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A Publication of Church Supplies & Services | November 2020



Adapting to a World of Technology

Feature Article by
Dr. Richard Caldwell,
page 21



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How grateful we are for the innovations that have allowed us to continue ministry over the past few months! While technology tools have bridged the COVID gap, let us not forget that church is intended as a gathering, and the means for ministry set forth in Scripture is pure and timeless.



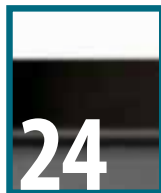
Smart Church Facilities and the Internet of Things

Have you heard of IoT? If you're familiar with Echo, Nest, Ring or Tile, you are well on your way to understanding the concept. Learn more about the efficiencies of becoming a smart church!



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Editor's Note: For submitting articles, artwork or comments about this publication, please contact: Patti Malott at 832.478.5131 | patti@churchco-op.org

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From the Director

Our team had just finished reviewing evaluations from the 2020 Texas Ministry ConferenceSM when COVID-19 hit the news. Soon afterwards, we entered the “stay at home” phase. I felt we should hold off on making plans for the 2021 TMC until we knew more about the availability of a venue and the guidelines for large gatherings. By August, we recognized the need to plan a virtual conference due to the magnitude of our event. Packing 1,100 people into the CFBC Family Life Center just wasn’t going to work. Since we couldn’t predict the future, we decided to move forward in exploring virtual platforms to host our event.

Suddenly, we were presented with a whole new world of technology! Although I had attended six virtual conferences, the backend of a virtual event is a whole other ballgame. We found ourselves learning about MP4s, gamification, advanced production and much more. We are grateful and blessed to be able to continue our conference plans—all because of technology.

The more we learn about the capabilities of our virtual conference, the more excited we are for you to have a wonderful experience on February 18, 2021! Much is being prepared, and there will be many opportunities for you to gain valuable tools for your ministry, connect and engage with vendors, network with friends and—of course—win door prizes!

All of us have adapted in some way or another to technology, from tackling new software on our computers to new apps on our phone to new features on our vehicle. Advances will continue at a rapid rate, and we will continue to triumph over new challenges.

Included in this issue are several articles offering helpful insight for navigating the ever-changing world of technology. On page 21, our featured author, Dr. Richard Caldwell, shares his perspective on how his congregation has benefited from technology, and how it must not be allowed to substitute for what God has designed to be pure and timeless. Other contributors share their stories on pivoting their ministry methods and the wisdom gained from their experience.

We invite you to grab your favorite fall drink, shut your technology off for 30 minutes, and enjoy reading!

Together We Overcome!

Patti Malott
Executive Director



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Texas Ministry ConferenceSM

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The purpose of the Texas Ministry ConferenceSM is to provide tools and resources for those who serve in churches, schools and nonprofit organizations. This includes both people in leadership who drive the vision and those who support them such as employees; committee, lay, council, and session members; elders and volunteers.

We do this at our annual conference by offering affordable training, educational workshops, quality vendors and sponsors, networking, fellowship and encouragement.

The Texas Ministry ConferenceSM is held the third Thursday of each February.

Learn more about how you can benefit from attending this conference at TexasMinistryConference.org or by calling **832.478.5131**.



we've got you covered

by Gary Benson and Paula Burns

Increased Risk to Youth in a New World of Technology

No one could have imagined a year ago that in just a few months the world would be turned upside down with the emergence of COVID-19. It would have been hard to fathom what we now know as the “new norm”. Churches have been impacted on every front. New policies and procedures have been implemented to maintain compliance and continue operations safely. Changes are happening daily, and church leaders must adjust.

Churches have been hit hard financially as a result of donors' loss or reduction of income. Some ministries had previously been on a growth trend and had built new facilities to accommodate their increase in membership. Those trends are now on the decline as our nation recovers and stabilizes from the pandemic. However, we know the Church is resilient and has been a shining light during this time of uncertainty. New technology, providing the ability to stream services and host meetings, has been invaluable in navigating these uncharted waters and maintaining a baseline of contributors.

Online platforms such as Zoom, Teams and GoToMeeting have been amazing tools to create a sense of community and keep momentum moving forward. Keeping people connected would have been much harder, if not impossible, had these tools not been readily available. While acknowledging the positive results of this new world of technology, we also need to be aware of the negative. What was created for good has resulted in an emerging risk for our youth.

Pedophiles are always looking for new avenues to gain access to youth. Leaders need to take precautions and be aware when hosting online youth group meetings. It is key that leadership is trained in how to operate safely in a virtual environment. Our Risk Management Department at Insurance One has seen a heightened number of claims resulting from the abuse of online activity. It is important to spread the word and increase awareness of this emerging risk.

To decrease risk to youth in online meeting platforms:

- The same screening process needs to be followed for online meetings as for onsite activities. The church should not permit any adult who has not been screened to have access to children in an online meeting.
- Everyone should have and follow the 2-Adult Rule in their Sexual Misconduct Policy at all times during online activities. Both adults must have passed the screening process. If at any time the second adult must leave the online meeting, then the meeting will need to end early. The church should not tolerate any deviation from the 2-adult rule. This is where most claims are occurring. The root of the issue is lack of accountability by the youth leader.
- The leader needs to have a list of participants who have been invited to the meeting and check it against the list of those attending. The list of attendees should show up on the host's screen. No uninvited participants should be allowed to join the meeting.
- It is much safer, especially in a Zoom format, to use a professional Zoom link rather than a personal account to host an event. Be sure your church has an account and get proper training on safety protocols when hosting a meeting.
- Turn off any chat features. Do not allow participants to talk to each other privately during the meeting.
- Get permission from parents for youth to join the online meeting. Encourage parents to be in the room or come in occasionally to check the virtual environment and ensure it is being run safely and in good conduct.
- Establish clear guidelines for youth regarding appropriate clothing and suitable backgrounds while attending the meeting.
- Parents and youth should not share the meeting link with other interested participants. Invites need to come through the host leader so they can track who is attending.
- If the online platform can be accessed through a social media format such as Facebook, instruct participants NOT to log in that way. They need to access it directly.

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Accountability creates a safe environment for our youth. Abuse occurs as accountability decreases. Many online platforms have training available on operating meetings safely. Encourage your leaders to take advantage of this training so we can continue to build and maintain the safe community that is so desperately needed during this time.

A note from all of us here at Insurance One: Our hearts and prayers go to all impacted by COVID-19. If there is any way our team can help with your risk management needs, please do not hesitate to reach out. We are praying that God will heal our land. May God bless you. +



Gary Benson and Paula Burns

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The Insurance One team assembled to service CO+OP members is led by experienced agents with close to 100 years of combined experience. The Woodlands (Texas) office is led by agency owners, Gary Benson and Paula Burns.

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morepower^{to}you

By Steven Carroll

We've come a long way.

Technology continues to shape the way we engage socially and how we satisfy our day-to-day business needs.

Energy services are no exception. One of the most profound changes has been the transition from the analog electricity meter to the "smart meter". Smart meters allow more accurate and instant access to electricity data. They provide up-to-date information and do many things remotely that once required numerous employees to handle.

Remember the days when the dogs started barking because the utility company would send meter readers to walk from house to house reading the dials of your outside meter to determine how much electricity was used for the month?

Today most analog meters have been replaced by smart meters. The advancement of being able to access data via smart meters has opened the doors to unlimited possibilities of service that TES can offer to commercial and residential customers. Smart meters provide instant access to energy data, enabling us to see how much electricity is being used by that meter and at what time of day the electricity is being used. Consumers and energy providers can then determine if there is a way to lower this consumption to reduce energy charges. Reduction of energy consumption can be accomplished by taking actions such as adjusting the thermostat, unplugging appliances before leaving the home or business, or making sure that the lights are turned off. TES can use this information to determine which electricity provider and contract would be the best fit for your home or business.

Smart meters have also facilitated a more streamlined customer service experience. Data is collected electronically and analyzed by the energy provider to understand usage patterns and how best to serve the customer. Excessive numbers of power outages or usage spikes can be detected, and the problem can be assessed and corrected more quickly than if using an analog meter.

If you don't already have a smart meter, you will probably be getting one very soon. With a smart meter, you just might be able to save a lot of money on your future energy bills.

TES Improvements

TES continues to take advantage of technological breakthroughs to best serve its customers. With over 6,000 residential and business customers, technology allows us to find efficient ways to stay in touch with our customers and keep them informed of opportunities to contain electricity costs and save money. As energy rates fluctuate, timing to act on pricing opportunities can be critical. For this reason, we offer digital signatures and electronic confirmations. These allow our customers access to up-to-date energy pricing opportunities and lock in lower rates before they expire due to changing market conditions.

COVID-19

During this pandemic period, advancements in technology have allowed TES employees to work remotely with no disruption in their level of service and availability to our customers. We have adapted our phones, computers and video conferencing to offer the same level of best-in-class customer service.

One of the most profound changes has been the transition from the analog electricity meter to the “smart meter”. Smart meters allow more accurate and instant access to electricity data.

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Automating your thermostats and lighting offers a smarter, more responsive set of options for saving energy. Being able to manage your lights and temperature settings using a smartphone and/or computer allows for greater control and a reduction in energy usage and costs.

Retrofit Lighting

Improvements in lighting technology have helped decrease the consumption of energy and reduce maintenance cycles. This has been a big win for church and school budgets.

Mobile Apps

Real-time communication through mobile apps is available for IOS and Android. Some apps allow for a 360-degree overview of electricity accounts, electricity usage history, pricing options, forecasts and budgets.

Ongoing advancements in technology allow TES Energy Services, LP to continue to serve its customers better. We are always searching for ways to make it easy for customers to save money on their energy bills. If you are not already one of our satisfied customers, let TES help you find the electricity plan and rate that best suit the needs of your church, school, business or home. +



Steven Carroll

Steven Carroll has over 18 years of experience in energy procurement. He has worked with some of the top energy retail providers and consulting firms in the U.S. This allows him to offer a unique and honest perspective to each customer to lower their energy costs and maximize savings.



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SMART CHURCH FACILITIES AND THE INTERNET OF THINGS

by Tim Cool



I have been involved in church for over 56 years (having been born into a pastor's family) and have served the church facilities market for about 34 of those years. I can tell you firsthand that the church tends to lag when it comes to adopting new trends, means, methods and technology. This is not a slam on the church as an organization, just a reality.

However, many churches are now keeping up with trends, and in many cases leading the charge (especially with sound systems, video production, etc.). Consider the YouVersion Bible app or how online giving and text-to-give are almost as commonplace as the offering plate. Some churches have more IT personnel alone than 80% of American churches have on their entire staff.

There is a trending technology concept that I believe will impact all aspects of your world, including church, so let's get familiar with it—Internet of Things (IoT). According to a recent Forbes article, it can be described as:

"...the concept of basically connecting any device with an on and off switch to the Internet (and/or to each other). This includes everything from cell phones, coffee makers, washing machines, headphones, lamps, wearable devices and almost anything else you can think of. This also applies to components of machines, for example, a jet engine of an airplane or the drill of an oil rig. As I mentioned, if it has an on and off switch, then chances are it can be a part of the IoT. The analyst firm Gartner says that by 2020, there will be over 26 billion connected devices (some even estimate this number to be much higher, over 100 billion). The IoT is a giant network of connected things (which also includes people). The relationship will be between people-people, people-things, and things-things."

So, what does this mean for churches...YOUR church? Here is what I see happening and where we are heading:

1. We already have Smart Phones, Smart Cars and Smart Homes. Now we have Smart Churches. That's right...your church building can be SMART. What does that even mean? For the past decade, the term "smart" has been used to identify devices and physical environments that have incorporated technology to produce integration, inter-connectivity and system processing that does not rely solely on human interaction. Like the Scarecrow, can we give your church building a brain? Well, sort of. While we cannot literally give your facility any gray matter, you can add components that are "smart." Major facility systems can be integrated with themselves and their management tools (i.e. Church Management Software and Event Scheduling Software). Imagine—you schedule an event in your management software and it:

- Turns the HVAC on in time for the event and turns it off after the event
- Unlocks/locks digitally-controlled doors for access to the event
- Lists the event schedule and details on digital signage throughout your building
- Turns on and off TVs and projectors for the event
- Turns on and off lights needed for the event
- Alerts your facility team and appropriate vendors if there is a significant issue

This is not a fairy tale! This is the world of IoT (Internet of Things) and the future is NOW.

2. Given the incorporation of APIs (Application Programming Interface, a software intermediary that allows two applications to talk to each other), more and more integration is going to interact via APIs and not through proprietary protocols.
3. Seeing that APIs are an IT world widget and not an everyday Facilities Management tool, the IT department at your church will play a much larger role in the selection, implementation, training and maintenance of these systems (via IoT).
4. Most of these IoT integrations will require Ethernet or Wi-Fi connectivity, which may require the incorporation of firewalls, networks, servers, static IPs, cloud connectivity and storage.
5. These applications will have cost and budget implications. Some will have significant reductions in cost as we become more effective and efficient, but some of those savings may be offset by subscriptions, hardware, software and maintenance.
6. This leads to the real crux—IT and Facilities must collaborate.

- They must communicate.
- They must seek information from each other before decisions are made.
- They must determine WHY they need an application before they decide on the WHAT and HOW.

- They must have budget discussions. As stated above, there may be cost savings and offsets. Whose budgets do these savings and costs impact?

All the above will make most IT professionals start to geek out. But there is a very practical reason this needs to be on your radar. It all boils down to operational efficiency. Nearly every church is understaffed in their facilities department. We find that churches are unlikely to increase their staffing to the level that is really needed (1 FTE for every 30-35,000 SF), so how do we help our current staff be more productive? Could they be more efficient and effective if they didn't have to address tasks that could otherwise be automated? This kind of technology can do just that.

As you can see, this is an exciting topic with great potential that deserves our consideration. Unless we are living in a cave, rubbing two sticks together to make fire, change comes to us all and we all adapt. The iPhone is only 11 years old, yet it feels like we have always had one. Just think how SMART your church facility could be in another 11 years! ✦

Tim Cool



Tim Cool is the Chief Solutions Officer at Smart Church Solutions/Cool Solutions Group and has assisted nearly 1000 churches throughout the U.S. with their facility needs. He has collaborated with churches in the areas of facility needs analysis, design coordination, construction management and life cycle planning/management. Tim is also the author of several books including his latest *ENTRUSTED: An Intentional Guide to Church Facility Stewardship*. You can reach Tim at info@smartchurchsolutions.com.



Using Technology in Children's Ministry to Respond to COVID

Two Perspectives

Julie Crocker - The Woodlands United Methodist Church

Where were you when you heard that COVID-19 was beginning to shut down our nation? I was driving back from our family's Spring Break trip to Alabama when my husband announced that the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo was closing immediately. We spent our drive through Mississippi and Louisiana watching news reports and hearing people voice their disappointment and frustration. And, then it hit me. Wait. If the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is closing down, what will happen to our Sunday morning church programming this week?



Like many of you, by Friday morning, March 13, 2020, I was in my Pastor's office figuring out how to move our Children's Ministry programming online. Little did we know this would be the first of many conversations regarding the use of technology in our new reality of ministry in the middle of a pandemic.

As I reflect on the months that have gone by and the multiple shifts and pivots we have made as a Children's Ministry Team, I am amazed at how much we were underutilizing the technology right at our fingertips. The hustle and demand of day-to-day ministry hindered our capacity to use technology in new and creative ways. I now firmly believe that even when we go back to in-person programming, we must never underutilize it again.

The first technology area that our Children's Ministry team focused on was utilization of online platforms like Facebook, Instagram and our church website to push out a quickly written introduction to our new Sunday morning online experience. This online experience included a link to access curriculum-produced Bible story videos. Our curriculum provider graciously and quickly lifted all copyrights that would have prevented us from using their content online. While our numbers are not as strong as they were in person before the pandemic, we have maintained steady online engagement with the children who were already in our program.

Then something else pretty amazing happened. Our engaged church families began telling us that they were sharing the online content with their friends and family in our community and in other parts of the country. And with that, we saw a greater vision—a Kingdom vision. So, our team has spent its time in quarantine revamping the online experience. We will be shifting our Sunday morning online experience to a Children's Ministry YouTube Channel. We will be developing online content with the goal of reaching families who aren't comfortable returning in person once we reopen our doors. We will also keep online production going for children who are hundreds of miles away from us geographically, but only a click away from us on the internet.

The second shift we made was utilizing technology to move our Vacation Bible School to an online virtual experience. This decision was more difficult for me, as the week of VBS is my favorite. I was hoping to be in person for VBS, but with over 1,000 children traditionally attending our early June Vacation Bible School, there was no way to provide a safe in-person option. So, we shifted quickly with the help of our Creative Services staff. We produced four days of VBS online content to be engaging, fun and interactive. The biggest concern we had was making it a product kids wanted to watch after being in online school. We also provided VBS "Treasure Boxes" for each child. These boxes were handed out at a drive-by VBS Carpool Parade. We then used the technology available through our church database system, ROCK, to organize volunteers as points of contact for families in their neighborhoods. Technology was key in mobilizing the 100-plus staff and volunteers it took to pull this off.



The third area our Children's Ministry team focused on was the use of social media. I am of the "Facebook Generation", but I am more aware than ever that a majority of our younger families are on Instagram and other platforms. During this season, we shifted the focus of one of our staff members to build a comprehensive online presence. Our goal is now to use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest to tell our story and engage our parents. Initially, we were only posting content for children on our platforms, but we came to realize that parents were engaging with content directed at them, like helpful articles and encouragement for what THEY were going through. We now use social media as a way to not just resource our parents and caregivers, but to support them as well.

The final technology tool we are tapping is our church database, ROCK. Before COVID, we were using it to generate lists of those children who were in our building. We have since taken this list, along with the geofencing capabilities in ROCK, to get an idea of where our families live. I did not even know what geofencing was until recently. Basically, this program has allowed us to build geographic maps of our members. With that, we are able to group our families into manageable community connection points, so we can

drop off goodie bags to our children or set up a Popsicles in the Park event close to their home. If your church database doesn't have geofencing capabilities, then web-based programs like MAPLINE are available.

As one of our staff members, Shana Duerr, puts it, "Telling kids about Jesus is essential work." This season of uncertainties, while difficult, has yielded many beneficial re-creations of the wheel, so we can still do that ESSENTIAL WORK. I am truly thankful for our Children's Ministry team, Creative Services team, volunteers and church staff who know how important kids are to God. I am also thankful for the technology that has allowed us to move outside of the building and into the homes of families. ✦

Julie Crocker



Julie Crocker currently serves as the Co-Director of Children's Ministries at The Woodlands United Methodist Church. Her 17 years of children's ministry experience is balanced with her passion and educational background in child and adolescent development, leadership and counseling. She is an advocate for all children in her community and beyond to be cared for in ways that show them the love of Christ.



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Stephanie Rogers - Champion Forest Baptist Church-Jersey Village

How are you reading this article? Did you find it while visiting a website? Did someone email it to you? Did you pull a hard copy out of a mailbox? Since March 2020, the way we receive information has changed. For those serving in Kids Ministry, the way we lead, teach, train and even think about Kids Ministry has radically transformed.

When the announcement was made that the four campuses of Champion Forest Baptist Church would be closed due to COVID-19, each campus Kids Minister jumped into action. Very early in the pandemic, we realized this would be a unique time parents would have with their children. How parents used this time had the potential to change everything—their marriages, their children and their family unit. Children needed to hear and know God's Word. 2020 was going to be a year when we would each be doers of the word and not just hearers. The church had left the building and was now located in each individual home.

The four campuses of CFBC are made up of a diverse group of Kids Ministries of varying sizes, facilities,

languages and resources. That diversity led each campus to take a different creative approach to the new reality of online Kids Ministry.

ZOOM?! If you're like me, the word Zoom may have been a fleeting thought from the news or media, but I surely never considered it a plausible tool in my analog reality. Suddenly the word Zoom was in every conversation and meeting. At the Jersey Village Campus, we launched a Daily Bible Time Zoom. Families logged their children onto Zoom on Monday-Friday at 12:00. Kids brought their lunch and their Bible. Everyone enjoyed peanut butter smiles and racing to find books of the Bible. These 30 minutes together brought a sense of normalcy to a world that seemed off-kilter and confusing.

Soon, Life Group Leaders at every campus launched their classes online, meeting with kids on Sundays after the online sermon or during the week. Some campuses had Wednesday Night Kids Choir via Zoom, and even our Weekday Ministries hopped on Zoom to meet with preschoolers and their families.



Another previously underutilized resource was our website. ChampionForest.org was updated to include a brand-new kids page so parents, the primary disciplinarians of their children, could access lessons with easy to read instructions for leading Life Group at home. Our weekday programs added a webpage filled with activities so that parents could do at-home learning with easy to find resources. And let's not forget social media!

Social media had previously been utilized for advertising upcoming events and posting memory verses for the upcoming Sunday. In the new reality of COVID-19, social media played a huge part in communicating with families. The use of social media went from just advertising the next big event to an entire Family Fun Night on Facebook Live! Families were challenged to put cookies on their foreheads and scooch them into their mouths with no hands! While some challenges seemed to be just for fun, they were all aimed at guiding families to work together, study God's word together, and use this unprecedented time to grow together.

Not long into the pandemic, we looked at each other in our Zoom squares and said, "What about VBS?" We prayed and asked God to show us how He wanted VBS to happen this year. Shortly after we began praying, God gave us the answer, "Let's go to the drive-in!"

Then we thought: If VBS were only one night at the drive-in, kids would miss learning the songs and hearing all the Bible Stories, and what about crafts! So, in true pandemic fashion, each campus Kids Minister became a pro at shooting videos on our iPhones, and the month-long Concrete and Cranes VBS was under virtual construction. Every weekday was a rotation—Rec, Crafts, Bible Time, Worship Rally and Missions. On Fridays, parents could access our Parent Talks as they continued to guide their children to understand that even though we live in a broken world as evidenced by this pandemic, God is in control and He loves us.

The month-long virtual VBS ended in a grand finale at a local Houston drive-in theater! Families social distanced as they watched our version of a VBS Movie that led them to run around their cars, honk their horns, worship through songs, and hear God's word.

2020 has been and continues to be a strange year. Jesus told us we would have trouble in this world. But this we know for sure—He is with us always, to the end of the age. So, let us not grow tired of doing good. Ministry looks different today than it did at the beginning of March, but none of this is a surprise to our creator! ✚

Stephanie Rogers



Stephanie Rogers has served in Kids Ministry for 13 years and has been the Kids Minister at Champion Forest Baptist Church-Jersey Village for 5 years. She and her husband Kevin have been married for 24 years and have 3 girls, Katie, Morgan and Caroline. When Stephanie is not serving at CFBC, she enjoys baking chocolate chip cookies!





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Technology: A Blessing to Be Submitted to God

by Dr. Richard Caldwell

On March 13, I sent a letter to our congregation announcing that we would not be gathering on the Lord's Day. Instead, I would preach a sermon via livestream. For the first time in my 22 years of ministry at Founders Baptist Church and my 37 years of vocational ministry, I would be preaching to a camera and an empty room at a time when the church would normally gather. From that time until this past Lord's Day (August 30), technology played a role in our ministry that we would have never envisioned prior to the emergence of COVID-19.

In the providence of God, our church was uniquely positioned for such a crisis. Founders was already livestreaming our morning and evening worship services each week. Our people were already accustomed to receiving spiritual instruction through sermons and podcasts delivered on our church's YouTube channel, Facebook page, Sermon Audio ministry and other media channels. In addition, our church is one of 12 campuses that make up The Expositors Seminary, and we deliver training that includes a combination of face-to-face instruction and video conferencing in collaboration with the other campuses. If not for the blessings of technology, and our willingness before the crisis to make use of those blessings, ministry would have looked much different over the past five months.

Not only have entire worship services been livestreamed (we eventually included singing), we made use of video conferencing to maintain our Adult Bible Fellowship ministry (small groups), our men's and women's discipleship ministries, our student ministry and our elder's meetings. Almost every ministry of the church that required face-to-face interaction was able to be maintained because of the technological blessings of the modern era. All this represented innovation for us. Unlike what I mentioned previously, these were not things we were already doing. In the perfect wisdom of our God, He made a way for our church to maintain its spiritual health at a time when our physical health was threatened. For this, we are most grateful.

Blessings, however, are never to be exalted to the place of the giver. Indeed, every blessing that God gives is to be submitted to His will, which is clearly communicated in His inerrant Word. Technology represents something that changes. The will of God, communicated in Scripture, represents something that never changes (James 1:17).

The Bible is clear that the church is a people who gather. The New Testament church consists of those who have been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ, have

followed Him in baptism, and have covenanted together to carry out the great commission (Matt 28:18–20). The many "one another" commandments of the New Testament require that we meet together (Heb 10:25). Whether it is loving other believers, serving them, receiving them, praying for them, correcting them, teaching them or greeting each other in ways that express God's love, none of these things can be fully accomplished virtually in the way that God designed. Sitting in our living room, distanced from the rest of the congregation, not only fails to satisfy our hearts, it fails to adequately satisfy God's commands.

The recent battle between Los Angeles County and Grace Community Church in California serves to emphasize the point that I am making. Dr. John MacArthur, long-time pastor of Grace Church, has argued that of all the things considered essential, and therefore allowed to continue with some semblance of normalcy, the church is preeminent. Its needfulness and authority are not derived from government, but from God. By its very definition, the church is a gathering. When we were told that the pandemic would result in millions of deaths, it was perfectly reasonable that the church would temporarily suspend its meetings and strive to minister to its people virtually. But, at some point, the church must gather again because the kind of ministry the Bible prescribes requires it. A ministry that is purely virtual will never satisfy what is set forth for the church in Scripture.

**Technology
must never be allowed
to redefine the means
for ministry that God
has set forth in His Word.**

Technology is a blessing that must be submitted to God and to Scripture.

This is a most important point. Technology must never be allowed to redefine the means for ministry that God has set forth in His Word. For two thousand years, the means for ministry set forth in Scripture have proven sufficient precisely because they are ordained by the God whose wisdom proves timeless. What the church does in its worship of God, in its mutual ministry among the people of God, and in its evangelism to the world, must follow the pathway set forth by its King. Christ is the Head of the church and His will is communicated in the Bible.

We gather to pray, to sing, to fellowship with other believers, to serve with our spiritual gifts and to hear His Word taught. We gather to partake of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. These things we gather to do have remained unchanged since the very beginning of the church (Acts 2:42).

The challenge, therefore, is to be able to take wise advantage of ever-changing technology without proving unfaithful to God's unchanging plan for His church. The challenge is to maintain what is simple and pure by God's very design, while taking advantage of technology to advance those simple means of grace in every way possible, without distorting them.

Our church feels that challenge. We make use of technology in our worship services (lighting and sound). We make use of technology in the distribution of instruction throughout the world via video, audio and print media. We make use of technology when looking for ways to connect our people with each other and when making the best scheduling decisions for the use of our facilities. Even now as I write this article,

because of COVID our church's ministry has not returned to complete normalcy, and we are making use of technology to close that gap. Some portion of our congregation is still unable to meet with us in person, and the ability to minister to them virtually is invaluable. However, we would never exhort them to make this a pattern for the rest of their lives.

Technology is a blessing. We should give thanks to God for the many ways that the church's ministries can be multiplied because of technology. But we trust with full confidence what God has revealed in His Word to be His will for the church, and therefore we trust the means He has ordained to carry out that will. Technology is a blessing that must be submitted to God and to Scripture. It must not be allowed to substitute for, or to distort, what God has designed to be simple, pure and timeless. ✚

Dr. Richard Caldwell



Dr. Caldwell is Pastor-Teacher of Founders Baptist Church where he has served since 1998. In 2017, Caldwell launched Walking in Grace Ministries, a ministry that produces and distributes Caldwell's sermons and books. His passion and gifting lie in the area of verse-by-verse exposition of God's word. Caldwell is the author of several books including *Answering Anxiety* (Kress), *Pastoral Preaching: Expository Preaching for Pastoral Work* (Rainer), and the *Walking in Grace Commentary Series* (Kress).

Caldwell holds an M.Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a D.Min. from The Master's Seminary. He also serves as the campus pastor of The Expositors Seminary, which has a campus at Founders Baptist Church. He and his wife Jacque have four children, Richie, Amber, Chris and Reagan.

POLL: TECHNOLOGY IN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

For this issue, we were interested to know how Christian schools were impacted by COVID-19 during the onset of the pandemic and the process of returning to school. We polled Christian school leaders and support staff and asked them how they were adapting to a world of technology.

What adjustments did you make to close out last school year?

- Had a drive-through graduation.
- Transitioned to virtual learning on Zoom, providing Chromebooks to students as needed.
- Held an informal outside event with social distancing and an ice cream truck.
- Switched to full-day virtual classes.
- Took advantage of Google and Zoom. We really do not have a true IT person, so our teachers helped each other figure out a good process to get lessons out to students.
- Moved to eLearning within a week after spring break. We have been using Schoology for 3 years, so the transition was almost seamless.
- Closed for a week at Spring Break to clean, disinfect and create policies regarding COVID-19 procedures. When we reopened, our enrollment took a drastic hit, but by June we returned to a more normal routine utilizing more classrooms.
- Began virtual learning and followed up with students weekly by phone, text or email.
- Completely automated check in/check out, bill pay online and signing everything electronically.
- Went entirely online, utilizing Schoology as our learning management system and a combination of pre-recorded videos and Zoom to deliver lessons.
- Relocated our lesson plans to our student information software system.
- Delayed the return from Spring Break by one week to allow time for teacher training and transition to a fully remote learning environment. Through the use of Google Classroom (Upper School), Facebook Live and Seesaw (Lower School), our students completed all curriculum objectives and promoted to the next grade level.

Looking back, what would you have done differently?

- Offered more training for on-campus instructors.
- Stayed open for essential workers.
- Tried harder to keep in touch with families through the summer months.
- Developed a training video for the parents.
- Revisited our methods for presenting new material.
- Implemented a way for students to get completed work turned back in more easily.
- Opened long before we did. Reopening was not nearly as scary as folks think it is.
- Scaled back our instructional program because students whose parents worked (including children of our own teachers) often did not get the help they needed to complete their assignments until the evening. This was particularly challenging for younger students who needed closer attention and were new to utilizing technology so extensively.

What were your most important considerations in making school reopening decisions?

- Keeping the staff and students healthy. Providing a safe and loving place for kids to learn while their parents are working or managing other commitments.
- The current orders from the state for social distancing at school.
- Staff and parent readiness to return.
- God's leadership. Are teachers willing to come back? Do we have the capability with our technology? How will we address the emotional and spiritual needs of students and staff? How will we work out the distancing piece in every area of our day? How will we communicate to parents and train them with distance learning?
- Parent needs and teacher availability.
- Establishing COVID-19 safety measures.
- Student safety while offering classroom instruction. Being able to offer a better eLearning experience for families wanting to keep their students at home.
- Taking extra cleaning measures throughout the day and before and after school.
- Holding smaller classes with only one teacher and no shared bathrooms. Minimum staff each day and covering absences with current staff picking up extra shifts.
- The spiritual, emotional, academic and physical health of our students.

How do you ensure you are addressing your students' needs?

- Continuing to give our students the best care possible while increasing sanitation procedures and keeping classes apart from each other.
- Providing a Chromebook or laptop per child to reduce sharing.
- Surveys and polls.
- Following the mission statement of our school.
- Being very intentional in assessing and individualizing.
- Constant communication, relationships and parent partnerships.
- Participating in Zoom meetings with other school directors in our area.
- Assessments, feedback from parents and following guidelines.
- Making sure our teachers feel empowered, supported and protected.
- Prayer, listening to needs, observing, asking solid questions and being open to parents.
- Consulting with our attorney and hiring an independent medical consultant to review our protocols and advise on best practices for classroom instruction.
- Keeping an open line of communication with parents and kids.
- Though our circumstances might change, the way we address student needs should never change. This is accomplished by teachers possessing the wisdom, discretion and initiative to know their students well and ongoing assessment of students' academic progress and overall well-being. If a need arises for a given student, we believe we have a God-given responsibility to work together with the parents to address those needs.

How is your school utilizing and/or adapting to technology?

- Purchasing several laptops with Cares Act money.
- Continuing to require all faculty to use our Learning Management System (LMS) platform, CANVAS, for grades and attendance and implementing features we have not used before.
- Children use their own devices at home, and the school provides Chromebooks and tablets on campus.
- Our school utilized 1:1 technology in the Upper School prior to COVID. Beginning this year, teachers are actively planning lessons that can be adapted to remote learning, as well as recording all live lessons for remote learners.

- Using Zoom calls to students, emails for parent communication, and tablets in the classroom.
- Continuing to use Google classroom for assignments.
- Utilizing technology minimally with our preschool students, quite a bit to keep families up-to-date, and more than ever to train our staff.
- Older grades all have Chromebooks and younger grades receive homework packets each week. We communicate through email, texts and RenWeb.
- Slowly, but step by step. We learned about setting up QR Codes for quick and easy hands-free access.
- Purchasing cameras for each classroom, headsets for each teacher, and Chromebooks for all students. Families choosing to keep their students at home will be able to enjoy “live” instruction for their children. Whether the student is at home or in the classroom, they will have the same learning experience.

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING POLL CONTRIBUTORS!

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Arlington Baptist University

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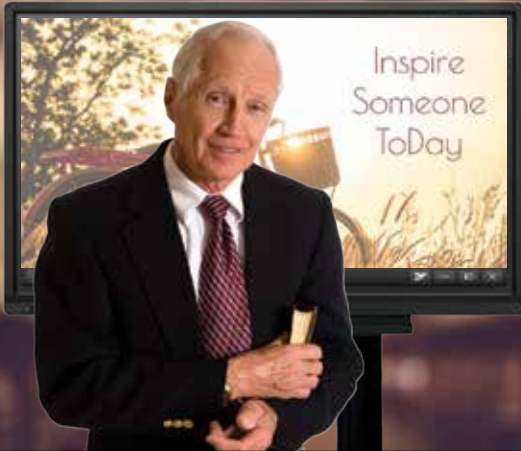
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A CHRISTIAN'S WORLD VIEW...PART 2

As Christians, we have a different world view because our hope and trust are centered around eternal, not earthly, matters. In our last issue, we polled Christian men and women from across the country and asked them to answer this question: "What has God revealed to you through the COVID-19 pandemic and how has it changed you?" Here are more responses:

JOHN BOHACEK – TEXAS

Chaos seems to be the overall message that the World is trumpeting during this season when we find ourselves facing the COVID-19 pandemic and a nation that seems to be divided. A foundation of fear continues to grip not only unbelievers, but also many of those who would call themselves sons and daughters of the Most High. I have to remind myself at times that the World does not have the answer, nor do our politicians, nor does the field of science. Yet, what we listen to determines what we hear. If faith comes by hearing, and hearing from the Word of God, then subsequently fear and anger come by hearing, and hearing from the voice of the World. We must choose the Word of God and the Message of Jesus as Lord over the voices that try to distract us from pursuing Him.

KATHY LEACHMAN – INDIANA

I never thought of myself as a very social person. But I changed my mind about myself when all the many activities I was involved in came to a sudden stop. Prior to COVID-19, I was very active having lunch out with friends, attending watercolor art class, and participating in church activities. Now, I attend worship services, Bible studies, small group and Widows Connection on Zoom. While I am thankful this technology exists, I realize life is better when I can interact with my friends and church family face to face. When I feel anxious about the future and the changes COVID-19 has occasioned in our lives, I take my thoughts captive and remember that God will never leave me nor forsake me, and He will uphold me with His righteous right hand.

PEGGY MILLER – TEXAS

I realized that sometimes our faith is tested, and we feel sorry for ourselves. I miss the visits with family and friends. I miss the hugs and kisses that we give and receive. I miss the large gatherings, parties, luncheons and meetings. But today as I was hugging my husband telling him how nice he looked in his new shirt, I realized that humor is very important. I had to laugh as I said, "Wow, you look so nice and slender in that shirt!" And his response was, "Yes, I have lost several pounds since you have been home!" You see, I really am a bad cook, and he was used to going out to eat during the week while I was at work. I guess there is a silver lining to every bad situation! He is a survivor of not only me but cancer. My husband is doing well. My family is trying to be safe. I know that God is with us all, reminding us not to worry, to care and help each other, and to believe in him! Find humor, it helps to have joy and laugh! Psalm 42:5; John 14:27

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Attorney, author and Bible teacher, Mark Lanier graduated from Lipscomb University with a degree in Biblical Languages in 1981 and received his law degree from Texas Tech Law in 1984. With offices in Houston, New York, Los Angeles and Oklahoma City, Mark has earned international recognition setting record verdicts in courtrooms throughout the United States. Organizer of the Christian Trial Lawyers Association, Mark was twice named National Trial Lawyers Association's Trial Lawyer of the Year and further inducted into the National Trial Lawyers' Hall of Fame. The American Association of Justice honored Mark with its Lifetime Achievement Award, and he was selected the 2018 Outstanding Trial Lawyer of the Year by The National Law Journal.

Mark was bestowed the Ambassador of Peace award by the Guatemalan government for his ministry and mission work among the poor, just one example of his philanthropic work around the world. In Houston, Mark founded and built the Lanier Theological Library, one of the nation's largest collections for serious theological research and study. An active member of Champion Forest Baptist Church, he teaches a Bible class weekly to thousands, both in class and online at Biblical-Literacy.org. Mark is married to Becky, and they have five children and three grandchildren.

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Peter Ndikumana

Come hear Peter Ndikumana's compelling account of how he was miraculously spared from a tragic death by genocide and devoted himself to a life of service to God.

Save the Date!

2.18.2021

Produced by the CO+OP
Virtual Conference
Details coming soon!



Technology Resources for Churches

Technology abounds in everything we do. We carry around cell phones with greater computing power than what produced the Apollo 11 moon landing! We have apps for everything—ordering food, purchasing movie tickets, shopping on Amazon, and the list keeps going. The same holds true for the church. There are apps for everything from connecting to your ChMS or accounting systems to reconciling credit card purchases to managing your travel plans.

As the Administrator for Seacoast Church, I utilize a variety of apps and wanted to give you a recap of the ones I have chosen and why. I have broken them down into four categories: Finance, File Access, Communication and Travel.

Finance

Sage-Intacct – In 2014, Seacoast transitioned to Sage-Intacct to manage our finances. This has given us better information and greater access to data. While Sage-Intacct doesn't have a specific app, their website is optimized for phone access. While I can technically do anything with the web interface, not all of our reporting is optimized for a phone.

Nexonia – Seacoast uses Nexonia for employee credit card reconciliation and approval of invoices and expenses. For purchases on their church credit card, employees can snap a photo of a receipt and add details at the time of purchase. The image is matched when the charge hits the card, making it easier to reconcile, while ensuring the church gets a larger percentage of receipts. This has made the Accounting staff very happy!

On the invoice and expense approval side, managers can view their staff charges, adjust GL coding if needed, and approve transactions—all from the app. (These can also be done through an email sent to the manager.) This makes it easier to approve transactions while on the road or working from home.

Apple Pay/Google Pay – Whether or not your bank allows you to add your credit card to their system is bank-specific, but if you can, it provides an easier way to pay and track purchases. Contactless payment methods are becoming more prevalent during the pandemic and this is another option.

File Access

Seacoast uses **MS Teams** and the **M365** platform for access to emails, files, team chats and information sharing, and we are very happy with the integration. NFP licenses are inexpensive and offer access to a variety of tools to manage data.

OneDrive allows users access to files in their private drive, but also access to shared files across various teams. Sharing of files, either through a shared link or sending the actual files, is simple and effortless.

Not all files are stored in OneDrive, so I also use **Dropbox** for files that are not sensitive in nature. There are some who oppose Dropbox and use similar apps, but this is a discussion for your IT Department and church leadership. Other options include **OwnDrive, Box** and **Google Drive**.

Evernote is a wonderful app that allows access to PDF files, photos, receipts and documents. Files can be “tagged” which helps to categorize them and make finding information easier. They offer both free and paid versions. The Pro version will scan documents and offers OCR recognition to find serial numbers, phone numbers and any other text item on a document!

Being a person who LOVES working with spreadsheets, I have to include **MS Excel**. The app provides access to all of my documents and allows me to do a lot of work on files when away from my computer. Running pivot tables can be a bit challenging on my phone, but I can still have access to them. MS has mobile apps for their entire suite of programs: Word, PowerPoint, Access, OneNote and more.

Communication

MS Teams – As a M365 church, we utilize Teams for ministry team meetings, video chats and texting between staff. We are very happy with the platform, and new features are being rolled out on a quarterly basis.

Zoom – There are some who think Zoom isn't secure and should be avoided, but it is up to the IT staff and church leadership to decide on approved platforms. At Seacoast, we use Zoom for some video calls. There are a TON of articles on Zoom security. Read them, talk with your IT staff and make your own decision.

Travel

My go-to travel app is **Triplt**. It allows me to forward emails for plane, hotel and rental car reservations, and the app will create trips based on dates. It makes it easy to keep up with changes and information and giving my wife the login allows her to keep track of my schedule!

There are a variety of airline, rental car, hotel and travel apps available. Find the ones that make sense for you. For mobile boarding passes, using the app for the carrier you are flying is quick and easy—no need to overcomplicate it!

FlightView allows me to enter flight information and see a map of the route, as well as weather conditions.

MyTSA is an app that provides estimated wait times based on the time of day and day of the week. It can help you in determining how early you need to arrive at the airport before your flight.

CarFind puts a "pin" in a virtual map and shows you where you parked your vehicle. I "lost" a car years ago at DFW airport because I thought I had left it in one lot, but actually parked it in another. (It took me three hours to find it!) CarFind gets you home quicker because it guides you right to your vehicle.

The list could go on and on, but these are my top go-to apps. What are yours? +

Glenn Wood



Glenn Wood is the Pastor of Administration for Seacoast Church, where he has served since 1995. Seacoast is a multisite non-denominational church with 14 campuses across South and North Carolina. He oversees administration, legal work, campus leases, site selection, campus design, politics, forecasting, construction projects, and coordinates the work of the IT/AV departments on campuses.

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Overcoming Technology Challenges

Forward planning churches and ministries are continuing to pursue IT plans during these crazy 2020 months. Many of these projects target growth and involve both staff and volunteers. The current pandemic adds complexities that may hinder their successful completion. As a result, past methodologies, which were primarily manual in nature, must be automated and simplified. Microsoft Teams provides the collaboration tools for streamlining in today's environment.

To begin with, Teams is part of the Microsoft ecosystem. As such, it seamlessly integrates with all the other Microsoft products that staff members and volunteers are already familiar with. This includes the entire Microsoft 365 family—Outlook, Word, Excel, OneNote, Publisher, Access and PowerPoint. Many individuals use these products professionally and personally.

In the past, working in a group project environment involved many moving parts that heavily relied on manual practices. Projects necessitated printing large amounts of documents, physically distributing them to all team members, making countless phone calls in all directions, and redistributing documents every time a change was made.

Microsoft Teams includes comprehensive collaboration tools that provide for easy sharing and exchanging of information and documents throughout the life of the project. Moreover, Teams accomplishes this regardless of whether project team members are in-house staff or volunteers located across the world.

Let's examine some of the key features and functionalities provided by Teams:

Group work simplification. Teams' video conferencing capabilities allow you to share and collaborate in real-time. You can complete work with your colleagues as you chat together and work on files through Teams, rather than taking turns emailing updates.

Collaborate securely internally and externally. You can be confident in the cutting-edge security and compliance capabilities that come with Teams and Microsoft 365. Eliminate any concerns about "Zoom-bombing" type experiences that other video conferencing platforms encounter.

Reduced email. Conversations are kept in a team channel for convenient viewing by all team members. You'll have less clutter in your inbox, as quick questions get resolved promptly over Teams chat, rather than waiting on an email reply.

Access Teams across all your devices. Teams not only has a comprehensive web interface, but you can collaborate on the go or answer teammate questions from afar using the mobile apps.

Automatic setup across the suite. When you create a team, Microsoft Teams will also create a shared selection of Microsoft 365 elements for whatever you're working on. This includes a SharePoint team site, shared OneNote notebook, or shared Plan.

Fast searching for information. Use the search function in Microsoft Teams to easily find relevant information from past conversations or files. You can directly schedule meetings for your group where all members within the team are automatically invited.

These are just some of the myriad of functions provided by Microsoft Teams. As an added bonus, as a 401(c)3 church or ministry, you are eligible for Microsoft's nonprofit pricing. Microsoft offers donated and discounted products for eligible organizations, regardless of size. These nonprofit offerings provide access to feature-complete Microsoft 365 cloud services, including Microsoft Teams, without a significant financial outlay.

While living during a pandemic is fraught with challenges never before experienced in our lives, it's also a time to regroup and plan. A year ago, less than 10% of churches in the United States streamed their services live on the internet. Almost overnight, that became a necessity. There are countless post-pandemic opportunities for churches and ministries, and now is the ideal time to plan for them. Microsoft Teams can be a vital part of your future project planning. ✦

Doug Reed



Vice President and COO
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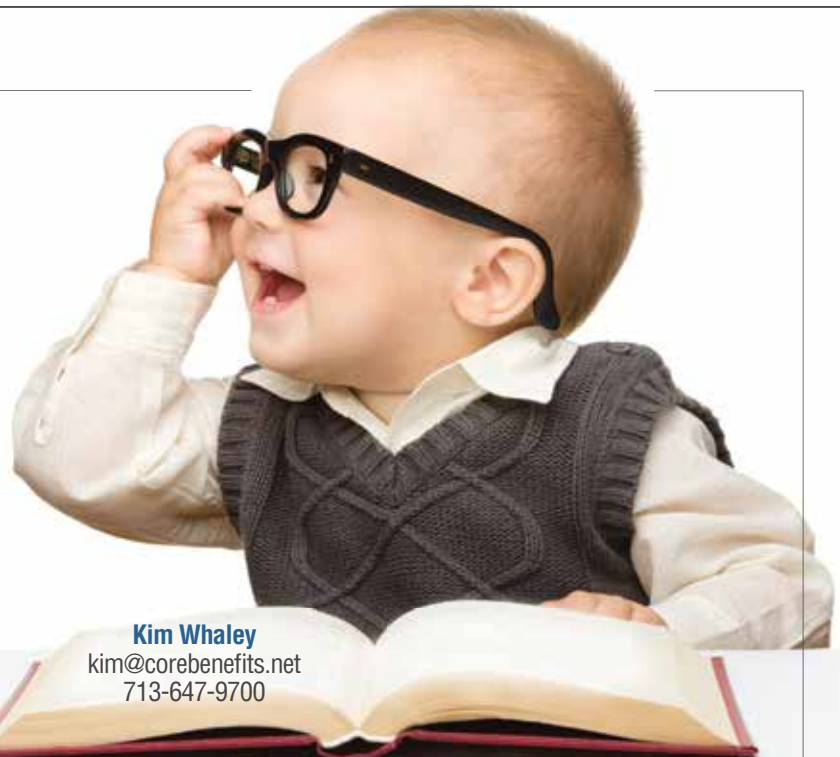
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Doug Reed – BEMA

Each month, we interview one of our approved CO+OP Vendors. This month, we spoke with Doug Reed, Chief Operating Officer of BEMA Information Technologies. Take a closer look at how his organization can benefit your ministry.

Q: Can you clarify what services your organization provides for our members?

A: We provide IT services. This encompasses everything from desktop support to complex IT strategy and solutions. High demand needs include:

- **Security** - Helping clients work towards safe and secure environments
- **Cloud** - Helping clients move to the cloud
- **Remote Workforce** - Assisting with strategy and implementation of remote workers
- **Wireless** - Implementing secure and efficient wireless environments

Q: What sets you apart from similar organizations?

A: Experience is the BEMA Difference. The vast majority of our engineers have been with us for many years, so we bring a wide array of experience to the table. BEMA leadership will do the right thing when it comes to taking care of clients. We are known for a strong Help Desk including Grant, who has been with us for over 12 years. Our Team Members truly care about people and are passionate about helping churches, schools and ministries attain their goals and provide workable solutions. Should issues arise, BEMA will work through challenges with you to overcome them.

Q: How did you get into this line of work?

A: My passion for ministry led me to this area. I love seeing churches have the ability to minister to their constituents with consistency and efficiency. It makes me happy to see ministries take advantage of modern technology instead of working on 10-year old machines.

Q: How many team members do you have and what is their focus?

A: We have 50 Team Members. The large portion of them are technical engineers with years of experience implementing and maintaining IT environments.

Q: What are some of the challenges of working with organizations using both PCs vs. Macs?

A: BEMA serves well over 100 churches, and almost all have both Windows devices and Macs. We strive to help clients determine what a user needs based on their job duties. Historically, it has been cumbersome for Mac users to access items like file shares and manage Macs centrally. However, as everything moves to cloud solutions like Microsoft 365 with OneDrive and Teams, it is much easier for Mac users to coexist and coauthor with PC users. Additionally, centralized Mac management through products such as JAMF or Mosyle is making it easier to deploy applications and policies to all Macs in the environment without having to touch each device.

Q: What percentage of customers utilize cloud storage vs. onsite servers?

A: For the last few years prior to COVID-19, we have been strongly encouraging our clients to move to the cloud. We are very thankful that over half our clients responded by deciding to make this move in some form, as it made their transition to working remotely much more seamless. This is a very smart preparedness step for natural disasters such as hurricanes. By having data in the cloud, team members have the ability to work from anywhere, and leaders have peace of mind that business continuity will occur.

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Q: What is the biggest technology issue currently impacting churches and schools?

A: At the moment, the issue at hand is conducting church services and school classes both in person and streaming at the same time.

Q: What is the greatest benefit to an organization of outsourcing their technology services?

A: Outsourcing brings the following advantages:

- **Experience** - Customers immediately gain the collective years of experience from our engineers. Serving over 100 churches simultaneously, we share experience from one organization to the next.
- **Variety** - Between 35 engineers, we have quite a variety of solutions in our toolbox from trying various strategies over the years.
- **Availability** - Lots of small to medium-sized organizations don't need to pay salary and benefits for a full-time IT resource. BEMA is here when you need us.

Q: If an organization outsources their audio/visual needs, can they still utilize your services?

A: Yes. In most cases, AV/sound experts are not knowledgeable in dealing with IT networks. We often work hand-in-hand with AV firms.

Q: If a CO+OP member wishes to utilize BEMA, what should they expect from the process?

A: Friendly, respectful, responsive service. We usually start with an IT Assessment. This process helps to identify any deficiencies in the environment as well as outline solutions. The main deliverable from this process is the creation of an IT Plan which helps the client see 3-5 years down the road regarding IT direction and decisions. Based on the IT Assessment, we perform any urgent project work to correct or fix issues. Most have to do with backups, antivirus software or equipment not working correctly.

Once urgent issues have been resolved, we move on to ongoing support. BEMA offers several support plans to meet the needs of small and medium-sized organizations. In addition to our service desk, we provide patching of workstations and servers, managed endpoint protection to reduce risk of viruses and ransomware, and monitoring of your network to alert us of any outages. ✦

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