

Weather The Storm: Evangelizing Amidst The Pandemic

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Abstract

The Corona Virus Disease 2019 has caused tremendous effects to the various facets of human life. To mention some areas, it has disrupted the economy, education, transportation, food, employment, leisure, and worship services. However, though how destructive the pandemic has been, the church still spreads Gospel. Through its evangelization program, the church resorts to find effective ways how to reach both its current members and the unreached. Using qualitative method which focusing on the documentary research, this paper is purposed to discuss how the early church faced trials and found methods to do the commission. The result shows that amidst the trials the early church, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, always found a method to make the mission continue moving forward. The implication of the study shows that the digital science and technology is an effective method in attaining church's mission despite the present situation of the world.

Key Words: Evangelization, Corona Virus Disease 2019, pandemic, digital science and technology

Introduction

The Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19), an unprecedented event, has wreaked the world. It seems to have surprising turned the world upside down. As Sibanda, Muyambo, and Citando emphasize,

Sweeping across the globe and causing death, untold suffering and unprecedented disruption, the COVID-19 pandemic announced its presence in a staggering manner in 2020 and 2021. Within a short period of time, the pandemic became the world's most pressing emergency, exposing the limitations of bio-medicine and highlighting the vulnerability of human beings in different parts of the world.¹

¹Fortune Sibanda, Tenson Muyambo, and Ezra Citando, "Religion and Public Health in the shadow of Covid-19 pandemic in Southern Africa." In *Religion and the Covid-19*

Covid-19 has caused trauma and havoc not only economics, social life, mass transportation, work and employment, but also supply chains, leisure, sport, international relations, and academic programmes.² It has paralyzed the activities of all people, may it be outside the home, school, and even churches.³ In other words, Covid-19 has impacted everything.

Covid-19, which deteriorates the significance of the believers' fellowship⁴, has not spared churches and religious communities but rather transformed⁵ and brought significant to changes to Christian churches.⁶ Though it is a challenge for the church,⁷ yet, it is an opportunity to bring souls to the feet of Jesus.⁸ Still, the church is to continue its mission to the world. There are unreached community waiting for evangelists to let them know the Gospel. Thus, Jesus said to unto his disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt 9:37-38). We are to join in working for Him to save more souls to His feet—to seek and save the unreached. It is because "... the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Moreover, the church "must not lose its identity as a divine institution devoted to the extraordinary task of being the salt and light of the world"⁹ come what may. In other words, still God's gospel will be spread amidst Covid-19.¹⁰ There must be appropriate procedures for the church given its constant experiences of unending changes.¹¹ Thus, it is stressed:

The practice must be under the control and power of the Holy Spirit, live in the power of praise and worship, and have a heart full of compassion for souls. We must also rise to respond to God's call and be a light, the continuity of the gospel must continue, even amid an emergency, so that many souls can be won for Christ.¹²

Covid-19 calls a change in the carrying-out of church duties and service to its congregation and surrounding people, by having innovations in its ministry—to adjust, alter, and suit for new service patterns, may it be onsite, online, or hybrid.¹³ In terms of finding innovation or methods on how the church conduct the ministry during the pandemic, Ardi Sastrohartoyo et. al demonstrate that church should not

Pandemic in Southern Africa, eds. Fortune Sibanda, Tenson Muyambo, Ezra Citando (New York, NY: Routledge, 2022), 1.

²Jerry Pilay, "COVID-19 Shows the Need to Make Church More Flexible," *Transformation*, 37, no. 4 (2020): 266.

³Gernaida K. R. Pakpahan, et al. "Pandemic Ecclesiology: Church Re-actualisation During the Pandemic." *HTS Theological Studies*, 78, no. 4 (2022): 1; see also Albert Leonarts Jantje Haans. "Crossing the Gospel of God's Kingdom Amidst the Storm of COVID-19." *International Journal of Social and Management Studies*, 2, no. 4 (2021): 88-97; and Onyekachi G. Chukwuma, "The Impact of the COVID-19 Outbreaks on Religious Practices of Churches in Nigeria," *HTS Theological Studies*, 77, no. 4 (2021): 1.

⁴Pakpahan, et al., "Pandemic Ecclesiology," 1.

⁵Chukwuma, "The Impact of the Covid-19," 1.

⁶Haans, "Crossing the Gospel," 89.

⁷Chukwuma, "The Impact of the Covid-19," 2, 3.

⁸Haans, "Crossing the Gospel," 89.

⁹Pakpahan, et all. "Pandemic Ecclesiology," 7.

¹⁰Haans, "Crossing the Gospel," 89.

¹¹Pakpahan, et all. "Pandemic Ecclesiology," 7.

¹²Haans, "Crossing the Gospel," 95.

¹³Pakpahan, et all. "Pandemic Ecclesiology," 1.

stop doing the ministry despite the pandemic. They suggest that one thing the church needs to do is to make digital evangelism. According to them, by applying this method, spiritual distancing should not occur although there is a social distancing caused by the pandemic¹⁴ Jolf John Tendeau, Bartholomeus Diaz Nainggolan, and Stimson Hutagalung suggest that during the pandemic church can utilize health literatures as an effective way to make a bridge to the world as the church do the Great Commission.¹⁵

Moreover, Ferry Simanjuntak, Christie Putri Sion, and Diana Tri Agustine suggest a solution to planting church during the pandemic. According to their study, church must not only use the media opportunity but also manage them properly in supporting church plants and growth. Jerry Pilay, on the other hand, emphasizes on the how the church should be flexible during this pandemic. He states that the church should not hesitate to embrace or adapt new methods in order that the church can do the mission and embrace theology which are “life affirming and transforming to reflect and mirror the reign of God.”¹⁶ The usage of the new methods in the difficult situation is likely a must. Otherwise, church cannot coup the advance of this world and the mission will fail.

The fact that modern church utilizes new methods during the pandemic call an idea to find out how the early church experiences difficult times and what methods they use to do the mission at that time. Therefore, this paper attempts to look how the early church in the New Testament find the evangelism methods during the trials. In this study, the discussion of Ellen G. White’s view in related to the suggestion of the usage of new devices or methods to share the Gospel under the unexpected circumstances is also informed. As the church needs improvisation of evangelism method, at the end of the discussion, therefore, an implication of the study is provided in the form of methods to help today’s church spread the Gospel during the pandemic.

Methodology

This paper is qualitative research in nature where the documentary research method is employed. Documentary research method is an analysis of documents that contains information about the phenomenon one desire to undertake¹⁷ It is considered as a significant source of information that can be used in different ways of social researches.¹⁸ Thus, articles, books, and any related reference will receive attention as the literature reference of this paper.

Discussion

¹⁴Ardi Sastrohartoyo, et.al, “The Priority of the Church’s Ministry during A Pandemic,” *Evangelical: Jurnal Teologi Injili dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat*, 5, no. 2 (2021): 165.

¹⁵Jolf John Tendeau, Bartholomeus Diaz Nainggolan, and Stimson Hutagalung, “Pandemic Covid-19, Health Literature and Great Commission,” *Grafta: Journal of Christian Religion Education and Biblical Studies* 1, no. 1 (2021): 3.

¹⁶Pilay, “COVID-19 Shows,” 274.

¹⁷Kenneth D. Bailey, 1994. *Methods of Social Research* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 294.

¹⁸Jashim Uddin Ahmed. “Documentary Research Method: New Dimensions,” *Indus Journal of Management & Social Sciences*, 4, no. 1 (2010): 2.

Jesus's command to his disciples that they must proclaimed the message of salvation is the basis of the discussion of this paper. Therefore, before tackling the main issue of this paper a brief introduction which emphasizes on the commissioning and providing in evangelism is given below. This introduction bases on the idea of mission and command reflected throughout the Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

God Commissions. Scholars are on the agreement that the commission in the New Testament rooted in the Old Testament. The expression mentioned in the book of Isaiah, “... I heard the voice of the Lord ... Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me” (Isa. 6:8) is considered as a missiological statement which commonly used in Christian sphere. The Gospels portray the commission given to the disciples known as “the great commandment.” Jesus says, “...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt 28:18-20). In short words, Mark states, “Jesus also said, ‘... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.’” (Mark 16:15-16). In fact, Jesus has given the initial commissioned to the disciples as he says,

And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.” (Matt 10:7-14).

Paul understands clearly this commission. In his first letter to the believers in Corinthians, he states, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” (2 Cor 5:20). In another part, he reclaims, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16). These verses suggest that Paul is very aware of his role as the one chosen and sent to invite the people, in this case the Corinthian and Roman church, to make peace with God in this way they may be saved.

To Christians, this is a long-life task to do in order to let people know Jesus and salvation and to prepare themselves for the His second coming. Paul's statement is an invitation to all Christians that without their participant in spreading the Gospel, many will be lost. He says, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom 10:14-15). Therefore, this commission has a great influence in the life of the apostles and the church members all the ages that they willingly risk their live although they have faced the trials in doing the mission.

God provides. God has His provision to His people who do work of evangelism. The Scripture says, "... ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8), and "to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (1 Cor 9:22). It is because "... he that winneth souls is wise" (Prov 11:30). In other words, God never abandons his workers. He equips them with power so that they can carry the work. In the same time, God provides the believers new and effective methods or devices when they face challenge in their work, as discussed below.

Challenges and New Methods in the Early Church

The Acts of the Apostles confirms the actualization of the Great commission. In chapter one, the author provides the introduction of the early church and affirms the great commission mentioned in the four gospels. However, in this chapter he amplified it by mentioning that the disciples should be witnesses "di Yerusalem dan di seluruh Yudea dan Samaria dan sampai ke ujung bumi." (Acts 1:8 ITB).

In fact, the mission in the early church was done not without trials. The church had to face challenges both from the Jewish leaders and the Roman empire. Though, the challenges from inside the church were also occurred. Though, this condition played crucial role to make the church growth. The Act of the Apostles reveals how the church faced the trials and in the same time devised some methods to ensure that that they can still undergo the commission given to them despite the challenge. As matter of fact, sometimes the Divine guidance was seen taking control the situation and provides method which were not devised by the church. Below is the discussion of the challenges the early church faced and methods revealed in the Acts as the Gospels spread out from Jerusalem to the end of the world known at that time.

First challenge: Communication. In the early work of the church, the challenge the church faced were communication. Jerusalem was full with people coming from several countries to celebrate the day of Pentecost. This is a big opportunity for the apostles to share the Good News to these people. However, since all of them were uneducated, the disciple cannot speak other language to communicate the Gospel to these diasporas. To overcome this challenge, God intervened the mission by pouring the Holy Spirit upon the apostles so that they could speaks various languages. Charles H. Talbert says, "these Jerusalemites gathered when they heard the noise and to their amazement heard the Galileans, where notorious for poor linguistic skills."¹⁹ In regard to this situation, Narcis Katambe demonstrates that this phenomenon "can be interpreted as a prophetic empowering of mission or witness."²⁰ By this method, many people coming from outside of Jerusalem could hear the message of salvation though some of them think that these apostles were drunk (See Act 2).

Second challenge: Division of work. The church later experienced a setback in spreading the gospel due to disputes over the division of table ministry and the preaching of the word. The result of this problem is that the apostles could not render the Gospel properly because they had to take care the needy. They said, "It would not

¹⁹Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA, Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2005), 25.

²⁰Narcis Katambe, "The Act of the Apostles and the Mission" in *Missio ad Gentes in the Act of the Apostles*, ed. Fabrizio Meroni (Roma: Urbania University Press, 2019), 55.

be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. (Acts 6:2 NIV). This challenge led the apostle find a method so that both ministries would not be ignored. What they did was to choose seven people, full of Holy Spirit, to serve the table. These people were later known as 'deacon' for the first time (Act. 6:5). The result of this method was that "the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7).

Third challenge: Breaking down the Wall. Until Act 11, Luke records that the work of Christianity centralizes in two area, Jerusalem and Antioch. After the transition in ch.12, the narration shifts back to the work of mission of Barnabas and Saul. In ch. 13, these two were appointed to become missionaries or apostles to be sent to some areas outside of Jerusalem and Antioch. This appointment is the answer of a mission challenge that is to reach out the heathen. In the same time, this is also a special task given to them in order that they will break "the middle wall oof partition" (Eph. 2:14). God directly set aside these two apostles to be sent out. As seen from the narrative, God change the method, from the mission centralized in Jerusalem then advanced to Antioch, now expanded to the other part of world. It is proved in the Scripture that after the laying hands, these two apostles started in new mission journey. This method proved effective because not only were these believers where they met strengthened, the gospel was also preached in the new places where these two apostles visited. In fact, this method is a fulfilment of the commandment of Jesus that the apostles should be witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8 NIV).

In carrying out this method, God did not act arbitrarily in choosing the right person to proclaim the gospel to the gentiles. The election of Paul and Barnabas was a precise plan whereby with the knowledge they had, the work would be more easily disseminated. Paul, having a background as a devout Jew and at the same time, has knowledge of the law, could prove that Jesus was the Messiah. Meanwhile, Barnabas, whose real name was Joseph, was so named by the Apostles because he was known as "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith (Acts 11:24 NIV). Barnabas is also the first person who welcome Saul publicly after his conversion (Act. 9:27). In several moment, before the appointment, both of them had made several short-mission works (see Act 11:26-30; 12:25).

Fourth Challenge: Disperse of church members. Sending missionary is proved effective. Church members and groups of believers multiply. However, when the missionary work of the church began to develop and there were already many new church members scattered in areas outside Jerusalem, including in parts of Asia Minor and beyond, the apostles faced the challenge of nurturing these new members. This challenge needs to be addressed.

Beside the methods in the Acts as mentioned above, sending letter has become an effective way of evangelizing and nurturing. According to there are two reasons why apostles used letters in the early church. First, to keep pace with the increasingly advanced development of missionary work and to bridge missionary work that is separated by long distances. Second, at that time, this method was the most convenient and necessary way to establish pastoring care because it serves a "personal presence from a distance."²¹ Mike Megrove Reddy demonstrates that in the early Christian church, the leaders of the church documented the values and beliefs of

²¹D. A Carson & Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 331.

Christianity because they important for the faith. These written documents were made in order that the believers might live according to the Christian principles because they want to anticipate the second coming of Jesus.²² In the same time, beside verbal communication, this method “had a major impact on spreading the gospel of Christ.”²³

The advanced of the technology by the Roman empire at the time help the church spread the gospel. Roads were built to connect the areas under this empire.²⁴ By this, the process of sending letter was easier. This indicates that God uses the current technology in every phase of the age of Christianity to ease the spreading of the Gospel.

Ellen G. White and Evangelization

In her writings, Ellen G. Whites put a great emphasis on evangelism. She has also an open mind regarding the use of new methods in evangelism. Below is the discussion of White’s view on evangelism and the urgency of utilize new methods to spread the Gospels. Concerning the importance of evangelism for Christians, White stresses,

Evangelism, the very heart of Christianity, is the theme of primary importance to those called to herald God’s last warning to a doomed world. We are in time’s closing hours, and the Advent message, proclaimed to make ready a people prepared for our Lord’s return, must swell to a loud cry reaching the uttermost parts of the earth.²⁵

God’s people are commissioned to share the Gospel. Furthermore, White emphasizes,

We are bidden to go forth as Christ’s messengers, to teach, instruct, and persuade men and women, to urge upon their attention the word of life. And to us also the assurance of Christ’s abiding presence is given. Whatever the difficulties with which we may have to contend, whatever the trials we may have to endure, the gracious promise is always ours, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”²⁶

For White, “evangelism is a real work wherein it opens Scriptures, telling everyone what is to come, and how God’s workers need to make use of God’s time.”²⁷ Thus,

God calls for consecrated workers who will be true to Him—humble men who see the need of evangelistic work and do not draw back but do each day’s work faith fully, relying upon God for help and strength in every emergency. The message is to be taken up by those who love and fear God. Lay not your

²²Mike Megrove Reddy, “The Use of Written Communication by the Early Christian Leaders: For Maintance and the Propagation of Christianity,” *Journal of Theology* 99 (2018): 1.

²³Ibid., 3.

²⁴To see how the ancient Roman Empire built roads in the era of the New Testament, see Roger S. Boraas, “Trade and Transportation,” *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, Revised ed. (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publisher Inc., 1996), 1165-1171.

²⁵Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1946), 51.

²⁶Ibid., 14.

²⁷Ibid., 15

burden upon any conference. Go forth, and, as evangelists, in a humble way present a “Thus saith the Scriptures.”²⁸

White understands correctly that the method of evangelizing may be varied as the church, whether as a group or as a person, go out to share the Good News. Learning from Christ’s way in presenting Gospels, she states, “From Christ’s methods of labor we may learn many valuable lessons. He did not follow merely one method; in various ways He sought to gain the attention of the multitude and, having succeeded in this, He proclaimed to them the truths of the gospel.”²⁹ In regard to the work of Paul, White states that this apostle was also utilizing various methods when he worked among men. Thus, she emphasizes, “Thus the apostle varied his manner of labor, shaping his message to the circumstances under which he was placed. After patient labor he was successful to a large degree; yet there were many who would not be convinced.”³⁰

Moreover, she elucidates that since “our work is a progressive work, and there must be room left for methods to be improved upon. But under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, unity must and will be preserved.”³¹ In other words, White emphasizes that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, church can invent or use a new method or plan in order to carry the Gospels to the world.³² Therefore, she urges to the church today that in order to reach the heart of people, the labourer of God should utilize the best methods where some conventional one cannot afford.³³

One of the challenges in church mission is the city evangelism. Realizing this challenge, White says, “In the cities of today, where there is so much to attract and please, the people can be interested by no ordinary efforts”³⁴ In a clear expression she states, “They must make use of every means that can possibly be devised for causing the truth to stand out clearly and distinctly. . . While they are to labor earnestly to interest the hearers and to hold this interest, yet at the same time they must carefully guard against anything that borders on sensationalism.”³⁵ Moreover, White asserts, “New methods must be introduced. God’s people must awake to the necessities of the time in which they are living. . . Some of the methods used in this work will be different from the methods used in the past; but let no one, because of this, block the way by criticism”³⁶

The discussion of White’s view in regard to the evangelism demonstrates two importance ideas. First, church must be always aware of the responsibility to carry out

²⁸Ibid., 23

²⁹Ellen G. White, *Counsel on Health* (Mountain view, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1923), 387.

³⁰Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, Revised Ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 2005), 118.

³¹White, *Evangelism*, 105.

³²Ibid. When she suggests that church can use new methods, it does not mean that she refuses to occupy the old ones as long as they can be used to make the work of God progressed. She states, “Men are needed who pray to God for wisdom, and who, under the guidance of God, can put new life into the old methods of labor and can invent new plans and new methods of awakening the interest of church members and reaching the men and women of the world. Ibid.

³³White, *Gospel Workers*, 118, 119.

³⁴Ellen G. White. *Testimonies for the Church*. Vol. 7 (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1948), 110.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 30, 1902, 7

the Gospels to the world. Second, the church should understand that the circumstances and challenges in evangelism would be complex and sometimes unexpected, as occurred today. In this pandemic, therefore, church must invent or utilize new methods in order to reach men's heart. Below is the discussion of employing methods of evangelism during the pandemic.

Implication: Digital Science and Technology and Evangelization

As discussed above, amidst the challenges church found new methods to spread the gospel and to nurture the believer in the early church. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, church nowadays must also do the same thing, particularly when facing pandemic. Among the four methods mentioned above, the third and fourth ones are closely connected with the condition today, that is, sending apostles and letters, only in a different way and technology. Comparing the condition of early church and today church regarding the using of the technology for spreading the Gospel, Michael D. Hearn states, "The systems and networks that have been created are now roadways for the spread of the gospel, much like the Roman Road was to the time of Christ and the spread of New Testament Christianity,"³⁷

Therefore, during this pandemic, Digital science and technology are great tools for ministry. These tools have been employed before Covid-19 and are more prominent during the pandemic.³⁸ It has been an additional means to the traditional means of pastoral ministry. Digital space, may it be live streaming on Facebook pages, videos and WhatsApp audio is not only beneficial in disseminating religious messages³⁹ but serves as a platform for realizing religious identity and vision,⁴⁰ and for pastors and congregations in their reaching out souls, that is the main aim of the evangelism work. There is a need to maximize the use of social media for the interests of everyone.⁴¹ Ponde-Mutsvedu and Sophia Chirongoma emphasize,

The Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) in Zimbabwe which is popularly known for holding annual camp-meetings in August has also been innovative by hosting various virtual camp-meetings spreading between the months of August and September, 2020.⁴²

Social media can still enhance evangelism despite the COVID-19 situation. Tshenolo J. Magidele and James N. Amanze state: "Even though the church could not

³⁷Michael D. Hearn, JR., "How Information Communication Technology Can Reshape Missional Ecclesiology: The Making of a Technomissional Church," (DMin. Dissertation, George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon, 2013), 4.

³⁸Adebayo Ola Afolaranmi. "Towards the Possibility of Internet Ministry as an Alternative Pastoral Ministry in Nigeria during the COVID-19 Pandemic." *International Journal of Information Technology and Language Studies*, 4, no. 2 (2020): 12.

³⁹Lucia Ponde-Mutsvedu and Sophia Chirongoma. Tele-evangelism, tele-health and cyberbullying in the wake of the outbreak of Covid-19 in Zimbabwe. In Fortune Sibanda, Tenson Muyambo, Ezra Citando (eds). *Religion and the Covid-19 Pandemic in Southern Africa*, pp. 103-114. New York, NY: Routledge, 2022.

⁴⁰Justine Renu F. Galang and Willard Enrique R. Macaraan, "Digital Apostleship: Evangelization in the New Agora," *Religions*, 12, no. 2:92 (2021): 1, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12020092>

⁴¹Gozum, Ivan Efreaim A; Sarmiento, Philip Joseph D., "Maximizing social media for evangelization and religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic as a model going forward," *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 10, no. 9 (2021): 107.

⁴²Ponde-Mutsyedu and Chirongoma, 105.

measure the impact of media evangelism, people could hear the gospel with their families and people are being reached out without any possibility to gather.”⁴³ Moreover, they demonstrate “Social media is indeed the most important and sustaining mode of communication in the contemporary world,⁴⁴. Another example is tele-evangelism which also saves time due to less time spent in travelling to the church building or venue when the church service is being broadcast online.⁴⁵

Covid-19 has caused limitless restrictions. However, these restrictions are not hindrances to worship. Through ICT, worshipping God will continue.⁴⁶ Tshenolo J. Magidele and James N. Amanze share the worship experience during the pandemic in Zimbabwe, according to them,

The lockdown regulations in Zimbabwe which limits worshippers to only 50 people in a particular church service leaves the majority without the much needed spiritual caretaking. Consequently, the use of ICT is bridging the gap by bringing the word to different people in various parts of the world via the media. The use of media to share religious messages has sustained the spirituality of most people as they continue to fellowship together as families in their own homes. With just one click, the message is delivered instantly. This has actually helped to build relationships by cementing and increasing family interactions.⁴⁷

Digital science and technology enhance the effectiveness of religious services.⁴⁸ It can help spread the Gospel.⁴⁹ Through it, the church can be innovative and creative in its implementation to reach the unreached not only in the surrounding areas but the world community as a whole⁵⁰ to hasten Jesus’ soon return. Below are suggestions on the Internet Ministry:⁵¹

1) Pastors should embrace the use of the Internet and other technological tools in their pastoral ministry. While the traditional physical means of pastoral ministry should be continued as much as possible, pastors should be thinking of how to make Internet ministry not only an alternative ministry, but also as supplementary to the traditional ways of pastoral ministry.

2) Pastors should learn how to use the Internet and other technological tools in their pastoral ministry and continue to update their knowledge of these tools as they advance almost every day. Pastors should be broadminded and humble to learn from church members and those that are professionals in technology-related fields. Pastors should be more open, creative, innovative and Information and Communication Technology compliant.

3) Pastors, as well as members of churches, should be sensitized about the efficiency of the Internet and other technological tools in pastoral ministry.

⁴³Tshenolo J. Magidele and James N. Amanze, “*Churches and COVID-19 in Botswana*,” In Fortune Sibanda, Tenson Muyambo, Ezra Citando (eds.), *Religion and the Covid-19 Pandemic in Southern Africa* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2022), 177.

⁴⁴Ponde-Mutsyeddu and Chirongoma, 108.

⁴⁵Magidele and Amanze, *Churches and COVID-19*, 105.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Pakpahan, et all. “Pandemic Ecclesiology,” 7.; see also Afolaranmi. “Towards the Possibility,” 12, 13.

⁴⁹Haans, “Crossing the Gospel,” 92.

⁵⁰Afolaranmi. “Towards the Possibility,” 13.

⁵¹Ibid.

4) While Internet ministry cannot be a substitute for physical church worship, less emphasis should be laid on so-called traditional physical means of pastoral ministry to curtail the spread of Covid 19. Also, more emphasis should be laid on Internet ministry that is more in line with physical distancing as a means of curtailing the disease.

5) Pastors should work and improve on their physical outlook, spoken English, good grammar, and spelling, and be mindful of their words as they use the Internet in their pastoral ministry.

6) Every church should have as much as possible well-equipped functional multimedia unit manned by professionals in technology-related fields and/or teenagers/youths who are well versed in information and communication technology.

7) The government and concerned authorities should make access to cheap and fast internet connectivity available for the citizens.

8) The government and concerned authorities should work on providing stable power supply, as the internet and other technological tools cannot be effectively used without fully- charged technological tools.

9) Pastors' training schools, colleges of theology and theological seminaries should include courses like "Introduction to Internet Ministry," "Principles and Dynamics of Internet Ministry," "Internet Ministry Practicum," and similar courses on Internet ministry into their curricula.

10) Online learning should be introduced or adopted for some courses of these academic institutions in the course of training both would-be pastors and pastors in the field to accustom the pastors to Internet ministry.

Though the church is facing a crisis because of the unprecedented event, still, it has to continue its mission of sharing the Gospel. Thus, Worchester¹² suggests how to enhance evangelization despite a pandemic and advance the Gospel.⁵² Below are the ten ideas.

1. **Reach out to a lost friend.** Ask how they are doing and how you might pray for them during this uncertain time. The pandemic period is a perfect time to break the ice with non-Christian friends you have not spoken with in a while. Go down your friend list and message everyone you know. Encourage student leaders to reach out to friends and set up times to catch up. Jump on Zoom or some other way you can see them face to face. Listen well. Short and simple is best. Pray for others. Most people appreciate genuine care and concern. No one has been offended by an offer for prayer.
2. **Go on a walk.** Meet your neighbors and serve them. When the weather is good, walk and meet as many neighbors you have not met before. This is a perfect moment to meet your neighbors and see if they have needs. Swap contact information and start making plans to throw a big block party when social separation ends.
3. **Use technology to make social connections.** Continue to explore creative ways to have fun together online during this odd time.
4. **Start an online discovery group exploring Christianity.** Discovery groups are evangelism tools where unbelievers can explore what Christians believe and ask spiritual questions without judgment. Now is the perfect time to invite a handful of your skeptical friends to explore the Christian faith.

⁵² Paul Worchester, "10 Simple Ways to Evangelize During a Pandemic. Retrieved May 20, 2022, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/10-ways-evangelize-pandemic/>.

5. **Host a virtual watch party for your online worship services.** Most churches are hosting their services online. Share the link or consider hosting a “watch party” on Facebook that notifies your friends and invites them to watch. Use the comments section to interact with people during the service and follow up with direct messages to take conversations deeper.
6. **Invite your friends to your virtual small group.** Invite friends into a small-group Bible study. People are rarely offended when invited to something. You can call or message them and say, “One thing that keeps me encouraged and connected during this time is my small group from church. We’re meeting on Zoom this Wednesday night, and I can share the link with you. I’d love for you to join us.” No one knows what God might do through a simple invitation.
7. **Record your testimony and share it on Facebook Live and Instagram Live.** Follow up personally with those who comment. Everyone is online now, and most have more time on their hands, so going live has great potential. Prepare a two-minute testimony and casually share it via video on social media. You may be surprised by how many views and comments you will get. Encourage people to comment or message with questions. Consider answering questions live or take the conversation deeper via a direct message or by phone.
8. **Start a spiritual conversation and make virtual appointments with those interested.** Some basic spiritual questions include “What experience do you have with spiritual things?” or “If you could know God personally, would you want to?” If this conversation is on text message, then set up a gospel appointment by saying “I’ve been growing recently in my relationship with God. I’d love to jump on a Zoom call soon and hear more of your story.” A three-story outline: (1) their story, (2) your story, and (3) God’s story, can be employed when one is on the call.
9. **Practice the 3 Habits for Every Evangelism.** Evangelism is primarily something we go and do. We can plan times of going out on campus to strike up Gospel topics and even organize group events for evangelism. These are great activities, but you will discover them as more effective means to share Christ as one goes for God. Evangelism is more of a lifestyle than an event. The following habits can be employed for everyday evangelism, (1) pray daily for open doors and boldly take advantage of them, (2) create and impact list of people to pray for daily, and (3) plan regular times to spend with lost friends.
10. **Volunteer to do follow-up calls for your church or ministry.** Your church will likely have many online visitors the next few weeks. Let your church leaders know you’re willing to follow up with those who completed a virtual connection card. You can set up a phone or Zoom call and share the gospel with those who expressed interest in spiritual things. Volunteering to serve will mean a lot to your church leaders during this season. Your pastors are working hard to serve and love you. Most are adjusting to preaching to an empty room and battling comparison issues. This pandemic period would be a great time to encourage them. Tell them something you got from the sermon. Let them know you’re “all in” with them.

Conclusion

Covid-19 has caused various negative impacts to the entire world in different aspects including church. Given this, the church ministry is affected. Though the world faces the different impacts as a result of COVID-19, the church must find ways and new methods to continue spreading the Gospel. The early church has proved that in facing challenge, new methods are implemented in order that the work of mission must go on. Compared to this experience, church today utilizes digital science and technology and it is proved that this utensil has been a good resort to spread for church today to spread the gospel. Though it has been employed before the pandemic, the use of this technology is increasingly seen as useful during this pandemic.

Church ministry must still continue whatever the situations and circumstances are. After all, Jesus admonishes His people *to go*. Jesus commissions and provides despite any circumstances. Through the suggestions discussed in this paper, Jesus' servants are challenged to *weather the storm*, that is to continue work even in a difficult situation without being harmed or damaged but keep on moving with new methods and devices, and by this, help hasten His soon return. It must be understood and always highlighted that the mission belongs to the Lord. He is the God who orchestrates, inspires, and moves the missionary work forward. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, church will find its way to invent and utilize new methods of evangelism despite the any challenge in its way.

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