

Twittered, Tweeted and Still Lonely?

I am worried about the future of our movement. Organizations that don't change with the times can be left behind, and eventually become extinct. Our movement sort of holds its own, but barely. And technology is part of that picture. Many of our congregations are very slow to adapt to the new technology. As the minister of a 12-year-old congregation and a minister who hopes to help start one more new congregation before I fade away, I spend considerable time trying to figure out where religion is going in this country. I don't think it's going away, but it is morphing, changing form, and the bricks and mortar form where we all gather once a week may be fading into the sunset.

When I first began to muse on the topic of technology and the church, the first thing that came to mind was that when the UU Congregation of Saratoga Springs bought its first building in 2002, some wise soul insisted that the door locks have combinations, so that we wouldn't have to run around giving keys to people, and then trying to get them back or have someone go to the building to let people in. We share freely with our members the combinations to the doors and they can show up to do their business whenever it's convenient for them. In eight years, we've changed the combination once and we've never had any problems. Alleluia! Technology makes life easier once again. Technology is affecting the life of our churches in almost every area -- from security of buildings and grounds to minimizing consumption of energy to religious education to database management to office administration. But it is especially impacting worship and communications, and within communications, especially marketing.

I interviewed a potential new member last week who was raised in a Lutheran church in a small town on the upper peninsula of Michigan. He said that church still doesn't have a web site and probably never will. And I thought, oh, how wonderfully simple! What a concept, that people would just show up on Sunday morning because they want to worship and/or to work on their spiritual lives. No reading of the newsletter – or the website -- to see if the sermon or music sounds interesting enough to bother. Just show up. Come together, not to be entertained, or to be intellectually stimulated, but because it's what we do to care for our souls, because we hope it will help us be better people. How beautiful. But we don't live in that world anymore, do we?

The other day I read the newsletter of one of the churches in our district. They were concerned about updating their telephone tree. I thought, how quaint. We don't even have a telephone tree. Never have. My telephone rarely rings, and if it does, it's usually an emergency. It's my least-common form of communication. Ninety five percent of my communication is via e-mail or texting. But even that is old hat. Young people aren't e-mailing any more. They do instant messaging via cell phones. Remember when teenagers were known for talking on the phone? That's gone. Thirty-one percent of teenagers in our country send 100 text messages every day.

I haven't yet gotten into instant messaging very much, and I'm too cheap to pay for internet access on my cell phone. Our church published a paper membership directory this year, but I doubt we will again. After all, you can get the info on line and it's more up-to-date. I would say 95, if not 98% of our congregation has access to the internet. Many of our churches have stopped sending a periodic newsletter via

snail mail. If we send a newsletter at all, it's via e-mail. And some are not doing that. Instead, we just Twitter or post on Facebook.

I seriously doubt the UUA will ever publish a hymnal again. We'll just put words up on the screen as we did here tonight. It will give us maximum flexibility for both readings and music. Why would we be tied down to one collection? We can go on the web and gather words and music for worship from around the world, or just go to the UUWorship Web. Hardback hymnal? Why? The same with curricula for religious education. Many of them will be available for downloading via the internet.

I'm not a person who loves technology, and I struggle to keep up with it. I would rather not spend a lot of time in front of a screen. I'd much rather read or garden or play music, or just be in conversation face to face. Talking with individuals about their spiritual lives is one of the most rewarding aspects of ministry for me. I prefer that it be face to face, so that I can read facial expression, voice tones and body language. Pastoral care via e-mail is pretty unsatisfying, although I suppose if I could Skype and see you through the computer, that would be better than only having words electronically. But it's hard to hug you through the computer.

I've mostly viewed technology as a necessary evil. I've resisted blogging, in spite of encouragement from my friend Sam Trumbore. In January of this year, the Pope told the priests to "Go Forth and Blog," to "use all multi-media tools at their disposal to preach the Gospel. . ." (Associated Press, January 23, 2010, "Pope to Priests: Go Forth and Blog) I've set up a Face-book account, but I find it more annoying than useful, because I just can't read all the messages that come there

AND those that come into my minister e-mail at church AND my personal account. Sometimes, I get more than 120 e-mails per day.

A few weeks ago, I got a sort of wake-up call about technology. It came in the form of an e-mail from a young woman asking me to do her wedding. Not so interesting. What was interesting is that this young woman opened my eyes to one of the ways technology is shaping the future of religion. Rebecca had been a student at Skidmore College and during her last year had done her senior paper on our congregation and what she saw as strengths and weaknesses of Unitarian Universalism. Then she graduated and moved to New York City.

In the midst of her email requesting my conducting her wedding, she said she had been getting my sermons off our church web site and using the ideas in them as the basis for a gathering of her friends at her apartment in Manhattan on Friday nights. “Wow!” There’s something going on here to which I’d better pay attention.

For at least the past eight years, my sermons have been posted on our website, and for the past two or three, they are also podcasted. When you go to our website, you may read or listen to a sermon. Occasionally I receive an email from someone far away telling me how much they enjoyed a sermon. I’ve received such e-mails from Scotland, England, Chicago, and Washington, D. C. My colleagues often tell similar stories. And this is good ego food. Nevertheless, in spite of these earlier messages from cyberspace, I have clung to the paradigm of my church and my ministry consisting primarily of the people who show up in our building on Sunday morning and pay the bills.

But, here I was getting this nice ego food from Rebecca, and at the same time, facing a financial crisis in our congregation and having

to contemplate cutting staff. So, I'm thinking, wow, maybe we need to re-think our model of church and ministry. The old model of church was a group of people who came together in the same building for worship on Sunday morning, and occasionally for other times. Now I know that we never thought our buildings were our churches. The churches still exist even when the building burns down. But the defining factor was our commitment to come together in one place for worship.

So, I found it disturbing recently when a membership committee person challenged my paradigm by asking why isn't it okay for someone to just belong to a Small Group Ministry group and never come to worship and give very little, if any money. Why isn't that good enough, he asked, for membership?

Hmm. Maybe we need to think of our congregations' ministries in a whole new way. Maybe our ministries will be not just to our members, or even to our own communities, but maybe to, potentially, the whole world, via the web. Within the last five years, we've had members move to Germany and Taiwan. Occasionally, they email that they've read or listened to a sermon, and one couple sent a sizable pledge last month. Maybe, instead of coming together at a certain time, we'll connect via the internet. And instead of the truth coming down from on high, maybe, the truth will emerge as we all interact together. Communication will be flowing in all directions, instead of primarily from the minister or the church outward.

In his book, *Generations of Faith*, Carl Eeman points out that to "attract Generation Xers, worship needs to be interactive, with everyone joining in beyond standing, sitting and singing. Congregations

with a freer worship style are more interactive, with praise choruses, projected and continuously shifting visual images, and talk-show-style interviews.”

Religious institutions face the same dilemma faced by newspapers. How do we finance our ministries on the web? I’ve asked our webmaster to make it possible to donate via our web site, and you can now pay your pledge on line. But I don’t really expect much to come of the possibility for strangers, or those marginally, even randomly, connected to donate there. Would you leave something in the offering plate of the virtual church? Do you pay every time you read a newspaper article on line? The financing mechanisms of this have not yet been figured out. And can you really imagine (gasp) Google ads on your web site?

While I’m worrying about how technology is impacting virtually every area of the church –the Pew Research Center is telling us there may not be a future church, at least, not as we have known it. The Millenials, the generation currently ages 18 – 29, are not interested in institutional religion. One in four is unaffiliated with any faith. That’s twice as un-affiliated as Boomers, my generation, at the same time in the life cycle. Interestingly, Millenials’ beliefs are still similar to those who’ve gone before. But the Millenials aren’t going to church or temple or mosque. Instead, if they go at all, it’s online.

VIRTUAL CHURCH



[see YouTube video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-BGQKaKi18>]

So, in worrying about whether we have a good enough website to attract people, or whether we have the most sophisticated membership database, we may be, as military leaders like to say, “fighting the last war.” Instead of asking whether we should be using screens in worship or contemporary versus traditional music, maybe we need to be asking much more basic questions. Like:

Will there be an institutional church four decades from now? If so, what will it look like? Will it consist of a small television studio and we’ll all stay home and watch the service on line? And maybe come together face –to-face only now and then instead of every week? Maybe we’ll just rent a hall for that and not maintain these big buildings. Think of all the energy we’ll save and how good that will be for the environment. Or maybe we’ll print a sermon and gather in our homes in small groups to discuss it, as Rebecca’s friends do. Maybe we’ll participate in the service by sending in our prayer requests, aka Joys and Sorrows via instant messaging, or discuss ideas via a chat room.

On a C-span broadcast last week of a conference on Innovation and Resources, one panelist said some believe personal computers will go away completely. Instead, we will just be connected through hand-held I-phone-like devices. When we need a “spiritual fix”, we’ll just call up on our hand-held screen some spiritual message.

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT



“There’s an app for that!” Or maybe we’ll call up a video of a service and watch it while we sit on a park bench. Or maybe we’ll watch a service with a few friends as it is streamed into our receivers. My husband says we’ll soon all have only “receivers” in our hands, much like current radios. All the generation of content will be done somewhere else. We won’t store things on our sets. We’ll just receive through them. It’s called “Cloud Computing.” I quipped, “Well, that would give the traditional sky god something else to do wouldn’t it?” This gives new meaning to the Church of the Larger Fellowship. Do they realize that they may be the ONLY church of the future?

We UU’s have always prided ourselves on our individualism, and technology is pushing it even further. Religion in the future may not be congregational at all. We’ll just get our religious information via the web, and our connections may occur primarily through “social media.” One might think that would be music to the soul of we UU’s. But as another of those commentators on C-span said the other day, our big challenge is to move from the myth of INdependence to the myth of INTERdependence. Some think the web is the perfect symbol or metaphor for that.

TRUTH FROM ON HIGH



Community

Outreach

Worship

Small Group
Ministry

While watching live-streamed worship, we could even participate, that is use the gestures of religion along with what's going on the screen. We UU's don't get our bodies into our worship much, but if we were Catholic we could genuflect and make the sign of the cross and kneel to pray. Or if we are Jewish, Muslim or Buddhist we could bow along with those on screen. We could sing along.

For years, I have toyed with the idea of staying home from GA but renting a large hall and having the UU's in our cluster come together to experience through live-streaming, the same service that the folks at GA are experiencing. Maybe we'll do all of these?

What will be the ties that bind us together? Will we still need bricks and mortar? Or only bits and bytes and screens . . .

We have primarily been people of the word. Around 1991, in my last year of Divinity School, I wrote my senior paper on ritual in UU Worship. As part of my research, I went to Chestnut Hill in Boston to interview the minister, Joe Bassett. He described how every Sunday they processed into his church holding up the Bible to symbolize the importance of the Word in worship. For him, the Word also referred to Jesus. Over the years, I have thought how apt that procession of the Bible was in symbolizing our commitment to "truth." We are children of the enlightenment, modernists who believe in objective truth. We believe truth can be found, it's worth searching for, and we are willing to dedicate ourselves to it. That's partly what those high pulpits are about in New England churches. We embrace using reason, especially, through words, to find and articulate the truth. We pay a "learned clergy" to do that for us. Still, even now, in congregational surveys

preparing for calling a minister, we say our number one requirement is “intellectually stimulating sermons.”

But postmodernism tells us there’s no such thing as objective truth. Quantum mechanics tells us we can’t know both the velocity and position of a particle. Light can appear as both a particle and a wave. Neuroscientists are telling us we have to have emotion in order to reason. We are down the rabbit hole again! Our old hymn sandwiches – hymn, sermon, hymn-- or lecture and discussion, don’t cut it any more. How shall we do church now?

Will we do it with lots of electricity? Electronic music? Lots of screens? Shorter sermons? More video? Maybe we’ll interact only in virtual reality. One of our largest congregations – of 800 people -- exists only in virtual reality. It is the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Second Life. It’s not officially affiliated with UUA. But there is already within our ranks a virtual spiritual experience. We’ll go there now. We invite you for a few moments to the on-line monastery of the UU Christian Fellowship.

VIRTUAL PRAYER





Light a Candle

9,383,085 candles have been lit from 242 countries,
including 15,670 candles in last 2 days.

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist
Christian Fellowship. We hope that you will
light a candle in witness to the transforming
power of the Holy Spirit.

Begin »

Welcome to Gratefulness.org. To go back to the site you came from simply close this window. The text on this page was written by the Webmaster of the linking site, and Gratefulness.org is not responsible for its content. If you are a webmaster and wish to set up your own free custom candle intro, click here: [Webmasters](#). ©2006 Gratefulness.org - [Home](#) - [Topics](#) - [Practices](#) - [Features](#) - [Forums](#)

To light a candle,
enter and click on one which is not lit.

enter

15,701 candles from 128 countries are shining.



pkc MA BAYLE US lbd fence US papà IT carol



Idali Hijas US iao BR TF Hayde AU

Click To Light



M.RE BR HB SCB US 12



5j41 j US DH j US MEQ icab BR ma LA FR





Before continuing,
reflect for a moment
on your reason
for lighting a candle.

[continue »](#)



Feel free to add a few words of dedication,
which will show when one clicks on your candle

May the light and love of the Saint
Lawrence District shine on...

Please initial your candle,
so you can find it again,
among the others.

SLD

To associate your candle with a candle group,
or to start a new group, enter a group initial,
otherwise, leave blank.

[continue »](#)



May the light and love of the
Saint Lawrence District shine
on...

— *from NY, United States*

[« edit message](#)

To light the candle,
click on the wick.



Stay here quietly,
as long as you wish,
before continuing.

[continue »](#)



Would you like
to invite a friend
to see this candle?

Yes

No



**Your candle will stay lit for 48 hours.
When you return to the candles
you may also look
at messages left by others
and hold their concerns in your heart.**

return to candles...

15,712 candles from 128 countries are shining.



TF Hayde AU

SLD US

May the light and love of the Saint Lawrence District shine on...



12

5j41 j US

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One of the questions I have not been able to answer in my research is whether I am correct in believing that even though we might Twitter and Tweet and blog and chat and participate in virtual church, whether we'll still be lonely and need the face-to-face contact provided by coming together in one place once a week. One of the hottest questions being explored by cyber philosophers is "how real is virtual reality?" It's so real that you can learn to fly a plane in it. It's so real that therapists can use it to put soldiers returning from war zones into traumatic stress and then help them heal. It's so real that people are watching pornography more and actually making love less.

Emerson told us we didn't need churches to experience the holy; just go out in nature. On surveys, UU's often say that is their primary spiritual practice – communing with nature. If we believe in God at all, we believe s/he/it is contained in nature. 40% of UU's say they have had a spiritual experience -- one of those oceanic experiences of being part of something larger. We now know such experiences can be stimulated by putting a probe into the brain, so why not stimulate, or do I mean simulate it, using virtual reality? Will THOSE spiritual experiences be real? And if so, in what sense?

Cyberpsychologists are now talking about "ambient intimacy." We offer "ultimacy and intimacy" in our small group ministries. We founded that program more than a decade ago on the idea that people are hungry for both. But, maybe cyber-intimacy is good enough. If I can find a soul-mate, even if s/he is half way around the world, if we really click, maybe that will be good enough. Maybe I don't need to see my soul friends face to face. Maybe it's enough to have had the same

experience via the internet and then talk about it through the internet. No bricks and mortar. No maintaining a large building.

What might be lost? For one thing, diversity of thought. We tend to gravitate to people who think like we do. Will our cyber-friends challenge us when they disagree? To some extent we have that problem even in face-to-face interactions.

How much do humans need to be face to face? Somewhere in my training I was encouraged to shake hands with people on Sunday morning, especially with elderly people. “They might live alone,” said the professor, “and you might be the only one who touches them all week.” Somewhere I read a year or two ago, that we need to be touched significantly 11 times a day for optimal mental health. So sometimes, My husband and I will jokingly hug each other, and counts pats on the back as we do so, “one, two. . . three, . . . eleven,” hoping that’s good enough in our busy lives! How do we do in religion what medicine calls, “High tech, high touch?”

Of all the areas of church life impacted by technology, worship and communications are the two areas impacted most. A couple of weeks ago, on my “Sunday off”, I hied myself off to the local rapidly-growing mega church, where technology is used to the max. It’s housed in a former shopping center, and serves 5000-6000 people each weekend, in three locations and six services. The service is transmitted electronically to two remote locations.

Entering the building, I wasn’t sure whether it felt like a hotel or a movie theater. Dead center, there was a beautiful woman behind a counter. The sign above her head said, “Guest Services.” Down a hall on the left was obviously KidsWorld, because there were big murals of

children having fun. All elementary children were encouraged to go to KidsWorld. On the other end of the lobby was a lovely coffee bar, with several different kinds of coffee. Felt like Starbucks, only it was “free,” and people brought the coffee into the service with them. Next to the coffee bar was a nice little bookstore, where I could purchase books and DVD’s of previous services.

THE TECHNO-CHURCH

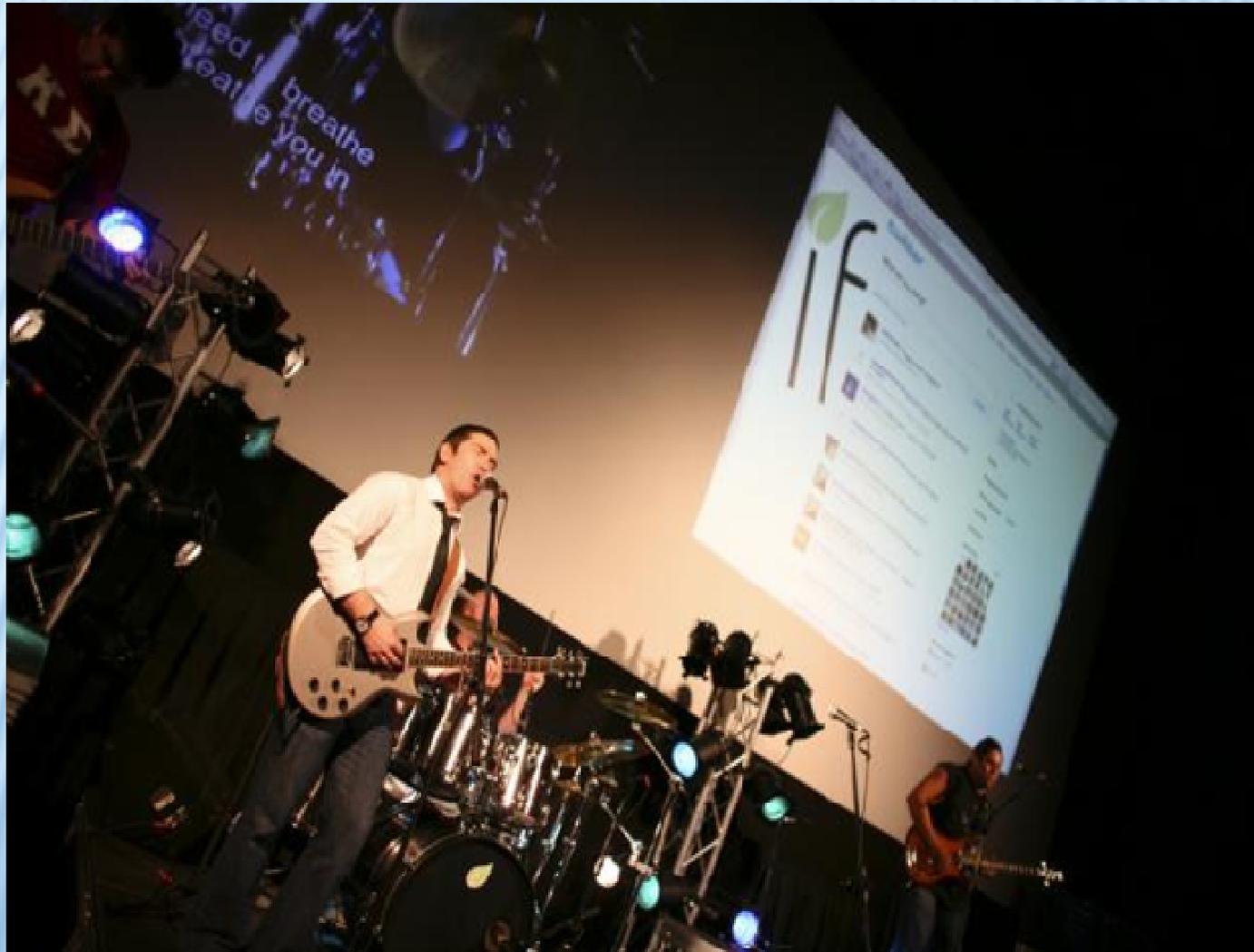
**IT'S
YOUR
TIME**

CURRENT SERIES

Locations ► Clifton Park NY • Colonie NY • Pittsfield MA



THE TECHNO-CHURCH



I was greeted by three people before I sat down, but no one was intrusive. On my chair was a little card. If I filled it out, I could get a free copy of Joel Osteen's latest book. The sanctuary felt like a movie theater, or maybe a TV set. It was dark, kind of like a black-box theater. The chairs were cushy. There were two large screens, left and right. No one handed me an order of service. I was just going to have to trust them. The theme of the month was "It's Your Time." Five, or ten minutes before the service began, a digital clock on the screens started the countdown by seconds to "It's your time." The band, a male lead singer, two female backups, two guitarists, keyboardists and drummer began playing. Very loud bass. I could feel it thumping in my chest. Wasn't sure whether I was having a spiritual experience or a heart attack. Announcements appeared up on the screen.

The lead singer welcomed us, and invited us to stand to our feet to praise God. We "sang" a couple of songs. I put it in quotes because I'm a fairly musical person and I couldn't find the melody in the loud noise. So in spite of the words being up on the screen, I couldn't really "sing along." The minister welcomed us. He led us in prayer. We sang a rock version of How Great Thou Art as a prayer response. Ah, this I could sing. At least I knew the tune. The minister spoke for 30 minutes in a casual, conversational style. He had a wireless mic, and wandered freely around the stage. A couch was his main prop. Bible verses reinforcing his points were put up on the screen. The audience participated by reading, or shouting, words he had underlined.

Though I didn't see it this time, in a previous visit, occasionally a message would appear on the screen, "Parent No. 25, please report to

the nursery to attend to your child.” Nursery parents had been given buzzers like one receives in restaurants while waiting for tables or food to be ready.

The minister’s message was “Turn your dreams into goals so they can become a reality.” It was a message I or any of my colleagues might deliver, but wrapped oh so differently. The service was fast-paced. Entertaining. Lots of technology. And the room was full. I didn’t see many people older than I, but I saw a lot of people my age and younger. For those who grew up on rock music, I thought, “Man, this is their world. I feel like I’m at a rock concert, with an inspirational talk thrown in.” Although, I have to admit, I left feeling uplifted. The message was very positive and upbeat and wrapped in a high-energy package. I was jazzed.

Can we UU’s do this? Should we? We had you sing hymns a few minutes ago. We put the words up on the screen because we wanted you to experience that. If you’ve been to GA, you’ve experienced it before. Some believe the advantages are, you’re not weighed down by holding a hymnal in your hand. You’re breathing more deeply because you’re looking up as you sing, instead of down into a book. But, and this is especially hard for us, if they put them up there only one verse at a time, it’s harder to read ahead to see if you agree with the words in time to decide whether you are going to sing along or not! :-)

A few years ago, I thought I wanted to try some video in my services. I dutifully created a task force, bought six copies of *Silver Screen, Sacred Story*, from Alban Institute. We visited other churches who were using video. But when we reported back to our church, there was a big NO. We don’t want screens in our church. One young father,

who makes his living making movies, said, “I see video projection as the height of worldliness in the best and worst sense. And I go to church to get in touch with otherworldliness or to transcend the worldly. Or to connect with what is of the world but more important to it. To me church needs quiet and calm and video is distraction.”

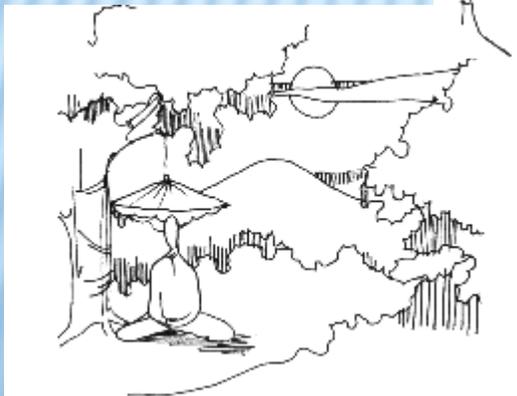
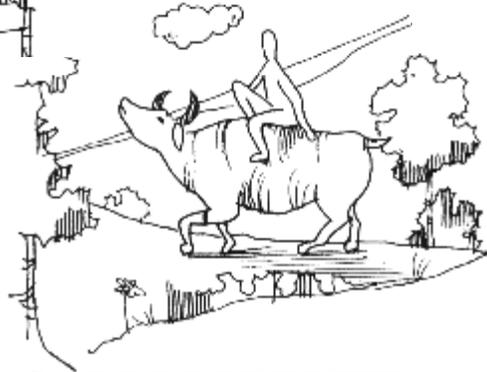
One of the things that has surprised me about my congregation is a very low-tech thing. I’ve instituted a time for prayer and meditation that lasts for about ten minutes. There’s some meditative music, there is a spoken prayer and there are at least three minutes of silence. We strike a singing bowl to begin and end the silence. When I started it I was prepared for major pushback. To my surprise, everyone who’s told me about it loves it. Some even want longer silence. And when children are in, even they, if they’re older than toddlers, seem to “get it.” Would being silent together with people not in the same room be as good? Maybe, but there’s something very unique about being in silence in the same room together. I think it has to be learned. Carl Eeman says our younger generations, raised on constant media and multitasking, think something is wrong, something is “not working”, if there is silence. Television screens are not supposed to go black. Radio stations are not supposed to be silent. So, intentional silence is a very counter-cultural move. And yet, it’s been central in many religious traditions.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by all this stuff and it’s hard to know where to start. How much of this technology do we need to adopt, and how can we do it so that we are using it to tell our version of the good news, rather than being shaped by it?

I believe that we need to move with the times in the sense of moving from “word” as the primary means of communication, to “word and image” as complementary forms. In the earliest forms of human worship, all of the senses were stimulated. We got rid of all that, the “smells and bells”, and now we seem to be putting it back in. We light chalices, and sometimes have fragrant flowers or bread that smells good. Our Flower Communion is a feast for eyes and noses. I haven’t quite figured yet how we do that one on line. But once we all become competent graphic artists, I’m sure we can draw flowers and post them for one another, and then claim them and print them out and put them on our walls, either in virtual or this reality, or both.

I have seen video used wonderfully in memorial services, especially. It also was used wonderfully by our children a few years ago, when they interviewed members of the congregation and then wove the interviews together and presented them on RE Sunday. I believe there is a place for image in our service. There are some sermons, services, ideas, which can be much better presented visually. For years, I have had a sermon percolating about “riding the ox home,” ten images of the spiritual journey from the Buddhist tradition. But it’s a sermon I can’t do without pictures. It just wouldn’t work.

VISUAL SERMONS



One of our churches in Massachusetts created a wonderful visual meditation on water right after Hurricane Katrina. They used it in their Ingathering Water Communion, and it was so much more powerful than words could have conveyed about the destructive power of water as well as its beauty.

I encourage starting small with the use of video in services--with judicious use of images now and then.

Let's talk about communication for a few minutes.

My husband is a commercial real estate broker. As I was working on this talk, he pulled out from his real estate trade journal a page saying: "Join the conversation", and then it shows six different ways to do so: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, RSS, Blog, and E-Newsletters. Now, I don't even know what all these are.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

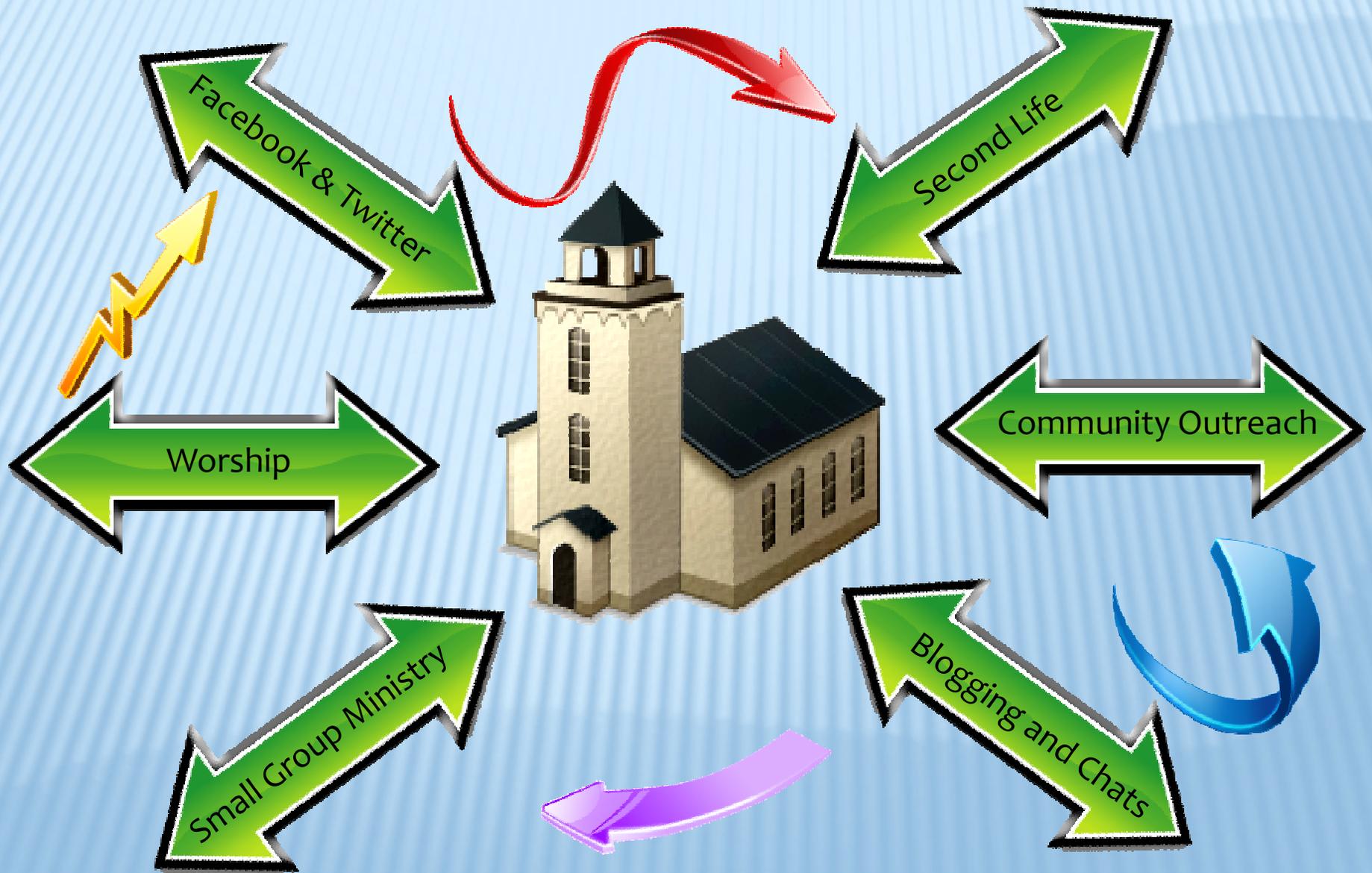


But I did notice at my local tech-savvy megachurch, that they are on Facebook AND Twitter, AND they have a web site AND the minister blogs. I have resisted blogging, wondering whether people really need to read my every half-baked thought on every subject. But then, I read an article by Heather Kirk-Davidoff in the Alban Institute Magazine, *Congregations*. She convinced me congregational blogging might be a good next step after setting up a web site.

I had been thinking of blogging as one more task which would be added to my already-full plate. But Ms Kirk-Davidoff, the pastor of an ecumenical Christian church, has a different idea. Instead of writing the blog herself, she has a church blog on which anyone can write. Although I believe someone should screen entries just to protect the church.

Blogs are to websites what conversations are to speeches. Speeches are one-way communication from speaker to listener. It's an efficient form of communication if you simply need to transfer information. But, if you want to invite people to share from the heart, from their authentic selves, if you believe better truth will emerge with many minds and voices working together, blogging can do that. Whereas most websites just offer information, blogging can offer engagement.

TRUTH AND LOVE ARISE FROM WITHIN, AMONG AND BEYOND



Pastor Kirk Davidoff pondered:

“ . . .I realized that by establishing a blog and inviting the whole congregation to read it and write for it, I wasn't just suggesting a different format for doing something we already do. I was nudging the church to open up our conversations with each other and to invite the world to listen and respond.”

So, Ms Kirk Davidoff's church has two forms of communication in addition to the web site. They use an e-list for which people must sign up for in-house conversations. But the blog is open for anyone to read.

She says their church's blog has “enabled us to both open up our communication and also to streamline it. Within six months of starting our blog, we stopped publishing our printed newsletter, which had been limping along for years. Between the blog, a once-a-week e-mail of announcements and printed announcements in our Sunday morning bulletin, the newsletter had become completely redundant and no longer worth the administrative time spent on developing it or the cost of printing and mailing.” (*Congregations*, Fall, 2008, page 31-32)

Each of us will have to tailor our communications to our congregation. If you're serving a small congregation and most of them aren't using the internet, the new technology is not going to serve you well. It might be appropriate to keep that telephone tree. But for the rest of us, the digital age beckons. I'm sure that more than 90% of people visiting us have visited our web site first. They've read sermons. They've checked out what's offered for children. Sometimes, as in our

church in Amherst, NY, they've taken a virtual drive to the church and learned where to park and where to go once they are in the building.

Regardless of how we use technology, we need to be careful that it remains subservient to our missions, and our message. If we do not use technology to share our version of the good news, then it can do as much damage as good.

Go forth and blog. Go forth and create an e-list for in-house communications. Save energy and trees by letting go of 12-page paper newsletter. Experiment with video in worship and religious education, but start slowly.

Let your words and your images be in the service of love and compassion and justice. For if we do otherwise, we will not deserve to survive, nor are we likely to in the long run. However we communicate, however we worship, our goal remains the creation of the beloved community.

Rev. Linda Hoddy

Gould Discourse

St. Lawrence District

April 23, 2010.

THANK YOU

Harsey Leonard
May Memorial UU Society
for Technical Engineering

Kimberley Debus
UU Congregation of Saratoga Springs
for the PowerPoint Presentation