



The Ordinary Church in Extraordinary Times:
**The Tech Challenge—
 Its Use, Purpose, and Value for the Future**

a webinar presented by the EPC Smaller Church Network
 June 11, 2020



Josh Modrzynski

**EPC Small (Ordinary) Church Workshop
 The Ordinary Church in Extraordinary Times (June 11th)**

Segment 4: The Tech Challenge—Its Use, Purpose, and Value for the Future

Outline:

I. Introduction

- a. Why am I excited about this conversation?
 - i. I believe in the model of the small church – It’s not called to do everything, it’s called to do specific things because it knows who it is.
 - ii. Experiences of seeing technology used in ways that further the Kingdom, and help us to experience and know God. Technology can help us extend the Gospel and the work of the Kingdom.

II. **Purpose:** So what I want to do today, is in light of what we are learning from Covid-19, the big question we are asking is will technology help our unique community advance the Gospel where we are at? And truthfully, I can’t say “yes” or “no” for you, but the one thing I do want to encourage you to do is to have the conversation. Give you four questions that approach this from that small church context.

III. Ground ourselves in Scripture: 1 Cor. 9:19-23 –

- a. This passage for me has been a constant source of invitation as a pastor. So much so that I have it taped to the wall beside my desk. And it’s a reminder that I as a person, have comfort zones & preferences, but in Christ I have the ability to love infinitely more and minister to infinitely more. And the invitation for each of us I believe, is that we are called to examine “all means so that we might win some.”
- b. I love this about Paul’s ministry. He could have felt very entitled, he is a *Jew of Jews* after all. But his ministry is marked with a constant effort of trying to find ways to put Christ on display instead of himself. And that is totally based on who he is talking to. And our guiding force this evening as we look at the topic of technology in the small church from the perspective of Covid-19, is v. 23 – “*I do it all for the sake of the Gospel.*”
Is technology a way that God is calling your community out of this season to reach others (even if it feels challenging) for the sake of the Gospel?

IV. Question #1: Does increasing our technology increase our access?

- a. In the world of counting views, and clicks, and opens, etc., the only real information we get as a church from this is: Do we have more access to people b/c of this? You can’t measure discipleship, fellowship, or even “a-ha moments” – just access. But if we’re doing it “*for the sake of the Gospel*” then access means something doesn’t it.
- b. Youtube example – All it tells me is that we have access to other folks outside our community.

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- i. I like the way Zack said it a few weeks ago, that b/c of the online pieces they're church is "beginning to notice people on the margins."
- c. Why is this important? I like to joke with our Session, our church is a little typical country white church on the hill with two big doors in the front. And I joke with them that we're the "white fortress on the hill." B/c if you're unchurched, or even just unfamiliar with our church, walking through those two front doors can feel like walking through the front gates of Mordor. You have NO idea what's behind them – it's intimidating!
- d. One common reality that most of our newer families have in our church, is that they've told me that they checked us out online first. We have a minimal online presence, but there is a webpage and our audio sermons. I think more now than ever, people look online for their first experience of so many things (from should I buy this pair of shoes to where is the best hike, to should I visit this church). A starting question for us is, does increasing our technology increase our access to others.

V. Question #2: Can we do it well?

- a. Surprising answer...this answer matters so much less than you think, but we ask it b/c people need to know that it's **not the most important question**.
- b. Bad stories – The infamous livestream gone wrong – the internet crashed, the camera stopped working, the computer suddenly began updating.
- c. Karl Vaters (*The Grasshopper Myth*) recently wrote an article titled: "So Your Small Church Live-stream Stinks – Here's Why That's Okay." In it he makes the point that: "**Top-notch video production is not what the typical small congregation expects or needs from their church leaders.**"¹
- d. He basically goes on to say that our online presence will never be the **best part** of our ministry. And it shouldn't, if it is we are probably missing some of the best gifts as to what it means to be the small church like community, fellowship, & discipleship.
- e. Example: Visitor who was a web designer
- f. I think if we choose to use certain technologies, we want to be fair to ourselves by knowing what resources we have and what we can expect. If we're doing it *for the sake of the Gospel*, then there needs to be a humility and joy that comes from this.

VI. Question #3: What kind of technology often works for a small church? Easy.

- a. DIY'ers here? Small churches can often attract the DIY types. But it's important in this conversation that we don't put that DIY mindset on our churches. (*If we get it, we'll figure it out.*)
- b. Our technology has to be **easily transferable** more often than not because we are utilizing volunteers with or more often, without extensive knowledge of the technology.
 - i. Ex. Camera mic inputs for syncing sound

¹ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2020/march/small-church-live-stream-stinks.html>



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- c. A big part of asking this question is how are we going to have conversations with professionals around this topic. You may be pleasantly surprised by how many companies have been fielding questions from churches just like yours in the past few months.

VII. **Question #4: How will technology shape our future ministry?**

Examples to start some creative thinking of where small churches can implement technology

- a. Webpage – Help people to see you. Ask your Presbytery leaders for help! Make it important.
- b. FB page – Like other businesses or organizations in your area – putting a business card on their front desk.
- c. Recording your services/ Bible studies – build a Youtube page.
 - i. Does this help to create a new shut-in service where you go set up people with an easy to use tablet?
- d. Online giving
 - i. Tithe.ly blog – Predict church giving will be 80% online. Notes that by 2025 Millenials and GenZ will be moving into the primary space of givers in the church. Online giving is the way they give. My interpretation of that is are we helping our younger generations grow in that discipline through means that make the most sense to them. ²
 - ii. Comical piece is that we moved to online giving in our church over Covid, and I had people in the 50s-60s telling me that the church was the only thing they still used a check for.
- e. Small groups online – Include shut-ins
- f. 15 minute pastoral Zoom call with that busy family – First call
- g. Camera – Used to do skits, but you have some youth or a youth director that would love to shoot some short films for Sunday worship.
- h. Beefed up your internet connection – Not sure if we will have full-time school in the fall, maybe staggered. Could your church use that internet connection to host a Wednesday morning or afternoon study hall or even tutoring center, so families who don't have good internet can come with their kids devices and get online or get help.

² <https://get.tithe.ly/blog/church-after-covid>