

THE DEACON'S BENCH[®]



Practical risk management guidance
to help today's Christian ministries thrive



CONNECTED

● Protecting your ministry. Uniting your people.

DIGITAL

discipleship

IN THE AGE OF DISRUPTION

As the first spring of a new decade began to bloom, churches around the world were faced with a similar question: how do we continue making disciples if we aren't meeting in person?

While COVID-19 revealed the need for many churches to develop their online presence, the demand already existed. "COVID exposed where many churches should have already been," explained Justin Tarsiuk, head of strategic partnerships at Subsplash®, an all-in-one digital engagement platform for ministries.

Americans are spending more time online than ever before¹ – regardless of age – and the trend doesn't seem to be slowing down. Churches that leverage technology will not only be well-positioned in a growing digital landscape, but may be better equipped to handle unexpected disruptions.

No Matter the Method, the Goal Remains

Churches today are fighting for people's attention. Leaders need to find a way to cut through the clutter and get their discipleship message across, eliminating as many distractions as they can along the way. Ironically, enhancing your church's online presence can

easily become a distraction of its own if you don't have a plan. Tarsiuk clarified, "The main thing ministries miss is strategy. If a platform – like an app or website – is just another giant net to catch people in, without a specific purpose, it becomes an option. And people are already exhausted by too many options."

Ministries looking to improve their digital reach can quickly become overwhelmed by the number of tools available to them. Online giving platforms, streaming services, social media accounts, websites, and apps are wonderful tools, but in the end they are only that – tools to carry the mission forward. What matters is that your church is using those tools to guide people through the discipleship journey.

Worth the Investment

Entry into the digital landscape doesn't have to be expensive. Many platforms are free to use. However, while these platforms may not have fees attached, it's important to ask yourself what you're really paying to use them, and if they're secure. As Tarsiuk pointed out, "While some platforms don't cost anything monthly or annually, you give them the rights to your content when you upload."

How do we continue making disciples if we aren't meeting in person?

Additionally, when you post content to certain platforms, you lose control over the distractions that might accompany your message, including ads or suggested content that might not align with your ministry's values.

While all-in-one digital platforms may have fees up front, they empower you to manage your message and eliminate obstacles by bringing all the tools you need to engage your community together in one space. This helps keep your congregation focused on the message and not the milieu, and it pays dividends. For instance, Subsplash claims its clients could see a 10% increase in giving and a 50% increase in media plays when they switch to the all-in-one service.²

Not to mention, all-in-one platforms often offer enhanced security, considering your information is stored in one place, rather than various, unlinked locations. Whether you choose a free or paid service, make sure to research their data security measures, including how they'll use your data.

Staying Connected and Engaged

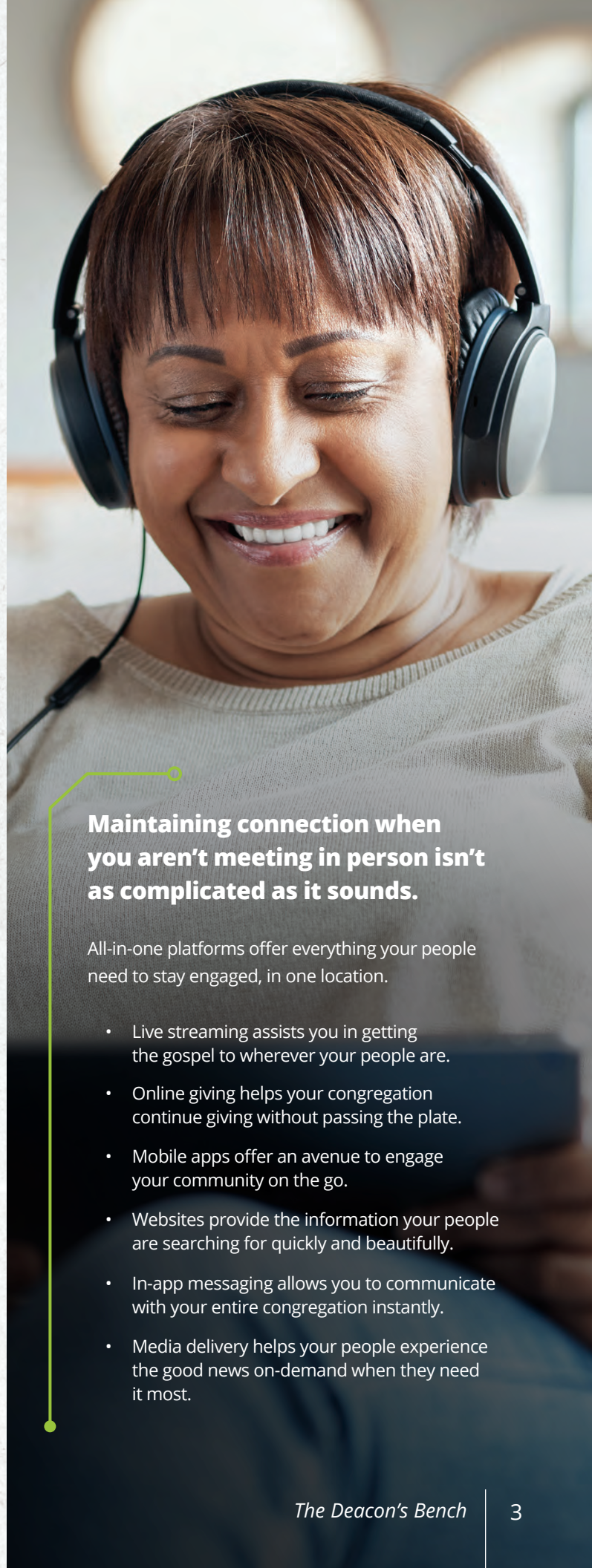
Technology can be a valuable tool for ministries seeking to keep their people connected and engaged during times of both disruption and normalcy. With the average American spending as much as 12 hours per day in front of a screen,³ ministries will continue to be confronted by the growing need to engage people where they are. In the end, what matters is that the mission is being carried forward and disciples are being made, no matter the tool. 📶

References

¹<https://www.vox.com/recode/2020/1/6/21048116/tech-companies-time-well-spent-mobile-phone-usage-data>

²Data pulled from Subsplash's home page – <https://www.subsplash.com/>

³<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nicolefisher/2019/01/24/how-much-time-americans-spend-in-front-of-screens-will-terrify-you/#1206fcac1c67>



Maintaining connection when you aren't meeting in person isn't as complicated as it sounds.

All-in-one platforms offer everything your people need to stay engaged, in one location.

- Live streaming assists you in getting the gospel to wherever your people are.
- Online giving helps your congregation continue giving without passing the plate.
- Mobile apps offer an avenue to engage your community on the go.
- Websites provide the information your people are searching for quickly and beautifully.
- In-app messaging allows you to communicate with your entire congregation instantly.
- Media delivery helps your people experience the good news on-demand when they need it most.



MINISTRY BEYOND BRICK AND MORTAR

How One Church Uses Technology To Make Disciples

The pandemic forced many ministries to live stream their worship services out of necessity. As ministries were using technology to bring worship to their people, one Indiana church pivoted to implementing an online campus, reaching a new audience for Christ. And according to Outreach Magazine, they are one of the fastest growing churches in the country.¹

Prior to the pandemic, Traders Point Christian Church in Indianapolis had a two-year plan to implement an online ministry experience, or online campus. “We had just launched two new brick and mortar campuses, and I was leading one, but that was three weeks before COVID hit,” said Nick Durm, online campus pastor for Traders Point. The pandemic compelled the ministry to dramatically accelerate its timeline. In a matter of months, Durm went from being a traditional pastor to the ministry’s new online pastor.

The concept of an online campus goes far beyond simply using digital tools to stream services. “The goal is to leverage technology to engage people and make connections, ultimately sharing the hope and help found in Jesus,” offered Durm. Their team includes a guest experience director and a groups minister, and they’re working to create access to a healthy church experience and developing content specifically for an online audience.

First – You Need a Strategy

One of the first steps before starting an online ministry is to think about who you want to reach. Many ministries had to start an online presence because they didn’t want to meet in person. They needed a way to connect with their own people. Durm explains that it is entirely different when you’re starting an online presence to reach people who aren’t currently being reached. You need to solidify who your audience will be.



“The goal is to leverage technology to engage people and make connections, ultimately sharing the hope and help found in Jesus.”

*- Nick Durm, Online Campus Pastor
Traders Point Christian Church*

“When thinking about who you want to reach, it’s important to consider what they value, what they’re looking for, what their felt needs are, and where they hang out digitally,” offered Durm. “That is where you begin to build your strategy.”

It takes all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people. Durm emphasizes that effectively doing online ministry takes a lot of investment and work, but it also takes a calling, so not every church will feel led to have an online campus. There are challenges to being online, but there are also some incredible benefits. “We recently had a young lady get baptized as a result of her getting connected with our church because of Traders Point Online,” added Durm.

Part of Traders Point’s strategy is to avoid creating consumers. Their goal is to help people find Jesus, follow Jesus, and live on mission. “We really see the online campus as a huge vehicle to get the gospel to the ends of the earth,” emphasized Durm.

Focus on Creating Community

Community is key, and it should be a central component of your plan. Community happens when people share common goals, struggles, and successes.

Even in an online setting, community includes gathering as a body. This can happen in several ways. Traders Point has watch parties happening at colleges around the state. “We also have people who are hosting gatherings at residential facilities, rehab centers, domestic shelters, and a local jail. We’re empowering those people to gather physically as they’re able, and to watch and engage our online services,” said Durm.

It is possible to build relationships, be a missionary, and point people to Jesus online. “Paul used the most advanced technology available to him, which was writing letters. We’re leveraging technology to reach people for Jesus,” said Durm.

The ministry’s goal is to introduce people to the gospel anytime, anywhere. While this can be challenging in an online setting, Traders Point is concentrating their efforts on creating a wide-open experience that’s focused on helping people live on mission and making ministry happen anywhere in the world. 🙏

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Take a 360 View of Your Security

PREVENTING CRIME THAT CAN HALT MINISTRY ACTIVITIES

- *You walk up to your church on a Monday morning and the first thing you notice is broken glass everywhere. As you enter, the devastation slowly reveals itself with every step. Graffiti spray painted on the walls, computers and audio equipment stolen, smashed bathroom fixtures flooding nearby classrooms. The destruction affects nearly every room in your building. The physical damage can be repaired, but the resulting emotional trauma can affect your people for months or even years.*

Mike McCarty, Founder and CEO of SafeMinistry Solutions, a security consulting company specializing in safety and security for ministries, saw first-hand how theft affects ministry. His church experienced two separate break-ins within weeks of one another. “The theft really created unease among our congregation that lasted for quite a while. Losing the equipment also affected our ability to hold virtual services. The incident heightened the awareness of the need for a focus on security with our leadership team,” said McCarty.

Every year, thousands of ministries are affected by burglary, vandalism,

arson, and other property crimes, according to FBI crimes against property by location statistics.¹ The physical and emotional damage can devastate a congregation, leading to disruption of services and reduced attendance.

As a result, many ministries have started security teams and implemented Sunday and mid-week plans to protect their people and property. But security teams can’t monitor property all the time. By incorporating technology with a 360 view of security, you can create a full circle of safety for your ministry’s people and property.

1 LAYERS OF SECURITY

McCarty recommends a layered approach to securing your property. This method helps you focus on critical areas to address first, such as having policies and procedures, a safety team, and a robust volunteer screening plan.

Once you have the basics in place, take your security to the next level by incorporating technology to protect your property. There are several key technologies that can help, including access control, security systems, and security cameras.

2 ACCESS CONTROL

Churches are uniquely open and welcoming, particularly when there are worship services, so they have different access control needs than a regular business. This means that ministries need to think about which doors need to be locked or left open as it relates to events. "Many churches have open doors on Wednesday night, Saturday night, Sunday morning, but they need to look at keeping doors locked on weekdays during regular hours," said McCarty.

When considering ways to secure your property yet still maintain an open and inviting space, McCarty recommends looking at who has access to specific areas of your ministry's property. The layer that is the most open includes the parking lot and sanctuary. Ministries want people to feel welcome as they come and go from a worship service. But as those layers get closer to critical areas, such as the children's ministry or office area, the access becomes limited.

Don't be tempted to relax your access control measures when there aren't any children or youth activities on campus. Keeping your people safe is important regardless of who is on campus.

Controlling access to specific areas of a ministry building can be as simple as locking doors, but this isn't always safe or practical. An alternative is to install access controls, such as a digital keypad or key card reader, to doors leading to the critical areas of your ministry. Whether your ministry uses electronic access control or simply chooses to keep doors locked or monitored, providing safety while maintaining an open and friendly atmosphere is the goal.

3 FULL CIRCLE SAFETY

Security cameras are another great tool to layer into your safety and security plan. Criminals often look for less secure facilities, or facilities that offer the least chance of being caught. They'll typically avoid buildings with alarm systems or surveillance cameras. In one study, security cameras were found to be an effective deterrent to burglary.² Security cameras may also deter other criminal acts. Read more about security cameras in The Deacon's Bench Online.

Finally, consider installing a security system. A system with an audible alarm can potentially reduce the amount of time a burglar or vandal remains inside your building.

"Criminals panic once they hear the alarm. They know the police will arrive soon," offered McCarty. You don't need an expensive system, either. The idea is to force the person to move quickly, minimizing the amount of damage.

As your ministry implements robust layers of protection, you'll strengthen your people and property against disruptive events, and ensure the continuity of essential ministry services. 🏠

References

¹Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation 2018 National Incident-Based Reporting System. Crimes Against Property Offenses by Location. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/2018/tables/data-tables> Accessed September 2020.

²Kuhns, Joseph. Understanding Decisions to Burglarize from the Offender's Perspective. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology. 2012. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268444817_Understanding_Decisions_to_Burglarize_from_the_Offender's_Perspective. Accessed September 2020.

For more information about SafeMinistry Solutions visit www.safehiringsolutions.com/brotherhood-mutual-insurance



**Read More
Online**

Read more about protecting your people and property:

brotherhoodmutual.com/db/connected





FUTURE FACILITY

Leverage Technology to Save Time, Money, and Energy

For Tim Cool, every ministry facility he walks into belongs to God, and that demands a high level of planning and care. The son of a Wesleyan minister, Cool has spent the past 35 years focused on church planning, construction, and facilities stewardship. He is now the chief solutions officer for Smart Church Solutions, a company he started in 2008. His passion is to help Christian ministries care for the facilities that God has entrusted to them. "I've seen many churches that are failing because they didn't care for their facilities. I want to see ministries thrive by helping them steward their facilities through building maintenance, planning for future needs, and embracing the right technology to help them be more efficient and effective with tithe dollars," said Cool.

With a few equipment upgrades, additional planning, and a software program to tie everything together, your ministry can become a future facility. The increased staff efficiency combined with reduced energy bills can enable your ministry to take its mission to new heights.

Ministries could be spending

• **\$3,000 to \$6,000 every year**
to have someone adjust their indoor temperature.

AUTOMATION TO THE RESCUE

The reality is that most ministries lack the necessary funds to add the staff that they really need to manage their property. Christian ministries already spend precious resources on energy costs, facility management costs, and equipment downtime and failure. As a result, many ministries defer maintenance due to lack of funds, planning, or qualified volunteers. This too often results in large, unexpected expenses to fix or replace buildings and equipment, potentially crippling ministry efforts.

Ministries need to figure out ways to make their current staff more efficient and productive while shielding their budgets against unexpected costs. One way to do this is by using software to automate, or control, specific functions of your facility. "Too often, and I'm as guilty as anybody, I hear the word 'automation,' and I immediately think that it's expensive, but that's not always the case," said Cool. There are many inexpensive ways to automate your facility to save time and money. Let's start by looking at WiFi thermostats, lighting, and access control.

Wifi Thermostats

Do you leave your thermostats set to a constant, comfortable temperature 24/7? Or do you manually adjust thermostats every time there is an activity somewhere inside your building? If either is true, you're wasting time, energy, and money.

Smart Church Solutions performed a national benchmarking study on facilities use and maintenance. The study found that many ministries had employees who were spending anywhere from two to six hours per week manually adjusting temperatures on their heating and cooling units. Even if you only have two or three thermostats, the time and expense can add up.

At an average pay rate of \$20 an hour, ministries could be spending \$3,000 to \$6,000 every year to have someone adjust their indoor temperature. "You could automate this function and in the first year have a payback just on the operational costs, which doesn't include the energy savings," remarked Cool.

For most small and mid-size ministries, WiFi thermostats are an easy and affordable way to achieve automation. Once installed and connected to your ministry's network, they give you the ability to control your HVAC from a computer or a smartphone. These smart devices enable ministries to program the appropriate temperature based on time of day and occupancy. No longer will staff need to run all over the building adjusting temperatures. With the tap of a button, you can make your facility comfortable and energy efficient.

Continued next page

Lighting & Door Access

In addition to automating your heating and cooling, resilient ministries also consider automating their lighting and door access. Automating these features enables ministries to operate more efficiently, saving additional time and money. You can automate lighting by using motion sensors, which are especially helpful in rooms without windows, like bathrooms. “These are typically the lights that end up getting left on all day and all night. And it’s not just the light. It’s the fan that’s connected to the light, too,” said Cool. You can go a step further by installing WiFi lighting controls, which allow you to program when lights turn on and off. Finally, door access can be automated, but it’s a little more expensive. “You should budget about \$500 to \$800 per door for access control,” said Cool. The benefit of access control is that you have full control of your building. You can automatically unlock or lock doors based on the need, time of day, or access level granted to each individual programmed key fob.

INTEGRATE YOUR MINISTRY ACTIVITIES AND SYSTEMS

Another benefit of automating your facility is that you can program them to work together. Let’s say your church building is 10,000 to 15,000 square feet with 10 to 20 events every week. If you use software to

schedule events, you can also integrate various building functions like HVAC and lighting. “It’s very efficient to schedule an event and schedule lighting, HVAC, and access at the same time,” remarked Cool.

Smart Church Solutions offers eSPACE, a scheduling program that enables ministries to integrate their HVAC, lighting, and access within a single program. Now you don’t have to worry about lights being left on all night or trying to heat or cool your building while it’s unoccupied. Connected automation allows your ministry to be more flexible when faced with event cancellations or severe weather events. And it can all be done from a remote location by one person.

JUST THE BEGINNING

Technology can help your ministry reduce energy costs and become more efficient. You improve resiliency with facilities that run more efficiently. “As facility stewards, we’re called to support the work of ministry and seek ways to improve its effectiveness, and technology can help us do that,” stated Cool. 🏠

To learn more about Smart Church Solutions, visit www.smartchurchsolutions.com



FACILITIES TECHNOLOGY

Facilities technology involves much more than automating access, temperature, and lighting. Future facilities also find additional ways to operate more efficiently to save time, reduce energy costs, and minimize environmental impact. From LED lighting to cleaning technology, find out how your ministry can enhance its sustainability at: brotherhoodmutual.com/db/connected



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Ministry Routing List

- ☐ Pastor
- ☐ Administrators
- ☐ Office Staff
- ☐ Board Members
- ☐ Other

CONNECTED

We crave connection — to God and to each other. It's more important than ever. In this issue you'll find some creative new ways to keep your people plugged into ministry. You'll also discover how you can safeguard your efforts from disruption.

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