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INSPIRING REASONS TO GO ALL IN ON ONLINE WORSHIP

AND HOW IT CAN HELP YOU
REACH MORE PEOPLE THAN EVER

BY
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When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it forced churches to get online - fast. Now, as the dust settles and doors begin to reopen, churches are asking, "Now what?" Some are tired and even wondering if we can be done with this whole "online" thing already.

But online worship is here to stay. And it SHOULD be! It's one of the greatest opportunities we've had in our lifetime to reach more people and grow the church.

When you have a vision for online worship, the doors it opens, and the souls it reaches, you will see it as an integral part of the life of your church and a way to create meaningful worship experiences in person and at home.

Here are 13 real-life reasons why online worship is an incredible opportunity to love people and reach them with the message of Jesus - even long after the pandemic is over.

01

SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE TURNED AWAY HAVE COME BACK

People leave the church all the time for all kinds of reasons. Maybe they didn't like a sermon you preached, and they're mad at you. Maybe they liked the previous pastor more than you. Maybe the chairs were too uncomfortable, or the service was too boring. Whatever the case, hybrid worship has allowed them to sit in and maybe even reconnect with your church despite whatever feelings they once had. They've also been able to do it anonymously or without having to address their earlier departure.

I had one pastor tell me in a recent coaching call that he's seen three people who had left his church return since the building reopened. There was never any formal explanation, only the assumption that after a year or more of worshipping online, they warmed up to the idea of returning.

002

THOSE WHO FELT SHUNNED OR WERE SHUNNED HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PARTICIPATE WITHOUT FEAR OF CONDEMNATION

People in church can be mean and insensitive sometimes. They can say very off-putting things to those with and without an established faith life.

I can remember at a young age attending a gathering at a church for a youth retreat called Chrysalis (the youth version of The Walk to Emmaus) and being told by an older person I should go home because I had a ball cap on. “This has no place in God’s house,” he said. I was probably 14 at the time, and under that cap was the worst case of hat head you can imagine. I was not comfortable taking it off. My faith was well established at that time, but I might have bolted otherwise. I wore the cap anyway as I entered the building and prayed that God would not strike me down.

Being shunned for a ball cap is minor compared to what others have been through. Maybe someone’s hair was too long, or they had too many tattoos. Others may not practice hygiene to the satisfaction of regulars, or maybe there’s some other reason they’d not be welcomed.

In the spring of 2021, a pastor told me the story of one of her members who had celebrated her son’s return to the church. This young man grew up in the church, was baptized, and went all the way through confirmation. When it became known that he was homosexual in high school, the church had a very negative reaction to this revelation. Whether he was actually shunned or felt shunned, he no longer felt welcome in church. He took a 10-year break, and during the pandemic, he began worshiping online with the church he’d grown up in.

Without fear of judgment, he could tune in and participate, rekindling his faith. Easter Sunday in 2021, he joined his mother in in-person worship for the first time in over a decade. Hybrid worship, or what I call “Both/And worship” (in person and online), opens opportunities for reconnection!



HYBRID WORSHIP OPENS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECONNECTION!





*WE WISH YOU WERE
HERE WITH US, AND
WE'RE PICTURING
ALL OF YOUR
SMILING FACES
HERE IN THE ROOM.*



03

SHUT-INS AND THOSE WHO ARE IMMOBILE AND/OR ARE SUFFERING FROM ILLNESS HAVE HAD THE BEST EXPERIENCE OF WORSHIP THEY'VE EVER HAD SINCE ENTERING THIS CATEGORY

In some churches, those who are no longer able to make it to church because of advanced age, illness, or other challenges are out of sight and out of mind. Other churches have excellent visitation and care ministries in place, but worship has largely been an afterthought for these folks.

Churches who previously might send a CD, an audio recording, or a printed sermon for shut-ins to engage with now have the ability to treat them with dignity and respect by including them in the chat, talking directly to them on camera, and by including Both/And language as they participate.

One pastor I consulted with took time at the beginning of worship to look directly at the camera and welcome those residents at two nursing homes the church partners with. He said, "Welcome this morning. We wish you were here with us, and we're picturing all of your smiling faces here in the room." It was a beautiful moment.

There's another wonderful ministry opportunity involving shut-ins who are not shut in by choice, but by the criminal justice system. I've heard several stories this year of churches who have partnered with jails and correctional facilities to stream worship so that inmates might also participate in the life of the church. Some of these churches have even figured out how to partner with these institutions to allow families time to interact with their loved ones on camera as part of the service.



04

VACATIONERS, BUSINESS TRAVELERS, AND BUSY FAMILIES CAN WORSHIP FROM ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Sunday used to be pretty much off limits for things like soccer games, gymnastics tournaments, and the like. The “Blue Laws” of the past are long gone, and prior to our entering the streaming world, families had to choose church or those activities. Not anymore! With streaming worship, people can stream right from the field or later that day when they get home from the game.

I’ve worshiped from a hotel room on many a business trip and family vacation. This relatively new phenomenon of streaming worship for some of us gives us a way to keep people connected to our faith communities and worshiping from the road.

05

SUNDAY MORNING (OR WHENEVER YOU OFFER WORSHIP) LIVES BEYOND SUNDAY

For the early adopters, this one doesn’t apply, but for all of those who first started streaming worship in 2020, it’s almost hard to believe now that we put all that effort and energy into one hour on Sunday (or whatever day you worshiped) without anyone but the people who came in person benefiting from it. Worship now lives on indefinitely, and people can be transformed by your worship service days, weeks, months, and even years later.

06

VISITORS/GUESTS CAN TRY YOU OUT IN A MUCH LESS VULNERABLE WAY

Like going to an ice cream shop, online worship is the “taster spoon” for in-person worship. In other words, people can try you out before they commit to the more vulnerable in-person visit.

I’ve had numerous pastors and leaders tell me they’ve seen a huge uptick in guests since going online with worship. The funny thing is that those guests come in with some degree of experience for who’s who and what’s what in our worship experiences.

My friend, Pastor Adam Diehl, told me one Sunday morning he approached a couple that he didn’t recognize to introduce himself. When he walked up and said, “Hi I’m pastor Adam,” they looked at him like, “Yeah, we know, we’ve been worshipping online with you for a long time.” In just a matter of seconds, they all realized what had taken place in that moment and laughed about it.

This would be like going to see Jerry Seinfeld at a comedy show and having him come off stage to introduce himself to you. You’d probably think, “Yeah, we saw you on TV. That’s why we’re here.”



**YEAH, WE SAW YOU ON TV.
THAT’S WHY WE’RE HERE.**



07

GEOGRAPHY IS NO LONGER A LIMITATION

People can worship at your church from anywhere when you do Both/And worship. Worship used to happen at a certain time in a certain space. That's all changed. I've heard stories of families worshipping together from multiple states at an agreed upon time for worship, people reconnecting with a church they used to go to from other states, and people worshipping even from different countries. As mentioned earlier, The Chapel Online has 32 different countries represented.

I had one church in the Charlotte, North Carolina area tell me that they had a family drive all the way up from Florida to join their church after being a dedicated online worshiper for months. They're not moving to Charlotte; they're staying in Florida, but they feel such a strong connection to this church, they wanted to step into membership.

08

SPECIAL NEEDS FAMILIES CAN EXPERIENCE A RESPITE

Having a special needs child is a challenge that many will never know or understand. Getting a special needs child to church can be very difficult, and participating in the "typical way" can be extremely challenging if not impossible. As the parent of a special needs child, I can tell you from personal experience, there are times you feel judged by others when it comes to the behavior exhibited by a child who literally cannot control their actions.

There are some Sunday mornings - particularly when kids are younger - that it feels easier to just stay home. With Both/And worship, when those mornings come, families can worship without the feeling of judgment that sometimes accompanies the reality of having a special needs family member.

09

WE CAN NOW DIALOGUE WITH OUR CONGREGATIONS

Worshippers both online and in-person can literally help shape the experience. I've already shared a few examples of what this looks like. With chat, Zoom, texts, and other means, you can deeply engage and interact with your congregation.

During a recent visit to Trinity UMC in Savannah, Georgia, I witnessed pastor Ben Gosden demonstrate the power of dialogue in worship. With more than half of his congregation online, Ben devised a new way of offering "Joys and Concerns." For those unfamiliar with this language, it's more or less the sharing of things to celebrate and things to pray for (prayer requests).

In this historic Methodist church (the first in the state of Georgia) where the sanctuary is very traditional (thick stained-glass windows, pipe organ, etc.), and where liturgical worship is practiced, Ben asked the congregation to do something very out of ordinary in such a space. He said, "This morning for those of you gathered here, I'm going to invite you to take out your phones. Mute them and navigate to our Facebook page. You can also scan the QR code on your bulletin to get there. At this time, we're going to share our 'Joys and Concerns.'"

He went on to explain what that meant using language similar to the above. He then said, "We used to share these by shouting them out from our seats, but the people at home cannot shout loud enough for us to hear them, so we're all going to put them in the chat. That's for those of us here in the building and those online. Let's pray with our fingers this morning."

The chat began to fill up with joys and concerns from congregants participating from both in the room and online. Ben then pulled out his phone and began to share those responses. When he'd share a joy or concern, he'd make note of where it came from. For example, he said, "Sarah, I believe you're joining us from home this morning. You share a concern about a friend suffering from the effects of COVID. We hear your concern and lift it up now. Rob, you are with us in the building today and you're celebrating the birth of a new grand-baby. What a joy that is! We celebrate that with your family."

He continued on by reading every request. It was a beautiful moment that allowed a dialogue to play out regardless of where people were worshiping from.





10

EVANGELISM AND SHARING OUR FAITH HAVE NEVER BEEN EASIER

Many Christians are not comfortable sharing their faith with co-workers, family members, and friends. Asking them to church is an even greater fear. With social media, it's dramatically easier to share a link to a stream or a Facebook Group.

Encourage your church to make those invitations. Tell them where to link. Generate QR codes. Invite them to use hashtags.

11

INTROVERTS AND THOSE WITH SOCIAL ANXIETY CAN TAKE A BREAK FROM THE STRESS OF CROWDS

Let me be clear in saying that I do not believe that introverts should bow out completely from in-person worship, but online can give them the occasional break when they're not feeling up to "people-ing" on occasion.

As a recovering extrovert, I have a hard time wrapping my brain around the idea that being a part of a gathering and making small talk and connection is taxing for some. My wife however is a full-fledged introvert. I've seen how it can drain her. We're wired differently, and I'm grateful for the perspective she gives me. When we go to a party, she'll sometimes say something like, "Can we go now? I've talked to three people." I'll say, "Not yet, there are three people I haven't talked to." When the pandemic first began and things shut down, she jokingly said to me, "I've been preparing for this my whole life." I know many people who feel this way.

For some, the greatest thing to come out of the pandemic is the introvert dreaded ritual of "passing the peace" or greeting time. Our Both/And worship gives these folks a break when they just aren't up for socializing in person but still want to worship.



12

THOSE WITH HEARING AND SEEING DIFFICULTIES CAN TURN THE VOLUME UP, SIT CLOSER AT HOME, OR EVEN STREAM IT FROM THE ROOM WITH CLOSED CAPTIONS TURNED ON

This one wasn't originally on my list, but in one conversation I was in with a cohort of pastors I coach, one pastor told me that this was one of the things she's heard over and over in her church made up of many elderly people. She said, "Some folks are at home watching with the volume cranked up, and they can see better with their device closer to their faces or their large screen TVs turned on."

13

IT AIN'T OVER TIL' IT'S OVER

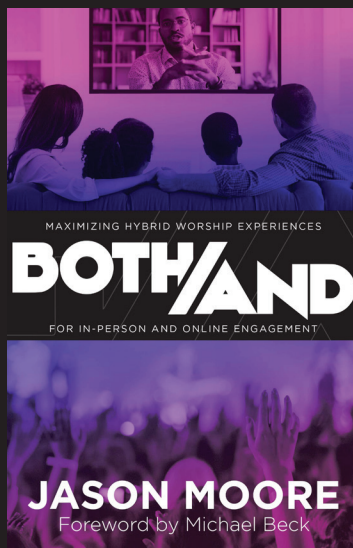
I hope and pray that as you are reading this, the pandemic is over. In the late summer of 2021 (when I am writing this), it is inaccurate to say we are living in the "post-pandemic" world. The rise of the Delta Variant of COVID-19 is raging through communities large and small. Many schools have reinstated online learning and mask mandates, and hospitals are once again overwhelmed with patients. Vaccine hesitancy is still a thing, and even the vaccinated are testing positive with breakthrough cases of the new variant.

We should not stop offering online worship and risk losing the skills we've developed. In the unlikely event we have to shut down the world again, we do not want to have to re-learn all of the things we spent 2020/2021 learning. Those muscles will atrophy in time. Besides, we've got 12 other great reasons to continue.

**ARE YOU
CONVINCED
YET?**

**MAYBE
EVEN EXCITED
ABOUT THE
POSSIBILITIES?**

LET'S ENVISION WHAT BOTH/AND WORSHIP CAN LOOK LIKE TOGETHER!



Both/And, the latest book by Jason Moore, is a modern field guide for church leaders who want to create truly meaningful hybrid worship experiences. It will show you how to integrate online ministry into the life of your church, from your service to ongoing discipleship, and how you can make online worship work for your church – even if you have limited time and resources.

You'll get three proven models for hybrid worship and practical considerations for each, including best practices, step-by-step guides, and scripts for worship, teaching, hospitality, prayer, and more.

Packed with resources, examples, and practical know-how, Both/And will give you fresh vision for how worship can become something that lives beyond the moment, no matter when or where someone participates.

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