# Ministry Tools for Leaders in the 21st Century Church

Brenda L. Rush

Beulah Heights University

Abstract

The purpose of this literature review was to present information regarding ministry tools that are available for use in today's churches and how their use can enhance the religious services. Each article and book presented discussions regarding the different social media tools and applications. The applications are well known in today's world. They are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and videos which can be downloaded to the many devices such as smartphones, IPADS, and laptop computers. Network technology has been viewed by the religious communities and has been considered to be positive and negative. Careful consideration is given to technology and its impact upon the morals and values of the religious community.

*Keywords:* Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Videos, New Technology, Social Media

Ministry Tools for Leaders in the 21st Century Church

Research is everywhere concerning the use of social media, or the term, social network sites. The participation by individuals is increasing not just here in the United States, but around the globe. Pew Internet 2012a (as cited in Miller, Mundey, & Hill, 2013) advises that 66% of all American adult Internet users visit a social network site. Younger adults ages 18-29 years of age show 86% usage. Facebook has over 900 million users (p. 228). This material suggests that the more religious one is, the less one is apt to engage in the social network site. This study was completed in 2013, however so much has changed since that time, there appear to be more religious believers participating on the social network sites now than there were in the past.

Campbell and Garner (2016) advises that Christian groups respond to new technologies in different ways. Basically they respond positively, negatively, or somewhere in between (p. 98). When technology is seen as being positive, the groups are looking at the message that the technology is carrying rather than the technology itself. The messages are viewed as being a gift from God, so the tools to get the message across the network is also viewed as being God given. This is the vehicle that is used to take the message to masses of people.

When the technology is viewed negatively it is because it is seen as being a distraction from morals. Technology brings with it, ideals and morals that may not be God given. Christians are concerned with the impact of technology, which may not always be positive. The technology at times can be viewed as being, “powerful and seductive” (Campbell & Garner, 2016, p. 99).

Some see technology as not having an advantage or disadvantage on one’s belief system. Technology itself is created by people who have their motives and desires in mind, so the technology is not the enemy, but the intent behind it may be the culprit. However, religious groups do not automatically dislike technology, but agree that it must be studied and evaluated to see what the overall impact will be concerning the belief system that is in place. Campbell and

Garner (2016) advises that religious groups, will go through a four-stage process concerning their choices about technology. These include the following:

1. History – the history and tradition of the community that shapes who they are and what they stand for;
2. Core Beliefs – core beliefs of the group that relate to their general beliefs and choices related to media;
3. Media Negotiation – the negotiation and decision-making processes they undergo, as it relates to a new technology grounded in the first two areas; and finally
4. Community Discourse about Technology – the communal framing and discourses created by a group to justify their technology use in light of their values and identity. (pp. 103-104)

Once the process has been conducted the determination is made to accept or deny the technology. Whatever the decision, religious groups understand the opportunities that technology can mean for their congregations.

Standage (as cited in Lim, 2017) report that new opportunities are available for the church in the 21st century as more and more believers are using the social network sites or social media. The social networks used most often are Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook. As of 2016, Facebook is now reporting, 1.79 billion users (Facebook, as cited in Lim, 2017), where it was previously reported that the figure was about 900 million users as of the 2013 writing. The social network sites are great communication tools for churches of today.

Churches are using these sites for different purposes. Lim (2017) says churches use the social sites as ways to inform members, persuade people to attend church events, to create a sense of excitement about the church, meet the needs of the membership, get to know the members, pray for the membership, encourage members, support the members, and to teach devotionals and deliver sermons.

Longden (2013) suggests that social media is a tool that can be used in the teaching and forming of ministerial training. Most clergies see it as impacting their social life and not the ministry. However, it is true that while their social life may be impacted, clergy can use this tool to assist with the ministry of missions. By using it in this capacity, they may be encouraged to bring other Christians on board, and the cycle continues.

Danaan (2016) agrees that technology has changed the world of today and the way we interact with each other and the way that God's Word ministers to the people. Christian churches today are beginning to adopt the use of social media as an aid in missions. Social media is a way to transmit the Word of God and also be able to reach so many people. Through Social Media, the Word of God can reach places where the Word of God is not practiced or lived.

Danaan (2016) says,

> The new media are computer-based media that allow easy, person-to-person communication. They are the latest and most friendly communication forms that bring the world together. The Internet, for instance, has opened the opportunity to enhance information flow and improve shared ideas across national frontiers. It is a medium of Mass Communication that has greatly changed the behaviour of man. (p. 70)

According to Danaan (2016), the new media is the way of evangelism and of fulfilling the great commission which listed in Matthew 28:19 says, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (King James Version). Ministry tools are valuable for today's churches as there are many to choose from, the tools are available and useful for the members, and the tools help in the advancement of the ministries.

## Literature Review

### Ministry Tools Available for the Ministry

Today it is not uncommon to walk into a church and find parishioners holding a smartphone or a tablet instead of a Bible. The convenience of applications that can be accessed

on these devices, which includes not only Scripture but being able to access the Internet, along with their size makes it more convenient than carrying a Bible in a case. These devices are present in the lives of people, so it is no surprise that they would make their way into religion and today's churches. The portability of the devices makes them available to go anywhere the user may travel. Christians, Muslims, and other religions are utilizing the applications that have been made available.

Rinker, Roof, Harvey, Bailey, and Embler (2016) noted that Christians were using the applications daily for devotionals, understanding of scriptures and inspirational messages. Applications are easily downloaded regardless of the device that one owns. Itunes for the iPhones and IPADS and the Android stores for the Galaxy products. Several of the applications are free, and as long as the user has the proper amount of space on their device, they can use the application.

Rinker et al. (2016) also noted that the Muslims were using applications to translate the Qur'an because many of the students did not learn the Arabic language. This application is helpful for any religious scholar wanting to learn more about the Qur'an. In addition to translating the Qur'an, a person can access the compass application or the Global Positioning System, to ensure they are facing the correct direction when praying. This is extremely important, as Muslims are to pray facing in the direction towards Jerusalem, which is the east. Directional applications are convenient along with the Internet.

The Internet is used not only by the membership but also by Pastors. The Pastors are using the Internet as a primary means of communication to the members or each other about the Gospel. Southerland (2014) states that people today are using Social Media, and these tools are helpful to fulfill the call to the Gospel. Christ commissioned witnesses to go into the different

parts of the world and share the Gospel, Acts 1:8. Through these tools, one can share the Gospel with anyone in the world at any time. The tools help the communication effort overall.

Communicating through social media allows the Pastor to reach more people daily. Using social media will enable this effect. The Pastor can send out emails, newsletters, and may connect on Facebook. Through Facebook, the Pastor may leave members private messages or set up a blog. Southerland (2014) also notes that additional tools that are available for use by the Pastor and the members are not only Facebook but are also email, Twitter, text messaging, Skype, and instant messaging (p. 23). These are just some of the tools available.

Another tool that is also available for use between members is instant messaging or what is commonly known as IM. Instant messaging are text messages that are sent between users. These messages arrive much quicker than emails. Group meetings, while are normally held face-to-face can be arranged through email, Facebook Live, or Skype, with notes and announcements distributed through email. Google accounts are also new methods of communication. These tools are useful for use among members and may also be used by members in communication with the outside world, especially in evangelism.

Evangelism will continue to be a ministry that is more effective face-to-face. However, invitations, announcements, and other pertinent information concerning the church can be posted using Facebook, Twitter or even Video. The use of a church's website to inform the public of outside activities is also a great tool. In using Social Media, it must be remembered that the applications are only tools which can enhance the ministry and not become the ministry. Another popular application is Facebook.

The church can now set up a Facebook page, or a Facebook group. Facebook is a social networking site. A site can be created for the church, and different Facebook groups can also be

established and used as communication tools. Facebook Live is another facet of this media which can be used to show videos of religious services. The only thing that is needed is a smartphone that has video capabilities. Twitter is also available for the church to set up an account.

Through the use of Twitter, a member or the Pastor can forward sermon highlights through the use of hashtags (#). Twitter allows individuals the ability to transmit small pieces of information to a large number of people. This is similar to text messaging. People who receive the tweets, as they are called, are those who have chosen to follow you. The messages are given and received in real time. The service is very simple to use. Each tweet must be 140 characters or less. Through this service one can also attach pictures, videos and other content to several followers (Southerland, 2014, pp. 86-87).

YouTube is a free video stream that can be used to video the church services, introduce the Pastor or highlight specific events at the church. This media is used to share experiences. Videos can be seen by the sender and whoever else desires to view them. YouTube is helpful in the religious communities because it can be used to spread the Word of God by directing people to the ministries without them having to physically visit. As one can see, social media tools are available, and the church should consider carefully before embarking on this journey.

Williams (2015) suggested churches ask four basic questions before deciding to use social media as a tool for discipleship. The questions are: “why use social media, what types of social media to use, how social media will be used in the strategy, and what are the expected outcomes in terms of spiritual formation” (p. 382). Once the strategy has been decided and the outcomes determined, it may be time to appoint a technology specialist who understands the different networking applications.

In addition to knowing the tools that are available for use in the churches, it is also essential to know the differences in the technology. The digital culture of today consists of a

networked theology and understanding the differences between digital religion, online religion, and religion online. Online networking is flexible. A person can interact with another person and not share the same geographical space. Relationships can increase and include more diversity. "Online communities, therefore, transcend geographical and physical space and form a new shared space via digital media" (Cloete, 2015, p. 3).

Religion online refers to the different information that is available online and online religion refers to religious practices formed online. Religion online is one-way communication as there is minimal interaction. "Digital religion includes religion online and online religion" (Cloete, 2015, p. 4).

Online religion is a place where people can come together, whether they are a part of the church or whether they have left the church. Online religion tosses traditionalism out of the church door. Knowing the difference will help the reader understand what it means to merge the network with theology. Churches are interested in technology, but they are also interested in how to increase the memberships.

Churches are using advertising tools and branding to attract, grow, and build the memberships. Flett (2015) reported that churches located in New Zealand and Australia, are using visual technology as a form of communication, with much success. They are promoting who they are, what they have to offer, and their vision for the future. Images used in advertising allow the viewer to see themselves as a part of the church. Images can be very persuasive in the behavior of people. Christian images are suggested for use within the church while secular images are the suggested use to attract persons outside of the church. These new tools are proving to be useful to the membership of the churches.

**Ministry Tools Aiding The Membership**

van der Meerwe, Grobler, Strasheim and Orgon (2013) state, that the number of young adults that are attending church services today has decreased. The reasons, begin with the fact that they may be distracted, consumed with work, or may have a desire for social leisure and relaxation (p. 1). The reasons for young adults are stated, but children are believed to be the future of the church.

While it is true that children are very active in the church, when they are younger, their participation has been attributed to their parents. Sometimes when the children become young adults, they leave the church altogether and will sometimes return when they become much older. When the children do not return, some believe that the church is in trouble.

Dreyer (2004) believes that most Pastors tell the congregations that the church of tomorrow lies with the children and without them, the church will not grow (p. 936). This is a feeling of not only the Pastor but the congregations. Training programs are frequently held with the young adults in the churches so that they become familiar with how their church coordinates services. A lot of the time they will stand side-by-side with the Deacons, Deaconesses, Trustees, and other officers of the church to get an idea of what may be expected of them to do. When the children grow up and do not return for whatever reason, the church must find new ways to attract and keep young adults in the churches.

Church marketing has been found to possibly be the key to attracting and keeping young adults in the churches. Sherman and Devlin (as cited in, van der Merwe et al., 2013) say, “Church marketing is not new and is on the rise” (p. 1). The difference in marketing the way it is commonly used is that instead of marketing a product one is marketing a service. Some are calling this a “servicescape” (van der Merwe et al., 2013, p. 2). The techniques used in the servicescape are different. Items are advertised that will attract people to the church.

Signs, symbols, layout, lighting, temperature, and music have been described as atmospherics (Bitner & Gremleer, as cited in van der Merwe et al., 2013, p. 2). Young adults are very interested in the music that is being offered in the churches. If the music is contemporary, one will find that young adults are more prone to attend the services where this type of music is offered. A questionnaire, asking young adults between the ages of 18 and 30, was given to volunteer participants who attended churches in Pretoria and Johannesburg in South Africa. The results of the survey were as follows:

> All of the respondents reported a positive experience of the service they attended. Of the sample, 60% indicated that they attended a church service once a week, and an additional 25% attended a service at least three times a month. Only 6% attended church less than once a month. A key finding was that atmospherics, relating to a welcoming, homely, cozy and friendly atmosphere, are more important than the physical aspects of layout and design. Music seems to be the most important aspect that has an effect on the experience of church attendees. (van der Merwe et al., 2013, pp. 7-8)

The results concluded that individuals have a greater need to fulfill than music and the landscape of the church. Young adults and others love the music. However, the need to be a part of a group who serves others by serving God is also essential to this group of young adults (van der Merwe et al., 2013, p. 9). Advertising, having the right music and the right atmosphere are all important to the growth of the membership, in addition, churches are turning to marketing to build and sustain their memberships.

A study was conducted of churches to determine how effective their marketing efforts were in building and keeping their members. There were 24 tools identified that were used to retain, attract, and persuade others to become members. Some of the tools were the church's

website which would reflect that they offered ministries for young people, the age of the congregation, social media apps, ministries for college students, along with the ability to use Google and Yahoo. Also, personal referrals, and a large projection screen, and the number of services offered by the church were instrumental.

Pastors of churches that are not growing, but are interested in their congregations growing, should become familiar with social media. Internet-based media are low in cost but have proven to be very successful for nondenominational churches. Other ideas include establishing satellite campuses, which can give the appearance of a small neighborhood church (Webb, 2012, p. 258). Members may be interested in other activities that are available through the different churches.

If the churches advertised that they had leadership roles for women, the church atmosphere was conducive for worship, and they felt they were able to build relationships, and the church offered something for the entire family, these would be a significant factor in attracting members. Webb (2012) stated, “the guiding principle of the marketing approach is to serve the needs and interests of individuals and families” (p. 69).

People are expecting the local church to be the light in their community. It is important to offer as many services for the young children as it is for the services offered to the adults. The need is there for a Men’s Ministry that can minister to the needs of men. The need is there for a Women’s Ministry that can minister to the needs of women. Young children and young adults are requesting activities like dance or what is called liturgical ministries, along with classes that they can attend to learn the Bible on their level. Sunday School classes that are tailored to the different genders is also helpful.

You will find all genders using the Social Media applications to enhance and enrich their experiences in church. The more that the church stays up to date with the technology, the more

interest is shown by the membership at all levels. Webb (2012) notes “nondenominational churches … are utilizing social marketing as a way to increase church attendance and membership. Social media tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, podcasts, Netcasts, and smartphones are instrumental in helping churches connect and build relationships” (p. 254).

While attempts are to be made to attract, retain and persuade persons to come to their churches, it is essential that churches remain faithful to doctrine and theology. Wrenn, Shawchuck, Kotler, and Rath (as cited in Webb, 2012), continued with this thought saying, the church must also embrace the changes that are occurring very rapidly in society today (p. 69).

While the ministries are very important, members want to ensure that they are receiving the necessary teaching to face obstacles that may arise at any time. People have many options when it comes to choosing or remaining at a church. The options include how the church worships, what the church has to offer, comfort and convenience, delivery modes such as the internet, television and finally multisite locations. According to Joseph and Webb, (as cited in Webb, 2012), people are committed to their faith but not necessarily to a church and will switch to another church if they feel their needs are not being met (p. 69). Some churches may have found the answer.

Megachurches seem to have found what it takes to keep their memberships growing. The most frequent utilized media were yellow page ads, newspaper ads, direct mail and personal contact. The internet was being used for email, access to other Christian sites, and information gathering for sermons. Webb (2012) stated, “the solution to membership growth lies partially in the types of marketing communications media that churches utilize for building and sustaining membership” (p. 80). Churches must use internet-based media and church practices to retain members. The more tools churches can take advantage of, the more success they may experience in advancing the membership.

**Ministry Tools Advancing the Membership**

As a person enters into a church or sanctuary today, one will likely see large projector screens, sophisticated technology which enhances the volume of the music, a location designated for the instruments which are used in the services, and ATMs which are used for members to contribute their tithes and offerings. The funds are taken directly from their accounts and deposited into the church's fund accounts in a matter of seconds. The church may have a sign posted saying the services are being recorded live through the use of video streaming. This church would be considered an advanced church, regardless of the size of the membership.

Such churches exist, and two of them, one in the United States named LCBC and the other in Germany CityChurch have been noted for their advancements in ministry. The name of the first church is LCBC, which is located in Pennsylvania. The atmosphere when walking into this church is that of walking into a movie theatre. An usher is there to welcome, greet, and offer popcorn. Once inside it appears that the lighting is that of a movie theatre. Then the music is noticed.

The next obvious difference is the band that is playing on the stage. The lyrics to the song that is playing is showing on the large flat screen or projector screen. The lighting is very low, like a movie theater, however, one cannot help but notice people's lips moving as they are singing the songs.

The volume of the guitars, which are electric, bass, the drums, keyboard and the singing, are louder than the congregation. The songs being sung are contemporary praise and worship Christian songs which are known internationally. The pastor comes out and begins speaking the message for that day. The pastor is preaching from a series entitled, "At the Movies" (Justice, 2015, p. 86).

This pastor begins to preach and references one of the latest movies in his message. The audience is excited because whatever the movie is, more than likely they have seen it. When the service is over, people greet each other, as they normally would at the end of a regular church service, and leave. These are the normal activities that take place in this church and in several churches around the world, which have elected to do church, differently.

The other church is located in Germany and is named CityChurch, and their services are also held in a Cineplex similarly to LCBC. LCBC stands for, 'Lives Changed By Christ', however, the community church's actual name is Lancaster County Bible Church. The acronym was left the way it was, and the church decided to rebrand itself. This did not alter anything because the members only referred to the church as LCBC, so the name did not functionally change (Justice, 2015, p. 100).

These churches are examples of two churches that are using new media to advance their congregations. About five years ago, when attending a workshop at another church close to me, the pastor began the sermon by playing a clip from the movie, Indiana Jones and the Holy Grail. As the clip played, everyone in the audience was in awe how he was able to tie his message in with the theme of this movie.

Justice (2015) explained how the volume of the music, along with the type of music, the atmosphere and the building itself, made a difference to the parishioners. The parishioners were not all young adults. Several adults were a part of this congregation and viewed their services as being unique to their worship service. These churches have become a part of a group of churches which are known as media-friendly churches (Justice, 2015, p. 117).

Webb (2012) has taken a look at megachurches and surmised that they know how to market their churches to everyone. This is not just to specific individuals but people whose

makeup is different from their neighboring churches. Diversity is the key. In addition, several of the megachurches have opened up satellite campuses which enhance the smaller neighborhood churches.

Webb (2012) notes, “They are doing this by using video technology, with prerecorded sermons and major simulcasts on video screens” (p. 248). Considine (as cited in Webb, 2012) advises leaders of small churches that wish to see an increase in their membership and attendance, to study churches who have experienced growth. Then develop and implement their marketing plan (p. 248). The use of a church website that has been properly designed also may attract and retain members in a small church.

Leaders of small churches could visit other churches whom they see as growing and determine what tools they are using, which could benefit their church and begin a program to adopt them. “Megachurches or large churches could potentially become mentors, or even partners with small churches since leaders of large churches have evidently mastered the marketing philosophy and the process required for continuous growth and preservation” (Webb, 2012, p. 258).

The churches in America along with churches in Europe are familiar with the use of new media. In Czechoslovakia, most of the citizens have access to the internet, and the use of cybersociety is very advanced. The website of the Roman Catholic Church was created for the general public and the internal community (Karim, 2017, p. 252). The Roman Catholic Church is the established church in the area.

In many of the established churches, an automatic teller machine (ATM) has been placed in the church lobbies. This makes it convenient for the member to deposit money, withdraw money and even give their tithe and offerings from this machine. Some churches have

established accounts whereby the member can text their tithes and offerings to the church account. This mode to give money makes it easier to give.

## Conclusion

Research is everywhere concerning the use of social media, or the term, social network sites. More believers are using the social network sites or social media. Churches are using these sites for different purposes. Social media is a tool that can also be used in the teaching and forming of ministerial training. Most clergies see it as impacting their social life, however, their ministry will also be impacted.

Ministry tools are available to be used by churches whether they are considered to be small, midsize or megachurches. The tools, Facebook, Facebook Live, Skype, Twitter, Instagram and several others are available for use. These are just some of the tools that can assist churches of today into growing and maintaining their congregations. Once the church decides that social media fit their strategic plan, they only need to execute the plan and bring a technology expert on board. New media tools are available for churches. Ministry tools are available for ministries, will aid the ministries and assist them in advancing their ministries. The digital age is not going away but will offer more opportunities as research continues.

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