

PREPARING FOR A HYBRID WINTER

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As winter approaches it's time to review our hybrid and digital ministries. It's well known that being online keeps up our connections with people who are unable to attend or who are anxious about attending in person due to health, distance, and winter. Chances are, come snowy weather and darker evenings, more of your congregation will prefer to worship and meet digitally.

Added to this, we are learning that people are very likely to watch our worship online before they come through our doors. Keeping your digital face to the public fresh and engaging is well worth your attention as an important feature of new your member ministry.

Engaging online means inviting people to connect with God, connect with others in the congregation, and adopt a way of life shaped by following Jesus. Zoom allows for these connections in real time – allowing for interaction that expands our community beyond our walls. Streaming worship on YouTube or Facebook means that more steps are needed on our part to create membership from viewership. Here are some questions to consider.

- As Anglicans an important way we connect with God is through worship. How do people describe how they connect with God in worship when then attend in person? How does your online worship experience invite this connection?
- How are people watching online invited to connect with the congregation? Is there a Connection Card or way for people to give contact information? Are people invited to add names to the prayer list? Some churches include an invitation for people to attend an informal online social gathering every few months.
- Adopting a Christian way of life includes considering stewardship, the gifts of time, talent, and money. How is your online community invited to participate in these ways? What about offering downloadable prayer and bible study resources?

When people watch our church services online they are reaching out towards us. Our task is to reach back; show and invite. There are lots of social media options from our websites to TikTok to help us tell our stories and invite people to participate.

It's also the time of year to set budgets. Managing a church's annual budget for technology involves careful consideration of various factors to ensure that the technology meets the needs of the congregation and enhances the overall ministry. Here are some annual budget items that a church might consider regarding technology:

- **Software and Licensing:** Budget for software licenses, subscriptions, updates for church management systems, office productivity tools, and any specialized software used for worship, communication, or administration. (ex: licences or Office Tools such as Word, Excel or licenses for products such as church membership software)
- **Website and Online Presence:** Allocate funds for maintaining and updating the church website. Consider investments in online giving platforms and other tools to enhance the online presence of the church.

- Communication Tools: Budget for communication tools such as email services, messaging platforms, and video conferencing tools.
- Audio-Visual Equipment: Set aside funds for the maintenance and upgrades of audio-visual equipment used in worship services, events, and presentations.
- Equipment Replacement Cycle: develop a schedule for replacing technology equipment, such as computers, printers, and other hardware. (for example: laptop replacement consideration).
- Future Planning: Set aside funds for strategic planning and innovation to ensure that the church's technology aligns with its long-term vision and purchases can be made to meet needs.

By carefully considering an annual technology budget, a church can effectively manage its technology resources to support its mission and better serve its community. Keep in mind that the specific needs of each church will vary, so the budget decisions should align with the unique goals and priorities of your congregation.

Congregational Development staff and volunteers support parishes in developing their online ministries. During the pandemic over 70 parishes received Reach Grants to support their digital presence and a group continues to meet to discuss and develop best practices in volunteer tech support for digital ministries. For information and support take a look at www.toronto.anglican.ca/parish-resources/digital-ministry/.