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CHURCH TECHNOLOGY

LIVE STREAMING OPTIMIZING TECHNOLOGY
ENGAGING WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
COMMUNICATING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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THE SGI JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP

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Leading the United Pentecostal Church International to think strategically about future growth.

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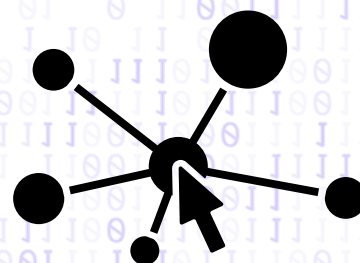
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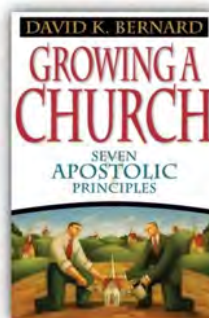
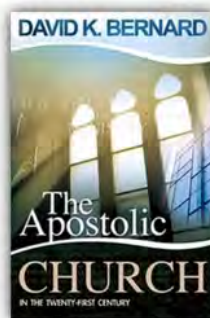
Strategic Growth Initiative (SGI) Resources



The Strategic Growth Initiative (SGI) was born in the heart of General Superintendent David K. Bernard as God gave him a vision for growing the North American church. The General Board of the UPCI approved the forming of SGI for the purpose of highlighting growth in the areas of the number of churches and ministers in North America. The four focus points of SGI are outlined below along with resources available through the Pentecostal Resources Group.

Multiply the number of churches

SGI will assist districts by providing promotion, planning, and training with the goal of enabling every district to at least double the number of churches (including preaching points, daughter works, autonomous church plants, multicultural church plants, integrate independent Apostolic churches, etc.) in one decade.





Church Technology

Darrell Johns, SGI Committee Chair

I follow a professional fisherman on YouTube. He's eighty-three years old and teaches fishing techniques. My wife laughs when I watch his videos because he's old school. A few months ago, he shot a video on fishing technology. He (Roland Martin) talked about teaching old dogs new tricks and proceeded to share some of the latest gadgets he has on his boat to make him a better fisherman. He admitted he is not as savvy with technology as some of the younger professional fishermen, but he firmly chided older guys for resisting new methods for catching more fish. Why, he reasoned, would you not want to catch more fish?

As I watched the video, this issue of the *SGI Journal* was immediately on my mind. Love it or hate it, we live in a world of rapidly advancing technology. It is expensive. It is problematic. Most of our churches are served by volunteers with limited time, so the learning curve to master new platforms and gear for production is steep.

Did I mention that technology is expensive? We are in a building program and are getting bids for AVL (Audio, Visual, Lighting). AVL costs vary widely but may represent 8 percent to 12 percent of a new construction project. This does not include other needed technology such as internet, wiring and infrastructure, computers, and communications.

Technology and production costs for a major facility remodel could be just as expensive as a new build, depending on the extent of the project. When making a proposal to the pastor or board, the people who serve on your production team may quote their favorite verse, "How shall they hear without good gear?"

Churches, of necessity, are cost-conscious. Most churches do not have unlimited financial resources. Additionally, every dollar donated belongs to the Lord and must be spent using wise stewardship. It really is God's money.

Decision-makers in local churches need to be educated about the cost, shelf-life, and value of technology. Sticker shock is real. Cheap equipment may cost more in the end. Uninformed decisions in the boardroom can be expensive. When spending money on technology (a broad term for this topic), we must be accountable for our decisions.

With cost in mind, we need to compare cost to value. How much will this investment in technology cost? Can we afford it? Should we spend God's money on it? On the other side of the cost-to-value equation, we need to ask questions like, "What is the value of the investment? Will this expenditure on technology advance our mission? Is this expense essential? Is this gear a good value? What is the life expectancy of the equipment?"

The church website, service stream, and social media presence have become the new "foyer" of the church. In the past few weeks in our church, we've met several people who watched our church services online long before attending in person. It is common for people to peruse a church's website or social media platforms in advance of their first visit. The value of a soul is incalculable, however, that reality does not justify giving a blank check to the production team. It is cost-to-value with many budgetary considerations.

The purpose of all technology should be to advance the mission of the church.

Leaders not only deal with the financial factors of production and technological advances but also the emotional aspect. When our church makes changes to the look, feel, and sound of our Oneness Pentecostal worship experience, we affirm our message and mission.

We try to provide copious communication to our people. People tend to be “down” on what they are not “up” on. Depending on the scope of the project, we generally process a decision in this order: church board, pastoral staff, ministry leaders, volunteers, and then the church body. This communication process provides input to perfect the project and allows the committed core of the church to understand and embrace the change—all within the context of the message and mission of the church.

If new methods or new technology can help us “catch” more souls, count me in.

If I’m not adept at learning a new “trick,” I can release the next generation to implement those changes. My priority, as pastor, is to remain focused on the unchanging and non-negotiable message and mission of the church.



Darrell Johns serves as pastor of Atlanta West Pentecostal Church, assistant general superintendent of the Eastern Zone, UPCI, and chair of the Strategic Growth Initiative Committee of the General Board.



A Pentecostal Future

David K. Bernard, General Superintendent

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17).

We face two significant challenges to revival. The first is worldliness. Both the secular culture and the church world try to impose their values upon us. As an example, our culture and our political system are increasingly promoting sensationalism, rumors, scandals, gossip, lies, and false narratives. Much of our public discourse is derogatory, rude, sarcastic, harsh, and even hateful.

Social media lends itself to this kind of communication. It can be an amazing tool for communication and cooperation, as in our fellowship’s response to recent hurricanes, but it can also be detrimental. It’s OK to discuss, disagree, and vote according to our preferences, but we must maintain Christian ethics. If we use worldly methods to promote our views, that is worldliness, just as much as worldly dress or amusements.

The Golden Rule says we should treat others as we wish to be treated (Matthew 7:12). If ministers want saints to discuss their sermons, decisions, and programs with respect, then they must treat one another with equal respect in online communications. Ministers are first disciples. All the passages of Scripture that teach about godly communication, respect, ethics, and unity apply to ministers as much as anyone else.

A second challenge is that with unprecedented opportunities, we face unprecedented dangers. For instance, to grow as God intends, we must be willing to change some traditional methods. Growth requires change. Yet some changes could lead to disunity or compromise. As we grow, we are becoming more diverse, which is a strength, but it could result in contention. We must make room for different cultures, methods, and opinions in the church. The racial and ethnic tensions of society press against the church. We must not succumb to them, but we must become more aware, more sensitive, more knowledgeable, and more careful in how we discuss issues. We can’t simply operate according to how we were raised, but we must value people of other countries, languages, cultures, races, and political persuasions. We must show respect for different perspectives. As we unite around our Apostolic identity and allow space for diversity, we will experience great revival.

As we grow, we will attract more attention and recognition. We must be wise and intentional in presenting ourselves to the world.

For this reason, the UPCI has a Communications Council.

We seek to address current issues in a way that shows how Christians can relate to our world. If we are silent, others will characterize us negatively. With social media, anyone can identify as Apostolic or United Pentecostal and claim to represent us. Instead, the church needs to speak on matters of significant interest and concern in society.

Facing the Challenges

There are two ways to face these challenges. One way is the survival or maintenance mode. While we must survive and maintain, we must do much more. We need to overcome insecurities, small thinking, and a fortress mentality. We cannot become suspicious of every new idea and everyone who is different. We can’t hold back ten thousand ministers from being creative and stepping out by faith because we are afraid of change.

Instead of survival mode, we need revival mode.

Jesus prayed for His disciples, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.... I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one” (John 17:15, 20–21, NKJV). We should be in the world, but not of it. We can interact with the world without adopting its values. We should seek oneness—not an ecumenical oneness of denominations but oneness with the original apostles. This is how we can engage the world without compromise.

Likewise, Paul sought to be all things to all people (1 Corinthians 9:19–23). He practiced adaptation without compromise. He was a missionary to his culture. If we were missionaries to China, we wouldn’t expect the Chinese to speak our language, eat our food, or wear our style of clothes. Instead, we would adapt to them. In the same way, without compromising Apostolic identity we must be missionaries to our own changing, post-Christian culture in North America. We can’t assume people will relate to our traditional ways of doing things. When preparing to speak and to sing, we can’t consider merely what we enjoy but also what relates best to people who weren’t raised in church. How do we reach them? How do we communicate effectively?

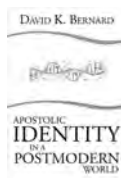
Will We Possess the Future?

Will we compromise? We’ve answered that many times: No. We must continue to give that answer. But we cannot succumb to a spirit of suspicion or a mode of attacking our brother. Will we survive? Yes. Based on one hundred years of Oneness Pentecostal history and seventy years of UPCI history, we will survive.

When the Lord spoke to me in February of 2017, He changed the question: “You decided years ago that you wouldn’t compromise. What I am asking you now is: What are you willing to risk? What are you willing to sacrifice?” My question to the UPCI is: Are you willing to take a risk for revival? Are you willing to sacrifice for revival? Can the UPCI possess the future? From both Scripture and history, the answer is yes. The real question is: *Will* the UPCI possess the future? Only you can answer that question.



David K. Bernard is the General Superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church International.



Recommended Resource

Article adapted from *Apostolic Identity in a Postmodern World* by David K. Bernard (Word Aflame Press, 2019). First printed in the *Pentecostal Herald*, December 2017. A condensed version of the message preached at the UPCI General Conference, Kansas City, Missouri, September 29, 2017.



Church Growth and Revitalization

Derald Weber

This past March 2023, in our General Board meeting, General Superintendent David Bernard and Assistant General Superintendent Darrell Johns introduced a new committee on Church Growth and Revitalization as a branch of the Strategic Growth Initiative. The committee is tasked with offering ideas, solutions, and resources to assist UPCI districts and churches in the church growth process.

According to multiple sources, such as the Pew Research Center, the Christian Post, the Malphurs Group, and Gallup Research, there are about 350,000 Christian churches in the United States. Of those 350,000 churches, about eight out of ten (80 percent) are plateaued or in decline.

We are still gathering information within our newly formed UPCI Research and Development Department, but we will most probably find that most of our churches are plateaued as well. At least, this is what I have found in my travels, as well as talking to pastors throughout the past decade. Most of our plateaued churches are suffering from undiagnosed challenges and hindrances that keep them from achieving their God-given aspirations.

UPCI Church Growth and Revitalization exists to help districts and pastors identify and remove these hindrances by providing practical, biblical solutions.

We believe most churches can build healthy disciples and thriving congregations and bring beneficial impact to their cities and regions. Our mission is to empower districts and churches by providing in-depth assessments, expert coaching, and powerful resources to help guide leaders and districts into fruitfulness and fulfillment.

Here are some goals of the Church Growth and Revitalization Committee:

1) Assessment of Health of Local Church

Develop an online interactive assessment for determining the health of a local church. The question is not, "What do I need to do to grow?" Rather, it is, "What am I doing that keeps me from growing?" Many times, lack of growth is a symptom of the health of the church.

- Analyze key statistics such as baptism numbers, attendance tracking, percentage of adults serving, small group involvement, etc.
- Determine growth rate through analysis of guest ratio, new converts, core members, leaders, etc.
- Provide scores to indicate the level of revitalization needed. Pastors who may not seek help through coaches, growth consultants, or mentors would have an avenue to interact online through survey diagnosis. They could then follow the suggested paths for growth and/or revitalization.

2) Assessment of Ministerial Spiritual and Mental Health

Develop an online interactive assessment for ministers that assists in determining their spiritual and emotional health.

- Include a series of questions exploring bi-vocational load, hours of study, diet, exercise, physical health, etc.
- Rate potential for burnout and emotional stress.
- Check on the spiritual vitality of prayer, fasting, and other spiritual disciplines.
- Provide scores to indicate areas of need.
- Resources will be provided to determine paths for personal assistance.

3) Church Growth and Minister-Wellness Retreats

Provide templates for districts to use to host Church Growth and Minister-Wellness conferences/retreats.

4) Write Church Growth Curriculum

Write curriculum for UPCI-endorsed colleges to use to teach courses on Church Growth.

5) Develop a UPCI Church Growth Institute

- Design multi-level curriculum to train and certify UPCI church growth consultants, in-person as well as self-paced.
- Certification would require shadowing consultations.
- Require annual re-certification.
- The goal is for each district to have a certified UPCI growth consultant.
- Provide a consultant directory listing all UPCI-certified consultants from which a pastor, church, or district could choose for coaching, consulting, teaching/training, or mentoring.

6) Church Growth Track via Ministry Central.

Growth Track Topics would include topics such as: Vision, Assimilation, Evangelism, The Church Service, Connecting Groups, Leadership Training, Finances/Stewardship, Volunteers, Building a Growth Culture, Revitalization, Administration/Organization, Succession, etc.

7) Development of Church Growth Curriculum and Books

As these goals are developed and achieved, we believe that declining churches will be revitalized, and plateaued churches will experience growth again. The Church Growth and Revitalization plan will work hand-in-hand with a number of our UPCI-endorsed ministries that also assist churches with growth goals.

These are certainly exciting times and promised days. God is ready to pour out His Spirit in our communities in ways in which we have never experienced. By implementing church growth principles and adding them to our dependence on the Spirit of God, we are positioning our churches for unprecedented growth!



Derald R. Weber is the district superintendent of the Louisiana District UPCI. For almost twenty-five years, he pastored the church he founded, The Pentecostals of Lafayette (LA), planted two daughter works, and led two additional churches through revitalization.

COMMUNICATION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Jonathan Mohr

Quick Links

ONLINE RESOURCES IN THIS ARTICLE

FIND YOUR LOCAL
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DISCERN HOW YOUR
COMMUNITY USES THE INTERNET

FACEBOOK META
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TOOLS

As a member of Generation X, I have experienced firsthand the mind-boggling changes in the field of communication over the past four-plus decades. I learned to type as a high school freshman using an electric typewriter in the early 1990s. By the time I graduated, the typewriters had been replaced by desktop computers. Dial-up internet service arrived shortly thereafter, allowing us to carry on real-time conversations with friends on the other side of the globe via AOL Instant Messenger while listening to music downloaded on Napster. Today my children, who have never known a world without smartphones, view my experiences as something akin to emerging from the Dark Ages.

Navigating these technological changes has been overwhelming at times, especially as a church leader committed to effectively communicating the gospel. How do we make sure our message is heard above the noise of mass media, popular culture, social media, and the constant barrage of marketing that inundates everyone living in the twenty-first century? We don't want our church and ministry communications to be lost in an endless sea of information.

If you were hoping this article would share all the answers to your church communication questions, you are about to be sorely disappointed. Communication technology is changing daily. By the time you figure out how to effectively use a particular medium, the developer will push out an update that will obliterate everything you thought you knew.

Instead, the goal of this article is to help you ask the right questions. Resources are limited, even for the largest congregations, and we want to be good stewards of what God has given us. Asking the right questions can help us decide where to concentrate our efforts and what we can ignore.

Who is my target audience?

This is the most important question because it helps determine where to focus our resources. Most church leaders automatically respond, “Everyone.” Jesus did command us to “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15), right? However, a single congregation does not have the resources to fulfill this mandate alone. Instead, we focus on reaching our local community.

But how well do you know your neighbors? Have you researched your town’s demographics? (If not, a website such as census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table can be a good starting point.) Does our messaging appeal to the people in our community, or are we speaking in a way that is essentially foreign to the audience we say we are attempting to reach?

“Who has God equipped us to reach during this season?”

Your town may have a growing Hispanic population, but if no one in your church speaks Spanish, you will have a tough time effectively evangelizing that segment of your community unless something changes. The same applies if you lead an older congregation that wants to reach teenagers and young families. Determining your target audience helps you decide what changes you need to make to reach them with the gospel.

Where does my target audience spend time?

Once we have determined who we are trying to reach, we need to find out where they spend time online. What platforms are they using? You can have the most cutting-edge messaging of any church in your community, but if your target audience never sees it, your technological prowess has been wasted. (What may be worse is when our carefully crafted messaging fails to resonate because we developed it for an audience of fellow Pentecostals, not lost people who need Jesus.)

Again, there are countless websites online that share information about how different demographics use the internet. You can start your search at blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-demographics.

Who can assist me with this effort?

Maybe you’ve already thrown up your hands in despair and decided that technology is so confusing and frustrating that it’s not worth the effort. Before you do, I encourage you to find someone who can help you answer these questions and determine a communications strategy for your congregation. There may be someone in your church who already has some experience with communication technology and would be willing to adopt this as their area of ministry.

Case in point: I recently noticed that one of the young adults in our church had been posting nature photography on his social media account, so I approached him and asked if he had any interest in helping with our church’s social media accounts. He told me he had been praying about how he could use his photography skills for God’s kingdom, and I was more than happy to put him to work. The result was an immediate improvement in our church’s social media.

What tools and resources are available to make my job easier?

Many smaller churches do not have anyone to assist with communications technology, so the job defaults to the pastor and his wife (along with most other responsibilities). While this certainly isn’t ideal, there are an increasing number of tools that can make even time-strapped technological neophytes appear cutting edge.

I hesitate to offer suggested resources, mostly because these may be obsolete by the time you read this article. However, the following are starting points for improving your church communications.

- **Meta Business Suite** allows you to manage your church's Facebook and Instagram accounts from one place and provides the ability to schedule posts in advance. You also can see the demographics of your current audience and determine who is watching your church's Facebook live stream and engaging with your other content. Best of all, it's free.
- **Canva (Canva.com)** really can make anyone look like a halfway decent graphic designer. Canva also offers a free non-profit account with access to all the platform's tools and templates.
- Brady Shearer at **ProChurchTools.com** offers guidance on setting up a church website, developing a social media strategy, live streaming services, and much more. Shearer also has a podcast with the same name and an Instagram account (@bradyshearer).
- If you prefer an overview of church communications in book form, the aptly titled **Church Communications: Methods and Marketing** is a good starting point. This book was recommended to me by Tony McCall, director of the communications studies program at Urshan College, and it has inspired my thinking in several areas.

This short list does not even begin to scratch the surface of available resources. New technology is constantly being developed to aid in church communications, but remember that the goal is not to be the cool kid on the block with the newest toys and gadgets. Rather, we are trying to communicate the gospel effectively to lost people and to disciple the saved. If smoke signals can accomplish that purpose, then let us strive to send the best smoke signals possible.

Asking the right questions is a good way to begin honing your church's communication strategy, particularly when it comes to the use of technology.

- Who is my target audience?
- Where does my target audience spend time?
- Who can assist me with this effort?
- What tools and resources are available to make my job easier?

Take these questions to God in prayer, and He will provide answers from previously unseen sources. After all, it's His message that you are communicating, and He wants to help you share it effectively.

Jonathan Mohr



Jonathan Mohr is an ordained minister and former pastor who currently serves as director of communications for the United Pentecostal Church International.



How Church Leaders Can Engage with AI

T'Neil Walea

Each generation has a decision to make—to embrace or reject the technology they create. The dawn of artificial intelligence (AI) marks a revolutionary moment not only as a fourth “industrial revolution” in the tech industry but in the corridors of our churches as well.

As Christians, we stand at such a crossroads. The decision we face is not just about adopting new technology but about actively participating in shaping it according to God's purpose for a hopeful future. The question is, will we engage with this innovative technology and mold it for the greater good, or will we distance ourselves, leaving others to be the primary voices in crafting a future where we must also reside?

Understanding AI

First, let's demystify what AI is. Imagine a potter (traditional computing) who follows a step-by-step guide to create pots. He can produce beautiful, functional pots but cannot deviate from his instructions. He makes one style of pot in one specific way. Now, picture a potter's apprentice (AI) who observes the master, learns through trial and error, and can eventually create pots independently, even making creative and artistic decisions that go beyond the simple, repetitive output of the initial design. Unlike traditional computing, which follows direct inputs, AI learns by observing data and makes decisions, sometimes in new and unforeseen ways.

The Silent Seamlessness of AI in Our Midst

It may surprise many to realize that AI isn't a distant concept—it's here, weaving through our daily lives, often unnoticed. In our personal day-to-day habits, we're already using it in our smartphones, on smart thermostats, and experiencing it in the targeted ads that reach us on social media platforms. Church leaders are already utilizing AI in ways they might not recognize, either. Algorithms suggest the videos we share with our congregations, AI-driven analytics help us understand community needs by analyzing trends from social media or Google searches, and virtual assistants help organize our Sunday schedules on various platforms. These technological advancements, designed to streamline our lives, are all forms of AI. Yet, with new frontiers come new challenges.

Ethical Considerations: Guiding AI with Scripture

As shepherds of our communities, ethical engagement with AI is not optional; it is a God-given responsibility. We are called to "Choose this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15 ESV), a decision that resonates with our current crossroads. Engaging with AI doesn't mean blind adoption. It calls for a proactive stance to ensure these technologies and our usage of them align with biblical principles.

As we integrate AI into our days, our workforce, and even our outreach efforts, we must ensure it doesn't erode the personal connections that foster empathy and understanding. After all, "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19 ESV). We can never cede the very human and personal calling to be salt and light to a technological advancement or an automated process. People still need people.

Additionally, Proverbs 31:9 (ESV) instructs us to "Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy." AI, with its vast potential, also has the capacity for misuse, often inadvertently inherited from flawed human reasoning. As stewards of brotherly kindness and godly justice, we must advocate for and participate in the development of standards for using AI both personally, professionally, and governmentally. The voice of moral and ethical people must be involved in shaping the boundaries of future technologies.

Shaping Tomorrow: The Church's Role in an AI-driven World

Our role extends beyond passive observation to active engagement. We are not called to conform to this world but to transform it (Romans 12:2 ESV). By involving ourselves in conversations and developments in AI, we contribute to shaping a technology in a way that reflects God's kingdom.

What does that look like? A few ideas:

- **Educational Engagement:** Understanding AI and its implications is the first step toward meaningful engagement. Churches can host learning environments, bringing together tech experts, theologians, and congregants, fostering spaces where questions and discoveries about AI are discussed from a faith-based perspective.
- **Partnership in Innovation:** Collaboration between the tech industry and churches can guide ethical AI development. By contributing to these spaces, church leaders can be the voice advocating for technology that protects God-given freedom, dignity, and truth.
- **Ministering in Digital Spaces:** As AI shapes social dynamics, digital discipleship becomes crucial. From AI-powered apps that support spiritual growth to online pastoral resources and streamed services, the digital realm is a fertile ground for ministry. As more and more of the world connects via social platforms, the church has an opportunity to meet them where they are, speaking the language they speak, while pointing them to Jesus.

A Hopeful Future

As we stand at this crossroads, the path we choose must reflect our commitment to being the light of the world (Matthew 5:14 ESV). Engaging with AI and guiding its trajectory with the wisdom drawn from scripture ensures we don't just adjust to a changing world, but we actively participate in creating a future where even our technological tools can be an extension of God's love and grace.

The Apostle Paul, in his letters, never ceased to engage with the cultural changes of his time, using them to further the gospel. Today, our "cultural change" lies in bytes and data. We have an opportunity, and indeed a responsibility, to ensure that this digital age is marked indelibly by Christianity. With God's guidance, the future of AI and innovative technology is not a dystopian landscape to fear but a field ripe for harvest.

T'Neil Walea

T'Neil Walea and her husband Tyler serve as pastors of First Church in Pearland, Texas where they live with their three children, Paisley, L'Wren, and York. T'Neil is director of innovative technology for the federal government at Microsoft where she helps integrate artificial intelligence and quantum computing into federal agencies.



Optimizing Technology Integration in Your Church

Ryan Johns

When it comes to integrating technology into your church, it's essential to establish systems that maximize the benefits of your investment. In this article, we'll focus on enhancing the in-service experience for your congregation by addressing three key aspects: Education, Equipment, and Empowerment.

Educate

As a pastor or church leader, it's crucial to invest in the training and development of your volunteers. While comprehensive apostolic online resources are limited, websites like mXu.rocks, ChurchFront.com, and YouTube offer a range of both free and paid content to support your teams.

Additionally, there are experts within the apostolic movement who extensively travel and train. Websites such as ChurchCx.com, DiGiovanni.tech and DyeAudio.com provide invaluable resources and excellent teaching. By offering educational opportunities to your volunteers, you empower them to excel in their roles.

Equip

Providing your volunteers with the right tools is vital. Neglecting equipment issues, such as broken microphone stands, missing knobs on the audio console, buzzing speakers, or outdated technology, can lead to high volunteer turnover rates.

While technology investments can be financially demanding, you don't always need the biggest or most expensive tools. Being a responsible steward of your resources is paramount. Here's a strategic approach to technology investments for your church, with a focus on the sequence of audio, media, lighting, and video:

- **Audio:** Audio is the foundational element of any worship service. Poor sound quality, whether experienced by the congregation in-person or online, can lead to frustration and distract from the message delivered by the minister and the worship team. To ensure your message is effective and impactful, prioritize addressing audio needs first.
- **Media Systems** (ProPresenter and IMAG): Once your audio is optimized, shift your attention to media systems. These include ProPresenter and Image Magnification (IMAG), which play a pivotal role in enhancing the congregation's experience. These systems allow the congregation to sing along, read scriptures, and engage with supporting content for sermons. They create a sense of comfort for both regular attendees and guests, making it easier for everyone to actively participate in the service.
- **Lighting:** Lighting is often underestimated but is crucial for your video cameras to perform at their best. Proper lighting enhances both the visual appeal of your services and the performance of your video equipment. With well-designed lighting, even an inexpensive video camera can produce high-quality video.
- **Video Recording:** While video recording is essential for reaching a broader audience and preserving your services for the future, it's the final component to address. This order of priority ensures that the foundation of audio quality, combined with engaging media and effective lighting, is in place before focusing on video recording. This strategic sequence results in a well-rounded and impactful technology integration for your church.

When it comes to sourcing equipment, consider reliable Apostolic resources such as Porcheinc.com, FrontPorch.media, DiGiovanni.tech and DyeAudio.com. Websites like bhphotovideo.com and Adorama.com often offer competitive prices, and Sweetwater.com provides discounts to churches when working with a customer service representative.

While having the right equipment is undeniably important, it's equally vital to establish effective processes and leverage church management systems for seamless communication with your volunteers. There are several options available for scheduling teams and planning services, such as PlanningCenterOnline.com, Subsplash.com, BreezeCHMS.com, and Pushpay.com. These platforms not only streamline scheduling but also enhance the overall planning of your church services. However, if budget constraints limit your ability to invest in these services, you can explore alternatives like Slack or other group messaging services. These cost-effective solutions facilitate team communication without overwhelming your volunteers' inboxes.

Empower

Empowering your volunteers is about more than just providing training and equipment. It's also about granting them the opportunity to take ownership of their roles. As you invest in their development, you'll witness emerging leaders who can lead these departments effectively. At this stage, you can step back and focus on larger organizational tasks instead of worrying about changing batteries or fixing that broken microphone stand.

When volunteers sense your commitment to their growth, they are more likely to wholeheartedly carry out their responsibilities.

Your role as a pastor or leader extends to safeguarding and advocating for your production teams. They often receive feedback only when there are problems, and opinions on sound levels, lighting, and other production aspects can vary widely. To support your teams effectively, communicate to your congregation that you stand with your production teams and that any criticism should be routed through you or a designated staff member responsible for managing these teams. Knowing that their pastor supports them can significantly boost the morale and effectiveness of your production teams.

By emphasizing education, providing the right equipment, and empowering your teams, you can ensure that technology integration in your church will enrich the in-service experience and strengthen the sense of community within your congregation.



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Effective Live Streaming Practices and Principles

John Mahoney

In an increasingly digital world, churches are adapting to new technologies to reach and engage with their congregations. The pandemic accelerated this transition, making live streaming an essential tool for churches to continue their ministries. As a church tech director, I understand the importance of implementing effective live streaming practices and principles to ensure that the church's message is delivered seamlessly to both in-person and online audiences. In this article, we will explore the key strategies and principles for successful church live streaming.

Quality Audio and Video Production

One of the first principles of effective church live streaming is ensuring the quality of both audio and video. The audio should be clear, balanced, and reach a reasonable volume level, allowing viewers to hear every word spoken and every note played. A great-sounding audio mix does not always come from having dedicated mixing equipment just for broadcast audio. Focus on the principles first: room acoustics, a trained audio engineer, and the right audio speakers for the job. These core principles result in a better overall mix in the room which will translate to a better mix online.

Likewise, high-definition video production is crucial. Many viewers might be watching on computer or television screens, so low-resolution video can be distracting and unprofessional. Using a camera that can output a high-definition resolution while also choosing the right lens for that particular camera shot will result in a high-quality video stream. Keep in mind that most people will be viewing your services through a mobile device. When viewing your service through a small screen, you should prioritize video shots that are closer to your subject.

Reliable Streaming Platform

A stable streaming platform is a lifeline for successful live streaming. Frequent buffering or disconnects can be frustrating for online viewers and might deter them from returning. To avoid this, invest in a reliable and trustworthy streaming platform.

Engaging Content

To keep online viewers engaged, it's essential to offer more than just a passive viewing experience. Incorporate interactive elements into your live streams, such as live chat, prayer requests, and the ability to submit questions. Respond to comments and make online attendees feel like part of the service.

Copyright and Licensing

Churches must be aware of copyright laws when streaming services. Ensure that you have the appropriate licenses and permissions for any music, videos, or other copyrighted content used during your services. Failing to do so could lead to issues down the road, especially when streaming to social media platforms.

Testing and Rehearsing

Before going live, conduct thorough testing and rehearsals. Make sure all equipment is functioning correctly and everyone involved in the live stream knows their roles. Run through the entire service to identify and resolve any potential issues. This practice will help you deliver a polished and professional experience.

Accessibility

Ensure that your live streams are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Add closed captioning for the hearing impaired and provide audio descriptions for the visually impaired. Making your content accessible demonstrates inclusivity and ensures that everyone can engage with your services.

Data Analytics

Use data analytics tools to monitor the performance of your live streams. Pay attention to viewership trends, peak times, and audience demographics. This data can help you make informed decisions about when and how to reach your audience effectively.

Recording and Archiving

Don't limit your content to live streaming alone. Record your services for future use. This allows those who missed the live stream to catch up and enables you to repurpose content for other platforms, such as social media or podcasts.

Engage Volunteers and Training

Building a reliable team of volunteers is crucial for maintaining a successful live stream. Train them effectively so they can troubleshoot issues and manage the technology involved. Investing in your team will result in smoother services and increased confidence in the live streaming process.

As a tech director and technical consultant, I can attest to the power of technology in expanding the reach and impact of a church's ministry. Implementing effective live streaming practices and principles is more critical than ever. By ensuring quality audio and video production, a reliable streaming platform, engaging content, and addressing legal and accessibility concerns, your church can provide a meaningful and inclusive experience to both in-person and online attendees. Moreover, constant improvement and engagement with your audience will result in a thriving digital ministry that strengthens your church community and extends its influence far beyond the physical walls of the building.

John Mahoney

John Mahoney is the technical director at the First Church of Pearl and the owner of **ChurchCX**, a church technical consulting firm. John has worked full-time for the Kingdom of God for over 25 years. Whether it's his local team or another church he is helping, John lives his life in HIS service.



Recommended Resource

ChurchCX helps churches execute the best possible experience, giving the members and guests every reason to want to return service after service.



ISSUE 18 TOOLBOX

PRACTICAL TOOLS YOU CAN USE



Church Tech Today Resource Site

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