

# THE FUTURE OF CHURCH TECHNOLOGY



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# ABOUT TOBIN PERRY

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All of the first person pronouns in this book are his.

# ABOUT THIS BOOK

In the past two decades, technology has changed nearly every aspect of our lives—from medical care to education to sporting events. Our churches are no different. If you want to know what tomorrow holds for the Church's use of technology, you don't have to look very far. *The future of Church technology is now!*

In this ebook, we'll explore how technology will change the Church in the next few years—and how you can take practical steps to prepare for it.

# NO MORE CHEAP SEATS

Imagine you live in California's Central Valley. You're a big a Sacramento Kings fan. It hasn't been easy. It has been more than a decade since the team won even half its games. But you've stayed loyal—even through the tough times. You haven't been to a game in several years. You've always enjoyed going, but ticket prices have climbed. Plus, you have a new big-screen TV and a great sound system that puts you right in the action. You can see the sweat dripping from DeMarcus Cousins's face. You can hear the not-so-great language coming from the upper deck of the stadium.

You can *almost* smell the popcorn from your comfy couch.

But when you get two tickets to tonight's game, you're excited. You've not been to the new Golden 1 Center. On your way to the game, you get a notification on your phone that tells you which parking lot will be easiest for you to get into. You head into the stadium, scanning the ticket on your smartphone as you enter. Your Kings app then proceeds to give you step-by-step directions to your seat. You're a few minutes late so you quickly pull up the game highlights on your phone, using the stadium's state-of-the-art wifi network. Using your phone, you make a friendly, non-financial wager with a buddy sitting at home.

Then you get hungry. Using your smartphone, you order handmade tacos (with 90 percent of the ingredients locally produced) and it's delivered right to you. Twenty minutes later, when you have to use the restroom, your smartphone tells you which has the shortest wait time.

Every corner of the building—from the 600 miles of fiber-optic cable to the hundreds of wifi access points to the 32-million pixel jumbotron—is installed with one goal in mind: to delight fans.

*And boy does it.*

Attending a basketball game, a concert, or a UFC fight at the \$557 million Golden 1 Center is far more than just a single event on your schedule—it's an experience. It's called America's first truly 21st century sports stadium and has arguably become Sacramento's cultural centerpiece.

Make no mistake, though. Golden 1 Center had no choice but to deliver a world-class experience to its customers. *It was a business necessity.*

Back in 2011, American sports leagues had a problem—a big problem. Televisions were getting bigger. Resolution on those TVs became clearer. The generations-old assumption that the best sports experience happened inside stadiums was under assault. Like so many other industries today, technology became a disruptor, transforming the business in a mere decade. In 1999, an ESPN survey showed that 54 percent of sports fans would rather attend a game than watch it at home. Just 12 years later—after years of progressive transformation of the home entertainment industry—that [number dropped to 29 percent](#).

The shrewd businessmen who own American sports teams knew changes were needed. Too much money would be left on the table if fans simply confined themselves to their homes to watch games.

The very future of the industry hung in the balance.

Over the next few years, these owners built a series of innovative “smart” stadiums in metro areas throughout the country. Other owners massively innovated their existing structures. Each new or renovated stadium centered on enhancing fan experience through technology. Here are just a few tech innovations revolutionizing the fan experience at today’s sports stadiums:

- ▶ At Cleveland’s Quicken Loans Arena, Cavalier fans who appear on the stadium’s giant “Humongotron” during games can receive their own personalized video clips through the “15 Seconds of Fame” App and share those clips with their friends.
- ▶ Smartphones alert Golden State Warriors fans who enter San Francisco’s Oracle Arena about available ticket upgrades.
- ▶ Fans attending San Francisco 49ers home games can watch four different replays at a time on their smartphones—the same ones shown by the studio if they were watching from home.

The fan experience today at any of these stadiums is vastly different than it would have been just a few short years ago. It had to be. Of course, the sports industry isn’t the only one that has been disrupted by tech in recent years. Technology—and more specifically mobile technology—has impacted nearly every industry from media to manufacturing to retail.

And it’s changing the Church, too.

Or at least, *it needs to change the Church.*

## Preparing for the Next Great Disruptor

In 2016, the *Harvard Business Review* identified two common factors in industries facing massive disruption as part of society's continual march toward digital technology. Both should be familiar to those involved in church ministry:

- ▶ New entities have low barriers to getting started in the industry (new churches often start with little money in the bank).
- ▶ “Legacy” business models generate most of the income (the vast majority of churches rely on the giving of older generations, which means so far they've faced little financial pressure to invest in technology).

For generations, churches that were effective in fulfilling their mission and growing their churches had a few simple things in common: *they had top-notch facilities, they had powerful preachers, and they were often in growing locations.*

In the coming years, a new dividing line will separate effective, growing churches and all the others.

Churches that lead the way in reaching the next generation in the coming years will likely be the ones who embrace the great disruptor of our time—technological change—rather than those who run from it.

This ebook will help you prepare to be in the former camp.

# THE GROWING GAP

*“The best way to predict the future is to invent it. It is a very good time to start inventing the future.” — Robert Cannon, Internet law and policy expert, [Pew Research Center’s “Digital Life in 2025”](#)*

No doubt about it. We stand at a crossroads. According to the website [theemergingfuture.com](#), technology will be 32 times more advanced in five years than it is today. In 10 years, it’ll be 1,000 times more advanced.

In 20 years, it’ll be 1,000,000 times more advanced.

Technology is transforming the world around us at breathtaking rates. It’s changing how we work. It’s changing how we dress. It’s changing how we get in shape. It’s changing how we fight crime. For example:

- ▶ A new iPhone app (called [Vigilante](#)), which debuted in late 2016, alerts New Yorkers when a crime is occurring nearby. The hope is that the app [will cut down on crime](#) through increased transparency.
- ▶ Design company Marchesa [created the world’s first “cognitive dress”](#) for a red-carpet gala in early 2016. The dress changes colors based upon how social media reacted to it during the show.
- ▶ Qualcomm has an ongoing contest for inventors to see who can be the first person to create a [Star-Trek like handheld “tricorder”](#) that monitors and diagnoses the health conditions of patients. Two finalists for the prize will present their presumably functioning projects in early 2017.
- ▶ In December of 2016, Amazon delivered its first package via drone (completely without a human pilot). [The process took 13 minutes.](#)

*In case you’re wondering, we’ve officially stepped into the future.*

## A Legacy of Innovation

From its inception, the Church has been at the center of global innovation trends (like the ones mentioned above). Paul used the newly invented Roman Road system on his early missionary journeys. When people needed healthcare, the Church invented hospitals. When people needed to become literate in order to read the Bible, the Church started schools. Gutenberg invented the printing press to mass-produce the Bible, setting the stage for the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation.

Even into the 20th century, Pope Pius XII was saying, “The Church welcomes technological progress and receives it with love, for it is an indubitable fact that technological progress comes from God and, therefore, can and must lead to Him.”

Billy Graham used television to enlarge the audience of his crusades. Millions have heard the gospel through those broadcasts. But Graham didn’t stop there. Nearly every aspect of his ministry was impacted by the technological progress of his day. He instinctively understood its significance, too.

“It is time for the Church to use technology to make a statement that in the midst of chaos, emptiness, and despair there is hope in the person of Jesus Christ,” Graham once said.

As personal computers became more readily available in the mid 1980s, [Bible software and church management software](#) began showing up on church computers. With the advent of the internet, churches built websites to communicate with potential attendees. Church management software moved to the cloud.

Powered by cheaper technology, the number of “multisite churches” (single churches that meet in multiple places) climbed from 10 to more than 5,000 between 1990 and 2012.

## The Astounding Cost of the Church Tech Gap

Yet, by and large, the Church has struggled to keep up with the high speed of technological change in recent decades. [Burdened by lack of money, knowledge, and at times a cumbersome church polity](#), the Church has clearly fallen behind. Even as late as 2012, [only a little more](#) than half of [churches have websites](#) (55.7 percent). Though most church members can pay every other bill online, only [42 percent of churches](#) offer the ability to give online.

And this has cost the Church dearly.

Eliot Crowther, who co-founded the mobile engagement company [Pushpay](#), believes churches that avoid investing in technology end up paying a high cost. He compares it to a business that is hesitant to shell out money to provide internet access for its employees. It may seem like you’re saving money—but there’s an opportunity cost to consider.

For the Church, the opportunity cost comes in engagement. Millennial Christians look first to online sources (and specifically mobile ones) to engage their faith. According to George Barna, nearly 6 in 10 millennial Christians search for spiritual content online. Seventy percent of millennial Christians read Scripture on their cellphones.



According to [mobilecause.com](http://mobilecause.com), millennials as a whole are more likely to give to charitable causes on mobile devices.

“When churches neglect the most relevant distribution method available to them because of the cost associated with it, they’re missing out,” Crowther says. “The opportunity cost is high. The younger generation doesn’t write checks nor carry cash. You have to provide an opportunity for them to give. There will be a financial cost for not doing that.”

## Inventing the Future

Yet not all is doom and gloom when it comes to how churches are using technology to further their ministry goals. Some churches have led the way in inventing the future of church technology.

Pastor Craig Groeschel started [Life.Church](#) in 1996. Five years later, the birth of Groeschel’s fourth child the night before a regularly scheduled Sunday service inspired the church to use a preaching video for worship services. That experimentation with video-based worship services has led 25 physical locations in seven states and a burgeoning internet ministry.

The church also launched its [Youversion Bible app](#) in 2007. The revolutionary Bible app includes 1,396 Bible translations in 1,027 languages. *The app has been installed on 243 million devices.*

Founded a year earlier, [North Point Community Church](#) in suburban Atlanta has grown up in the digital era:

“Our mission is to be a church for people who don’t like church,” says Rebecca Kuebler, a digital designer at North Point. “I’d like to think our digital footprint plays a part in that. If our website is not trustworthy, you have no idea what hangs in the balance of one interaction.

Chris Aimes, the church’s director of digital environments, says the technology will never replace human interaction. In fact, at North Point, it enhances it. As an example, he points to a digital kiosk designed to replace all the printed brochures the church had produced on various ministries through the years. The hope was that the new kiosk would provide attendees with a multimedia app experience instead of simply a two-dimensional printed product. But North Point didn’t just scatter unmanned machines around their campus, they put a person near each machine to answer questions. Because involving people in ministry is a major goal for North Point, new technology is always seen as a way to enhance the value of volunteers, not detract from them.

Despite its size, North Point doesn't have to "reinvent the wheel" to make use of technology and further its mission. How it onboards new employees demonstrates this. From using the list-making app [Trello](#), to making sure candidates have interviewed with all the necessary staff to using [Basecamp](#), to ensuring new hires have experienced different parts of the organization, North Point uses existing technology to make its ministry more effective.

"Our goal is to partner with our ministries to help them reach the citizens of Earth that are living an increasingly digital lifestyle," Aimes says as he describes the mission statement of his team. "We do that by putting the right technology in the right place at the right time."

# WHY INNOVATION MATTERS FOR THE CHURCH

*“We will do anything short of sin to reach people for Christ.”*

—[Craig Groeschel](#), founding pastor of Life.Church at [Catalyst in 2014](#)

Technological innovation in the local church starts with the heart and activity of God—the Great Innovator—Himself. Guy Kawasaki defines innovation as, “Creating something before people know they need it.”

That’s what God does.

He has been innovating since the dawn of time. Humans didn’t even exist when He created the world they would one day inhabit. Before sin had cast a shadow on the planet, God had designed a remedy—the death and resurrection of His Son. Before the Gentiles understood they needed a Savior, God stopped Paul on the road to Damascus.

God is always up to something new. God never changes, but He constantly works in new ways.

He says in Isaiah, “Do not remember the past events, pay no attention to things of old. Look, I am about to do something new; even now it is coming. Do you not see it? Indeed, I will make a way in the wilderness, rivers in the desert” (Isaiah 43:18-19).

From the first few words of Genesis to the closing chapters of Revelation, the Bible tells the story of God’s innovative work in the world. As the classic Don Moen song says, “God makes a way when there seems to be no way.”

That’s innovation—and the heart of the gospel message. As heirs and stewards of that message, we have no choice. To love as God loves is to innovate as He innovates. If God takes innovation seriously, we must too.

Eternity hangs in the balance.

## The most important message

Messages are everywhere today. Television, social media, movies, advertisements, email—someone is always trying to get our attention. It's working, too.

Just look at a list of the most popular tweets ever.

- ▶ A photo of President Obama and the First Lady after his 2012 re-election was shared more than 900,000 times.
- ▶ A photo of a little girl walking down a winding road with the quote: "I'm guilty of giving people more chances than they deserve but when I'm done, I'm done" was shared more than 1.4 million times.
- ▶ A dog food maker's tweet promising a bowl of food to a hungry dog for every retweet was shared more than 700,000 times.
- ▶ An Indonesian political analyst's tweet of support for one of the country's presidential candidates was shared nearly a million times.
- ▶ A group selfie full of A-list Hollywood stars taken after the 2014 Academy Awards was re-tweeted more than 3 million times.

In any list of the most viral social media shares, you'll find funny messages, caustic messages, weird messages, heart-warming messages, and even a few important messages.

*But you'll be hard-pressed to find one with eternal consequences.*

That's what sets the Church's message apart from all others—eternity hinges on it. For the Church, no message matters more than what Jude calls the "faith that was delivered to the saints once for all" (1:3). Generations of committed Jesus-followers have laid down their lives for this gospel message that stitches together both life and death.

"We—the Church—need to be the ones pushing the boundaries and innovating," says Pushpay co-founder, Eliot Crowther. "If the church's message is the most important message on the planet, our distribution methods for it should be at least as innovative as anything else."

Maybe the late theologian Carl F.H. Henry said it best, "The gospel is only good news when it gets there on time."

Innovation in the Church must happen so the gospel gets where it's going before it's too late.

# THE FUTURE OF CHURCH TECH IS HERE

So how will the Church of the future embrace technology? How can we close the gap before it's too late? No need for a time machine. *The future of church tech is here.* We can see the quickly approaching future in other industries, but we're also beginning to see it within the Church. This section of the ebook will explore four key areas of technology the Church must embrace within the next few years to more effectively fulfill her Jesus-appointed mission in the 21st century.

## The future of technology is:

- ▶ On the Go (mobile)
- ▶ Data-Driven
- ▶ In the Cloud
- ▶ Highly Connected

The next few pages will not only take you inside the future of church technology, but they will also give you practical crawl-walk-run suggestions for taking steps in that future.

# THE FUTURE OF CHURCH TECHNOLOGY: ON THE GO

You'd have to go back to the printing press to find another technology revolutionizing how people live as deeply as mobile. Just take a look at your congregation during your next worship service. Many will access Scripture via mobile devices. Others will be accessing social media (and hopefully, many will be accessing your church's mobile app).

The people your church wants to reach are increasingly mobile-first in how they look at the world. Average Americans [spend nearly three hours a day](#) on their phones. The numbers for millennials and the up-and-coming Gen Z are even higher. Mobile technology drives how most of us want to engage with the world—and your church—today.

The marketplace gets this. Like the sports owners described earlier in this book, they're spending billions to influence mobile consumers. Mobile technology represents a \$3.1 trillion of GDP. It's projected that \$100 billion was spent on mobile advertising alone in on 2016.

"If you want your company to succeed, you must retool it for the age of the customer," Ted Schadler writes in [The Mobile Mind Shift](#). "The best way to connect with and satisfy customers is on a mobile device. And to do that properly, you must refocus your strategy, your systems, and your people to deliver mobile engagement.

It's not just about mobile phones either. It's a mindset. People today expect to be able to access whatever they need via mobile technology. That rings true within the church as well. When we need a Bible, we will download it on our phones. When we need prayer and support, we reach out to others via our mobile devices. When we need a new devotional book, we can download it in minutes. When God leads us to give generously to our church, we can do it in three taps or less on our mobile phones. We no longer need to wait until the next time we gather with others in a church setting to do what God leads us to do.

*Mobile technology remains the critical piece to the Church's technological future. Everything else described in this ebook is predicated upon the Church embracing mobile technology in a fresh way.*

## How This Looks in the Future Church:

The technological hub of the future church won't be inside its building—it will be in the pockets (and on the wrists) of its congregants. Future churchgoers will use the church's mobile app to engage with the church in a variety of ways throughout the week.

Nearly every manner in which a churchgoer has grown accustomed to engaging with the Church will have a mobile component. Your congregants will give via the app. They will (or at least will be able to) watch worship services on the app. They'll read their Bibles on the church app (and even discuss with others using the app what they're learning). They will get news about what's going on at the church through mobile alerts. They will sign up for church events straight from their mobile devices. They will respond to sermons from their mobile devices.

Let's be clear. Mobile technology won't change what our churches do. We'll still gather people for worship, connect them in meaningful relationships, disciple them, train them for ministry, and send them out to impact the world for Christ. *How we do it will change dramatically because of mobile technology in the years to come.*

## How Your Church Gets Ready for This:

- ▶ **Crawl.** Jump into the mobile revolution. Start planning today to build a mobile app for your church. Find the budget room. Decide what will be included. Get a mobile presence. Mobile engagement specialists like [echurch](#) can help you get started.
- ▶ **Walk.** Look for ways to make your app better. Do a survey. Find out how your members use mobile applications. Just having a mobile app isn't enough. You need a mobile app that your members actually want to use. Unhelpful, glitchy apps won't stay on your members' phones very long.
- ▶ **Run.** Begin to bring mobile into every step of your strategic thinking. Whether you're planning a new ministry initiative, sermon series, or outreach initiative, look for ways mobile technology can accelerate your efforts.

# THE FUTURE OF CHURCH TECHNOLOGY: DATA-DRIVEN

Dads don't know everything. But your local department store may.

That reality became painfully clear to a Minneapolis dad who grew concerned when an area Target began sending his teenage daughter coupons for baby clothes and cribs. The concerned father stormed into the store and asked the manager, "Is Target now encouraging my daughter to get pregnant?" The manager profusely apologized—and even called a few days later to reiterate his apology.

But she was pregnant. When she told her father the news a few days later, he apologized to the Target manager.

How did Target guess the pregnancy status before dad? They didn't—at least not for sure. They predicted it. Using the growing field of predictive analytics, the retail chain had been perfecting its ability to market its wares to expecting moms for nearly a decade. Target realized that by observing the shopping habits of pregnant women, they could discern trends. Looking at these trends, Target can predict—with remarkable accuracy—which purchase patterns suggest a woman is pregnant and then what she might want to purchase at specific times of that pregnancy.

Of course, it's not just department stores that are using technology to make their communication more specific. Personalization has become the expectation of consumers. They will expect it from churches, too.

And no one will expect it more than today's youngest generation—Gen Z.

Data science adviser Monica Rogati makes a distinction between millennials (whom she refers to as *digital-natives*) and Gen Z (whom she refers to as *data-natives*).

"While digital-natives ask what they can do with technology, data-natives are more concerned about what technology can do for them," writes [Rogati on Medium.com](#).



She goes on to say that while digital-natives will use a Starbucks mobile app, data-natives want the app to know their favorite drink. While digital-natives program their thermostat, data-natives will expect the thermostat to program itself.

So what does this mean for the church?

You've likely been preaching this for years: *God made every person unique—with unique backgrounds, talents, frustrations, and concerns.* You may believe this theologically (and intellectually), but you're face-to-face with a problem. The larger your church gets, the less uniquely you can deal with your congregation. Technology is changing and will continue to change that.

Your churchgoers will increasingly expect you to understand them and communicate with them according to what you know. They'll have less patience with blanket emails that go to everyone. When they visit your website, they'll want to see ministry opportunities that uniquely apply to them.

Certainly in the years to come we'll wrestle with a variety of ethical issues concerning "Big Data"—from how we collect the data to why we collect data to what we do with the data we collect. We'll need to think through privacy concerns, both inside and outside of the church. We'll also need to discern how the church's reliance on data and the corresponding personalization that will flow from it will contribute to the commercialization of the church.

But the benefits will, by far, outweigh those concerns.

## How This Looks in the Future Church:

You'll no longer have to guess when it comes to the pastoral care needs of your people. Every week you'll get a report that shares with you the members of your congregation who likely need a phone call from a spiritual leader. When you have new people visit your church, you won't have to send a one-size fits-all "thanks for coming" letter. You'll know *why they came* and will have an automated letter that'll address their specific situation ready to send. Thanks to an increased and largely anonymous data pool, you'll know topics your church needs to address in future sermons. Instead of data making your congregation a faceless, nameless sea of people, technology will introduce you to the amazing array of diversity in your midst—and will help you communicate with it better.

## How Your Church Gets There:

- ▶ **Crawl.** To start collecting and using data that can help, you'll need to be able to follow each congregant as they interact with your church. Church management software can help you get started (by giving each congregant an ID number). You'll find a variety of great resources out there in this space. [Ministrytech.com](https://ministrytech.com) provides a comparison tool that can help you choose between the options.
- ▶ **Walk.** Begin to interpret the data you have and make better decisions because of it. Recruit help from outside vendors and volunteers with experience in data science.
- ▶ **Run.** Use the data predictively to help you prepare for upcoming ministry efforts.

# THE FUTURE OF CHURCH TECHNOLOGY: IN THE CLOUD

Just five years ago, most of us bought software the old-fashioned way. We purchased a physical disk. Two decades ago that meant a floppy disk. Ten years ago that meant a CD. But no matter what media we used, we could depend upon four inherent problems with disk-based storage:

- ▶ The software only resided on devices where it was loaded.
- ▶ The disk could get damaged.
- ▶ You had to keep the software up to date.
- ▶ If your device crashed, you likely lost data.

Then came “the cloud” (not to be confused with the white, fluffy, gaseous objects in the sky). For our purposes, “cloud computing” simply means any kind of software that enables you to store and access your data via the internet.

The business world started realizing about a decade ago that cloud computing could save them money, time, and stress. They no longer needed to make the substantial investment in staying up to date with tech infrastructure. They also could cut their stress level significantly—no more worrying about data breaches or viruses devastating their bottom line. According to one [analysis by Right Scale](#), 95 percent of businesses are using the cloud in some manner.

## How This Looks in the Future Church:

No computer in the church office will have a disk drive. Every piece of software you use will be available from whatever device you’re currently using. Every piece of software syncs between devices. Your church contacts, giving reports, metrics, etc., are all available wherever you are. Churches with cloud-based software will budget less for tech and focus more of their time and money on what matters most: ministry.

## How Your Church Gets Ready for This:

- ▶ **Crawl.** Do an audit of the software you use in your church. Look everywhere—from your church management software to your word processing programs to your Bible research programs. Make a note of the software you need a disk or some form of digital media to access.
- ▶ **Walk.** Make a plan for replacing your software on disk with cloud solutions. Budget for it. Do it in stages (over the long haul, it will save you money).
- ▶ **Run.** Make sure you're using the most effective cloud-based software out there. Always stay on the lookout for better solutions. Gather a team of people in your congregation with an understanding of technology that can help you stay abreast of new cloud-based software.

# THE FUTURE OF CHURCH TECHNOLOGY: HIGHLY CONNECTED

John Donne is most definitely correct: “No man is an island.”

No app or device is an island today either.

You can see this every time you use your smartphone to log on to a new app. Most of the time you're given an option—create a new account or log on with a social media account.

In today's technological revolution, apps and devices work together or they don't work at all. We're connecting everything. Your calendar talks to your social media app. Your social media app talks to your television. Your television chats with your car. Your car is in conversation with your music service. Your music service will connect back with your social media app.

That kind of interactivity typically makes the difference between an app staying on your smartphone or getting deleted—and the difference between a device becoming a go-to item in your arsenal and it being relegated to your junk drawer.

At the end of the day, it's about user-experience. Connecting apps and devices together makes each of them more valuable to the user. For example, look at Uber—one of the hottest new companies in America. Despite more than 1,200 engineers on its team, much of its success depends upon third-party apps. When you try to find your next ride on the app, it uses Google Maps to do it. The SMS messaging is from Twillo. You rate your driver through Zendesk.

“The point is that even a company as sophisticated, as well funded as Uber with billions of dollars doesn't try to do it all. It still leverages APIs [application program interface],” says James Maiocoo, Pushpay's chief business development officer.

## How This Looks in the Future Church:

As a church member heads into your worship service on one particular Sunday, he gets an alert from your church app—which knows his location thanks to the phone's GPS—welcoming him and his family to the worship service and providing the family with the morning bulletin. The app then recommends the member play a short intro from your pastor and sends it to your car's stereo system—along with a playlist that'll prepare the family for worship, using whatever that weekend's theme is.

Because your app connects with your church management software, an email instantly goes out to your children's workers letting them know you'll need extra volunteers and another room for the children. Parking attendants are told which parts of the lot to open up thanks to an advanced logarithm that predicts the number of cars based on the number of people with an app heading into the church.

## How Your Church Gets Ready for This:

- ▶ **Crawl.** Make wifi available throughout your worship environment. Connectivity requires internet capabilities.
- ▶ **Walk.** Before purchasing any new device or app, make sure it works well with others. Get a demo. Read the documentation. Ask salespeople. Vendors in the church space have been slow to make their APIs (the protocols, tools, and routines that help applications and devices play well with others) available to other vendors. For the good of your church and the global Church, insist that the products you purchase do this.
- ▶ **Run.** Begin budgeting for hardware that will help connect more of your worship (and office) space. Start slow but be intentional about how you do this.

# YOUR FIRST STEP TO FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR CHURCH

The five years right in front of your church are the most important in its history. Whether your church is two years old, 20 years old, or 200 years old, you stand at a crossroads.

*It's a crossroads created by technology.*

What your church does with the technological changes rushing toward us will define its future for generations.

The Apostle Paul's ministry hit a similar crossroads 2,000 years ago. God had called him to take the gospel to the Gentiles—and he had done so with amazing effectiveness, starting churches throughout the Roman Empire. He never could have fulfilled that calling on his own. But as he sat in a Roman jail cell penning a letter to one of those churches, that truth became even clearer.

He wrote to the church of Philippi: “I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now” (Philippians 1:3-5, HCSB).

Paul needed partners. You do too. Your church's 21st century mission can't be completed on its own. You may have read this ebook and now wonder, “How in the world will our church be able to grab a hold of what God is doing through technology?”

You can't.

Even some of the largest churches in North America reach out for partners to help implement some of these changes.

Your first step toward embracing the future of church technology is to find the right partners:

- ▶ Look for partners who understand the Church and her mission.
- ▶ Find partners who will take the security of your data and finances seriously.
- ▶ Connect with partners that offer enterprise-level support and can keep up changes in the church technology space. How do you know whether potential partners can provide this? Ask them how many developers are a part of their team. That's a great start.

Reach out to a potential new partner today. Start the conversation.



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