

Using Technology for God's Mission

The Congregational Development department and the Project Evaluation and Monitoring Group (PEMG) sought to evaluate, and further support, the 76 parishes and congregations that received Expedited Technology Reach Grants from June 2020 to February 2023.

In response, our diocesan volunteer-led team designed, planned and delivered a four-part Zoom workshop called **Using Technology for God's Mission: Leading and Learning Together** (2023 02 – 2023 06) guided by these goals:

1. Building connections and a shared tech ministry community
2. Identifying and exploring best practices for online liturgy and worship (Sunday and weekdays), Christian education and spiritual growth, stewardship, governance and decision-making
3. Creating a common terminology and vision while respecting local parish variations
4. Exploring tech-assisted opportunities that enable community engagement
5. Celebrating successes and learnings to inform future sustainability planning
6. Evaluating the Reach Grant process and its role in fostering a hybrid approach within a healthy church

Methodology and Results Summary

We invited the 76 parishes who received Expedited Tech Reach Grants to attend our four two-hour Zoom workshop summits:

- Session 1: Building a Shared Understanding of Using Technology for God's Mission, A Dialogue
- Session 2: Technology as the Enabler
- Session 3: Casting the Net to Build Forward
- Session 4: From Engagement to Efficacy: A Healthy, Hybrid Church

Forty per cent (40%) of Tech Reach Grant recipients participated in this workshop series representing parishes from every corner of the Diocese. We used interactive tech and online tools, including video, Survey Monkey, Google Maps, Jamboard and exit tickets, and invited tech savvy clerics (including the Rev. Tay Moss, the Rev. Lucia Lloyd, Bishop Andrew Asbil and Bishop Jenny Andison) and lay people to speak at each session. Folks joined breakout rooms to discuss questions and topics that they themselves identified in the needs assessment survey.

Participants evaluated each session, and it became clear that tech experts, hoping to find solutions to more complex problems, wanted more. The planning team responded in real time, delivering a wildly popular specialized tech forum Zoom workshop called Shop Talk (2023 05). Shop Talk continues now in partnership with [Churchx](#). The planning team has published its promised sustainability tool to [Assess your Church's Hybrid Presence](#), helping parishes plan for sustainable online ministry.

Recommendations

From our exit tickets and our Zoom online workshops, the planning team, in consultation with Janet Marshall, director of Congregational Development, respectfully submitted the following recommendations to Bishop Andrew in our last Zoom session, approved by Synod Council.

Establish a working group on hybrid ministry as a networking community to:

1. Build a forum for the tech community to share resources, trouble-shooting experience and other information of online church (i.e., Shop Talk and [Churchx's Hybrid Ministry Question Bank](#))
2. Adapt and develop basic volunteer management tools to support tech volunteers in parishes
3. Identify best practices for new technologies including the use of applications (apps)
4. Crowdsource troubleshooting expertise for parishes (see Churchx above)
5. Provide continuing education on effective growth of the hybrid Church
6. Recommend best practices around fiscal support of technology-enabled innovation for healthy, hybrid church – as parishes plan, acquire, care for and maintain their equipment
7. Encourage shared use of resources and expertise in digital ministries when considering regionalization plans

Goals for 2024

Guided by this vision: To engage congregations in building a healthy, hybrid church, inspired by faith, and a reimagined ministry experience based on collaboration and creativity, responding our tech-shaped culture.

Goal 1 – **Build a flipbook sharing experiences** - collecting parish ministry experience and stories

Goal 2 – **Increase understanding of the value of hybrid church** - Facilitate ways to transform diocesan culture by increasing the understanding of the value of hybrid church for worship, missional work and future-focused stewardship.

Goal 3 - **Initiative measures of hybrid health** - Pilot key, meaningful and easy-to-use measures that indicate growth, stability and sustainability of a parish's hybrid health.

We are grateful for Synod Council's support of this important experiment, and grateful also for our now-expanded team in 2024, the Hybrid Ministry Working Group (HMWG):

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Rebecca Jones (Holy Trinity, Thornhill)

David Paradis, ODT (St. Margaret, Barrie)

Tim Ralph, ODT (All Saints, Whitby)

Kylah Lohnes (Trinity, Streetsville)

The Rev. Daniel Brereton (St. John the Baptist, Dixie)

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