

CHURCH BROADCAST SCHOOL

A Communication Ministry of the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church

EPISODE ONE: Introduction

Gracious God; we give you thanks for your steadfast love for the world in Jesus Christ, a love that never changes. And though that love never changes our way of sharing. That love changes by circumstance and the technologies available to us. And we have gathered because we want to learn how to use our technologies in our circumstances to enhance our ministries. So, we come with open minds, open hearts, open spirits, perhaps a little apprehensive, but calmer anxiety, help us learn new ways to share our love in Jesus. In whose name we pray. Amen.

KEY IDEAS

- The COVID Pandemic changed everything for local churches.
- There have been enormous changes in technology in the past few years.
- What has not changed is the fundamental mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and our need to connect with other people.
- The technology we have enables us to touch people's lives in ways we had considered inconceivable years ago.
- We can use technology to stay connected to people. And in some cases, to reach people, we may not reach in other ways.
- In 2019, when the COVID pandemic reached the United States, the familiar rhythm of worship in the local church on Sunday morning was lost.
- In her book, "The Great Emergence," author and religious professor Phyllis Tickle theorized that every 500 years or so, the church holds "a giant rummage sale." Preceded by a traumatic global event, it becomes a time of significant religious upheaval. In the unrest, we decide what to keep and what to discard. Nevertheless, from this painful disruption, new ideas emerge. New ways of being the church. These times are historically followed by growth.
- For decades, the church has failed to adapt, losing the battle for time on Sunday mornings from over-scheduled people with greater competitive demands for their time.

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- For churches that already offered effective online or on-demand worship and discipleship before the arrival of the pandemic, attendance and stewardship continue to thrive. But just a minority of churches did that until a pandemic forced everyone to get online or leave behind.
- It's important to note that online worship is not some new idea. For more than 100 years, churches have experimented with new ways of sharing the Gospel that extend beyond in-person worship.
- Since the 1920s, churches have been broadcasting on the radio, followed by a shift to television in the 1950s and 1960s.
- What is different is the sudden, pandemic-induced demand that all churches offer some kind of online—or on-phone—worship. Moreover, unlike paid radio or television, the internet makes that possible and much more affordable.
- In-person worship is not going away entirely. In fact, in-person worship is what many people want in times of induced isolation.
- Worship no longer needs to live just on Sunday mornings. Now connection and community can be offered online throughout the week, on-demand.
- Developing in-person relationships also continues to happen during missional activities and small group meetings.
- Offer yourself and others grace as we move through this time. Change is disruptive. Change is hard. But think about how to use your energy, resist and fight new ways of sharing God's word, or embrace new ways of sharing it.
- Online worship is here to stay. For families with busy schedules, older persons not wanting to or unable to leave their homes, snowbirds, and those curious about their faith but uncomfortable entering your church doors online worship is perfect.
- Online worship is a solution to attracting people to worship and discipleship. Our best hope is to create new disciples and turn around decades of decline by offering what people need, such as access to worship and discipleship on demand.

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- Historically, communications have often been considered an administrative or operational function of the church. It is, in fact, outreach. It is evangelism.
- Church communications require faithful people, working as a small group, and doing faithful work. In today's setting, communications are an essential pipeline for local churches to preach, teach and reach out in mission. This holds true for local churches, districts, and especially annual conferences, which are charged with supporting local churches with resources.
- It's worth noting that online worship must look and feel different from in-person worship.
- The communication technology demands for your church will only continue to grow. These new responsibilities cannot rest solely on the shoulders of our pastors. Pastors and ministry leaders are already stretched thin, experiencing extraordinary workloads. Thriving local churches will add paid staff and/or trained volunteers who view communications as a critical outreach ministry.
- Creating online worship is like adding an additional service.
- Online worship is not a task in the local church. It is a critical ministry that congregations need to embrace.
- The most successful volunteer online ministry teams function just like any other small group in the church. They meet weekly to pray together; they do bible studies and faith development together. They care for one another. And they also see online worship as evangelism. Bringing new people to the power of the gospel through online ministry.
- Adding a new online service means local churches must invest in online communication infrastructure.
- Leaders need to budget for communications and internet access similarly to how they would approach maintenance of a church roof, parking lot, furnace, or any other brick-and-mortar expenditure.
- United Methodists know how to work together, and we need to collaborate when it comes to broadcasting worship.

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- Churches that work with like-minded congregations can create, bank, and share online content and worship resources.
- A cohort of four to six churches, alternating weeks producing music, online children's time, Bible studies, liturgies, and other content, can significantly reduce effort and cost. All of this still can happen in a way that allows the pastor to preach during worship.
- Wherever you are in the online worship production process, you're in the right place.
- Online worship may be totally new to you, or you may have started and are looking to improve what you are doing, or maybe you're producing great worship but still looking for few tips. Wherever you are, know this; producing excellent online worship is not a destination; it's a journey.
- You never, ever stop learning. Focus on the next step of where you want to be.