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**Youth
Theology
Institute
Journal**

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Peace be with you!

We had another great week at the Augsburg College Youth Theology Institute this summer exploring the theme of *OMC: Christian Community in the Internet Age*. Dr. Hans Wiersma led our in-class learning as we dove into readings on communications theory, technology and theology by Neil Posman, Shane Hipps, Martin Luther and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. We took part in community based learning experiences as well including a visit to the rare book room and Old Muskego Chapel at Luther Seminary, viewing Chad Amour's film *The Evidence of Hope*, a visit to the Sacred exhibit at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and a tour of Eagle Brook Church's worship space and use of technology. It was a fascinating week and this journal contains the students' reflections on the relationship between technology and faith.

The students' papers seem to have organized themselves into four clusters. The first group of papers gives us a really nice overview of the materials that were read and discussed in the class. *Emily Glaser* warns that technology creates an unrealistic emotional euphoria, which can consume us and distract us from living a life of faith in God's very real world. *Gunnar Olson* gives us a nice review of some of the philosophical arguments as he argues that technology is neither good nor evil but what matters is the value we put on technology. He claims that faith communities must be a part of this conversation around values. Lastly, *Emily Tomas* mines Dietrich Bonhoeffer's description of Christian community and claims that social media, given its selective socialization, hinders the formation of Christian community.

The next set of essays address technology's effect on the relationship between young people and the church. *Aiden Coil* explores how digital technology can help a church expand its outreach to youth. *Eric Thompson* takes the opposite view and claims that technology has not allowed Christianity to have a positive impact on culture, but rather its constant and multiple streams of information have only served to splinter and weaken the church. *Peter Strobel* offers an interesting "third way" in claiming that people aren't leaving the church due to its use or non-use of technology but due to the conservative, narrow-minded message the church tends to put into the world through its technology.

Two essays explore the use of technology in worship. *Meagan Fortier* claims that technology does not enhance the worship experience but only distracts us from it. *Ian Buddecke* agrees in his essay, which explores the relationship between the use of technology in worship and Attention Deficit/Hyper Activity Disorder (ADHD).

The last cluster of essays explores the role technology plays in the creation and sustaining of relationships. *Kristina Monson* examines the costs and benefits of technology, lifting up its potential to become an extension of ourselves and facilitate connections with others and its potential to become a new materialism that cuts us off from others. *Maggie Slater* reminds us that we are called to share God's love through word and deed and warns us that social media makes it very easy to say one thing and do the opposite. Lastly, *Mara Neitzel* points out how technology can enhance human-to-human relationships as a medium that communicates human love, but also points out its limitations in communicating spiritual love, which causes it to become a barrier in the human-divine relationship.

I am always amazed at how intellectual, curious and funny the students are who sign up for this experience. God's spirit works in amazing ways during this week, but I always see the most powerful work happen in the relationships and community that form. It was a blessing to spend this week with this group of young people.

God's peace,
Jeremy Myers
Associate Professor, Religion
Fellow, Christensen Center for Vocation

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Conscious Dream, Unconscious Reality **By Emily Glaser, Princeton, Minnesota**

“God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world” (Bonhoeffer, 27). This statement can be taken several different ways, but my interpretation is this- God does not want us to live anywhere else but in reality. I believe he wants us to accept who we are and who he is, and explore both deeply. Unfortunately, the technology of today’s world is distracting us from doing this because it is changing the way we feel about church, it is altering our focus and motivation, and it is interfering with the connections we are supposed to be making with God and with other people. The progression of modern day technology is creating an unrealistic emotional euphoria that takes away from the focus of a Christian lifestyle, which should be God.

Technology has changed the way we believe we should be feeling about our church services, activities or even the whole idea of our church community. Members of the church do not expect the same things as they used to. They no longer go to church simply because they want to understand and strengthen their connections with God, but instead, the reality is they go to experience technology. People may not admit it, but they go to be entertained. I believe that they really want to be connected with God, but technology is making the true message invisible. It is like a drug, it sweeps them away and it makes them forget why they are really there. They go to have fun, and they think that if they are having fun then that must be God. I wonder if they feel they do not need to study *The Bible* because they already know what God is because their pastor has told them so in a simple passage or two. They are told they are experiencing God, when really all they are experiencing is a show of light and music with some hidden message that is diluted by the technology.

A service in a megachurch is incredible. The lights, the cameras, the big screens and the music completely blow you away. It feels like a concert and the audience is immediately sucked into this powerful and happy vibe. It is amazing how in order to be connected with all of these people, all people have to do is simply stand there and take it all in. They feel the beat of the music, the pounding of the drums in their chest and throughout their entire body. The audience is told in song and word that God is with them and all around them, creating a perception that this is what God must be. This energy, this excitement, this is learning and knowing God. It works the same with televised services. People sit there and they are told that they are loved, important, and a part of something big. All they must do is turn on a television to be connected to God and to other fellow people. Church is quick and simplified for people. Technology makes being connected and learning about God easier and more fun than ever before. Now does this all sound too good to be true? Well, maybe it is.

Consider for a moment, why people go to church. The majority of people will say they go because they want to become more connected with God and they want to learn more about *The Bible*. Some may also say that they go for the feeling that they get from church. They like the presence of other people, they like looking at each other, and they like that others see them in church. While technology is making services feel like they are connecting with God and with each other, these mega churches and television services completely misinterpret what a church community really is or what I believe it is really supposed to be. “Community is a broad, amorphous work suggesting connections by practices, priorities, experiences or interests. People doing things in common- watching the same television program, enjoying YouTube, playing games online- are not true *communities*” (Boers, 12). Community is supposed to be togetherness, and I think that being connected with God is supported by a belief and faith that there is something that guides who we are and what our purpose is in life... something bigger than ourselves. That being said, I feel that the use of technology is giving people the illusion that they

are becoming closer to each other and to God, when really they are not seeing the true message in the liturgy because it is lost in the bling of lights and the sounds. Modern day technology makes people feel special and connected without actually being connected to anything real.

Technology is also changing the way we go about getting people to come to church. In the past, everyone in the town went to church. It was expected; it was like going to school. Nowadays, we are not judged as much for missing a service or even for not belonging to a church. While this freedom of choice is wonderful, we have to start wondering why the idea of going to church has changed so much for people, and more importantly, that the church has to think about what it can do to get these people back. So what does the church do? It does what makes the most sense: it adapts. The church brings in technology, it brings in the videos and the loud music, and it brings in the quick and the easy and the simplification and all of a sudden people are interested. Give people games, give people more food, give people something they do not have to work too hard to understand and they are interested. The big problem with this is that churches are forgetting the real reason why they are here, which I believe is to educate people on God and on how to find Him, and not on how to just have fun.

This need to impress people in order to get them to come to church is a change that is also seen in the raising of many children of this generation. More than ever before, our children are being spoiled. They do not like to eat their vegetables? No problem, just give them a yummy gummy bear vitamin that will give them all the nutrients they need. They do not want to do their homework? Offer them something: food, candy, a toy, anything. They are being trained to feel like they have to get some kind of tangible prize for doing something, otherwise it is not worth their time. When touring Eagle Brook Church, I was told by our guide, "Parents are no longer dragging their children to church; it is the kids that are begging the parents to go." This sounds great, until you glance into their game room and realize a child would have to be completely, for lack of a better word - stupid - to not want to spend some time going to church and learning about God, or as it would appear, playing in that massive arcade. It is a nice trade off really. If a child sits quietly for a short period of time, he or she will get to play with the super cool air hockey table or Wii. It leads one to wonder if people are really learning about what church is or what God's message is. I do not believe so. Instead, I believe they are learning how to sit quiet and patient long enough to receive a fun and exciting reward.

It is not just mega churches who are doing this, almost all churches pull kids and adults apart in this way, and in the process technology takes away the focus on God and replaces Him with the desire for entertainment and fun. I even think of my church, with the coloring stuff provided for children outside the sanctuary. This is for keeping the children occupied and distracted during service. I know they are trying to make it quieter and less stressful for the adults, but in the process they are teaching the children that they do not have to pay full attention during church. The worst part is that all of this happens without us even knowing it because we are told that we still are experiencing the same great connection with God when really all we are experiencing is a great connection with technology.

Technology is affecting our motivation as well as taking away our ability to slow down and focus on God, His creations, and each other. The first sentence of Shane Hipps article, "Enough about Me, How Do You Like Me?" states, "If you make it to the end of this article, you are an impressive and rare breed of human- an intellectual Navy SEAL, an elite mind, trained with an ability most people just don't have anymore: the ability to sustain concentration over long periods of time" (26). Over time we, as humans, have formed this attitude, primarily seen in Western Societies that we have to constantly be improving. Our society has the same mentality that Bradley Cooper's character in the movie *Limitless* had while he was taking a drug called NTZ

that allowed him to access the use of all of his brain functions. He says this about his drug use, “Only problem? If I wasn’t moving forward, I felt like I was going to explode” (Cooper). We know that technology has always been improving, but over the last couple of decades it has gone from slow and gradual improvements to this idea that we must always be working faster and better - that change is always useful and necessary. We have done amazing things with technology, but we have to start thinking about if these amazing things are really making us happy.

When people today have a question, what is the first thing they do? Unlike the pre- computer and smart phones era, we have the ability to ask Siri to Google whatever it is we are wondering about in order to find an answer. There is no thinking required, no contemplation. Siri finds it, we have our answer and we can move on the next part of our day. It is not just that we see research and studying as inconvenient anymore. We are beginning to lose our mental abilities that allow us to sit still and reason because we are so used to getting that quick answer. This is partially why reading *The Bible* has become a chore to so many people. We are so used to the “quick and easy” answer that technology provides, and when reading *The Bible*, one must actually infer about what God’s message means. There are countless apps, websites, papers, and books dedicated to *Bible* summary. This has gotten so out of control that we have to wonder, are people really working toward finding an answer to their question or are they just simply satisfied with the first Wiki answer they get? “Our thinking patterns begin to mirror the things we use to think with” (Hipps, 26). We do not care about nor do we need thinking and contemplation anymore, or at least that is what technology is training our society into thinking.

As a society we are also losing our sense of adventure. The unknown has always been frightening and dangerous, but people looked past that and pushed onward because that is all they could do. Now, that is unnecessary because a click of a button gives you all the answers and entertainment you could possibly want. We still crave excitement and fun, but we have made it so our needs are taken care of without actually doing anything or rather without actually thinking for ourselves. All you need in order to have an adventure now in days is to watch a movie, read a book or play a video game. Personally, I do not think anything virtual is going to guide our lives and give us any meaning or any more faith in God, I think we have to actually dig for the answers within ourselves and explore unfamiliar topics.

Modern day technology makes people feel like they are accomplishing something without physically doing anything. Video games are a great example of this. Level by level, a person is pulled in, yet the only prize received is a virtual one. Getting a gold star, unlocking something, even being able to brag about how far one advanced in the game is satisfaction enough for most people. Technology is tricking us into thinking we are doing so much, accomplishing such a great feat, being creative, cunning, and smart, when really technology “functions to sedate the imagination rather than actually open it. It limits our capacity to uncover and articulate that which is profound” (Hipps, 30). While we are so busy getting to that next level on our games, we are minimizing the importance of our tasks in the real world, which I believe are finding out who we are, what we are here for, learning about God, and learning about interacting with each other and with nature.

We have got to slow down and look at what is in front of us if we have any chance of being happy, really happy, with our lives. People need to start realizing that things like planting a garden and looking at the clouds are much better for the soul than staring at a single object for hours on end, no matter how interactive the object seems to be. We have to appreciate the important things God has given us, like each other, and the opportunity to work hard and be truly

proud and satisfied at what we have accomplished. We have to slow down and smell the roses because if we do not, we are just throwing away every good thing we have been given.

Technology is making us feel like we are connected and special without actually forming real emotional or spiritual connections. We have stopped seeing the importance of simple gestures that used to be so present in our daily lives, and in doing this we have become less and less interested in each other and in God.

Social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are no longer just websites or apps to us. We have allowed them to become a huge part of our lives because they create feelings of connection and belonging quicker than any other form of communication, yet it is because of them that we are losing our desire and ability to make real connections anymore. Consider how often we find ourselves surrounded by others physically while at the same time we are with different people electronically. While it is extremely convenient to be able to multi-task, we are failing to see the negative effects it has on us. For example, "It is common for face-to-face conversations to be interrupted by cell phones. Gadgets intrude on meals, hospitality, and meetings. We no longer see this as rude; gadgets are our default priority" (Boers, 7). How has the human race allowed itself to become so obsessed with something so virtual? The internet is not something we can touch, feel, or be in, all it is is a simple screen, yet we are behaving as if it is more like some kind of machine that transports us into a different dimension, a different world. Perhaps it does in a way, but that does not make up for the fact that it is not real. It has changed us. We do not talk or interact like we used to. Once a screen is present, our minds go blank and that screen becomes our sole priority. We block out everyone that is around us physically. It is incredible that modern technology has made it possible to spend hours and even days on end doing nothing but sitting and staring at the same object. While the object may be visually appealing and the content may be mentally transporting, at the end of the day the object is still not a human being, or nature. It is a distraction; nothing more, a distraction from reality and a distraction from life. We have to start focusing on what is in front of us, what God has created for us- people, animals, nature and the world- and forgot about the short-lived satisfactions that a screen may bring us.

Playing fantasy games with toys is what children typically choose as their form of finding an escape from their lives. Similar to what adults and older children do with the internet, playing with toys like Barbies and GI Joes allow children to become the person that they dream of being, even if it is only for pretend. The idea of becoming a different person is truly fascinating, but getting too caught up in a different identity may be potentially harmful because it means that they are not allowing themselves to focus on improving the person they are and finding their own place in the world. Even though virtually all children play with toys, it is the type of toys technology is introducing that can be potentially harmful. Things like interactive video games are great, but consider how much time children are spending on these toys. Parents in this generation have discovered the convenience and ease that games bring them and are taking advantage of them. We must also remember, "The problem is not using the technology. The problem is using it unconsciously" (Hipps, 29). Parents are allowing their children to spend so much time interacting with their toys that they are forgetting the importance of interacting with other humans. This is not necessarily the fault of the child, because they are receiving a sort of immediate gratification from their toys in the form of praises and encouragement, things that are given faster and easier than they are being given by their parents, so it is completely understandable why children would want to spend more time on those devices. However, the problem is that the relationships children are forming with these technologies are not real relationships and the happiness they are experiencing is not true happiness. Furthermore, these technologies are distracting children from beginning their spiritual journey in the world because, quite frankly, it is just way less work to

play that game than to think about who we are, what our place is in the world, and how we should be connecting with a higher power.

It is hard for us to accept that we have a problem, and it is difficult to change the way we think about how we are connecting with people. Simple things like meeting a friend instead of messaging them or perhaps interacting with your family in the car instead of having each member be completely zoned out in their own gadgets, could make all the difference in the way we feel about each other. In order to bring back more real and genuine relationships, we have to take matters into our own hands and away from the technology that consumes us.

While technology is moving forward, the focus we used to have on God and on each other is diminishing and in its place is something that can only be described as euphoria. We are focusing more on technology than we are on each other, and more importantly, than we are on God. The way we think we should be feeling about church, our ability to think deeply and carefully about things and the way we are forming connections have all changed because of technology. In my opinion, this change is definitely not for the better. As stated by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian Community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial" (Bonhoeffer, 27). I think that if we want to live a truly satisfying life, a life that is centered on God, we have to stop playing it safe and start playing it truthfully. We have to see the world for what it is, and not for what technology makes it seem to be.

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Technology and Culture

Gunnar Olson, North Mankato, MN

After reflecting upon my experience at the Augsburg College Youth Theology Institute, I found technology and its influence on culture to be the most influential piece of my learning. In what follows I will provide a summary of what I found to be persuasive themes as well as some of my personal reflections. This is not a traditional research paper, rather an experiential essay.

I gained lasting insight regarding technology reading about the debate between Theuth and Thamus in Plato's *Phaedrus* as described by Neil Postman in the *Judgment of Thamus*. At the very core of their debate is the issue of the pros and cons of writing, and more broadly speaking technology. The story starts with Theuth, a prolific inventor, coming before Thamus, the king of a great city in Egypt, to display his newest invention, writing. Theuth declares that writing will improve both the wisdom and memory of the people. However, Thamus counters that the creator of any invention is not able to make an impartial case as he is not a neutral party. Thamus then further refutes Theuth in stating that writing will not enhance memory, only recollection, and even if there is an accumulation of knowledge, there will be no increase of wisdom. Thamus explains by saying that even if his pupils have access to more knowledge, they and others will mistake it for wisdom and will thus eventually be burdensome to society knowing "stuff" that is of no help to the community.

Who is right? The answer is both, yet neither. Both Theuth and Thamus make good arguments as writing does help preserve knowledge, yet the accumulation of knowledge is not equal to wisdom. Neither Thamus nor Theuth acknowledge both sides of the coin regarding the technology of writing. Rather they each argue like "one-eyed prophets" (Postman). To better understand technology we must acknowledge and observe that technology is not inherently good or bad.

Alas we are still surrounded by one-eyed prophets, who view technology only as improvement, and fail to see what may be lost with each new invention. These people might be called technophiles. On the other hand there are those who will merely point out the flaws of technology, namely technophobes. Although neither ideology is without error, I agree with Postman, we need a dissenting voice to moderate and balance out the masses of technophiles.

Every culture must negotiate with technology. Wisdom would tell us to recognize technology's successes before we critique its shortcomings. So, when new technology is introduced into our culture thoughtful citizens should imagine the possibilities and limitations with eyes wide open. When a new technology comes to strength within culture it is inevitable that some will become very competent with it, these people form an elite group that accumulate great, but sometimes undeserved financial profit and influence over those who aren't competent in that technology. A few good examples of this would be publishing companies, Silicon Valley whiz kids, or even the monopoly the state of Texas has in the choosing of textbooks that will be published and distributed nationwide.

So, what happens when a new technology comes along? Usually it replaces previous technology and puts a new group of people in control. It is in this way that we can see definite winners and losers and ironically the losers tend to support the winners. A very good example of this can be seen in schools today. The schools teach the students how to operate computers in the belief that it will improve the quality of their life. Now, this belief or value didn't develop out of thin air,

but was established and encouraged by the winners who developed such technology. For example Apple giving free computers to poor schools so they can compete. As impressive and flashy as these computers may be it is hard to argue that they ultimately improve the quality of one's life in comparison to a highly competent and caring teacher or mentor. And so the winners' specialized knowledge has become its own form of wisdom, but perhaps not one with great relational value.

It must be taken into account however that in cultures such as our own changes in technology are often viewed as a grand benefit that will be spread across the entire population and the winners are rarely clear until the new technology has become firmly established. This situation is almost as if a culture is conspiring against itself. Technology has a very subtle and complex impact on our culture's worldview as a whole. A great example of this is our use of numbers for determining value. It's awfully strange if you think about it, using numbers (for example grades, SAT scores, or incomes) to evaluate people. What does that say about our culture? It is an ideological bias, our worldview determining what we value most.

"The medium is the message" is an aphorism coined by Marshall McLuhan that has deep implications for technology and culture. What I believe this means is that our view of everything is impacted by what we are constructed by, be it our culture, our technology, our language, our history. An example of this would be a goldfish born in a fish bowl. That is all the fish has ever known, but what happens if he gets moved to Lake Superior. Suddenly it's a whole new world, all because he now has a new point of view. This is because the lens he used to see through has been changed. This is why the medium, be it a fish bowl, a bible, a standardized test, or even a hammer greatly shape the message or how we communicate. So when different media, often a traditional and a contemporary one, clash it is a fight between worldviews.

Where can this be seen? School classrooms perhaps? Before print, oral communication was the way of education, focusing on group learning and print having an emphasis on individual learning. Although print won out, oral teaching hasn't been abandoned and both are used to optimize learning, but now personal computers are being thrown into the mix. Personal computers promote a focus on private learning. Postman posed the question, "Will the computer raise egocentrism to the status of a virtue?" It's hard to say, to avoid such a future we, as a culture, must negotiate with technology through thoughtful and consistent conversation and reflection about our values. How much will we sacrifice for efficiency and newness?

A definition of *technology* is "the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes."(Oxford Dictionary) Through the use of technology to improve our quality of life, we drastically shape and redefine our culture. This can be observed throughout history. For example, upon the invention of the radio we can observe a major shift in American culture. You could say that the radio brings echoes from the past when our communities were small and stories would be told around a campfire for all to hear and learn by. Before the radio America was dominated by the print culture. The printing press created by Gutenberg in 1450 AD began the print era, a time of individualism. Individualism promotes personal reflection, this however is reversed through the use of radio and television and their ability to allow people all over to have group experiences, where the individual fades in place a tribal culture.

Before radio, public primary schools taught children how to read using textbooks that included Bible stories. The majority of people today don't know many Bible stories, but each generation has their television shows that many people can recite plot line and character.

As previously mentioned the essence and goal of technology is to use knowledge for practical purposes and improve our way of life. Cell phones are often seen as efficient because they can

connect us to those far away with little difficulty. Isn't it ironic then that at the same time, the use of our cell phones can create a totally new kind of barrier between us and those who aren't far off in the distance at all but sitting right next to us in our living rooms.. Our electronic culture can alienate us from those close to us, however this is often overlooked in place believing we are becoming closer through electronics, a mystifying paradox. When we use our televisions, computers, and especially cell phones we are no longer "there" but off in a different dimension, cyberspace, walled from all that is around you, be it your friends or family. We are now a tribe of individuals.

Another big impact on our culture that has come with the rise of the Information, or New Media Age, is our exposure to the tragedies of the world. Shane Hipps describes this effectively in "Together Apart" as empathy at a distance. Never before in human history have we been able to see and hear so quickly and easily of the immense amount of sadness in the great wide world of political corruption, mass starvation in Africa, or the child sweatshops of Asia. In response many of us send money to help, this being our way of showing sympathy and compassion for those far off, but at the same time the seemingly endless tragedy we view on television breeds apathy and hopelessness. As Shane Hipps wrote in *Flickering Pixels*,

The human psyche isn't designed to withstand the full gravity of planetary suffering. Numbness and exhaustion are natural reactions. Feeling helpless is nearly inevitable. The human heart can only stretch so far before it is worn thin and wrung dry. This is empathy at a distance.

The horror of this is that it diminishes our own ability to comprehend and help with the sadness we see near in our personal lives. It is through our knowledge of world pain that causes us to feel great helplessness and depression and overlook that which we can change and improve in our daily lives and those who we are among, in our houses, neighborhoods, and cities.

With the rise of ever changing technologies and America's infatuation with all things "new and improved" it is vital that more people acknowledge how technology influences culture. So that with every new invention, we as citizens, students, scientists, educators, and consumers discuss like Thamus and Theuth the merits and the limitations of each new tool invented and marketed. Communities of faith could and should provide leadership in these conversations. Communities of faith talk about values and I think what we value should inform how we make decisions about the use of technology- old and new. A good value isn't getting something quick and cheap, a good value is one that builds up community rather than tearing it down.

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Christian Community in an Electronic Age **By Emilie Tomas, St. Anthony, Minnesota**

For the average subway passenger, street performers are an everyday occurrence. No one would be surprised to hear that a specific violinist on a given January morning in 2007 attracted the attention of only seven passerby. But, according to The Washington Post, this ordinary performer was virtuoso Joshua Bell, whose regular audience was a sold out concert hall. This begs the question, how much does one truly see their own daily routine? Once something becomes familiar the details become blurry. Electronics have quickly become a staple in our lives, but are so deeply integrated that few stop to ponder what negative implications dependency may have. As Neil Postman states in his book *Technopoly*, “Every technology is both a burden and a blessing” (Postman, 4-5). What flaws have been overlooked in the grapple for efficiency? The intention of modern technology was a tool to enhance lives, but when people instead live through it, they are taught unhealthy habits including idolatry, egoism, and obduracy. When a Christian, without analyzing its use, becomes reliant on social media and electronics, they undermine their ability to create and relate to Christian community as defined by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

In 1954, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* to share his ideas on what community should be. Bonhoeffer declares, “Our community with one another consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us.” Although the book proceeds the dawn of modern electronics, the content remains relevant, as he states, “This is true not merely at the beginning, as though in the course of time something else were to be added to our community; it remains true for all the future and to all eternity” (Bonhoeffer, 25). This means that technology does not change what Christian community is nor what it has the potential to be. No relationship can surpass that which is grounded in God, regardless of efficiency. While true Christian community can coexist with electronics, believers will continue to sabotage faith in their relationships until they are aware of its shortcomings. The values perpetuated by electronics make spiritual connections difficult because such Community cannot be created by accident, but by willful action and focused faith.

Modern technology limits the potential for Christian Community through selective socialization. Neil Postman asserts that “radical technologies create new definitions of old terms, and that this process takes place without our being fully conscious of it” (Postman, 8). This is true of the word neighbor, a change which has radical implications. Jesus proclaimed in Mark 12:31 “Love your neighbor as yourself.” As Christians, this means we are called to serve everyone regardless of physical distance. For when asked to define what the word neighbor meant, Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan, in which a Samaritan helps a Jew, a nationality by whom his own is hated (Luke 10:25-27). Christians must apply Jesus' teaching within their own lives for Genesis 1:27 says "God create[s] human beings in his own image," therefore followers of Jesus should strive to be like him and live a Christ-like life, pure and holy. Dietrich Bonhoeffer incorporates this into his definition of Christian Community with the claim that believers “belong not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the thick of foes” (Bonhoeffer, 17). Regardless of religion, nationality, ethnicity, or any other defining feature, Christians must help all they are able. The internet vastly expands those who can be served. Yet despite its potential, it is hindered by homophily or “the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people” (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, Cook, 417). In one study conducted by researcher Sean MacKinnon, students in a computer lab chose seats next to those who most strongly resembled themselves. Interviews revealed “they believed students who were similar in appearance to them would be more likely to share their attitudes and more likely to accept and befriend them”

(Zuckerman, 71). This trend is also true of online connections. Stewardship is sacrificed by remaining in the comfort zone amongst those they identify with. This means that while the number of people accessible to serve has grown dramatically, people continue to foster connections with those like themselves, an obvious violation of Bonhoeffer's theory of community.

When individuals prefer to socialize with those like themselves, they fail to create spiritual relationships. Religion follows race ethnicity and age as the biggest factors in homophily (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, Cook, 417). But, the involvement of two believers in an activity does not constitute as Bonhoeffer's theory of a "christian community", for a "christian community means community through and in Jesus Christ". Religion should not be treated as a mutual interest, but as the central pillar in which all interaction is rooted. Modern technology is not designed to facilitate such communication. It is intended to share moments of our lives, but many live through it entirely. Electronics are not intended to be the foundation of spiritual understanding. While such platforms allow users to connect with more people, these interactions lack depth, without which Christian community will crumble.

When an individual seeks validation from a source other than God, they sacrifice their ability to relate to Christian community. "The Christian is the man who no longer seeks his salvation, his deliverance, his justification in himself, but in Jesus Christ alone" (Bonhoeffer, 21-22). Dependency on social media replaces Christian morals with a new set of values. Justification may be derived not in Christ, but from the number of likes generated by a post. Large amounts of positive feedback may cause feelings of pride, to which Bonhoeffer declares, "The way is blocked by our own ego" (23). If a picture or post does not receive any or enough likes, one may feel that no one cares. Technology allows for communication at all times, regardless of physical difference. Previously, interaction was only possible while in the same presence. As a result, an individual may feel unwanted when friends or family do not try to contact them. It is often taken personally, and leads to assumptions such as 'I am not good enough' or 'no one likes me'. This means that they are looking for validation in others. For a community to succeed, an individual must see his or herself on an even plane with those around them, rather than constantly comparing in an effort to measure their own worth. As Martin Luther reminds us, "There is a great difference between what God commands and what men command."

Dependency on social media and the internet encourage idolatry. From materialism to celebrities, when more time, thought, or praise are devoted to any given object than to an individual's faith, it becomes a barrier to Christian community. Many fail to realize that false Gods can be more than an established religion other than Christianity. As a former advertising account planner, Shane Hipps reflects, "It took me a few years to realize that I was actually promoting a counterfeit gospel... the gospel according to Porsche will set you back between \$80,000 and \$150,000" (Hipps, 12). That is not to say such distractions are only an issue because of modern technology. As communication philosopher Marshall McLuhan once said, "We become what we behold. We shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us." Technology has merely magnified the faults within ourselves. Before the dawn of cell phones and the internet, shopping could only be done during store hours. Now, an individual can spend unlimited time surfing the internet for clothing and looking for trends. While shopping is not inherently bad, any fixation harms an individual in both their personal faith and as a member of a larger faith community. By fulfilling users every whim, technology has become a vessel for obsession. "The basis of the community of the Spirit is truth; the basis of human community of the spirit is desire" (Bonhoeffer, 51). Technology encourages these desires. If such habits go unchecked, they destroy one's ability to have a pure relationship with God. In searching for more, one is fundamentally saying that what has been given is not perceived as enough. In John 11:25-26, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life.

The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” While use of technology is not wrong, believers must be aware that faith is the only thing that will last. “Therefore a Christian says: This Christ I must have, though it cost me everything else ‘what I cannot take with me can go’ Christ alone is enough for me” (Luther). While tweeting, posting, and re-blogging, may be viable ways to keep in touch or share thoughts, they should only be used as a tool for human interaction. To achieve Christian community, one must be active and firm in their faith. “So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled” (1 Thessalonians 5:6).

What was meant as a tool for human connection, has grown to be the standard by which it is measured. Unchecked dependency on modern electronics is unhealthy and hinders the potential to build true relationships in Christ. In exploring the ways technology hinders Christian community, it becomes clear that familiarity with something does not mean it is understood. However, this does not mean technology itself must be eliminated, rather that its users should be conscious of the effect it has on their lives. When technology’s problems become acknowledged, they can be readily combatted. In his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman asserts, “For no medium is excessively dangerous if its users understand what its dangers are. This is an instance in which the asking of the questions is sufficient. To ask is to break the spell” (Postman, 161).

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Digital Technology and the Church's Youth

By Aiden Coil, Rochester, MN

Have you ever stopped and thought about how much digital technology is used at church? Digital technology has become a big part of how we outreach to youth. This digital technology is a good way to draw in youth, because they are so used to having it. Without digital technology the church would lose a significant number of youth. The idea that digital technologies such as social media, computers, smartphones, the internet, and television positively influences Christian youth is an interesting one, and one that I believe in.

Social media is a way for people to stay informed about almost anything. Now if an advertisement for a church is spread throughout social media, a significant increase in youth may occur. In the Social Media Gospel, Meredith Gould states that "Social media is not something separate... It's an essential tool for communicating faith and building community" (Gould, 85-86). She makes a very good point in saying that nowadays we almost require social media to be our main outreach program. This in most ways is a good thing, because social media is the easiest way for people to see things.

Computers are a really great way to advance the traditional church setting in multiple ways. First, they can help some people better understand the material by providing a visual representation, a copy of the material, or opinions from others who have seen the material too. Second, it can make the material easier to access by putting it on a website or an online database. This makes church convenient and easier for some people to access. For example, if a person likes going to church and is very disappointed for missing a day, they could watch a video recording of the church service when they have spare time. Lastly, this is a great way to outreach to a younger generation allowing the church to grow dramatically. This also keeps the church thriving with attendants. Having this type of digital technology is definitely a positive thing towards the church.

Smartphones are a huge benefit to the youth in a church environment in multiple ways. First, when going to a group discussion or meeting, smartphones are a great way to look up information on the spot. This is useful, because the youth are so used to using smartphones making it that more enjoyable to look up. Second, smartphones are really fun things to use. Implementing these fun tools will make the youth want to learn and discuss. This is beneficial because it's a really great thing to learn and finding a way for the youth to relate to the learning is a cool thing. Lastly, they are a way to connect to social media. This is very important in many ways, because the youth are always connected to it. Having this sort of connection could allow the church's current youth to outreach to other youth allowing the church to grow. Smartphones are very beneficial to the Church's youth.

The Internet is a gigantic benefit to the church's youth in many interesting ways. First, numerous types of information can be found online. For example, if a member of the youth couldn't attend Sunday school one day and the really wanted to learn the lesson that was planned, they could look up the lesson plan online and learn the lesson themselves. This is beneficial because the youth could all have the same amount of knowledge whether attending the actual class or catching up online. Second, the internet is really easy to use, because all you have to do is type what you want to search. For example, kids nowadays naturally know how to use navigate online because they have grown up with it, making it a useful tool. This is beneficial because it is important to have easy to use tools in a learning environment. Lastly, the internet is up to date. Numerous amounts of people are updating their websites and online databases every minute making them reliable.

Having new and up to date information is very important when learning. This is beneficial to the youth because it makes their learning process a lot easier.

Television is another great digital technology for today's youth. First, live broadcasting is very important to not only the youth but to everyone. For example, if a person is regularly going to church and has an accident where they are stuck at home, all they would have to do is turn on the television and watch a live broadcasted church service. This has a positive impact on the youth, because they like watching television and having a channel dedicated to broadcasting live church services would positively impact them. Second, the television is a great source of information. This can be beneficial to the youth by creating a channel dedicated to exploring the bible or other religious material. Lastly, the television can record shows or movies. For example, if someone wasn't able to watch the television while a live church service was going on, they could just record it and watch it later. This is very good for the youth because they can learn whenever, by watching the recording of the show or movie.

Overall, Technology has a very positive influence on the church's youth. Although we can live without these technologies, they make our lives a whole lot easier. They help us learn, explore new things, and open up a whole new world of possibilities. When we use technology in moderation and during the appropriate times, it dramatically helps the church. The youth of this time loves technology, maybe a little too much at times, but I strongly believe that technology positively influences the Church's youth.

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Dim Light
By Eric Thompson, Eagan, Minnesota

As I sit here searching for the latest updates on the new Ice Cube album, I have already decided that I am not going to go to church this Sunday. Instead, I will sleep in a little bit and watch television. I admit this is not the first time I have done this and it will probably not be the last. The Christian Community is suffering from a decrease in worship turnout and it is mainly from the younger generation, which is my age. For those young people who do go to worship, I can sometimes spy them looking at their phone, checking for updates or texting their friends. Many people who no longer go to church will say they don't believe in the same things that their church or faith does. The endless supply of knowledge and information provided by the internet and books that discuss many deep and relevant religious topics has given people a false sense of wisdom. Due to the amount of information technology that can be accessed from our own homes, the Christian Community is dying.

When we hear the word "technology", we mostly think of items such as our iPhones, computers, and television, however, technology is not limited to only those things. Over the centuries, technology that has changed Christianity in significant which started with paper, The Bible and the Printing Press and now the availability of printed materials and new electronic media has made the Word of God widespread and accessible to all. New interpretations of God became known which would later split Christianity into a religion with many sub-groups. The best example of this was when a German priest named Martin Luther split away from the Catholic Church and formed a new Christian religion called Lutheranism (Campbell, 10). This action started what is known as the Protestant Reformation, a movement where many people joined new Christian faiths and split away from the Catholic Church. "If I had kept at it, I would have become exceedingly good at locating things in the Bible" (Hemmer, 9). This quote by Martin Luther shows that widespread availability of bibles during that time was a major influence on the beliefs of the people. Since many people of this time used new technology as a means to understand their faith, they then created their own faith systems resulting in Christianity has been divided into a seemingly endless number of subcategories, none of them exactly the same. There would be hate from one group to another, as seen in the Thirty Years War. The result of the Reformation movement was the emergence of the Catholic Church becoming worldlier, the Humanists wanting a simpler religion and the selling of Indulgences were all a challenge to the Protestant faith. This resulted in the Thirty Years War where strong monarch found over lands using religious believe to fight the war leaving many Christians tortured and killed due to the effect on the ruler becoming "part of the nature technology seeks to conquer and control" (Hemmer, 4). The hate between these groups is all caused by the different beliefs in God prompted by technology. These new views on how the Bible should be interpreted have turned Christianity from one whole religion to one with many types of sub-groups.

As time went on, tensions between different forms of Christianity were contained to a degree since some conflicts after the Protestant Reformation were not based on religion. However, things gradually became worse for the Christian Community as a whole. Just recently, there were pastors, such as former Pastor Fred Phelps Sr., who would go on the radio and preach their messages full of hate and banishment into hell. Such hateful messages sometimes causes tension between all types of people (Hanna).

“The Internet could be the ultimate isolating technology that further reduces our participation in communities” (Boers, 5). People coming to the local church and worshipping together is an essential part of not only the Christian Community. When Christians come together, proclaim their faith in God and ask for forgiveness from Him. If you do not go to worship for a period of time, you will tend to drift away from other local members of your Church and will not be looked kindly upon by other Christians. To very devout Christians, listening to the pastor on the radio or watching the sermon on TV or online doesn't count towards being a loyal Christian. As the internet became more popular and more used, people could just sit at home and watch the pastor preach. According to the devout Christians, you need to actually be in the Church and sit in the audience that the pastor directly looks at to feel the true love and presence of God. The difference in ways people worship can get so extreme that members of groups will refuse to speak to each other and stick to the way that they think is best for them. As technology throughout our existence was further developed to the point where we can hear and see what is going on around the world, we seem to have been putting ourselves farther away from our own local communities.

As we begin approaching the modern era, more specifically the twenty-first century, I can't help but begin to notice how broken the Christian Community has become over the years. The internet, which is more widespread and used for religious purposes, now has websites of churches spreading their messages in tones that can come off as being ignorant or intolerant. There are now videos online of pastors telling their congregation how we should put homosexuals behind barbed wire and torture them. Anyone who “simply makes the claim that the internet is transforming religions culture is naïve and lacks the necessary nuances of critical reflection” (Campbell, 3). While it may be true that the internet has influence on religion, it doesn't change the culture but simply continues the tension between the subgroups of Christianity.

Since virtually anyone can access the internet and look up these videos and messages some churches are putting out, it can give people outside the religion a bad view of what Christianity is, since most information about Christianity that is in the media, like TV, the newspaper, and the internet, that gets the most attention is from churches or pastors who are known for sending out messages of hate and damnation to all those who are not like them. Just look at the comment section on any Facebook status or blog entry and you will see how angry people can get over religion. This fact is very sad but it is completely accurate. All you hear about churches currently are those that form protests against certain groups of people who go against how they interpret the Bible, such as when the Westboro Church in the DC area formed a protest right outside a local high school a couple days after the principal came out and said he was gay (Kennedy). Since everyone has access to technology, they all think they can do a thorough and unbiased research and claim their views on life are correct which destroys communities within Christianity. Since my generation knows how to access the internet for information, our beliefs and interpretations of God clash with the beliefs of the older generations and cause the younger generation to not be welcomed into the Church. If the younger generation is blocked out by the older members of the religion, new ideas about how to do things can never thrive and Christianity will be in a stand still. As technology progressed through time, it has opened doors of conflict that would later shut the doors of community.

If we are to ever begin healing the relationships between the many subgroups within Christianity, each church has the responsibility to monitor their own website and make them as factual as possible. When opinions on controversial subjects are presented they need to be done so as to prompt thinking and discussion and not anger people. Each group must acknowledge the fact that their beliefs are not the absolute truths to life and respect the beliefs of others. These are the first steps to changing the current environment and building a strong healthy Christian Community which the youth of today will embrace.

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A New Age, A New Church?
By Peter Strobel, Leawood, Kansas

In an age marked by significant change and innovation, many traditions and patriarchal institutions have come under fire. It appears that a “cleansing” of some sort awaits those that are stuck in the past and unable to adapt to current expectations and cultural norms. The emergence of social media, the rise in the population of agnostics, and a mass zero-depth faith has rocked churches all across America. The ultra-conservative stance that once tethered people to their churches has begun to repel rather than attract believers. In an age shaped by “likes” and social networking, people are looking for a new way to link with God and His community.

For many centuries most people have “inherited” faith. In her book, *Christianity After Religion*, Dianna Butler Bass explains that tradition was the glue that held the church and other stable institutions together. Most children accepted their parents’ faith without questions and then went on to encourage their own children to do the same. However, a new trend has emerged: “45 percent of Americans have opted out of family faith...half of us have chosen a way different from the one our parents gave us” (Bass, 140).

The Pew Research Center surveyed to monitor these and similar trends. It found that “Millennials” are driving this trend, which has resulted in a three percent rise in religious unaffiliation from 2007 to 2014 (Pew Trends). Changes in marriage rates also are important when monitoring religious trends. Marriage is an important cornerstone of traditional lifestyles and faiths. Traditional Catholic and Protestant views on marriage heavily influence political stances on same-sex marriage, school prayer, and other social issues. Just 26 percent of Millennials are married. The number of political independents increased by 10 percent from 2007 to 2014 (Pew Trends). Millennials are abandoning the church’s traditional views to adopt a more liberal stance on “many political and social issues, ranging from a belief in an activist government to support for same-sex marriage and marijuana legalization” (Pew Trends).

Many churches desperately are attempting to respond to these trends, which are emptying their pews. They are striving to look less dated or ignorant. Increasingly, they respond with mega church models, praise music, and social media programs.

Mega churches have a variety of benefits that attract outsiders. Secure financial bases, hip technology and electronics, social media mastery, talented bands, flashy worship performances, and a large church community are just a few. These churches appear progressive even when they preach “the word” conservatively or barely at all. Twitter, Facebook, texting, email, and live streaming are all used to connect the church to its members, making it easier to access people or information.

Social media is very effective at becoming “liked,” especially since over “81 percent of Millennials are on Facebook” (Pew Trends). Unfortunately, it can bring with it a tendency to build many shallow relationships based on superficial interests. Hip churches often become more focused on attracting members than helping current members. Services and sermons are watered down in order to avoid controversy. Band and light shows are great for concerts, but worship services are not just performances.

While traditional churches and services need improvement, a mega-transformation is not always the answer. Millennials are looking for an authentic way to connect with the world and each other. They benefit from the personal, face-to-face interactions of youth groups, mission trips, community service, Sunday school, and intimate social gatherings that allow members to share their doubts and beliefs with one another.

In a *New Kind of Christianity*, Brian McLaren discusses the need to transform what the church stands for as well as how it worships and evangelizes. In the past, “both Protestant and Catholic leaders aligned with...conservative family values...minimizing biblical community values. They supported wars of choice, defended torture, opposed environmental protection...cared more for protecting the rich from taxes than liberating the poor from poverty or minorities from racism...wanted to protect unborn human life inside the womb, but didn’t seem to care about human life in slums or prisons...paint gay people as a threat to marriage...miss the irony that heterosexual people were damaging it at a furious pace” (McLaren, 6-7). McLaren believes that the equality of Christian’s relationships with God and each other are paramount. He recognizes that churches have developed a reputation of being intolerant and oppressive, making it difficult for less conservative people to affiliate with them. When the loving word of God is warped to preach hate and violence, then churches lose their link with God. They become enraptured with stereotypes and blinded by hate. Jesus declared, “Love thy Neighbor”, the Golden Rule. How can hating same-sex couples and Muslims be the modern rule for Christianity?

The church has demonstrated, through the mega-church model, that, when it comes to communication, it can adapt. It needs, however, to reconsider its message. Traditional beliefs are not necessarily Biblical beliefs. A reformed church can offer Millennials a connection with the benevolent God portrayed in the Bible. It is necessary to abandon the conservative agenda and focus more on loving God, our neighbors and ourselves rather than on traditions and social mores.

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Technology and God

By Meagan Fortier, Minneapolis, MN

Modern technology has in many ways improved lives in the past fifty years. We can now communicate an idea to someone halfway around the world at the press of a few buttons and they can respond back if they like. With this technology comes great distractions, and we can easily lose focus from our tasks, and God. Advance technology in worship takes away from the message and the meaning, distracting from how we listen to God.

The word technology is a broad concept for anything and everything that we use to make our life easier. Technology can be as simple as a stick used to poke a bug, or it could be the smartphone that we use to call our best friend. Technology is simply an extension of ourselves that our body can't do on its own, because of physical limitations. Our present day technology has become a form of entertainment when we are bored, it allows us to zone out and not involve ourselves with others physically. It gives us isolation that makes us feel connected. "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25, ESV). Technology is not all bad, but it does hinder us from interaction. In the passage, it reminds us that we should meet together and encourage each other to do so. Technology can prevent us from that, or help us to that ideal. By giving people a personal computer, we open up a whole world of time to use or waste, with or without others.

Jesus taught many things about how we should live as a human race. He taught us that all of God's creation is good and valuable, and needs to be taken care of. We are called to be good stewards to this earth and one another, and everything in creation, even each other. We are also called to follow God, and live by his word. To fully see how the Christian community should use modern technology, we should look at it through this value lens. Our calling is to respect all creation, technology included. Technology, though, can be harmful to us and the earth. It can also be good, curing the sick and feeding many who are hungry. Looking at technology through this lens, though, makes it seem neutral, neither good nor bad, but the analysis cannot stop there. We also need to ask if the technology of today helps or impedes our relationship with God. By answering this question, individually and as a whole, we can fully understand the impact that technology has on us, our faith, and our connection to God.

As mentioned before, technology distracts and makes us busy, focusing our attention on earthly stuff. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21, ESV). We are told by Jesus to not store up on earthly wealth, because it wastes away. Have you ever bought a new phone, and not a year later there is another version that is supposedly better than the last? The company that sold it to you expects that you buy the new one, along with society, because owning the new device shows your wealth and coolness. It is one thing to live life to the fullest while on earth, but to ignore God and focus on earthly things is not the message we want the next generation to learn from us. Marshall McLuhan says that the Medium is the Message, stating that the way in which we deliver a message influences the message itself. Let's take a break up for example, if you text this person that you are breaking

up, the message is that your relationship really didn't mean much and could be ended with a press of a button. Now if you were to go to the person and say it, they would hear that you at least valued them and cared enough to talk it out with them. The same kind of message influence happens in worship, from how the pastor delivers his sermon, to what kind of lights the church uses. During the ACYTI camp, we went to visit Eagle Brook, a huge mega church with six locations around the metro area. While there, we got to see a clip of the previous Sunday's service, light show and all, and I found it distracting from what I know to be God. God is the still small voice within us, around us, and we find him in the good deeds we do or witness. Listening to the loud rock music, and seeing the blinding lights made it hard for me to find God in there. The tour also went to see the kid's ministry section of the church. It was full of television screens and projectors in the rooms, so that they could keep the kids' attention. In the older kid room, it was like an arcade in there. The man giving us the tour told us that the services in this room start out with ten minutes of play, then there is twenty minutes of worship, and the rest of the hour is play again. Does the world we live in today have too many distractions that the younger generation has to be persuaded to listen to God with more distractions?

We need to take a more analytical approach to technology and how we use it in worship. To see the value of technology we need to look at it and see if it is doing both bringing people to God and delivering his message. At Eagle Brook, it is obviously very good at reaching a large audience, but is its message the one God is sending? Technology needs to be a tool, not a toy for ourselves to use as a distraction. With fuel crisis, and global warming we cannot afford to distract ourselves from our calling to care for this earth and all of God's creation. We also need to step away from the screen and have alone time with God, and truly listen to the message sent to us, both personally and as a whole world.

How we listen to God is important to how we interpret the message. It is imperative to our faith and our relationship with creation. Technology is neither good nor bad if we as a church use it right and not get distracted. If we are distracted, we are lead astray from our stewardship to Creation, and our relationship with God put on hold. The meaning of the message is up to us to decide, but we must with a clear head, and a willing heart. We must not let the technology distract us from our goal, because the danger with technology is its good that diverts us from the goal.

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Worship and the Rise of No Attention Spans **By Ian Buddecke, Eagan, MN**

Here I sit, in the Augsburg College Library writing a three to five page paper on the ooh look! A squirrel! Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a prevalent problem in today's society. This problem has increased in recent years mainly due to the attention-grabbing effects of technology in the digital age. ADHD has even permeated into the church by lessening attention spans for long services and causing the inability to focus on sermons. The rise of digital technology, and as a result, ADHD, in the church can cause many issues in worship. To fully go in depth with this problem we will explore the relationship between ADHD and new technology, ADHD in worship and possible solutions that could be implemented.

In an article titled "ADHD Culture: Emerging Technologies and the Gospel", Jason Derr quotes, "Like grass that destroys a cement wall, soft can be harder than strong" (Derr, 180). The advance of technology is making ADHD more and more of a problem. Instead of the centralized news source of a book or newspaper, information is now distributed throughout thousands of websites and different mediums. Grass eats away at cement slowly, bit by bit. By receiving information from many different sources at once, the impact can be greater than receiving it from a centralized source (180). With each medium the information goes through, a part of the medium becomes a part of the message being conveyed. Marshall McLuhan famously quotes, "The medium is the message" (McLuhan, 15). Depending on what medium is used, the information will be perceived in a different way than if a different medium is used. For example, if I were to yell at someone with caps lock on over a text or email, I would seem less threatening than if I did it in person and with my voice. With more and more ways to communicate, the ways to perceive a message are becoming more numerous and along with the relentless flow of information, this is one of the main reasons ADHD is becoming a major problem.

With ADHD on the rise, problems in worship can result. I, myself, have trouble focusing on a sermon that's longer than twenty minutes. Instances like this can be problematic when the pastor is trying to convey his message. Along with trouble focusing, another problem can be simply getting bored. When a service starts to go really long, the congregation might start drifting off or thinking about other things. In general, these issues can lower concentration during a service and they won't be as likely to take away anything from the sermon or the service as a whole.

Some churches are also going the route of trying to attract a younger and broader audience by becoming mega churches and using more technology. An example of this would be the Eagle Brook church in Lino Lakes. This church has one central church and several satellite churches and come worship time, the pastor will preach at the central church and he will be broadcasted onto a vertical projector screen at all the satellite churches. While this may seem like an innovative idea to reach a more technologically minded generation, think about all the distractions a service like this would hold. At the main Eagle Brook location in specific, there were flashing lights all over the stage and if that wasn't distracting enough, there was a fog machine rolling fog throughout the stage and three different screens simultaneously projecting at once. The services more resembled a rock concert than a worship service. While visiting the church and experiencing some of the services they had, focusing on the message of the songs being played was nearly impossible as multi-colored lights flashed brilliantly around us. If a

church like this proves distracting for your average churchgoer, the distraction to someone with ADHD would be tenfold and ruin the purpose of attending that service.

Solutions to these problems are available and can help alleviate the issue at hand. To solve the issue of a congregation getting bored at long services, churches could make services shorter to make sure that the audience is concentrated on the message of the day. On the flipside, making services shorter would lessen the amount of material that could go into a service and the pastor and other worship planners would be limited in their decisions on the service. Another option to help solve this problem would be to hold a long service and a short service so that those who want to sit through a longer service and get a fuller experience can, whereas those who know they can't focus for that long can attend the shorter service.

In terms of the bigger mega churches that are beginning to be more popular, I believe the intentions are in the right place but it just can't work. In a lecture given by Hans Wiersma, it was discussed how one-fifth of Americans don't identify with any religion at all but still believe in God. These mega churches are created to try and bring in this twenty percent of Americans but in the process they provide one big distraction after another from the message. To solve this, churches should go back to the smaller congregations and more old-fashioned services with hymns and a sermon etc. By doing this and shortening services, there is an opportunity for a more focused congregation as well as a less distracting service that someone with ADHD can participate in and with ADHD growing more and more, this is vital to keeping them part of churches and their communities.

In conclusion, ADHD is a rising problem in today's society because of advances in technology. This technology has shortened attention spans across the board and is bringing about mega churches made to appeal to a younger generation. Many situations are present in a church service that can provide distraction for those with ADHD. Solutions are possible and can be done. ADHD is indeed a problem in a worship setting, but with this information and these solutions, it doesn't have to be.

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2 Corinthians 5:18
By Kristina Monson, Eagan, MN

Sitting in a classroom, I scribble random words I hear the professor say as he is giving his long monologue to the theology class. The topic albeit was interesting, but when you have a short attention span it's hard to stay focused without something triggering your attention. As I wait for something to spark my interest, I keep doodling down words, until my selective hearing picks up the phrase, "Technology is essentially an extension of one's body." Never mind the fact that I didn't hear what the actual definition of what technology was, I was finally able to actively engage my mind in doing something. Now, take that same ideal of extending technology and shift it over onto the church and the ideals that it embodies; communication, community, and culture. The question we must ask ourselves is how we are actively engaging in the church and how technology is extending us in the church as well?

Communication: the ways of sending information to people by using technology (Merriam-Webster). In today's era one thing we lack is the exchange of communication with others, ourselves, and even God. Although we may be text messaging someone with our cell phone, IM'ing someone over Facebook, or FaceTimeing someone on your laptop, our sense of communication has greatly diminished from what it used to be. Today we choose to communicate by using electronics, relishing in the sense of anonymity that it provides us, saving us from judgment from the person on the other end. But then one really needs to think about judgment, because who is really there to judge us besides God? So then why do we care so much about what everyone around us has to say?

Think back to when you were a baby. How were you able to communicate with the people around you about what you wanted? You would cry, laugh, cough, or squirm to let someone know that you needed something. You extended your thoughts and actions to them hoping they would understand. That primal way of communicating is what is lost as we move into the future. People evade the extension of the mind by using electronics as a means to do so. Our so called "Medium" is no longer an authentic way of passing along information, but rather just a simpler way of doing so without a single ounce of emotion behind the sentiments. Today everyone is spending more time inside their own world that they have concocted in their head and exists in technology, instead of being present in the real world. Would you rather be in a room surround by loved ones whom you could never talk to, or talk to them whenever you want to over skype but never see them face to face?

Community: an interacting population of various kinds of individuals in a common location (Merriam-Webster). Also related to the loss of communication between people is the lost sense of community or togetherness that people used to share very strongly. The reason many people blame technology for the loss of community is because technology doesn't enable us to trust people. Through technology we can never be sure that someone is who he/she says they are. Trust is linked to risk, understood as the unwelcome, threatening future state of the world, that is, the probability of adversity related to our own actions, due to our own commitments. And this is because we feel that if we can't trust someone, we associate them with risk, therefore alienating ourselves from them to abstain from extending our self to them.

Piotr Sztompka, a Polish sociologist known for his work on the theory of social trust, says that trust is a relationship in which the truster lacks sufficient information concerning all relevant aspects of the situation, and it is both a precondition for cooperation and a product of successful cooperation (Sztompka). For individual partners of the interaction, endowing each other with trust evokes positive actions. Thus, trust liberates and mobilizes human agency and increases possibilities for action. For the wider community, trust encourages sociability, helps communication, encourages acceptance of and respect for strangers, strengthens the bond between individuals and community, and increases the chances for cooperation. Therefore by bestowing trust among people, you are extending your body to them as well as your personality. A community only thrives when connections and cooperation exist. Where do your connections lie?

Culture: the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations (Merriam-Webster). Along with the lack of trust with the people among us, we are also being raised to be materialistic and wanting everything now, having no sense of virtue or patience. In his 2005 critique of contemporary materialism, *Hypermodern Times*, the French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky argues that our culture wants everything faster and faster, and that is mainly blamed on technology (Lipovetsky). Technology is the hidden shaper of people and cultures. Its transformative effects hover just beneath conscious awareness. Consider the shift in our reading capacities. Although image culture has led to a decline in literacy rates over the last forty years, we are not actually headed for illiteracy; rather we are witnessing the rise of a different kind of literacy. Our new text-based media causes people to prefer short, simple messages rather than lengthy, uninterrupted essays like this one.

What we as a society need to understand that bigger is not always better, and that less usually means more. By following the path of materialism, we turn self-absorbed and ignorant to the people and the world around us. But rather turning to a minimalistic way of life encourages one to be present in the now, and to be observant of the people and things around them. Also, relating to the church being materialistic detracts what the real message behind God's word holds, whereas being simplistic allows a person to better understand what God is trying to say without being "fluffed-up" to make His word seem more attractive. By implementing your faith through minimalism, you are truly extending yourself to God, in a pure, simple, and unyieldingly true way that shows who you really are. God accepts you regardless of the way that you practice your faith, will you extending God the same privilege?

Technology as time goes on keeps dividing, splitting, fragmenting, and atomizing all aspects of social life and culture as well as human beings. The world and life become split into a succession of "problems," each calling for separate technological know-how and a Do-It-Yourself manual. It is difficult to make any predictions in these social sciences, because social life and culture are shaped by human interactions that result from the operation of numerous factors, including individual choices that often seem to be made under the influence of a sudden irrational impulse. These impulses will always be seen through communication, community, and culture: the three pillars of life and the church. So now ask yourself, how do you extend yourself to God, and how is God extending himself to you? Only you will know.

And all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and who has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18

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The Medium is the Message
By Maggie Slater, Apple Valley, MN

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20, NLT). Modern social media creates disconnect between the Christian word and the deed. Humans interpret things in all different ways, whether it is an interpretation of the weather, or possibly another person’s actions, it is just what we humans do. As one reads the bible, interprets the scriptures, it is usually their duty to spread to word. We are called to spread God’s Holy Word.

“Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38, NLT). Christians enter the world of God by baptism. In most cases, we are baptized as newly born babies. But in other cases, people are baptized as a teenager or adult. No matter the age, the time, the church, the religion; we are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. We are baptized for not only a cleansing of our sins, but as a reminder that we are all children of God as well. We are children of God; we are imperfect. Baptism leads us to obey the commandments God has set for us, such as spreading God’s word. “And then he told them, “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone” (Mark 16:15, NLT). We are called to share the words of the Lord.

“Go in peace, and serve the lord!” We are sent forth into the world with these words after every service in the modern Lutheran and Catholic churches. God gives us so many opportunities to serve him, such as sharing the Christian word through good deed. The teenage years throughout high school are years we try to find ourselves. Too often there is a great number of those who choose to say one thing, and yet do another. We know our peers, and we know how they act outside of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat account. God gives us all chances to serve him through our deeds, it is however up to ourselves what we say and do and how we reflect our self’s with our actions.

Daily, 29 percent of teenagers message through social media network sites, implicitly. A way that is not directly expressed. A way that teenagers too often interpret each other’s words over social media falsely; purely implicitly. Life offers us so many temptations. One moment you are being crowded around the “popular” kids at school, being invited to that weekends party or get together. Then, the next week you find yourself sitting in your room, feeling excluded and alone, which can take you into a type of consideration of trust in your neighbors. Trust is a powerful thing to gain from somebody, and it is very simple to loose. How one decides to trust another is made only over a matter of time. The more time we spend around people, the more we study their words and actions, the better we begin to know them. We know the type of person they are, even if we no longer spend time around them, and with the help of social media, it is overall very simple to see the different sides a person may have, online or in person.

Marshall McLuhan is known for his quote: “The medium is the message.” For McLuhan, a medium is a new technology. Marshall McLuhan interchangeably words such as medium, media and technology. The medium is a way of one sharing or doing something in a certain way. The

way you present a medium, is the way it is received. As an example from McLuhan, “a road is a flattened up wheel, rolled up in the belly of an airplane.” How one may interpret this simple sentence is how it will be used as a message. The way we use technology, such as social media and what we say, does impact the way other people give us their trust and friendship.

When it comes to spreading the word of God through social media, anybody could do it. It sounds so simple, how easy is it to stand behind a computer or cell phone screen and express your love for God. Something as simple as tweeting a bible verse, or updating a Facebook status to how thankful you are to have such a wonderful God! People see that. People gather thoughts, and come to realization about this God, and how he is working. People notice that. People also see you out in public with your friends, making poor decisions that our wonderful God wouldn't be so pleased to see you doing.

“You must faithfully keep all my commandments by putting them into practice, for I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 22:31, NLT) It is one thing to do one thing, but then to do another. Especially in the teenage years, years of temptation and regret. Years we find ourselves sitting and wishing we did something we didn't because others did. Years we find ourselves regretting something we did because others didn't. Years of peer pressure to try something out, to say something new. We spend these years growing into the person we dream of being. During these years of confusion of who we want to be, we find ourselves living the best of both worlds. Too often humans find one another praising God through social media, yet we go into the real world, outside of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and bring our road rage, our jealousy, our foul language, our jealousy, our attitudes, and our negativity. It is difficult to live by the Lord's commandments, only by expressing it through a tweet or a Facebook status every once and a while.

Life is short. We only have a certain amount of time on this earth, and too often we take it for granted. Jesus died for our sins, for our mistakes and for our actions we take into the world.

Modern social media creates a dramatic disconnect between intention and result. As one may tweet or Facebook that special bible verse intending to provide a series of hope to that suffering friend, they must intend for success in that. The media is the message. How one may spread the word of God through words, may be completely different than how they spread it through deed, and that indeed does impact the way others spread the word of God.

The word of God deserves to be spread by Christians who are dedicated to their Lord, not just asking for attention through their social media. It is very difficult to trust one who is sharing the word of God through their lack of wise decisions. Think of the church ministries God has provided us with, think of the trust we have in those adults that provide your church community with the word of God, and all the wonders he is doing. It is for those people that we have such an abundant understanding of how God works, and those are the people in the world, in all the churches in the country, in the world that are living to God's commandments, and sharing his word, like Jesus once taught us to do.

It is so simple to gain followers on social media. Having numerous followers means gaining lots of likes on photos, tweets, statuses, and all sorts of posts. Living in this society, it is very easy to feel confident in yourself for the number of likes you get or the number of followers you have. People like you for what you post and say behind the screen, but what matters is how many followers you have in real life. How many people will stand by you through the difficult path life may bring you through. Social media gives you all the freedom you want to say what you want with only a specific number of characters to slow you down, but it's up to you to spread the

message you are trying to get across without those insignificant, diminutive characters you are provided with.

Modern social media creates disconnect between Christian word and deed. It is so simple to tweet a hopeful bible verse when you're feeling blue. However, it is also simple to go out the following night and smoke or drink something with that popular group you are just so close to finally being accepting in to, to chase the negative feelings away. Baptism offers us forgiveness of our sins when life grows heavy and drags us down a bit. Baptism is a reminder that we are children of God, and God loves each and every single one of us. "I love all who love me. Those who search will surely find me" (Proverbs 8:17, NLT). Everything we do, everything we say results in a consequence. We must think thoroughly about our words and how they result in our actions. We must put to caution how our intentions and our deeds come to show each other. The medium is the message. Trust, grace, actions all play a special role in the message we are trying to send, the message being God's love for us, which is shown in every verse, every word tweeted, texted, Facebook update, and it all results in our actions. It is up to us, our generation to spread the holy word of God, the holy, loving, graceful word of God through our actions and deeds, not behind our technology screens.

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Invisible Barricades
By Mara Neitzel, Aberdeen, South Dakota

Modern technology has greatly impacted communication and human interaction over the last century. It has allowed people to talk to anybody nearly instantaneously. In a matter of seconds, people from across the world can communicate through phone calls, texts, emails, or even social media. Modern communication technology creates a sense of urgency in life. People feel the need to know something right away and are willing to sit by the phone or computer until they get their answer. There is no doubt that this technology has improved relationships and communication between people, but what has it done to relationships with God? What would happen if people sat around waiting for God to answer their prayers? When people realize that a relationship with God is more gratifying in the long run than a relationship bound by technology, they will grow in their faith and spread God's love.

Text messages, phone calls, video chats, and other similar forms of technology allow people to be connected instantly. For example, any person can text his or her partner to express the love they share. This creates an instant feeling of satisfaction because each person has received a direct message of love. This way of communicating may work well for humans, but God cannot text, call, or video chat. He cannot send a message with technology that shows his unconditional love. Humans have become so reliant on quick and easy communication that some people may feel abandoned and unloved by God because God may not answer prayers right away, as a friend would answer texts. The fast-paced lifestyle created through modern communication technology has created a false expectation that God will answer prayers at comparable speeds to technology. In addition, many relationships could not even exist without this technology. Technology undoubtedly allows many relationships to thrive in the most complex situations. However, it can put a strain on relationships between people and God. "Every technology is both a burden and a blessing; not either-or, but this-and-that" (Posman, 5). This describes the effect of communication technology on Christian Community. While technology allows people to stay in touch with one another, it also can create a barricade in a person's direct relationship with God. A person who is always texting or checking their phone will have his or her head pointed down at the screen instead of up at God and the world. This technology has brought some people closer together, but at the same time it has created a superficial world where God has no part.

However, there is a solution to some of the problems created by communication technology. First, people need to realize that spiritual love is not comparable to human love.

[H]uman love is by its very nature desire—desire for human community...Spiritual love, however, comes from Jesus Christ, it serves him alone; it knows that it has no immediate access to other persons...Human love can never understand spiritual love (Bonhoeffer, 34-35).

In other words, the love that partners have for one another is not comparable to the love that God has for each of them. Once this realization occurs, people can trust in faith alone that God will answer their prayers—on his own time.

Second, people need to knock down the barricades created by technology in their relationship with God. “[Technology] has a remarkable capacity to bring those far away much closer, while at the same time making those near us more distant” (Hipps, 106). For example, a person who is on his or her phone all day is no doubt close to his or her colleagues, but God, who is right there, is being pushed away because the person’s focus is on everybody but Him. If people were to limit the time spent on their phones and devote more time to God, the barricades that block their direct relationship with God would surely crumble.

After these steps have been taken to negate the barricades created by communication technology, people will be able to grow in their faith and spread God’s love by serving others. Serving others is God’s indirect message of love. He cannot text, call, or video chat to show his unconditional love, but he can work through each and every person to show his love. In other words, people are the medium that shows God’s love, whereas phones are a medium that can show humans’ love. Once somebody’s technological barricade is broken down, God will be able to work through that person and show his love to others who may not have felt it before.

A relationship with God is more gratifying in the long run because God works on his own time. Faith cannot be determined by how quickly God answers prayers because spiritual love cannot be compared to human love. Furthermore, communication technology can create a barricade that limits God’s ability to show his love through people. Once people realize this, they will be able to grow in their faith and spread God’s love because the barricades that held them back before are now broken.

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