
- How do you recruit leaders who proactively show interest in people who have no interest in church and build meaningful relationships with them anyway? How might you catalog, classify and reward the various activities that different parishes are undertaking to create and nourish relational health?

**In a future in which the purpose of learning and education expands beyond academic achievement...**

- With so many children struggling with brittle anxiety, what can leaders and educators learn from children who are thriving in today’s environment?
- What is your role in balancing learners’ well-being and academic achievement?
- Is there a role for your schools and parishes to play in slowing the gender divergence among younger generations and, if so, what bold ideas should be tested?

**In a future in which institutions serve as partners to communities in uplifting mutual aid networks and grassroots care solutions...**

- How can you accelerate the Episcopal Diocese of Texas’ commitment to place communities “[at the center state for change](#)” to ensure that they lead in the design, decision-making, and governance of philanthropic investments?



## Rescue and Recovery Glyphs

The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) has approved the following rescue and recovery glyphs for 2035. Please learn and use them, where appropriate, as these glyphs are designed to speed up the rescue and recovery process. TDEM has seen a 30% increase year over year of rescue and recovery events, and the use of these glyphs helps our teams get through as many dwellings and situations as possible. In every case, see the TDEM phone app for more details.

There are currently **three categories** of rescue and recovery glyphs.

### BODY GLYPHS

These should be written on the skin of an arm, a leg, or the belly. Sharpie or other nonwashable marker is acceptable, but TDEM recommends that, if possible, citizens consider a permanent tattoo marking.



#### DNS – Do Not Sequence

This parallels the DNR – Do Not Resuscitate – glyph TDEM introduced two years ago. As required by Texas legislation as of January 1, 2035, the DNS glyph tells the rescue and recovery teams to refrain from doing spot genome sequencing for identification.



#### Religious restrictions on the treatment of the body

This will usually be accompanied by a symbol indicating the relevant faith. Such restrictions can include limitations on the gender of those ministering to the body and time requirements for interment.



#### No public announcement of death

This person wishes to maintain postmortem privacy, and not have their name given to public media.

### SPATIAL GLYPHS

These must be placed on the external wall above the front entryway. Although a permanent marker is acceptable, TDEM strongly recommends a physical sign made of a high-resistance material.



#### Pets

This glyph will indicate the presence of pets in the dwelling. Optional accompanying glyphs can show the number of animals and whether they pose a danger to rescue and recovery teams.



#### Active-Castle Defense

Any dwelling that includes an active-castle defense system, potentially endangering the lives of rescue and recovery workers, must have a glyph indicating so, accompanied by a symbol indicating the manufacturer. See the TDEM app for further details.



#### Notification of Community

This glyph indicates that a particular community should be notified that rescue or recovery was necessary in this dwelling. This must be accompanied by an explicit identification of that community.

### WORLD GLYPHS

Glyphs found on public buildings offering disaster and post-disaster services. These glyphs will not typically be used at dwellings or other nonpublic spaces. Misuse of TDEM world glyphs is a felony.



#### Heat Safety

This facility is equipped with cooling and hydration support for the public. This glyph will be accompanied by two additional glyphs: a sun symbol with a number showing the maximum protected temperature (typically 95-140); and a person symbol with a number showing the maximum occupancy.



#### Sanctuary

This facility is open to and protective of citizens during periods of civil unrest. The facility has an active-castle defense, and is legally allowed to refuse entry to armed individuals. Although not TDEM-approved, this glyph will often be accompanied by additional indicators (glyphs, initials, or text) listing communities explicitly given protection (e.g., religious, gender, ethnic).



#### Body Drop Box

This facility is able to collect and safely store dead bodies brought in by civilian recovery volunteers post-disaster.