

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?



INTRODUCTION



The COVID pandemic is pushing church digital

Andrew Cuomo's executive order closed churches in New York City. He only allowed essential businesses to stay open. Those businesses included supermarkets, pet stores, liquor stores, brokers, and hardware stores. They had no capacity restrictions.

Churches in Red Zones were restricted to 10 people, no matter the size of the building. Orange zones were capped at 25% or 25 people, no matter building size. Yellow zones were capped at 50% capacity.

Church attendance was not considered essential so everyone was pushed online.

INTRODUCTION



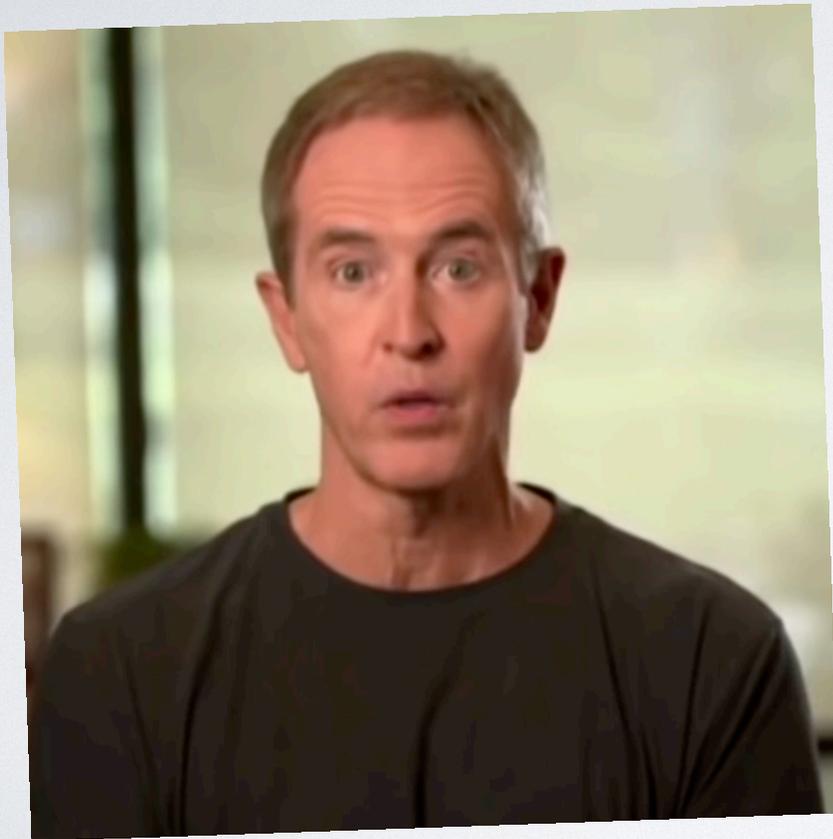
The COVID pandemic is pushing church digital

Gavin Newsom has 18 counties in California, home to more than 15 million residents, completely prohibiting indoor worship services.

Those same counties allow indoor malls, nail salons, meat packing plants, and laundromats to be open.

Church attendance was not considered essential so everyone was pushed online.

ANDY STANLEY



In response to the pandemic, Andy Stanley closed his physical church putting everything online for almost a year.

When interviewed at Liberty University on why he did this, his response was:

“...people keep saying ‘The Lord commands us to meet. The Lord commands us to meet.’... He does not.”

LARRY OSBORNE



At the beginning of the pandemic, Larry posted a video for pastors telling them the way he expected COVID to change church in America.

“North Coast used to think of themselves as a church with 7 physical campuses and an online presence. Now are trying to think of ourselves as an online church with 7 physical locations. I hope that after the pandemic we are both a physical church and an online church.”

DJ SOTO OF LIFE CHURCH VR



Life Church VR claims “our online church can be your church in every sense of the word.”



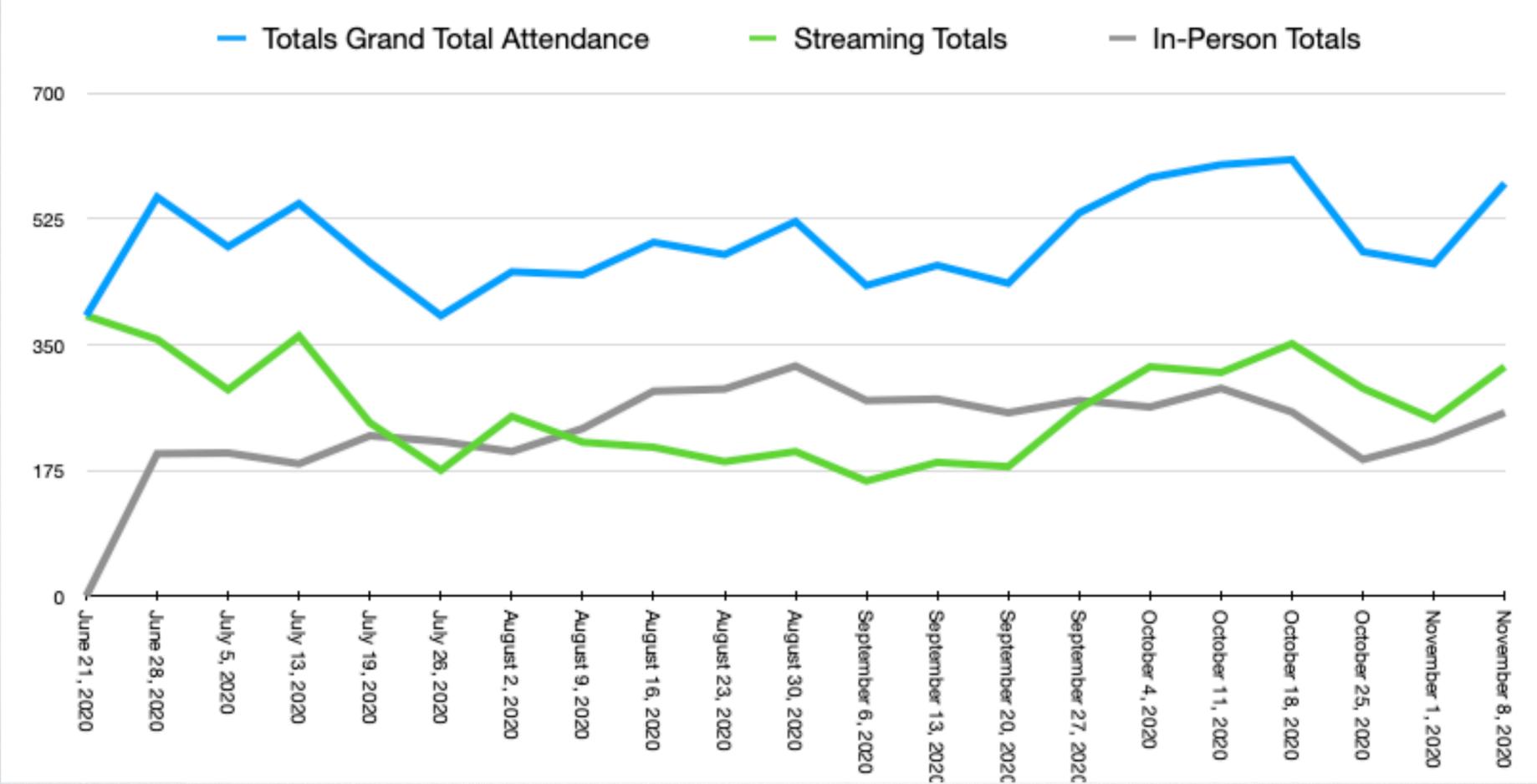
The graphic features a dark blue background with a glowing blue fingerprint-like pattern on the right side. A man in a black t-shirt is wearing a VR headset and holding two controllers. The text is in a clean, modern font.

VR CHURCH
Season 4

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

- REC ROOM :: 8 AM EST
- ALTSPACEVR :: 1 PM EST
- VRCHAT :: 3 PM EST
- REC ROOM :: 4:30 PM EST
- ALTSPACEVR :: 7 PM EST

WHAT IS CROSSWINDS DIGITAL ATTENDANCE?



OUTLINE

1. What are the benefits of digital church?
2. What are the dangers of digital church?
3. Since digital church is here to stay, what should we do?

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

1. People stuck at home or in a nursing home can still be part of a worship service.
2. There is access to a vast library of high quality digital biblical teaching. (Right Now Media, Church Web Sites, gotquestions.org, patheos)
3. Those who don't have a pastor, can receive teaching and help. Our Windom extension site is an example.
4. In a pandemic, we have some community through Zoom and other groups.
5. What benefits of digital church do you see?

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

Physical Church and Digital Church are NOT interchangeable!

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

I. There Is A Big Difference Between Corporate Worship And Individual Worship.

Consider the difference between attending a concert at the Green Space in Arnold's Park compared to watching a YouTube version of the same concert in your basement on your smart phone. It is a completely different experience.

Do participate in the singing when watching at home? Do you participate in the singing when at church?

There is a difference between joining in worship with others around us versus to watching worship as a spectator at home.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

2. Corporate Study of the Word is Distracted Instead Of Focused.

While watching a sermon at home it is easy to check your email, grab breakfast, talk to your sister, or change the channel. It is much harder to focus on a digital screen than a physical person.

Zoom teaching is failing our kids. 40% of St. Paul Minnesota High School students have failing grades from digital learning. 40% of children in Houston Texas are failing at least 2 classes. Fairfax Va. is giving 83% more "F" scores. Middle schoolers "F" grades have increased by 300%.

Story of Deanna's college visit meeting Faith

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

3. The Media of Digital Instruction Is Not As Effective As Physical Instruction.

Digital interaction is quick, shallow, and isolating. It involves smaller communication windows. Interpersonal skills are lost (story of me as a child)

Digital discipleship via Zoom is shallow. Personal discipleship face to face is far more effective. (Paul Baumann story)

In the ancient world Paul wrote letters to churches he wanted to visit. Those letters were used by God. Paul still desired to physically visit those churches. Letters were a substitute for physical presence. They were not intended to completely replace his physical presence.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

4. Digital Pastoring Is Difficult

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. Acts 20:28 (ESV)

It is very difficult to know people and care for people online because it is challenging to meet people and develop relationships with people.
(Shepherding groups story)

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

5. The One Another Commands Are Hard To Follow

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:1–3 (ESV)

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, Ephesians 4:15 (ESV)

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

The One Another Commands Are Hard To Follow

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Ephesians 4:25 (ESV)

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)

The one-another commands presuppose we are gathered physically in a church where we have relationships with other Christians. This is difficult online. (Dating Web Sites)

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

6. Spiritual Gifts Are Given To Us To Serve The Needs Of Others In The Church. They Are Hard To Use Online.

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Romans 12:4–8 (ESV)

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

7. God Dwells In The Gathered Church More Intimately Than He Does The Individual Christian.

Level 1 - God is present everywhere. He is omnipresent. Psalm 139:7-12

Level 2 - God takes up dwelling in a believer by His Holy Spirit once the person is born again. They are made into a new creation. This is a more intimate dwelling than God's omnipresence.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,... 1 Corinthians 6:19 (ESV)

Level 3 - God takes up dwelling among His people in the local church when they gather in a more intimate way than he doesn't in the life of individual believers.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

God Dwells In The Gathered Church Differently Than The Individual Christian.

For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."
Matthew 18:20 (ESV)

Do you not know that you (plural) are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you (plural)? 1 Corinthians 3:16 (ESV)

God doesn't just live in his people but he temples in a more intimate way with his gathered people.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

God Dwells In The Gathered Church Differently Than The Individual Christian.

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 2 Corinthians 6:16 (ESV)

...in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
Ephesians 2:21–22 (ESV)

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

8. Paul Has Strong Words For Those Destroying the Unity Of A Local Church.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 (ESV)

What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, 2 Corinthians 6:15–17 (ESV)

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

9. The Writer of Hebrews Commands The Local Church To Meet So We Encourage One Another, Especially In Difficult Times.

...not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)

In times of crisis it is more important to meet, not less important to meet. Digital church meeting is difficult. Simply watching an online service is not meeting as the church.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

10. The Lord's Supper Is Difficult To Celebrate Virtually

Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. 1 Corinthians 10:17 (ESV)

The bread is ideally to be from one loaf to symbolize our interconnection as one body in the local church.

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. Mark 14:23 (ESV)

The cup should ideally be one cup symbolizing our connection to one another as one body when we take it.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

11. The Baptism Is Difficult To Celebrate Virtually

But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Acts 8:12 (ESV)

Baptism, like a wedding ceremony, is a public declaration of our love and faith in Jesus. It is to be done publicly in front of other people, not privately in the shower.

It is a physical act of being buried with Christ and raised to new life in Christ. Virtual baptism ignores a physical reality.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

12. Everything about Jesus and our Salvation is physical, not virtual or solely spiritual.

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.
Romans 8:11 (ESV)

Jesus didn't save just our souls. He saved our bodies. When we die, our souls go home to God but Jesus will resurrect our bodies to live forever.

Eternity is not just a spiritual place. It is a physical place. The New Jerusalem. The new heavens and earth. Digital church starts to ignore physical realities.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

13. Acts of Compassion Are Usually Physical. They Either Can Not Be Done Digitally Or Are Better Done Physically Than Digitally.

And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.” Matthew 10:42 (ESV) (Visit sick)

For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ Matthew 25:42–45 (ESV)

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

14. Church Discipline Is Almost Impossible In A Digital Church.

For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 1 Corinthians 5:12 (ESV)

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 1 Corinthians 5:6–7 (ESV)

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF DIGITAL CHURCH?

15. Developing And Affirming Elders In A Digital Church Is Almost Impossible.

Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. 1 Timothy 3:2–7 (ESV)

SINCE DIGITAL CHURCH IS HERE
TO STAY, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

SINCE DIGITAL CHURCH IS HERE TO STAY, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Recognize church is more than just teaching and worship. *It is a physical community where we use our gifts to serve one another, follow God's commands to love one another, and God dwells more intimately among his gathered church than among scattered Christians.*

Be careful of our terminology. *The term "online church" or "online campus" is an oxymoron. It is like speaking of a paid volunteer.*

Preface our online teaching with an encouragement to be part of a local church. *Matt Chandler often prefaces his teaching with, "We pray this sermon is used by God in conjunction with you belonging to a local church." Or "This resources is never meant to substitute God's good plan for you to be in a community of faith where the Word of God is preached and proclaimed."*

SINCE DIGITAL CHURCH IS HERE TO STAY, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Have an online presence that focuses on relationships and people, not just teaching and spectator worship.

Every church should take their digital presence just as seriously as their physical gatherings. People visit churches virtually before they visit them physically. Digital church attendance will grow exponentially in the future.

SINCE DIGITAL CHURCH IS HERE TO STAY, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Recognize young adults will attempt to substitute online church for physical church. *A church's online presence should be digitally excellent but relationally inviting. We need to move people from a desire to be digital spectators or a church to the desire for incarnational and relational worship in a church.*

Recognize that in an online world, many young people will start out more comfortable with virtual community than physical community. *Provide virtual doors for them to enter the church.*

SINCE DIGITAL CHURCH IS HERE TO STAY, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

What do you think CrossWinds can do so we don't encourage people to think of digital church is a valid substitute for physical church?

Since digital church is here to stay, how can we use it well to reach more people with Jesus in the Internet universe?