

NC, VA, and SE Synods  
September 21, 2020

# Being Church in a Digital Age:

What's Next for Virtual  
Worship?

Ryan Panzer  
@ryanpanzer  
[www.ryanpanzer.com](http://www.ryanpanzer.com)

# GRACE ..... AND ..... GIGABYTES

.....  
**BEING CHURCH  
IN A  
TECH-SHAPED  
CULTURE**  
.....

**RYAN M. PANZER**



September 14th:

The Case for  
Prioritizing  
Digital Ministry

September 21st:

What's Next for  
Virtual Worship

September 28th:

Building Digital  
Community

## Webinar series

Learning goals

- Pause to reevaluate how you are doing church online
- Implement next-level tactics for doing church online
- Develop a long-term framework for online worship
- Discover the challenges in building virtual Christian community
- Develop a plan for community building in your context



## My background

- Career in tech industry, including Google
- Author of *Grace and Gigabytes: Being Church in a Tech-Shaped Culture*, coming out this December from Fortress Press
- Researcher, speaker, and consultant on digital ministry, church leadership, and faith formation
- Based in Madison, WI



## Today's Agenda

- Review: 3 Mindsets for Digital Age Ministry
- Ingredients for Online Worship
- Moving towards a hybrid worship experience
- Breakout discussion

# **Review: 3 Mindsets**

**For Successful Digital Age Ministry**

"The noblest and greatest work and the most important service we can perform for God on earth is bringing other people, and **especially those who are entrusted to us**, to the knowledge of God by the holy Gospel."

–Martin Luther

(WA, 53, 415)

Mindset #1:  
**Culture over Tech**

**Search  
Engines** → **Search**  
“Everything”

**Tech** → **Culture**

Mindset #2:  
**Engage Digital Values**

**Proclamation**



**Questions**

**Hierarchy**



**Collaboration**

**In-Person**



**Hybrid Connection**

**Passivity**



**Creativity**





## Mindset #3: **Digital Minimalism:**

If you think you can't keep up with the pace of technological change, you're probably right.

Start by considering your mission in the context of tech-shaped culture

Prioritize technologies that align with your vision and the broader culture of the digital age

# Worship Online

**3 Ingredients Every Church Leader  
Should Focus On**

# Platforms: Facebook, YouTube, and Zoom



Most opportunity for social engagement

Widespread usage as church communications platform

Broadcast worship by "Going Live" on church page

**Example:** Good Shepherd Lutheran in Madison, WI; Our Saviour's Lutheran in Appleton, WI



Best control over broadcast quality

Easy to share with those not on social media/Facebook

Broadcast worship by broadcasting live on church page

**Example:** Episcopal National Cathedral



Most built-in interactivity

Widespread adoption as a business communications tool, free/easy access

Broadcast worship by starting a Zoom call, sharing URL

**Example:** Upper Dublin Lutheran in Ambler, PA

## Distribution: Livestream or Recording

	Benefits	Technology
Livestream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Affords real-time involvement</li><li>• Spirit of togetherness</li><li>• No editing necessary</li><li>• “Forgiveness” on content quality</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facebook, Zoom, or YouTube</li><li>• Internet-connected device</li><li>• Optional software: Switcher Studio, Vimeo Livestream</li><li>• Optional hardware: MeVo Camera</li></ul>
Recording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Stitch together” community contributions</li><li>• Ease of access for busy families</li><li>• More polish</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• YouTube or Facebook Premieres, YouTube channels</li><li>• Basic video editing software: QuickTime, iMovie, Camtasia</li></ul>

## **Software:** An ecosystem of vendors

### **“Secular”**

Vimeo Livestream

vMix

DaCast

### **Church-Specific**

Truth Cast

Christian World Media

StreamingChurch.TV

# Software: Vendor evaluation

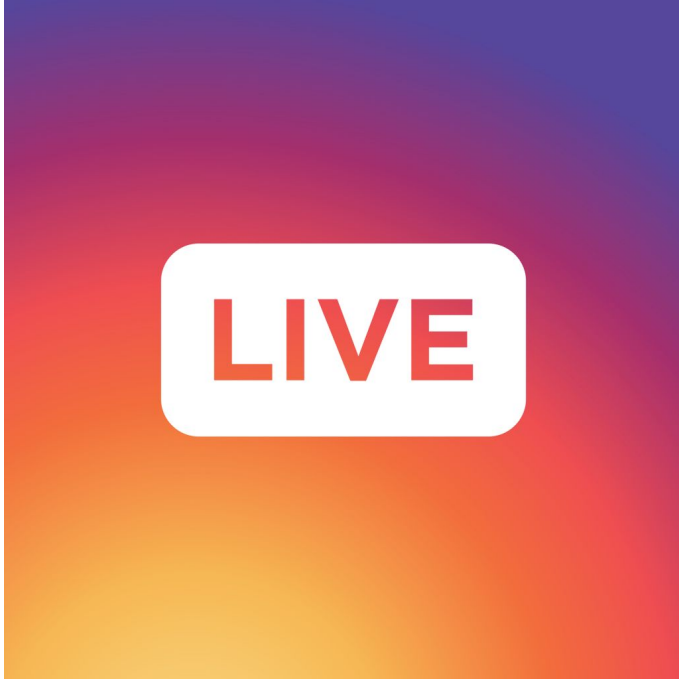
1. Integration with existing worship platform (YouTube, Zoom, Facebook)
2. Features to move beyond existing worship content
3. Feasibility of use given your context's technical requirements
4. Feasibility of use given your community's digital expertise
5. Quality of tech support, availability of tech support during worship broadcast
6. Cost

# For the live-streamers



Facebook Watch Party or YouTube Party

# For the recording broadcasters



Live posts to Instagram and Facebook



# For the Zoom users



Shared Leadership, "Equipping Hour," test YouTube

# Build the Bridge

**Moving Towards a Hybrid Worship  
Experience**



## Three likely scenarios:

Stopping “online” church

Continuing to livestream worship as an “alternative”

Building a bridge between offline and online

# Stopping “online” church

## Scenario likely for:

- Small congregations
- Churches with limited staff
- Churches who saw a marked dip in “attendance” in last 3 months

## Advantages:

- Staff/leaders narrow focus
- Potentially cost-effective
- Emphasizes importance of togetherness

## Drawbacks:

- Squandered missional opportunity
- Lost learning
- Second wave

# Livestream “alternative”

## Scenario likely for:

- Most churches using livestream during quarantine
- Congregations with medium-sized staff
- Churches using social media

## Advantages:

- Easy to continue what we're already doing
- Requires little change to church as we once knew it

## Drawbacks:

- “Second-tier” worship experience
- Passive/shallow faith formation
- Lack of integration into church community

# Online/Offline Integration

## Scenario likely for:

- Churches who start planning now for upcoming transition
- Leaders who remain thoughtful about use of technology

## Advantages:

- Builds community across “hybrid” experience of church
- Alignment to broader cultural expectations and experiences

## Drawbacks:

- Requires creativity and inventiveness
- Few best practices documented

## Some ideas:



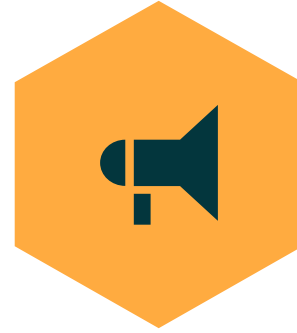
### **Inclusive language**

Speaking to and praying for those gathered physically and virtually



### **Virtual Pews**

Creativity with liturgy and screen use



### **Virtual Pulpits**

Using virtual lectors, cantors, prayers, and preachers for in-person assembly

# A week in the digitally integrated church

Friday

## **Prepare**

With online platforms, introduce themes and invite participation in the liturgy

Sunday

## **Gather**

Digitally-integrated Word and Sacrament

Monday-Thursday

## **Send**

Support topically-relevant spiritual practice and lived discipleship with online experiences



**Permanence**

The pandemic will end.  
Digital ministry is only getting started.

**Planning**

We moved online in a matter of days.  
Let's be thoughtful and strategic  
about where we go next.

**Perseverance**

This work will challenge us all.  
Let's learn, with grace and patience.



## Worship Breakouts

- What platforms, distribution, and software are you using?
- What trends are you noticing with engagement and worship attendance?

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**Ministry in a Digital Age  
Weekly-ish Newsletter:**

[www.ryanpanzer.com](http://www.ryanpanzer.com)

**New on Faith+Lead –  
Ministry in a Digital Age Learning  
Community:**

<https://faithlead.luthersem.edu/communities/ministry-in-a-digital-age-learning-community/>

ryanpanzer@gmail.com  
@ryanpanzer

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**30% pre-order discount for anyone attending  
a book launch webinar!**

**Fortress Press Store:**

<https://www.fortresspress.com/store/productgroup/1899/Grace-and-Gigabytes>

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