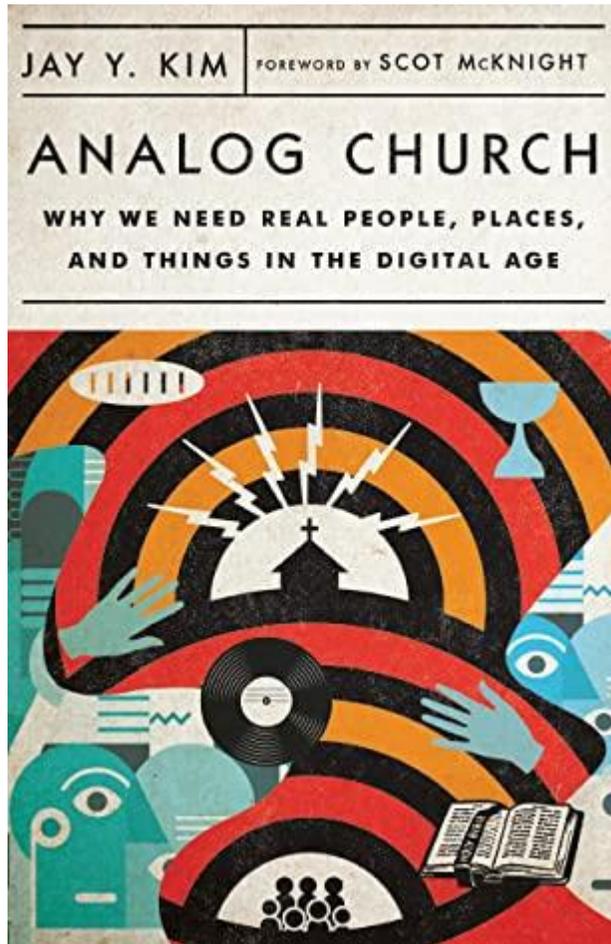


Re-Imagining Ministry:  
Moving from an Analog Church to  
a Digital Church

Presented By:  
Rev. Dr. Erika D. Crawford

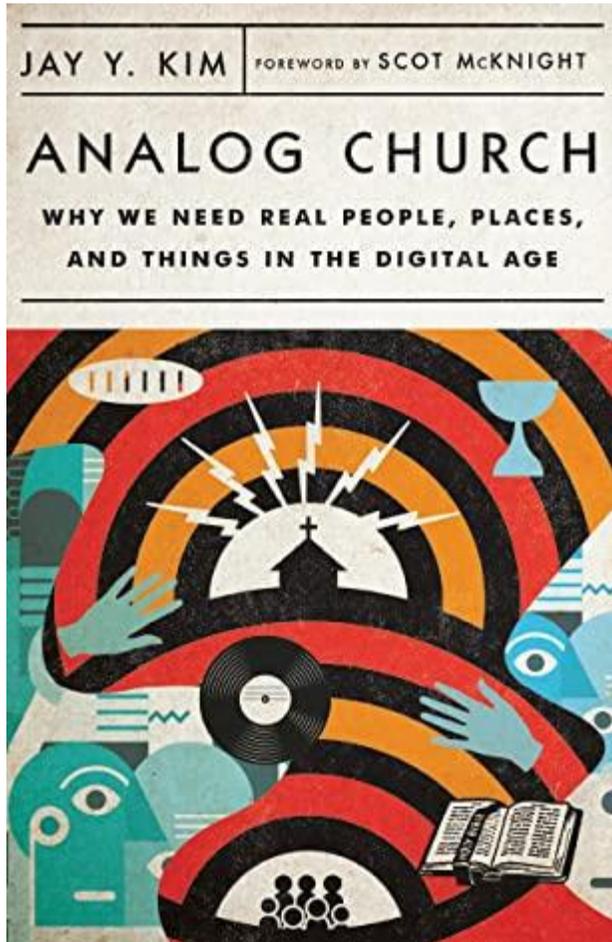
For:  
First Episcopal District of The AME Church  
Bishop Gregory G.M. Ingram,  
Presiding Prelate



What does it mean to be an analog church in a digital age? In recent decades the digital world has taken over our society at nearly every level, and the church has increasingly followed suit--often in ways we're not fully aware of. But as even the culture at large begins to reckon with the limits of a digital world, it's time for the church to take stock. Are online churches, video venues, and brighter lights truly the future? What about the digital age's effect on discipleship, community, and the Bible?

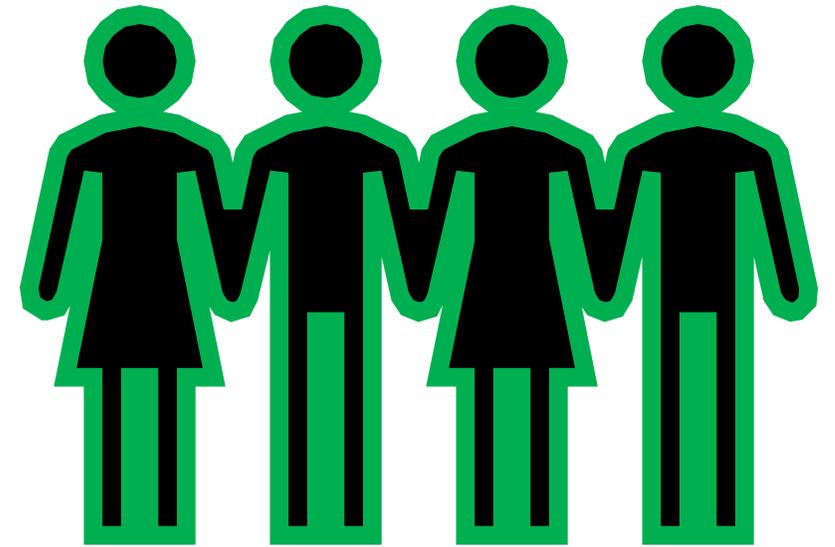
Jay Kim examines this in his book. In *Analog Church*, he grapples with the ramifications of a digital church, from our worship and experience of Christian community to the way we engage Scripture and sacrament. Could it be that in our efforts to stay relevant in our digital age, we've begun to give away the very thing that our age most desperately needs: transcendence? Could it be that the best way to reach new generations is in fact found in a more timeless path? Could it be that at its heart, the church has really been analog all along?

Every era shapes the Church, and this digital era is no different. What really makes a church relevant? Why does the Church really exist, and what are its hallmark characteristics? Kim asks church leaders and all Christians to thoughtfully evaluate their answers to these questions. This book prompts us to be discerning about, and constantly attentive to the ways that our use of technology limits, hurts, or helps our discipleship, worship, community, and understanding of scripture.



- The church was never meant to be a *derivative* of the cultural moment but, rather, a *disruption* of it.
- Yes, as a church leader I want to serve and reach as many people as I can with the gospel. This is true of most church leaders I know. But often, the desire to “serve and reach as many as we can” in the digital age devolves into methods that essentially equate to “what’s the fastest, most efficient way for us to get bigger?”
- Everything we do must invite people to engage and participate and not let them off the hook, to simply sit back and be entertained.

# Facts about OUR congregations



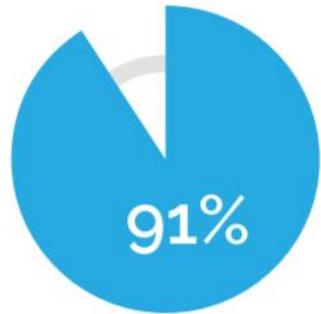
# Facts About: Age and Technology (Seniors)

There's a widespread idea that seniors are technologically illiterate or dislike devices, but that's not necessarily the case. Instead, older adults adopt tech they find useful and resist tech they don't.

- 42% of seniors have smartphones
- 67% of seniors have internet access.
- 73% of seniors use the internet.
- 25% of seniors feel confident about using electronics to go online.
- The older the person, the less likely they are to embrace the internet, social media, or smartphones, but those who have adopted these technologies use them a lot and learn new skills to do so.
- Seniors are the fastest growing online demographic, though some remain holdouts. In many of those cases, the real barrier to entry isn't technological—it's personal.
- Seniors learn new tech skills when that tech has value to them.
- Many older adults have privacy concerns, and with good reason. Scammers use a variety of technologies to target older adults to such an extent that the FBI posts warnings on its website.

# Facts About: Age and Technology (Seniors)

## OF SENIORS AGED 65 AND OLDER...



use the internet every day via smart phones.

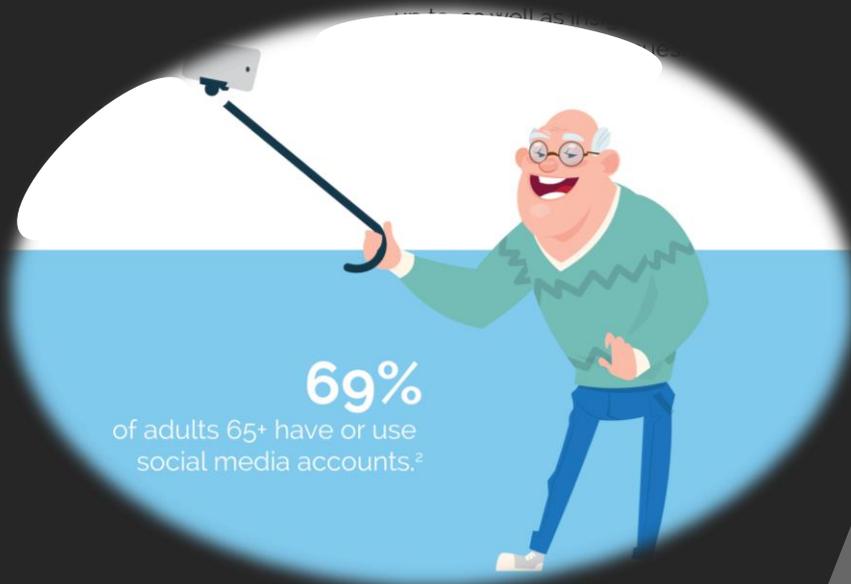


own a tablet.



say they feel somewhat or very confident using electronics.

# Facts About: Age and Technology (Seniors)

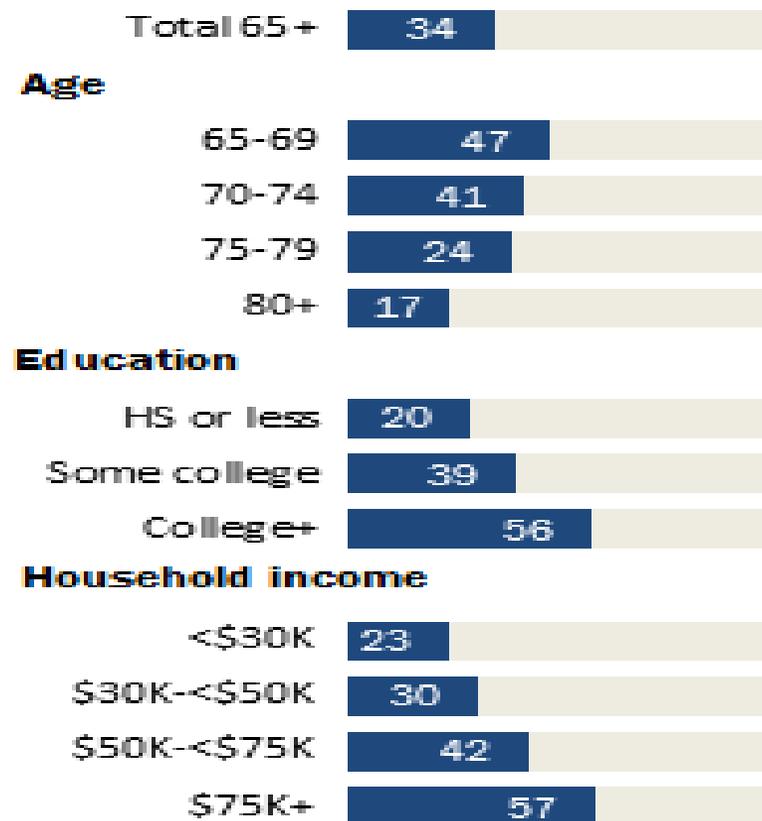


69%

of adults 65+ have or use  
social media accounts.<sup>2</sup>

## Around a third of seniors report using social media

*% of U.S. adults ages 65 and older  
who say they ever use social  
networking sites*



Source: Survey conducted Sept. 29-Nov. 6,  
2016.

"Tech Adoption Climbs Among Older Adults"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

# Facts About: Age and Technology (Seniors)

## Why don't Seniors use Technology?

1. Mobile apps require updates and relearning of operations: App vendors frequently update their products, sometimes to add features, but also to fix bugs and close security holes. Nearly 50% of older adults 65 and older and 40% of those ages 50-64 feel they need someone to assist them in learning and using a new technology device, as compared to approximately 20% of those ages 18-29.
2. Seniors often prefer the lower costs, durable construction and longer battery life of flip phones as compared to an US\$800 smartphone, which may require a headset and daily if not more frequent charging.
3. Age-related hearing loss is common for adults over 65. As a result, older users may fail to hear alerts and soft high-pitched pings that a device or app uses to announce upcoming calendar events, push notifications or alarms.
  1. Hand-eye coordination may also make using smaller devices difficult.
  2. Finger swiping on the screen comes naturally to younger adults raised with electronics in their hands, not so much for older adults.

# Facts About: Age and Technology (Young Adults)

- Just because many Young Adults are leaving physical churches, it doesn't mean they're no longer interested.
- 80% of Christian Young Adults have posted scripture on various social networking sites and at least 65% prefer to read the Bible on a digital device -there are just as many YouVersion (the free Bible phone app) downloads as there are Instagram downloads.
- Young adults belong to the digital generation. If you want to engage them, you have to go where they are.
  - Send out tweets and Facebook posts with scripture and insights from your most recent sermon. Offer social share buttons on your website. You can even create your own app.
- Young adults are connected 24/7, so church's technology needs to be just as accessible.
  - For instance, Young Adults may lose interest in a church if they only interaction they receive is on Sunday.
    - Options, have Q&A sessions on Facebook, Twitter or Reddit during the week.
    - Create a community forum on your website for all members to interact during the week.

# Facts About: Age and Technology (Young Adults)

- More than anything, young adults crave a casual, community atmosphere in church. They're not looking for flashy light shows, loud music or a speaker system that makes them feel like they're being yelled at. Churches don't have to go overboard on technology. Instead, use your church's technology to create a more social atmosphere.
  - For instance, create an app with live surveys during the service.
  - Ask a question and let members provide feedback in real time.
  - Instead of feeling preached at, they feel like part of a community. Even if you're in a simple building versus a massive cathedral, creating a social, community feeling through simple technology, such as integrating smartphone use into your service, works far better at engaging Young Adults.
- Seven out of 10 of practicing Christian Young Adults (70%) read Scripture on a screen. One-third of all Young Adults says they read sacred Scripture on a phone or online, demonstrating how broadly the digital trends are shaping this generation.
- Young Adults are also heavy users of online videos pertaining to faith—54% of practicing Christian Young Adults and 31% of all Young Adults engage in this activity.
- About one-third of Young Adults are using online search to scope out a church, temple or synagogue online.

FACTS ABOUT:  
TECHNOLOGY &  
THE CHURCH

# Facts about technology and churches

## In response to virus, four-in-ten U.S. Christian churchgoers appear to have replaced attending church in person with virtual religious participation

Among those who said in a 2019 survey they attend religious services at least once or twice a month, % who have \_\_\_\_ as a result of coronavirus outbreak

	Been attending less in person, now watching online or on TV %	Been attending less in person, not watching online or on TV %	Been watching online or on TV, not attending less in person %	Not changed (not watching virtually because of virus, not attending less in person) %
All who attend services monthly or more often	40	19	17	24
Christian	41	19	18	22
Protestant	45	16	17	22
Evangelical	47	15	18	20
Mainline	43	23	12	22
Historically black Prot.	38	13	20	29
Catholic	30	25	16	28
Men	37	21	16	26
Women	43	18	18	22
White	45	21	13	21
Black	35	14	22	28
Hispanic	26	16	29	28
Ages 18-29	42	13	16	29
30-49	38	22	16	24
50-64	38	17	18	26
65+	44	21	17	19
Rep/Lean Rep	47	17	15	21
Dem/Lean Dem	31	22	19	28

Note: Based on those who said in a 2019 survey they attend religious services at least once or twice per month. The share who refused to answer both questions (<1% overall) not shown. Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. The survey included too few interviews with non-Christian respondents who attend religious services regularly to permit analysis of their responses to these questions.

Source: Survey conducted March 19-24, 2020.

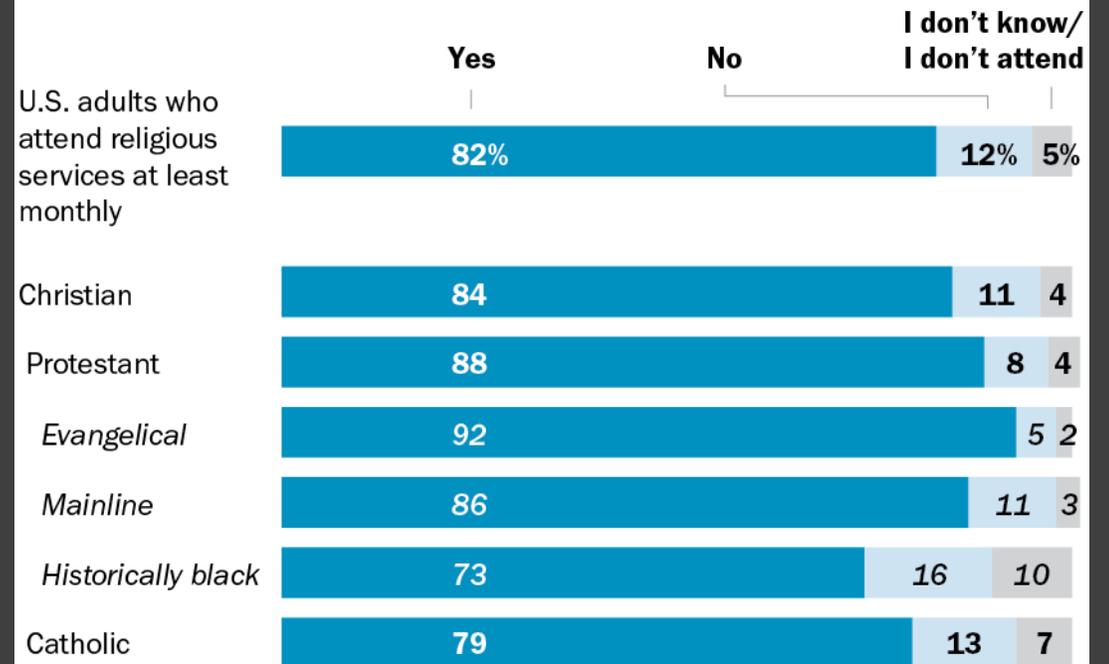
"Most Americans Say Coronavirus Outbreak Has Impacted Their Lives"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

# Facts about technology and churches

## Americans who worship regularly say their services have moved online

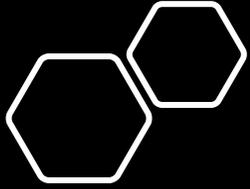
*Is the house of worship you most often attend streaming or recording its services so that people can watch them online or on TV?*



Note: Based on U.S. adults who said, in a 2019 survey, that they attend religious services once or twice a month or more often. Sample size for non-Christian religious groups not sufficient for analysis.

Source: Survey conducted April 20-26, 2020, among U.S. adults.

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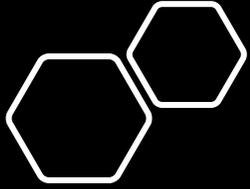


# Why the Church **MUST** update technology

The technology you use (and how you use it) has an immediate impact on your standing among worshippers. If someone feels like they're stepping back in time to worship with you, it can make your ministry come across as irrelevant, no matter how sound your teachings are or tight-knit your church community is.

Prioritizing theology, engagement, and community outreach are essential for building a thriving church. At the same time, ignoring technology completely or deprioritizing it is hurting your church, and turning away the generations you are pleading to return (or stay).

Young generations are using high tech personal devices and spending hours each day staring at a screen. They even meet people online, work on laptops, and do their finances from their phones—that's the nature of the digital age. If your church doesn't respond in kind with excellent technology that meets multi-generational needs you may be communicating a very discouraging message to the same people you're trying to reach.



# What bad technology communicates

## 1. “YOU NEED TO CHANGE IN ORDER TO MAKE THIS RELATIONSHIP WORK”

You might intend to communicate to people, “We’re here for you,” but if the responsibility is on them to navigate through poor tech or a glitchy website to reach you, that’s a problem. What you’re really saying is that people need to change in order to maintain a relationship with your church. i.e. expecting a young adult to financially support the life of the church is one thing, but you can’t limit donation options to cash and check. They’re simply not going to give.

## 2. “YOU NEED TO GO BACK IN TIME”

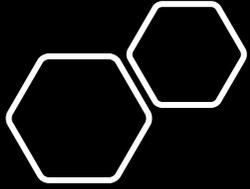
The gospel message is timeless and the kingdom of God is everlasting. At the same time, people want a faith that intersects with their everyday life.

There was a time when hymnals made the most sense for corporate worship, but that’s just not the case anymore. PowerPoint changed the game, and church presentation software is making it even easier to worship corporately.

Pulling out the hymnals might be a quaint way to occasionally connect with the traditions of the church, but it’s not the biblically prescribed method of worship and shouldn’t be a mainstay of every weekend service.

## • 3. “IT’S ON YOU TO MAKE US CATCH UP”

People want to go to a church where they can contribute. They want to give of their time and their talents, but they also want to feel like what they do is going to make a difference and it’s not all on them. If the church is already running at a deficit in the way it handles cultural changes and shifts people will feel like everything they do is only helping you play catch up instead of making true advances forward.



# What bad technology communicates

## 4. "WE'RE UNPROFESSIONAL"

Does it matter if a church is "professional?" It does to Generation Y. If the words are wrong during worship or everyone didn't get the message about the potluck afterward, it's no biggie. We're all good to those who have grown accustomed to that but what others see or hear is : "Details sometimes fall through the cracks but we're okay with that." That can make people nervous about getting plugged in and at the risk of falling through the cracks as well.

## 5. "YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE IN *CHURCH-MODE*"

Your congregation's faith should be part of their life in the modern world. When you use current technology in church, worshippers don't have to shift into a different mindset when they walk into their house of worship. When the church is in step with the lives of worshippers, life and faith become integrated.

## 6. "WE CARE ENOUGH TO USE THE RIGHT TOOLS"

When a church uses the right tools, you are communicating that you value stewarding time and resources well, and that aren't coasting through critical cultural and technological shifts. Technology is impressive when it is used correctly, is relevant and actually enhances experience. People will be turned off if you don't post engaging content or if you don't know how to use hashtags. If your projected lyrics aren't timed correctly, your technology will end up hindering worship instead of helping.

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# COVID-19: THE GREAT EQUALIZER

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How do we do what we do with closed buildings, locked doors, and empty pews? How do we transition from the power of a gathered people to an empowered scattered people? How do we sustain the “therapeutic function” of the Black Church amid a rapid metamorphosis? How do we nurture and sustain genuine kinship and familial relationships now crippled by social distancing?

The short answer is, we must fully commit to serving this present age by embracing a myriad of unfamiliar and progressive models of ministry. The church cannot afford to shrink back or avoid going where the world is going - we must be present and vital to change the world. This pandemic is every congregation’s moment of reckoning because it has pushed us over the threshold of the “radical discontinuity,” with so much momentum that we cannot stop it and cannot waste time trying to understand it.

However, the good news is that this pandemic is the great equalizer, and platform booster of small churches once gasping for air, pleading for members, and juggling resources because they now have the same ability to reach the same “least and lost” as million-dollar ministries with just a computer, camera, and click of a button.

# MORE THAN “JUST A WEBSITE”

With buildings closed, gathering restrictions, and vulnerable populations we must move our minds, budgets, and ministries to our **primary campus – our virtual campus**. Virtual campuses are no longer a luxury, no longer optional, no longer for the progressive ministries or large congregations. **Websites, technology, and digital footprints are a necessity for every church** and ministry that seeks to look and live but doesn't come without challenges.

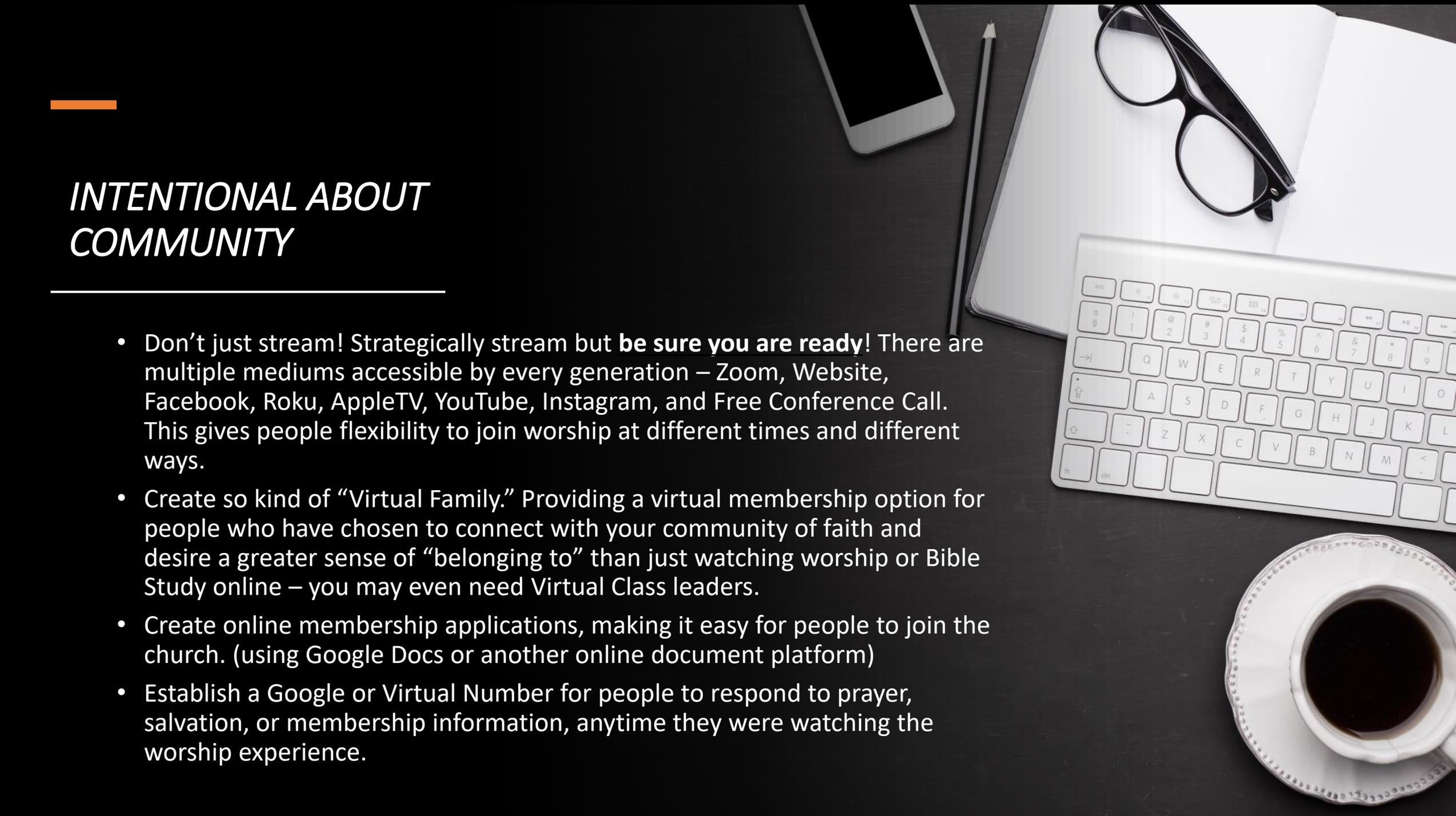
The “flipside” of this is that when we packed up our pulpits, cut the lights off in our sanctuaries, and forwarded the office calls to voicemail, we did so knowing that we would face the:

- *Reduction of person-to-person interactions*
- *Addiction to and misinterpretations of electronic correspondences*
- *Loss of clearly defined workspaces and hours*
- *Heightened distraction from multi-tasking*
- *Abandonment of the comfortable and familiar*

- Whatever technology you use, keep the focus on worship and not on the tech. After all, people want a place where they feel free to be themselves and be authentic. They want to explore their faith in their own way. Technology helps engage them, but they still need spiritual guidance. This is where church and tech come together to create the perfect solution for worshippers.
- Keep your church's technology simple and you'll engage far more Young Adults. Use tech to be more accessible and social. Even if Young Adults aren't physically at church, they'll still pay attention online and reaching them is what's most important.

# Keep It Simple

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A top-down view of a dark desk with various items: a smartphone, a pencil, a notebook with glasses on it, a white keyboard, and a white cup of coffee on a saucer.

## *INTENTIONAL ABOUT COMMUNITY*

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- Don't just stream! Strategically stream but **be sure you are ready!** There are multiple mediums accessible by every generation – Zoom, Website, Facebook, Roku, AppleTV, YouTube, Instagram, and Free Conference Call. This gives people flexibility to join worship at different times and different ways.
- Create so kind of “Virtual Family.” Providing a virtual membership option for people who have chosen to connect with your community of faith and desire a greater sense of “belonging to” than just watching worship or Bible Study online – you may even need Virtual Class leaders.
- Create online membership applications, making it easy for people to join the church. (using Google Docs or another online document platform)
- Establish a Google or Virtual Number for people to respond to prayer, salvation, or membership information, anytime they were watching the worship experience.

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# Every Church Should Have

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- **Logo** – every church should have an identifiable logo. Something that is uniquely you and yours. When people see the logo, they should automatically know what church the information came from.
- **#Hashtag** – Every church should establish and use a common hashtag that will be used across all Social Media platforms by everyone who posts for your church. NOTE: Please be sure you the #HashTag History BEFORE connecting it to your church.
- **Motto/ Tagline** – Every church should have a motto or tagline that speaks to who you are, who you serve, what you do and who you are becoming.
- **Church Sign** – Every church should have a CLEAR visible sign in front of their worship facility that indicates the time of worship and the name of the Pastor.
- **Voice Mail** – Every church should have a voicemail system that indicates the time of worship, the name of the Pastor and the church website.
- **Email** – Every church should have an email address that is exclusively for the church. Sperate from the Pastor’s email address.
- **Website**: Every church should have a website (even if it’s a free one like Wix or a shared page with your Presiding Elder District Webpage) that indicates the time of worship, church address, phone number, email address, fax number and Pastor’s name.
- **Social Media Platform** – At least ONE, whether it’s Facebook, YouTube, Twitter or Instagram

# STREAMING OPTIONS

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When preparing to stream consider what type of interaction is best for YOUR congregation. This decision changes a lot for the rest of the planning process (particularly congregational involvement), but all forms can certainly be useful in their own way.

1. Pre-Recorded Worship
2. Live Streaming Worship (through a streaming platform)
3. Live Interactive Streaming (like zoom)
4. A Hybrid (partially live and partially interactive)

# Resources & Information

1. <https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/black-churches-phones-and-facebook-bridging-digital-divide-amid-covid-19>
2. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/30/few-americans-say-their-house-of-worship-is-open-but-a-quarter-say-their-religious-faith-has-grown-amid-pandemic/>
3. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2017/05/17/technology-use-among-seniors/>
4. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2017/05/17/tech-adoption-climbs-among-older-adults/>
5. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2017/05/17/technology-use-among-seniors/>
6. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/05/19/on-demand-ride-hailing-apps/>
7. <https://blog.lyft.com/posts/2018/3/2/revolutionizing-patient-transportation-with-lyft-concierge-api>
8. <https://insights.samsung.com/2017/12/27/how-wearable-technology-is-giving-seniors-their-independence-back/>
9. <http://www.napsa-now.org/policy-advocacy/exploitation/> 9. <https://www.eversafe.com/>
10. <https://gerontology.usc.edu/resources/infographics/designing-technology-for-the-aging-population/>
11. <https://www.adheretech.com/>
12. <https://www.imedicalapps.com/2015/04/apple-watch-medication-reminder-webmd/>
13. <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/learn/research/the-united-states-of-aging-survey-2012-aarp.pdf>
14. <http://seniornet.org/blog/10-pieces-of-technology-seniors-should-embrace/>
15. <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/learn/research/the-united-states-of-aging-survey-2012-aarp.pdf>