

Why not a robopastor?

By [Daniel Schultz](#)

March 15, 2013

Paul MacInnes's tongue-in-cheek column on "[jobs a robot could never steal](#)" got me to thinking: could a robot ever take the place of a pastor?

Sadly, I have to conclude that a robot could replicate a lot of what the average cleric does, or even do it better. For some things it wouldn't take much: for example, a simple snippet of code could have a robot matching up hymns to scripture lessons. As long as you could calibrate it to the congregation's tolerance level style-wise, it would probably be an improvement. You could also build a database of scripture, commentaries, and previously delivered sermons and create a program to stitch them together into 20-minutes chunks that made something like sense. Given the state of preaching—and listening to preaching—I'm not sure anyone would notice.

What's more, scientists have had some success in using [robotic animals in therapy](#). There's no reason to think that you couldn't program a cyborg to nod at the right time, murmur meaningfully and ask, "How's your prayer life?"

Come to think of it, why not just replace the pastor *and the congregation* with robots? What could better fulfill the commandment to "pray constantly" than a computer chip running the Lord's Prayer script a thousand times a second? You could probably even put it in flash memory, saving valuable RAM space for things like acts of charity or the Hanging of the Greens service. Robots don't have to be told twice that this is the way we've always done it!

There is one problem. MacInnes claims that no bot in its right mind would settle for a "carer's" pay. I disagree; I suspect they'll be happy to work for lug nuts and the occasional system upgrade. But no robot in its right mind would put up with the constant criticism pastors receive. It would either wither or do the sensible thing: get a job on the welding line.