A Practical Theological Exploration into the Methodist Church Ghana's Use of Social Media

By

Joseph Owusu Atuahene

Thesis Dissertation

Doctor of Theology in Practical Theology South African Theological Seminary (SATS)

November 2022

Supervisor: Dr. Roger Tucker

By submitting this work to the South African Theological Seminary (SATS), I declare that it is my work, that nobody did it for me, and that I did not copy any of it from anyone else. I cited all sources, such as books, journals, and websites. I understand and accept that if this declaration is proved to be false, I will automatically fail the course and be subject to disciplinary action by SATS.

Abstract

Digital communication, particularly social media platforms, have had a significant influence both within and outside the church. Social media platforms, specifically Zoom and WhatsApp, became the major tools that were employed to maintain and continue online services and other church- related activities amidst COVID-19 which prohibited traditional in-person meetings among churches, including the Methodist Church Ghana (MCG). However, its adoption and effective use may have been influenced by several factors, including church doctrine, cultural perception, technical capabilities, etc. The church's ability to understand this influence and deliberate effort to commit and use these technologies effectively will be essential in enhancing its relevance and ability to reach out with the good news of Jesus Christ.

This study, therefore, employed Osmer's approach, a four-step theological model adopted to evaluate the causalities, forms and effect of theological practices understanding the current usage of Zoom and WhatsApp online platforms and assessing how they have been accepted. It also sought to discuss biblical, normative and theological principles to examine social understanding, and finally developed strategies to ensure the smooth and effective adoption of Zoom and WhatsApp in services, bible studies, bible classes, information dissemination and other activities in the MCG. A survey was conducted through questionnaire and focus group discussions which focused on collecting data from congregants and clergy on the level of inclusion of social media platforms in their church activities, membership indulgence, complaints associated, positive impacts on the growth and how traditional and cultural norms affect their usage. From the survey, there was an overall positive response regarding Zoom and WhatsApp pertaining to their popularity, accessibility, reliability, and how informative and trustworthy they were.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was used to ascertain the critical factors for acceptance. The results showed that conducting activities and teachings using Zoom and WhatsApp helps to bridge the gap between cultural, traditional and religious beliefs, known as subjective norms, and technology acceptance by the congregants. This strategic reflection must be contextually informed, theologically grounded, and

biblically supported. Social media is undoubtedly another channel to disseminate the gospel and share church activities globally, but it must be used carefully and always be guided by the teachings and guidelines of the church.

The major pragmatic strategies identified to help the easy implementation and smooth transition to more integrative church-related activities and technology included team building, training, a specified target audience, and creating a clear social media presence and policymaking goals. It is recommended that the church continues to be engaged in applying the suggested strategies by organizing seminars at the different levels of the church structure to communicate these methods to all congregations and congregants fully. Further research could repeat this study with different churches and Christian bodies as well as different social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube, amongst others.

Acknowledgement

I want to thank my academic adviser, Rev. Dr. Roger Tucker, to whom I am deeply indebted for his selfless dedication and contribution to this work. My immeasurable gratitude also goes to Dr. Ebenezer Miezah Kwofie of McGill University, Montreal, Canada, Very Rev. Dr. Mark Aidoo, Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Accra, Very Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Y. Lartey, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta Georgia, Very Rev. Prof. Joseph Osei, University of North Carolina, USA, Dr. Alex Adu Osei, USA, Dr. Bernard Boadi, USA, Very Rev. Dr. William Mpere Gyekye, Rev. Dr. Isaac Boaheng, Mr. Derek Kpakpo Allotey, PhD Candidate, McGill University, Montreal, Canada and the Most Rev. Dr. Paul Kwabena Boafo, the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana.

I cannot conclude without mentioning the Methodist Church Ghana, Toronto Circuit, especially the Bethel Methodist Church of Calgary, Canada, North America Diocese and Mr. & Mrs. Okyere, McMaster University, Medical School, for their encouragement and prayer support.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God, my wife, Veronica Owusu Atuahene, and two daughters, Nana Akua Twumwaa and Nana Akua Serwaah, for support for the ministry, including this work. It is impossible without your love, inspiration, and sacrifices, and I am eternally grateful to you.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

AT	-	Attitude
AVE	-	Average Variance Extracted
BI	-	Behavioural Intention
B	-	Bishop
CFI	-	Composite Fit Index
CR	-	Composite Reliability
CMIN/DF	-	Chi-Square Degree of Freedom
DNA	-	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
FGD	-	Focus Group Discussion
GFI	-	Good Fit Index
IBM	-	International Business Machines
ICT	-	Information Communication Technology
IT	-	Information Technology
LL	-	Lay Leader
LXX	-	Septuagint (Seventy in Roman Numerals)
MCG	-	Methodist Church Ghana
MT	-	Media Team
NAMD	-	North America Mission Diocese
NFI	-	Normed Fit Index
NIST	-	National Institute for Standard and Technology
NIV	-	New International Version
NRSV	-	New Revised Standard Version
PE	-	Perceived Ease
PU	-	Perceived Usefulness
QDA	-	Quantitative Data Analysis
R	-	Reverend Minister
S	-	Superintendent Minister
RMR	-	Root Mean Square Residual
RMSEA	-	Root Mean Square Appropriation
SEM	-	Structural Equation Modelling
SN	-	Subjective Norms

SO	-	Standing order
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TAM	-	Technology Acceptance Model
TH	-	Theologians
TIB	-	Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour
TPB	-	Theory of Planned Behavioural
TRA	-	Theory of Reasoned Action
USA	-	United States of America
USCCB	-	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
YP	-	Young Person

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter is the foundation for the research. It deals with preliminary matters like the background to the study, the research problem, research hypothesis, research questions, preliminary review of related studies, delimitations, and the methodology for the research, among others.

1.1.1 Motivation and Background of the Research Problem

Social media is rapidly having a tremendous impact in public discourse and communication globally (Kimaru, 2019:1). With the emergence of the internet, social media has gained influence on today's culture. As Bolu (2011) observes, more and more young people are turning to the Internet for information and ecclesiastical institutions are engaging in this cutting-edge technology to improve their presence on the web, especially during the intensity of COVID-19. Kimaru (2019:2-3) confirms Bolu's observation, that many contemporary churches use social media very actively to communicate with their members and beyond. Scholars such as Sturgil (2004), Andrade (2007), Boaheng (2021) and Kimaru (2019) have done several studies on how information technology is impacting the church and community. Andrade's exploratory study for instance, investigates the anticipated outcomes of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in some rural communities.

Many ecclesiastical leaders have observed this phenomenon of technological advancement and its anticipated impact on the church. As Pope Francis suggests to the church in his 48 Communication Day message: "The revolution taking place in communications media and information technologies represents a thrilling challenge. May we respond to that challenge with fresh energy and imagination as we seek to share with others the beauty of God" (USCCB, 2014:2). The rationale for this strategic engagement of technologies is that social media can connect people across cultures, time zones, and languages (Williams, 2015:375). Therefore, every Christian, church, or community must capitalize on the "digital community" created by the internet to share or teach the faith.

As Kimaru (2019:1) argues, social media is a complex terminology with multilayered meanings, and there is no single definition the researchers can best use to explain the term social media. Therefore, the researcher will approach social media as a "collective of online communication channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content sharing and corroboration (Rouse, 2016:14). Social media also can be considered as online facilitators or enhancers of human networks (Van Dijck, 2013:11).

The thesis investigates how social media influences church interactions and the effective ways to manage it for effective communication in the church and dissemination of the gospel. There is no doubt that ineffective engagement of social media may result in more harm than good. Hence, there is the need for church leaders to strategize in how to engage social media for the needed results.

1.1.1.1 Personal motivation and background to the study

Social media has introdudced a new dimension to communication which can reshape personal spirituality and the dissemination of the gospel, particulalrly, for the current generation. Personal habits have changed drastically with the advent of social media, and people have resorted to always using the internet, and when in doubt of any issue, they just "google it" (Mfumbusa, 2014:np). As a result of contemporary advances in technology, the church has to employ cutting-edge information technology to guard and guide its members, advance its course, and entrench itself. Such a strategy will prevent the church from probable extinction because, as Wise (2014:12) observes, "how the new generations understand the very nature of interaction should be of great interest to the Church".

As an ordained minister of the Methodist Church of Ghana (MCG) working in North America, a continent advanced in technologies, the author decided to conduct this research on technology, especially how social media impacts communication in the MCG to enable him make strategic recommendations for the Church and other Christian communities to engage social media to disseminate information effectively.

1.1.2 Definition of Key Terms

- *"Arminianism"* refers to the doctrines of Jacobus Arminius (Latinized name of Jakob Hermandszoon, 1560-1609), a Dutch protestant theologian, who rejected the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. *Arminianism* highlights human's free will through God's grace to collaborate with God in salvation, the atonement of Christ and the grace of God. It also emphasizes that one can lose his/her salvation. Jesus died for all, and salvation is free for all who are willing (Stanglin cited in Venema, 2018:23). His teachings had a considerable influence on Methodism.

- *Charismatism*: the term charismatism derives from the Greek word charisma which means a magnetic and charming personal quality that draws people to someone. It is having to exhibit or based on charisma or charism.

From the etymological meaning of charisma, the expression "charismatism" or "Charismatic Christianity" refers to Christian denominations "who are convinced that by their status as followers of Jesus, they are able to re-enact the power of the Holy Spirit as it operated in the lives of first century disciples" (Amevenku, 2015:88). The charismatic movement stresses the power of the Holy Spirit to control and direct believers' lives and bring forth healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues, and spiritual renewal and other pneumatological phenomena (Amevenku, 2015:88).

- *Circuit* consists of one or more societies [churches] under the pastoral care of one or more Ministers within a specific geographical area (Standing Orders (SO), 601 (1)).

- *Connexionalism* is a system of ecclesial organization and governance in which all churches are connected.

- *Digital administrative and financial tools* are transitioning administrative, accounting, reporting and storage from the traditional filing system to an electronic format for organizational efficiency.

- *Diocese* is composed of several Circuits in the same area organized into a unit for purposes of administration and oversight (SO. 501(1)).

- *Gospel* is the translation of the Greek noun *euangelion,* "good news" or "momentous", and the verb *euangelizo,* meaning "to bring or announce good news". The two words originate from *angelos,* "messenger" (Sproul, 2020:np).

The Gospel is the total of the saving truth as God has communicated it to the lost humanity as it is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, His only Begotten Son through the Holy Scriptures, the Bible.

- *North America Mission Diocese (NAMD) is* a diaspora diocese of the MCG. Its inclusion is essential for this work to highlight the full spectrum of the Methodist Church and, more importantly, to draw relevant lessons from their technological advancement in church digitalization. The NAMD consists of the circuits in the United States of America and Canada, in which the Methodist Church Ghana determines governance, organizational and administrative structures.

- *Prima Scriptura* is the Christian doctrine that canonized scriptures as "first" or "above all" other sources of divine revelation.

- The members of the *Prophetic churches* rely on the prophetic gift and revelation from God to assist the church in growing into maturity (Atuahene, 2010:13).

- *Social media* is the combination of websites that permit users to share content and network. This creates a virtual community where people can discuss issues without face-to-face interactions.

- *Social networking sites* are web-based applications that permit users to connect globally by creating public profiles (Badmos, 2014:3).

- *Society* refers to the Methodist Church's local organization, meeting as one congregation for public worship and organizing classes under the Leaders' Meeting (SO. 701 (1)).

- *Techno-spiritual* is the meeting of technology and spirituality, where information and communication technology advances assist in humans' spirituality (Ahmad & Abdul, 2013:np).

- *The web* is the part of the internet that can be looked at with a special programme (browser), and that is made up of many documents linked together (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary).

- *WhatsApp* is a mobile messaging application that grants mobile devices and desktop PCs the ability to exchange text, image, video, and audio messages.

- *Zoom* is a cloud-based video conferencing tool that allows users to organize face-to-face meetings.

1.1.3 The Statement of the Problem

The rapid change of communication in society over the last three decades with significant implications for data/message creation, information dissemination, and human experience and expectation have revealed the need for the church to adapt to the phenomenon to achieve its core mission. This task has become more urgent due to the COVID-19 pandemic which compelled the introduction of restrictions in physical interactions, thus compelling the church to evaluate the usefulness, effectiveness, and strategies currently being used to enhance communication within the church and reach out to many.

This study explores how social media platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp assist in disseminating the gospel in the Methodist Church Ghana. The central research question is this: How might the Methodist Church of Ghana (MCG) effectively use digital media to propagate the gospel?

The subsidiary questions are:
   a. What strategies are employed using social media to influence current members and prospective members regarding church evangelism?
   b. How has digitalization influenced information dissemination and falsehood on digital church platforms, and what are the potential trade-offs within a normative construct of God?
   c. What are the primary barriers and opportunities in transitioning to disseminating the gospel using social media?
   d. What lessons were learned from the use of social media, and how can they be applied to enhance the church's mandate, particularly in rural and semi-urban settings beyond the COVID-19 era?

1.1.4 Hypothesis

The researcher hypothesizes that:
   (1) Social media use has a significant impact on the life and outreach of the church.
   (2) A careful understanding of the techno-theological-cultural factors and their impact could lead to more effective strategies and models for communication and the spread of God's word.

1.1.5 Researcher's Presuppositions

Any study has presuppositions. Researchers always attach their beliefs and philosophies when conducting research. These views determine which problems need to be studied, what questions to ask, or how to go about gathering data. These presuppositions inform the researcher's choice of theories that guide the research.

a) **Theological**

As an evangelical theologian, the author accepts the authority and authenticity of the Scripture. The power of the Scripture abides in its purpose: to disclose the relationship of love between God and creation.

i) *Biblicism*: The basis of the Christian faith is embedded in "scripture" as the sole traditional source. The Scriptures contain God's holy words, and it exclusively and unerringly reveals the agenda of God for creation. The Scripture provides the theological context within which each situation or occurrence could be interpreted. Scripture is not a collection of historical documents which can be studied scientifically. Rather, it is a "living book" and God's self-revelation that speaks to every generation. The Holy Spirit inspired the authors. It is the first authority and contains the only measure whereby all other truth is tested. Christian beliefs, practices, priorities, and missions are anchored in clear biblical interpretations, and it is the foundation for Christian doctrine.

It is a rule sufficient in itself. It neither needs nor is capable of supplementary or any further addition. As confirmed Bebbington cited in Harry (2016:23), the inerrancy and verbal inspiration show the need for a literal interpretation of the Bible. Though, the concept of *Prima Scriptura* suggests that other means exist in which one can know the ways of God and His plan for man, that cannot be found in the Scripture, but help in its interpretation and can be tested and corrected by the canon if it appears to be contrary to Scripture. (Humphrey, 2013:16).

ii) *Crucicentrism:* The call for focusing on the sacrifice on the cross by Jesus and the importance of him atoning for the sins of man (Bebbington cited in Dochuk, 2015:np).

iii) *Conversionism:* This is the conviction that sinners need to be born again or to be converted. "All Men Need to be Saved" (Hughe cited in Edusa-Eyison, 2011:np). An acceptance of *Arminianism*, the view of free will that opposes the Calvinist view of theological *determinism* that God has predestined the salvation of a selected group of people.

iv) *Activism:* The Christian faith ought to be active in all good works. The sovereignty of God is His absolute control over the whole universe. His authority is sovereign, and His will is evident in all the happenings worldwide.

b) Confessional

A confessional view based on the Apostle's Creed, Nicene Creed and the "Our Methodist Faith" by Hughe Thomas in 1961.

i) I believe in the one true, holy and living God, Eternal Spirit, who is Creator, Sovereign and Preserver of all things visible and invisible.

ii) The one God reveals himself as the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power.

iii) The Christian church is the community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is a redemptive fellowship, redeemed by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit.

iv) The Lord's Supper represents our redemption and is a token of love and union that Christians have with Christ and with one another.

c) Philosophical

According to Guba (1990:17), a philosophical worldview is "a basic set of beliefs that guide action". The philosophical views of the world influence the views a researcher uses when conducting a study (Creswell, 2014:6). The study believes in the pragmatic philosophical worldview because the study "is not committed to any one philosophy and reality" (Creswell, 2014:11).

i) This study is not based on abstract debates but is focused on practical, real-world issues (Patton 2005:153).

ii) The emphasis of this study is to interrogate and assess data through an analysis of practical issues. The approach can, however, be compared with a qualitative-dominant interpretative understanding of social issues (Morgan, 2014b:1045-

1053).

iii) This study aims to examine research based on the envisioned consequences, exposing various worldviews and varied data collection and analytical tools (Creswell, 2014:11).

1.1.6 Statistics of Social Media Usage and Growth Globally

Those who thought social media must be a fad because many sites could not stand the test must reconsider their notes. Social media has come a long way in its short twenty-year history; the concept of social media remains strong and has become a vital part of the fabric of the global society. Since its inception in 1996, social media has infiltrated half of the 7.07 billion people globally. Social network platforms almost tripled their total base in the last decade, from 927 million in 2010 to the number passing 3.81 billion users in 2020 (Dean, 2021:np). For instance, according to the Global Web Index, in 2020, there were 3.96 billion people actively using social media globally. This statistic shows an increase of 10.9% year-on-year from 3.48 billion in 2019. If someone signed up at 16 years and lived to 70 years, they would spend 5.7 years of their time on it (Dean, 2021:np). Dean posits that "as of 2015, the number of people using social media is over 3.96 billion worldwide".

According to Global Web Index, back in 2015, there were only 2.07 billion users, making an overall increase in users of 92.76% in just five years as shown by the 5 Year Social Media Growth Statistics:

- **2020:** 3,960 billion active users (+9.6%)
- **2019:** 3,484 billion active users (+ 9.2%)
- **2018:** 3,196 billion active users (+ 9.0%)
- **2017:** 2,796 billion active users (+ 21%)
- **2016:** 2,307 billion active users (+11%)
- **2015:** 2,078 billion active users (Dean, 2021:np).

Today, globalization is being accelerated and redefined by data flows that embody ideals, information, and innovation (Manyika et al., 2016:23). The world's population stood at 7.83 billion at the start of 2021 (Dean, 2021:np). The United Nations reports that this figure is growing by 1% per year, meaning the global total has increased by

more than 80 million people since the start of 2020. There are now 4.20 billion social media users around the world. This figure has grown by 490 million over the past 12 months, delivering year-on-year growth of more than 13%. This statistic indicates that social media users are now equivalent to more than 53% of the world's total population. (Digital Global Reportal, 2021).

Social media users increased by more than 13% over the past year, with nearly half a billion new users taking the global total to 4.02 billion by the beginning of 2021. On average, more than 1.3 million new users joined social media every day during 2020, equating to roughly 15 ½ new users every second (Data Reportal, 2021). Clement (2020:np) predicts that by 2025, the number of social media users will reach 4.41 billion. This forecast means between 2020 and 2025, the number of users will possibly increase by 926 million (Cox, 2019:np).

In addition, overall, social media has influenced every department of human life globally; it has become even more critical over the past year. The COVID-19 pandemic has raged and forced the world to move onto virtual or rely on digital technologies more than ever, mainly to remain connected with church members.

1.1.6.1 Social media penetration in Africa

According to Varrella (2021:1), as of 2021, Northern and Southern African countries had the largest share of social media. Boakye (2021:34) observes that as internet penetration continues to grow in Africa, so has social media. Allen (2021:np) contends, "the rapid spread of the internet across the African continent has been heralded as a critical driver of prosperity and a sign of the continent's technological coming to age". In the mid-1990s, when developed countries experienced rapid mobile phone usage, few people thought of Africa as a potential market. "Now, [Africa has] more than 400 million subscribers, its demand is greater than North America" (Essoungou, 2010:np). According to Mary Meeker cited in Ejemeyowi et al (2019:np), an influential internet analyst, mobile internet and social media are the fastest-growing areas of the technology industry globally. Now social media has overtaken other technological inventions. When Africans go online (predominantly with their mobile phones), they spend much of their time on social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube and

so on (Essoungou, 2010:np).

For many people, social media is now a daily part of life across the African continent. According to the Global Attitude Survey by Pew Research Centre (2017), more than three-quarters of sub- Saharan Africans who go online also use social media sites. They go there to share their views about a trending issue.

1.1.6.2 Internet penetration and social media usage in Ghana

Ghana had an estimated population of 31.40 million in 2021. Out of this number, 49.3% is female, while 50.7% of its population is male. Also, 57.7% of the population lived in urban centres, while 42.3% lived in rural areas (Ghana Statistical Service Report (GSSR), 2021).

According to the Sasu(2021:np) Ghana was one of the first countries in Africa to achieve a connection to the World Wide Web. Again, Ghana had the 4th fastest internet connection on the African continent and the 87th fastest internet connection in the world out of 182 countries in 2013. The 2021 Digital report on Internet usage reveals that Internet users in Ghana were 15.70 million in January. The number of Internet users in Ghana increased by 943 thousand (an addition of 6.4%) between 2020 and 2021. The Internet penetration rate in Ghana stood at 50% in January 2021 (Digital Reportal, 2021; Sasu, 2021:np).

Mobile connections stood at 41.69 million in January 2021. The number increased by 3.1 million (an addition of 8.1%) between January 2020 and 2021. This number was equivalent to 132.8% of the population. The percentage figure may exceed 100% of the total population since many people have more than one mobile connection. (Digital Reportal, 2021; Sasu, 2021:np).

In March 2020, the Ghana Statistical Service surveyed ICT access, usage, skills and the digital divide. The assumption was that information and communication technology had become the trailblazer of modern development. ICT's fundamental role and importance in national development leave no one in doubt. It catalyzes the change in the development of policies, programmes, projects, strategic tools, and synergies

among stakeholders to engage in a continuous dialogue and direction for various developmental interventions that the Government of Ghana and the private sector desire. The Internet penetration rate in Ghana reached 50%, up from 48% in 2021 in the same month in 2020. There were 15.70 million Internet users in January 2021, and Internet users increased by 943 thousand (an addition of 6.4%) between 2020 and 2021 (Sasu, 2021:np). This survey brings the country to the global average of 62% (GSSR, 2021).

As of 2020, there were approximately six million active social media users, up from 5.8 million in 2019 (Kemp, 2020:np). The most used social media platform was WhatsApp with 4.92 million users, followed by Facebook with 4.26 million, YouTube with 3.72 million, Instagram with 3.66 million, Facebook Messenger with 3.06 million, Twitter with 2.22 million, Snapchat with 2.2 million, Pinterest with 845 thousand, Tik Tok 840 thousand, Linkedin 720 thousand (Kemp, 2020:np). The average amount of time spent per day on social media in Ghana was three hours and one minute (3h 01m) (Kemp, 2020:np). Kemp (2020:np) further asserts that the Ministry of Communication and Digitalization in 2019 reported that Ghana earned the 9th position globally regarding hours spent on social media in 2019. This report indicates that Ghanaians spend considerably longer hours online than their African counterparts, probably due to accessibility and affordability.

The Internet landscape continues to grow across Ghana due to little government interference and no suspicion of surveillance (GSSR, 2021), which has influenced social media use. As Boakye argues, as internet penetration continues to grow, so has the use of social media (2021). Social media users in Ghana in January 2021 were 8.20 million. The number of social media users increased by 2.2 million (an addition of 37%) between 2020 and 2021. The survey shows that the number of social media users was 26.1% of the total population in January 2021(Digital Reportal, 2021).

1.2 Literature Review
1.2.1 Practical Theology - Overview and Models
As cited by Ward (2017:1), practical theology has a host of different writers and thinkers. This is evident in the various methodologies presented in the literature. Key

amongst them are those by Osmer (2008), Swinton and Mowat (2016), and Ward (2017). Ward (2017:69) lays the foundation of practical theology and explains various viewpoints, including viewing it as the church, theological discipline, and conversation. He recognizes practical theology as having its origin and purpose in the local church and as an academic discipline with a conversation at its heart. Viewing practical theology as a conversation with its complexity and multilayered form has methodology as its core. Ward (2017:70) divides these methodological approaches to practical theology into four: ministerial educational strategies, correlational methods, interpreting action approaches, and a return to theology and traditional approach.

This study is aligned with interpreting the action approach, which supports the definition of practical theology as a discussion of how communities, through their practices, express their understanding of God. A key output of this study is to understand the modern culture of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and its impact on the worship life of the MCG, primarily church services (including the delivery of the Bible passages, hymns, announcements, posters, etc.), church management and administration. Within this context, the study will focus on interpreting the Christian community's socio-cultural reality by understanding how the church has constructed and expressed the culture of ICT use.

Ward (2017:157) acknowledges that empirical, practical theology research could be carried out quantitatively, and focuses on qualitative approaches because these connect readily to practical theology and generate an in-depth appreciation of social reality. Ward further highlights Silverman's (2016:86) four main qualitative research methods. These methods involve (1) observation, (2) analyzing texts and documents, (3) interviewing and recording, and (4) transcribing. The observation aspect involves self and community exploration, the self, and the community, with the critical feature of paying attention to clarification and confirmation. The second component aims to unravel the patterns and activities shaping a community's work. The third component focuses on shaping a conversation to develop and explore areas of interest to the researcher while generating a wealth of material in the research process. Having gathered the data, the final step of recording and transcribing allows the researcher to look for patterns in the researcher's observations and their self and community

explorations towards analyzing the materials gathered (Ward, 2017:158). The practical techniques of qualitative empirical research provided by Ward will help this study. However, while the four-method approach described offers an in-depth understanding of reality, it does not lend itself to developing strategies to shape the discovered reality. Also, it does not provide a clear pathway to understanding God's will vis-à-vis the facts found.

Like Ward (2017:156), Swinton and Mowat (2016:xii) provide the foundation for both practical theology and qualitative research, focusing on using faithfully qualitative research to provide factual data for theological reflection. Swinton and Mowat (2016:7) define practical theology as "a critical, theological reflection on the church's practices as they interact with the world's practices to ensure and enable faithful participation in God's redemptive practices in, too, and for the world." Their provisional definition does not support the idea of viewing practical theology as directly applying doctrine espoused by other theological disciplines to practical situations, preferably a critical discipline to challenge accepted assumptions and practice. This is done through a theological reflection that keeps theology as the primary source of knowledge.

Swinton and Mowat (2016:7-8) argue that research in practical theology should not merely focus on the practices of the church and the Christian experiences but must also embrace the practices of the world. They further expand the definition of carrying out practical theology research into a four-stage approach geared towards (1) understanding the realities, (2) their contextual implications, (3) their theological reflections, and (4) formulation of revised methods to improve reality. In the first stage (situation stage), a pre-reflective description of current praxis around a practice or situation that requires critical challenge is pursued through initial observations about what appears to be going on. This is followed by a cultural/contextual analysis second stage, which involves dialogue with other sources of knowledge to discover what is going on. During the theological reflection third stage, an intentional theological reflection weighs God's intention against the significance of what was found in stages one and two. A fourth stage allows the conversation to draw together the cultural/contextual analysis and the theological reflection to produce new and challenging forms of practice (Swinton & Mowat, 2016:7-15).

Although Swinton and Mowat (2016:10) provide a similar model to the four-task practical theology model proposed by Osmer (2008), the researcher intends to use Osmer's model. This is because it provides a pathway to understanding the reasoning behind the realities through both scientific and social science models. Again, Osmer's approach proposes what ought to be going on in the face of the realities discovered and expands the theological reflections to include both the ethical dimension and good practice. This is important in the context of this study because of Omer's standpoint on using the biblical model that the researcher requires: "priestly listening for the descriptive-empirical task, sagely wisdom for the interpretive task, prophetic discerning for the normative task and servant leadership task for the pragmatic task". This is highly apt for this study; therefore, the study proposes using Osmer's practical theological methodology.

1.2.2 Technological Revolution and Communication

The significant growth and development in technology use marked the beginning of technology transformation and socialization with a stronger desire for information about everything (Fournier & Kop, 2011:1). The observed changes and their associated influences on inter-personal and community-level interactions underscore that something fundamental to our existence has changed or is changing. These gradually developed into social media, which is significant in information about people. Nche (2012:18) adds that social media is currently key in information and communication technology (ICT). Social media applications are fast becoming the default when it comes to communicating online (Vester, 2010:np). Though these changes are positive, they have become a challenge for contemporary Christianity in the 21st century.

The technological trend is changing the way we communicate as a church and individual communication, so much so that we are living through a period of vast cultural transformation (McLuhan, 1994:14). In his address to World Communication Day, 2011 on the phenomena of the Internet and social media, Pope Benedict XVI asserts that the new technologies are changing the way we communicate and communication itself. This Internet demands a profound reflection on the significance of communication in the digital age (Lucas, 2012:158- 159). The world is currently in

a digital era, where connection and connectivity move away from physical presence but find shape in online communities and forums (Potgieter, 2019:1). "It's radically changing the way we communicate with each other" (Forrester, 2017:24). The digital era permeates our society to the extent that it does not determine our society. Still, it has become our society (Nagy & Kolu, 2014:270).

Forrester (2017:24) posits that the church's potential to amplify the most important message in history through social media is epic. Bourgeois (2013:35) and Lazarus (2017:40) predict that the change is occurring at such a rapid pace outside the church that the church risks becoming irrelevant if it cannot keep up with the pace. Every organization, including the church, becomes irrelevant when the outside change exceeds the organization's transformation. Today one of the best means to establish your church presence where the people are is by being present on social media (Lazarus, 2017:39). Despite the significance of using communication tools, negative trends accompany it if employed unguardedly (Omekwu, 2006:np; Kitetu, 2008:12; Omololu, 2015:np; Woode, 2017:32).

Additionally, their usage has significant legal and ethical theological implications and require a more in-depth reflection and authentic dialogue (McLuhan 1994:15). Therefore, it is essential that churches explore and acknowledge these challenges while building the capacity to understand and mitigate any negative impacts. For instance, technology (social media) becomes an enemy of creation when we develop what Quentin Schultze (cited in Myers, 2017:81) calls "information- intensive, technique-oriented habits" that shape our values".

1.2.3 Digital Technology and Its Effects on Communication

The constant evolution of communication forms from smoke signals and messenger pigeons to the telephone and email has also reflected in changes in how people communicate. In 1831 one of the greatest developments in communication, the electric telegraph was invented. Digital methods have superseded almost all other forms of communication (Rogers, 2019:np). The world is now in a digital era where people often connect online instead of meeting face-to-face (Potgieter, 2019:1). The electric revolution and the digital age of communications began at the end of the twentieth

century with many advances taking place in the fields of telecommunications, computers, digital technology and information technology (Bowen & Pennaforte, 2017:102). This period resulted in the availability of devices such as the mobile phone, the personal digital assistant (PDA), satellite communications and digital television. The world wide web and the Internet have provided a global environment that have improved communication. Bowen and Pennaforte (2017:100) confirm this development when they argue that social media, network capabilities and digital technologies are changing the way humans communicate. Digital technologies have provided new resources to enable people to socialize.

The present age has experienced the proliferation of digital communication technologies and pervasive computing devices which have impacted all aspects of human life. It has greatly impacted the way people work, enjoy their leisure activities, get educated and interact with each other. This transformation has emerged due to the availability and affordability of digital devices or mediums (Bowen & Pennaforte, 2017:105).

With these digital communication tools, individuals and society have largely been shaped by the possibilities for new means of interaction and social group formations through the medium of the available technologies (Bowen & Pennaforte, 2017:110). Now digital communication methods have made it possible to have a different sort of community that could support rapid interaction using any available communication tool such as mobile or telephone conversation, zoom conferencing, WhatsApp platform, email SMS messages and others.

1.2.4 Church as a Community

This interpretation of "church" (*ekklesia)* is echoed among the Greek-speaking Jews of New Testament times (Grudem, 1994:853). The term is also understood as an assembly of people in a covenant relationship with God, people assembled for religious purposes. Grudem (1994:853) explains that the church is "the community of all true believers for all time" (Eph. 5:25). Jesus Christ himself builds the church by calling his people to himself (Matt. 16:18).

The standard definition of a "church" as a particular place of worship would have appeared strange to the early church because they held services in homes. For example, Apostle Paul greeted the congregation of people who met in the home of Priscilla and Aquila in Rome. (Rom. 16:3-5). The "church" is the congregation and not the edifice. After some years of Christian existence, the "church" became known as the place where believers met to fellowship. The local church is where the members of the universal church can apply 1 Corinthians 12 encouraging, teaching, and building one another up in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The restrictions imposed on social gatherings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the debate among church scholars as to whether a congregation needs to have a physical place of worship to attend to the Great Commission (Afolaranmi, 2020:32-40). This has brought to question the previous understanding of a church as a particular place of worship (Pillay, 2020:np). Scholars such as Kimball (2009:9) assert that missionary work could not be done without a building. The question now is, with virtual church worship resulting from Covid-19, how is Kimball going to argue his position? Some scholars vehemently disagreed with his perception of the urgency of buildings in ministry. For instance, Eastburn (2016:np) proposed that Kimball's new mindset is incorrect: "It is our consumer-mentality that causes us to think we need buildings". Buildings can be great tools, but the church thrives every day without them. The church is not the building but the individuals who come together as one in the body of Christ.

John Wesley's model of church is one of the greatest ways to examine the concept of the church. Wesley used a particular method to execute his ministry strategy. Together with other preachers, they travelled around on horses to selected parts of England, where they held church meetings in various places (Heitzenrater, 1995:162). They got their results without possessing a building. This act of Wesley established a method now known as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Outler, 1985:16). This method can be used to settle the debate surrounding church buildings in future research.

Calvin, cited in Ozili (2020a:np), refers to the church as *ecclesia*, the called-out people of God. "The church universal is a multitude gathered from all nations; it is divided and dispersed in separate places, but agreed on the one truth of divine doctrine and is found

by the bond of the same religion". This view seems to suggest that the church is not the building but the people, the church is anywhere Christ is revered as the foundation of the Church. It may be possible that the COVID- 19 pandemic was directing the church to move in other directions to spread the gospel when the lockdown occurred. Numberger (cited in Pillay, 2020:np) as providing insight into comprehending the invisible church:

> The invisible church (ecclesia invisible) is composed of all who have been reached by the Word of God and have responded in faith, wherever they may be. According to Luther, this is the true church. It has no head other than Christ. The risen Christ operates through the Word in the power of the Spirit. No human being can grant or deny access to this fellowship. The power of the new life of Christ flows into the members and through the members into the world. Expressed in Paul's terminology, the Spirit of Christ permeates the Body of Christ and empowers its members to witness to Christ and build up the Body of Christ with their respective gifts.

Christians are called to 'redeem the time' (Eph. 5:16). This pandemic. presents an opportunity for Christianity to move into other dimensions. The Apostle Paul urged believers to redeem the time because of the evil days man currently lives in. Similarly, building space should not prevent the church from having fellowship and evangelizing. Those who believe that the church is the building and, therefore, that there is no more church, must "move away from a customer-service mindset and not focus on consumers of religious goods and services" (Stetzer, 2015:np). Christians need to put more effort into virtual worship because the church is no longer a building due to the restrictions imposed on physical gatherings for worship in some areas. To this end, as the growth of the church is not solely confined to the physical meeting in structures or buildings but is more focused on fellowship and evangelism, there is the need, as Christians, to put in more effort in adopting virtual tools for worship for the growth, especially in these times of some levels of restrictions in in-person meetings.

1.3 The Value of The Study

1.3.1 Theological and Practical Values

Hopefully, this study will contribute considerably to the MCG and the Christian

community at large. It is a great responsibility to disseminate the gospel. The specific contribution to academic knowledge and the church are summarized as follows:

1. The research attempts to provide a church digitalization framework based on best practices and theological-cultural reflections to guide Christians in Ghana, especially the MCG, on how to appropriately engage digitalization platforms in preaching the gospel. For instance, it may give insight into any unforeseen misunderstanding on whether the congregants should traditionally come with their printed Bibles and hymns or follow the new trend of coming to church with electronic Bibles and hymns – smartphones, iPad, and the use of projectors.

2. The research may create evidence-based awareness among the MCG scholars, leaders and ministers on the implications of current communication tools and the strategies to modify these for better use.

3. The study also seeks to discern God's will for the use of modern communication platforms in the churches and re-examines the theological tradition of the MCG in determining God's will for and in engaging advanced communication technologies.

4. The study may provide a theological-cultural analysis of Zoom and WhatsApp within a religious context of MCG's traditions as well as cultural and intergenerational influences.

5. Finally, the study attempts to contribute to the ongoing intellectual debate on whether the church should engage and manage ICT use or ignore it.

1.4 Research Methodology and Methods

1.4.1 Research Model

The study uses Osmer's model of practical theological interpretation to advance the theory–praxis interplay. The four-step theological reflection model is built around four tasks, each governed by four key questions: (a) What is going on? (b) Why is it going on? (c) What ought to be going on? (d) How might we respond? (Osmer, 2008:4-12).

The first task called the *Descriptive Phase,* is to find out what is going on through empirical research (Osmer 2008:31-78). This step requires either a qualitative or a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (a mixed-methods approach) to provide empirical research results and, for that matter, answer how the MCG currently

applies digitalization in its operations (Osmer 2008:79-120). The second task, the *Interpretive Phase,* seeks to find the reason behind the phenomena and provides analytical results with secondary data. The third task in Osmer's model is the *Normative Phase* which aims at discerning God's will, as expressed in and interpreted from the Judeo-Christian scriptures in relation to how the church ought to act on the subject being considered (2008:80-103). In a contemporary context, it could be expressed as understanding the ways scriptures and theology speak to the use of modern communication tools and discerning God's will for church digitalization. Osmer's final task called the *Strategic Phase* seeks to establish strategies developed on insights from the previous three steps (2008:85- 118). Hence, this study intends to develop a strategy for the smooth implementation of digitalization as well as an evangelism strategy.

1.4.2 Methods

The mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2014:215-238) was used to explore how the church uses ICT. It involved the use of qualitative (open-ended) and quantitative (close-ended) instruments to collect data in a single research project "in response to research questions or hypotheses" (Creswell, 2014:217). After that, the data was analyzed to understand how Zoom and WhatsApp have impacted the communication of the MCG.

1.4.2.1 Justification for using a mixed-methods approach

Mixed methods research has been increasingly recognized as a useful approach for describing and explaining complex issues. The quantitative portion of the study was descriptive in design, while the qualitative portion pertained to the Grounded Theory methodology. This approach allows the participants to contribute their thoughts to a specific range of answers. As Anderson (2010:np) posits, a qualitative approach involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data that are not easily reduced to numbers but rather the data relating to the social world and the concepts and behaviour of people used for the study. The descriptive nature of the mixed methods approach allows the people to contribute their thoughts instead of limiting them to a specific range of answers. This approach also enables readers to understand the meaning attached to the experience, the distinct nature of the problem, and the impact of the problem (McKenna et al., 2017:89).

1.5 Data Collection

Three broad categories of data collection were used in this qualitative research: (a) participant observation, (b) the use of questionnaires and interviews, and (c) the use of documents (Glesne, cited in Feza, 2017:457). Questionnaires and interviews were used for the data collection, followed by focus group discussions (FGD) and fully semi-structured online survey data. A Google Form (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1pEDzQjcFUFSvWZg-tGeh2SJTbIqBECOUsfFgbyC9iro) was used via email to sixty-five participants. Out of the 65 questionnaires administered, 65 responded, representing a 100% response rate. Emails were sent to the selected churches and individual persons requesting assistance and education on the instructions on the survey. The questionnaire sought information on the impact of Zoom and WhatsApp platforms on church communication and discipleship.

A pilot study with a limited number of 5 individuals was first conducted to limit ambiguities and other potential pitfalls. It was also done to determine if the questionnaire was easy to understand or did not create too many ambiguities, easily accessed with or without limited challenges from the online platform used and if the questions were relevant.

1.5.1 Participants

A total of 65 respondents were asked to respond to the questionnaires. Using purposeful sampling (Creswell et al., 2014:86; Palinkas et al., 2015:533-544; Patton, 1990:32), the researcher selected individuals who have had experience with Zoom and WhatsApp, which enabled them to provide their perspectives on the use of Zoom and WhatsApp. Purposeful sampling is defined by Creswell et al. (2014:89) as a form of sampling in which the researcher studies a person or site to learn a phenomenon.

It is a particular means widely used in "qualitative research for identifying and selecting information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 1990:43). Consideration for the selection of respondents for this study was based on the hierarchichal structure of the church, gender inclusiveness, diversity in roles played in the church, geographical spread to reflect the international character of the church.

In all, the respondents for the interviews were divided into four groups:

a) Five ministers, that is, three males and two females represent the heads of the various local churches.

b) Five Lay members, three males and two females, with a long-standing history of the church and its communication style.

c) Three ICT Team members, mainly young adults, who have direct engagement and management of the social media platforms – Zoom and WhatsApp in the church.

d) Two Music Team members to determine how they have been using Zoom and WhatsApp during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sample size for the FGD was 15 churches across Ghana and North America (Canada and the United States of America) on a ratio of 2:1 (i.e., ten churches in Ghana and five churches in North America) from 3 out of twenty-one dioceses of the MCG. In each diocese, five churches, including the cathedral, were selected. Purposeful sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015:533-544; Patton, 1990:32) was used to reflect the variations and to capture the impact of ethnicity and urbanization, among other factors. In Ghana, the Northern Accra and Kumasi Dioceses, which have higher Internet penetration and well-educated members due to their cosmopolitan nature in Ghana, were chosen for this study. A total of 10 churches responded to the questionnaire in Ghana.

Additionally, one diaspora diocese of the MCG (North American Mission Diocese) was included. The NAMD 5 churches responded to the questionnaire (Appendix G). It is significant to note that while the diaspora churches are outside Ghana, they are predominately Ghanaian. Thus, the study will be of benefit to the whole MCG due to the varied responses. Further, to get an insight into the impact of social media on MCG's communication, four more FGDs were organized with eight people, six participants and two observers each within one month. Each group discussion took a minimum of 45 minutes and a maximum of an hour.

Participants were contacted via emails and phone calls on their invitation to the FGD. The objectives, criteria, date, time, questions, and Zoom ID were sent to the participants

two weeks before the sessions. A phone number and email address were given for further questions and clarifications. The discussions were recorded with the consent of respondents, and notes were taken. After each discussion, the recording was transcribed, and a copy was sent to the participants for approval. Gaps in the transcription, where words were not correct or missing, were corrected. The data were then coded concerning the research questions in relation to whether further information was required. The notes were coded by dates and the themes emerging in the notes.

1.6 Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) includes the dimensions of processes and procedures moving from qualitative data collected to explaining, analyzing, understanding and interpreting the participants and their situations (Akinyode, 2018:np; Carmichael & Cunningham, 2017:117).

All the data for this study were analyzed for explorative information using NVivo to help understand the context of church digitalization and to identify the relevant pointers for developing the primary survey data. According to Kikooma (2010:2), NVivo is a QDA computer software developed by Tom and Lyn Richards in 1999. Thus, the data were edited and formatted in the recorded discussions with paragraph styles to allow the software to develop auto code, thus creating case nodes. An imported classification sheet was then used to classify the case nodes made. This was to ensure that the researcher could retrieve all responses segregated into the classification created for easy analysis and interpretation.

The onset of COVID-19 also makes the use of Web-based approaches over paper-based questionnaires very appropriate. Web-based approach eases data gathering, has minimal or no costs, increases the response rate and flexibility of design, reaches people who prefer to be online rather than face-to- face and reaches people who are not geographically accessible (Eysenback, 2011:78). This approach is not without disadvantages. The absence of an interviewer, inability to reach a challenging population, and possible survey fraud (people responding more than once) are some of them.

Besides providing descriptive information on how church digitalization has been carried out, the study sought to evaluate Zoom and WhatsApp's effectiveness and examine the intra and inter- personal interaction among churches. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is used to evaluate church digitalization effectiveness. It is based on constructed questions (2-14) of the questionnaire based on four analysis constructs – Perceived Ease of Use; Perceived Usefulness, Attitude, and Efficacy.

1.6.1 Permission and the Use of Documents

Archival records, including committee reports, Synod reports, conference reports, and experts' presentations and writings, were used for this study. A formal letter was drafted to the MCG Headquarters in 2018, and the Church granted permission (*Appendix A.*). The South African Theological Seminary, Johannesburg, also granted the researcher admission into the Ph.D. programme in June 2018.

1.7 Ethical Consideration

Considering the importance of ethics in conducting research and the challenges, a careful approach was employed to ensure that the Research Ethics Committee approved in chapter one was adhered to during the research process. The guidelines included minimizing the risk of harm, obtaining informed consent from participants, protecting anonymity and confidentiality, avoiding deceptive practices, and providing the right to withdraw. Several ethical considerations were taken into account to ensure that the study was conducted appropriately (Burles et al., 2018:np).

To comply with approved ethical considerations in conducting research, the researcher contacted all participants via emails and phone calls to participate in this study. Every participant has the right to be informed of every relevant issue concerning the research to be conducted. Therefore, the participants were informed in advance and unhesitantly participated in the study after being contacted by the researcher to explain the research purpose and process to them. All participants could communicate with the researcher of this study at any time (by email or phone call), asking possible questions, indicating objections, or any second thoughts that they might have.

Secondly, the researcher protected the participants' identities, ensuring that their

answers were private and confidential. It was clearly explained in detail at the beginning of the questionnaire and FGD that all participants' answers would be used only for the present research objectives and that they would be kept confidential. In addition, to avoid biased results and dishonest responses to the questionnaire, the survey was extremely well structured to make the participants fully aware of the procedures being applied.

Thirdly, it is ethically wrong in research to make room for deception; it is considered forbidden. The researcher made sure the accuracy of the data was assured. In selecting the participants, the age range, 18+ and social background were taken into consideration to avoid vulnerability. The participants were allowed to withdraw without any charge or prior notification to the researcher if it warranted to withdraw.

Finally, the recorded videos were sent randomly to the participants to play to confirm their contributions to the discussions to avoid "manipulation" and misinterpretation of the information provided.

1.8 Project Structure

The project structure has been formatted to align with Osmer's practical theological approach.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction provides a broad background to the study and a justification for pursuing the research. It presents a background to the study, a brief historical context of the MCG, the researcher's motivation, and a highlight of the research problem. The overall research plan, including the methodological approaches used and a critical review of existing literature on the recent and relevant scholarly discourse on the church's engagement with social media, is in this chapter. This chapter's data included primary sources such as interviews, FGDs, and secondary sources such as books, articles, theses and dissertations, libraries, and the Internet.

Chapter 2 – Communication, the Internet and Theology

This chapter continues to look critically at some relevant literature on communication.

Chapter 3 -- The Descriptive Phase

This chapter focuses on understanding what is going on in the church regarding communication platforms use. Thus, it is based on Osmer's first stage. While concentrating on Zoom and WhatsApp, it explores prospects and challenges and explores Methodist churches' variations in different ethnic zones and cities. This section is the output of the first objective, which seeks to determine the effectiveness of church digitalization using the Theory of Interpersonal behaviour (TIB) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

Chapter 4 – The Interpretive Phase

This chapter is the interpretive task in Osmer's methodology. It explores the influence of culture, ethnicity, gender, education, and generational groups on digitalization. It drew on the best theories and science to help interpret the reasons and influences of the factors. This section is the second objective's output to examine the barriers and opportunities in transitioning to social media platforms.

Chapter 5 - The Normative Phase

This chapter presents the results of the third stage of Osmer's methodology. Specifically, it re-examines the existing theological traditions of the MCG concerning church digitalization. Results from the FGD with some selected theologians and scholars in the MCG. This section examined information dissemination and falsehood on digital church platforms and potential trade-offs of digitalization within a normative construct of practical theology.

Chapter 6 – The Strategic Phase

This chapter is the final stage of Osmer's methodology and the output of objective four. It gives the framework developed for church digitalization.

Chapter 7 – Summary and Conclusion

This chapter includes a summary of the findings, the contemporary relevance to the church, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: COMMUNICATION, THE INTERNET AND THEOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

Chapter two deals with how technology has influenced communication and its implication on Christian theology and dissemination of the gospel in the 21st century. A brief history of the MCG and how they are engaging social media in their communication is provided. Osmer argues that a researcher understands the situation well through empirical research about what is going on (Osmer, 2008:4-5). This is refered to as the descriptive phase (Osmer, 2008:31-78).

2.2 Communication

Communication does not have a straightforward definition. This is because the process of communication keeps changing as a dynamic activity which is difficult to to describe. (Pearson & Nelson, 2000:6). Communication is the process of imparting or exchanging information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium. It is the act of transferring information from one place, person, or group to another. The communication process involves understanding or comprehension, sharing, and meaning (Pearson & Nelson, 2000:8).

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines communication as a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behaviour. Communication is fundamental to the existence and survival of humans as well as to an organization. The process involves creating and sharing ideas, information, views, facts, and feelings from one place, person, or group to another. It involves the following components: *source, message, channel, receiver, feedback, environment, context and interference.*

The primary concept of communication is to share, impart, or have something in common. Communication is an ever-continuing and ongoing process in the Bible, and it is a fundamental need for any human being. Because of the dynamic nature of communication, the changing nature of the world is shaped by the way people communicate (Gamble & Gamble, 1996:4). The primary aim of communication is to create a commonality in meaning between the sender and receiver of information. This

aim engenders interconnectivity routes in the communication process involving the sender, the message, the channel, the receiver and the feedback generated from the reception of the message (Aririguzoh, 2013:17; Gamble & Gamble, 1996:5).

Gamble and Gamble (1996:6) predicted some decades ago that in the years to come, the world would rely on communication skills as the world confronts a number of challenges such as the mode of communication and the kind of communicators with whom people interact. Becoming a more diverse kind of society will depend on mutual respect and a sense of ethical fairness. The prediction seems well fulfilled in today's world as the dynamics of communication have changed. Communicators have now become more digital in communication.

2.3 Communication and Information Communication Technology

Information and Communication Technology is the convergence of computing and telecommunication. It is defined as a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to transmit, store, create, share or exchange information. These include computers, the internet (websites, blogs and e-mails), live broadcasting technologies (radio, television and webcasting), recorded broadcasting technologies (podcasting, audio and video players, and storage devices) and telephony (fixed or mobile, satellite, Visio/video – conferencing) (UNESCO, 2017).

Technologies improve communication by determining how closely people are able to work together, even in cases where people may be operating from different continents. Technological advancement with new trends in communication continues to affect the way people communicate, which has become the norm of the generation. Communication, the exchange of ideas, has become faster, easier and more efficient due to advances in technology, such as smartphones, social networking websites, e-mail and instant messaging. They play a critical role in communication today.

2.3.1 Communication Technologies

Communication technologies refer to the different ways and tools anybody can deploy to pass their messages to their listeners until a common understanding is established (Aririguzoh, 2013:15). According to McLuhan, there have been four technological

28

ages; trial, literate, print and electronic (McLuhan cited in Aririguzoh, 2013:15). Folarin (cited in Aririguzoh, 2013:16) sees these ages as the oral, visual linear, electric and space satellite stages in human communication. Folarin contends that at each period of the technological age, the predominant technology that is employed is different. However, primary communication technologies align with the four ages identified by the above communication scholars. These primary technologies are oral, print, electronics and the internet. The internet, otherwise refered to as the information super highway enables millions of diverse pieces of information to reach others connected to a computer or mobile phone.

2.3.1.1 Oral

The oral media was the period where most of the communication was based on spoken words. Those involved in communication, the sender and receiver of the message, are usually in close physical proximities; hence they can engage in face-to-face communication. This type of communication centres within a community or immediate environment. For example, in an African setting, a local king can send the town crier to convey his instructions to all the quarters in his kingdom (Aririguzoh, 2019:16).

God created the universe by speaking. He gave humanity the ability to communicate creatively through language. God directly communicates his revelation with his people clearly and naturally, using language. God communicates with Abraham and other patriarchs orally. He spoke through angels, dreams and visions, prophets and even through a donkey. Swar, Gidoomd and Arango, cited in Aririguzoh (2019:28) aver that one of God's strategies for teaching his nation Israel was through oral methods, such as communal meditation on his law, and through regular communication.

Lamech had a close talk with his wives Adah and Zillah: "… hear my voice; Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have talked to a man for wounding me, even a young man for hurting me." (Genesis 4:23). Lamech explains to his wives that he killed a young man in self-defence, but it was not premeditated, like Cain, who planned, calculated and executed the murder. In this situation, Lamech used a voice to explain and educate his family on the incident. Jesus gives an example of oral communication. "And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying…" (Matt. 5:1-2).

The earthly ministry of Jesus provides a unique look at the use of an oral training method with the regular use of parables and questions in the formation of the disciples. He frequently applied oral communication to express his intention and explain some issues to his followers to create a sound meaning to guide them. The Sermon on the Mount is one of the examples of Jesus' use of oral communication to educate the masses.

2.3.1.2 Print Media

The print media encapsulates the different channels that pass across their messages through words printed on a medium, for example, the use of paper. In this technological age, the receiver is expected to read and comprehend the message in newspapers, magazines, and books. Aririguzoh (2013:16) posits that the reader must be able to see, decode the symbols and make meaning out of the words. The interaction between Philip and Eunuch below illustrates Arirguzoh's assertion:

> Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the Prophet."Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I", he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So, he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. The eunuch was reading this passage of scripture, "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth" (Acts 8: 30-32).

Philip was assigned by the Holy Spirit to decode the text to create meaning for the Eunuch because the eunuch was confused concerning the interpretation of the book of Isaiah 53, which he was reading.

There were two different interpretations between the Jewish teachers in Jerusalem and the Christians concerning the text at the centre of the interaction between Philip and the Eunuch. While the Jewish teachers believed that Isaiah prophesied about himself, the Christians affirmed that Isaiah was referring to the crucified Messiah – Jesus (5:42). The eunuch needed the right interpretation of the scripture. The scripture has to be interpreted to readers taking into consideration the culture of the time to create meaning for the people and make the gospel relevant.

In Luke 4: 17-18, Jesus opened and read about what is written about Him.

> And he was handed the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken – hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD". Then he closed the Book.

Bruce et al (1979:1194) state that in accordance with custom Jesus was invited to read and comment on the days from the prophets. A scroll was a roll of papyrus or leather on which the law was written (Dickson, 2011:1193). Jesus read the scroll by removing all obstacles concerning interpretation to create meaning of the text to guide the people.

2.3.1.3 The electronic media

This stage of the four technological ages involved the dissemination of messages via radio and television. These technological inventions saw rapid development in communication. The listener must have functional ears to hear the voice of the broadcaster. Television aids the exciting feature of moving images. Now the viewer can read text, hear sounds as well as see the pictures.

2.3.1.4 The internet

The internet combines all the features of the old media' text, voice, pictures, and motion. But this technological advancement adds speed as its special characteristic (Aririguzoh, 2005:79, 2013:19). Aririguzoh (2013:126) notes that today, "the internet and the world wide web connects host computers to each other".

2.4 Historical Survey of the Use of Technology in Christian Ministry Globally.

The church is nearly two millennia old, starting immediately after it was birthed at the time of Pentecost. However, there are certain practices in Christian worship, such as the preaching and dissemination of the gospel and administering the sacraments that have remained constant over that period. Also, the use of technology in church communications has proved to be so important that it cannot be overlooked. As part of

the culture, technology has significantly shaped the church. Technology is a culture-making activity in which human beings exercise freedom and responsibility (Monsma, cited in Schuurman, 2022:np). Schuurman (2017:np) contends that worship reflects the traditional context in which people live. The style of music, the aesthetics of worship, the language, and the church architecture have all been shaped by the surrounding culture to one extent or another.

Technology has helped to propagate the gospel since the 15th century with the intervention of the Gutenberg Printing Press. It continues to play a significant role in church communication. Apart from the printing press, Churches use technology in mediums such as radio, television and digital-social media to reach millions of people.

2.4.1 Invention of the Printing Press and its Impact on Christian Ministry

Johannes Gutenberg employed chemistry and cutting-edge mechanical technologies research to invent his printing machine in 1445. This invention facilitated the vast distribution of the Bible across the European continent, resulting in the rapid increase in literacy and new Christian converts. While printing had existed for several centuries, Johannes Gutenberg's revolutionary innovation of movable type in 1445 inroduced a revolution in that industry (Crompton cited in McDaniel, 2014:1). Crompton, cited in McDaniel (2014:29), reveals that Gutenberg's Bible was the first book printed with the movable type printing. Gutenberg started printing forty lines per page which increased to forty-two lines per page instead, compared to the scribes who wrote thirty-six lines per page in earlier Bibles. (Lyons cited in McDaniel, 2014:29).

As a result of the ability of Gutenberg fitting move lines per page, the Gutenberg Bible limited the number of production materials such as paper and parchment. This cutting-edge technology also allowed for fast production of the Bibles. While the scribes were using three years to produce a single Bible, Winson (cited in McDaniel, 2014:32) explains that Gutenberg produced a total of 180 copies of pamphlets, 150 Bibles and 3000 vellums. Fast production and fewer materials decreased the price and increased availability of the Bible, thus providing more opportunities for "common people" or anyone of any economic status to own and read a private family bible (McDaniel, 2014:30). This revolution limited the dependency on religious authorities for

knowledge, interpretation and analysis of religious literature. The higher literacy level at the time assisted the people in forming their own intellectual, philosophical and theological opinions concerning the Bible and their faith through reading. This shift in power between the 15th and 16th centuries from the religious authority to the "common people" resulted from more accessible and inexpensive print and manageable costs of printing products, including the Bible.

Christians also took advantage of this cutting-edge technology; the Catholic Church utilized the printing press for printing ordinances, indulgences and anti-Islamic crusade propaganda during the late 1400s and 1500s. (Rubin, 2012:np). Christians hailed the printing press as a gift from God (Rubin, 2012:np) to advertise Christianity at the time. The printing press had an immense impact on the world. It revolutionized the world and bolstered social movements such as the renaissance, and religious discourse at the time, from strengthening the church's authority to laying the groundwork for the Protestant Movement (Liulevicius, 2020:np).

Liulevicius (2020:np), in "*the religious impact of the printing press",* finds that Gutenberg's contribution to Christianity did not stop at printing Bibles. He produced pamphlets that spoke of widespread issues of the time, including a papal proclamation calling for a Crusade against the Turks as retaliation for Constantinople. He printed indulgences to raise funds for the Crusade against the Turks. Gutenberg also published a special "Turk Calendar, which contained monthly calls for the Crusade against the Turks" (Liulevicius, 2020:np).

The printing itself played a pivotal role in super-charging the Protestant Reformation. The print was a perfect medium for the message that Luther wanted to propagate – *sola scriptura* or "scripture alone". The power of the printing press to print the Bible for the masses worked extremely well. To Luther, reading the written Word directly from the source of authority implied that everyone was responsible for their salvation as the relationship to God.

Gutenberg was also driven by his belief that the church's binding hold on the Word grieved God. His intervention would then "break the seal" by offering a machine that

did not tire like copyists and cut down on production costs (Grey; cited in McDaniel, 2014:32).

The printing press enabled production of the Bible in large quantities and ideas to flow rapidly to vast audiences. The technology resulted in a series of translations. For instance, in the early 1500s, William Tyndale translated the Bible into English and had it printed and distributed to many people. Besides, Martin Luther printed booklet after booklet to share his views with interested Europeans. He also translated and published the Bible in German.

In the same way, the printing press assisted the Protestants Reformation to produce the King James Bible. Bibles that were once solely copied painstakingly by hand experienced quick and mass production due to Gutenberg's inventions. The Bible thus became more available and accessible to people due to the less time required for its production, compared with the months or years it would have taken, depending on the size (The Gutenberg Bible, 2019). The large scale of production also contributed to a reduction in price. The gospel message became closer to the people in their homes and workplaces.

The Catholic Church considered the printing technology a "divine art". Papal Bull (1515), according to Loach (cited in McDaniel, 2014:32), declared printing "uniquely advantageous to extending the glory of God, to the increase of the faith, and the diffusion of the arts and sciences". The church adopted the new technology for its own purposes, producing leaflets to garnish support for an anti- Turkish campaign (Eisenstein, 1980:86), and relevant Christian literature for the clergy and the laity.

2.4.2 Effects of the Printing Press on Missionary Work in Sub-Saharan Africa

The Central principle of the *sola scriptura* was that every Protestant should be able to read the Bible. For instance, the Protestant missionaries played a central role in developing a written tradition in sub-Saharan Africa. They were among the first to bring the printing press to Africa. The missionaries made "it accessible" to the indigenous populations by both exposing them to the printing technology and granting them access to it" (Woodberry, 2012:246).

This early availability of printing technology enabled the local development of a culture of writing and information diffusion beyond the single field of religious literature. Apart from printing Christian literature, they produced all sorts of written material and newspapers in indigenous languages (Maake cited in Cage & Rueda, 2014:3). The printing press still plays a significant role in the church today. Scholars and theologians still use publishing companies or houses to publish books, pamphlets, leaflets and tracts about their faith, clarify issues and evangelize. During conferences and synods, agendas and other relevant documents are printed. The printing Houses still produce books for bible studies, class meetings, and Bibles.

Before the development of the printing press by Gutenberg, which brought a higher quantity of production, the Bible was one of the greatest and most sacred commodities. The church would chain their Bibles to their pulpits to prevent its theft. With the invention of the printing press in 1455, a new world was born, with many people getting access to books to read. Toqarasei (2007:73) observes that the printing press was the most utilized media then but expanded quickly. "This medium was one of the most influential of its time and spread around the globe with its use". The writing was done by hand and was reserved by the elites and the privileged, especially clerks and monks. This situation gave monopolistic control over texts, which were written on papyrus or vellum and stored in the libraries of monasteries and cathedrals. Hence the printing technology effectively democratized access to the Bible (Liulevicius, 2020:np).

Today, printing still has a great influence on church communications. Globally, every church relies on printing tracts, letters, agendas, bulletins and other relevant means to disseminate information to the members or the general public. Janzen (2019:11) confirms that this technology holds even more weight in other countries, especially on the African continent. Missionary and African Indigenous Churches (AIC), especially the charismatics, rely greatly on this media technology to spread the gospel. Togarasei (2007:74) explains, "Taking advantage of the high levels of literacy of their membership, the leaders produce booklets, tracts and magazines full of church doctrine".

Christians continue to access Christian Literature, Bibles, and other relevant Christian

materials produced by printing houses. The World Publishing Houses continue to publish them and translate them into modern languages to suit the day's culture. Wycliffe, one of the Bible translators, believes that it is possible to translate the scripture into every known tongue and language within 50 years or less, primarily because of the use and abet of technology (Flesher, 1999:8).

As revealed in Chapter 3, it is clear that the overwhelming influence of technology on Christianity cannot be denied. Technology has been a major applicable tool in facilitating the dissemination of the gospel message of salvation in different parts of the world. McDaniel (2014:30) argues that since reading spurs the formation of intellectual opinions, many opinions were formed that did not always align with that of the church authority figures. These varying opinions resulted in disagreements and conflicts between the two main parties of Christian thinkers on biblical interpretation. These disagreements and conflicts played a role in sparking social upheaval and, eventually, the Protestant Reformation. Many scholars are of the view that the availability and accessibility of the Bible to the "common people" undermined the catholic church and disrupted the European religious culture.

Martin Luther was one of the great Protestant figures responsible for spreading knowledge of the Bible to the people in the 16th century. He challenged the *modus operandi* of the Catholic Church. However, he loved the church but had his reservation concerning the corrupted sale of indulgences that every sin must be absolved either here on earth or after death in a state called purgatory before one could go to heaven (Crompton; cited in McDaniel, 2014:27). To address his beliefs and opinions, Martin Luther printed his Ninety-five Theses to the door on October 31, 1517 (Crompton; cited in McDaniel, 2014:29). Though Luther intended to address church issues conventionally, it went viral through scholarly debate with other theologians. The Theses were swiftly printed and circulated in total between 1517 and 1520 in all of Europe, "translated into other vernacular or native languages, aside from the original German" (Eisenstein; cited in McDaniel, 2014:31). Crompton (cited in McDaniel, 2014:32) averred that Hans Luffe of Wittenberg printed at least 300,000 copies.

The mechanized movable printing press was the technology that made the spread of the

gospel and revolutionary technological ideas possible to many people. Many scholars, such as McDaniel (2014:38), see Gutenberg's movable type printing press as a disruptive innovation in more ways than one. It brought about freedom, innovations and ideas that shifted power and standards in both the religious and scientific areas of life. These included a shift in religious power from the church authority to the general population, standardization of scientific reporting, and an influx of theological ideas and new scientific discoveries.

2.4.3 The Cutting-Edge Technology – Radio and Television

As with other areas of communication, religious media has evolved with technological transformations. For example, Gutenberg's invention of movable type during the mid-1400s enabled the church to print and distribute the Bible in large quantities. The late 1800s also experienced developments in electronic technology, such as sound recordings, which promoted the free flow of information and religious music and sermons to be stored and transported. (Wikle, 2015:196).

Radio and Television have been among the early contributors to mass media and affected religious beliefs and communication. Churches have used the broadcast media almost from the beginning for evangelism, teaching and worship (Soukup cited in Wikle, 2015:130). Ward presents an extended narrative history of evangelical broadcasting. "From radio and television programming to text messaging, email, and Internet websites, religious organizations are increasingly dependent on electronic media for sharing and exchanging information, idea and beliefs" (Ward cited in Wikle, 2015:195).

2.4.3.1 Radio

In the late 1800s, the development of wired communications technologies played a significant role in connecting distant places. Though these tools were suitable for the synchronous exchange of information, the telegraph and telephones were ineffective tools for reaching many people simultaneously. There was then an emergence of the radio to help to target a larger audience, which occurred after World War I. Churches first used it for broadcasts for Sunday services, religious content in the form of music, hymns and Bible reading (Erickson; cited in Wikle, 2015:197).

Radio is the most inexpensive form of media distribution and reaches many people. It has advantages over other mass media, such as television and magazines, in terms of being accessible, and cheap. Churches have many radio stations that cater to different people. Television ministry also reaches millions of people, and many churches have television stations today to reach the people with the gospel in their homes.

The introduction of the radio in 1900 also brought successive, great waves of technology worldwide. After a few years, radio began to be used commercially, and Christians realized it could be a viable way of evangelism and communication. Globally, the radio still maintains its position as one of the appropriate tools for communication and evangelism in the church's life today. The introduction of FM stations has made it easier, more affordable, and more accessible. In Ghana, for instance, it is assumed that every nine of ten households have access to radio sets (Ghana Statistical Service Report, 2021). Radio is still a powerful tool to disseminate the gospel, especially among the rural folks in Ghana. There are still Christian radio stations globally that send Christian messages and music through the airwaves, spreading the gospel to those who would never step into a chapel to have the opportunity to feed their spirit (Janzen, 2019:11).

2.4.3.2 Television

In addition, around 1957, Billy Graham began Worldwide Pictures to complement his Billy Graham Crusade Organization. According to Janzen (2019:12), television emerged to be widely utilized around the 1930s; however, the influence of Christian television networks did not come until about twenty years later. The 1990s and 2000s experienced more incredible changes in technology. Swee-Hong and Lester (2017:14) assert that this period changed from solely audio within the church to audio and visual. Television is one of the powerful tools technology has helped Christianity work effectively on its core task of spreading the gospel to all nations (Matt. 28:19). The churches are reaching millions of people utilizing television. Sims (2009:6) argues that this achievement would not have been possible without the aid and support of technology.

2.4.3.3 *Digital media*

Churches are now using social media to communicate with members and non-members by announcing upcoming events and sharing with the audience specific information concerning the gospel and church activities (McKinney, 2014:12). Modern mass media in the 21st century has tremendously influenced the lives of humans. Such media include the radio, television, newspaper, magazines, billboards, Internet, cable networks, mobile phones, pamphlets, and handbills. These tools have positively and negatively influenced humans in all aspects of life. This two-edged influence has affected the church too. Several positive impacts have resulted from integrating digital media in church-related activities, including spiritual, economic, and social development, as well as increased numerical strength.

a. Spiritual Development

Christian spirituality is initiated and enhanced through evangelism, conversion, baptism, preachings, teachings, exhortations, prayers, fasting, Bible studies, and discussions. Most of these activities require mass media tools such as public address systems, tracts, pamphlets, and the Internet for effectiveness and success. Churches worldwide are capitalizing on the mass media, especially radio, television, and digital platforms, to build the spirituality of their audience.

b. Economic Development

Proper and effective use of mass media ensures a large turnout and income. Many churches today use mass media to raise funds to boost the economic life of the church's members.

c. Numerical Strength

The mass media plays a part in the church's numerical growth. Churches across the world today are using the mass media to "sell" their church or advertise the church. The gospel is reaching billions of people through media organs like books, journals, and digital and compact discs.

d. Social Development

The social development of the church is in terms of its growing relevance, popularity

and acceptability by society and growing cooperation and unity among members in different congregations and denominations, which enhance social interaction among members and the people within the community. The mass media has been the preferable tool often used to create awareness of the publicity of the church programmes.

Kolawole (2019:3) re-echoes the benefits Christianity has enjoyed from technology:

- ➢ It has greatly magnified the voice of those preaching the gospel. Instead of reading hundreds or even thousands when preaching a sermon, ministers now have a possible audience of millions.
- ➢ It has enriched the gospel by providing more information to more people in a shorter time.
- ➢ It saves time and works faster.
- ➢ It has increased the number of channels of distribution of the gospel.
- ➢ It has provided help for the encouragement, strengthening, and edification of the believers through technology tools and advanced electronic discipleship material.
- ➢ It aids Christians in reaching out to a distracted world using familiar tools.

2.5 Technology in the 21st Century Ghana Church

Janzen (2019:12) explains that the church is no longer concentrating just on the audio quality in service but has begun to develop the visual aspect of worship. Technologies such as overhead projectors (OHPs), slide projectors, and advanced instruments have started to reshape the way and style of worship. With technological advancement, soundtracks and laptop computers have become crucial to music-making and pre-recorded sermons.

The use of digital technology has become standard in worship services. For decades, churches have played CDs and MP3 recordings in worship to enhance music, dance and drama ministries and fill when musicians are unavailable. Video clips and PowerPoint presentations are used to help ministers drive home sermonic focus, especially those who may be visual learners. They also lend a contemporary feeling to worship, saving us from hymn books and worship bulletins. Services are recorded and made available on CDs and DVDs for those who might want to view them again, and

now some churches are using digital technology to live stream their services. If you cannot get to the church, the church comes to you. Many, if not most, would agree that using digital technology in worship has positive aspects and results. (Allen-McLaurin, 2015:67; Janzen, 2019:9).

The world is a global village with highly advanced technology where information distribution and exchange have become easy. This impact of global technological advancement in the 21st century does not exclude the church, and its effects cannot be underestimated or ignored by any missionary-minded severe church. Allen-McLaurin (2015:69) argues that the church has been one of the institutions to benefit from this technological phenomenon. "Technology allows people to interact with the gospel in a profound way".

2.6 Understanding Digital Culture

Zukowski (2012:np) argues that the conservative nature of the Christian faith is now faced with an irresistible digital culture which touches almost every aspect of human life. Djikuk (2017:045) defines digital culture as a contemporary explosion of information and communication technologies and how these technologies affect information gathering and processing, as well as human interactions, worldview, beliefs and opinions.

Djikuk (2017:040) seems right because almost all of today's churches have been affected by digital culture. The author can strongly argue that no church in this techno-cultural era can exist or discharge its missionary task without the use of technology. Unsurprisingly, all churches encourage their members to embrace technology, and an irresistible pressure necessitates this move of the techno-cultural influence on our present world. Jerome-Zsupan (2014:67) rightly argues that this move by the church resulted from a cultural shift involving digital communication and how it reshapes how members interact, form and maintain relationships, and gain knowledge and understanding.

These technological gadgets allow a wider range of voices to contribute to conversations (Lewis, 2014:np). In his 2020 Annual Synod address, the Rt. Rev. Prof.

Edusa-Eyison, the Bishop of North Accra Diocese of the MCG and a renowned scholar in history and digital culture disclosed that this generation, especially the young people are living in a different culture that has influenced even the way they serve and worship God. Kinnaman (cited in Dyikuk, 2017:045) describes the current environment as "Digital Babylon," which is in many ways similar to the kind of head-snapping change that Daniel and his colleagues went through in Babylon in terms of the exposure to a broader world, immersion in a whole set of worldviews and beliefs and ideas about spirituality, regularly relating with people who hold different views and perspectives about God, human meaning and flourishing.

Lewis (2014:np) contends that through ICT, digital culture is unleashing new dimensions of interaction and social relationships upon people. The digital culture offers multiple choices through multimodality (using various media) and its tools. In the face of these successes or achievements, "if the church still prefers analogue communications, she will no doubt be missing out" (Djikuk, 2017:045). Despite the opportunities these technologies offer the church, some church leaders do not like the church to engage them to avoid theological misinterpretations and malpresentation.

Djikuk (2017:045) presents the following implications of an Online Church
   i) A decline in Church attendance: Some churches fear that creating an online church would reduce church attendance. Research conducted by the United States of America discovered that fewer people were attending church because the rest were joining services through the internet (Fitzerald, 2014:np). The Ghana Methodist Church of Toronto, Canada, experiences a similar challenge where some members, especially the younger ones, are not coming to the "in-person" church service under the pretext that they access church services or programmes on mobile applications.
   ii) Individual replaces community with social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Gmail, and Twitter, among others. Aside from the false sense of community it creates through information sharing and communication with people who are not familiar with one another, it creates a "church" in cyberspace that would further entrench individuality. Tillich (cited in Djikuk, 2017:045) argues that "the implication is when the individual

replaces community, the sense of a community is submerged in an individual's whims and caprices".

iii) Gadgets without human interaction: human communication through interpersonal and group communication is crucial to human existence (Djikuk, 2017:045). As Nilles (2012:np) observes, advocating for a sacred space on the internet threatens basic human communication and interaction.

iv) Subjective and Relativism: modern ideologies such as subjectivity and relativism have been advanced due to the advent of the internet (Garga; cited in Djikuk, 2017:046). A person cannot operate the internet without a gadget, be it a computer (PC), mobile phone, or other personal appliances. This implies that the usage of these gadgets is subject to the user. For instance, it is up to the person to switch on their PC and phone or not. The church member may choose to be part of "Cyber Church" or not at a given time.

v) Challenge of internet communication: the interruption of internet services could militate against a potentially vibrant online church (Egore, 2012:6), such a situation is problematic in rural Africa, where internet signals could be unstable or disappear for some days or weeks. In such cases the fate of believers who want to access that word of God online will be adversely affected.

No church leader can argue that the impact of the digital culture on the contemporary world is not felt by the church. ICT has changed the world and continues changing, therefore, the church cannot remain stagnant. There is a need to strategize to capitalize on the changes that have affected every part of human existence, especially communication, which is the primary means of disseminating the gospel. The digital culture calls for opening up and connecting with people where they live "in the real world and virtual space." Instead of waiting for the distracted and wandering young people, the church should meet them in the terrain where they are familiar (Djikuk, 2017:048).

2.7 Theology and Communication

The term "theology", is a combination of the words *theos* (God) and *logos* (word about, or study of), which literally means studying God (Erekson & Shumway, 2006:22). According to Erekson and Shumway (2006:23), technology provides the mode for

effectively communicating the gospel to mankind and efficiently organizing the operations of the Church. Theology is "the study of the science of God and the relations between Him and the universe" (Stronge cited in Effiong, 2015:165). "The science of the facts of divine revelation, so far as those facts concern the nature of God and our relation to Him, as His creatures, as sinners, and as the subjects of redemption" (Hodge; cited in Effiong, 2015:163). It is a sense of curiosity about the world and human experience. Theology attempts to interpret the meaning of the world by providing answers to life's questions regarding purpose in life. It simply tries to make sense of human lives (Fore, 1990:40). Tarimo (2020:np) defines theology as studying God and his relationship with his creation. Hence, theology includes examining all of creation in the light of the Creator.

The word "communication" in Latin is "a deeply theological concept" (Eilers, 2011:11; Fore, 2006: 28). Its common usage may be defined as a means of "transmission of thoughts, opinions or information through speech, writing or signs and symbols" (Häring, 1978:14). Communication is right from its beginning, theological. Greshake (cited in Eilers, 2012:11) argues that the origin of communication can be said to be a theological idea premised on the biblical revelation, which expresses the Christian comprehension of God and the universe.

Biblical theory of communication begins with the principle that "communication is an inner structural principle of theology for at the centre of all theology is the notion that the God revealed by Christ is a communicating God" (Eilers, 2011:2). Furthermore, communication is viewed as an interactive process where a sender puts a message across to the receiver with a certain medium (Palakeel, 2011:37). Within the context of theology, communication concerns the uses of "media, wherein media is seen as an instrument to be used for the Kingdom of God" (Soukup, Buckley, & Robinson, 2001: 368). Greshake (c i t e d i n Fore 2006:30), shares a similar view, elaborating that communication, in itself, is a concept that reveals an aspect of the nature of God: sharing, commonality, interdependence, and gift.

2.7.1 Communication is one of God's Attributes
God's nature is many-faceted; one key element is as a communicator. God is a

communicative God, which is evidenced in creation. Communication is deeply rooted in God's nature, and it is this nature he imparted to humanity after creation. Communication with humanity is a deep desire in the heart of the Lord. Jorgensen emphasizes the fundamental link between creation and communication with reference to Martin Luther (Mattox, 2018:201):

Luther is right when he claims that to be created in God's image has to do with relationship and communication. That means I am created for dialogue: God's communication with man takes the form of a conversation. This is the basic theme in all of Scripture: God is continually seeking man out to talk with him, from the story of Eden until the proclamation of the new heavens and the new earth. In the same way, the concept of covenant is based on two-way communication.

2.7.2 Some of God's Channels of Communication
2.7.2.1 God communicates through the Bible
The word communication is not explicitly found in the Bible, but the whole Bible is an account of God's communication. It is the divine communication expressed in human language. Biblical concepts such as logos – the word, revelation, prophecy, incarnation, church, the gospel and icons are forms of communication.

The Bible is a written document of God's self-communication. In the Book of Exodus, God commits the dialogue to write in two tablets of stones (Exod. 3:6). The Bible is God's word and not human's (2 Pet. 1:19-21), but humankind's response to God's initiation. The Bible contains realities God revealed and is written through human agency. The process involves God and human beings.

The Bible is a medium through which God communicates with humanity. "Thus says the Lord" expression denotes God's communication through the life and testimony of the prophets. This communication happens only through God's intervention. The Bible is an oral tradition in a written form. It records all divinely revealed communication from God, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20: 31; 2 Tim. 3:16 -17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 3:15-16).

2.7.2.2 Old Testament understanding of communication

There are characteristics of God's communication in the Old Testament. The phrase "Word of Yahweh" is the most significant and predominant expression of divine communication. Bible reveals him through words, deeds and his own presence. The prophets and the law signify the everlasting presence of God's divine communication.

The migration of the people of Israel from Egypt to the promised land and the covenant symbolize God's revelation in the history of humankind. From biblical understanding, God's divine communication proceeds from the divine initiative. The book of Genesis 1:3 presents that God made the earth and everything. "In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth. The earth was without order and form. In the midst of darkness, God uttered the first word; which is considered divine communication. 'Let there be light', and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). This is the first communication of our creator, God, which dispels darkness.

2.7.2.3 Revelation is communication

The communication of the Bible is founded on a historical revelation. Revelation is God's self- communication in human terms, an ascertainable historical fact in the Bible. In the Old Testament history, God is infinitely superior to the thoughts, speech, and vision of human beings. God communicates with humanity through dreams, omens, divination and other signs and symbols like thunder, rain and fire (Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10; 1 Sam. 15:23). All these are channels of God's revelation. Revelation is God's interpersonal communication with humanity. God is the God of communication; he communicates through different channels. In the New Testament, Jesus is the medium and message of God's communication. According to John 1:4, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. In him was life, and life was the light of man".

The essence of incarnation is to convey God's love towards humanity, a sign of language of his love, and his love in action. His desire for a cordial relationship with humanity. In the strict sense, Jesus Christ, the Word, becoming flesh, is an act of God communicating his unquenchable love for humanity. Incarnation is a divine communication event in a definite human environment, an expression of

communication. God communicates to us as we think about Him and His Word; as we read or study; we dictate upon, hear, read, and memorize His Word. Essentially, God intended to use the capabilities in his word, nature, and senses to communicate the essence of himself to his creation. Thorp (2013:19) considers it as the Transaction model of communicating a message; thus, God is the sender, the content is his infinitely glorious nature, and the creature" by the receiver. In Psalm 96: 7-12, the created order declares the glory of God.

2.7.2.4 The spoken word

God, by speaking, communicates his true nature and his character to humanity. God speaks directly to some privileged men and women in the past and presents to his people and all nations. He speaks to the prophets and preachers, who have the mission to communicate his intent to his people through visions and dreams (Num. 12:6) and mouth-to-mouth (Numbers 12:8). God's spoken word or voice is divine communication. All scripture is "God-breathed". "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26). Through the Spirit, humans are connected to the ultimate truth as found in Christ (Jn. 16:12-15). "For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature have been seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). Through the intricate details and magnificent beauty of all that God has made, we can "hear" his voice. "The heaven declares the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day, they pour forth speech; night after night, they reveal knowledge (Ps. 19:1-2).

2.7.2.5 Through prophets

In the Old Testament, the Lord God reveals himself through the prophets' actions and missions. Through the prophets, God transmitted his message. The words of the prophets were preserved first orally, and then written. These oral and written communications were the sources of change and the inspiration for liberation. While God's commandments never change, the world is constantly changing. Different periods have each brought new circumstances and unique challenges. God does not want his people to go through the challenges alone; therefore, he guides them through

his prophets. Although God has different communication methods, the prophets were the most recognized form of communication. Priests in Israel were the people's representatives before God; the prophets were God's official representatives before his people. He contends that priest calling was hereditary; God specifically called the prophet. A prophet is someone God has called to guide the entire world. Indeed, the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants, the prophets (Amos 3:7). The prophets receive direction from God to help people navigate challenges and situations.

Prophets have the most visible channel in God's communication system. "The Lord God of their fathers sent warnings to them by his messengers, rising early and sending them, because he had compassion of the peoples (2 Chron. 36:15). In *A Prophet Among You*, T. Housel Jemison listed eight reasons why God used prophets rather than some dramatic attention-getting device such as writing on the clouds or thundering out his will every morning or dawn:

1. Prophets prepared the way for Christ's first advent.
2. As the representative of the Lord, prophets showed the people that God valued human beings enough to choose from among them men and women to represent him.
3. Prophets were a continual reminder of the nearness and availability of God's instruction.
4. Messages through the prophets accomplished the same purposes as a personal communication from our creator.
5. Prophets were a demonstration of what fellowship with God and the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit could accomplish in human life.
6. The prophets' presence tested the people's attitude toward God.
7. Prophets assisted in the plan of salvation, for God has consistently used a combination of the human and the divine as his most effective means for reaching lost humankind.
8. Prophets' outstanding product is their contribution to the written word.

2.7.2.6 Through angels and dreams

Angels are spiritual beings created by God to serve him, though created higher than

humans. One of the key agents through whom God reveals his will are angels. They are simply messengers of God, and through them, God communicates with humanity. Angels are included in descriptions of all God created (Ps. 148:2; Col.1:16). Horton (2006:121) suggests that the angels' ability to communicate in human language and affect human life in other ways is basic to their biblical role. Kayembe (2019:4) argues that depending on the needs of mortals and according to the will of the Lord, angels communicate with mortals in a variety of ways, such as visitations, a voice, thoughts, feelings, dreams, visions, and other means. For instance an angel of God spoke to Jacob in a dream (Gen 31:11), and similarly to Joseph (Matt. 1:20, 2:13, 19).

Ryrie (1999:152) writes, "Angels have been involved in communicating and revealing the meaning of truth, which the church benefits from today (Dan. 7:15-27; 8:13-26; 9:20-27; Rev.1:1; 22-6' 8). God spoke through dreams to some people in the past, but even then, it was rare. Hebrews 1:1-20 indicates that God's primary communication today is through Christ via the Bible. Additionally, the Bible exhorts Christians to guard against spirits that attempt to mislead through paranormal activities (1 Jn. 4:1). Most dreams are naturally part of the sleeping state, and Bible talks about the fleeting and unreal.

2.7.2.7 God's love and relationship
According to the 17th Century philosopher-theologian, Jonathan Edwards, the beauty of God is love, and love is relationship. The love and beauty essence of God is divine nature and act. Edward describes, "…God's having an idea of himself and standing forth in a distinct subsistence or person in that idea, there proceeds a purest act, and an infinitely holy and sweet energy arises between the Father & So; for their love and joy is mutual, in mutually loving and delighting in each other" (Edward, 2013:3). Proverbs 8: 30, "I was daily his delight, always rejoicing before [him] (Edward, 2013:5).

Edwards sees the beauty of God as indistinguishable from the love of God. Considering the essence of God as love demands relationships, one must recognize that relationships require communication. Love involves mutual interaction, affection released from the source as well as the comprehension of the love of one to another, which reflects in the perichoretic communication of the Trinity. When God contributes to this intrinsic

relation, he is consenting within himself.

> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then encourage; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully (Rom. 12: 6-8).

God created humanity for communication as Powell (cited in Schwarz, 2017:215) argues, the chief, coherent conceptualization of the purpose of God creating the world points towards the nature of God as communicative, from the perichoresis of the Trinity, highlighting the communication of the persons of God, and extending to the externalization of the inherent value of the glory of God. Thorp (2013:4) contends that looking through the lens of the communication between the persons of the Godhead brings about investigating issues of how God communicates with himself.

Edwards argues that God is glorified within Himself in these two ways:

1. By appearing…to Himself in His perfect idea [of Himself] or in His son, who is the brightness of His Glory.
2. By enjoying and delighting in Himself by flowing forth in infinite love and delight towards Himself or His Holy Spirit… so, God glorifies Himself toward the creatures also in two ways:
   i. In communicating Himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying, the manifestations He makes of Himself…God is glorified not only by His glory being seen but by its rejoiced in. When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it. His Glory is then received by the whole soul, both by understanding and by his heart. God made the world that he might communicate, and the creation receives His Glory, which might [be] received by the mind and heart. He that testifies his idea of God's glory [does not] glorify God so much as he that also testifies his approbation of it and his delight in it" (Edward; cited in Thorp, 2013:9).

2.8 Theology of Digitalization/ICT

There is a biblical-worldview approach to everything (Myers, 2017:145). In this sense,

it is necessary to identify how the biblical worldview applies to the use of social media in the context of technologies. The Christian worldview unmasks technology's illusion of neutrality. According to Myers (2017:154), "Technology is never passive". In his book *Technology: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, Postman (1992:28) argues, "New technologies alter the structure of our interests: the things we think about. They alter the character of our symbols, the things we think with and about. And they alter the nature of community: the arena in which thoughts develop" (Effiong, 2015:167). Postman reverts much power to technology and creates the impression that technology has power over humankind. Meanwhile, humankind has the right to allow technology to control their lives. Generally, pictures of mobile phones and computers come to mind when discussing technology in relation to communication.

McGivern (2016:np), on the other hand, argues that technology is not a mere creation of modernity. In the Stone Age, stones and fire were also some forms of technology. Just as computers and phones have shaped how human beings live today, the creation of stone equipment also transformed how humans lived in the past. As Turkle (cited in Myers, 2017:156), "We make out technologies, and they, in turn, make and shape us". Effiong (2015:162) further observes that the dilemma of adopting Information Technology has become an issue of concern to theologians due to the subject of moral ethics and the Christian faith. Theologians have the task of answering the question of whether God has a hand in technology or whether it is one of the devil's tools to fulfil its mandate. For instance, Postman (1992:13) argues that new technologies redefine the old. He laments, "We do not even notice, embedded in every tool is an ideological bias, a predisposition to construct the world as one thing rather than another, to value one thing over another, to amplify one sense or skill or attitude more loudly than another," but this view seems too extreme. It is more likely that new technology will become the norm; still, it does not mean the previous generations- telegraph and telephones, are forgotten, but rather acknowledge the old and accept the new.

Nartonis (cited in Postman, 1992:68) vehemently disagrees with Postman. According to him, technology as a tool is controlled by the user rather than the tool controlling the user. The various technologies do not act on their own; they work according to the dictates of man. Televisions, for example, do not gratify man instantly; man, rather

gratifies himself by watching the television. Postman's view may have a certain basis, but he does not pay much attention to the power of man to make his choice regarding the influence of technology.

2.9 Evangelism and Technology

Evangelism comes from the same Greek word for gospel, *euangalion*, and literally, "gospeling". It has to do with preaching, promulgation, announcing, or otherwise communicating the gospel to share the message and teachings of Jesus Christ. (Donovan, 2007:xii). "Evangelization is a process of bringing the gospel to people where they are, not where you would like them to be. When the gospel reaches a people where they are, their response to the gospel is the church in a new place." (Donovan, 2007: xii & xiii). Technology has been used as a mode of communication to spread the gospel since the era of the New Testament (White et al., 2016:np). The dissemination of and interaction with the gospel have become more manageable with the emergence of social media. Contemporary cultures have evolved due to technological advances which requires that Christian leaders develop the most effective strategies for sharing the gospel.

The use of social media by the world makes it necessary for the church to also use it in spreading the gospel. Social media use by individuals and organizations and its popularity make it imperative for the church also to take advantage of this phenomenon to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ (Wise, 2014:26-27). It "provides a way for people to share ideas, content, thoughts, and relationship online" (Scott, 2011:38; White & Niemandt, 2015:255-259). There is no doubt; that social media provides an opportunity for evangelists to interact with many people online. It is one of the fastest ways to get the gospel to people on a larger scale. Gould (2013:x), forwarding. Gould posits that social media serves as a mode through which the community can be reached with the gospel. Using social media to evangelize, people can accept the message of salvation without being present physically at a church meeting or service (Asamoah-Gyedu, 2007:232-233). Churches are engaging social media during the pandemic with the sole purpose "to establish and maintain a relationship; to connect with members of the congregation" (Vosko, 2011:91).

The Digital reportal 2019 reports from Hootsuite and "We are Social" reveal that there number of people using the internet has surged over the previous year, with more than one million people coming online for the first time each day since January 2018. In 2019 there are 4.39 billion internet users an increase of 366 million (9%) verses January 2018. There are also 5.11 billion unique mobile users in the world, up 100 million (2%) over that of 2018. According to the report there are 3.48 billion social media users in 2019, with the global total growing by 288 million (9%) since 2018. The report indicates that 3.26 billion people use social media on mobile devices in January 2019, with growth of 297 million new users representing a year-on-year increase of more than 10 percent.

Social networks' popularity is still growing, according to the global social media statistics research summary 2020. Global Web Index research reveals that globally, an average of 2 hours and 24 minutes are spent online by an individual usesr daily on about eight social media sites. It is now a daily part of life across the African continent for many people. Users from Africa are constantly signing up for social media, and this has become a major influence on communication (Mungonera & Peters, 2016:np). Hence, any church that is determined to achieve the Great Commission cannot afford to reject social media engagement in the contemporary world.

2.10 Communication in The Church

Throughout the ages, God communicated in a common language to the audience to create a more in-depth understanding (Acts 2). The Trinitarian self-communication of God in revelation and incarnation continues until the end of time through the Church (Eilers, 2011:3). Therefore, it will be impossible to separate communication from the church's core business which is the preaching of the gospel. Social media platforms communicate the gospel message and render it understandable to the audience. Any conscious attempt to separate the gospel from communication will be impossible and alienate the gospel from its essential nature, the primary mode of expression, the medium of demonstration and proclamation, and the means of progressive reflection of engagement. In its appreciation of communication in its entirety and the light of the gospel's essence, the Christian Church needs to take every aspect of communication seriously, including printed, electronic, media, and oral. A church cannot exist without

effective communication.

Evangelism and outreach are intrinsically based on effective communication. They are central to maintaining Christian culture and transmitting authentic Christian traditions and realities from generation to generation. The mandate of Jesus for all believers to spread the gospel is the first step of sharing faith. All followers of Christ have been mandated to go and evangelize (Matt. 28:19). Hence, communication is key to the success of any Christian ministry (Dipio, 2013:14). All teachings and commandments of Christ centre on effective communication. Jesus mandates his followers to "teach all nations" to be 'the light of the world' and to present the good news everywhere.

During his earthly ministry, he was the perfect example of the best communicator. Similarly, the apostles used any available means of communication such as letter, tablets and so on. Pope John Paul advises Christians, "it is now necessary that the [gospel] message be carried through social communication methods that are available today" (Paul VI; cited in Dipio, 2013:16*).*

2.11 Effects of COVID-19 on Churches

The influence of COVID-19 on the church has been tremendous. It has affected every aspect of the church's life. Hence, certain traditional theologies need to be reconsidered, and theologians must rethink some of the church's practices (Pillay, 2020:np). A key question relates to whether the acceptable definition of the Church is going to be a visible or invisible community of believers while people are worshipping outside the church building. In some churches, the members have survived without physical contact with ministers, pastors, bishops and class leaders, though some members have stopped being active Christians because of the lockdown. There is common acceptance that COVID-19 has revived the concept of the 'priesthood of all believers'.

Sacraments are a challenge; in traditional churches, the Holy Communion is administered only by authorized agents (Pillay, 2020:np). The responses to these complexities differ based on the theological orientations of denominations. For instance, The Presiding Bishop, Rt Rev. Dr. Paul Boafo of the Methodist Church Ghana, dispensed all ministers to administer the Eucharist. In Roman Catholic Church,

Pope Francis permitted the priest to celebrate mass on their own (White, 2021:243). Pre-packaged cups and wafers were also used.

COVID-19 is a highly infectious respiratory disease (Yan-Rong et al., 2020:11) which started spreading in Wuhan, a province of China, in December 2019 (Alanagreh et al., 2020:331). It ravaged the world unabated in 2020, and it quickly spread around the globe within a few months (Afolaranmi, 2020:164).

With the spread of the virus globally, lockdown measures were imposed by political leaders in various countries to curtail the spread of the virus. Large gatherings of people and movements of people were restricted. To curb the disease, physical distancing measures were introduced as "a way to keep people from interacting closely or frequently enough to spread an infectious disease" and non compliance meant that "religious services may be cancelled". The COVID-19 pandemic radically altered every department of human existence, posing a threat to well-established norms (Pillay, 2020:np).

Churches all over the globe have "experienced lockdown as a result of the ravaging COVID-19 pandemic" (Afolaranmi, 2020:164). Unquestionably, the lockdown affected the church's activities in its mode of evangelism. The world has changed since then, and this pandemic forced the Church to employ other modes of worship (Pillay, 2020:np). Any attempt by a church to resist change in this 'new normal' may affect its existence, and the possibility for that church to cease to exist is higher.

 "The COVID-19 pandemic and social media have changed how the church is viewed and its identity in the community. The situation has shifted churches into a somewhat revolutionary way of thinking and being a church today" (Pillay, 2020:np). With the cooperation of their members, church leaders have developed other ways to ensure that worship is uninterrupted (Afolaranmi, 2020:164). A large number of churches moved onto online church services to reach their members. As a result, the online church has become the norm for many churches. During the lockdowns, churches organized church services online, and members joined from their homes. Thus, the use of the internet for church services and meetings has since become widespread, and most people now

prefer that mode of worship (Crumpton, 2018:4,11-12). Afolaranmi (2020:164) observes that social media has become key in spreading information worldwide.

The social media phenomenon defeats the position of scholars who view the church in terms of its architectural structure. It has served as a vehicle for moving the church to where the people are. The statistics show that people spend much more time on social media today than in physical gatherings. As a result, all social media platforms have become essential in spreading information (Gonzalez- Padilla &Tortolero-Blanco, 2020:np). The pandemic has also reemphasized the need to spread the Gospel on a larger scale to unbelievers and people of other faiths as people grapple with issues beyond human comprehension and offer hope through social media (Pillay, 2020:np).

2.12 Social Media Influence on Church Communication

According to Rouse (2020:np), social media is multi-faceted and has no single definition. Van Dijck (2013:11) describes social media as online platforms that enhance networking, thereby facilitating communication. Fuchs (2014:2) argues that social media networks are different from traditional media (newspapers/television) where there is one sender of information. In simple terms, social media involves using online platforms to help users share information and other content online.

Social media also allows users to freely communicate without the barriers that hinder traditional communication lines established by various institutions (Niemandt, 2013:30). Social media as a new phenomenon has become an essential tool for communication used by many televangelists and pastors worldwide (Markley, 2015:6; Sudaryati, 2017:450; White et al., 2016:np). As Brown (2001:89) argues, the advent of social media technology has given different options for users. This is because the various technologies involved in the use of social media have one common goal of allowing users to communicate instantly with others. Such technologies enable users to connect, dialogue, build relationships, create, and share information. Thus, social media has emerged as the most effective tool in communication and connecting people and societies, thereby ensuring that users actively engage with one another despite the distance (Bala, 2014:2). The various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Zoom, Skype, etc., have changed communication among

individuals. They are fast, easy to use, have broad reach and appeal to many. Beyond messages, these platforms allow photos and videos to be instantly shared and viewed across distances (Markley, 2015:6).

The wide use of social media has pushed churches to accept this medium to expand their audience (Badmos, 2014:4). Badmos further posits that a church that uses social media platforms has more people attending services again. The advent of modern forms of technology has provided the church with several opportunities to spread the Gospel to the world.

Undoubtedly, social media greatly influences public discourse in today's world. It is a key determinant of how one lives today, and religion is no exception. It has become one of the fastest means to get the gospel to people on a larger scale. "Within moments, you can declare to the whole world, 'Christ died for your sins and rose from the dead'" (Moyer & Suzanne, 2020:np). Similarly, Kgatle (2018:1), and Lim (2017:25-28) observe that the influence of social media can enable the message of the church to "reach beyond the congregation to interacting with people outside the church." It has facilitated communications that required printouts to be transitioned into digital versions. Furthermore, social media has made it feasible to combine verbal presentation of sermons with visual communication through the use of the PowerPoint. Social media can serve as a means of creating a virtual church community where prayers, support, and testimonies are shared and exchanged (Howard, 2011:45). Christianity itself is a religion anchored in the community. Jesus declared that God is present when two or three are gathered (Matt. 18:20).

Various social media platforms have specific advantages. WhatsApp and Zoom, for instance, can be useful in delivering information to a specific group of people who form a WhatsApp group. Furthermore, information meant for the broader public could be shared quickly outside a church group among friends and families. These platforms translate the church from communing only within the confines of a building to an online community (Gould, 2015:9; Weisgerber, 2013:8). Twitter allows churches to interact with their readers, who can be part of the congregation or otherwise. This could be through tweeting prayer requests, bible verses, encouraging quotes, sermons, sending

and updating news, and messages tailored towards a specific audience (McKinney, 2014:11; Hunter, 2013:np). Instagram is a platform that can be used to grab the attention of an audience through pictures. Churches can use visual posts as an interactive way of engaging the congregation and increasing their programmes' visibility. Facebook serves as a platform for advertising prophetic churches and a display of posts by the churches (Kgatle, 2018:5).

Kgatle (2018:7) describes social media platforms such as Facebook as a stethoscope and a megaphone, enhancing the church's ability to listen to its congregation and proclaim the word of God, respectively. Zoom video conferencing platform makes religious services more accessible and keeps religious communities connected, especially during the pandemic. Social media has also become a means for worshippers to form and maintain healthy relationships. Members feel safe and welcome even though they are not in a public space and do not have to spend much on public transport, which is a barrier to some worshippers (Bennett et al., 2017:93-108). It is considered a cost-effective way of reaching out to people. One characteristic of prophetic churches is media and social media (Faimau & Camden, 2016:68).

Social networking is crucial for recruiting and retaining church members [especially the youth] (Everton, 2015:1). It promotes connectivity among members as well as non-members. It also gives much room for social engagement (Bex, 2016:np). Brubaker and Haigh (cited in Kgatle, 2018:15) that the use of social media during worship has increased the number of worshippers. Pillay (2020:np) also observes that the use of social media in the church has made it possible for people from different backgrounds to join churches without any issues. Brink and Detterman (2013:35), however, argue that the time for worship will always be done within a context. The manner in which worship is done determines how the good news is received across various cultures. However, social media removes the need to have physical meetings, sermons, announcements, news, and other information that can be made available online. This means that whilst the use of social media offers opportunities it may also present some challenges (Hearn, 2009:272).

2.13 A History of the Methodist Church Ghana

The MCG is one of the largest and oldest protestant denominations in Ghana. Bartels (1965:6) writes that Rev. Joseph Rhodes Dunwell was the first Wesleyan Methodist missionary to work in Gold Coast, arriving in the country on January 1, 1835. The subsequent successors were missionaries such as Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, who emerged as the Father of Methodism in West Africa. He worked for the MCG to lay a strong foundation in the Gold Coast area, despite the threats and challenges, including diseases and premature deaths (Edusah-Eyison, 2011:np).

The history of Christianity in Ghana dates back to January 20, 1482, when six hundred Portuguese merchants and explorers arrived in Elmina, near Cape Coast (in the Gold Coast, now Ghana), under the command of Don Diego D'Azambuja (Agbeti, 1986:50). They erected an altar to signify the planting of the Christian faith in Ghana (Walton cited in Boaheng, 2021:93). The missionaries' attempt to sow the seeds of Christianity in Elmina and its catchment areas, did not yield many fruits.

There was virtually no trace of Christianity in Ghana by the beginning of the eighteenth century (Boaheng, 2021:92). Western Christian missionaries came back in the 1730s. Still, it was a fruitless attempt again until the nineteenth century, when different missionary introduced new plans and strategies. Among these groups were the Basel missionaries (1828), the Wesleyan mission (1835), the Bremen mission (1847) and the Catholic Mission (1880), who had come and left earlier.

Edusa-Eyison (2011:np) confirms Boaheng's assertion that before Dunwell, several missionaries of other denominations such as Anglican, Dutch Reformed Church, French and Portuguese Catholic Priests and Presbyterians had worked in the Gold Coast. All these missionaries had similar intentions of propagating the gospel, creating pockets of Christian communities before 1835. The Methodists built on the foundation laid by the earlier missionaries for expansion (Agbeti, 1986:48). Edusa-Eyison (2011:np) and Walls (1996:86) argue that notwithstanding the foundation laid by the missionaries, missionary in the Gold Coast was, in many ways, the success story of indigenous African zeal. Agbeti cited in Edusa-Eyison (2011:np) writes

"... as far as a missionary enterprise in Africa was concerned, that perspective of the

circumstances which led the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) to send their missionaries there (Ghana) was a demonstration of the contribution which African initiative played in the establishment of Methodist work in Ghana.

Before the missionaries came, Christianity had already been introduced in Africa by Africans from the Diaspora such as Canada, Britain, and the Americas after the abolition of the slave trade. Walls (cited in Edusei-Eyison, 2011:np) seems to confirm Agbeti's view that, "modern African Christianity is not only the result of moments among Africans but it has been principally sustained by Africans and is, to a surprising extent, the result of African initiatives. Even the missionary factor must be put into perspective" (Agbeti, 1986:49). So, the first Church in modern Africa was not a missionary creation. It was the creation of Africans who had come to faith in a foreign land who were transported to back to Sierra Leone as people freed from slavery. They brought their own preachers with them and their churches had been functioning for nearly 20 years in Sierra Leone when the first missionary arrived. Subsequently, Sierra Leone could supply Africa with missionaries in quantities. For example, in West Africa and elsewhere, in Kenya in the 1880s the role of the mission had been to respond sometimes, through straightened resources, belatedly and minimally to an initiative within the community.

Pobee (cited in Boaheng, 2021:90) rightly argues that in rewriting the church's history in Africa, one thing that the reader cannot miss is that the hero of African Church history is not the missionary but the catechist who is the unsung hero of the Africa Church history. The zeal of some indigenous Africans, such as Joseph Smith, the head teacher, and William de Graft, a student, laid a solid foundation for Methodism in Ghana (Agbeti, 1986:54). The William de Graft group called the Bible Band or the Meeting, which was later provided with the bedrock for the growth of Methodism in the Gold Coast. These indigenous African Christians requested a Bible, and after an initial appeal to the Bishop of London for assistance had received no response, Potter a captain of a merchant ship, brought a Bible to the group (Bartel, 1965:9). The WMMS later sent Dunwell as a missionary to the Gold Coast. Edusa-Eyison (2011:np) explains that instead of only sending Joseph Rhodes Dunwell to the Gold Coast in 1835, there were nine other missionaries sent by the WMMS to work in Africa and overseas.

Dunwell lost his life within six months due to a malaria attack. Dunwell, within a short period, had worked tremendously with the few educated men who later became the pillar of the Church. He had taught them a deeper understanding of the Christian faith (The Methodist Recorder, 1961:3). He also reconciled the two factions of Smith and de-Graft, "so that in fewer than three months, there were fifty Methodist members holding class tickets. The death of their minister did not shake their faith, as evident in their determination to serve the Lord despite the odds as encapsulated in their reply to Smith's" question to them after Dunwell's demise (Edusa-Eyison, 2011:np). "I met the class on purpose to know whether they could continue in the profession they had recently entered into or desire to return to the former ways in a consequence of the death of the missionary. They said they would remain in the profession, for God lives though the missionary was dead" (Bartels, 1965:19).

According to Bartels (1965:51), Rev. and Mrs. George Wrigley were sent to continue the work of Rev. Dunwell. The couple also worked hard, spreading Methodism very fast. As the work expanded, the WMMS sent Rev. and Mrs. Peter Harrop to give a helping hand. Once again, all the missionaries died within six months of their arrival. Bartels (1965:52) was right to state that "the foundation of Gold Coast, now Ghana Methodism, had been laid through the sweat and blood of white missionaries who sacrificed their lives for it".

According to Edusa-Eyison (2011:np), a permanent solution was found to the high mortality of the missionaries when they finally identified Thomas Birch Freeman, who had volunteered and been recruited, a mulato; his father was African and an English mother. Freeman was not spared from the ordeal; he was shocked about the death of Mrs. Freeman. The death shook him for some time; he continued the work after recovering.

The Constitution and Standing Orders of the MCG reveal that in July 1961, the MCG achieved autonomy and was called its current name based on a Deed of Foundation. The Methodist Church Ghana, under the British Conference, became autonomous in 1961, and Methodism has since spread through Ghana and beyond – the USA, Canada,

Britain, Belgium and China. The MCG approach to evangelization in Ghana has always included formal education and other social services, including medical care. The Church established the Methodist University College in 2000 to offer business administration, economics and information technology courses (The Constitution and Standing Orders, 2000:8-14).

In 2018, the MCG was one of the leading churches in Ghana, with a total membership of 827,353. The figure represents an increase of 4.7% over the 2016 membership of 790,006 (Conference Representative Agenda, 2018:58). The Church adopted a "Biblical Pattern of Episcopacy" in 1999. The MCG has twenty dioceses and two mission dioceses, comprising 6,089 Societies, 312 Circuits in Ghana, 4 Circuits in North America – USA and Canada, Belgium 1, Holland 1, Germany 3, and Italy 2, thus 323 Circuits in total. The total ministerial workforce is 1,040 full-time ministers, 170 supernumeraries, 114 auxiliary ministers with 27,920 accredited local preachers, and 30,150 lay leaders actively serving in the MCG (Conference Representative Agenda, 2018:124).

2.14 Methodist Church Ghana's Use of Technology

Church requires effective communication to keep alive its theologies, practices and beliefs. Hence, all churches, including the MCG, use communication technologies to spread the gospel through Evangelism and Mission. Church technology has become integral to church ministry since the COVID pandemic, and churches have strategized to offer virtual service options to their congregations.

The Communication and Publication Directorate of the MCG seeks to extend and tap advancing core competencies of ICT to transform the Church and, as part of the church's vision and mandate, adopt ICT and ICT policies to guide adoption and implementation and use any form of ICT in the MCG. Like all churches globally, the MCG had no option but to engage social media in information dissemination. Ghanaian churches have vastly used social media platforms, especially the charismatic churches, to undertake their church activities (White et al., 2016:46).

Today, social media is one of the most dominant forces in our culture. It is, therefore,

not surprising that churches are using it to manage their activities (Animante et al., 2021:3). It's a core business of every Methodist to preach the gospel no matter the challenges. John Wesley challenges them to carry the message to where the souls are. He established that the whole world is their parish; hence, the gospel must be sent to the world. Therefore, the Church used the available means to accomplish the mandate to connect to members and the entire community with the gospel message during the COVID-19 pandemic. The natural advantage of social media is that it is fast, furious, and infectious. It is an all-inclusive, non-restrictive, non-hierarchical, and non-pretentious means of spreading the gospel (Adebowale, 2020:np).

Adzati (2014:46, 2020:1-2), one of the Methodist Church Ghana's scholars in communication information technology, has stated that technologies have created an enabling environment by providing a variety of platforms for churches to mass communicate on a global scale. Such an environment in the technological terrain is called "cyberspace".

Communication is the fuel of any church because no church can achieve visibility without effective communication. The doctrines and beliefs of the Church are appreciated through communication. MCG, over the years, has been using cutting-edge technology to spread the gospel. The Church has never ceased capitalizing on technology as a gift from God to make him known to every generation. The Church recognizes science (technology) as a legitimate interpretation of God's natural world.

The MCG, over the years, has been using print and electronic media. This includes printing of Bible Weekly Lessons for class meetings, the Centennial magazine, Methodist Times, pamphlets and other materials. The MCG's presence is found in any community in Ghana through the use of Radio and Television ministries. So far, the Church has strategized to use all local FM stations to spread the good news.

The MCG was among the first protestant churches in Ghana to establish its own printing press, "Alpha Printing Press", in 2000, and a television network, "Wesley Television". The Publication and Communication Committee reported to the 2022 Biennial Conference about the success of "Wesley Television" in spreading the good news. The

survey on their achievements shows that the network has benefited Ghanaians and other neighboring countries such as Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Gambia. The Publication and Communication Committee's research shows that almost all Methodist Societies (including rural areas) use technology for church worship, communication and evangelism (Conference Representative Agenda, 2018:156).

The MCG, in collaboration with the Rural Enterprises Programme (REP), has established a rural technology promotion and dissemination seeking to upgrade the level of technology of the rural folks to facilitate the dissemination and promotion of appropriate technologies in terms of skills training, manufacturing of processing equipment, testing and promotion of prototypes (Synod Agenda, 2012:1-4).

2.15 Challenges of Social Media for The Church

Social media has allowed people to share their thoughts on issues in their environments freely. The various media platforms offer the opportunity to circulate content. Bailey and Storch (2007:15) point out that social media features often contradict the communication culture in several traditional churches. They posit that the church has made strides in its one-way mode of communication, where information was given to the members (who often did not speak up) by the leadership. Even though this mode existed in the past, the trend has now changed, and people now engage more with issues raised in the church. This unknowingly has put the church in a position where its actions and inactions are discussed, and the consequences are sometimes damaging. In all, it can be said that there are benefits and challenges of using social media depending on how and who is using it.

There are risks of fraud or identity theft in the use of social media (Badmos, 2014:6). Facebook users may or may not use their real names and have multiple accounts; therefore, it is hard to verify whether they are real followers. It is also easy for false information to be published on social media platforms. For instance, prophetic churches in southern Africa have been found to present incorrect information and miracles on social media platforms (Mochechane, 2016:14). This presents a wrong picture of the church to unbelievers, including the duplication and exaggeration of information, mainly testimonies. While social media platforms enable interaction with the audience

who can provide comments on videos and posts, they can negatively impact publicity. Negative comments about the church, its leader, or its activities can negatively affect the integrity of the Church (Kgatle, 2018:1-6).

Social networking goes beyond a communications tool; it has become an alternative form of community. It has become part and parcel of daily human lives, particularly for young people, to hang out together and extend social lives and places of self-expression. Hence, it poses the same risks as the physical community may present. Hjarvard (2008:66) observes that many social functions of institutionalized religions provide moral and spiritual guidance and a sense of community. Kgatle (2018:3) posits those social networks do not offer only positive results; it is, at times, a source of destruction. It can influence attitudes, behaviour, and social norms (Young et al., 2011:1). Badmos (2014:6) points out that there is a reduction in personal interactions because of the autonomy of living in a virtual world. Social networking is susceptible to incidents of fake identities which, if unchecked, creates division instead of unity. It therefore leaves room for the invasion of privacy as one of the setbacks of the church's engagement with social media (Kgatle, 2018:14) which can expose church members to harassment or inappropriate contact with others.

Even though the church is making efforts to combat social media challenges, other church members and pastors still believe in false or negative perceptions about social media. Gould (2013:5), for instance, states that social media is not an absolute phenomenon and, therefore, cannot be said to be authentic. Gould adds that the use of social media, in the long run, undermines the church and cannot be relied on to serve as a means of increasing membership or participation. Verschoor- Kriss (2012:9) argues that technology can be of benefit or challenge to religion. On the one hand, it enhances effective and efficient communication, and on the other hand, it damages communal living.

2.16 Ethics Associated with the Moral and Neutral Use of Technology

As technology becomes increasingly more complex and influential each day it is natural to look at the moral nature of a church critically. Whereas technology may pose challenges to the Church it should be seeb as a morally neutral tool that God has

provided humanity to be used in ways that honour him and help us to love our neighbour (Matt. 22:37-39).

Technology is morally neutral because it will never have a moral agency like a human being created in God's image. We are moral agents and are accountable for our sins (Rom. 3:23) unlike technological tools. Some technologies are also evil because those technologies can only be used for morally reprehensible purposes, for example, nuclear bombs and all guns. While these tools are ethically neutral, they have moral values and will be judged.

2.16.1 Technology and God's Sovereignty

Everything is prepared for God because of his Sovereignty. He works providentially in a world that will eventually be glorified in the new earth. All wicked acts of humans are under his sovereign role. He does not fear but defeats evil by sending Jesus Christ, his only son, to die and rise again. Through his resurrection, Christians should not fear what will come (2 Tim. 1:7). God has intended for technology to be created and gave us the ability to create tools that enable the Church to accomplish her mission (Matt. 22:34:40). Though the Bible does not explicitly make statements on whether specific technologies are inherently good or evil, it does not hold believers to biblically-grounded morality and engagement with the World and cultures of our time. God is the first inventor of technology when Godself made garments of skin for Adam and Eve after the fall (Gen. 3:21). The two sons of Lamech invented farming tools, the arts, and sciences (Gen. 4:23-24). Also, the invention of tents, stringed instruments and the forging of "all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron" are associated with the descendants of Lamech (Gen. 4:19-22).

Technology often has unintended results. For example, bronze is used in Old Testament to make vessels for the tabernacle (Exod. 27:17). It was also used to make a bronze serpent to miraculously cure anyone who looked at it when they were bitten by snakes in the wilderness (Num. 21: 9). However, the people used the same technology to make a bronze Serpent into an idol of worship (2Kgs. 18:4 [NET]).

2.16.2 The use of Technology to Read the Bible

2.16.2.1 Internet usage to search for Bible content

Today, most Christians, especially young people searching for a biblical terminology or phrase, easily find it by typing a few words into Google or a Bible website like BibleGateway.com. Some tools like Logos Bible software search for complex terms or phrases. Today, many Christian bookstores struggle to survive while the flood of articles, blogs, e-books, podcasts, and videos continue to dominate or increase online.

2.16.2.2 Smartphone usage of the Bible

Research conducted by the Coordinating Office for Ministries (COM) of the Ghana Methodist Church of Toronto on the use of mobile phones in the church in 2021 to develop a guidelines on mobile phone usage shows that a whopping 78 % use their smartphones to access Bible content in pews on Sunday services. More people, especially the younger generation are using their phones to look up scripture, take notes, and perform research. Preachers will be challenged to accurately present or teach the Bible, as the greater number of the congregation can instantly verify what is being taught. Though the old generation typically challenges the use of phones during Church service and prefers the new generation to use printed Bibles and hymn books instead, it seems the use of phones in church services and programmes keeps increasing at every service or programme.

The ubiquity of smartphones and social media makes them hard to ignore in our world today. Stockel-Walker (2017:np) argues, "to some extent, the phone Bible is now replacing the book Bible" He further writes that the company behind YouVersion, (Bible app) presented that people spent more than 235 billion minutes using the app and have highlighted 636 million Bible verses. However, reading Bible this way has its negative side; in the paper Bible, the reader knows that Revelations is the last book, Genesis is the first book, and Psalms in between. In the digital version, there are no boundaries, therefore, there is no sense of what comes before or after, since the reader just goes where he was asked to go, no flick through the Bible.

2.16.2.3 Audio Bible listening

Many Christians listen to the teaching and preaching via podcast or audio version of

the Bible. This shift may be due to the availability of audio Bibles. According to Barna's study notes, audio Bibles exist online in nearly 1200 languages. Americans find their preferred versions at Bible.us, Bible.com, BibleGateway.com, and other places that offer free audio Bibles. Instead, church leaders insist people "read" the Bible during devotional times or quiet time; they can encourage Church members to "listen" to it.

2.16.2.4 Significance of Bible apps

There is no doubt that a greater number of Christians now access Scripture through a Bible app. YouVersion, for instance, offers the most popular app, though there are often apps such as Bible.is, BibleHub, BibleGateway. One can easily access thousands of resources ranging from the Hebrew text to Bible maps, commentaries, and concordances, all from a gadget in the palm of one's hand. Christian leaders who often see technology as evil must soften their stand to assess its influences critically. This cultural shift calls for an urgent need to continue the dialogue among leaders and members concerning technology usage as a church.

The Bible states that "there is safety amid many counsellors" (Prov. 11:14). This requires that ideas and voices from different levels of ministry and laity, and Christian organizations globally need to be part of the ongoing discussion on the influence of technology on church communication. Understanding these paradigm shifts will create a more profound understanding among Christians for effective engagements (Sims, 2009:np).

Some biblical ethics on the usage of social media shared by Christopher Cone seems so relevant:

  i. Christians' speech and communication must reflect diligent attention to graciously building up others. Any communication that falls short of this purpose is considered unwholesome (Eph. 4:29).
  ii. Apply wisdom and, make the most of opportunity, and be gracious and discerning in each response (Col. 4: 5-6).
  iii. Unsound speech invites reproach, and a believer must refrain from it, rather they must be above reproach in sound speech (Tit. 2: 8).
  iv. Clarity is tantamount in engaging social media (1 Cor 14:9).

Social media is primarily designed for quick and imprecise communication. But users must be guided by the purpose of communicating and considerate of those receiving the communication. One must be alert to whether one's communication is benefiting or hurting others (Stockel- Walker (2017:np).

There is no need for a long lecture to notify this generation that social media are the dominant forms of communication in this digital age. The statistics of research conducted in 2022 by Chaffey indicate that social networks have transformed communications. Social media's popularity is still growing in the latest global social media research summary in 2022. It indicates that 59 % of the World's population uses social media. The average daily usage is two 2 hours and 29 minutes (Chaffey, 2022:np).

Lundby (2014:np) observes that online communication is a big enough issue such that increasing attention is given to social media ethics. Much attention pertains to business, privacy, and even accuracy (Lauby, 2012:np; Turculet, 2017:np; Lipschult, 2015:np). The valuable question for the Church concerning the usage of social media is: what Jesus would Jesus do - or more precisely, what would Jesus have us do with social media? On the other hand, would Jesus have forbidden us from engaging the social media? It would certainly be unwise for the church to disengage from social media in this techno-cultural world. Social media provides useful tools for effective church communication.

Believers must carefully check their behaviour and habits to avoid being incendiary and causing harm. According to Proverbs 29:8, "scoffers set a city on fire, but wise men turn away anger." "If the words of wise men can prod and guide" (Eccl. 12:11), then "the words of fools can easily set a forest on fire" (Jam. 3: 5). With every WhatsApp message, tweet, or video, one can be either an arsonist or encourager. "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1).

Campbell (2017:np) advises that churches seeking to move towards digital ecclesiology should focus on how technology should be used in the church environment and why

and for what purpose they should engage digital media. Theological reflection should be at the heart of this strategic reflection. Though many church leaders seem to suggest moderation of the technology approach, technology should be something to be understood, guided, and informed with theological values and ecclesiological frameworks. Campbell further suggests that moving towards digital ecclesiology should be approached as a process of thoughtful, faith-based reflections and communal conversations that consider both historical and emergent social and ecclesiological implications of digital media integration for a church.

Campbell seems right; despite the digital age benefits of technology and social media presence to church communication, the engagement process should not be without a critical reflection. Digital media or social media are a double-edged sword, simultaneously providing opportunities and challenges. Paul cautions believers not to disengage from the world (1 Cor. 5:9-10). He again warns Christians not to be conformed to their world (Rom. 12:2). These biblical texts indicate that Christians must use technological tools to accomplish God's specific purpose and not to fall into the trap of being taken captive or enslaved people by those tools.

2.17 Conclusion

Internet, or social media has influenced modern communication to such an extent that any institution that fails to effectively engage social media may cease to be relevant. It has influenced every department of human life and culture. Churches globally must strategically plan to engage social media to communicate the gospel. Notwithstanding its benefits on communication, if it is not well engaged, its impact will do more harm than good. Christian leaders must educate the members on the proper way of engaging social media to fulfil the task assigned by Jesus Christ to bring glory to God.

From Chapter 2, we have understood the various forms of integration of digital social media platforms in promoting the worship activities in the church . In the subsequent chapter, Chapter Three, how these digital platforms are being integrated , specifically in the Methodist Church of Ghana with the impacts, is evaluated through questionnaire and focus group discussions.

CHAPTER THREE: THE DESCRIPTIVE PHASE - RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter considers Osmer's descriptive phase to explore what is going on through empirical research (Osmer, 2008:31-78). The focus of the research in this chapter is to assess the current trend in the usage of Zoom and WhatsApp applications by the local congregations in the Methodist Church of Ghana. Participants were asked to respond to some questions concerning the frequency of usage, accessibility, reliability, challenges, engagement, information, and trustworthiness and their contributions to promoting online worship, discipleship, evangelism, and bible studies and information dissemination to achieve this objective.

The tools used for the survey were Google Forms to collect the data, and Google Analytics associated with Google Forms were used for the analysis. Opinions regarding the recommendation for the continual usage of digital platforms to assess their outlook were evaluated. The data were presented in pie charts and bar charts to analyze the present state of Zoom and WhatsApp engagement in the church. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were also carried out to help complement the findings. The researcher conducted four FGDs, and information obtained from the discussions with bishops, superintendent ministers, ministers, theologians, lay leaders, young people, and church media team members helped complement the findings of the in-depth discussions.

The data from the FGDs were analyzed using NVivo 11. During the analysis, five themes emerged which were (a) the general experience, (b) the impact of social media - Zoom and WhatsApp tools on communication in the MCG, (c) how credible and reliable is information on Zoom and WhatsApp? (d) complaints received from the members in their engagement with social media, (e) theological and cultural orientations which influence the adoption rate of these modern communication tools. In Tables 1 through 5, the researcher shows the number and frequency of participants (designated B- bishops, S- superintendent ministers, R-ministers, TH- theologians, LL-lay leaders, YP- young person, & MT-media team) responses to the questions.

3.2 Analysis of Questionnaire

This section presents and summarizes responses received from participants in the survey. These include the demographic characteristics of the respondents, as well as their responses regarding current platforms in the daily church activities. The responses are based on the usage, reliability, trustworthiness, user-friendliness, complaints, cultural and traditional influences, and the recommendation of the acceptance and adoption of Zoom and WhatsApp in activities in the MCG.

3.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

3.2.1.1 Age

Out of 65 respondents, 28 (43.1%) fell in the age range of 35 - 44 years, 13 (20%) were in the age range of 45-54 years, 12 (18.5%) fell in the age range of 25-34 years, and 12 (18.5%) fell in the range of 55-64 and as shown in Figure 3.1. This indicates that the older adult group had a high percentage of respondents.
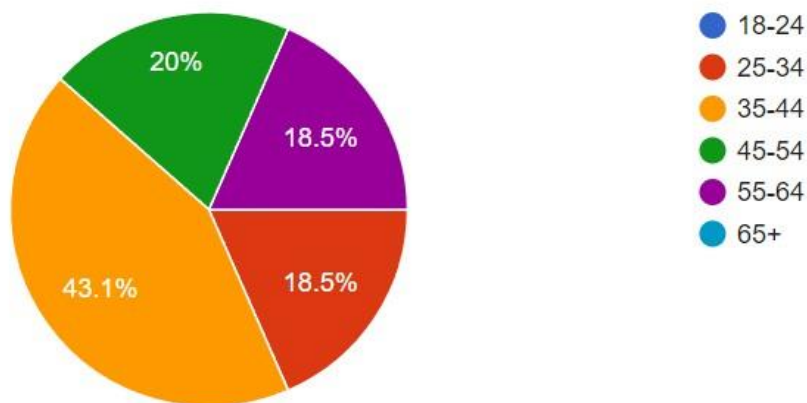
Figure 3.1: Age of Respondents

3.2.1.2 Gender

According to Figure 3.2, male respondents 51(78.5%) were more than three times as female respondents who were only 14 (21.5%).
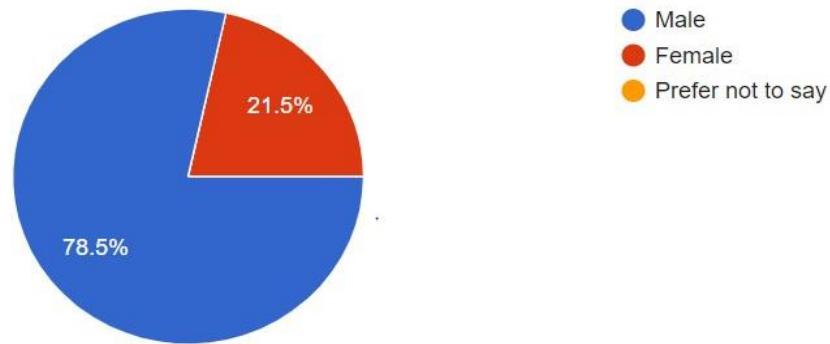
Figure 3.2: Gender of Respondents

3.2.1.3 Membership status

Most of the respondents, that is, 62 (95.4 %), were full members of their local congregations, with 3 (4.6 %) identifying as not being members, as shown in Figure 3.3. This indicates that the respondents would be full participants in most or all religious activities carried out in their respective congregations.
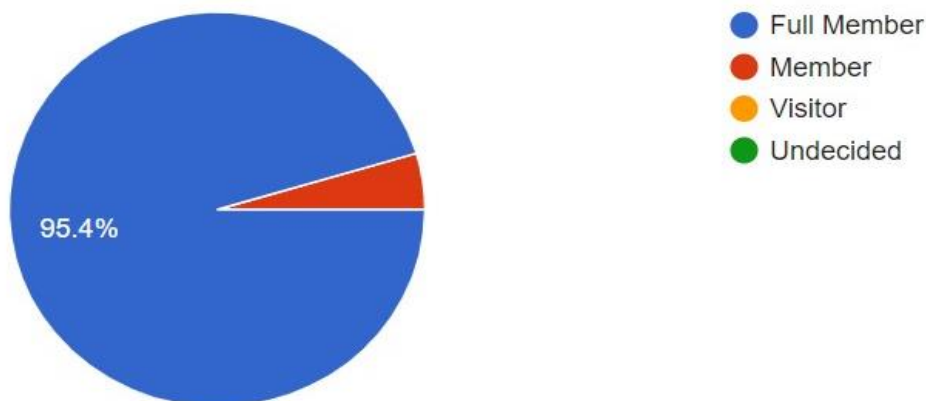
Figure 3.3: Membership Status of Respondents

3.2.1.4 Profession

From Figure 3.4, out of 62 responses, 18 (29%) respondents identified as members of the Clergy (29%). The Clergy is made up of Pastors, Bishops, Reverends, Preachers, etc., who have both general and specific roles in the overall day-to-day activities and growth of church members and the church as a whole. Students and teachers were 8 (12.9%) and 6 (9.7%) respectively. 4(6.5%) identified as Accountants as same applies to Lawyers,4(6.5%). The rest of the respondents identified as ICT technicians.
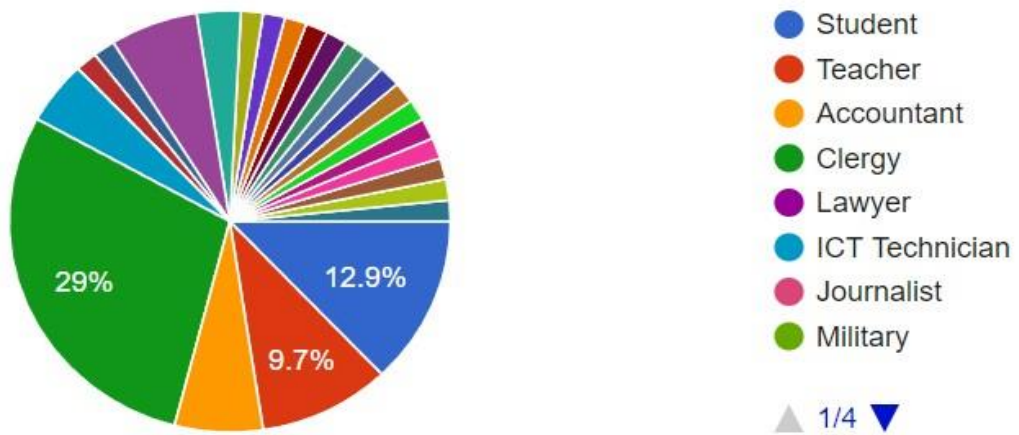
Figure 3.4: Profession of Respondents

3.2.1.5 Highest level of education

About half of the respondents, that is, 33 (50.8%), have attained a Master's degree, 12 (18.5%) have attained a Doctorate Degree, 9 (13.8%) have attained a Bachelor's degree, 7(10.8%) have an associate degree or Diploma, and 4 (6.2%) have certification in Trading and Technical/Vocational training as shown in Figure 3.4. This implies the high level of education the respondents have achieved and substantive experience in using different academic and social tools to solve "compelling" problems in their respective fields of study.
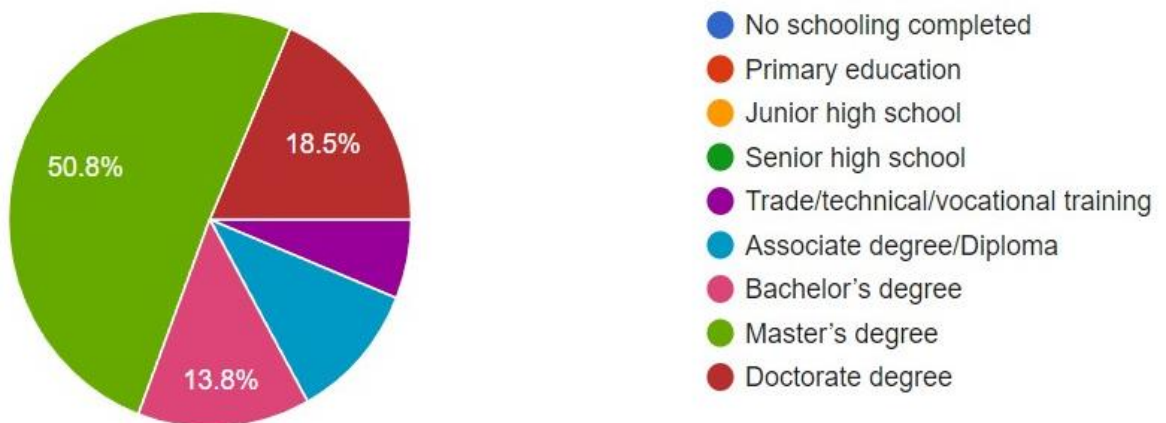
Figure 3.5: Level of Education of Respondents.

3.2.2 Patronage of Digital Platforms for Online Church-related Services

3.2.2.1 Digital platforms used for online worship services

Figure 3.6 shows that Zoom and WhatsApp are the top two most patronized digital platforms for online worship and discipleship in the local Methodist churches, with 56 (86.2%) and 47 (72.3%) respondents selecting Zoom and WhatsApp, respectively. Figure 3.6 also shows that 30 (46.2%) and 28 (43.1%) respondents also patronize Facebook and YouTube. Facebook and YouTube are mainly used for streaming live services or uploading sermons, bible studies and motivational talks.
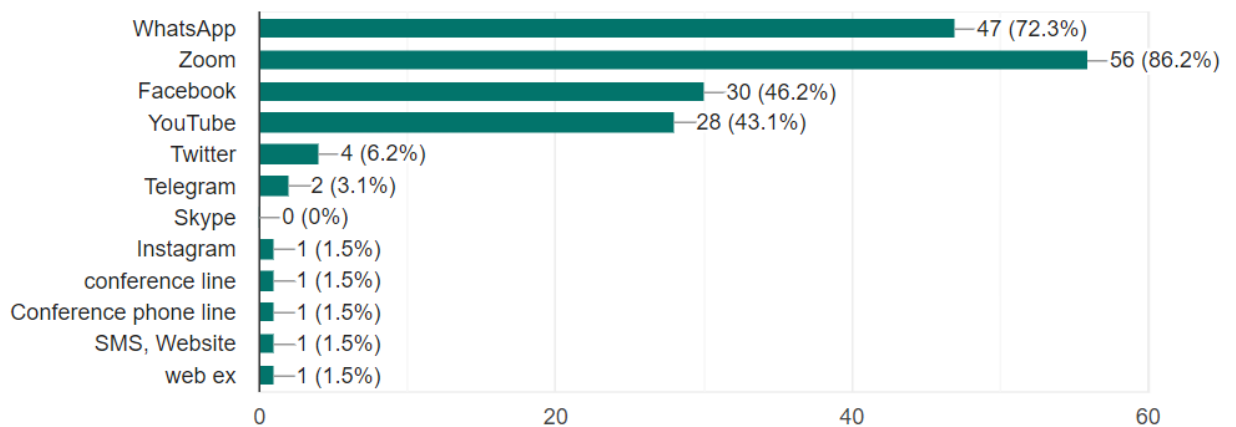
Figure 3.6: Platforms Used for Online Worship and Discipleship in the COVID-19 Era

3.2.2.2 Patronage of digital platforms before and during the COVID-19 era

From Figure 3.7, 45 (69.2%) respondents answered that Zoom and WhatsApp as digital communication platforms were adopted by their congregation during the COVID-19 Era and 20(30.8%) responded that these platforms had been in use for various activities in their congregation.
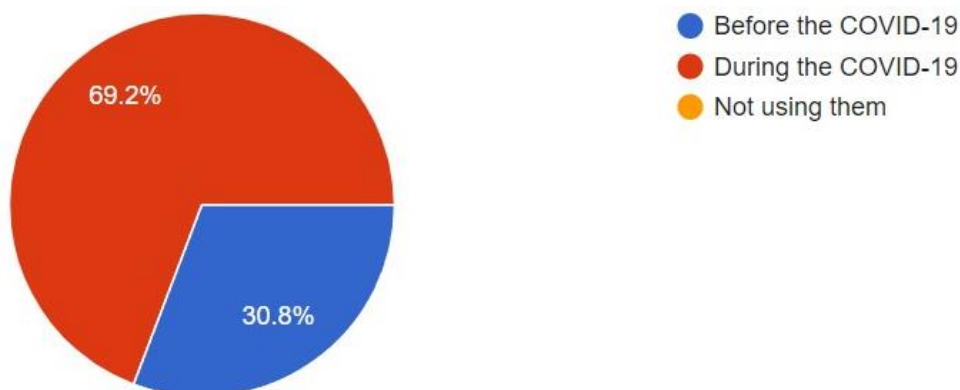
Figure 3.7: Digital Platforms Patronage Before and During COVID-19

3.2.3 Status Regarding the Usage of Zoom and WhatsApp

3.2.3.1 Frequency of patronage

Responses on the frequency that the family and friends of the participants turn to Zoom and WhatsApp to find information are represented in Figure 3.8. Out of 65 responses, 38 (58.5%) agreed this is often, 16 (24.6%) agreed this is quite often, 10 (15.4%) agreed this is not often, and 1(1.5%) agreed that the family and friends never turn to WhatsApp and Zoom. This indicates there is general patronage of these platforms but not as high as expected.
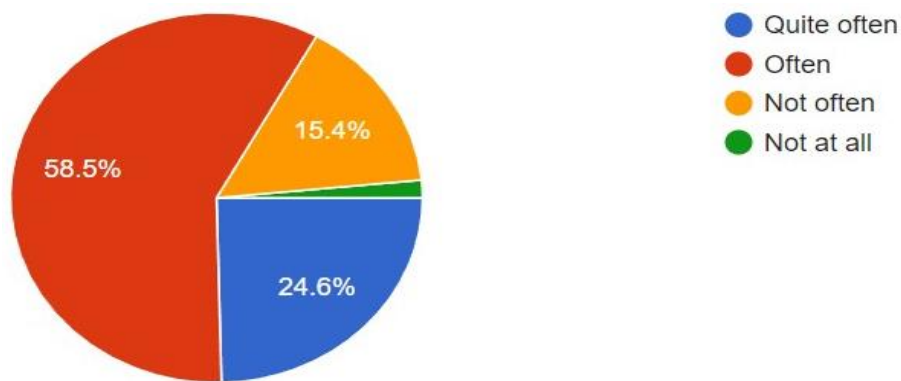
Figure 3.8: The use of Zoom and WhatsApp to find information

3.2.3.2 Reliability of information

Figure 3.9 presents how the participants find information about their local congregation through Zoom and WhatsApp reliable. Out of the 65 responses, 33(50.8%) found it to be reliable, 27 (41.5%) found it to be very reliable, and 5(7.7%) were undecided. None of the respondents agreed it was either unreliable or very unreliable. This indicates a high level of reliability in the utilization of Zoom and WhatsApp in the local congregations.
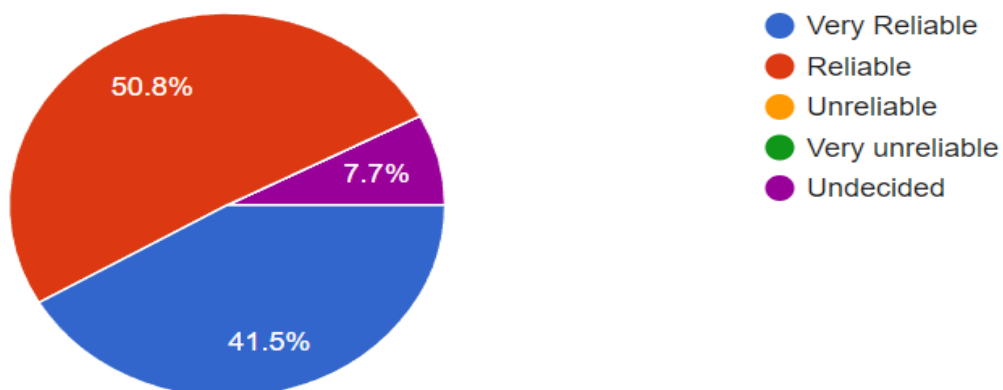
Figure 3.9: Reliability of Information Received from Zoom and WhatsApp

3.2.3.3 Trustworthiness

From Figure 3.10, 36 (60%) respondents agreed it was trustworthy, 23(35.4%) agreed it was very trustworthy, 2 (3.1%) did not have an answer to that and 1 (1.5%) agreed it was deceitful. This also shows that generally, information received from these platforms is regarded as trustworthy. However, one (1) respondent that agreed that it was deceitful might be speaking from an experience with miscommunication or misinformation, which is one of the negative implications of using WhatsApp.
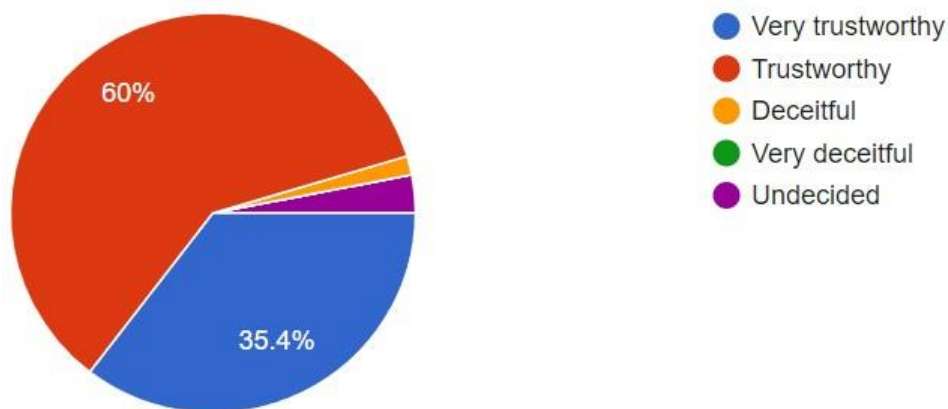
Figure 3.10: How Trustworthy Information on Zoom and WhatsApp Are

3.2.3.4 User-friendliness

Figure 3.11 shows how the congregations of the participants find Zoom and WhatsApp user- friendly. Out of 64 responses, 29 (45.3%) agreed that it was somehow easy, 28 (43.8%) agreed that it is quite easy to use and 7 (10.9%) agreed that it is not difficult to use. None of the respondents answered that these platforms are not user-friendly. This indicates that these platforms are interactive, easy to navigate through, and easy to use for the said purposes but also need some improvement to make them more user-friendly.
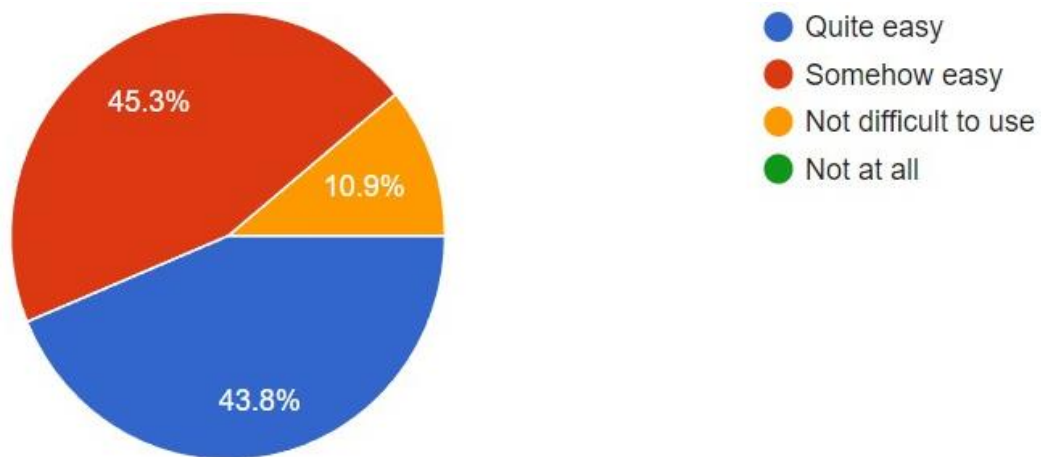
Figure 3.11: How User-friendly are Zoom and WhatsApp

3.2.3.5 Complaints

Figure 2.12 shows the frequency of complaints encountered in the use of Zoom and WhatsApp for church activities. From the chart, the three major complaints encountered with the usage of Zoom and WhatsApp, according to the participants, were that they are less interactive, do not motivate worship life and are distracting, with 29 (45.3%), 21 (32.8%) and 20 (31.3%) attesting to these, respectively.
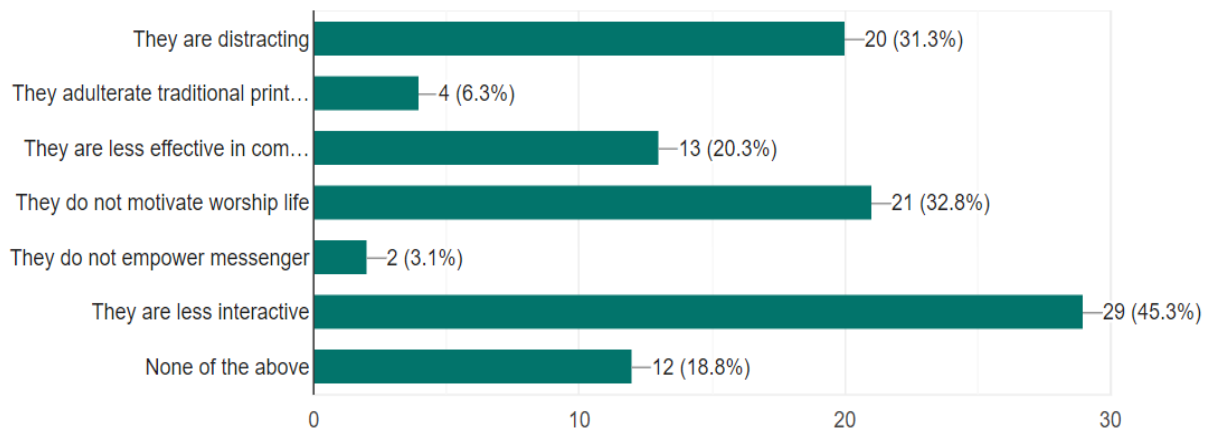
Figure 3.12: Complaints about the use of Zoom and WhatsApp for Church
Services and Communication

3.2.4 The Role of COVID-19 in the Methodist Church's Transition to the Digital Platform

This section sought to assess the readiness of the Methodist church to adopt these digital platforms as permanent components gradually and fully in the day-to-day church-related and other religious activities.

3.2.4.1 Impact of doctrinal practices on Zoom and WhatsApp

The Methodist Church is centreed on some defined underlying doctrinal beliefs and practices. These beliefs could be hindrances or may impact the adoption and usage of WhatsApp and Zoom. The respondents' opinions on how these doctrinal beliefs and practices influence the acceptance of Zoom and WhatsApp for Local Congregations are presented in Figure 3.13. From the data, 28 (44.4%) agreed that it was accepted and adopted when introduced and had very minimal influence from the existing doctrines, and 14 (22.2%) agreed that these doctrines had some partial impact on the acceptance. 16 (19%) responded that there was an initial rejection by members, but highly probable that it was accepted after some time. 7 (14.3%) of the respondents also agreed that these doctrines had a very minimal effect on these digital platforms' acceptance.
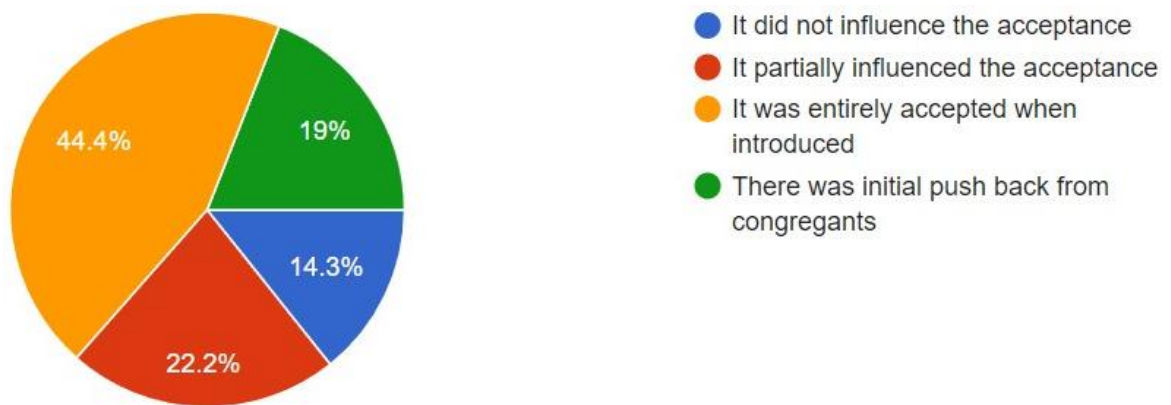
Figure 3.13: Effect of Doctrinal Beliefs Towards Acceptance of Digital Platforms

3.2.4.2 Impact of cultural and traditional beliefs on Zoom and WhatsApp

Aside from religious and doctrinal beliefs, cultural and traditional beliefs also impact the adoption of these digital platforms in the church. Figure 3.14 shows responses on how the local culture and tradition affect the utilization of Zoom and WhatsApp. From the chart, 24 (36.9%) of the respondents agreed its usage is somehow affected by cultural beliefs, 19 (29.2%) agreed that it is not really affected, 15 (23.1%), 6 (9.2%) answered that the cultural and traditional beliefs do very much affect the use of Zoom and WhatsApp. It can be inferred from this data that cultural beliefs have some level of impact on the use of these platforms.
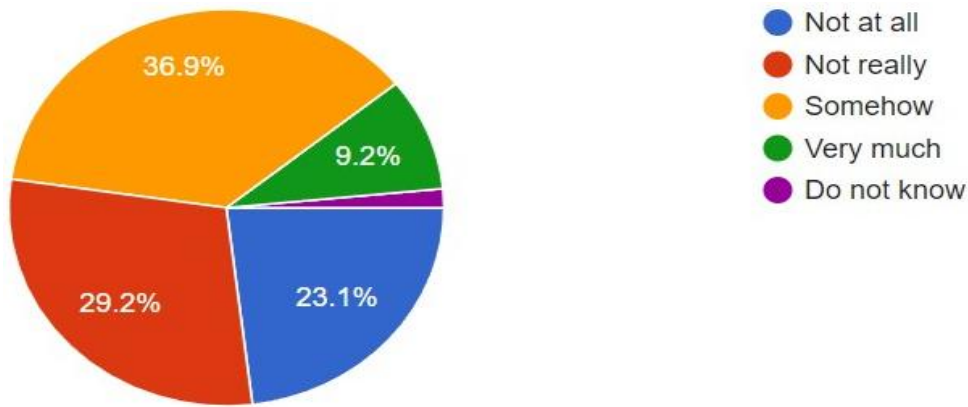
Figure 3.14: How Culture and Tradition Impact the Use of Zoom and WhatsApp

3.2.4.3 Effect on soul-winning and membership indulgence

Figure 3.15 shows how these social platforms have affected soul winning and member participation in the Methodist Church. From the data, 34 (52.3%) of the respondents answered "No" to whether they know of anyone who has been converted or become a more involved Christian through the use of Zoom and WhatsApp, and 24 (36.9%) answered "Yes" and 7(10.8%) Maybe.
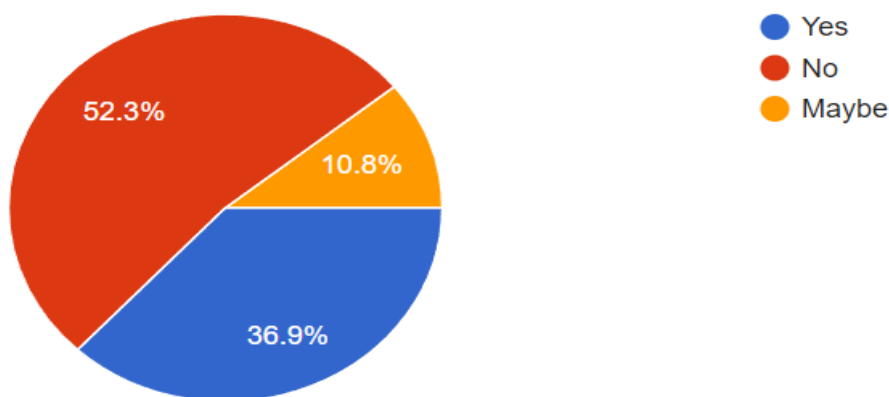
Figure 3.15: Effect of Zoom and WhatsApp on Soul winning and Increased
Membership Involvement

3.2.5 Acceptance and Adoption of the Use of Zoom and WhatsApp in the Church
3.2.5.1 Recommendation for the usage of Zoom and WhatsApp

Figure 3.16 describes the responses regarding how strongly the participants recommend Zoom and WhatsApp platforms to all Methodist Church Ghana societies to improve their discipleship. Out of the 65 respondents, 30 (46.2%) strongly recommended it, 28 (43.1%) recommended it very strongly, 5 (7.7%) did not recommend it much, and 2

(3.1%) were undecided about that.
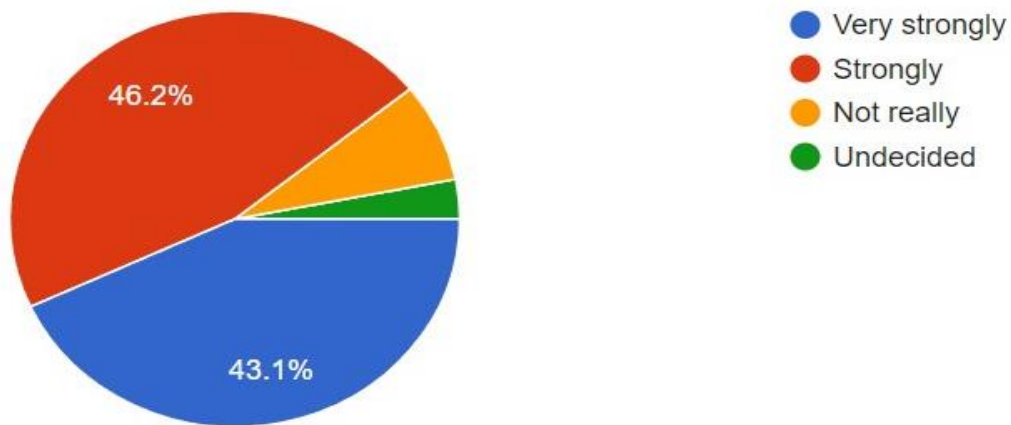
Figure 3.16: Recommendation of Zoom and WhatsApp for Usage in the
Methodist Church Ghana

3.2.5.2 Continual utilization of digital platforms

Based on the participants' experiences regarding their use of Zoom and WhatsApp tools for local congregations' activities, they were asked to respond to whether they are willing to continue utilizing these digital platforms in this post-COVID-19 Era. From the chart, out of 65 responses, 57 (87.7%) were certain, 7 (10.8%) were sparing about this, and 1 (1.5%) was undecided about continuing the utilization of the platforms. This indicates that the church is willing to fully adopt and continue using these digital platforms for church activities.
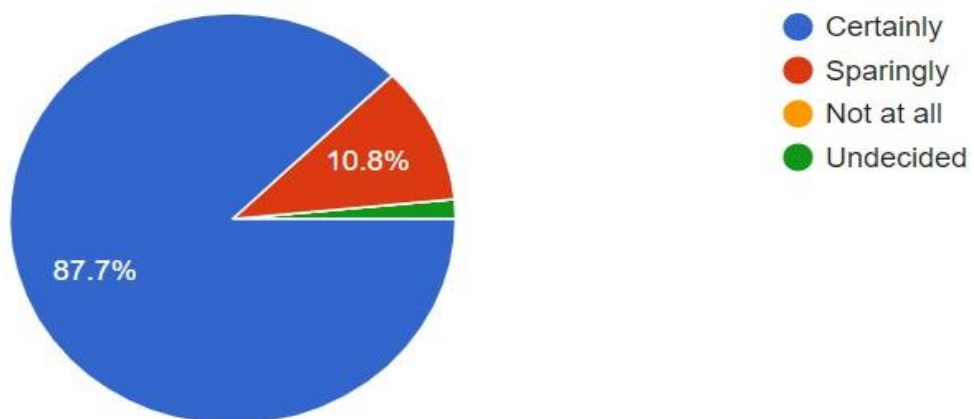
Figure 3.17: Continual Utilization of Digital Platforms

3.3 Analysis of Focus Group Discussions

This section shows the results obtained from the FGD exercises. The essence of the FGD was to allow the participants to give more detailed responses to the research questions and provide more insights into the results obtained from the questionnaire survey for analysis. Under each theme of discussion and the feedback, whether positive or negative, was presented. A tabular presentation of these responses also shows the number of references by each participant. For the focus group, the underlying research question used in this study was the following:

Do social media strategies help church leaders in the MCG disseminate the gospel?

From this central question, five sub-questions, which are captioned as themes, were asked to receive opinions from the participants as described below.

3.3.1 What are your general experiences with the church's engagement with Zoom and WhatsApp?

For the first discussion theme, the participants regard positive experiences on these platforms in church activities. It provides opportunities for worship to reach a wider audience, enhances the flow of information, improves membership growth, and sustains interrelationships. The platforms help to enrich class meetings and bible studies and promote rich preparation by leaders and class members. Other participants expressed negative concerns about the usage of these platforms, which included a broad audience that sometimes may generate wrong information that may spread to many people fast and cause damage which will take time to fix, promotes self-centredness, a sense of apathy and also provides room for adulterated and distorted theological interpretations.

General experiences with the use of Zoom and WhatsApp in the church are presented below.

(Table 3.1)

Table 3.1: General experience with the church's Zoom and WhatsApp Platforms engagement

Participant	Interview questions	Number of references
B	1, 4, 3, 5, 6	4
R	1. 2 ,3, 4, 5, 6,	7
S		
TH	1, 2, 4, 5, 6	4
LL	1, 2, 3, 4, 5,	6
YP	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,	7
MT	1, 2, 3, 4, 6,	6

3.3.2 What are the impacts of social media on communication in the Methodist Church of Ghana?

The second discussion theme focused on the impact of social media on communication in the MCG. Table 2, TH, R, S, MT, B, and LL stated that the availability and engagement of social media tools had promoted a wider audience. Participant B stated that "a million people get our message". The participants YP and MT observed that with WhatsApp, for instance, the church can reach countless people- church members and non-church members. Multi-million people can be reached with information or message from the comfort of their homes with a tap and pick (B, S, R, LL, MT, YP). One can deduce that social media has become accepted by the majority of people and it has become the main mode of communication (Badmos, 2014:1).

Table 3.2: Impact of social media on communication in the Methodist Church Ghana

Participant	Interview Questions	Number of references
B	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	5
S	2, 3,4,5	4
MC	1, 2, 3, 4, 6	5
TH	1, 2, 4, 5, 6	5
LL	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	6
YP	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	6
MT	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	6

Some participants, LL, YP, and R, believe that the impact has been both positive and

negative. The participants see that social media has had a positive impact on the church because it is currently reaching a wider audience and provides opportunities for worship, enhances the flow of information, improves membership growth, sustains interrelationships, enriches class meetings and bible studies, promotes rich preparation, feedback from the audience. One primary adverse concern expressed by the participants was that these platforms provide room for adulterated and distorted theological interpretations.

3.3.3 What are the credibility and reliability of the information on these digital platforms and the frequency of members turning on these platforms for information?

The third discussion theme also focused on the credibility and reliability of information and the frequency of members turning on platforms for posted information. Some negative thoughts expressed by the participants include false information and misinterpretations; sources of information lack theological substance reliability and trustworthiness.

Table 3.3: Credibility and Reliability

Participant	Interview Questions	Number of references
B	1, 2, 3, 4	4
R	1, 2, 3	3
S	1, 2, 3,	3
MC	1, 3, 4	3
TH	1, 2	2
LL	1, 2, 4	3
YP	1, 2, 3	3
MT	1, 2, 3, 4	4

3.3.4 What are some regular complaints among church members regarding the use of Zoom and WhatsApp?

Theme 4 focused on finding out some participants' complaints regarding digital platforms. All participants shared initial complaints, the people saw it as a change, and anything that comes with change takes a long time for people to accept. These include difficulty in usage, high cost of the Internet, falsehood, poor quality sound on zoom, lack of intentional education, poor network by providers, poor power supply in Ghana

and inappropriate images posted on the platforms. Table 3.4 summarizes the participants' responses to complaints from church members

Table 3.4: Regular Complaints Among Church Members

Participant	Interview questions	Number of references
B	3, 4	2
R	2, 3, 4, 7	4
S	2, 3, 4, 6	4
MC	3, 6	2
TH	4, 7	2
LL	1, 2, 3, 6, 7	5
YP	1, 2, 3, 5,6, 7	6
MT	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	7

3.3.5 Do doctrinal beliefs and cultural traditions influence the adoption of Zoom and WhatsApp?

Discussion theme five also focuses on finding how doctrinal beliefs and cultural traditions influenced the adoption rate of the WhatsApp and Zoom platforms. Opinions expressed about this were that there were no significant doctrinal and cultural influences, but rather the inception of these platforms hindered African cultural traditions of physical communing. Table 5 summarizes responses from focus groups.

Table 3.5: Doctrinal Beliefs and Cultural Traditions Influence Adoption.

	Interview questions	Number of references
B	1, 2, 3, 5	4
R	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	5
S	1,3,4,5	4
MC	1, 2, 3,5	3
TH	1, 3, 4, 5	4
LL	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	5
YP	1, 3, 4, 5,	4
MT	1, 2,3	2

3.4 Discussion of Results

This section discusses and interprets results obtained from the questionnaire survey and FDGs on understanding the general trend and status quo of the usage and adoption of

social media platforms, with a keen interest in Zoom and WhatsApp. Data for the analysis were collected using questionnaires and the FGD.

In summary, the demographical data of the respondents indicate that a more significant number of them can be described as male clergy members who have attained higher education degrees and are also full members of their respective local congregations. There is also a significant distribution among the respondents regarding their professions and having attained a relatively high educational level.

3.4.1 Social Media Patronage

Figure 3.6 shows that Zoom and WhatsApp are the top two most patronized digital platforms for online worship and discipleship in the local Methodist churches within the MCG, with 56 (86.2%) and 47 (72.3%) respondents selecting Zoom and WhatsApp, respectively.

3.4.1.1 Zoom

It can be concluded that Zoom is more popular because it is a more ubiquitous meeting or gathering platform used in many settings and fields, especially in the corporate and academic world. It is, therefore, a more familiar platform that has been used for remote meetings in all activities worldwide prior to the COVID-19 era and can be easily adopted by the MCG. 52 (92.9%) out of 56 respondents who use zoom have an Associate or higher degree. Zoom is also more popular than other handles due to its different and resourceful elements, including a live video meeting, chatroom, and recording tool, making it a more inclusive package.

3.4.1.2 WhatsApp

WhatsApp is also ubiquitous and regarded as the cheapest, most easily accessible, and fastest communication medium. Groups and subgroups can be created for information dissemination, bible studies and dawn prayer meetings, for convenience, or for the group of members who are not very familiar or conversant with Zoom. Meetings on WhatsApp can be arranged without scheduling conflicts, and meetings can be spontaneous and short for convenience.

3.4.1.3 Other platforms

Figure 3.6 also shows that 30 (46.2%) and 28 (43.1%) respondents also patronize Facebook and YouTube. Facebook and YouTube are mainly used for streaming live services or uploading sermons, bible studies and motivational talks. Facebook has this additional component where announcements are posted, upcoming events are publicized, and photos taken during church gatherings are posted. Facebook and YouTube are also useful as library platforms, and meetings and activities can be stored on these platforms for the future. However, these two platforms are highly patronized by the youth; hence, the low frequency of responses is perhaps due to the meagre percentage of the youth in the data collection. Moreover, since YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp inclusive are regarded as more casual platforms than Zoom, it can be inferred that patronage on social media is high.

3.4.2 Impact of Social Media on Church Communication

To establish the impact of WhatsApp and Zoom on communication in the Methodist Church Ghana, the questionnaire and FDGs were analyzed. Questions 6, 7, 8, and 10 were consistent with Theme 2, which stated, "What has been the general impact of social media on communication in the MCG? The impact was described as either beneficial or adverse.

From Figure 3.7, 45 (69.2%) respondents answered that their congregation adopted Zoom and WhatsApp as digital communication platforms during the COVID-19 era and 20 (30.8%) responded that these platforms had been in use for various activities in their congregation prior to the COVID era. So, in a COVID era where local and national health officials recommended social distancing protocols, social media came to the rescue of the church community. Although this shows that these platforms' patronage was heightened in the COVID-19 era, some congregations were conversant with them even before the issue of social distancing elicited their immense use. Also, none of the respondents indicated that their congregation is not using digital platforms. This shows that the whole church has a significant level of exposure to these digital platforms, and therefore, there would be minimal hindrances in transitioning to espousing them.

3.4.2.1 Beneficial impact

The participants stated that the impact of social media on communication has been tremendous in disseminating information, especially in the COVID-19 era. Participants B, R, S, TH, LL, and YP asserted that social media allows congregants to actively engage in the word of God that is preached, ask questions, share picture highlights of the service, and this does not end on Sunday but continues through the week. As Smith (2013:67) puts it, "there is no limit other than our imaginations in how we might use these new communication opportunities to reach people." In their contribution, participants B, MT, and LL posited that the new breed of the audience that has emerged out of the combination of social media and mobile technology remains always connected. Internet connectivity has become part of who they are. Participants YP and MT stated that the connected audience is live and active from the moment they tune in when they awake, and this continues throughout the day.

This research revealed that the connected audience is beginning to grow, which will only increase the church's communication ecosystem. Technological progress has given birth to a new generation of audiences. For the church to benefit from this technological space positively, it is necessary to consider these audiences and their behaviour while planning the church's communication strategy. According to participants S, R, LL, and MT, social media promotes church growth because it assists churches in maintaining contact with inactive members. The "impact of social media refers to whether an audience believes or trusts in the information from a given medium and is based primarily on the source of the medium" (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986:46). Social values and norms are vital factors that the audience considers in assessing the credibility of information. Social media provides effective means to get feedback from millions of people within a short period. For instance, participants LL contributed that those ideas, suggestions and comments from congregants and non-members are easily gathered to understand their content which will help the church leaders to plan, build strategies and make amends (participants MT, YP).

3.4.2.2 Adverse impact

All participants shared that the church's reputation can be damaged when social media is misused, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Hence, there is a need for the

church to strategize to counter any negative impacts. Social media has been used to disseminate information but has on the other hand also been used by unscrupulous persons to spread false news leading to chaos, fear and panic. As an example, the use of social media to spread propaganda on the COVID-19 vaccines is rife. Also, unintended posts to the wrong platform discourage others from actively participating. According to Religion News Service, it is not surprising that the Pope has embraced Twitter. However, the Vatican has not opened a Facebook account for him due to the complication of monitoring negative comments (RNS, 2012:np).

In this techno-cultural, theological, ideological, and political Era, many people seem to believe what supports their opinions and viewpoints. There is a growing need to critically examine the sources of information received on social platforms, but finding credible and trustworthy sources is not always easy. The Church is currently at a point when most people are being deceived or misled, especially in the spiritual realm (Wiles, 2021:np). During an interview, Peter Chow-White, professor and director of Simon-Fraser University's school of communication, said social media is a curse because, on the one hand, there is much information out there, but on the other hand, there are a lot of negativities that have the potential to destroy users. The extent of negativity or positivity is hard to know; one must do a lot of research to find the truth (Wiles, 2021:np).

3.4.3 Social Media Usage

Out of the 56 respondents who use Zoom, 46 (82.1%) use social media quite often or often, and 9 (16.1%) responded as not using it often. One respondent reported that family and friends do not use zoom at all. Similarly, out of the 47 responders who use WhatsApp, 39 (83%) use social media quite often or often, and 7 (14.9%) responded as not often. Again, one respondent reported that family and friends do not use WhatsApp at all. This indicates that although these platforms have general patronage, their usage is not universal. This can be attributed to the fact that these platforms might not be the most preferred platforms for everyone to turn to for information.

3.4.3.1 Divine intervention

All participants in the focus group shared that the experience with Zoom and WhatsApp

tools have been unique and a welcome piece of intervention in the COVID era. Participant B stated, "it is divine intervention; just imagine what would be the fate of the Church without the intervention of these technologies?" Kamau (2019:347) and Chun-Ming and Meng-Hsiang (2018:91) observe that the various online applications help users interact and disseminate information that is of mutual benefit to users. Online church services also offer a platform for believers to worship and share their faiths through web-based channels which offer support, hope and encouragement (Hutchings, 2011:17). The increased use of various devices has become important and essential to the everyday life of users (Couldry & Hepp, 2017:45; Deuze et al., 2012:62).

3.4.3.2 User-friendliness and initial challenges

Of the 28 respondents who consider Zoom and WhatsApp to be quite easy to use, 22 (78.6%) use these platforms quite often or often, and 6 (21.4%) do not use them often. Out of the 29 participants who find Zoom and WhatsApp somehow easy to use, 21 (72.4%) use these platforms quite often or often, and 3 (10.3%) do not use the platforms often. None of the respondents reported that Zoom and WhatsApp are not user-friendly. This indicates that these platforms are interactive, easy to navigate through, and easy to use for the said purposes but need some improvement to make them more user-friendly.

Participants shared initial challenges, particularly among the adult members. WhatsApp was easily adaptable compared to Zoom, which posed challenges to many members. WhatsApp application is "simple, intuitive, and easy to use" (Mefolere, 2016:620). The extensive use of smartphones, coupled with the availability of mobile data, has enabled many users to access WhatsApp across the globe (Dodds, 2019:np; Mefolere, 2016:607). Its adaptability has resulted in a more significant influence on daily human activities. Without a doubt, WhatsApp is taking communication to higher levels daily, serving all classes of people. (Jailobaev et al., 2021:np).

WhatsApp has become an essential tool for the church before and during the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to be useful for church communication. It is easy to use, and promotes a new level of mutuality and fellowship among Christians, fosters dialogue, increases sharing, creates an enjoyable atmosphere by improving interactions, and "promotes profound collaboration with peers" (Jailobaev et al., 2021:np). Research

has shown that WhatsApp differs from other social media applications. Boulos et al. (2016:37); Mars and Scott (2016:82-90) have observed that WhatsApp provides easier and faster modes to communicate with a smartphone and data without having to get an account with the use of applications such as Skype or Zoom.

3.4.3.3 Communicating the Gospel

It can be inferred from Table 1 that there were 34 references to the general experience with social media as a communication tool to spread the gospel. Participants' experiences with Zoom and WhatsApp were evaluated to determine if they were beneficial or a challenge. The sole mandate of the church is to disseminate information on the gospel and other ecclesiastical duties. The participants demonstrated that without the emergence of these modern communication tools, the churches would have found themselves wanting to perform these duties during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants elaborated that social media-averse members have generally adjusted and adopted the tools for information dissemination despite the initial challenges.

Results from the questionnaire also show that, although these platforms' patronage was heightened in the COVID-19 era, some congregations were conversant with them even before the issue of social distancing elicited their immense use. Also, none of the respondents indicated that their congregation is not using digital platforms. This then shows that the whole church has significant exposure to these digital platforms, and therefore there would be minimal hindrances in transitioning to espousing social media platforms.

The data was analyzed to establish whether the general experiences with WhatsApp and Zoom as social media platforms have been helpful or challenging to communicate in the MCG during the COVID-19 pandemic. The responses to Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 were consistent with Theme 1, which asked, "What have been the general experiences with Zoom and WhatsApp tools for church communication"? The purpose of this question was to enable the researcher to establish if the experience has been helpful or challenging to develop some appropriate and effective ways the church can engage these modern communication tools.

3.4.3.4 Effectiveness and helpfulness

Most of the participants stated that the experience had been unique though there were initial acceptability challenges due to insufficient knowledge about these tools. Nearly the entire world was caught unprepared as the Coronavirus disease ravaged the world in 2020 (Afolaranmi, 2020:12-26). Participant B stated that "the WhatsApp and Zoom platforms have rescued the church from extinction during this COVID-19 pandemic".

Additionally, participants S, R, TH, LL, YP, and MT shared that the engagement with Zoom and WhatsApp has widened the church's audience. Millions of people now can easily access their sermons, teachings, and announcements on social media platforms. As Conrad (2021:np) observes, social media has become one of the most effective and necessary ways of reaching members. Contrary to the past model of preaching where ordained ministers share the gospel, social media gives the opportunity to all Christians to share the gospel with unbelievers. Smith (2015:78), who authored *Online Mission and Ministry,* posits that this new trend presents the Church as a real entity with an interest in the unsaved and following in the footsteps of Christ. Jesus was interested in the people, which shows in his interactions with individuals. Likewise, social media gives believers the chance to engage with people on a one-on-one basis.

3.4.3.5 Challenges

Four participants (S, R, LL, YP) asserted that the adults (age range of 45-64) were having challenges with the operation of the tools, especially with Zoom, and they lacked confidence in using social media compared to the young adults. They also had a problem with the sharp transition or a cultural shock. Also, in particular, they considered Zoom to be occasionally noisy by unmuted participants. Corporate singing of hymns on Zoom without hardware and software enhancements is very challenging. In several ways, social media has changed the interaction between churches; one such is the perception of credibility (Kim and Brown, 2015:np). The credibility of a source has been an issue that has been of interest to scholars over the years, and there has been extensive research on the analysis of the features that make a source credible (Whitehead, 1968:59-63). More recently, Pope Francis reviewed the use of social media and said, "it is important to know how to dialogue and with discernment to use modern technologies and social networks in such a way as to reveal a presence that listens,

converses, and encourages. Allow yourselves, without fear, to be this presence, expressing your Christian identity as you become citizens of this environment. A church that follows this path learns how to walk with every day" (Schmitt, 2019:14).

3.5 Credibility, Reliability and Trustworthiness of Social Media

Credibility refers to believability, a quality perceived by individuals who cannot always discern truthful information from fake one (Viviani and Pasi, 2017:1209). In establishing the credibility and reliability of WhatsApp and Zoom tools in church communication during COVID-19, a question posed was, "How credible and reliable is the information posted on social media platforms?" Social media allows people from different backgrounds to form alliances due to their belief systems. This creates a formidable social structure where valuable information is shared in excessive amounts. The downside of this is that users often find it difficult to obtain credible information when the need arises (Kapoor et al., 2018:531-534). Viviana and Pasi (2017:1209) comment that in the social media scenario, the availability of excessive information presents a risk of possible misinformation. Hence, ensuring the credibility of the information put out on social media currently is very necessary.

Of the 62 participants who consider social media as between the ranges of trustworthy to very trustworthy, 58 (93.55) consider them as reliable to very reliable. Only 1 (1.5%) out of the participants considered Zoom and WhatsApp deceitful, and 2 (3.1%) were undecided. The questionnaire results show that information received from these platforms is generally regarded as trustworthy. However, the one respondent who indicated that it was deceitful might be speaking from an experience with miscommunication or misinformation, which is one of the negative implications of using WhatsApp. According to the congregants, understanding how reliable the use of these digital platforms is the participants were also asked to give their opinions on how trustworthy they find information communicated on Zoom and WhatsApp platforms. This also indicates that information received from these platforms is generally regarded as trustworthy. However, the one respondent that indicated that it was deceitful might be from an experience from miscommunication or misinformation, which is one of the negative implications of using WhatsApp.

There is no institution that can downplay the important role social media plays today (Kim and Brown, 2015:97). According to Smith (2013:np), in 2013, using social media ranked number one for most people. However, certain Christian domains have continued to emphasize their dislike for the modern means of communication due to their perceived mindset about social media. This school of thought sees social media platforms as channels created by the devil to ruin the church; hence it is not uncommon to hear them complaining. They have not reserved time to see the good side of these prejudices. For instance, in 2016, Pope Francis, in his message for World Communications Day, alluded to this when he said: "Emails, text messages, social networks, and chats can also be fully human forms of communication. It is not technology that determines whether or not communication is authentic, but rather the human heart and our capacity to use wisely the means at our disposal" (Mwachukwu cited in Kim & Brown, 2015:98).

3.6 Regular Complaints

All participants shared initial complaints, the people see it as a change, and anything that comes with change takes a long time for people to accept. From Figure 5, most participants responded that these platforms are less interactive and distracting and do not motivate worship life. From the focus group discussion, the questions 1, 2, 4 and 5 were posed to identify complaints by some church members to enable the researcher to recommend some strategies.

3.6.1 Slow to Change

Social media can significantly benefit the church and further the church's involvement in the local community. Notwithstanding its immense contribution to the church, Badmos (cited in Darko- Adjei and Akussah, 2021:4) revealed that a majority of church leaders are unwilling to use social media. This is due to some perceived challenges. The misapplication of social media could result in serious problems, even if unintended, and this may result in a damaged reputation and even a risk of litigation. As evidenced in Table 4, all participants stated various complaints frequently received from the congregants who use social media. Over time, there have been many concerns and controversies about whether social media will do the church any importance.

3.6.2 Fringe and Marginalized

For instance, participants S and R stated that social media raised theological issues, and members accessing unsound theological materials- audio and videos have become the order of the day. As identified by Campbell and Teusner (2011:63) the authority of religious leaders has been downplayed and the internet has become a medium for showing this untoward attitude. Participant B advocates that it is an important issue facing the contemporary church and should not be considered trivial.

3.6.3 Unintended Messages

Participants shared that some of the frequent complaints among the members were unintended messages, unsupervised posts, inappropriate discussions, videos and pictures, private information leaks, misrepresentation of church image, distractions, and much more. Participants MC, R, MT, and LL suggested that following all social media activities with caution and wisdom is imperative. All messages must be adequately supervised to post the correct information.

3.7 Impact of Doctrinal and Cultural Beliefs on Zoom and WhatsApp
3.7.1 Doctrinal Beliefs

The MCG is centreed on defined underlying doctrinal beliefs and practices. These beliefs could be hindrances or may impact the adoption and usage of WhatsApp and Zoom. It can be inferred from this data distribution in the results of the questionnaire (Figure 13) that the beliefs, doctrines, and religious practices of the MCG affect the acceptance of these platforms. This could probably be due to some church members' non-utilization of these platforms or possibly due to some negative perceptions of some congregation members on their adoption. Aside from religious and doctrinal beliefs, cultural and traditional beliefs also impact the adoption of these digital platforms in the church.

The FGDs established how doctrinal beliefs and cultural traditions influenced the adoption rate of social media – WhatsApp and Zoom platforms. Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were discussed. All participants stated no alternative to WhatsApp and Zoom for church communication or propagating the gospel when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged. In other words, churches were forced to adopt social media as the only appropriate communication medium when the COVID pandemic started. There was

initial resistance to adopting these communication tools. As Michels (2015:7) observes, social media adoption was not without challenges. Participants YP, LL, MT, TH, and S believe that there was no doctrinal influence determining the rate of adoption rather, the abuses and misapplications of the platforms made some members resist or slow to accept WhatsApp and Zoom platforms for communication. They shared the Roman Catholic stand,

> it is, therefore, an inherent right of the church to have at its disposal and to employ any of these media insofar as they are necessary or valuable for the instruction of Christians and all its efforts for the welfare of souls. The pastors must instruct and guide the faithful so that they, with the help of these same media, may further the salvation and perfection of themselves and the entire human family (INTER MIRIFICA).

Participant B elaborated that in the MCG, the doctrine was not necessarily an issue but rather the proper use of these social media platforms that all who employ any of these platforms be acquainted with the norms of morality and consciously put them into practice.

3.7.2 The Church and Changes

Although it appears social media was less patronized by the church prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, the church is not new to technological changes to spread the gospel. This is not the first time the church is engaging in technology; the church in history used the television and radio when they were first introduced, and churches are now using social media. The use of online services by the church is therefore not a novel occurrence. Helland (2011:381ff) provided the history of the church using newly developed technologies (Michels, 2015:6). Hutchings (2015:3811-3830) on the other hand provides the current outline of how the church has embraced technology to spread the good news to its communities.

3.7.3 Culture and Traditions

Figure 3.14 shows responses on how the local culture and tradition affect the utilization of Zoom and WhatsApp. From the chart, 24 (36.9%) of the respondents stated its usage is somehow affected by cultural beliefs, 19 (29.2%) said that it is not affected, 15

(23.1%), 6 (9.2%) answered that the cultural and traditional beliefs do very much affect the use of Zoom and WhatsApp. It can be inferred from this data that cultural beliefs have some level of impact on the use of these platforms.

Participants TH, B, S, and YP stated that cultural factors influence technology adoption. Deligiannaki and Ali (2011:np) observed that the expansion of science and technology hurdles is not a product of innovation alone. Socio-cultural underpinnings have a role to place in the acceptance of innovation. Cultural factors, such as communalism, affect the adoption rate of WhatsApp and Zoom communication tools. While cultures worldwide place a value on their traditional belief system social media brings people together despite their backgrounds and differences (Sawyer and Chen, 2012:151). In Africa, a person is defined by an ethnic group. For example, the Ubuntu philosophy, "I am because we are." It embraces the idea that humans cannot exist in isolation. Africans feel a sense of belonging when they touch one another and talk to each other. The concept of communalism delays the rate of adoption of WhatsApp and Zoom. Straub (1994:98) posits that culture plays a key role in how the bias toward electronic communications. The world has been compressed into a small community due to globalization (Chen et al., 2012:14). Social media has become the enabler in this venture to make the world a "global village" (Sawyer and Chen, 2012:151).

3.7.4 Impact of Evangelism

Question 8 and Figure 3.15 shows how these social platforms have affected soul winning and member participation in the Methodist Church Ghana. From the data, 34 (52.3%) respondents answered "No" to whether they know of anyone who has been converted or become a more Involved Christian through the use of Zoom, whilst for WhatsApp, 24 (36.9%) answered "Yes" and 7(10%) answered "No".

3.8 Zoom and WhatsApp to Stay in the Church

Question 13 and Figure 3.16 describe how strongly the participants recommend Zoom and WhatsApp platforms to all MCG societies to improve their discipleship. Out of the 65 respondents, 30 (46.2%) strongly recommended it, 28 (43.1%) recommended it very strongly, 5 (7.7%) did not recommend it much, and 2 (3.1%) were undecided about that. Based on the participants' experiences regarding their use of Zoom and WhatsApp tools

for local congregation activities, they were asked whether they are willing to continue utilizing these digital platforms in this post- COVID-19 era. From the chart (Figure 3.17), out of 65 responses, 57 (87.7%) were certain, 7 (10.8%) were sparing about this and 1(1.5%) was undecided about continuing the utilization of the platforms. This indicates that the church is willing to fully adopt and continue using these digital platforms for church activities. It can be drawn from this data that there is a reasonably strong recommendation for the full adoption of Zoom and WhatsApp in the MCG.

3.9 Conclusion

Social media has influenced the contemporary world so much that any institution, including the church that any church that wants to fulfill the task of the Great Commission in Matthew 29:18,19, to preach the gospel to all nations in our contemporary world, cannot ignore social media. Many churches have embraced social media, especially during the COVID-19 era, to sustain and expand their "church community into the virtual world. Another viable arm of churches engaging in social media is the potential of reaching new members, which is the primary duty of the church and sometimes generating funds. For the church to achieve its missional mandate in the 21st century, it must perfectly and effectively engage social media and find new approaches, flexible and appropriate ways to proclaim the gospel afresh to those who do not relate to its traditional ways. The church must be incarnational in its mission approach.

Responses from these participants showed the heightened use of Zoom and WhatsApp in the local congregations, indicating its adoption in the Methodist Church Ghana. Although these digital platforms were more embraced in this COVID-19 era, the church had substantial exposure as some congregations employed them in some of their activities. Moreover, responses showed that all the local congregations had been exposed to Zoom and WhatsApp platforms, and therefore a transition towards its full acceptance would face minimal challenges. Also, there is an overall positive response to Zoom and WhatsApp regarding accessibility, reliability, trustworthiness and information. Doctrinal and cultural beliefs were shown to impact the usage and acceptance. Despite the possible hindrances regarding their espousal, the respondents strongly recommended the full adoption of Zoom and WhatsApp as a component in all

religious and non-religious activities in the church and were very confident of its continual utilization. Therefore, it is recommended that the current bottlenecks be duly addressed to maximize Zoom, WhatsApp and other digital platforms to promote worship and discipleship and increase member participation toward the ultimate goal of building the Christian faith in MCG.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE INTERPRETATIVE PHASE

THE USE OF THE TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL (TAM) TO STUDY THE ADOPTION AND USAGE OF ZOOM AND WHATSAPP IN THE METHODIST CHURCH GHANA

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the performance and indulgence of digital and social media platforms in the Methodist Church of Ghana (MCG) have been explored through questionnaire survey and focus group discussions. In this chapter, we apply the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to understand the trends in the responses received, to know why this is going on, according to the second step of the Osmer's approach.

Research has revealed that connectedness is vital in today's world (van den Berg, 2018:66). Rushkoff (2017:np) posits that the issue of connectedness has made it possible for advancement "through the transformational mobile device" (Sweet, 2012:np). The world has evolved technologically, and this has changed the dynamics of communication across the globe. People can contact each other easily (Friedman, 2006:8).

Having dealt with the issue of *what is going on* in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on the interpretative task to find out *why it is going on* (Osmer, 2008:11). The interpretative task explores the reason for the phenomena that were observed in the descriptive task. The chapter interprets the data obtained through observation in line with an inclusive framework to explain the behavioural patterns of both churches and worshippers (inclusive) (Osmer, 2005: xv). Osmer (2012:338) offers a route which is similar to Biblical Exegesis, where a researcher sets out to acquire information action from the data collected and evaluates it in light of issues pertaining to the culture of the congregation and the values of the institution. The chapter aims to examine why certain behaviours and patterns come to play.

Organizations [Churches] over the years have engaged in the use of modern forms of communication (Moody & Siponen, 2013:322). Members have also come to accept

these modern technologies and widely use gadgets such as phones and computers for personal reasons.

The researcher refers to such behaviour as personal use of the internet, which is the social media. The study seeks an understanding of personal use of social media by proposing a theoretical model, namely, the Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour (TIB), which was first specified by Harry Triandis cited in Moody & Siponen (2013:302). It posits that behaviour, in any situation, is a function of intention (consistent with other behaviour models) as well as the strength of habit of the behaviour and the various facilitating conditions. It belongs to a school of cognitive models, namely that of Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) concepts (Milhausen et al., 2006:114). Triandis recognizes the critical role of habits and emotions in forming intentions to perform a behaviour. The TIB includes the TRA and TPB concepts of attitudes, social influence, and intentions. The other factors included in this context were emotional habits and other different sources of social influences. TIB provides a broader understanding of what may lead to the personal use of social media tools in church communication (Moody & Sipnen, 2013:322-323).

TIB is highly appropriate for this study, as personal use of social media tools in church communication is highly social behaviour learned within the community by observing such behaviours of the church members. According to Triandis (1976, 1977), behaviour is determined by intention, facilitating conditions, and habit (Gagnon et al., 2003:104). Intention refers to an individual's motivation regarding the performance of a given behaviour. Facilitating conditions represent objective factors that make a given behaviour easy to do. Conversely, barriers consist of factors that can impede or constrain the realization of the behaviour.

On the other hand, habit constitutes the level of the routinization of behaviour or the frequency of its occurrence. This theory helped the researcher understand why members of the Methodist Church Ghana use Zoom and WhatsApp for communication. Interpersonal behaviour is the behaviour and actions present in human relationships, including how they communicate and all that it entails. Humans need to communicate

to support their lives as social creatures.

4.2 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

TheTechnology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989, 1993) is considered as the most common theory appropriate for integrating the fragmented theory and research on individual acceptance of information and communication technologies. According to Ali et al. (2020: 271), the model has two main antecedents, which, according to Davis (1989), are the main factors in adopting or using any technology system. It is an adaptation of the theory of reasoned action, which is customized to study the user's behaviour to adopt a new technology system (Ali al et., 2020:271). Jameel et al. (2018:202), Parasian and Yuliati (2020:11) and King and He (2006:748) argue that TAM has been widely used for predicting the acceptance and adoption and use of information technology. According to them, this model has become the most comprehensive attempt to articulate the core psychological aspects of technology use. Over the years, this model has been studied in various contexts; therefore, it has become a robust, powerful, and parsimonious model for predicting user acceptance (Rondan-Cataluna et al., 2015:789). After more than 30 years, the model is still being used extensively in information system research (Mahomed et al., 2018:440).

The two variables of TAM, the perceived usefulness and the perceived ease were used to predict Zoom and WhatsApp acceptance factors. TAM was developed to include critical technology- related factors to explain an individual's decision to accept new information system technologies in an organizational setting (Davis, 1989:46). The model's thesis states that:

1. External variables will influence the perceived ease of use and usefulness of a technology.
2. Perceived ease of use of technology will directly affect its perceived usefulness.
3. Perceived usefulness and ease of use will impact attitude toward the technology.
4. Perceived usefulness and attitude toward the technology are expected to influence its behavioural intention of use.
5. To this end the activities carried out in this chapter, are:
1. To assess how digitalization been carried out in MCG to evaluate its effectiveness

2. To evaluate WhatsApp and Zoom's effectiveness and examine the intra and inter-personal interaction in the church

3. To examine the variation of the perceived effectiveness among the different stakeholders.

4.2.1 Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use of Social Media Platforms by Churches

Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were utilized to identify the factors influencing the adoption of technology – social media for church communication technology acceptance. Information communications technology (ICT) is the technology used to facilitate communication processes, and Zoom and WhatsApp platforms are examples of ICT. ICT use has expanded exponentially in recent years, and it can be challenging to catch up with the pace. There is no guarantee that the target audience will always embrace emerging technology. When the individual perceives the ICT to improve his performance, as Davis (1989:46) suggested, he uses it frequently in his daily activities at work.

4.2.1.1 Perceived usefulness of social media platforms

The individual must have the need to embrace new technology, and that new technology must be useful to the user. Perceived usefulness describes an individual's subjective probability that using a particular tool would improve his or her job performance within organization content (Davis, 1993:). The perceived usefulness explains the user's perception that the technology will enhance the user's workplace performance (Jameel et al., 2018:202). In other words, there is a perception that the engagement of Zoom and WhatsApp would enhance communication in the MCG. It is presupposed that if the leaders of the MCG perceive that the use of social media platforms is beneficial, they will continue to use it.

To provide effective communication in the church, worshippers must perceive social media as useful and provide additional benefits to their communication needs. For instance, Cheong (2014:1); Cheong and Ess (2012:3-4) argue that Tweets play a constructive role in religion as microblogging tools today affording clerics a platform for real-time information sharing with its interface for short written texts. Includes

providing links to graphics and sound recordings that can be forwarded and responded to by others". It was stated that "microblogging rituals facilitate epiphany and generate a sense of the sacred. This, in turn, revitalizes communal sentiments and a higher moral purpose through identification and solidarity with other believers. Social media platforms have been found to make information dissemination cheap and easy. Churches have the opportunity to post pictures to announce upcoming events and engage followers through visual posts. According to Burnett (2013:np), pictures combined with announcements have been proven as a powerful way to grab attention.

These findings may support the use of social media as an effective information dissemination tool in the MCG. As Badmos (2014:14) states, "every organization, including the church, needs to get the word out about its upcoming fundraising or new product or service, there is no better way to get the message to millions of people 24/7 than through a social media website". The use of social media has provided an opportunity to reach a large audience.

4.2.1.2 Perceived ease

According to Davis (1989:320-325), the perceived ease of use is defined as "the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular system would be free of physical and mental effort". In this sense, the perceived ease of Zoom and WhatsApp refers to subscribers' perceptions of the relative ease and lack of effort required to use the video and messaging applications. An application perceived to be easier to use than another is more likely to be accepted by users (Animante et al., 2021:102).

Jameel et al. (2018:202) posit that perceived ease also consists of the following determinants: ease of use, ease to read, using understandable terms, link to search for related information, and ease to return to the previous page. Social media appears to have come to stay, and the platforms have been incorporated into and are readily available on common communication electronic systems such as cellphones, tablets and computers. Asur and Huberman (2010:97) argue that social media is fast changing the public discourse due to ease of speed and reach. Social media sets trends and agendas on topics from the environment, politics, and religion. The perceived ease of using social media services is the reason for their frequent use (Sago, 2013:56). User

acceptance determines the success or failure of accepting technology in an organization (Davis, 1989:327). The decision of an individual or organization whether or not to use a communication technology depends on its perceived ease. The perceived ease of use will be a determining factor for the leadership of the MCG in adopting social media for communication. If the perceived ease of use is high, they will continue to use it; otherwise, they will ignore it.

Lack of acceptance of a user can be a factor in the failure to adopt communication technology in the organization, making the goal of using the system in the organization unachieved (Parasian and Yuliati, 2020:12). Burton-Jonas and Hubona cited in Parasian and Yuliati (2020:12) suggest that declination against the use of new technology must follow an evaluation of perceived usefulness and ease in making decisions.

4.2.1.3 Subjective norms

Subjective norms are incorporated into this research design to help identify the effect of social dimensions (societal, traditional, cultural and doctrinal beliefs) on the attitude and behavioural intention of use. Ham et al. (2015:78) refer to subjective norms as "the belief that an important person or group of people will approve and support a particular behaviour. They are determined by the perceived social pressure from others for an individual to behave in a certain manner and their motivation to comply with those people's views". This includes the external variables, that is, the belief that usage considers various external variables (such as their respective abilities, technology types, tasks, and situational constraints) to evaluate the consequences of using them. Their overall evaluation is reflected in their beliefs about utility (the extent to which using it will improve their performance), and ease of use (the degree to which using it will be load-free); After beliefs emerge attitudes: users' beliefs about the consequences of using drive their attitudes (or affections) towards the behaviour (Legris et al., 2003:198).

Ajzen (1991:180), argues that "intentions are heavily influenced by personal factors, such as attitudes and perceived behavioural control. The perceived expectations from others influence a user to perform a particular behaviour". The extent to which a person or the individual perception that most people who are important to him/her think that he/she should perform or not perform a certain behaviour (Haruna & Kassim, 2019:26).

a.   Attitude

The next stage is attitude intention: users feel favourable to or unfavourable to using technology to the extent they intend to use it. Intention to use: users intend to use technology whether or not they will use it. This refers to "the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour of interest. It entails a consideration of the outcomes of performing the behaviour" (LaMorte, 2019:np).

b.   Behavioural Intention

LaMorte (2019:np) refers to behavioural intention as the motivational factors that influence a given behaviour. The stronger the intention to perform the behaviour, the more likely the behaviour will be performed. With the recent rapid advancement in mobile telecommunication technologies, mobile phone applications have changed how mobile phones are used through the introduction of new mobile gadgets and technologies (Chao, 2019:np). For example, if one has a positive attitude toward going, thinks it will be easy, and thinks others would approve, then one's intention to go would be strong, and one could predict that one is more likely to go. As Long-Crowell (2021:np) argues, "a person's attitude, his perceived control of how he chooses to act, and the norms of society can predict his intentions, which can then be used to predict his behaviour.

Behavioural intention to use technology is a predictor of interest in embracing such technology. A technologist can develop the best crystal ball that seeks to solve problems; however, if the end- user perceives it to be complex and intimidating, the intention to use it will diminish. One model used to investigate the effect of factors on attitude and behavioural intention toward the use of technology is Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). It is also a measure to assess the likelihood that an individual or a particular congregation would want to use or adopt Zoom and WhatsApp in church activities. TAM behavioural intention is the central perceived construct to be determined by the primary predictor constructs such as; perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of an implementing system as well as by the external secondary factors, such as; social norms, facilitating conditions and user personality traits.

4.2.2 Structural Equation Modelling

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is a set of statistical techniques used to measure and analyze the relationships between observed and latent variables (Gonzalez et al., 2008:337). It is a robust multivariate analysis technique that is widely used in the social sciences. Its applications range from analyzing superficial relationships between variables to complex analyses of measurement equivalence for first and higher-order constructs (Gheung & Vogel, 2013:164).). It was employed to assess the "fitness" of the TAM theory proposed in the case study conducted. It is also employed to use data from respondents to determine relationships, dependency and variances among the different factors that are "claimed" to affect the acceptance (or usage) of social media platforms in the church.

SEM is a comprehensive multivariate statistical technique or methodology for presenting, estimating, and testing theoretical network relationships between observed or measured variables and unobserved variables known as latent constructs. SEM specifications require researchers to support a hypothesis with theory and specify relations associated with it (Diana, 2005:np). It involves multiple regression analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and variable path analysis. SEM model testing can be conducted for global fit measures, local fit measures and model modification. The most used testing method is the Global fit measures, where the goodness of fit tests and alternative fit indices are quantified (Diana, 2005: np).

Figure 4.1 is a conceptual model of SEM used in this study. In this model, subjective norms, perceived ease of use, and perceived usefulness are identified as independent latent variables that predict the intention to use social media.
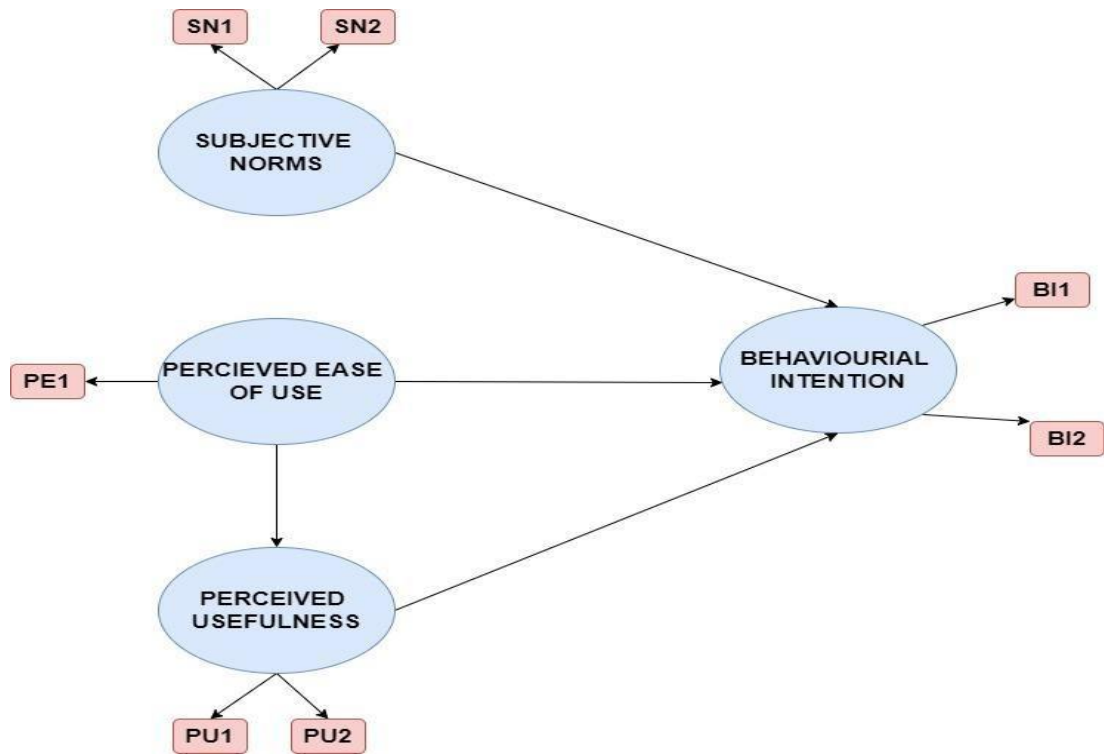
Figure 4.1: Proposed Model for Technology Acceptance Model for Zoom and WhatsApp Usage (Diana, 2005: np).

4.3 Methodology

SEM requires raw data to calculate the correlation and covariance matrices to determine directional or non-directional relationships among construct and indicators. It combines two statistical methods: confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis. "Confirmatory factor analysis originated in psychometrics, has an objective to estimate the latent psychological traits, such as attitude and satisfaction" (Spearman cited in Fan et al., 2016:19). On the other hand, Path analysis began in biometrics and aimed to find the causal relationship among variables by creating a path diagram (Wright cited in Fan et al., 2016:19). The goals of SEM are: to understand the patterns of correlation/covariance among a set of variables and to explain as much of their variance as possible with the model specified (Kline cited in Diana, 2005: np).

Responses from participants of the questionnaire survey were therefore converted into a 5-point Likert-type scale to suit the input data requirement, where 1. indicated strongly disagree, 2. showed disagreement to an extent, 3. showed Undecided (or Unknown), 4 showed agreeance to some extent and 5. indicated strong agreement.

Table 4.1 below lists the independent latent variables used in this study. The variables were obtained from the Likert-type scale measurements used in the questionnaire during data collection for this study. The variables are included in column 1 of Table 4.1. Column 2 is the variable designation, and column 3 is the Likert-type scale measurement used in the SEM model.

Table 4.1: Model Constructs, Observed variables and their Measure instruments

Instrument	Observed Variables	Likert-type Scale Measurement
Perceived Usefulness	PU1	I find the information I receive concerning my local congregation through Zoom and WhatsApp very reliable
	PU2	I highly recommend the use of Zoom and WhatsApp to all Methodist Church Ghana Societies to improve their discipleship
Perceived Ease of Use	PE1	My congregation finds Zoom and WhatsApp User-friendly
Attitude	A1	I find the information posted on my local congregation's Zoom and WhatsApp platforms trustworthy
Subjective Norm	SN1	I believe doctrinal beliefs and practices influence the acceptance of Zoom and WhatsApp
	SN2	The culture and tradition of my community/region have an impact on the use of Zoom and WhatsApp
Behavioural Intention	BI1	My Family and friends turn to WhatsApp to find information
	BI2	I would continue to utilize Zoom and WhatsApp

After converting the responses into Excel, the data was screened to eliminate respondents who did not answer at least one of the questions. This brought the total number of cases to 104, ready to be imported for analysis. The cleaned data was then imported into the IBM SPSS Statistics software to prepare the data points for the SEM. Some descriptive statistics were the covariance and correlation matrixes for a preliminary study of the data.

4.3.1 Measurement model

The Measurement model is the part of the model that examines the relationship between the latent variables and their measures (Mills, 2015:np). A good model must predict outcomes with high accuracy and reliability. The proposed model was developed,

evaluated and tested using a commercial statistics software developed by IBM known as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data were first tested for reliability and validity using the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). CFA is a statistical technique used to verify the structure of a set of observed variables. It allows the researcher to test the hypothesis that a relationship exists between observed variables and their underlying latent constructs. Reliability is employed to assess the model theorized. This helps to identify the likelihood of the model being appropriate to predict the outcome (behavioural intention, B11 and B12) based on perceived usefulness (PU1 and PU2), attitude (A1), and subjective norms (SN1 and SN2).

4.3.2 Statistical Tests

Statistical tests provide a mechanism for making quantitative decisions about a process or processes. The intent is to determine whether there is enough evidence to "reject" a conjecture or hypothesis about the process. This connotes that not rejecting may be considered a good result if we want to continue to act as if we "believe" the null hypothesis is true (National Institute for Standards & Technology (NIST), 2012:nd). Several steps were taken to validate the model concerning the data collected. These steps consisted of performing statistical tests. The statistical tests included analyses of reliability, model fit, and correlations. A hypothesis test was also conducted to assess the plausibility of the proposed model.

4.3.3 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure, and it is a measure of how accurately a model can explain observations. Middleton (2019:np) refers to reliability as how a method measures something consistently. The measurement is reliable if the same result can be consistently achieved using the same methods under the same circumstances. The model's reliability was tested using two statistical tests; composite reliability and variance extracted measure. CR (α) (sometimes called construct reliability) measures the internal consistency of variables and measures how the measurements vary from true values. The CR was estimated to evaluate the internal consistency of the proposed model (Sauro, 2015:np; Sideridis et al., 2019:np).

Another measure of reliability is the average variance extracted (AVE) measure (ρ).

Variance extracted is a measure of the variance that is captured by a construct concerning the amount of variance due to measurement error. The average variance extract was also evaluated, explaining errors in the proposed model (Sanhokwe, 2022:115-117; Shrestha, 2021:6).

The reliability evaluation consisted of determining the composite CR and average variance extract for each of the perceived usefulness (PU1 and PU2), subjective norm (SN1 and SN2), and behavioural intention (B11 and B12) to predict whether an individual will use or accept social media (Sauro, 2015:np; Sideridis et al., 2019:np).

4.3.3.1 Model fit indices

Model Fit Indices describe how well a model fits a set of observations. There are several model fit indices. For this study, the indices used include Chi-square/degree of freedom (CMIN/DF), Root mean square residual (RMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The goodness of fit index (GFI), normed fit index (NFI), and comparative fit index (CFI) (Hu & Bentler cited in Diana, 2005:np).

4.3.3.2 Correlation coefficient

A correlation coefficient is a statistical measure used to identify the strength of the relationship between the variables (B11, B12, PU1, PU2, SN1, and SN2). These were evaluated to determine if the variables depend on each other. Fernando (2021:np) explains that the correlation coefficient is a statistical measure of the strength of the relationship between the relative movements of two variables.

4.3.3.3 Hypothesis testing (path analysis)

After validating the model fit of the theory proposed, the structural relationship among the constructs proposed was evaluated and tested. A multivariate analysis of variance was therefore undertaken to determine whether the hypothesis defined is supported or not. This process is also known as path analysis. This step was used to test the simple bivariate relationships between the constructs as hypothesized by the model. The hypothesis testing was conducted within the context of the structural model.

Hypothesis testing is a form of statistical inference used to decide whether the data at hand sufficiently support a particular hypothesis (Davis & Mukamal, 2006:114). It is a

way for the researcher to test the results of a survey or experiment to see if he has meaningful results.

4.3.3.4 Results of reliability and validity tests

Table 4.2: Results of Reliability and Validity Tests

Constructs	Loadings	Composite Reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
PU		0.635	0.217
PU1	0.372		
PU2	0.544		
SN		0.735	0.275
SN1	0.742		
SN2	0.016		
BI		0.685	0.266
BI1	0.245		
BI2	0.687		

The loading (column 2) are factor loadings and are scaled from 0 to 1 and are essentially coefficients that tell how strong the relationship is between the variable and the construct. Based on the loadings, there appears to be a strong relationship between PU2 (those who highly recommend the use of social media), SN1 (doctrinal beliefs and practices influence the acceptance of social media), and B12 (those who will continue to utilize social media) and the construct. CR values of 0.6 and up are typically considered to be reasonable. The results of the composite reliability in Table 3.2 suggest that perceived usefulness (PU), subjective norms (SN) and behavioural intention (BI) are consistent variables in explaining the model.

The values for AVE vary from 0.217 (PU) to 0.266 (BI). AVE values above 0.5 are typically acceptable. However, if the value is less than 0.5 but the CR value is greater than 0.6, as indicated in Table 1, then the validity of the construct is still adequate. Therefore, perceived usefulness and subjective norms are consistent factors in predicting whether an individual will embrace social media.

Table 4.3: Results for Model Fit Indices

Model-fit measures	MEANING	Value
CMIN/DF	Chi-square/degree of freedom	0.072
RMR	Root Mean Square Residual	0.001
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	0.001
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index	1.041
NFI	Normed Fit Index	0.943
CFI	Comparative Fit Index	1.000

The Chi-square/degree of freedom is a measure of fit in SEM used for tests of statistical significance, and it predicts that a model and observed data are equal. It is used to determine if there is a significant relationship between two nominal (categorical) variables (Odetunmibi et al., 2021:5-6). A common benchmark for chi-square/degree of freedom is 5 or less. The value of 0.072 in Table 4.3 indicates that the model explains the data collected (McHugh, 2013:146).

Diana (2005:np) explains that the Root means square residual (RMR) measures how far data collected differs from the model. The Root means square error approximation (RMSEA) is a measure of how to spread out these residuals are good. RMR and RMSEA values are typically less than 0.05. The value (0.001) for RMS and RMSEA in Table 3 suggests that the model predicts the data well.

GFI is a measure that determines how well data fits a model. The normed fit index (NFI) is 3 measures the difference between the null model's chi-square and the target model's chi-square. CFI compares a model with a null or baseline model in which there was no correlation between observed variables. GFI, NFI, and CFI values range from 0 to 1, with 1 being a perfect fit. The values from Table 3.3 indicate that the data fit well with the model.

Table 4.4 below is a summary of the correlation analysis performed for the observed variables (B11, B12, SN1, SN2, PU1, PU2). This is performed to ascertain if any relationship exists between the individual variables.

Table 4.4: Correlation Matrix for Observed Variables

	BI2	BI1	SN2	SN1	PU2	PU1
BI2	0					
BI1	0	0				
SN2	-0.035	-0.028	0			
SN1	-0.008	0.02	-0.004	-0.001		
PU2	0.011	-0.071	-0.062	-0.025	0	
PU1	-0.011	0.076	0.008	0.018	0	0

A high correlation coefficient value (typically greater than 0.6) suggests a strong correlation between two variables. The low correlation coefficient values in Table 4.4 among the observed variables and that the variables are independent.

Table 4.5 below is a summary of the hypothesis test (Path Analysis) for perceived usefulness (PU), subjective norms (SN) and attitude (AT) in predicting the use of social media.

Table: 4.5 Results from Hypothesis (Path Analysis)

Hypothesis	Label	Value	Supported
Perceived usefulness affects behavioural intention	PU →BI	0.833	Supported
Subjective Norms Affect Behavioural Intention of Use	SN → BI	1.424	Supported
Attitude Affect Behavioural Intention	AT → BI	0.012	Not Supported

The hypothesis test results are a statistical value that predicts whether a model can be accepted or rejected.

4.4 Discussions and Conclusions

4.4.1 Influence of Social Media

The use of social media has increased exponentially in recent times. According to the January 2022 report on Global Social Media Statistics, it is estimated that more than half of the world's population (58.4%) uses social media, and growing. Christianity has historically adapted to changes in technology to spread the gospel. This was especially true during the invention of papyrus, paper, the radio, television, and internet technology. It is, therefore, anticipated that Christianity will respond favourably to the

explosion in the use of social media to spread the gospel. During the COVID-19 pandemic, most Church programmes were migrated to social media platforms to comply with local public health regulations. It is believed that this precipitated the use of social media across many Christian denominations to spread the gospel.

In this study, it was hypothesized that social media use significantly impacts the life and outreach of the Church. It was also postulated that social media use could be affected by techno-theological- cultural factors and that their effect could lead to more effective strategies for communication and the spread of God's word.

4.4.2 Research Findings

Using qualitative content analysis, questionnaire and interview data were collected and analyzed to accept or reject the hypothesis. The data was collected from individuals who make everyday decisions in the MCG. The purpose was to determine the impact of social media on communication in the church and provide strategic recommendations to the MCG and other Christian communities on using social media to disseminate information effectively.

The analysis used the TAM to develop variables for testing the hypothesis. TAM measures the adoption of new technology based on customer attitudes. Analysis of the questionnaire suggests that Zoom and WhatsApp are the most popular social media platforms among the respondents. According to TAM, the two variables that determine whether a technology will be accepted by its potential users are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Three variables in the questionnaire were identified to support the perceived usefulness and ease of use.

Additionally, variables on subjective norms, including attitude and behavioural intention, were identified. These TAM and subjective norms variables were used to predict whether Zoom and WhatsApp have a significant impact on the life and outreach of the church.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to test the data from the respondents to assess relationships, dependency and variances among the different variables that affect

acceptance/usage (behavioural intention) of social media platforms in the church.

4.4.2.1 Perceived usefulness and ease of use

The results show that perceived usefulness and ease of use, and attitude strongly correlates with behavioural intentions regarding using Zoom and WhatsApp. This implies that the respondents in the data collected perceive social media as a powerful tool for disseminating information. This supports the hypothesis that social media use significantly impacts the church's life and outreach.

This is not surprising because more people are spending more time on social media. According to the Global Index Report, as of March 2022, the average daily social media usage was 147 minutes per day, up from 145 minutes in the previous year. The church aims to reach the unreachable and spread the gospel. So, if social media is where people are spending more time around the world, the church must show a presence and influence the world. This is perhaps the cheapest and easiest way to evangelize and strengthen the gospel. It is a far cry from the door-to-door and the many miles of travel covered by the early missionaries.

4.4.2.2 Cultural/doctrinal issues

The second hypothesis of this study states that techno-theological-cultural factors impact social media usage. It must be pointed out that this second hypothesis can be rejected. It can be concluded from the study that social media use is not affected by techno-theological-cultural factors. It was discovered that doctrinal and cultural beliefs have a weak relationship with social media use. There was a negative correlation between estimates for social media use and doctrinal and cultural beliefs. This may be due to respondents not being very candid in responding to the possible effects of doctrinal and cultural beliefs on the intentions of using Zoom and WhatsApp. Perhaps, this shows how church members engage social media platforms in both religious and non-religious church activities.

This also reveals that social media has become a way of life for the many who patronize it. If any techno-theological-cultural sentiments against social media use existed, they must be fading gradually or faded with increased usage.

4.4.2.3 Social media tools for church communication

In summary, social media appears to have been embraced by the world and has come to stay, and the Church must also embrace it or find itself on the wrong side of history. Subsequently, the implementers also need to contemplate the study's practical implications to maximize the acceptance among the churches in MCG.

For the church to reach and engage its members and new converts, it must have a visible presence on social media. The church must be where its audience is. The church must critically review its current organizational chart and make every effort to include information and communication technology (ICT) experts in the echelon of its advisers.

4.2.2.4 False teaching

The survey and FGDs show that many preachers who use social media have thrown doctrinal and cultural beliefs out of the window. This must be a source of worry for the church, and it has the potential to promote heretics and heresy. The church has always been fighting the dissemination of false information. Although social media has become useful in everyday life, it is rife with propaganda and misinformation. Implementing any ICT programme in the MCG must complement an anti-misinformation solid programme, insulating members from fake news and disinformation.

4.2.2.5 Church integrity

There are risks involved in becoming visible online. Misusing social media, even if unintended, can tarnish the image and reputation of the church and even put the MCG at risk of protracted litigation. Any social media programme must seek to protect against possible misuse. The MCG must develop a policy on social media usage, including regulations, control, editorial, and evaluation. Statements on social media must be evaluated for disinformation and legal risks to protect the church.

4.2.2.6 Privacy

There are privacy issues that must be contended with when it comes to social media. The laws governing the use of social media are still being developed. Personally, identifiable information should not be shared on social media, even if offered

voluntarily. Social media is public and can be accessed by anyone outside of the church. Vulnerable individuals, especially children in the church, must be protected. Personal information such as birthdates, phone numbers, school names, and home addresses must be kept out of social media feeds. Several countries have laws prohibiting the sharing of photographs of minors, and parental consent will be required before sharing pictures of children.

4.2.2.7 Legal and copyright risks to the church

Laws such as copyright must be obeyed. Using articles, photos, music, or other materials without permission is illegal, and simply naming the original author is not good enough. In order to legally post copyrighted material, like a video of a worship service containing copyrighted music, one must have proper authorization, and all posted media must be devoid of sensitive and copyrighted material. Confidential information must not be posted on social media. Churches are readily willing to help and sometimes post prayer requests, and individual names must be avoided. Also, posting information about missionaries in sensitive countries or military members can actually put those individuals at risk.

4.2.2.8 Managing social media in the Church

Any social media programme must be used to educate members. Having a social media handle can help disseminate information from the top hierarchy of the church to its members. It can also be used for announcements on upcoming critical Church events. If the Presiding Bishop of the MCG decides to own a social media handle to disseminate information, a team of ICT experts should be tasked to manage this handle.

4.2.2.9 Benefits outweigh risks

Social media has come to stay. The COVID-19 pandemic precipitated the use of social media in the church. The church did not have a choice but to adapt to survive. The church will be better served if it embraces social media. There are dangers associated with the use of social media. However, the benefits reached far outweigh the dangers of social media use. Since social media is new, the MCG must constantly evaluate its ICT policy and modify it accordingly.

The instrumental contribution of social media to the church was evident as the study revealed the positively perceived usefulness of social media. For instance, most respondents affirmed that social media platforms made it easy to follow Church activities. They further confirmed that social media enabled the church to communicate effectively to its target audience, increase the accessibility of the church to its members and disseminate church information and activities very easily.

4.5 Conclusion

From the results, perceived usefulness and subjective norms are consistent factors in predicting whether an individual will embrace social media. This implies that the respondents in the data collected perceive social media as a powerful tool for disseminating information. This supports the hypothesis that social media use significantly impacts the church's life and outreach. If any techno-theological-cultural sentiments against social media use existed, they must be fading gradually or faded with increased usage. Misusing social media, even if unintended, can tarnish the image and reputation of the church and even put the MCG at risk of protracted litigation. The church in this technological era must be proactive in developing a missiological framework or policy guide to guide members as they visit the digital community.

CHAPTER FIVE: NORMATIVE INTERPRETATION AND LEARNING FROM GOOD PRACTICE

5.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have discussed the first two phases of Osmer's approach by establishing what is going on through the survey and interviews. The TAM examined the results obtained and their values. However, beyond Osmer's approach and a scientific and social understanding of what is going on, there is the need to explain the model from a normative or theological point of view. Such an understanding requires answering the question: 'What is the theological interpretation of what is going on?'

Osmer's third phase of Practical Theology is the normative task, and it seeks to raise a normative question from the perspectives of theology, ethics and good practices. Osmer's normative task concerning what ought to be going on, is primarily located in "prophetic discernment", which is based on an overview of the prophetic office in the Old Testament. It involves both divine disclosure and human shaping of God's Word (Osmer, 2008:134-135). Of significance within this third phase and what befits the local church context in terms of the basis of faith (i.e. the Methodist faith) is how the interpretation focuses on Jesus Christ.

The New Testament draws on the prophetic tradition and extends it to a point where Jesus is seen as not just a messenger of God's Word, but he *is* God's Word himself. Hence, the prophetic discernment by congregational leaders does not look for other words from God alongside or in competition with this Word (Osmer, 2008:135). Such a belief coheres with the MCG's Faith statement about the Bible being the Word of God that speaks about the Deity of Jesus Christ and his authoritative teaching. MCG, therefore, agrees with Osmer regarding disseminating the Gospel as human words that should conform with who Jesus is rather than a view in competition with God's Word.

The essence of this chapter is to provide a normative interpretation of some theological principles that can be used to explain what ought to be and what lessons these interpretations offer the church. It uses a theological and normative task to examine how the church ought to engage modern communication tools. First, the study clarifies

what "normative" means in context. The MCG, like other denominations, has its own normative position. For example, it has its position on the Bible, the Deity of Jesus Christ, and the church's role in society. The theological interpretation considers MCG's engagement with technology and its implication for the church's operations.

In addition, the chapter explores ethical reflection and good practices by considering how the past and present respond to similar situations that might inform the present decision. It is hoped that the several theological norms or interpretations on the use of technology will go a long way to give a direction on the engagement of ICT in the MCG. The chapter uses key scripture passages to illustrate engaging tools for church communication. The scriptures have, as brick and mortar, so to speak, what is needed to build the foundation of ministry. Some scripture passages have been chosen as illustrative of what ministers, lay preachers, and class leaders can do in the light of the doctrine of communication.

Finally, the chapter interprets specific episodes, situations and contexts gained from the empirical data using theological concepts while constructing ethical norms to develop a suggested new theory for praxis while learning from "good practice" (Osmer 2008:4, Smith & Okolo., 2010;107- 108).

5.2 Clarifying the Perspective

The normative perspective is developed through theological disciplines such as biblical theology and applied through practical theology. "It is a procedure involving scientific research and description of certain events and communicative actions" (Wyk cited in Smith & Okolo, 2010;107- 108). The Bible does not explicitly mention how to see technology, and it is only through inferences on how God wants humanity to excel in communication.

The premise is that the messages in the Bible are appropriate for understanding communication in relationships. The Bible generally focuses on the relationship between God and the people and what the future holds. For instance, Craige (cited in Smith and Okolo, 2010;107-109) argues that the stories underlying the psalms are not abstract philosophical theology but rather a concrete relational theology and patterns

for life experiences. Although what is commonly found in the Old Testament are messages revolving around themes such as faithfulness, righteousness, social justice, worship, and demand for wholehearted devotion to the Lord's revelation, it is also possible that an understanding of these virtues serves to promote the relationship. Aidoo (2017:169-199) argues that the harsh prayers of the psalmist in the individual lament psalms are paradigms of communication that seek to build relationships. The psalmist wants to build a relationship with God and cause the enemies to turn to God in the name of renewed fellowship and positive spirituality.

The inferences drawn from the Bible will serve as paradigms for understanding the significance of the use of technology for communication. Wright (1983:43) offers a classic definition of paradigm as the basis for interpreting the Bible, saying, "A paradigm is used as a model or example for other cases where a basic principle remains unchanged, though details differ". He states further that "a paradigm is not so much imitated as applied". As a person of the Christian faith, consideration is given to the biblical worldview as a paradigm for understanding the world and not simply a worldview locked in the past. The paradigms thus help in applying the stories in human lives rather than imitating them. God's acts in creation provide a paradigm for understanding how humanity can enhance communication with one another. The creation story has a social dimension, and hence it is necessary to explore the passage in its social context to find out how the text can be applied to the human social context.

A discussion on how the theological normative can be integrated into church communication development will help unveil God's will for humanity. Knowing God's task on humanity will inform how the church operates. As Ramunddal and da Silva (2021:2) rightly argue, "those interested in developing Christian congregations today should feel a need to clarify how biblical norms and values affect different practices within congregational development".

Janzen (2019), Sims (2009), Nthabiseng (2021), Ray et al., (2021), Adjei-Darko (2021), and Fogency (2013) have discussed aspects of social media usage in different contexts. However, they do not specifically address the issue of Zoom, which operates slightly differently from WhatsApp. This study makes inferences from discussions on the use

of Twitter and Facebook platforms to explain what happens with WhatsApp and Zoom because they all operate in a similar dimension. Furthermore, Van den Berg (2018) and Anthony-Paul Cooper (2021) have tried to provide normative interpretations for social media, but those were within a jurisdiction where the internet was not a problem in terms of accessibility, stability and affordability. How do those interpretations apply to a region where the internet has connectivity challenges and still operates within a COVID era or a pandemic?

5.3 Biblical Basis for Understanding Communication

This section exposes some biblical passages that can inform the task of communication. A theological understanding of the basis for improved communication will guide the normative theology that lies at the heart of using technology even in challenging times.

In a description of Cain's lineage, Jubal was "the father of all who plays the harp and flute". (Gen. 4:21). Walvoord and Zuck (1985:34) state that God allows these people to prosper in their earth-bound way. They produce music, weapons, agricultural devices, and city-culture. Stott and Aboagye-Mensah (2006:19) argue that it is a fact that these people were the first ones to learn skills. This civilization resulted in "separation" from God as they chose to enjoy these inventions outside God. Their minds were filled with these inventions. Even those who are destitute of the knowledge and grace of God may be endowed with many excellent and useful accomplishments, which may make them famous and serviceable in their generation" (Henry, 2003:20). In spite of their Godless attitude God granted them to develop technologically since it was going to improve human life and making things easy for humanity.

God instructed Noah to build an ark to save himself and his entire family from the destruction caused by the flood due to the moral depravities of the world at that time. The skills portrayed in determining the dimensions and materials used for building the ark show signs of technological knowledge. "So, make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks" (Gen. 6:14-16). God here

makes Noah the man of his counsel, communicating to him his intentions and plans to destroy this wicked world by water (Henry, 1985:124). Building such a huge ark might have been the first of his kind, technological expertise may be required to accomplish such a task. The architectural plan given to Noah by God developed his mind technologically and served as a guide to accomplish the task.

The Lord instructed Moses, "See, I have called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with the ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that may make all that I have commanded you" (Exod. 31:1-6).

The principle behind the engagement of skilled men to build a tabernacle and its furniture indicates that God will not do for humans what they can do for themselves (Dickson, 2011:110). God gifted the skilled artisans with special skills to use their judgement as to how to develop the materials and determine many of the details. MacDonald (1989:121) shares that Lord appoints his workers, endows them with skill and ability, and responsibility for his glory. For instance, Bezaleel was inspired by the Holy Spirit to carry on the instructions to build the tabernacle. Aholiab created the beauty of the tabernacle to manifest the splendor of God. The work is all Lord's, but he always accomplishes it through humans' instrumentality. It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding, stretched out the heavens (Jer. 10:12).

The text confirms that God is not only the king of all nations but the source of all wisdom and knowledge. Godself created all things beyond human comprehension, including human minds (Dickson, 2010:842).

The military accomplishments of Uzziah were formidable. He subjugated many nations, the Philistines, Arabians, Menunims and Ammonites. All these successes were accomplished through technological inventions, for example, the building of

watchtowers to monitor the enemies' borders. In Jerusalem, he made machines invented by skillful men to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows and great stones. And his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong (2 Chron. 26:15).

By the time of Solomon, technology could be used to create an enormous temple in Jerusalem and ships to travel at least part-way around the world. The text reveals that gold was so plentiful that Solomon even used it for making shields to hand in the house of the forest of Lebanon (MacDonald, 1989:367). And the king had a fleet of 'trading ships with the ships of Hiram. Once every three years the trading ships came bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks (1Kgs. 10:22).

God chooses to communicate with humanity in such a way that they can understand and respond accordingly to what he is communicating. He did not pursue humanity with a mystical form of communication that required a decoder to understand. He chooses to reveal himself through the languages and devices humans developed. The biblical references below from the Old Testament confirm that technology has been with humanity since the beginning of creation:

I)   Cain built a city (Gen. 4:17)

II)   Jubal made musical instruments (Gen. 4:21)

III)   Tubal-Cain made things out of bronze and iron (Gen. 4:22)

IV)   Noah built an ark (Gen. 6)

V)   People built the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9)

VI)   King Solomon built a temple (1Kgs. 6)

God is not a hardliner when it comes to inventing and using technology to further his purposes and sometimes allows its development when they do not align with his purposes. This stand suggests that God is not entirely for or against all technology. He calls his children to use technology for his glory and their good (1 Cor. 10:31). There is nothing inherently evil in the nature of technology. It is the natural outcome of God's mandate which God gave to humans in Genesis 1:28. Technology has and will continue to influence Christian ministry and shape the concept of the Bible from generation to generation.

5.4 The New Testament and Technology

The New Testament has complete examples of the Disciples sharing the good news at places where have gathered and having some time together. For instance, Peter preached the gospel publicly, and thousands responded. Paul preached the gospel at the centre of culture and influence in Greece, and influential people responded (Acts 17: 21-34).

The Great Commission commands Christians to take the gospel to the end of the earth through various evangelistic activities. In the New Testament, Paul, Peter, James and John used letters to communicate or disseminate the message to the believers (Rom. 1:1; John 1:1-2; 1Pt. 1:1-2; Jam. 1:1-2). Most of the New Testament is made up of letters to infant churches. Undoubtedly, the internet - social media has proven to be one of the key channels and the most efficient and reliable means of sharing information globally with little to no restrictions, which churches cannot ignore.

5.4.1 Paul's Letter Writing Technique

Though Paul used all sorts of ancient technology, how did he use technology to communicate the gospel? According to Richards (2004:75) regarding writing, Paul most likely used parchment, papyrus, and lead ink. All of these were the most modern communication technologies available during Paul's time. Paul would write letters to the churches to keep in touch with the members and instruct them on good Christian practices. A main communication tool during the Roman Empire was the use of letters; much like phone calls or text messages today. Through letters the family was updated on happenings, such as a letter to parents or loved ones to announce a new employment (Effiong, 2016:15). However, ancient letter writing was not as easy as today; longer letters likely went through several drafts on tablets (Effiong, 2016:16; Richards, 2004:76).

Though letter writing may not be considered as technology anymore, it was a technology Paul used to disseminate the gospel. The early Christians relied on cutting-edge technology as they compiled and disseminated the texts of the New Testament to the churches and Christians. New Testament epistles show signs of thoughtful

composition, likely worked and reworked before being committed to papyrus for dispatch (Richards, 2004:76). That letter writing in Paul's time was time-consuming and costly. As Trobisch (2001:14) explains, before book printing was invented in the fifteenth century, all books had to be copied by hand. Paul then capitalized on the technology available to propagate the gospel; he most likely used parchment, papyrus, and lead ink; the most modern communication technologies available during that time. Paul would write a letter to the various churches to keep in touch with them and instruct them in theology and discipleship.

The first letter of Apostle Paul to the Church in Corinth was timely and definitely on purpose. His primary goal was to show the Corinthians that the gospel was relevant to all sorts and conditions of men. The Corinthians' lifestyle changed, creating a wall of separation among its settlers (Effiong, 2016:2). Morality was at its lowest ebb, and Christianity was in its infancy. As the people's context and lifestyle changed over time, the approach to reading was obsolete and called for a new direction. Paul sought to adopt any suitable, effective means to reach the people with the gospel. Paul has been exemplified as a missionary icon who knew his tool and essence of timely adaptation (Effiong, 2016:14). Paul would have probably been the leading tele-evangelist or a cyber-missionary of this techno-cultural era.

When Jesus appeared to the disciples after his resurrection, he commanded them to teach all nations and make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). Inherent in these commands was the act of communication. Certainly, oral communication and written messages by New Testament disciples played a central role in establishing the early Christian church. Paul would write letters to keep in touch with the churches and instruct them in theology and discipleship. He relied on carriers who would use roads which were created by using the most modern technology available to the Roman Empire to deliver letters to other churches (Col. 4:16). This method was utilized to teach, encourage, correct, pray, explain and more. Essentially Paul used the technology available to him in his time to spread the good news.

5.4.2 Purposes for Paul's use of technology

5.4.2.1 Teaching

The church exists primarily to teach the world as commanded by Christ in the Great Commission. Paul's teaching through letters is still relevant in today's church ministry as the Word of God. Paul, through his letters, was specific to his audience or recipients. Christians of today are expected to teach through interactive technologies such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook, Facetime, and YouTube based on the right teachings of the scripture.

5.4.2.2 Correction

Paul, through his letters, had to deal with many issues bothering the churches. In 1 and 2 Corinthians, he had to deal with: a man who is sleeping with his mother-in-law (1 Cor 4), affluent church members preventing the poor members from partaking in communion (1 Cor 11), bickering about the importance of who baptized someone (1 Cor 3), and more. Paul's sincerity, burden, and tender firmness in his letters (2 Cor. 2:4) show that it is not hard to imagine that Paul would send a WhatsApp message or have a Zoom video discussion with elders of those churches and discuss these issues as he was travelling to a new city. These tools would have made things easier since some corrections could have been done within a short time.

5.4.2.3 Encouragement and prayer

Paul has some sort of exhortation and encouragement for the audience or recipients of the letters. Again, it does not seem incredible to imagine Paul sending a daily reminder to his WhatsApp group chat, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Paul and Timothy would schedule a time to call each other and pray together daily for the ministry.

Communicating the gospel to different generational cohorts is a privilege as well as a challenge for Christian preachers. Each generation has been and continues to be influenced by other factors, causing slight and drastic differences in how each generation receives the gospel's message.

5.4.3 Apostles John and Technology – Letter Writing

"Though I have much to write to you, I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face so that our joy may be complete" (2 Jn.12).

Wax (2011:np) writes, critics may argue that John was not comfortable using writing to communicate as he stated in the text. But a critical study of the text clearly shows that John was comfortable using his day's communication technology – pen and ink, though, he did so with a set of values contrary to the tendencies built into the technology of writing. He did not condemn letter writing which was the technology of his time, but rather engaged it when it became necessary to do so. John, like Paul, engaged churches and Christians through letter writing to disseminate the gospel. A letter requires that one isolated person write a message and then another isolated person later read it (Wax, 2011:np). From Wax's argument, it can be deduced that John would have been excited to have a face-to-face communication with the people but there were some restrictions that did not allow him to have a physical meeting with the church. The other alternative means to be in touch was letter writing which he used.

5.5 An Old Testament Understanding of Communication

5.5.1 The Nature of Humanity

The image of God in humanity creates an identity conducive to enhancing communication with God. God created human beings to have a line of divine-human communication. Szterszky (2018:5) argues that being made in the image of God is not some abstract theological concept since it provides the basis for how humans understand and approach every area of life. The way human nature is viewed, treating people and the environment, and engaging human culture are all grounded in the human understanding of the image of God in humanity (*Imago Dei*). Such an understanding falls within a paradigmatic reading of the Bible.

Wenham (1987:29-31) and Brain (2018:np) explain that Genesis 1:26-27 is a primary text on the acts of God in creating humanity. It provides the view that humanity is created in the image and likeness of God. God said, "according to our likeness, let us make humankind in our image. So God created them; male and female he created them"

(Gen. 1:26-27). From understanding the image of God in the human being, it is clear that God is seeking to have a relationship with the human being, and that he has a kingdom in which human beings are invited to live and work.

In the ancient world, an image was believed to carry the essence of that which is represented (Walton et al. 2000:29). However, that does not suggest that the image could do what the deity could do, nor that it looked the same as the deity. What can be drawn from idol imagery and child imagery is the concept that an image provides the capacity to draw attention to what the original looks like and act like him. God has made available tools to accomplish human tasks and communication, including conscience, self-awareness, and spiritual discernment.

The meaning of *Imago Dei* has been a matter of controversy among scholars and theologians (Simango, 2012:638). For Brueggeman and Linafelt (2012:55), "while the phrase the 'image of God is open to many interpretations, it is plausible that it refers to the exercise of human sovereignty over creation as a regency of God's sovereignty". Hence, no matter the varied interpretation, the fact that the text helps to see the basis for human beings gaining mastery over creation is significant. In Ren's view, cited in Hoekema (1994:12), the image of God imprinted on human nature provides the basis for our supernatural vocation, the life in Christ that is greater than any possibility resident in our natural powers but which is nonetheless a genuine exercise of our natural powers. In this sense, the theological concept of the *imago Dei* presumes both a nature and a future, both a capacity to do what God intends for us as the consummating vocation of humanity and the actual doing of what God intends.

Genesis 1:27-28 affirms how humanity has been given some power to fulfill God's mandate on earth. What God is doing is revealing Godself to man more openly and appropriately. It is believed that technology can help humans appreciate what God has for humanity. On humanity's responsibility, von Rad (1961:58) posits: "man's creation has a retroactive significance for all nonhuman creatures; it gives them a new relation to God. The creature, having been created by God, receives through man a responsibility to God; in any case, because of man's dominion, it receives once again the dignity belonging to the special domain of God's sovereignty".

5.5.2 Mandate to Humanity to Dominate

The dignity God has given to humanity should be used to exercise dominion over technology. According to Kidner (1967:50), "the 'image' is man's indelible constitution as a rational and morally responsible being, and the 'likeness' is that spiritual accord with the will of God which was lost at the Fall". God provided this dominion to humans and is always subject to God; the relationship of humans to the balance of creation is defined as one of rule and supremacy; the sphere of his sovereignty is from the lowest to the highest of the subjects placed beneath his sway. As such, the ability to use human knowledge and thinking to enhance communication is necessary.

This paragraph will rely on the finished product, the final canonical form of the text as it appears, without considering the hypothetical sources, being aware of the controversies regarding the unity, dating multiple authorship, and sources of the Pentateuch (Simango, 2012:np). God created humanity on the sixth day as the final act of creation. As God speaks into being, it is evident that humanity is uniquely designed and set apart distinctly from the rest of the created order. Humanity, therefore, is part of the created order, spoken into existence by God and given the mandate to rule over creation. As Kidner (1967:50) explains, "Let them make" stands in tacit contrast with "Let the earth bring forth, the note of self-communing and the impressive plural proclaim it momentous step; and this done, the whole creation is complete."

The phrase "*Imago Dei*" appears four times in the OT in Genesis 1:26-27, 5:3; 9:6; and Numbers 33:22. Additionally, the term "likeness" is employed in Genesis 1:26; 5:1-3 and may be a synonym for the LXX term *eikon* (Gen. 1:26, 27; 3; 9:6) and *homoiosis* (Gen. 1:26). The verse 27 repeats unique aspect of the creation of humanity as the author of Genesis reiterates the words of God, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). What does it mean for humanity to comprehend itself as being in the image of God. Hamilton (1990:50) writes, "It is clear that v. 26 is not interested in defining God's image in man, and it simply presents the fact, which is repeated in the following verse. His argument may indeed be true, but it gives less than the answer philosophers and

theologians expect to the question. Moltmann (1974:1) comments, "A cow is only a cow. It does not ask, 'What is a cow? Who am I?' Only man [human] asks such questions, and indeed it clearly has to do about himself [herself] and his [her] being".

Middleton (2013:np) sees the debate on the interpretation of *Imago Dei* as a result of the scarcity of biblical references and their apparent lack of definition. "The reasons have created a virtual forest of interpretations over the church's history" (Middleton, 2013:np). He says, "Christian scholars have read their own cultural interpretations of what it is to be human into Genesis 1" (Berkhof cited in Middleton, 2013:np). Snaith (1974:24) comments that many "orthodox" theologians through the centuries have lifted the phrase "image of God" (imago Dei) right out of its context, and, like Humpty-Dumpty, they have made the word mean just they prefer it to mean. Craigan (2016:25) rightly argues from the biblical perspective that, the fact that Genesis does not expand on what it means for humanity to be created in the image of God may suggest that the original audience already had a sense of what that meant.

Specifically, and explicitly, the creation account does not state in what way human beings are like God, although one may identify certain resemblances to God. For instance, Genesis 1:26 reminds the reader that God commanded humanity to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth". This idea is reiterated in verse 28" "God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth".

To Middleton, some scholars and theologians identified *Imago Dei* as rationality, the soul, personhood, love, relational abilities, dominion over creation, moral sensitivity, representation, conscience, orientation, the gift of speech, artistic and technical creativity (Grez cited in Middleton, 2013:np). Erickson for instance, has given three views shared by scholars and theologians:

a. The substantive view considers God's image to consist of certain characteristics within the very nature of humankind, which may be psychological, physical, or spiritual.

b. The relational view regards God's image not as something inherently or intrinsically present in human beings but as we experience a relationship between beings and God or between two or more humans.

c. The functional view presents the image of God as a function that humans perform (Erickson cited in Simango, 2012:np).

For instance, Ramsay cited in Craigan (2016:22), summarized the substantial (structuralist) view, the Western concepts of imago Dei as either substantial or relational. Patristic and Medieval Western theologians put much emphasis on reason as the primary "substance" of the image of God (Tarus, 2016:18). The Western theologians identified conscience, aesthetic sense, capabilities, emotions, dominion, original righteousness, spiritual awareness, immortality, personhood, freedom, and moral capacity as other substantial characteristics of human nature that were the 'stamp; of the imago Dei (Tarus, 2016:19). According to Hall (1956:98):

The notion that it is the human reason that constitutes Homo Sapiens, God's earthly imago is so firmly entrenched in the convention of Christendom that it is hardly possible for anyone who is part of the intellectual stream of our culture to read Genesis 1:26-27 without immediately and subconsciously assuming that the ancient Hebraic author "phrase" imago Dei expressly referred to the rational capabilities of the human creature (Hall cited in Tarus, 2016:21). The weakness of this perspective is that if reason is the core of what it means to bear the image of God, then did the fall make reason obsolete? Hence, the philosophical argument based on reason or rationality on what it means to imago Dei does not enjoy a solid theological understanding.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) argued from a relational point of view. Though he did not break entirely from the reasonists' perspective, he saw reason elevates human beings above non-human creation. However, he contends that the image of God was the original holiness that human beings possessed before the fall. Though the reason is important, Luther argues that the relationship with God is of supreme importance (Bell cited in Tarus, 2016:20).

There was a perfect relationship between God and humanity before the fall that represents the imago Dei. The obvious inference of the relational view is that humanity

thrives in community and is created in the image of God so that they may enjoy a vibrant and perfect relationship with God and with one another (Tarus, 2016:22).

While some scholars see the creation narrative as substantive or relational, Walton (2009:33) seems to support the functional view. He sees it from a functional rather than a material perspective, observing that "create something (cause it to exist) in the ancient world means to give it a function, not material. To him, God is not setting up functions as much as he is installing functionaries (Walton cited in Craigan, 2016:26). He further argues that at the pinnacle of those functionaries is humanity and, while there may be multiple functions for humanity, "probably the primary one, is that people are delegated a godlike role (function) in the world where he places them" (Craigan, 2016:27). Walton's views on function seem to correlate with Middleton (2019:54) when he writes, "the royal function or purpose of humanity in Genesis 1:26 is not a mere add-on to their creation in God's image, separable in some way from their essence or nature. On the other hand, the rule defines image as its 'permanent implication'".

The command to humanity to assume the responsibility for rulership as God's representatives "becomes a constitutive aspect of the creation of humanity in the image of God" (Craigan, 2016:26). The first task God assigns man, Adam, is the naming of the animals on the earth (Gen. 2:18-20). God seems to have "done" with his part within the sixth day and now commanded humanity to continue the work and to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue I and structure to creation" (Gen. 1:28). In this function, the creativity or creative imagination of humanity is seen to be at work in the continuing process of bringing order. Crouch (2013:5) confirms this when he argues that for a case, humanity must 'be able to make decisions, set goals, and strategize effectively to achieve the goals. From Crouch's argument, it can be concluded that to be a person means, to be a "creative option". The key component of humanity's creation in the image of God is the ability to create. As Turner comments, "creativity is part of that inherited image because God is a designer and maker (Turner cited in Harper, 2012:12). One's desire to create, his ability to develop concepts tangible and his pleasure in making are reflections of God's original "let there be" and "it was good".

Humanity's role as creators cannot be overlooked because creative capacity is a

requirement for the task that God entrusts to humanity (Gen. 1:28). Humanity is accountable because the natural law states that nobody can be held responsible unless he is capable of envisaging states affairs, distinct from those which his experience has led him to believe he can obtain (Wolterstorff, 1980:74).

Many scholars and theologians, such as Wallis (1972:26); Walton (2009:554) refer to Psalm 8 for its human relation to God. In the New Testament, 'image' language is used almost exclusively concerning Christ, either reference to him as the eikon of God or humanity as refashioned into Christ's image and likeness (Rom. 8:29; 1Cor. 15:49; 2Cor. 3:18, 4:4' Eph. 4:24' Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). James 3:9 makes reference to those "made in the likeness of God" which likely refers to all humanity and in 1Cor. 11:7 refers to humans alone as God's "image" and "glory" (cf. Wisdom 2:23 in The Apocrypha).

From the above, God created human beings so that they will live as relational beings and communicate with each other and God. The image informs the nature of the communicative task of God in man. This mandate gives a framework for understanding the imago Dei in humanity in terms of being God's ruling representatives on earth. Genesis 1 denotes that God is a king who delegates some of his authority to the sun to govern or rule the day, the moon to govern or rule the night, and much of the power to humanity to rule the earth in a unique capacity as an image bearer.

5.5.3 The Place of Humanity

After creating the physical world and the animal kingdom, God created human beings, Adam and Eve, to be his friends. Although the text does not explicitly say that Adam and Eve were to be God's friends, as in the case of Abraham and Moses, the relationship between God and humanity was friendly. Unlike the Bible, the Epic of Atrahasis, a Babylonian myth that gives an account of both creation and flood, shows that humanity is created to labor for the gods and maintain the earth, replacing lesser deities who went on strike (Longman III, 2005:77). In brief, human beings in the Babylonian myth were thought to be of utility value to provide rest to the gods. However, in the Genesis creation text, God creates an appropriate environment, namely a fruitful garden, for Adam's sustenance and pleasure. Brueggemann (1982:33) further states that "the role

of the human person is to see to it that the creation becomes fully the creation willed by God". As such, the ultimate task of humanity is to pursue what God wants the world to be. The human being cannot isolate himself or herself from the will of God.

In Genesis 2:15, God reveals the motive for communicating with humanity by inviting human beings to take care of all created. Such a responsibility echoes a friendship based on trust and love. Reno (2010:69) explains that human beings were given the mandate to till and keep the land "as a parent, as a teacher, as a carpenter, and as an entrepreneur, in each case seeking to bring out the natural fruitfulness and productivity of our children, students, raw materials, and collective endeavors. All socially productive tasks deserve disciplined work and concentrated attention". In other words, the church needs to use the capacities God has given to its members to work out possibilities to communicate with others about God's goodness and greatness during times of pandemics. It calls for the use of appropriate raw materials just like a teacher or an entrepreneur to ensure fruitfulness and productivity. If teachers are using technology, then the church can also use technology.

Communication is enhanced in the context of friendship. Adam was to respond to God's friendship by demonstrating obedience coming from working on the land God had created (Kline 2006:14-15). In Genesis 2:16-17, God commanded human beings to stay away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Failure to keep this particular commandment would result in death, while obedience would make God's plans for human beings to fill the earth become possible (Gen 1:27-28). Wenham (1991:67) explains that "the prohibition applies simply to one of the two special trees: man was allowed to eat of the tree of life if he wanted." In the view of Wenham (1987:87), the restriction given was blunt and firm, that man should not eat of the tree that gives access to wisdom. However, such a command does not mean God wants humanity to stay ignorant and not have knowledge. God's intention is for humanity to grow in wisdom if they obey his commandments: "For wisdom will come into your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul" (Prov. 2:10).

In the Garden of Eden, God maintained a friendly relationship with the human beings He created by walking in the garden in the cool of the day (Gen 3:8). Walton (2001:224)

argues that the biblical text does not indicate that God was always walking in the garden as a regular thing.

It is possible that based on enhancing friendship; God made for the man, a woman as a helpmate. For Wenham (1991:87), the creation of woman was part of God's fatherly concern for man and to accentuate man's need for human companionship. Dryness (1979: 83) asserts that by God creating male and female, human beings are made with the unique ability to love and have an intimate relationship with their fellow humans. This duality is a vital part of their being: humans are made for relationship, to complement each other in love. That is to say, humanity is dependent on each other and stands on equal footing before God.

God has imparted remarkable creature facilities to his human image-bearers to be co-creators. However, humans cannot create *ex-nihilo* out of anything; they have been granted that ineffable aesthetic ability to perceive, appreciate, and create good and beautiful things by organizing and shaping God's resources. Humans have been endowed with technological insight to make life easier and more comfortable and bring glory to his name. God did not create human beings just for a relationship; he was not lonely, but they were created to partner with him to continue creating for humanity. As Pearcey et al., (2020:95) argue:

> Creation, Fall and Redemption are not only the foundational turning point of biblical history – but they also function as marvelously useful diagnostic tools. Genuinely biblical theology must keep all three principles in a careful balance: that all created reality came from the hand of God and was originally and intrinsically good; that all is marred and corrupted by sin; yet that all are capable of being redeemed, restored and transformed by God's grace.

Ayee (2012:2) shares that the clarion call of Christians "is to redeem communication so that it can be appropriately used directionally for what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable" (cf Phil. 4:8). For Ayee (2012:6), "God created humans with the ability to communicate with him and with other people and to create and foster a sense of community". Similarly, Schultze (cited in Myers, 2017:115) argues that "God intends for all people to use the gift of communication to love God and neighbor; not

just to exchange messages".

The book of Genesis also opens with two divergent accounts about creation. There are similarities and divergences, similar in that they both describe the creation of plants, animals, and humans. Nevertheless, they are distinct and even contradict each other on key issues. In Genesis 1, God creates plants and animals and simultaneously makes man and woman. In Genesis 2, God creates a human, plants and animals, later dividing humans into males and females. The woman is a helpmate. De Claisse-Walford (2006:349) explains the meaning of helpmate or helper, saying, "in the Hebrew Bible conveys the idea of a "help" that is a strong presence —guiding, protecting, sometimes out in front, sometimes standing behind, an aid without which humankind would be unprotected and vulnerable to all sorts of unsettling situations." These accounts, in a sense, present the same event in a different order and, for the male and female, a complementary function. The differences between males and females are there to enhance communication.

Both Bokovoy (2014:1-4, 2022:np) and Middleton (2013:np) argue that the literary styles of the two accounts are different. "The first account presents neatly organized into three days of preparation followed by three days of actual formation. Each day concludes with the formulaic expression, 'and there was X'". But on the seventh day, all creation was in the proper sphere, and God rests. (Bokovoy, 2022:np). This orderly pattern suggests a well-planned universe. Middleton (2013:np) affirms that the literary styles, scope, and organizational principles are different. "Genesis 1 describes the creation of the entire cosmos – heaven and earth over six days, with repetition and pattering, climaxing with God's rest on the seventh day". According to Wenham (1991:10), The careful symmetries and deliberate repetitiveness of the chapter reveal more than a carefully composed introit to the book of Genesis; they speak of a God who creates order by his very Word of command. Gen. 1 is more than a repudiation of contemporary oriental creation myths; it is a triumphant invocation of the God who has created all men and an invitation to all humanity to adore him who has made them in his own image.

Bokovoy (2022:np) views the second account as lacking both the structure and the focus

of the first account. "It is much or less formulaic; rather, it is a dramatic narrative in a series of seven scenes". By contrast, Genesis 2 is more straightforwardly a narrative in the formal sense, with a series of tensions and resolutions. Middleton (2013:np) also says, "And in contrast to the wide- angle view of Genesis 1, which surveys the cosmos, Genesis 2 zooms in telescopically on humanity on the earth".

Bovokoy (2022:np) shares that these divergences suggest two separate authors with different theological perspectives and agendas. He observes that the differences in the accounts reflect the unique way each author conceptualizes the deity. In Genesis 1, God is distant or transcendent, creating through speech according to the master plan. God spoke, and creation came into existence. This image contrasts with Genesis 2, where the author depicts God anthropomorphically, who walks in the garden and, like the potter working with clay, a hands-on, trial-and-error approach to creation. God, in this account, seems more accessible than the transcendent Creator in Genesis 1. All these are to make the point that since God spoke and all things came into being, humanity created in the image of God has to use the channels of communication to continue the work of God.

Middleton (2013:np) contends that since the early 20th century, "a virtual consensus has been building" among OT scholars, the contextual relationship between the declaration that Adam and Eve, created in God's image, is called to exercise dominion over the earth. Thus, humans ought to think of the image of God in human beings as a function or task rather than a static endowment of some sort. Moreover, Genesis 1:26-28 clarifies that humans were created to bear the image of God to perform a task, "image-bearing is his reason for being" (William, 2013:np). Walvoord and Zuck (1984:28) argue that God's purpose in creating humans in his image was functional: to care, manage and have dominion (Gen. 1:26, 29). They contend that God's dominion was presented by a "representative". Humans must be identified by their being the image of God and must bear a dynamic, active, functional trajectory. God created human beings for a purpose, a task man in his image to carry out an assignment to fulfill his mission for the world.

Genesis 1:28 presents the biblical mandate that can be used for developing using

technology: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and every living creature that moves on the ground'".

The phrase "be fruitful and multiply" can also promote increased knowledge and wisdom, novelty and creativity Hence, any policy or regulation restricting persons' opportunities to discover new meanings of life is theologically unsupportable. Dyer (2020:np) writes that mobile phones draw on thousands of scientific discoveries and are enabled by the creativity God embedded in every person who bears and functions as his image.

Therefore, the theology of communication urges humans to co-create technologies and cultures to enhance their way of life. The church's work is not left out and should be set within the guidelines of enhanced communication for the people of God.

5.5.4 The Potential of Humanity (Psalm 8:5-8)

All creation displays God's design, power, and goodness, but human beings are made in the image of God to represent him uniquely (Allen, 1996:312; Wilson, 2002:48). Everything created by God was pronounced good but the verdict on the creation of human was exceptionally good (MacDonald, 1989:557). Futato (2007:34) defends that the purpose of the Psalms is instruction, not worship. Psalm 8 speaks of the glory of God and how the glory of man and his destiny reflects on God. The psalmist declares that:

> You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas (Ps 8:58).

According to deClaisse-Walford et al. (2014:120), Psalm 8 is a hymn of praise, the first such in the Psalter. "The Psalmist is led to ask the internal searching question about the purpose of human existence. The bank vault of human worth is not located in man's existence but rather in the twin sources of the God who created them and the creation

over which God has directed us to exercise responsibility: We are valuable because God values us and because God has commanded us to value creation". On the other hand, this Psalm deals with God and his relationship with humanity.

God, the king of creation, has made humanity and placed it into royalty to govern creation's responsibility. Humanity, therefore, has privileges and responsibilities to act on behalf of God. Psalm 8 draws attention to the fact that authority comes not as a reward but as an obligation. It is God who delegates humanity to exercise leadership and authority. Our rule cannot be arbitrary or self-serving but must serve God's intentions and purposes (Ps. 8:7-8).

Verses 3-8 express the author's wonder at God's dealings with humanity for whom God has ordained a special role in the created order. Verses 5-8 also constitute a reflection on Genesis 1:26- 28, where God commissions human beings, created in the image of God, to rule over the fish of the sea, birds of the air, and over all living creatures (Guthrie & Quinn, 2006:236). Human beings have a God-given authority that places them in charge of the physical world and everything therein in which they live as God's representatives (Gen. 6-8) (Wenham, 2004:114).

In this passage, the Psalmist sees that God made humanity a little lower than the angels, and this is evident in the way that human beings are not like angels in their present glory, power, and nearness to God. The word "angels" in the passage is translated from the Hebrew transliteration, *Elohim*, and often refers to God himself and other divine beings. Briggs and Briggs (1906: 64) explains that the Hebrew *Elohim* reflects a strict monotheistic view, but the Word could refer to God and angels, divine being, or gods. Kraus (1993:183) prefers to translate *Elohim* as "divine beings" or "heavenly beings". However, some ancient translators of the Bible from Hebrew to Greek understood *Elohim* as used in the passage to speak of angelic beings. As VanGermeren (cited in Kraus, 1993:187) posits, "The Hebrew for [angels] is simply 'God' or 'god'. It may refer to angelic beings".

By such an analogy, the Psalmist here might probably be stressing the idea that the human being is made in God's image, yet the emphasis is exalting the glory of God over humanity. For Kraus (1993:183), "the song is to be about the royal and divine

grandeur that rests on human beings. According to Yahweh's determination and arrangement, the little, frail human being (v. 4) belongs to God's world". In other words, human beings share an aspect of God's glory. Miller (1986:74) rightly observes that this Psalm emphasizes that nothing should be seen as possessing power beyond God's control. For Weiser (1962: 144), "the Lord of the universe has entrusted man even with the divine function of governing; man's status would even have been equal to that of God but for the fact that God made the status of man 'wanting', though only in a little".

So, the glory human being possesses is little compared to God. To Bullock (2001:63), Psalm 8 is declarative praise intended to explain the human relationship with God. It dwells on the human being's reflection of God in creation by being created in the image of God. By implication, God has endued humans with noble faculties and capacities. In the words of Brueggemann (1984:36), "humankind has honor and glory to the angels, not unlike God. Humankind has dominion over the other creatures, not unlike God. Humankind is not unlike God". In other words, God has given humanity his image, distinguished him from the inferior creatures, and qualified the human being for dominion over other creatures by making him wiser than beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven. According to Mays (2011:69), "The psalm invites us to see all the civilizing work of the human species as honor and glory conferred on it by God and, therefore, as cause and content for the praise of God".

How human beings use the glory God has given to them matters. Despite the position given to human beings, humans tend to make "wonderful" inventions or creations such as technologies. As people delight at the endless technological possibilities, they acknowledge God as the source of human ingenuity and glorify him by proclaiming: "Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (Ps 8:1). In this sense, God has positioned the human next in dignity to angels and has crowned him with the world's empire. In a modified sense, the human is still invested with some remains of his original dominion (Heb. 2:6-8; 1 Cor. 15:27, 28). Myers (2017:147) argues that "God made us have dominion by the word of creation. He made us kings unto God by his blood. His name shall be honored through all the earth". It was both honor and privilege to him that he was made last: an honor, for the method of the creation, was to advance from that which was less perfect to that which was more so; and a favour

(Henry et al., 2003:6). Calvin (1992:96) shares that the paternal solicitude of God for man is conspicuous because he furnished the world with all things needful before he formed man [human].

The psalmist earlier says: "When I consider your heavens…what is humankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for him?" (vs. 3-4). Despite this self-awareness, God has made humanity "rulers over the works of his hands" and "put everything under our feet" (vs. 6). This Psalm echoes the cultural mandate from Genesis 1:28, which denotes the notion of "filling the earth", that mandate does not necessarily mean that humanity should produce more children as perceived by some people but instead, unfolding all the possibilities of fruitfulness in creation: in art, humanities, literature, social sciences, mathematics, natural sciences, engineering and computer science – technology.

Being made a little lower than the angels does not limit humanity in creativity and invention. God makes all things new, and "that novelty and creativity are essential elements of God's world" (Fore, 2006:np). Therefore, Christians resist any attempt to restrict communication; new ideas, values, and understandings are essential to growth and human potential.

Psalm 8:3-9 parallels Genesis 2:8-15 in which God had made abundantly for humanity and had given the mandate to have dominion over all living creatures on the earth. Hebrews 2:5-9 applies this part of Psalm 8 to Jesus. He assumed "real human beings on our behalf, and after his death for our sins, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God restored the ingenuity Adam lost by sinning" (1 Cor. 15:20-28).

5.5.5 Revelation as a Channel of Communication

God's self-revelation in the Bible serves as a paradigm for communication, for through that, God spoke to humanity. When God appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush, he asked what was in Moses' hand. Moses replied that it was a staff, and God used the staff in Moses' hand for his own glory. The staff will be used as a sign to make the people listen to Moses that the Lord has appeared to him (Exod. 4:1-9). Revelation is "revealing or disclosing some form of truth or knowledge through communication

143

with a deity or other supernatural entity or entities" (Harper 2012:20). Bedner (1989) simply sees revelation as how God communicates with the church. He argues that the revelation does not come through a single channel but through various channels according to the needs and circumstances of the audience (Bedner, 1989 cited in Smedra 2013:np). Revelation is an ascertainable historical fact in the Bible that God is infinitely superior to human beings' thoughts, speech, and vision. The main content of Christian communication is the experience an individual has gone through in his relationship with God and what God has done in the lives of the individual through history, nature, group experiences, individual stories and the Bible. The revelation comes as a form of communication: God wished to share divine benefits that entirely surpass the powers of the human mind to understand.

God's self-revelation to the ancestors provided a basis for them to communicate who God is to their sons and daughters and generations to come. Literally, revelation means "uncovering or unveiling" (Hart, 2005:42). The OT understanding of God's revelation is through dreams, omens, divinations, and other signs and symbols like fire, thunder, rain and storm (Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10, 1Sam. 15:23). These signs and symbols are considered channels of God's revelations; God speaks to His people. Theologically, God's revelation happens only through communication; either He was communicating with a human in Word or action. A human being can communicate with God or other human beings but not through revelation. Hence, Smedra (2013:np) describes revelation as a supernatural, direct divine influence that secures an accurate transference of truth in language others may understand. It is also God's controlling influence over the human authors who penned the original autographs of scripture. God can produce a verbally accurate book; every section's precise statement represents His thought. In this process, God takes the initiative in making himself known and continues to reveal more and more of himself to generations through his own will (Jer. 29:13).

5.6 A New Testament Understanding of Communication

This section deals with the theology of communication from the New Testament perspective. It first looks at interpretations of the image of God in humanity. Then, it looks at Matthew 5:13-16 and 25:31-40 as texts of reference to discuss the theology of communication. These texts present a view of Christian identity. The human's

responsibility in creation is to use their ingenuity to make life comfortable (Osborne, 2010:678).

5.6.1 The Nature of Humanity

Several New Testament (NT) texts echo "the language of Genesis 1 in affirming that humans are or have the image of God created within their essence (1 Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9) (Garland, 2003:304). Lemke (2014:np) cites Hoekema's Old Testament Commentary, presenting other NT texts that portray Jesus Christ as given to humans to achieve "full" humanity (2 Cor. 3:13, Rom. 8:29, Col. 3:10). Commenting on Colossians 3, Powell (2019:383) explains that the new way of being human invokes the image of Christian baptism, yet it affects human relationships. Both family and social relationships are marks of the daily lives of believers as a result or consequence of growth in knowledge and maturity. In these texts, the image of God must be "transformed" or "renewed" to be a polemic against the Judaism of the time, and they are meant to present a contrast between the disciples and the Scribes and Pharisees.

From antiquity, salt has been used to prepare food (Davis & Allison, 1988:472-473). In addition to culinary use, salt was also used as a preservative. Besides, salt was also used in Israelite temple rituals; it had to be added to offerings and sacrifices offered upon the altar (Lev. 2:13; Ezek. 43:24; Ezra 6:9-10). Animal food was flavoured with salt (cf. Isa. 30:24). A covenant sealed by salt was believed to be everlasting; thus, the expression "a covenant of salt" (Num. 18:19; 2 Chr. 13:5). come into alignment with Christ, the perfect image of God. The image of God in the NT does not belong to man but is identified with Christ, an image new being the project reflecting the prototype (Porteous, 1962:682 cited in Lemke, 2014:np). In his reflection on Genesis 1:26-27, Paul also indicates that knowing and communicating with God is intrinsic to God's creation (Rom. 1:19). With a renewed mind, the Church should not rely on old ways of communication but seek new and enhanced ways.

5.6.2 The symbol of Salt and Light (Matthew 5:13-16) as a Paradigm for Communication

"You are the salt of the earth". But if the salt loses its saltness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot"

(Matt. 5:13). While the discourse in Matthew was spoken on a Mount (5:1), in Luke, it was spoken on an unidentified plain (Lk. 6:17). In Matthew, the Beatitudes are in the third person plural; in Luke, they are in the second person plural.

Davies (1989:250-251) notes that the uses of salt and light are two metaphoric parables meant to Salt without saltiness is not salt, for real salt does not lose its saltiness. Job asked: "Can something tasteless be eaten without salt?" (Job 6:6).

Keener (2009:173) explains that the possibility of salt losing its value can be likened to "a professed disciple who lacks genuine commitment". The verb for "tasteless" used in Matthew 5:13 literally means "become foolish (*mwranqh*)". Thus, a point Jesus makes is that a disciple can act foolishly, and such a person would be good for nothing. Hence, salt is used exclusively in a figurative sense. In Matthew 5:13, salt represents the disciples, while in Mark 9:50, Jesus tells the disciples to have salt in themselves. If salt loses its distinctiveness, it has no value (Matt. 5:13; Mk. 9:50; Lk. 14:34). As salt gives flavour to food, the disciples are to give flavour to the earth. The disciples who lose saltiness are of no value any longer.

As "salt and light," Christians are to preserve, guide, and guard the world to live a fulfilled life. If other men begin to decay due to sin, Christians are to direct them as light shows the way and preserve them from decaying in sin. France (2007:210), in his work, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of Matthew*, argues that "The world cannot endure without salt". He shares that the disciples are no less essential to the well-being of "the earth", which here refers to human life in general. He elaborates on two essential uses of salt in the ancient world: flavouring and preservation of food. Hence, the disciples of Christ are to provide flavour to the world they live in; they are to make the world a better place. In other words, they make life comfortable for their generation, which is the motif of inventors. "The disciples are seen in prophetic succession, and thus like their OT counterparts as covenant witnesses and guarantors to their age" (France, 2007:211).

Jesus further enhances the metaphor of light with another proverbial saying: "Nobody lights a lamp and puts it under a basket but on a lampstand" (Matt. 5:15). Here, Jesus referred to a typical Palestinian vessel with a wick that can be lit to give light. The

vessel was filled with oil and placed on a lampstand to provide illumination in the house. Lighting a lamp and covering it with a basket will never make sense. If light cannot be concealed, so is the light of the disciples. Their lives and actions are to be visible to the world. That is why Jesus added: "Let your light shine before men so that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Light is meant to guide a path. It directs the way to go (Jn. 12:46). Light dispels darkness (John 3:19-20). Light brings order to chaos (Phil. 2:15). Light warns of dangers ahead in a person's path (Eph. 5:11-14). Light can protect a person from stumbling and falling (Rom. 13:12). Here, Jesus was exhorting the disciples to be a shining light to the world. Light is a well-known metaphor both in the Bible and in Judaism (Keener, 2009:174). Just as the mission of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah is seen in terms of light (Isa 42:6; 49:6), the ministry of Jesus is light to the world (Matt. 4:16; Lk. 2:32; Jn. 8:12; 12:35-36). In the Old Testament, Israel was to be light to the nations (cf. Isa. 60:1-3). Paul uses the metaphor of light to represent the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:8; Phil. 2:15).

The verse, "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden," (Matt.5:14) joins two comparisons: A light and a town. Both of them have one thing in common. "A city placed on a mountain cannot be concealed, and a candle" is not usually concealed when it has been lighted. The comparison also implies that light should always be situated on a hill, a raised point to be visible without any hindrance. Therefore, Christians ought to live in such a manner, as if the eyes of all were upon them. As lighted candles, Christians are to be prepared to produce light to prevent the world from wandering in darkness. There is the need to put all God-given gifts into play to make the world comfortable. The analogy also implies that Christians become automatic children of light after being enlightened by faith and are exhorted to carry "burning lamps" in our hands to direct others on the way of life (Lk. 12:35). Through Jesus Christ, God has placed the church in this rank on the condition that they shall make an impact on all others from an elevated situation.

Since nobody lights a lamp only to cover it up but places it so conspicuously as to give light to all who need light so Christians cannot hide their lights but hold it forth before men so that they may experience life transformation: "Neither do people light a lamp,

and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, giving light to everyone in the house." In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds, and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:15- 16). Therefore, the Christian's light must shine by doing such good works as all people may see and give glory to God.

France (2007:212) explains that "light symbolizes a new hope," which arises through humans applying God's gifts to produce tools that make life easier. The mission of God for the world is for his servants to be "a light to the nations" (Isa. 42:6, 49:6). The world needs that light, and it is through Christians that it must be made visible. Christians are called to shine in the cosmos (Phil. 2:15). It is not surprising that Christians have played a significant role in technology and inventions for ages. However, more work must be done to become the salt and light in using these communication tools. As the world's salt and light, Christians cannot neglect technology on moral or ethical grounds. They are to preserve the world from decaying from sin – misuse and misapplication of technological tools as a light to guide on their proper use according to God's will and guard and warn the people about the dangers of their misapplications.

If social media can be enhanced to provide a key link in the communicative task of the church, and used to strengthen the moral and ethical perspectives of life, it will then be said that the church is living up to expectations. Social media usage for both theological and secular sciences, thus, grants the church the channel, especially in this COVID-19 era, to communicate her message in a more meaningful manner in her mission. The Christian, through baptism, is called to fulfil a mission of the communication of the Gospel. This theological understanding allows all believers to use social media to improve personal experiences and ongoing conversions, wherein Christ becomes the living presence who reveals a model par excellence for all human communication activities (Keener, 2009:174).

5.6.3 Judgment for not Using Our Gifts (Matthew 25:31-40)

Matthew 25:31-40 is part of the larger narratives about Jesus' teaching using parables, the final discourse of Jesus before his passion. It falls within the larger pericope of Matthew 24:3 – 25:46. The pericope in Matthew is also the last "parable" in Jesus' eschatological discourse, and the theme of judgment plays a central role. The parable

sets the scene with "all the nations" gathered before the Son of Man (25:32 NRSV). It may be appropriate to take "all the nations" (Greek: *panta ta ethne*) in a universalistic sense to mean "all peoples" (Osborne, 2010:243). However, there are instances where Matthew uses the Greek *ethne* specifically for Gentiles (4:15; 6:32; 10:5; 20:19, 25; 24:14; 28:19). Hence, the NRSV renders *ethne* as "elect" (or "Gentiles" in some contexts) while the NIV uses "nations".

For Matthew, those who are praised are the ones who use their gifts for the benefit of others. Ethical behaviour is equated to using what is available to care for others in adherence to Jesus' commands, and it does not result from much effort or from trying hard. Instead, Matthew points out that using what is available to the benefit of others comes naturally; good fruit comes from good trees. Again, the "good works" have less to do with ethical actions than living a life of other- centredness.

A mission becomes redefined when Christians consider the move outwards to others as a move toward God. When Christians use what they have to the benefit of others, then they will be rewarded, as Matthew puts it: "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you whom my Father blesses; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). "The Greek is not identical with "blessed by my Father", but you blessed ones who belong to my Father". The inheritance is for all believers of Christ, not Israel alone, and those who came from east, west, and south (cf. Matt. 8:11; Lk 13:29). For all people in every nation who fear God and use the technologies God has given to the benefit of others, the Kingdom is prepared for them (cf. Acts 10:35).

5.6.4 Incarnation as a Pointer to Communication in the New Testament

The doctrine of the incarnation is the meeting point of the human being and God. The model for communication of incarnation is Jesus, the Son of God who took on flesh and entered into the human experience to communicate himself for mankind to know him well. God is a community, God. Jesus Christ is the medium and message of God's communication (Jn. 1:4). The essence of incarnation is to convey God's agenda toward humanity. Incarnation is the manifestation of God's love in action. In the strict sense, Jesus Christ, the Word became flesh, and that act is a form of communication. Jesus

utterly identified himself through incarnation with those who were to receive his communication and presented his message not only in words but in the whole manner of his life. God incarnate as Jesus Christ is at the centre of any Christian communication because Jesus's way of communicating is central to the Christian understanding of how to effectively communicate the Word of God.

5.6.5 The Trinitarian Model as a Pointer to Communication

Peterson (2016:17) proposes a Trinitarian model for communication; he notes that Trinity is active in creating and advancing communication. He illustrates this for each person of the Trinity: "God said, 'let there be light'. Soukup and Glader (2020:9) expresses that, Such a basic interpersonal act of communication, simple speech, can have very creative results. God also created mass communication and long-distance communication when he created light. The Word becoming flesh is also an act of communication and sharing. Soukup and Glader argue that God could not share the experience of human beings until the Word became flesh. "They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak foreign languages, as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech" (Acts 2:4ff). The gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was speech. There are other gifts of the Spirit, but the first gift was the speech in foreign languages (Peterson, 2016:18-19). The author can strongly argue that all Christian communication should refer to a biblical model aided by the Holy Spirit. God's very nature is communicative, flowing freely within the Trinity.

5.6.6 Inspiration as a Model for Communication

Another key channel God has used and continues to use to communicate with the world is inspiration. It is how revelation becomes objectively disclosed (Smedra, 2013:np). Smedra further explains that inspiration uniquely endows the Bible with "veracity and authority". Inspiration is by nature verbal, plenary and dual authorship. By verbal inspiration, Smedra explains that the Spirit guided the choice of the words used in the original writings. Human authorship was respected in the process to the extent that the writers' characteristics were preserved, and style and vocabulary were employed without the intrusion of error. That is why Paul attests that every scripture is inspired to communicate something, as in teaching, exhorting, rebuking and correcting (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

On the other hand, Plenary inspiration is "the accuracy which the verbal inspiration secures, is extended to every portion of the Bible" (Smedra, 2013:np). Smedra's contention is that all its parts are infallible to the truth and final divine authority. For authorship, the Bible is the Word of God and a word of man. It is the Word of God in the sense that it originates with Him and expresses His thoughts and wills. It is the word of humans because God chose some people and nations for high honor and responsibility to communicate to the entire world. He inspired people and nations to transcribe his thoughts and will into written form. The scripture has a unique role in preserving and communicating with God, though God can speak apart from the Bible without contradictions.

5.7 Implications of the Theological Analysis

5.7.1 Being Fruitful in Communication

Therefore, the theology of communication urges humans to co-create technologies and cultures to enhance their ways of life. It has been established that failure to apply these divine gifts for the benefit of others calls for God's judgment. The nature and role of humanity in God's creation are to use the glory and dignity God has given for his glory to build upon what he has created. God has endowed humans with different talents or gifts to be used profitably. When humans use their gifts and talents, they become fruitful.

The relationship displayed in the Genesis account is humankind's relational partnership with Creator. This relationship is introduced in Genesis 1:26 with the hortatory declaration that Adam would be distinctively created in God's image and likeness. The intimacy of this relationship is first suggested by God's final approval of now completed creation as very good (Gen. 1:3). Until the second chapter, which is devoted to developing the intimate relationship between God and humankind, this relationship is described as full blossom and intimacy in communication and fellowship. Human beings have been created in God's image and likeness, which means that a person can enter into a relationship with the Creator (Maag cited in Arnold, 2020:43). Barth (cited in Choinski, 2014:211) argues that the very purpose for which humankind was created is to be in fellowship with God. He calls this relationship "the existence of the I and

Thou in confrontation".

God's purpose in creating the world points towards the nature of God as a communicative being. It can be seen from the perichoresis of the Trinity, highlighting the communication of the persons of God and extending to the externalization of the inherent value of the glory of God (Powell, 2019:215-22). Arnold (2020:45) explains that humans are unlike other creations and are intended to rule and have dominion over the whole; therefore, it is appropriate that God, the Sovereign Creator of the universe, has, in a sense, replicated himself in creating this unique creature. Jonathan Edwards also explicates the nature of God to communicate himself (Choinski, 2014:215).

5.7.2 God Wants Communication to be Enhanced

It has been established that human beings can do what God intends for us, and that capacity could be applied for the benefit of others in renewed ways. Hugh Victor cited in Myers (2017:148), states that a medieval theologian who argues that as God's image-bearers, humans need technological knowledge just as much as they need theology and other intellectual disciplines. Myers (2017:149) writes that humans can bear God's image today by creating technologies that restore people to their image-bearing capacity. It could have been disastrous if the churches had not prepared people technologically before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Christians who believe in God should be co-creators with God. The OT reveals the characteristics of God's communication. In the beginning, was the spoken 'word', the first sound ever made or heard. Genesis reveals that God made the earth and everything in it in the beginning, and the earth was without order and form. God uttered the first Word amid darkness, for light to dispel darkness, considered divine communication: "Let there be light, and there was light" (Gen. 1-3). How creation came into being was through the Word from Yahweh. The "word of Yahweh" is the most significant and predominant expression of divine communication. God reveals Himself through the Word, deeds, and his presence. The prophets and the law, the migration of the Israelites from Egypt to the promised land, and the covenant symbolize and signify the everlasting presence of God's divine communication.

God is also seen transmitting His message through the prophets, and the prophets' words were preserved first orally and then they were written. God's voice was heard in those days, and He made known His ways to the prophets, especially to Moses and the Israelites. In this respect, the Bible is a medium for God's communication and the manifestation of God's self-communication. All these imply that Christians should use the best ways available to communicate God's Word.

God commits the dialogue into writing on two tablets of stone (Exod. 3:6). Accordingly, the Word of God is God's Word and a human's creation (1 Pet. 1:19-21); it is a human's response to God's invitation. Both God and human beings are involved in the writing of the Bible. The Bible is the vehicle through which God speaks to all believers. The Word of God is the spoken Word, a channel that reveals God's nature and its acts in history. God reveals his nature and character; he speaks directly to the same privileged humans in the written Word and his people and nations. The WhatsApp and Zoom platforms are not simply for speech. They both give access to writing and speech, so there are diverse possibilities to share the Word of God.

5.7.3 The Church Must Promote Communication

The church is the continuation of the self-communication of God in history. The church's core mandate is to bring humans into communion with God and thereby open them up to communication with each other. The church, therefore, exists to accomplish God's mission for the entire world through effective communication through evangelism or education. The church continues God's self-communications through revelation and incarnation. Communication is the essence of the church. From this flows the notion that "the variety of communication technologies enables the church to intensify and deepen her proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ" (Eilers, 2011:36). Communication theology reveals to the church the truth that without communication, God remains hidden, and since he wishes to reveal God's self to humankind throughout the ages.

5.7.4 Christians Have a Task against Falsehood

Jesus apparently opposed the false interpretation of the law as it was universally understood. For instance, on the observance of dietary laws, Jesus "declared all foods

clean" (Mk. 7:19). Jesus corrected the people's views on the Kingdom of God and advocated for ethical purity and godly devotion (Mk. 3:31–35; Matt. 10:35–37; 13:44–46). In the sermon on the mount, Jesus also held that observance of the law should be external and internal: hatred and lust and murder and adultery were wrong (Matt. 5:21–26 and 5:27–30). Jesus warned his disciples to be aware of the false teachers who would come in his name (Matt. 24:3-4).

The followers of Jesus knew that false teachings were a threat to the ministry. Peter reminded the believers: "There were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you." (2 Pet. 2:1). Since the Old Testament, there have always been false prophets and teachers among the people (1 Kgs. 22 cf. Deut. 13:1-11). The people had to deal with them, and the church needed to be protected. It has been established above that through God's incarnation in Jesus Christ, those who did not know God had a better opportunity to see God not only in words but in the life Jesus lived. Jesus revealed the Father to all and dispelled erroneous notions about God.

Human communications can be an instrument for both good and bad, reconciliation and exploitation. The medium does not help communicate only a "message"; it can also be used to confront a "message". The fact that contemporary culture has become pluralistic means that there will be more distortions and falsehoods within societies that challenge Christian doctrine and practices. "It becomes even more true in the case of these" (Fore, 2006:17) extensive human communications in the mass media. Fore argues that every medium is more than just a transmission technique, and they are not neutral. Therefore, it is incumbent on all contemporary Christians to challenge the media's stance on the world if they consider it false and distorted to the Christian faith. Christians must be witnesses to the truth as they perceive it while at the same time being open to hearing the truth as perceived by others.

5.8 Contemporary Churches' Engagement with Technology
5.8.1 Positive Factors
The church's engagement with technology – social media – is not new. Whereas some Christians, such as Colberg (2018), Funk (1999) and Rice (2011) see it as God's intervention, others also see it as the greatest enemy of the church. Colberg (2018:np)

argues that the church needs to engage the lived reality of the world to advance its divine mission on earth. The church is a dynamic institution that adapts to different cultural changes in different environments. The church continues to consider and discuss how it may effectively and efficiently adapt itself to the digital environment, a relatively recent development (Boaheng, nd:np).

Boaheng (nd:np) contends that in the Old Testament, Jeremiah delivered God's message to the Jews using a letter, the media technology of his time (Jer. 29:1). In the New Testament, Apostles such as Paul, Peter, James and John reached other believers through letters (Rom. 1:1; 1 Jn. 1:1-2; 1Pet. 1:1-2; Jam. 1:1-2). These letters bridged the geographical gap between the Apostles and their addressees, making it possible to physically edify or nurture other believers. Some of these letters were personal; others were meant for the whole congregation, so they were read aloud to exhort everyone (Col. 4:16). Some letters also confronted falsehood and set the records straight.

The community's most common and applicable norm was the face-to-face approach to ministry; yet, they considered letter-writing mediated ministry as legitimate and effective means of discipleship. John, in his second and third epistles, makes a clear distinction between the communication technology of his day (pen and ink) and meeting in person (face to face) (2 Jn. 12; 3 Jn. 13–14) (Boaheng, nd:np). He rightly states that though John indicates his joy in seeing his audience face-to-face, he does not suggest that technological mediation is inferior or unimportant.

According to Boaheng (nd:np) "Even though Paul expressed a deep "longing" to have an in-person interaction with members of the Roman church (Rom. 1:11)", he also seems to think that some relational interactions were best handled via letters (2 Cor. 7.8), not via face-to-face meetings. Peter also valued his letter-writing-mediated ministry (2 Pet. 3.1) while also finding Paul's letter to be a bit difficult (2 Pet. 3.15–16). "The obvious conclusion is that the Bible validates oral communication and written communication, validating in-person and technologically-mediated communication for Christian ministry" (Boaheng, nd:np).

Before the 16th century Protestant Reformation, the Bible was locked up in a private

library of the clergy and was available to a few affluent families who could employ the services of scribes to have hand-written copies of the Bible. Rice (2011:np) agrees that the ability of digital media to collapse time and space into real-time global connections offers the twenty-first-century church a helpful model.

5.8.2 Possible Negative Factors

Another school of thought sees any form of technology as destroying the church. Scholars such as Borgmann (2000) cited in Diaz et al., (2021:np) argue that the radical break between modern technology and pre-modern technology is rooted in how technological culture steals the promises once held by the church – to heal, satisfy, bond, and give a future. Hence, technology tends to move the church away from its core identity. Postman (1992:19) supports the earlier view that technology has displaced culture to humanity's great harm. Most warnings like these go unheeded by the average person and seem to have a bit damping effect on the theological process. Certain scholars posit that people may lose their moral standards when accessing Christian ministry through the internet (Boaheng, nd:nd; Funk, 1999:np; Lee, 2010:2).

False teachers may take advantage of their access to the internet and proclaim false doctrines to deceive unsuspecting believers. "The internet user of the virtual world is a machine infected with paranoia and which has the most reprehensible taste. They do whatever they want; there is no reservation or hesitation in their actions. As they came to reshape our society, we will have a reality that resembles their online space" (Lee, 2010:5). Based on this fact, Boaheng (nd:np) suggests that it is vital that measures are put in place to curb internet abuse by believers worshiping in a digital environment.

5.8.3 The Mixed Results of Technology

Florman (1994:82) holds a view and summarizes the argument of technological critics and attempts a point-by-point rebuttal, citing, for example, that since technology is a process carried out by humans, it is by definition under human control. Technologies are not evil but depend on their users' intentions and purposes.

It would be difficult for Borgmann and Postman to maintain their stand in the current contemporary context with pandemics and lockdowns. Those who support such views

should also understand that the motive of the user could be either evil or good but not the technological system itself. Funk (1999:np) supports Gregory Stock for seeing the promise of a utopia and fulfilling human destiny in technology. In 2009, Pope Benedict wrote a message primarily directed to digital millennials – those who have grown up in a digital world. It was entitled *"New Technologies, New Relationships, Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship"*. He seems to support Funk when he argues that "[t]hese technologies are truly a gift to humanity, and we must endeavor to ensure that the benefits they offer are put at the service of all human individuals and communities, especially those who are most disadvantaged and vulnerable" (Philips, 2016:341).

5.9 How the Church Ought to Act with Modern Communication Tools

As Anderson (2015:5) posited, we live in historical times and will face new challenges in the 21st century, especially in technology. The fields of biotechnology and information technology can change the social landscape and even alter the way people make ethical decisions. Anderson argues that technology is nothing more than a systematic environment modification for human ends and should be a process or activity that extends or enhances a human function. This assumption is apt, especially within 2020 and 2021, considering the COVID-19 outbreak, which resulted in a pandemic with social distancing and lockdowns. The church wanted to meet but could not do so due to national policies. Had the church not prepared itself to be technologically inclined, it would be in much bigger trouble than it was because of the national policies on COVID -19.

Within 2020 and 2021, the church identified the more critical social media platforms to help broadcast its message. It used various platforms such as Zoom to hold live services. The innovation confirms Anderson's position that there could be a situation that would force the church to transition into social media. Most departments of human existence have been impacted by social media and changed how the church communicates, conducts studies, and even worships. As such, the use of social media space has come to stay with the church.

Virtual services should be part of the church's plan. The church cannot afford to go back

to its old ways of in-person meetings without considering virtual services. Instead, there is a need for hybrid types of services. Virtual services and meetings do not mean members should stop fellowshipping physically. The writer of Hebrews says: "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" (Heb. 10:25).

Spadaro (2014:57) argues that the digital environment is a new "anthropological space" that reshapes how we think, know, and express ourselves by connecting us to a digital society. That is to say; it cannot go back to its old ways after the church's thinking has been reshaped. The 21st century has permanently brought changes in ICT, affecting everything, including religion.

Since the initial challenges, especially with Zoom, are gradually being overcome to improve communication in the church, there must be continuity. Learning and adapting to new situations is significant in human lives, and humans can never stop learning until the day they cease to live. Wisdom must be gained to engage new trends and cultures seen as dynamic and effective. "Wisdom is the soundness of an action or decision concerning applying experience, knowledge and good judgement" (Spadaro, 2014:59). Challenges cannot be overcome if the Church chooses to rely only on the same thinking without a dynamic approach to issues.

The Bible accounts for God's communication with humanity in terms of his love, judgment and mercy. The holy scripture is the divine communication expressed in human language. Biblical concepts such as *logos* (the Word), prophecy, incarnation, revelation, church, the Gospel, and *koinonia* (Fellowship) are all communication channels. God has strategized using the simplest ways to communicate smoothly with humanity throughout history. Technology can also be classified as one of such simplest means God has gifted humanity for communications. According to Prior (2020:343) "as its simplest, technology, according to the theology of cultural mandate is in, Freeman Dyson's words, "the gift of God. After the gift of life itself, it is perhaps the greatest of God's gifts. It is the mother of civilizations, arts and science" (Prior, 2020:343).

Pope Benedict challenged Catholic believers to bring their Christian witness to the digital world, pointing to the early church's embrace of contemporary technology for evangelism and the need to do just the same in contemporary societies:

> Just as at that time, a fruitful evangelization required careful attention to be given to understanding the culture and customs of those pagan peoples so that the true Gospel would touch their hearts and minds, so also today, the proclamation of Christ in the world of new technologies requires a profound knowledge of this world if the technologies are to serve our mission adequately (Vatican, 2009).

Myers (2017:148) has a similar view. He states, "many of our gadgets, innovations, and inventions are great gifts". "The church needs creators, artists, and technologists, not just because technology can tell stories but because technology is part of the story of God" (Dyer, 2020:45). Apostle John declares that there is something good in paper and ink which constitute the technology of those days, and there are other things that are really good to be said face-to-face (2 Jn. 1:12; 3 Jn. 1:13-14). He seems to recommend technology and face-to-face as both important for humans.

In this techno-cultural era, ICT plays a significant role in all spheres of human activity. Communication is essential to the development of the individual and the formation of faith and ideologies. As Westerman et al. (2013:np) argue, social media are increasingly being used as an information source. The various media outlets have become a significant source of power and potential in the techno-cultural era because humans now depend upon them for information about their world. He argues that because of their intense concentration of power, they inevitably become a primary locus of sin by treating persons as objects of manipulation and turning them into media consumers rather than participants through media.

5.10 Good Practice: How Did the Past and Present Respond to Cutting-Edge Technology

In the mid-1400s, Gutenberg set up the printing press and published the first mechanically printed Bible. To a larger part, this was a factor in the start of the Reformation. The printing press enabled ideas to flow rapidly and in larger quantities

to a vast audience (Sims, 2009:40). Tertullian (1914:7) famously asked, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" To paraphrase Tertullian, one might say, as Green (2014b:16-20, 2016b:np) puts it, "What has the technology to do with theology or, more anachronistically, "What has Silicon Valley to do with Jerusalem (or Rome)"? The standard, accepted answer throughout most of Judeo-Christian history would have been "not very much".

Green (2016b: np) further argues that contemporary technological advances demonstrate that this response is inadequate. Green suggests that most technology should be divided into a spectrum ranging from "good" to "neutral", to "bad" technologies and that (because technology is a means to an end) the hallmark of the morality of technology relates to whether it facilitates good moral actions.

Another viewpoint is that "the world-altering powers that technology has delivered into our hands now require a degree of consideration and foresight that has never before been asked of us" (Segan, 1997:317). The Fall affected humans' lives entirely, and as a result of the sin, our ethics was polluted and have become corrupted; therefore, the possibility for humans to easily manipulate technological tools to their desired ends which might not end well, is higher.

Though the church is in favour of technologies that facilitate good moral actions and opposed to those that facilitate bad moral actions, there is a need for the church to find appropriate ways to manage the rapidly accelerating technological powers to modify the creation and call for several ethical convictions. Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew advised the church that "it is called to use science and technology fully and constructively while recognizing that the findings of science always have to be elevated in the light of the centrality of the human person, of the common good and the inner purpose of creation" (Common Declaration, 2002).

The four components of Wesley's quadrilateral are scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. The Methodists consider the scripture as the primary source and standard for Christian doctrine, and it has the authority to determine the decisions and practices of the Church. Waltz (1991:107) refers to tradition as experiencing, witnessing,

developing, and growing the faith through the past centuries and in many nations and cultures. The individual's appropriating and understanding of the Christian faith in the light of his or her own life is referred to as the experience in Wesley's quadrilateral; the individual Christian brings to bear on the Christian faith by discerning cogent thought through reason. Since tradition has shown that the prophets and apostles used the technological tools of their time to spread the message, contemporary Christians, by reason, must follow in their good footsteps. These four elements, taken together, bring "Christians to a maturity level to fulfilling understanding of the Christian faith which required response of worship and service. Wesley's quadrilateral must guide the Methodists in engaging with Zoom and WhatsApp.

Grill (1998:6) also contends that a Christian technology theology must be rooted in three fundamental authorities: the Bible, the Christian community (the church), and lived experience. This is because these three authorities provide the texts for the validity of a theology of technology. By its implication, the church has the mandate to engage cultural trends for transforming activities that seek to communicate the Gospel, aiming to make the Gospel meaningful to the community and fulfill the task charged to the church. The church should focus on good practice, which "involves deriving norms from good practice by exploring models of such practice in the present and past, or engaging reflexivity in transforming practice in the present" (Mutemwua et al., 2017:np).

Ethical practice will mean there is an ethic of regard grounded in the narrative of the creation and ministry of Jesus Christ that point to the inherent dignity and worth of all that God has provided. This is an essential premise in many respects as ethical propagation of the Gospel must address both the spiritual and physical dimensions of persons and communities and should be influenced in one way or another by prevailing environmental conditions. Therefore, the MCG must engage technological trends, but it should establish the relevant biblical and moral basis to fulfill the mandate appropriately.

Some Christian scholars have contributed to the discussion of the church and technology engagement. For instance, Pope Benedict founded his monasteries on

prayer and work; monks took on civil and mechanical engineering activities such as metalworking, flood control earthworks, draining swamps, and reservoirs and mills. They were responsible for many of Europe's cultural and technological "firsts". The monks created the first large-scale European schools, libraries, scriptoria and infirmaries, the importance of which cannot be underestimated for the collection, preservation, production, and transformation of technical knowledge (Green, 2017:4).

Modern musical notation originated with Guido d' Arezzo, O.S.B., in Italy, c 992-1033 AD (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017:135). The eighteenth-century Enlightenment inherited the Baconian promise that scientific knowledge would bring power over nature and culture, liberate human beings from drudging off life, and enable social progress in pursuing happiness (Murray, 2014). That is to say, anything that will bring happiness and progress in life should be embraced. Technology has defined human life from the beginning. Even the use of a plough carries the promise of control, liberation, and enrichment. Frederick Ferre contends that technology stands for all practical implementations of intelligence. Ferre talks about technology as a matter and activities, beliefs, and attitudes. In other words, technology can be discussed in terms of tangible things as well as intangible belief systems, attitudes and ways of thinking (Ferre, 2002:np).

Green (2016:np) posits that for much of human history, religions, in general, have been promoters of technology, ranging from megalithic circles to ornate religious structures, the printing press, and the invention of hypertext. The history of Wesleyan tradition as actually practiced is important for interpreting contemporary, more theoretical documents regarding technology. Hence, in response to Tertullian's famous question, ("what has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"), the Methodist Church has a lot to do with technology. Historically, the Methodist Church and its members have contributed significantly to advancing science and technology.

Wesley's intellectual interests included a lifelong engagement with the ideas and activities of the natural philosophies-scientists of his day. "He encouraged all Methodist preachers to become conversant with science and incorporated scientific topics in his sermons and other writings…science correctly understood was to serve the cause of

Christ rather than be feared" (Haas 1995:234). Indeed, many aspects of the Christian worldview are likewise crucial for technological progress (Barbour, 1990:67; Brooke, 1991:18-33).

5.11 Conclusion

As part of the theological interpretation, both the Old Testament and New Testament were used to develop a theological understanding concerning the use of communication tools. It is explained using Genesis 1:26-27 that God has created humanity to be fruitful, which also applies to communication. In Psalm 8:5-8, it was observed that the human being is created special and has great potential. The discussions in Matthew 5:13-16 and 25:31-40 revealed that communication tools play a key role in being the salt of the earth and the light of the world. God has made available tools to accomplish human tasks and communication, including conscience, self-awareness, and spiritual discernment. Hence, the image of God in humans should make them live as relational beings and communicate with each other and with God.

As salt, Christians should not be disciples who act foolishly or become good for nothing. As the light of the world, the lives and actions of Jesus' disciples are to be visible to the world. Christians must be prepared to produce light to prevent the world from wandering in darkness. Believers have been cautioned that there is judgment for not using what they have to benefit others. God has endowed humans with different talents or gifts to be used profitably. The one who communicates better to others is praised as doing the will of the Father. That is to say, God has made so many things available for human beings to use to make life comfortable. Such theological discussion implied that Christians should understand the concepts of creation, revelation, inspiration, incarnation, and the Trinitarian Model as all channels of communication. The church's identity is also to be seen as the continuation of the self-communication of God.

The chapter also discussed the contemporary churches' engagement with technology and how people in the past and the present have responded to the use of technology. The exploration noted what some Wesleyan Theologians have said in response to technology and social media engagements. It then offered some guidelines for using

Zoom and WhatsApp Platforms. The theology of communication is not merely Christianizing media technology or scientific techniques but guiding their usage by God's expectations. Any healthy church in the contemporary 21st century is expected to engage technologies to be meaningful. As communication cannot be validated unless it is affirmed in and through persons in the community it must occur within the community for the church to be revelatory. The church exists to appropriately engage the day's culture to make the Gospel communication understandable and meaningful to the people.

There is nothing inherently wrong with digitalization; it has become a predominant channel to disseminate information in the contemporary world. However, the church must guard against all abuses and safeguard its members against sin. Technology is a double-edged sword, simultaneously offering both good and bad products.

CHAPTER SIX: PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING SOCIAL MEDIA

6.1 Introduction

Osmer's (2008:175-218) final step of the selected model for this study seeks to establish strategies developed on insights from the previous three steps. This final task in Osmer's cycle, also referred to as the pragmatic phase, provides clarity on 'How we might respond' (Osmer, 2008:4-12). The response is by "forming and enacting strategies of action that influence events in desirable ways" (Osmer, 2008:386). Therefore, this final step will develop a strategy from the lessons learned while implementing the various communication tools across the various churches.

To this end, a recap of the past and present practices that have aided the smooth implementation, as well as potential pitfalls to avoid in the adoption process and other essential factors, have been considered. Critical elements, including the theological-cultural dynamics that have enormous implications for a successful transition to social media, were put together in a 'best practice f o r a church digitalization framework' to ensure a flexible template is available for other churches looking to digitalize their services and evangelism strategy. This development is what Osmer (2008: xvi) refers to as the "action-guiding model" – practical guidelines arrived at developing a new praxis that is more closely aligned with the biblical norm (Oldewage, 2015:240).

The thesis pragmatic question is: how can the church appropriately and effectively engage social media for communication? The chapter presents the pragmatic task as outlined by Osmer (2008:175-218) and focuses on proposing practical guidelines and biblical norms identified in the normative stage of the study and establishing strategies developed on insights from the previous three steps. Given this, some applicable recommendations have been outlined to enable the MCG and other Christian denominations to come out and implement social media strategies to promote church communication, especially the dissemination of the gospel in the technological era to a greater degree than the current praxis allows.

The pragmatic task offers an opportunity to formulate concrete guidelines that will help

the MCG and other churches move toward actualizing the biblical expectations for a specific area of Christian practice (Oldewage, 2015:241). This view aligns with Kim's vision of practical theology (2012:83) as a platform for dynamic theological reflection that "guides the church to a life of faith". Osmer (2008:175-218) calls it the strategic phase. Furthermore, the chapter also looks to the potential transferability of findings through occasional interjections on how church leaders in and outside the MCG's situation and tradition might benefit from this research.

There is an expectation that implementing the guidelines that would be proposed requires a degree of sound judgement and wisdom from those involved in the process (Oldewage, 2015:242). Latini (2011:10) shares a similar view and argues that strategies need to be adapted to the context of each congregation since every situation is unique. Osmer (2005: xvi) contends that the pragmatic task happens against the background of a specific context. Therefore, the guidelines formulated during this process are not meant to be applied in an automated or uncritical fashion. This sensitivity will guide the task of formulating guidelines for the societies (rural, urban and cities) under the MCG and the entire Christian community to a more considerable extent. Thus, a degree of deliberate and measured contextualization is necessary.

6.2 Challenges to Overcome for Effective Strategy Development

The study's outcome showed that the church is willing and ready to adopt the usage of Zoom and WhatsApp to facilitate the different religious activities in the church. However, based on the survey conducted as well as the focus group discussions, some encumbrances pose as possible factors that could hinder the successful implementation of this cause, as described in the following paragraphs.

6.2.1 Lack of Skills to Navigate the Platforms

One major challenge the church faces is that most members lack adequate or minimal know-how in terms of skills required to use digital platforms. With the relatively low technological literacy rate in most churches in rural communities, there is a critical lack of training in using these digital platforms, which hampers the transition. As described in chapter three, the data suggest most churches were not prepared or already using these technologies before the onset of COVID-19, and were also not given appropriate

training. Hence, any strategy for promoting the use of digital systems or tools must prioritize such pieces of training.

6.2.2 The use of Inappropriate Forms of Communication on the Platforms

Since these platforms are virtual and there are no physical interactions, members in meetings tend to spew out certain offensive utterances, banter, and indirect (or diplomatic) insults to other members. Moreover, on the information dissemination and communication platform, WhatsApp also serves as means through which members send irrelevant, offensive pictures, texts, and false information without much consideration from the religious point of view. This affects the trustworthiness, confidentiality, and safety of the usage of these digital platforms

6.2.3 Lack of Trained Media Teams

For the successful adoption of digital platforms in church activities, there should be a media team where each member handles specific components or portions, before the programme (or service), during and after the services, and information dissemination. However, most of the congregations do not have well-organized and trained members and such activities are left to mere members with just minimal skills, which results in an improper or lower-quality implementation of the digital platforms

6.2.4 Unstable Internet Connections During Services and Meetings

Internet instability is not a problem of only the host (or the church's internet connection) but also that of the members. Some members complain of bad internet connectivity and high costs that sometimes may serve as the reasons for the non-participation of the church members. These fluctuations make the meetings or services disrupted and less interactive, and members who do not (or cannot join) miss out on some important soul-lifting activities.

6.2.5 The Absence of Documented Code of Ethics

People are more prone to act or respond to certain actions in eccentric ways when no stipulated rules, regulations, or code of ethics guide them in using virtual platforms. Unfortunately, the church is not left out. There exist constitutions and bylaws in the congregations which help to govern the members; however, concerning the usage of

social media platforms, these do not apply. The unavailability of these rules and codes results in the ignorance of the church leaders and members, making them act up on these virtual platforms. The absence of these codes also does not allow culpable persons to be held responsible or accountable for their inappropriate behaviours.

6.2.6 Lack of Close Monitoring Teams

There are incidents where members or church leaders show some inappropriate gestures, sometimes subtle, on these platforms, which could be offensive to other members. Unfortunately, some of these go unnoticed since there is no appointed set of people who closely monitor the platforms to quickly identify some of these mishaps.

6.2.7 Behavioural Perceptions Regarding Their Usage

Another factor that could hinder the adoption of these digital platforms would be the possible reluctance of members to participate in activities or accept information disseminated actively. This stems from some complaints or perceptions from the members of the church. Some common complaints reported by members are that they are seen as less interactive, do not motivate worship life, adulterate traditional points, and are distracting. These reasons, when not addressed, would continue to hinder the greater patronage of these platforms towards their adoption.

6.3 Understanding the Pragmatic Task

It is expedient to gain insight into the nature of the pragmatic task that forms a focal point of this chapter to understand its envisioned outcome deeply. The pragmatic task interacts with normative, descriptive-empirical and interpretive tasks (Oldewage, 2015:242) employed in previous chapters, drawing from these moments to define a new roadmap to a preferred future (Latini, 2011:209). The pragmatic task seeks to formulate action-guiding principles that take account of opportunities and challenges associated with a particular Christian practice.

Oldewage (2015:243) argues that whatever emerges from the pragmatic phase should be a new framework for action to make the most of the potential and possibilities inherent in a situation, but tempered by a realistic understanding of the limitations within which congregational life is encountered and lived. Neither an overly utopian

nor an unduly restrictive framework is adequate, hence the need for dialectical interplay between these two dimensions. It has been observed that this measured approach lies at the heart of Osmer's pragmatic task, which, in apt the words of Hess (2015:195), is characterized as "a dialectical interaction between critical and utopian thinking". Osmer (2005, 2008) is of particular value and has recently set the tone for discussions around models for theological praxis.

The practical guidelines flowing from the pragmatic task is an ongoing process driven by two groups of participants: the task of congregational leaders, i.e., the "servant leaders", and the task of the congregation (Osmer, 2008:175-176). The fundamental place of the servant-leader in this task is based on the counter-intuitive notion that attempts to lead a change in a congregation. The most effective attempt is when leaders opt not to form the centre of that process but to empower those around them to move in a new direction (Oldewage, 2012:243). The counter-intuitive notion means that congregational leaders must share responsibilities and equip the followers to accomplish them by guiding them with accepted norms.

The second group of participants in Osmer's model is the congregation as a collective. According to Osmer (2008:201), mobilizing and inspiring the congregation to begin to take concrete action to move in a new direction will translate the pragmatic task into the required outcome. The people must own the "change" and play an active role in implementation to produce a new roadmap for the church, and live out the proposed plan in practice. The dual focus on the role of the servant leaders and congregation as the two key players in the pragmatic task is particularly vital to the current study since the form of this study involves the action of both players. The leaders provide and guide principles on social media profiles, and the congregation implements them in their interactions with others and their private social profiles.

6.4 The Theological Basis for Pragmatic Phases Proposal
6.4.1 Response to Technology and Social Media Engagements
The current generation is saturated with digital technology. It suffices to say that no one lives in a technological vacuum nowadays. Digital technology has become part and parcel of life in almost every corner of the world. One author says, "even in countries

where water is scarce, people have access to mobile phones and computers" (Allen-McLaurin, 2015:45). The rapid influx of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and FaceTime, to mention a few, have revolutionized how people live. People can share anything instantly on social media with a twinkle of an eye for the whole world to see. The ubiquity of this ever-evolving digital technology is providing the framework for creating new identities, relationships, and connections, "permeating every aspect of life and culture, including religious events" (Allen- McLaurin, 2015:46).

How have Wesleyan theologians responded to these technological trends in the past and present? How have they been engaging with social media? In answering these questions, the author asserts that Wesleyan theologians are gradually responding more positively to technology and social media for ministry work in recent times. A cursory glance at social media shows a strong presence of Wesleyan theologians. There is an urgent need to engage them for effective communication critically; they are gifts from God. Many have found social media platforms invaluable for pastoral ministry, evangelism, and discipleship, which was not the case.

For instance, in his contribution to the Focus Group Discussions, the Rt. Rev. Baffour Asamoah Agyei, the Diocesan Bishop of Obuasi Diocese of the MCG, says, "social media is a servant master; it cannot be neglected by any serious church in our modern communication". He suggests that social media platforms are divine gifts from God and, therefore, should be engaged appropriately to achieve God's missional agenda for this contemporary world. It can be argued that during the Covid-19 season, social media became indispensable to all ministries. Rev. Ryan Dunn, a minister of online engagement for United Methodist Communications, points out that "when people decorate our homes, they decorate with items that show what they value, in the same way, the church wants to be mindful of what is shared on public spaces" (Caviness, 2021:np).

Previously, many Wesleyans or Methodists did not embrace social media for their lack of technical ability. For instance, majority of the older generation (50 years or older) was not computer literate. Therefore, accessing and transmitting information via technology was a daunting task. The current digital age has come with computers,

mobile phones, digital applications, and internet systems that are much easier to use with the slightest education. Many can now send and receive information on mobile phones and computers with a button.

Whereas the technical know-how was a hindrance, many also abstained from technology because of the perceived negative effects on the church. One of these effects is displacing traditional Christian culture, especially in the church's worship life. Technology came along with the proliferation of digital Bibles and hymn books. Thus, carrying printed Bibles and hymn books to church has almost become unfashionable. Bibles and hymn books in pews were replaced with large screens on the walls. Instead of reading and singing from books, scripture readings and song lyrics were projected on screens. These were seen as a threat to the traditional methods of worship to which the church was accustomed.

Beyond church life, technology was seen as a defining element of society. Undoubtedly, the advent of digital technology created a culture of individualistic lifestyle to the detriment of family gatherings, communal engagements, and generally, the things that make up the community's life. This behaviour eventually trickled down to church life as people abandoned corporate worship for individualistic modes that suited their comfort. The overall impact has been modelling different forms of behaviour and the superfluity of viewpoints and value systems that contradict Christianity. As one author observes,

> in the past [young people] modelled their behaviour on those close to them, such as parents, teachers, pastors, and leaders in the community. Today they are being given—through the technologies of music, movies, and television—many different options for behaviour to model (Sims, 2005:13).

Andy Stoddard, a pastor of the United Methodist Church, in his article, "Social Media and Holiness" argues that social media was not helping him to love God and his neighbor better. "While social media itself did not cause me to sin, it did cause me to grow discouraged, pray less, and worry more. It caused me to despair because so many Christians are allowing this cultural moment, rather than their desire for holiness and sanctification, to be the force that dictates people's thoughts, passions, posts and words"

(Stoddard, 2021:np). Despite these observations, Wesleyans are engaging with technology and social media nowadays, and they do so from the standpoint that the church historically thrived on print and electronic media.

Mention is often made of Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1436, enabling the Bible to be mechanically printed for a broader readership. During the Reformation, the printing press facilitated the rapid flow of information in large quantities to large audiences. Martin Luther's polemical writings in the Reformation would not have reached a wider audience without the printing press. To illustrate further, the advent of radio and television in the 20th century propelled Billy Graham's ministry into the limelight in the 1950s. The radio and television had an immeasurable impact on Billy Graham's ministry.

Deriving inspiration from these precedents, Wesleyan theologians have a sustained social media presence in current times. Many carry their church services live on WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook and YouTube. Others disseminate their recorded sermons and homilies through church WhatsApp pages to disciple their members. Some also develop evangelism tracts for sharing on social media to spread the gospel. Generally, Wesleyan theologians such as Thomas G. James (2013:np) see technology and social media as crucial for magnifying their preaching to the world. Instead of reaching only a few people that attend church services, social media broadens the scope, enabling the possibility of reaching thousands when preaching a single sermon, as indicated during the focus group discussion.

For instance, Bishop Reuben P. Job (2008:np) uses John Wesley's three general rules to guide Christians to live a faithful life as they engage in the new phenomena of social media tools for church activities. John Wesley may have given Methodists the most uncomplicated directive for how to interact in general, which can apply to social media. Methodists know the rules: "Do no harm", "Do good," and "Communicate grace." Job writes, "To do no harm" means that one's actions toward every creation of God will be guided by the principles of God, respecting the cultures and life situations of those he/she engages. During engagement on social media, the people called Methodists may take time to discern both the intention and the potential consequences of our activities.

Some of the questions that may guide the intentions and consequences are:

    i. What is the intent of the post? Does it show Christ's love, or does it focus on judgement and condemnation?

    ii. Do I speak disparagingly about anyone involved? Do I try to use facts and opinions to manipulate others to my viewpoint?

    iii. Could this post "do no harm" to the reputation of Christ, the church or another person or organization?

    iv. Could someone interpret the post as harmful, offensive, rude or distasteful?

    v. Does this interaction recognize each person involved as a "love child of God – a recipient of love unearned, unlimited and underserved – just like myself?

Job (2008:np) writes, "My desire to do good is in response to God's invitation to follow Jesus, and it is my control…" How people engage online can profoundly affect the people they connect with, and people should use social media to extend hospitality and goodness to all or demonstrate God's love to digital neighbors. Job (2008:np) further writes that as people stay in love with God, they "find our moral direction, our wisdom, our courage, our strength to live faithfully from One who authored us, called us, sustains us, and sends us into the world as witnesses who daily practice the way of living with Jesus". Job seems right because social media can be a powerful channel to "re-present" Christ to the community outside the church building and likewise, like other ministries, can lead to emotional burnout and exhaustion.

6.4.2 The Technology and Digital Engagement by the MCG

The study's primary situational concern is how the ongoing transition process will bring about a desirable way to achieve the benefits of cutting-edge social media tools in disseminating the gospel. The general answer to the concern is derived from the focus group discussion findings.

6.4.3 Equipping the Members for effective engagement of social media: Congregational Leaders Task.

6.4.3.1 Encouraging the members

The Methodist Church Ghana's engagement with technology in the form of social media, specifically Zoom and WhatsApp platforms is transparent but at the general

level. The MCG's engagement or relationship with technology can be summarized as such: social media is a divine gift from God; some technologies are good, and some are bad. Myer's argument supports the MCG's position: "technology is not neutral; it changes our lives in bad ways as well as good ones" (Myer, 2017:146). The MCG encourages social media tools to extend its engagement with people inside and outside the church. The MCG operates a TV station dubbed "Wesleyan TV" to reach many people. The survey and focus group discussions indicate that all participants' churches have Zoom and WhatsApp platforms and were using them before the Covid-19 pandemic.

6.4.3.2 ICT policy

An ICT policy also has been put in place to guide the church, as confirmed by Adzati (2012:26) "The ICT policy of the Methodist Church Ghana shall, therefore, focus on addressing the basic needs of the church and making available information through a unified communication network in text, audiovisual and visual format for research and development". Hence, the policy looks forward to a better end.

There should be continuous education on the Church's IT Policies regarding social media platforms, enforcing members to abide by them and emphasizing their importance to the church. According to Adjei-Darko et al. (2021:27), the policies should encapsulate the "dos and don'ts", which must be explained to the members. This training will create a deeper understanding and appreciation of the need to abide by the policies. In effect, it will guide the users of the church's platforms to be cautious of what to post and not to post as the standard of the Holy Bible operates the MCG.

Despite the benefits social media provides to the church, other negatives may tarnish the church's image as a moral agent if not checked or monitored by the church leadership. That does not mean the church members should be restricted at all costs. As Kietzmann et al. (2011:56) observe, "social media are user-generated and empower users to exercise some independence in accessing and disseminating information." However, Perkins (2012:43) observes a concern within a religious community regarding individualism on social media. Perkins argues that the concept of individualism on social media makes users prone to people who subvert established

Christian teachings, doctrines, and values through these platforms.

6.4.3.3 Proper handling of ICT tools

Meadow (cited in Verma, 2021:np) argues that "human life has been specified by technology. Even the use of plough carries the promise of control, liberation, and enrichment". Hence, there is the need for wisdom and innovations to engage the invented tools. However, the human aspiration for new technology is unquenchable with or without wisdom. Reinke (2021:223) attempts to address the complex ethical dilemmas of living the Christian life within the technological age and draws Christians to Proverbs, pleading with believers to find wisdom. Reinke argues that "this wisdom is something our tech age cannot give us. Our technologies can amplify our powers, but they cannot give us wisdom with those powers". Ortlund (2012:17) contributes that "if we have technology but not wisdom, we will use the best communications invented to broadcast stupidity". These arguments seem convincing because none of the technologies or sciences can add to or upgrade mankind's wisdom, for "wisdom is about value", and "science does not deal with questions of value" (Harari, 2017:283).

6.4.3.4 Limits of technologies and sciences

Technologies and sciences accomplish incredible things but cannot deliver meaning or purpose. God is the meaning of the universe. Christians, therefore, need to train their senses to see creational patterns because how humans apply their wisdom and knowledge in relating to the natural world shows how rightly they relate to God. The participants in the survey and the focus group shared similar views about the significance of education and training as the church engages in social media. Meadows (cited in Hauser, 2012:228), in his presidential address to the Annual Meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society, stated, "technology is deep in our DNA". The same can be said of the MCG.

6.4.3.5 Capitalizing on the cutting-edge information technologies

John Wesley, the Father of Methodism, used cutting-edge printing technology to do excessive evangelism and produce more Bible copies. Wesley's influence as a publisher represents an astonishing record in its own right. Wesley engaged in the new technology of his time and issued sermons, tracts, commentaries, abridgements, biographies, and

other items relevant to maturing Christians' spiritual growth.

Using social media for church communications is a great way to meet people where they are. When properly executed, social media strategies can increase one's visibility and help draw in new demographics. The focus group discussions revealed how the MCG had leveraged this technology, especially Zoom and WhatsApp tools, in more than one ministry area: Bible study, church services, announcements, meetings, visits with homebound and hospitalized members, and even worship for some. As evident in the data analysis, Zoom and WhatsApp have been the appropriate tools for communication in the MCG. During an interview, Heidi Goehmann on KFUO's "The Coffee Hour (2022) sheds light on the matter: "noting that God has created humans to connect with others, not just verbally but through our physical bodies. Video conferencing brings awareness to the disconnect when people are not sharing space with those we meet".

6.4.3.6 Create clear goals for social media presence

According to the Sprout Social Index report (2017), marketers' top three goals for social media channels they manage are to increase brand/organization awareness, generate leads/sales and increase engagement. The church's goal may mean generating new members or converts by reaching them with the gospel.

6.4.3.7 Orientation

Orientation and awareness creation should be intensified for the whole church to accept and engage social media tools to disseminate the gospel. This programme should begin with the church's key leaders through workshops, then with the entire church membership, and be done periodically after church services, at class meetings, or workshops. As Adjei-Darko et al. (2021:27) suggest, leaders of the churches or societies should quickly orient all new members or visitors to ignite their interest in flexible church activities compared to other churches. Since many heads and leaders of churches are still reluctant to use social media due to fear of misapplication, awareness creation may be complex. This is probably also due to their doctrinal and cultural orientation on social media or inventions. Hence, leaders need education about social media so that they can also lead others to appreciate the use of social media.

6.4.3.8 Training

The church should organize adequate continuous training for church leaders and IT team members of the various societies since the functional features of social media platforms constantly keep changing. The church should emphasize the interface and functional features of social media platforms that church leaders will require, members and non-members, to access church programmes. This emphasis will ultimately enable the users to be conversant with the tools and help them navigate the church-adopted social media platforms easily. Mefolere (2016:620) shares this view and explains why many people patronize the WhatsApp platform by confirming that the WhatsApp application is "simple, intuitive, and easy to use". Another area that needs regular training is how they can appropriately utilize the social networking site adopted by the MCG.

6.4.3.9 Provision of strong internet connectivity

The church's leadership should seek to provide robust internet connectivity to avoid fluctuation during church programmes because "the internet is the way to access social media platforms" (Adjei- Darko et al., 2021:25).

6.4.3.10 Provision of technologies in the Church's budget

The period when one could post one's ministry or church event on social media and assume that people would see it is gone. The world is now in an era where one must spend money to see their content. Modern cameras and other related equipment are needed for quality pictures and sounds. Most churches now consider social media spending as something the churches cannot afford to do, but the author has a different view. It is rather something the churches cannot afford not to do. Currently, more and more people spend time on mobile devices, most of that time on social media. The church should make periodic provisions in its budget to revamp equipment and accessibility.

6.4.3.11 Keep information updated

The churches must stay up to date. The IT team should be charged and monitored by the leadership of the churches to update information on the platforms.

6.4.3.12 Setting up a monitoring team

This team manages and monitors the church platform because social media is a good servant but a bad master when misused or misapplied intentionally or unintentionally. The comments given by members should be responded to as immediately as possible. The monitoring team can easily tarnish the image and credibility of the church. Hence, the church needs notable trained persons to handle the platforms, whether voluntary or hired. If the church can afford it, the author suggests hiring personnel trained in theology to take the management of the information seriously rather than doing it anyhow. There is a need for the church to strategize to counter any negative posts such as fake news or pornographic pictures. Social media has been found not only to provide positives but also to spread false news and propaganda. Heikkila et al. (2012:278) have warned the church to handle social media platforms to protect the church's credibility. The unfortunate thing is that many people tend to believe such false information.

6.4.3.13 Technology team building

Some of the good practices of the MCG are establishing media teams, which is evident in both the survey and focus group discussions. Social media is a collaborative platform, and a well-equipped information technology team will strengthen the online presence and potential reach. Over billions of organizations, including the church on social media, compete for space and look for collaboration. Successful organizations are primarily due to social media having a strategic team.

The Technology team should adopt user-friendly platforms for church communication. It should not be so complicated that young people and new entrants in the social media space cannot join. For instance, it was identified from the focus group discussion that WhatsApp was easily adaptable in Ghana compared to Zoom and other social media handles which pose challenges to many members.

6.4.3.14 The target audience should be the focus

The IT team must always identify the target audience the church has planned to reach, and they have to check the demographic makeup of the audience planned to reach. Different demographics (age, gender, profession) flock to social media platforms. Once

the church has its primary social media accounts, separate accounts can be dedicated to more specific audiences. For example, the best way is to create a WhatsApp platform for the Youth Ministry, Women's Ministry, Evangelical Team, and Music Ministry. This is a strategy for better connecting with individual groups with similar organizational interests and goals.

Identifying the target audience will impact what will be posted on the platforms and help determine what platforms the church should be active on and invest resources or time in. As Smith (2013:67) posits, "there is no limit other than our imaginations in how we might use these new communication opportunities to reach people". The emergence of technology has brought a new generation of audiences. For the church to appropriately engage the new generation of audience and benefit from technological space, it is necessary to consider their behaviour to develop an effective communication strategy.

6.5 Pragmatic Strategies for Social media – Congregational Task

Afolaranmi (2020:12) avers that almost the entire world was caught unprepared as the Coronavirus disease ravaged the world in 2020. Human existence has been threatened by different plagues at different times, with each pandemic affecting economic, political, social and religious activities. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the COVID-19 pandemic has become the most devasting pandemic (Boaheng, 2021:np). Boaheng contends that against this backdrop, many churches and other public places were restricted with lockdowns and social distancing (as advocated by the World Health Organization to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic). These restrictions prevented churches and church leaders "from performing their pastoral ministry in the traditional ways through physical contacts; Internet ministry is likely an alternative ministry for pastors" (Boaheng, nd:np).

These restrictions have changed how meetings are held. Where people once met and sat together in a room; they now meet on Zoom, WhatsApp, or other online platforms while sitting in the comfort of their homes. Worshiping on a Zoom video conferencing platform is highly interactive, allowing worshippers to see each other and listen and be seen and heard (Synder 2021:np). The use of Zoom has allowed churches to reach

church members who previously could not attend in-person church services. With video service streaming capabilities, these homebound church members can tune in to services from the comfort of their homes. WhatsApp's ability to add valuable features regularly has made it one of the most popular and fast- growing platforms. Like Zoom and other platforms, users must be guided to avoid pitfalls.

In addition, members with non-traditional work shifts or conflicting time commitments can view recorded services at their convenience. The change brings many possibilities and implications for maintaining integrity, confidentiality, reliability, credibility, transparency, and trust. Despite all these benefits, it also has some setbacks which the churches must adapt to protect themselves from especially, the so-called "zoom bombers". "These nefarious folks exploit holes in the app to enter church meetings, cause disruptions and even take control of screen sharing to show disturbing images to all participants" (Strzelecki & Rizun, 2020:np).

The Methodist Church exists to share the redemptive stories and engage in conversations "where people are". The United Methodist Church of the United States of America has given the following guidelines for engaging social media platforms: Be Guided in All Social Media Conversations; Posts; Transparency; Respect Other Users' Views; Exercise Patience and Maintain Confidentiality.

6.5.1 Be Guided in All Social Media Conversations
Conversations on social media can sometimes develop into heated and pointless arguments. Methodists are aware of the effect of pointless arguments on their Christian lives and therefore do all they can to avoid such engagement. The only perfect solution is to always "sign off" from unproductive arguments calmly.

6.5.2 Posts
Do not post or share sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful content. Respect others on the platform, and always consider the effect of your content on others who may see what you post. The survey and focus group discussions reveal that many people have decided not to use Zoom and WhatsApp platforms to avoid seeing such illicit posts to disturb their faith.

6.5.3 Transparency

The church encourages users to be transparent by avoiding misleading people about their true identities and who they are, by using a fake identity. It was evident in focus group discussions that some people present fake identities to do unpalatable things on the platforms.

6.5.4 Respect Other Users' Views

All users must be relevant by not adding comments to a social media post irrelevant to the topic on board. Engage in the conversation rather than broadcasting opinions. Divergent views are welcome but must be done with love; carefully consider the nature and tone of criticism; it must be constructive. Do not take revenge if someone has previously attacked you.

6.5.5 Exercise Patience

Be patient when sharing content, do not share in haste, read link content thoroughly, or watch a video to the end to know precisely the content you are sharing before judging whether it is suitable.

6.5.6 Maintain Confidentiality

The users are advised to maintain confidentiality; if it is deemed that the content or comments posted on the church's platform are unsuitable and unacceptable or offensive, action will be taken that may include hiding, deleting or reporting comments or blocking users.

6.6 Further Proposed Code of Ethics for Using Social Media

The churches should note that embracing cutting-edge social media tools deserve careful consideration because they are new phenomena. People are "currently surrounded by throngs of zealous… one-eyed prophets who see only what new technologies can do and cannot imagine what they will undo" (Postman, 1992:5). The ethical question of "should we"? has been overtaken by the technical question, "can we"? The resistance to this technical logic is often met with ethics; for instance, the Luddite movement's accusations of a lack of concern for the Great Commission. Efficiency is the organizing principle for operation, and the underlying assumption is

that it means matters little in accomplishing ends. In this frame of communication in the church, what matters is what people communicate rather than how people communicate.

The medium is of little importance to the message outside its broadcast potential. Harari (2017:271) is right that people should prepare for some mind-bending ethical dilemmas. As Harari (2017:272) cogently argues, the Lord who makes sure that the ravager has a sword has also a patterned creation that can produce far beyond what Christians will endorse morally.

When humans experience a new technology or innovation, ethical challenges are brand new and may require a novel way of doing ethics. Thacker (2021:np) argues that while certain challenges posed by technologies may be new and at times can be overwhelming, the Christian ethic is adequate to address the core issues at stake and provide a path forward through the confusion. "Christian ethics is grounded in the life of the church and is robust enough for even the toughest challenges of this age" (Brock, 2010:7).

Reinke (2021:243-285) sums up the ethical-moral discussion, suggesting the following:
    i.   We respect the gifts of science and non-Christian innovations.
    ii. We expect human innovation to serve as an ecosystem (Ps. 104).
    iii. We expect to witness technological overreach and commit to correcting it as we go
    iv. We expect technological progress to honor God's design for the body.

Phillips (2016:341) reveals that in Pope Francis' recent encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, there are several issues with that same technology. Pope Benedict and Pope Francis spoke only seven years apart about the power of social media – Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, mass adoption of social media and its impact on global society. So, in a more guarded appreciation of the impact of digital culture, Pope Francis argues:

> When media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, think deeply, and love generously… True wisdom, as the fruit of self-examination, dialogue and generous encounters

between persons, is not acquired by a mere accumulation of data which eventually leads to overload and confusion, a sort of mental pollution (Schmitt, 2019:23).

The Anglican Church in North America proposes a simple Code of Ethics for Christians. The Code suggests that before a Christian clicks the "enter" button to send out any message, the believer should remember that people are witnesses to Jesus Christ modelling a life that is supposed to emulate him even in cyberspace.

i.   Is it the truth?

Christians are responsible for speaking the truth, yet speaking it in love (Eph. 4:15). We are to avoid slandering or unverified hearsay.

ii.   Talk to the person before talking about him

There is a difference between writing about what someone has said or done and writing about the person. It is easy to speak out about our anger and emotional needs without contacting the person first. It is unethical for a Christian to say or post anything about another person unless it flows from God's love within us, and he has given us a process to do it (Matt. 18:15-20).

iii.   Consider if it will benefit all concerned

This is exactly what love does. Let the content or what you post on the church platforms benefit those on the platform. Before posting any content, reflect on whether it will benefit our spiritual formation; if not, modify it or stop posting it.

iv.   Post words that reflect well on Jesus Christ

Reflect again to be convinced that in the content you post, people will see Christ in them. The fruit of the Holy Spirit must be manifested in the comments, pictures and other related materials you post (1 Cor. 5:14).

These guidelines are provided as a synthesis of best practices by Pope Francis in World Communication Day.

> Communication is a means of expressing the missionary vocation of the entire church; today, social networks are one way to experience this call to discover the beauty of faith, the beauty of encountering Christ. In communications too, we need a church capable of bringing warmth and stirring hearts (Well,

2022:np).

6.7 Conclusion

Social media tools, especially Zoom and WhatsApp, have become applicable for modern communications. But as identified by the study, they also pose challenges to the church, especially if they are mishandled, mismanaged or misapplied. It is, therefore, expedient to strategize for effective engagement.

The primary task is to assist the congregation in understanding the meaning and good practices of a social media application in the church. Understanding the meaning of an issue and the norms motivates people for effective engagement. Based on the normative stage, some practical guidelines and biblical norms have been proposed to develop a viable strategy for the MCG and other religious denominations for communications for the 21st century. Some recommendations have been provided to enable the church to remove all obstacles to social media engagement for church communication.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The study sought to understand the current trends and concerns regarding the usage of digital platforms in the MCG. The biblical and theological interpretation of engaging social media platforms in church-related activities and determine present bottlenecks and barriers that could hinder the full adoption of these platforms. It also sought to develop strategies and guidelines to help integrate and implement social media platforms in communication, information dissemination, evangelism, discipleship, service gatherings, and other church-related activities.

The study applies Osmer's approach, which involves a Descriptive Phase to understand the status quo, the Interpretive Phase to know and assess the reasons for the current trend, the Normative Phase to understand the appropriate means for integration, and the Strategic Phase to develop and recommend strategies and guidelines that could be implemented for the smooth and successful transition to digitalization in the MCG.

7.2 Summary of Study Findings

Chapter 1, introduced social media's challenge to the church, especially the MCG. The rapid change in communication over the last three decades with significant implications for data/message creation, information dissemination, and human experience and expectation has called for the church to adapt to the phenomena to achieve its core mission of engaging the world with the gospel. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic made this task urgent.

Chapter 2, dealt with the descriptive phase that is the development of technologies and how they have impacted human communications and their impacts and implications on church communication and dissemination of the gospel in the 21st Century and Christian theology. The brief history of Methodism in Ghana and how the church engages social media in its communication.

In Chapter 3, a questionnaire was used to assess the current trend with the usage of Zoom and WhatsApp by the local congregations in the MCG concerning the frequency

of usage, accessibility, reliability, and contributions. The section also included a focus group discussion to allow the participants to give more detailed responses to the research questions to provide more insights into the results obtained from the questionnaire for analysis. From the survey, there was an overall positive response regarding Zoom and WhatsApp regarding their accessibility, reliability, and how informative they were. The results also showed that information received from this platform was regarded as trustworthy. The survey results also showed that the whole church has significant exposure to these digital platforms.

However, some complaints the respondents shared regarding using these digital platforms were unintended massages, unsupervised posts, inappropriate discussions, videos and pictures, private information leaks, misrepresentation of church image, and distractions. Some other participants believe it promotes self-centredness and a sense of apathy and provides room for adulterated and distorted theological interpretations. Nonetheless, it was recommended that the current bottlenecks, mainly doctrinal, be duly addressed to maximize Zoom, WhatsApp, and other digital platforms to promote worship and discipleship. The recommendation was also to increase member participation towards the ultimate goal of building the Christian faith in MCG. The congregants were very confident of its continual utilization.

In Chapter 4, Osmer's interpretative task of Practical Theology (Osmer, 2008:11) was engaged. A Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was employed to understand the different behavioural perceptions, attitudes, usefulness, ease of use, and subjective norms towards the actual usage of Zoom and WhatsApp using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). From the activity, the instrumental contribution of social media to the churches was evident as the study revealed the positively perceived usefulness of social media. The model also showed that the perceived ease of use had a direct and significant effect on behavioural intention to use in the pre-implementation test (little or no direct experience with a particular system) but little influence on intentions over a period (after an experience with the specific system).

The analysis revealed some factors that include developing more incentives for the congregants to realize the great usefulness of the platforms. One possible clue is,

nowadays, having church services or conducting church-related activities through the internet is well known amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The members might have an interest in using WhatsApp and Zoom. The analysis also revealed that conducting activities and teachings with Zoom and WhatsApp helps bridge the gap between cultural, traditional and religious beliefs, known as subjective norms, and technology acceptance by the congregants.

In Chapter 5, theological and normative principles (Osmer, 2008:79-80) were used to examine and interpret the current social understanding regarding the use of social media in the church. Ethical reflection and codes of good practices were explored to understand how the church ought to respond to modern communication tools. From the analysis, face-to-face services must be the primary means of mediating God's word in the African environment. However, the face-to-face worship environment must be complemented by online services to reach out to people beyond the chapel. African churches seeking to move towards digital ecclesiology must consider how technology should be employed in the operations of the church and the reason(s) or motivation(s) for which they desire to engage the digital space. This strategic reflection must be contextually informed (considering both the historical and emergent social and ecclesiological implications of a digital church), theologically grounded, and biblically supported.

Technology is indeed a double-edged sword, simultaneously offering both opportunities and challenges. Social media is another channel to disseminate the gospel and share church activities globally. Still, it must be used carefully and guided by the church's teachings and guidelines. Users are to post words that reflect well on Jesus Christ and consider if it will benefit all concerned. The church must consider both sides and see how they can capitalize on the best opportunities used during the challenges.

In Chapter 6, pragmatic adoption strategies (Osmer, 2008:85-118) for the smooth implementation and engagement of the social media platforms in the MCG were developed. Some applicable recommendations were outlined to enable the MCG and other Christian denominations to come out and implement social media strategies to promote church communication, especially the dissemination of the gospel in the

technological era to a greater degree than the current praxis allows them. These guidelines were ultimately based on using social networks to discover the beauty of faith, the beauty of encountering Christ. It means that how people engage online can profoundly affect the people with whom we connect. People should use social media to extend hospitality and goodness to all or demonstrate God's love to digital neighbors. It is cardinal for church members to receive constant training on using social media platforms since updates on social media are on the rise by strictly following the church's guidelines.

The findings show that gospel propagation is not the sole business of the clergy; it is a shared responsibility of all congregational members. All members should be encouraged to disseminate the gospel on their private social media platforms. The major pragmatic strategies identified to help the easy implementation included team building, training, specified target audience, creating clear goals for social media presence, and policymaking. Moreover, the congregation should identify the church's budget, provide strong internet connectivity, keep the information shared on the digital platforms updated, and set up a monitoring team.

7.3 Study Recommendations

7.3.1 Orientation and Awareness Creation

The first strategy recommends that orientation and awareness creation be intensified for the whole church to accept and engage social media tools to disseminate the gospel. This programme should begin with the church's key leaders through workshops, then with the entire church membership, and be done periodically after church services, at class meetings, or seminars. Leaders of the churches or societies should quickly orient all new members or even visitors to ignite their interest in the flexible church activities as compared to other churches.

7.3.2 Training

The church should organize adequate continuous training for church leaders and IT team members of the various societies since the functional features of social media platforms constantly keep changing. The church should emphasize the interface and functional features of social media platforms that church leaders will require, members

and non-members, to access church programmes. Another area that needs intensity is the regular training of the IT personnel of the societies to enable them to intend guide church members on how they can appropriately utilize the social networking site adopted by the MCG.

7.3.3 Identifying the Church's Budget

This is a better way to connect with individual groups with similar organizational interests and goals. Identifying the target audience will impact what will be posted on the platforms and also help determine what platforms the church should be active on and invest resources or time in.

7.3.4 Policy Making

There should be continuous education on the church's IT Policies regarding the use of social media platforms, enforcing members to abide by them and emphasizing their importance to the church. In this regard, the church's leadership should also seek to provide robust internet connectivity to avoid fluctuations during church programmes because "the internet is the way to access social media platforms".

7.3.5 Setting up a Monitoring Team

The church needs notable trained persons to handle the platforms, whether voluntary or hired (the author suggests hired personnel if the church can afford it) to take the platform management efficiently and effectively. The team would manage and monitor the church platforms by setting rules and regulations to avoid the posting of profane, pornographic and other instigating items on the platforms. Congregants who fall foul to these laid down rules can be warned with pardons and brought to a disciplinary committee when grace period times are exceeded.

7.3.6 Create Clear Goals for Social Media Presence

The top three goals marketers have for social media channels are to increase brand/organization awareness, generate leads/sales and increase engagement. The Church's goal may mean developing new members or converts by reaching them with the gospel. In this direction, church leaders are encouraged to have an effective feedback plan to enrich the impact of their communication

7.3.7 Team Building

The churches must stay up to date. The IT team should be charged and monitored by the manager of the churches' platforms to update information on the various platforms. The comments should be responded to as immediately as possible. For the church to appropriately engage this new generation of audience and benefit from technological space, it is necessary to consider their behaviour to develop an effective communication strategy.

7.3.8 Specific Guidelines for Usage

The guidelines also included avoiding posting or sharing hateful, abusive and sexually explicit content, engaging in conversations rather than broadcasting them, maintaining confidentiality, being transparent, and welcoming divergent views with toned-down criticism, among others. All users must be relevant by not adding comments to a social media post irrelevant to the topic on board. Instead, they should engage in the conversation rather than broadcasting opinions. Congregants should respect others on the platform and always consider the effect of their content on others who may see what they post.

7.3.9 Seminar to MCG

Finally, to implement the above-recommended strategies, it is essential to fully communicate them to the large MCG community. As part of the dissemination strategy outlined, a seminar was organized for the Ghanaian Methodist Churches in North America, where some of the findings of this research were presented. Following the outcome of the seminar, it is recommended that the seminar be replicated in the participating Circuits and at the headquarters for the staff. In doing so, a connexion policy could be revised to streamline and enhance the use of social media tools for effective work.

7.3.10 Summary

It has been established that the internet is an excellent 'servant' but a bad 'master'. It offers many opportunities for the 21st Century church, especially during COVID-19 and even beyond. Pope John Paul II contributed to the discussion on media technology and its impact on Christian ministry, stating, "like other communication media, it has a

means, not an end itself". The Pope asserted that despite the opportunity the media technology has for Christian ministry, there are challenges that need to be addressed by the church leaders. Consequently, media technology has undauntedly affected the community's ethical, moral, and social fabric and theological issues.

Boaheng (2022:np) observes that moral degeneration is a major challenge today due to the emergence of the internet. Digital space is full of falsehood, obscene materials, malicious comments and cybercrimes, which is a challenge for the church to strategize to address. Boaheng (2022:np) argues that many people are losing their moral standards in their quest to access the gospel and theological interpretation in the digital community or online.

This attitude among this generation calls for further research among Christian scholars to look critically at both edges of this phenomenon. Without this 'seriousness', the church may exist alright but lose its relevance. In order for the church to continue to dominate society, it has to dominate the digital space.

7.4 Recommendations for Further Research

- Further research could study how social media can be strategized to improve the church's Bible class meetings and other relevant church sectors.
- The study is limited to only Zoom and WhatsApp tools, but other social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube need to be studied to find their effectiveness in the church.
- This research was based on the Methodist Church Ghana; therefore, further case studies could be conducted with the settings and scenarios of the different churches in Ghana and Africa. Examples include Presbyterian Church, Roman Catholic Church, Deeper Life, Seventh Day Adventist, and Pentecost.
- For a broader national strategy for the Christian community, the Christian Council of Ghana could commission large-scale research on the influence of social media on the church and how the negative impact could be mitigated. They could also evaluate implementing a national ICT programme where church leaders and media teams could be trained to administer church social media systems effectively.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acharya, A. & Mishra, B. 2017. Structure and knowledge retention: a study of the Indian infrastructure consulting sector. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, vol. 21 (4) 960-980. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Adebawale, J. 2020. The spread of COVID-19 outbreak in the first 120 days. *BMC Public Health*. https://bmcpublichealth.biomedicentral.com Accessed on June 15 2021.

Adjei -Darko, N., Animate, M.A. & Akussah, H. 2021. Use of social media by leaders of charismatic churches in Ghana. Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal). University of Nebraska-Lincoln. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu.Accessed on March 2022.

Adler, P.A. & Adler, K. 1994. *Observational techniques. In Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research 377-392*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Adler, K., Salantera, S. & Zumstein-Shaha, M. 2019. Focus Group interviews in child, youth, and Parent. An integrated literature review. *SAGE Journal*. https://doi-org/10.1177/1609. Accessed on November 2020.

Adzati, E. 2014, 2020. *Cyberspace evangelism and missions in Ghana strategic implementation plan for internet and mobile phone usage for evangelism and mission purposes*. Adepa Press.

Afolaranmi, A.O. 2020. Towards the possibility of Internet ministry as an alternative pastoral ministry in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic. *International Journal of International Technology and Language Studies.* Lead City University, Ibadan: Nigeria.

Agbeti, J.K. 1986. *West African church history. Christian missions and church foundations 1482-1919.* Leiden, E.J. Brill

Agyei-Darko, N. & Akussah, H. 2021. Use of social media by leaders of charismatic churches in Ghana. *Library Philosophy and Practice.*

Ahmad A N. & Abdul, R. 2013. On the emergence of techno-spiritual: The concepts and spiritual. https://www.researchgate.net/publication. Accessed on June 2020.

Aidoo, M.S. 2017. *Shame in the Individual Lament Psalms and African Spirituality* New York: Peter Lang.

Ajzen, I & Fishbein, M. 1980. *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behaviour*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, USA: Prentice-Hall.

Ajzen I. 1991. *The theory of planned behaviour. Organizational behaviour and human decision Process.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ, USA: Prentice-Hall.

Akinyode, B.F. 2018. Step by step approach for qualitative data analysis. http://www.Ijbes.utm.my. Accessed on January 15 2021.

Alanagreh, L., Alzoughoo, l. F. & Atoum, M. 2020, The human coronavirus disease COVID-19: Its origin, characteristics, and insights into potential drugs and its mechanisms. *Pathogens* 9(5):331.

Allan-Powell, M. 2018. *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Allen, L.C. 1996. *"Psalm" in the Old Testament survey, 2nd ed*. Edited by William Sanford Lasor, David Allan Hubbard and Frederick William Busch. Grand Rapids:Wm B Eerdmans Publishing company.

Allen, N., 2021. The promises and perils of Africa's digital revolution. http://www.brookings.edu Accessed on February 2022.

Allen-McLaurin, L. M. 2015. Let me post this praise on Facebook: Questioning the use of digital and social media in worship. *Liturgy*, *30*(2), 45-51.

Ali, S., Poulova, P., Akbar, A., Javed, H.M.U. & Danish, M. 2020. Determining the influence Factors in the adoption of solar photovoltaic technology acceptance model approach. *Economics* 8, 108; doi:10.3390/economics8040108.

Amevenku, F.M. 2015. "Faith healing in Ghanaian Christianity: an examination of attitudes and Practices based on an exegesis of James 5:13-18". *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* 18(4):87-101.

Anderson, C. 2010. Presenting and evaluating qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education,* 74(8), 141. Doi.10.5688/9/7408141. Accessed on February 8 2021.

Anderson, K. 2015. *The digital cathedral: Networked ministry in a wireless world*: Church Publishing, Inc.

Andrade, A.D. 2007. Interaction between existing social networks and information and communication technology (ict) tools: evidence from rural Andes. *Unpublished PhD Thesis* submitted to the Auckland University.

Animante, M.A., Akusah, H. &Adjei-Darko, N. 2021. "Experiences and perception towards the use social media for the church activities among charismatic Christian churches in Ghana". *Africa Journal of Emerging Issues* 3(2): 97-117.

Armbrust, W. 2012. A history of new media in the Arab Middle East. *Journal for cultural research,* 16 (2-3), 155-174.

Arnold, H. 2020. Made in the Image of God. *Plough Quarterly Magazine* 28.

Aririguzoh, S. O. 2015. The Function and Structure of Communication in Entrepreneurship. *Nsukka Journal of the Humanities*, No. 15, 160 – 178.

---------2013. Human integration in globalization: the communication imperative. *Nigeria Journal of Social Sciences,* Vol. 9, No. 2 118 – 141.

---------2019. Communication technologies and Modern-Day Evangelism. Unpublished Thesis: MTMS. websites. *Journal of Communication & Religion,* 31(2), 143-181).

Asamoah-Gyedu, J.K. 2007. 'Get on the Internet' says the Lord: Religion, cyberspace And Christianity in contemporary Africa'. *Studies in World Christianity,* 13(3), 225-242.

_____2020. *Christianity and Faith in the COVID-19 Era: Lockdown Periods from Hosanna to Pentecost.* Accra: Step Publishers.

_____.2022. "*Locked Down but Not Locked Out: An African Perspective in Pentecostalism and Media in a Pandemic Era" In Ecclesiology for a Digital Church: Theological Reflections on a New Normal* edited by Heidi A Campbell, John Dyer. London: S.C.M. Press. (Scribd version).

Aspers, P. & Corte, U. 2019. What is qualitative in qualitative research. *Qualitative sociology, 42, 139-160.* https://doi.org/10.1007/511133-019-9413-7. Accessed on February 17 2021.

Asur, S., & Huberman, B.A. 2010. Predicting the future with social media. 1-8. https://www.hpl.hp.com/research/scl/papers/social media/pdf, Accessed on May 15 2021.

Attride-Stirling, J. 2001. Thematic networks: an analytical tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 1 (3), 385-405.*

Atuahene, J. O. 2010. African Indigenous Churches. *Unpublished Thesis, Ghana:* KNUST.

Austin, J.S. 2014. Qualitative research: Getting started. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy.* https://ncbi.nim.nih.gov. Accessed on March 19, 2020.

Ayee, E.S.A. 2012. Human communication re-visited- A biblical perspective. *Koers-Bulletin*

Baab, L.M. 2008. 'Portraits of the future Church: A rhetorical analysis of congregational Badmos, K. 2014. Effect of social media on the church. *A paper presented at the annual Conference of theological friends and fellowship.* www.academia.edu/12388901/EFFECT_OF_SOCIAL_MEDIA_ ON_CHURCH Accessed on April 2021.

Bailey, B. & Storch, T. 2007. *The blogging church: sharing the story of your church through Blogs.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bala, K. 2014. Social media and changing communication patterns. *Global Media Journal-Indian Edition.* Vol. 5/No. 1

Barbour, I.G. 1990. *Religion in an age of science. London*: S.C.M. Press. Bartels, F.L. 1965. *The root of Ghana Methodism.* Cambridge University Press.

Bavinck, H. 2004. *God and Creation: Reformed dogmatics, vol 2.* Grand Rapids: Baker. Bebbington, D.W. 1984. *Evangelicalism in Britain.* London: Unwin Hyman.

Belotto, M.J. 2018. Data analysis methods for qualitative research: managing the challenges of coding interrater reliability, and thematic analysis. *Biomedical research alliance of New York*, vol. 23(11).

Bennett, S., Agnostinho, S. & Lockyer, L. 2017. The process of designing for learning: Understanding University teachers' *Educational Technology Research and Development.* 65(1):125-145.

Berkhof, H. 1979. *The Christian faith: an introduction to the study of faith.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Bex, L. 2016. How social media is changing the church. *theconversation.com*

Bhandari, P. 2020. An introduction to qualitative research. www.scribbr.com. Accessed on February 24, 2021.

Bloch A., Phellas, C. & Seale, C. 2011. *Structured methods: Interviews, questionnaires and observation. In Researching Society and Culture*. 3 ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Boaheng, I. 2021. "Christianity and the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Pastoral and Theological Reflection from the Ghanaian Context," *Journal of Pastoral Theology*:1-14, 1-2. DOI: 10.1080/10649867.2021.1908726.

_____. n.d. A theological and ethical reflection of digital ecclesiology from an African perspective. Unpublished article.

_____. n.d. The Covid-19 pandemic and Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity: observations from the Ghanaian context. Unpublished article.

Boakye, B. 2014. Social media futures: changing the African narrative. https://institute.global.com. Accessed on May 17 2021

Bokovoy, D. 2014. The word and the seed: The theological use of biblical creation in Alma 32. *Journal of book of Mormon Studies* 23, 1-21.

_____.2022. "Two creators in Genesis", https://www.bibleodysseyBolu.org:443/en

/passages/related-article/two-creations-in- genesis Accessed on May 22 2020.

Bolu, C. 2011. The church in the contemporary world: information and communication technology in church communication for growth: A case study. *Journal of media and communication Studies* 4(4) Doi:10.5897/ JMCS11.087

Borchardt, F. 2022. Some thoughts on the bible and technology. (A public lecture at Silliman University Divinity School) https://www.academia.edu/34807685/ some_thoughts_on_ Accessed on June 23 2021.

Boulos, M.N. Giustini, D. & Wheeler, S., 2016. Instagram and WhatsApp in health and healthcare: An overview. *Future Internet* 8(3):37. DOI: 10. 3390/fi80 30037.

Bourgeois, D.T. 2013. *Ministry in the digital age. Strategies and best practices for a post-website world*. Illinois, USA: IVP Books.

Bowen, T. & Pennaforte, A. 2017. The impact of digital communication technologies and New remote-working cultures on the socialization and work-readiness of individuals in WIL programmes. Work-integrated learning in the century. *International Perspective on Education and Society*, vol. 32, Emerald publishing limited, Bingley, 99-112.

Brain, C.C. 2018. Genesis 1:26-28: significance and challenges – BJU symposium. Bju press.

Breen, R.L. 2006. A practical guide to focus-group research. *Journal of geography in higher education,* 30 (3), 463-475. https://doi.org/10.1080/030982606009275 75. Accessed on March 14 2021.

Briggs, C.A. & Briggs, E.G. 1906. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Brink, E.R. & Detterman, P. 2013. *Wise church: exploring faith and worship and Christians Around the world.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Faith Alive.

Brock, B. 2010. *Christian ethics in a technological age*. Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Brooke, J.H. 1991. *Science and religion: some historical perspectives.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, M. 2001. *Learn to use Facebook, Twitter and Linkedin: The How-To-Guide.* Vook, Kindle.

Brink, E.R. & Detterman, P. 2013. *Wise church: exploring faith and worship with Christians around the world,* Faith Alive. Grand Rapids, MI.

Brinton, H.B. 2010. Are social media changing religion? *USA Today.* http://www.usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2010-06-21-

column21__ST_N.htm. Accessed on August 2020.

Brubaker, P.J. & Haigh, M.M. 2017. The religious Facebook experience: uses and gratifications https://doi.org/10. 1177/2056305517703723. Accessed on May 15 2022.

Bruce, F.F, Ellison, H.L. & Howley, G.C.D. (Eds.) 1979. *New Testament Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.

Brueggemann, W. 1982. *Genesis,* Interpretation. Atlanta: John Knox Press. 1984. *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary,* AOTS Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House.

Brueggemann, W. & Linafelt, T. 2012, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*, 2nd edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

Bullock, H. 2001. *Encountering the Book of Psalms.* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

Bunt, G. 2000. *Virtually Islamic: computer-mediated communication and cyber Islamic Environments*. Lampeter, Wales: University of Wales Press.

Burles, M. & Bally, J.M.G. 2018. Ethical, practical, and methodological considerations for unobtrusive Qualitative research about personal narratives shared on the internet. *SAGE Journals*.https://doi.org/1177/1609406918788 203. Accessed on October 2020.

Burnett, A. 2013. 8 Instagram marketing tips: social media today. http://socialmediatoday.com/ alexandraburnett/1680116/8-instagram-marketing-tips. Accessed on August 30 2019.

Cage , K. & Rueda, P. 2014.The long term effects of the printing press in Sub-Saharan Africa. https://scholar.harvard.edu Accessed on May 2019.

Calvin, J. 1992. *Genesis*. Pennsylvania, USA: The Banner of Truth Trust.

_____1994. *Commentary on Matthew, Mark, Luke, Volume 1, Calvin's New Testament.* Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

_____ 1979. *Calvin,s commentaries vol. 1: Genesis.* Grand Rapids.

_____ 2015. Calvin Commentary on Matthew: John Calvin Bible Commentary. Campbell, H. 2010. *When Religion Meets New Media*. Routledge, Oxford.

Campbell, H.A. Teusner, P.E., 2011. *Religious authority in the age of the internet.* Centre for Christian Ethics at Baylor University.

Campbell H A. Garner. T., 2016. *Networked theology negotiating faith in digital culture*. USA: Baker Academy.

Campbell, H - A. 2017. Introduction: Studying digital ecclesiology: How's churches are being informed by media and Cultures. https://brill.com/view/journals/ ep/7/1/article-pl_1.xml? language. = en Accessed September 20 2022.

Capurro, R. 2005. "Intercultural information ethics", in *Handbook of Information and computer technology."* 7, 30-29.

Carmichael, T. & Cunningham, N. 2017. Theoretical data collection and data analysis with gerunds in a constructivist grounded theory study. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*.

Catalina, E.K. & Lejuez, H. (eds) 2010. *Addiction: A social psychological perspective*. New York, USA: NY Psychology press.

Caviness, C. 2021. Social media: Take a cue from John Wesley. https://www.umc. org. Accessed on August 2022.

Chaffey, D. 2022. Global social media statistics research Summary. https: //wusw.smartinsights.com/ social - media. Accessed September 20 2022.

Chao, C-M. 2019. Factors determining the behavioural intention to use mobile learning: An application and extension of the UTAUT model. https://frontier. org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2019,01652/full. Accessed on April 4 2022.

Chen, G-M. 2012. "The impact of social media on intercultural communication in the global context," *China Media Research,* vol. 8, no. 2. 1-10, University of Rhode Island. Communication Studies Faculty Publications.

Chen, S-C. & Lin, C-P. 2019. Understanding the effect of social media marketing activities: The mediation of social identification, perceived value, and satisfaction. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 104(2):22-32. DOI: 10.1016/j.tech.2018.11.025.

Chen, Y., Zhang, Z. & Li, X. 2012. Deciphering word-of-mouth in social media: Text-based Metrics of consumer reviews. *ACM Transactions on Management Information Systems* 3(1) DOI:10:1145/2151163, 2151168.

Cheung, P.H. 2014. Tweet the message? Religious authority and social media innovation. *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture,* vol.3, Issue 3.

Cheung, P.H. & Ess, C. 2012. *Religion 2.0? Relational and hybridizing pathways in religion, and culture" in Digital Religion, and Culture: Perspectives, Practices, and Futures.* New York, USA: Peter Lang. Eds. P.H. Cheong, P. Fischer-Nielsen, P.S Gelfgren, C. Ess

Cheung, G.W. 2008. Testing equivalence in the structure, means, and variances of higher-order Content With structural equation modelling. *Order Res Methods.*

593-613.

Choinski, M. 2014. "A cognitive approach to the hermeneutics of Jonathan Edwards' sermons." *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 4, no. 2:215-28.

Chun-Ming, C., Meng-Hsiang, H., Huang, E. & Yang, Y-H. 2018. Measuring social media brand Community success: the roles of media capacity and organizational support. https://doi.org/10. 1080/14783363.2018.1485485. Accessed on May 13 2020.

Clark, J. 2012. *Facebook for Churches.* Church Juice/Reframe, Palos Heights, Illinois.

Clarke, A., Griffiths, F., Cave, J., Boardman, F., Ren, J., Pawlikowska, T., Ball, R. & Cohen, A., 2012. Social networks – The future for health care delivery. *Journal of Science & Medicine* 75, 2233-2241.

Clement, J. 2020. Number of social media uses worldwide. *Statista*

Clines, D.J.A. 1968. "The image of God in man". *Tyndale Bulletin,* 53-103

Colberg K. 2018. Ecclesiology today and its potential to serve a missionary church. *Missiology,* 46(1), 23-36. Doi:10.1177/0091829617739842. Accessed on April 15, 2020.

Cole, S.J. 2006. The text of true Christianity. http://fcfonline.org March 4 2019.

Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. 2000.

Conference Representative Agenda of the Methodist Church Ghana, 2018. Alpha Press.

Conlan-Donnelly, M. 2015. Technology is the new normal for churches. Streaming video, e-giving and other emerging technologies and reshaping churches as religious leaders seek to lure mellennials. *BizTech.* https://biztechnologies.com/article/2015/ 05/technologies Accessed on July 6 2019.

Conrad, M. 2021. Post-truth politics, digital media, and the politicization of the global compact for migration. *Politics and Governance* (ISSN: 2183-2463) 2021, Vol. 9 issue 3, 301-311.

Cooper, A.P. 2021. Exploring the use of Twitter Data to better understanding church attendance. *Doctoral Dissertation,* University of Turku.

Cooper, T., Stavros, C. & Dobele, A. 2019, Domains of influence: exploring negative Sentiment in social media. *Journal of Product & Band Management* 28(3), DOI: 10. 1108/JPBM-03-2018-1820.

Corbin, J.M. & Strauss, A.L. 2008. *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory.* 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA:SAGE.

Cornwell, A. & Jewkes, R. 1995. What is participatory research? *Social science and medicine, 14, 1667-1676.*

Couldry, N. & Hepp, A. 2017. The continuing lure of the mediated Centre in times of deep mediatization: "media events" and its enduring legacy. *Media Culture and Society Journal* vol 23 Iss. 7.

Cox, T. 2019. How different generations use social media. *Manifest 23*.

Creswell, J.W. & Clark, V.L.P. 2011. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* 2nd edition ed.), California, USA: SAGE Publications.

Craigan, N. 2016. The impact of Imago Dei on thinking about portrait photography (Doctoral Thesis, Bethel University]. Spark Repository. https://spark.bethel.edu/etd/ 141. Accessed on April 15 2020.

Craigie, P.C. 1983. *Psalms 1-50,* Word Biblical Commentary. Waco: Word Books. 39-40. Creswell, J.W. & Clark, V.L.P. 2011. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* 2nd edition ed. California, USA: SAGE Publications.

Creswell J.W. 2014. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crossman, A. 2020. "An overview of qualitative research methods." https://thoughtco.com/qualitative-research-methods-3026555. Accessed on May 2021.

Crouch, A. 2013. *Playing God: Redeeming the gifts of power.* Downers Grove, II. InterVarsity Press.

Crumpton, V.E. 2018. "The church has left the building: a leadership perspective of online church Versus traditional church." *Doctor of Ministry*. http://digital commons.georgefox.edu/dmin/276. Accessed on June 16 2020.

Csapo, B, Funke, J. (ed). 2017. *The nature of problem-solving: using research to inspire 21st Century Learning.* Paris: QECD Publishing.

Danis, H. 2007. Imagine: A vision for Christians in the arts. https:ransomfellowship.org. Accessed on June 23 2020.

DataReportal, 2021. https://datareportal.com Accessed on May 2021.

David, A. K. 1998. Multiple factor models. http://davidakenny.net/cm/mfactor.htm. Accessed on February 12, 2022.

Davis, F. D. 1986. A technology acceptance model for empirically testing new end-user

information systems: Theory and results. Doctoral dissertation. Cambridge, MA: *MIT Sloan School of Management.*

Davis, F. D., 1989. Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319–339.

Davis, F. D., Bagozzi, R. P. & Warshaw, P. R. 1989. User acceptance of computer technology: A comparison of two theoretical models. *Management Science*, 35(8), 982–1003.

Davis, R.B. & Mukamal, K.J., 2006. Hypothesis testing/Circulation. https://doi.org/10.1161/CIRCULATIONHA,105.586461 Accessed on January 23 2021.

Davis, W.D. 1989. *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount.* Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press.

Davis W.D. & Dale C. Allison, D.C. 1988. *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew. International Critical Commentary.* Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

Dawson L L. & Douglas E. C. 2004. *Religion Online: Finding faith on the Internet*: USA: Psychology Press.

declaisse-Walford, N.L., Jacobson, R.A, & Tanner, B.L. 2014. *"The book of Psalms* William, B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, UK" Excerpts from Nancy Declaisse-Walford, The book of Psalms (NICOT) – Potential of humanity (Psalm 8:5-8).

deClaissé-Walford, N.L. 2006. "Genesis 2: It is Not Good for the Human to Be Alone," *Review and Expositor,* 103, Spring.

Dean, B. 2021. Social network usage and growth statistics: How many people use social medial in 2021? https://backlinko.com/social-media-users.com. Accessed on May 15, 2022.

Denzin, N.K. 2001. *Interpretative interactionism.* Newburg Park, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S., 2011. *The SAGE Handbook of qualitative research.* 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. 2018. *The SAGE Handbook of qualitative research.* 5th ed. Los Angeles: Sage.

Deuze, M., Peter, B. & Laura, S. 2012. A life lived in media. *Digital Humanities Quarterly*; vol 6 Iss.1

Deligiannaki, A. & Ali, M. 2011. Cross-cultural influence on diffusion and adoption on innovation: an exploratory case study to investigate the social-cultural barriers. Brunel University. *European,' Mediterranean & Middle Eastern Conference*

On information systems.

Denteh, V.A. 2022. Rethinking digital technology in ministry in the face of covid-19 and beyond. *Address at the Pentecostal Youth Conference,* Accra.

Diana S. 2005. *The Basics of Structural Equation Modeling,* University of Northern Colorado.

Diaz, T., Duart, J.M., Carrion, P.V.T. & Gutierrez, I.M. 2021. Plagiarism and use of technology By high school students. *Inicio,* vol 10, no. 2

Dickson, R.E. 2011. *Dickson Teacher's Bible.* Hutchinson, Kansas. USA: Africa International Mission.

_____, 2011. *Dickson Biblical research library.* Hutchinson, Kansas, USA: Africa International Mission.

Digital Report 2021. https//datareportal.com. Accessed on April 4 2021.

Djikuk, J.J., 2017. Christianity and the digital age: sustaining the online church. International *Journal of Journalism and Mass Communication,* vol. 3(1): 043-049.

Dipio, D.2013. The communication needs of the Catholic Church in Africa. http://www.pccs.va/inex.php/en/news2/contributi/item1684-the-communication-needs Accessed on February 9 2019.

Dochuk, D. 2015. Revisiting Bebbington's classic rendering of modern evangelicalism at points of a new departure. *Fides et Historia,* vol. 47, Is, 1.

Dodds, T.,2019, Reporting with WhatsApp: mobile chat applications' impact on journalistic practices. https://doi.org/10. 1080/21670811.2019.1592693

Donovan, V. 2007. *Christianity rediscovered.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dryness, W. 1979. *Themes in Old Testament Theology*. Exeter: Paternoster Press. Dubovsky, P. (ed.) 2008. *Genezis* (KSZI). Trnava, Dobra Kniha.

Dutra, A., Ripoll-Feliu, V., Fillol, A., Ensslin, S. & Ensslin, L. 2015. 'The construction of knowledge from the scientific literature about the theme seaport performance evaluation.' *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 64,243-269.

Dyer, J. 2020. Where does technology fit in the story of God? A theology of technology for coders and artists. FaithTech institute. https://www.faithtec. com. Accessed on March 14, 2021.

Eastburn, K. 2016. "Wrong about church buildings 2: a response to Dan Kimball." *Christianity Today.* http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2009/december-

online-only/Accessed on July 23, 2019.

Ede, A. 2019. *Technology and society: a world history.* Cambridge University Press.

Edusa-Eyison, J.MY. 2011. The history of the Methodist Church Ghana. https.//archives,gcah.org.handle.net. Accessed on July 18, 2020.

_____2020. Synod address of the Accra Northern Diocese of the MCG. https.//archives,gcah.org.handle.net. Accessed on July 24, 2020.

Effiong, J.E. 2015. Theology and Information Technology. *Methodist Journal of Theology (MEJOTH), vol. 2, issue 1*:160-178. Methodist Theological Institute, Sagamu, Ogun State.

_____2016. Pauline adaptability in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23: A technological Reflection for 21st Century Mission. *Swem Journal of Religion and Philosophy*. Vo. 6 No. 1. 1-78.

Egore, I.K. 2012. Inculturation in cyberspace: a new portal for the "Good News". *Journal of inculturation theology,* vol 13, no. 1: 3-22.

Eilers FJ. 2011. "Communication Theology: Some Considerations." FABC Office of Social Communications. http://www.fabc. org/offices/osc/docs/pdf/ Communication_Theology. Accessed on August 12 2018.

_____.2012. Social communication and theology. *Communication Theology Sedos Bulletin Roma* vol 44. No. 11/12

_____.2021. Church, Communication and culture, 6:1, 155-156. http://www.fabc. org/offices/osc/docs/pdf/Communication_Theology. DOI: 10. 1080/23753234. 2021.1890629.

Eisenstein, E.L. 1980. *The printing aa an agent of change: communications and cultural Transformations in early-modern Europe.* Cambridge University Press.

Ejemeyowi, J.O., Osabuohien, E.S. & Bowale, E.I.K. 2019. Internet usage, innovation and human development nexus in Africa: the case of ECOWAS. *Journal of Economic Structures* 8. 15.

Ekpe, B.N., 2018. Evaluating the accuracy of the social media news report. *Nigeria Journal of Communication* (TNJC), Vol. 15, No.2, 427-444.

Elgan, M. 2018. How to survive in the fake information age. Computer World: https://www.computerworld.com/article/3229925/Internet/how-to-survive-Accessed on May 4 2021.

Ellul, J. 1964. *The technological society.* New York: Alfred Knopf.

Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2017. Encyclopaedia Britannia: Guido d'Arezzo, Italian

musician. www.britannica.com/biography/Guido-d'Arezzo-Italian-musician. Accessed on March 6 2022.

Erekson, T. & Shumway, S. 2006. Integrating the study of technology into the curriculum: a consulting teacher model. Brigham Young University – Utah. *Journal of Technology Education,* 18(1) 27-38.

Erickson, M. 1987. *Christian Theology.* USA: Baker Books House Company.

Essoungou, A.M. 2010. A social media boom begins in measuring information: African society *The ICT Development Index, 97) Iss. 9.*

Everton. S.F. 2015. 'Networks and religion: Ties that bind, loose, build up and tear down'. *Journal of social structure* 16 (1).

Eysenback, G. 2011. Using web-based and paper-based questionnaires for collecting data on fertility issues among female childhood cancer survivors: differences in response characteristics. *Medical internet research,* vol. 67 (45).

Faimau G & Camden B. 2016. "Facebooking religion and the technologization of the religious discourse: A case study of a Botswana-based Prophetic Church." *Online-Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 11.

Fan, Y., Chen, J., Sherkey, G. 2016. Applications of structural equation modeling (SEM) in ecological studies: an updated review. *Ecol Process* 5, 19. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13717-016-0063-3. Accessed on March 16 2020.

Fathema, N., Shannon D., & Ross M. 2015. "Expanding the technology acceptance model (TAM) to examine facultyuse of learning management systems (LMS)". *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching.* 11 (2):210-233.

Fernando, J. 2021. Correlation coefficient. https://www.investopedia.com. Accessed on April 4 2022.

Ferrer, J.N. 2002. *Revisioning transpersonal theory: a participatory vision of human spirituality.* NY, USA: State University of New York Press.

Feza, N.N. 2017. *Qualitative data analysis.* Oxford University Press. Fitzgerald, S. 2014. Study: the internet use keeping people out of church. www.newsmax.com Accessed on June 5, 2021.

Flesher, P. 1999. Technology and christianity. *Powered Blogger.*

Flickr Public Domain, 1872. Martin Luther nailing his ninety-five theses to his church's door in 1517.

Florman, S.C. 1994. *The existential pleasures of engineering.* New York: St. Martins.

Fogency, K.A-L.J. 2013. A Christian mega-church strives for relevance: examining

social media and religiosity. Masters thesis. University of Nevada, Los Vegas.

Fogg, B. & Tseng, H. 1999. The elements of computer credibility. Paper presented at *the Proceedings of the SGCHI conference on Human factor in Computing Systems,* New York, USA.

Fore, W.F. 1990. *Television and religion: the shaping of faith, values and culture.* Friendship Press. Reprinted by Augsburg 1987. SBS Press.

_____.2006. "A theology of communication, Religious Education." *Values and Culture, 38-58.*

Forrester, M. 2017. *Trending up: social media strategies for today's church.* Boonville, USA: Salubris resources.

Fournier, H. & Kop, R., 2011. New dimensions to self-directed learning in an open networked learning environment. *The international journal, vol. 7, No. 2*

France, R.T. 2007. *The gospel of Matthew (The New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT).* Eerdmans; New International Commentary on the NT edition.

Francis, B. M. 2011. The use of information technology to educate laity: A case study to unleash of electronic. https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/208. Accessed on January 25, 2021.

Friedman, T.L. 2006. *The world is flat: a brief history of the twenty-first century* and Giroux, New York: Farrar Strauss.

Fuchs, C. 2014. Digital presumption labour on social media in the context of the capitalist regime of time. *Time & Society* 23(1) 97-123 0961-463x. Sage Publishing.

Funk, K.1999. Technology and Christian "values" https:web.engr.oregonstate.edu. Accessed on May 14 2019.

Futato, M.D. 2007. *Interpreting the Psalms. An exegetical handbook.* Ist edition Kregel publications.

Gagnon, M-P. Godin, G., Gogne, C., Fortin, J-P., Lamthe, L., Reinharz, D & Clouier, A., 2003. An adaptation of the theory of interpersonal behaviour to the study of telemedicine adoption by physicians. *International Journal of Medical Informatics.* 71. 103-115. www.elsevier.com/locate/ijmedinf. Accessed on May 2020.

Gamble, T.K. & Gamble, M. 1996. *Communication Works 5th Ed McGraw.* Hill Companies; Inc

Garland, D.E. 2003. *Baker exegetical commentary on New Testament.* Michigan: Zondervan Academy.

Gaziano, C. & McGrath, K. 1986. Measuring the concept of credibility. *Journalism Quarterly,* 63(3), 451-462.

George, M. 2013. Teaching focus group interviewing. Benefits and challenges. *Teaching Sociology*,41(3), 257-270. doi:10.1177/0092055X12465295. Accessed on March 6, 2021.

Ghana statistical service report, 2021. https://hardly.ward@statista.com. Accessed on March 2020.

Gheung, R. & Vogel, D. 2013. Predicting user acceptance of collaborative technologies: An extension acceptance model for e-learning. Computers & Education 63: 160-175. DOI: 10.1016/j.compedu.2012.12.003

Giusti, M. 2019. Human-nature relationships in context. Experiential, psychological, and contextual dimensions shape children's desire to protect nature. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0225951 *PLoS ONE* 14(12). Accessed on February 12 2021.

Glesne, C. 2016. *Becoming qualitative researchers: an introduction, 5th edition*. Pearson. Global Web Index. 2021. Use of social media by generation insight infographic. https://www.gwi.com.reports. Accessed on April 3 2022.

Global Index Report. 2022. https://www.socialprogress.org. Accessed on May 4 2022.

Global Social Media Statistics 2022. https://datareportal.com.social-media-statistics. Accessed on November 13 2022.

Goertzen, M.J. 2017. Introduction to qualitative research data. *Techsource, vol. 53 (4).* Gordon, R.L & Bruce, A.D. 1990. *Intergrative theology, vol 2.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Gonzales, R. Jr. 2013. "The cutting-edge": Technology and church ministry. *Unpublished thesis*. https://www.academia.edu. Accessed on July 12 2019.

Gonzalez, J., de Boeck, P. & Tuerlinckx, F. 2008. A double structural equation model for three-mode data. *Psychol Methods.* 337-53. 10.1037/90013269.

Gould, M. 2013, 2015. *The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in a new way*. Collegeville, Minnesota, USA: Liturgical Press.

Gonzalez-Padilla, D.A. & Tortalero-Blanco, L. 2020. Social media influence in the COVID-19 Pandemic. https://doi.org/10,1590/51677-5538.IBJU.2020,s125. Accessed on August 23 2021.

Green, P.B. 2014b. what has the technology to do with theology? Towards a theology of technology paper presented at "what has Athens to do with Jerusalem"? *Dominican Colloquium, Berkeley*, CA, U.S.A.,16-20 July.

_____.2016b. Pope Francis, the Encyclical Laudato Si, Ethics, and Existential risk. Institute for Ethics and emerging technologies. http://ieet.org/index.php/IEET/ more/green 20150816. Accessed on February 6 2022.

_____.2017. The Catholic Church and technological progress: Past, present and future. *Religions*. 8 (6), https:// doi.org/10.doi.org/10.3390/rel8060106. Accessed on July 18 2019.

Grenz, S.J. 1968. The social God and the relational self: Trinitarian theology of the Imago Dei. Louisville: *Westminster John Knox* (2001), 141-82.

Grill, D. 1998. Prolegomena to a theology of technology. In *Bridges: An interdisciplinary Journal of Theology, Philosophy, History and Science*. Vol 5, Nos. ¾. Fall/Winter pp. 155-173.

Grudem, W. 1994. *Systematic Theology. An introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Michigan, USA: Grand Rapids.

Guba, E.G. 1990. The alternative paradigm dialog. In E.G. Guba (Ed.), *The paradigm dialog* 77-30.

Gulseth, S. 2022. *The coffee hour*. Concordia Univ. Wisconsin. cuw.edu.

Guthrie, G.H. & Quinn, R.O. 2006. A discourse analysis of the use of Psalm 8:4-6 and Hebrews 2:5-9. *JETS 49/2:235-46.*

Haas, A.1995. John Wesley's vision of science in the service of Christ. *Prospective on science and Christian faith* 47:234.

Hall, E., Chai, W. & Albrecht, J.A. 2016. A qualitative phenomenological exploration of teachers' experience with nutrition education. *America Journal of Health Education,* 47:3, 136-148. DOI: 100:1080/19325037.2016.1157532. Accessed on March 13, 2021.

Ham, M., Jeger, M. & Ivkovic, A.F. 2015. The role of subjective norms in forming Intention to purchase green food. *Economic research,* 28:1. DOI: 10.1080/1331677%2015.1083875.

Hamilton, V.P. 1990. *Genesis.* Grand Rapids, MI Erdermans.

_____1990. *The book of Genesis chapters 1-17,* NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans publishing company.

Harari, Y.N. 2017. *Homo Deus: a brief history of tomorrow*. New York: HarperCollins.

Haring, B. 1978. "*Free and faithful in Christ moral theology for priests and laity.*" USA: Inter-Versty press.

Harper, R.H.R. 2012. *Texture: human expression in the age of communication overload*. MIT Press.

Harry, B. 2016. *When faith turns ugly: understanding of toxic faith and how to avoid it*. Milton, Keynes, UK: Paternoster.

Hart, D.B. 2005. The Lively God of Robert Jenson. Journal of Religion and Public Life. https://www.firstthings.com>aticle>2005/10>the-live-god-of-robert-jenson Accessed on April 4 2022.

Haruna, S. & Kassim, N.M. 2019. Factors influencing the intention to use of E-Collection System in state-owned tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Doi:10:4018/978-1-5225-77. Accessed on March 16 2022.

Hauser, L. 2012. *Christian ethics in a technological age*. Theologische Literaturzeitung

Hearn, M. 2009. Color-blind racism, color-blind theology, and church practices. *Religious Education* 104(3):272-288

Heijden, H.V.D. 2004. "User acceptance of hedonic information system". *MIS Quarterly* 28(4):695-704.

Heikkila, H., Domingo, D., Pies, J., Glowacki, M., Kus, M. & Baisnfee, O. 2012. Media accountability goes online: A transnational study on emerging practices and innovations. Finland: *Journalism Research and Development Centre,* University of Tampere.

Heikkila, H., Kunelius, R. & Ahva, I. 2010. FROM CREDIBILITY TO RELEVANCE: Towards a sociology of journalism's "added value." *Journalism Practice*, 4(3), 274-284.

Heitzenrater, R.P. 1995. *Wesley and the people called Methodists*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Helland, C. 2011. Online religion as lived religion. Methodological issues in the study of religious Participation on the internet. DOI: 10. 11588/rel.2005.1.380.

Henry, M. 1985. *Matthew Henry commentary on the whole Bible*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company. First Edition.

Henry. M.M. 2003. God's domination mandate and the nations today. ICR, Institute Creation Research. https://www.icr.org>models=articles. Accessed on June 14 2019.

Hermida, A. 2010. Twittering the news: the emergence of ambient journalism. *Journalism Practice,* 4(3), 297-308.

Hess, L.M. 2015. *Learning in a musical key: insight for theology in performance mode*. Eugene: Pickwick press.

Hindman, D. 2014. The world without flesh: an ethical education of digital media in multimedia site worship. https:socialnaturejournal.com. Accessed on April 4 2021.

Hjarvard, S. 2008. 'The mediatization of religion: A theory of the media as an agent of religious change.' *Northern lights: film and media yearbook, vol 6 No.19-26.*

Hoekema, A.A. 1994. *Created in God's image.* Carlisle, U.K; Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans publishing company.

Horan, D.P. 2021. Franciscan spiritual wisdom to navigate the 'digital. https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/faith-seeking-understanding/ franciscan-spiritual-wisdom-navigate-digital-continent Accessed on January 2022.

Horton. D. 2006. *The portable seminary. A master's level overview in one volume.* Minnesota, USA: Bethany house publishers.

Howard, R.G. 2011. *Digital Jesus: The making of a new Christian fundamentalist community On the Internet. Vol. 5.* NYU Press.

Hugh, E.T. 1961. *Our Methodist faith. An annotated syllabus of Methodist Doctrine*. Cape Coast.

Hule, B.D. & Anderson, D.A. 2008. *News writing and reporting for today's media.* New York: McGraw Hill.

Humphrey, E.M., 2013. *Scripture and tradition: what the Bible really says*. Michigan, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids.

Hunter, L., 2013. Twitter for churches: key to social media success. https://laurenhunter.net. Accessed on January 8 2020.

Hutchings, T. 2015. Christianity and digital media in SD Brunn (ed). *The changing world religion Map* (3811-3830).

Hutchison, A.J., Johnson, L.H. & Breckon, J.D. 2010. Using QSR-NVivo to facilitate the development of a grounded theory project: an account of a worked example. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 13 (4), 283-302.* Doi:10.1080/136455709029963301. Accessed on March 4 2021.

Hvidt, N. C. 2007. *Christian Prophecy: The Post-Biblical Tradition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jailobaev, T., Jailobaev, K., Baialieva, M. & Baialieva, G. 2021. WhatsApp groups in social research: new opportunities for fieldwork communication and management. *Bulletin de methodogie sociologigue BMS* 149(1) :60-82. DOI: 10:1177/075910633320978337.

Jameel, A.S. & Ahmed, M.A-A. 2018. Determine some factors that affect the adoption of e-commerce among small and medium enterprises in Erbil. *Polytechnic Journal*: Vol. 8 No. 1.

James, T.G. 2013. Theology of social media. https://www.churchleadership.com. Accessed on August 14 2019.

Janzen, M. 2019. Ten arguments for deleting your social media accounts right now. *Perspective on Science and Christian Faith*. Vol 7 issue 2: American Scientific Affiliation.

Jemison, H. 2016. God speaks through prophets. https://spectrummagazine.org Accessed on March 20 2021.

Jerome-Zsupan, D. 2014. *Connected toward communication: the church and social communication in the digital age*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical press.

Job, R.P. 2008. *Three simple rules: Wesleyan of living a Wesleyan*. Abingdon press.

John Wesley and Science – WesleyNexus. https://wesnex.org/john-wesley-and-science/ Accessed on January 2022.

Kaivo-oja, J.R.L., Lauraeus, N. 2017. Knowledge management and triangulation logic in the Foresight research analysis in business process management. Doi:10:1007/978-3-319 62698-7_20.

Kamau, J.N. 2019. Experience 101; the network of dynasties in Kenya –A social network approach. *The International Journal of Global Sciences (TIJOGS), Vol 2*

Kaplan, B. & Maxwell, J.A., 2005. Qualitative research methods for evaluating computer information systems. Doi:10.1007/0-387-30329-4_2. Accessed on July 23, 2021.

Kapoor, K.K., Neur, S. & Tamilmani, K. 2018. Advances in social media research: past, present And future. *Information Systems Frotiers* 20, 531-558.

Karimi, M.H., Mirhaghi, A., Zapli, A.E. 2015. A journey across an unwelcoming field: a qualitative study exploring the factors influencing nursing students' clinical education. *Health Science Journal,* 9 (4).

Kasule, M.R. 2013. Increase of Internet usage in Ghana and its implications.

http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=28 6132 Accessed on April 5 2021.

Kayembe, C.V. 2019. Is God tying to speak to you through angels? https://www.charismanews.com. Accessed on May 17 2020.

Keener, C.S. 2009. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Kemp, S. 2020. We are social. https://wearesocial.com Accessed on January 2021.

Kgatle, M.S. 2018. "Social media and religion: a missiological perspective on the link between Facebook and the emergence of prophetic churches in southern Africa." *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39(1): 1-6.

Kidner, D. 1967. *Genesis,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press. Kietzmann, J.H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I.P. & Silvestre, B.S. 2021. Social media. Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons,* 54(3), 241-251.

Kikooma, J. F. 2010. Using qualitative data analysis software in a social constructionist study of entrepreneurship. *Qualitative Research Journal, 10*(1),40-51. doi:10.3316/QRJ1001040.

Kim, E.M. 2012. *Preaching as an art of shared leadership* (In Creamer, D.B. & Kim, E.M, *eds*. Women, Church, and Leadership: New Paradigms. Eugene: Wipf and Stock).

Kim, D.H. 2017. Ministry focus paper approval sheet- fuller. https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1386&context= dmin. Accessed on August 13, 2020.

Kim, C. & Brown, W. 2015. Conceptualizing credibility in social media spaces of public relations. *Public Relations Journal* 9 (4).

Kimaru, P.M.W. 2019. Social media and church communication: The role of modern technology In transformation of church interactions: A case study of Christ embassy church Norway. https://www.duo.uio.no>handle Accessed on November 2020.

Kimball, D. 2009. "I was wrong about church buildings." Christianity Today. http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2009/december-online-only/ Accessed on July 23 2019.

King, W.R. & He, J. 2006. A meta-analysis of the technology acceptance model. *Information & Management* 43(6):720-755.

Kitetu, C. W. 2008. *Gender, Science and Technology: Perspectives from Africa: Perspectives from Africa*. Vol. 6: African Books Collective.

Kline, M.G. 2006. *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for Covenantal Worldview*. Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 14-15.

Kolawole, O.P. 2019. An evaluation of the use of technology in the 21st century Nigeria church. *Pharos Journal of Theology*, vol 100.

Kraus, J-H. 1993. *Psalms 1-59: A continental Commentary*, trans., Hilton C. Oswald Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Krueger, R.A. 1998. *Developing questions for focus groups: Focus group kit 3.* Newbury Park, London: SAGE Publications.

Krueger, R.A. & Casey, M.A. 2000. *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*, 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Kurniawan, Y. & Cadelina F. 2014. Development of church information system: A case study approach. *International Journal of software, vol.* 8(12), 199-208.

LaCaille, L. 2013. *Theory of reasoned action.* In: Gellman M.D, Turner J R (eds) Encyclopedia behavioural medicine. New York, NY, USA: Springer.

LaMorte, W.W. 2019. Behavioural change models. Boston University School of Public Health. https://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu. Accessed on May 23 2020.

Latini, T.F. 2011. *The church and the crisis community: a practical theology of Small-Group Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans publishing company.

Lazarus, N. 2017. "The connected Church. A social media communication strategy for churches, non-profit and individual in ministry." www.natchilazurus.com Accessed on June 24 2019.

Lee, M. K. O., Cheung, C. M. K. & Chen, Z. 2005. Acceptance of Internet-based learning medium: The role of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. *Information & Management,* 42, 1095–1104.

Lee, D. S. 2010. An Effective Internet Ministry Strategy for Church Evangelism Through a Case Study of the Sarang Community Church. *Doctor of Ministry Thesis:* Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.

Leem, J. & Lim., B. 2007. The status of e-learning and strategies to enhance educational competitiveness in Korean higher education. The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 8(1). http://www.irrodl. org/index.php/irrodl/article/viewArticle/380/763. Accessed on April 30 2022.

Legris, P., Ingham, J. & Collerette, P. 2003. Why do people use information technology? A critical review of the technology acceptance model. *Information & Management,* 40, 191–204.

Lemke, S.W. 2014. The intelligent design of humans: the meaning of the Imago Dei for

theological anthropology. *A paper presented at the Southwest regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society* in Houston, Texas.

Lewis. B. 2014. The digital age: a challenge for Christian discipleship? www.academia.edu/8724570/the-challenge-for-christian-discipleship. Accessed on August 23 2022.

Lim, A. 2017. 'Effective ways of using social media: an investigation of Christian churches in South Australia." *Christian Education Journal* 14 (1):23-41.

Lipschults, J.H. 2015. "The ethics of social media accuracy". https://www.huffing tonpost.com/Jeremy-harris-lipschultz/ the - ethics of - social –media b7489288.html. Accessed September 19 2022.

Liulevicius, V. 2020. The religious impact of the printing press. Lecture series. https://www.wondriumdaily.com/the-religious-impact-of-the-printing-press Accessed April 4 2022.

Lofland, J. & Lofland, L. 1995. *Analyzing social settings. A guide to qualitative, observation and analysis.* 3rd ed. Belmont: Wadsworth.

Long-Crowell, L. 2013. Theory of planned behaviour: definition, examples and usefulness. https://study.com/academy/lesson/theory-of-planned-behaviour-examples-usefulness.html. Accessed on May 3 2022.

Long-Crowell, E. & Boyd, T. 2021. Theory of planned behaviour. https://study.com/ learn/lesson/theory-of-behaviour. Accessed on July 4 2022.

Longman, T. III. 2005. *How to Read Genesis*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity.

Lucas, B. 2012. social communication. *Vatican II and the Austrian Church:* Accessed from *Australian ejournal of theology 2, 155-171.* Aejt/com/au/Lucas_ social_communication_vatII-and-the-Australian-Church.Accessed on September 12 2019.

Luke, M. 2014. *Effective group leadership interventions. In J.L Delucia-Waack, C.L Kalouder, & M.T. Riva (Eds.), Handbook of group counselling and psychotherapy (2nd ed.), 107-119.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Luke, M. & Goodrich, K.M. 2019. Focus group research. An international strategy for applied group research. *The Journal for specialists in group work*, vol. 44, Issue 2

Lundby, K. (Ed.). 2014. *Mediatization of communication (vol.21).* Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter Mounton. GmbH & Co KG. Accessed August 12 2019.

Maag, V. 1955. Alttestamentliche Anthropologie in inhrem verhaltnis zur

altorientalischen Mytholoogie." *Etudes Assiatiques* 9. 15-44.

MacDonald, W. 1989. *Believers Bible Commentary.* (Ed. Art Farstad). Nashville, USA: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Manyika, J., Lund, Bughin, J., Woetzel, S, Stamenov, K. & Dhingra, D. 2016. *Digital globalization:The new era of global flows*. Mckinsey Global Institute.

Markley, B. 2015. "Effects of new media on youth ministry." http://digitalcommons. brockport.edu/honors/126 2018-07-04 Accessed on May 15 2019.

Mars, M.M. C. & Scott, R.E. 2019. WhatsApp guidelines – what guidelines? A literature review. J. Telemed Telecare, 2019;25(9):524-9. https://doi.org/10.1177/1357633x19873233. Accessed on July 14 2021.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. 1998. *Designing qualitative research.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Marshall, T.E. 2011. The conversing God: Exploring Trinitarian Information transfer from the perspective of Gordon Pask's conversation theory, *Journal of information and religion.* Vol. 1 (12). DOI-10.21038/asir.2011.0006.

Matthew, H. 2003. *Matthew's Henry's commentary on the whole bible. Complete and unabridged in one volume.* Hendrickson publishers, inc.

Mattox, M.L. 2018. Faith in creation: Martin Luther's sermon on Genesis 1. Theology Faculty Research and Publications. https://www.epublications.marquette.edu. Accessed on June 23 2020.

Mays, J.L. 2011. *Psalms,* Interpretation. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. Mbiti, J. 1969. *Africa religions and philosophy*. Nairobi: EAEP.

McDaniel, R. 2014. *"The spread of knowledge via print". Disrupting society from tablet to Tablet.* CC BY-NC.

McGiven, R. 2016. Chapter 8. Media and technology. https://opentextbc.ca Accessed on April 14 2020.

McHugh, M.L. 2013. The chi-square test of independence. *Biochem Med (Zagreb)* 23(2):143- 149.

McKechnie, L. E. F. 2008. *Observational research. In Given, L.M. (ed.), The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods. 573-577.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McKenna, B., Myers M.D. & Newman, M. 2017. Social media in qualitative research: challenges and recommendations. *Journal of information and organization,* 27(2).

McKinney, R.D. 2014. "Social media in the church. *Theses and Dissertation.* University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

McLeod, J. 2017. Qualitative methods for routine outcome measurement. In Rousmaniere, T., Goodyear, R.K., Miller, S.D., & Wampold, B.E. (Eds.). The cycle of excellence: using deliberate practice to improve supervision and training, 99-122. Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119165590. ch5. Accessed on March 22, 2021.

McLuhan, M. 1994. *Understanding media: The extensions of man*: MIT press.

McNiff, K. 2016. Thematic analysis of interview data: 6 ways NVivo can help. *QSR International* Vol. 67(6).

Mefolere, K.F. 2016. WhatsApp and information sharing: prospect and challenges.*International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Research* vol.4, Is. 1:615-625. ISSN 2348-3164.

Merriam, S.B. 2009. *Qualitative research and case study applications in education. Revised And expanded from "case study research"*. Jossy-Bass Publishers, 350 Sansome, St, San Francisco, CA 94104.

Merriam-Webster dictionary. 2016. Merriam-Webster incorporated.

Meyer, F.B. 1979. *Meyer Bible commentary.* Tyndale House Pub.

Mfumbusa, B. 2014. Tanzanian: embrace new media technology. Bishop cautions the catholic church. http://amecea.blogport.com.tanzania-embrace- new-mediated. htm Accessed on May 14 2020.

Michels, D.H. 2015. "Digital faith: law, ethics, and theology or online-engaged church" (Keynote address at the 5th annual international conference on information and religion at the centre for the study of information and religion, Kent State University, CSIR

Middleton, R. 2013. *The liberating image: Imago Dei in Genesis 1*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press. Ebook edition.

Middleton, F. 2019. Reliability vs validity in research/differences, types and examples. https://www.scribbr.com. Accessed on July 5 2020.

Milhausen, R.R., Reece, M. & Perare, B. 2006. A Theory-Based Approach to Understanding Sexual Behaviour at Mardi Gras. *Journal of Sexual Research*, 43(2), 97-106.

Miller, P.D. 1986. *Interpreting the Psalms*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Mills, J. 2015. SEM: What is the measurement model? URL version. https://stats.stackexchange.com/q/152031. Accessed on June 4, 2021.

Mintzberg, H. 1979. *Structuring of organization. A synthesis of the research. .* Michigan, USA: Prentice–Hall.

Mishra, L. 2016. "Focus group discussion in qualitative research."*TechnoLearn: An International Journal of Educational Technology* 6 (1):1-5.

Mochechane, S. 2016. "Dealing with fear and anxiety in Pentecostalism: The Bushiri-Phenomenon in Pretoria." A CHSSA paper presented at the Third Conference of Academic Societies in the Fields of Religion and Theology. https://www. merriam.com/dictionary/communication. Accessed on August 15 2022.

Mohamed, A.M.T.T., Hassanudin, M.T,T. & Pitchay, A.A. 2018. Modeling crowdfunders' behavioural Intention to adopt the crowdfunding-waqf model (CWM) in Malaysia: The theory of the technology acceptance model. *International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management.* ISSN 1753-8394.

Moltmann, J. 1974. *Christian anthropology in the conflicts of the present , trans.* John Sturdy. London : SPCK.

Moody, G.D. & Siponen, M. 2013. Using the theory of interpersonal behaviour to explain non-work-related personal use of the internet of work. *Information and Management,* 50, 322-335.

Morgan, D.L. 2007. Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. *Journal of mixed methods research* 1(1) 48-76. DOI:10. 1177/23456789906292462.

_____2014. *Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods: A pragmatic approach.* Sage publications.

Mourtada, R. & Salem, F. 2011. Facebook usage: Factors and analysis. *Arab Social Media Report*, 1(1), 1-18.

Mourtada, R. & Salem, F. 2012. Social media in the Arab world: influencing societal and cultural change. *Arab social media report,* 2(1), 1-28.

Moustakas, C.1994. *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Moyer, L.M. & Suzanne, E. 2020. Is my grief too public for you? The digitalization of Grief on Facebook. *Death Studies*, DOI: 10. 1080/07481187.2018.1522388.

Muleya, V.R. Fourie, L., & Schlebusch, S., 2017. Ethical challenges in assessment centres in South Africa. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology,* 43(2). DOI:10.4102/sajip.v4310.1324. Accessed on March 23 2021.

Mungai, S.K. 2016. *Information communication technology. Uptakes and use in religious institutions in Kenya: A study of Christ is the Answer Ministries.* University of Pretoria.

Mungonera, N.J. & Peters, A.N. 2016. Social media usage in Africa and its ethical implications. *Journal of Proceedings of the first Africans conference on internet computer.*

Mueller, C. 1999. What it means to be created in the Image of God. *Unpublished Thesis* submitted Liberty University.

Murray, D. 2014. "God's technology training our children to use technology to God's glory." DVD series, head, hand, heart ministries. https://headhearthand.org. Accessed on May 17 2019.

Mutemwua, D., Hattings, W. & Hattings- Rush, R. 2017. The effectiveness of Sesheke church's transformational task: an exposition of the descriptive-empirical task from a practical theological perspective. Accessed on March 2022.

Myers, J. 2017. *Understanding culture: a survey of social engagement.* U.S.A.: Summit Ministries.

Nadella, R. 2013. 'Redefining connectedness', in *Theological investigations in the church and culture.* Columbia Theological Seminary, Columbia.

Nagy, P & Kolu, B. 2014. "The digital transformation of human identity: Towards a conceptual model of virtual identity in a virtual world. *The international journalOf research into new media technologies.* 20(30) 277-29

Nche, G.C. 2012. 'The social media usage among Nigeria youth: impact on national development.' *International journal of advancement in development studiesVol. 7 No. 5, 18-24.*

Nche, G.C & Nkechi, O.G. 2014. 'The moral implication of social media phenomenonIn Nigeria.' *Mediterranean journal of social science.* Vol. 5, no. 20 MCSER publication.

Niemandt, C.J.P. 2013. "A network society, social media, migration and mission approach," *Missionalia 41, no.* 1, 30.

Nilles, M. 2012. Technology is destroying the quality of human interaction. www.the.bottomline.as.ucsb.edu/2012/01/technology-is-destroying-the-quality-of-human-interaction. Accessed on August 15 2022

NIST/SEMTECH 2015. What are statistical tests? E-Handbook of statistical methods.

Nthabiseng, M. 2021. Effectiveness of using social media for preaching during the

Covid-19 lockdown. Doi. 10.46222/pharosjet. 102.22. Accessed on March 13 2022.

Nwachukwu, R.U. & Eberechukwu, C. 2019. The changing roles of higher education teachers in the digital era in Nigeria. https://open.library.okstate.edu/adect/ changing-Accessed on April 12 2020.

Nyumba, O.T., Kerrie W, Christina J D & Nibedita M. 2018. "The use of focus group discussion methodology: Insights from two decades of application in conservation." *Methods in Ecology and Evolution* 9 (1):20-32.

Nyumba, O.T., Mukherjee, N. & Derick, C. 2018. The use of focus group discussion methodology: Insights from two decades of application in conservation. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution* 12-25.

Odetunmibi, O.A., Adejumo, A.O. & Anake, T.A. 2021. A study of hepatitis B virus infection using the chi-square statistic. J. Phys.: Conf. Ser. 1734 012010. *Journal of Physics: Conference series.* IOP Publishing.

Oldewage, H.E. 2015. Fostering koinonia: a critical evaluation of the value of digital social Networks in urban congregations. *Unpublished Doctor of Pastoral Studies thesis* submitted to North West University.

O'Challaghan, P. 2017. Cultural challenges to faith: a reflection on the dynamics of modernity. Church, Communication and Culture. Vol. 2 Issue 1, 25-40 https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2017.128728.

Omekwu, C.O. 2006. "African culture and libraries: the information technology challenge." *The Electronic Library*.

Omololu, F. E. 2015. *Digitalizing the world.* Columbia, USA: Univ. press.

Omololu, B. 2020. Digital transformation the hedge fund and private equity industry. *Lex research topic in corporate law & economics working paper No. 2020-1.*

Ortlund Jr, R.C. 2012. *Proverbs, Wisdom that works.* Wheaton, II: Crossway.

Osborne, R.G. 2010. *Zondervan exegetical commentary on New Testament*. Zondervan Academy.

Osmer, R.R. 2005., 2008. *Practical Theology: An introduction*. Cambridge, UK: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

_____ 2008. *Practical theology: An introduction*: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

_____ 2012. *Practical theology: An introduction*: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Ossai-Ugbah, N.B. 2011. The use of information and communication technologies in Nigeria Baptist Churches: *International Journal of Science and Technology*

Education Research. Vol. 2(3), pp. 49-57.

Outler, A.C. 1985. "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral – in John Wesley", *WTJ* 20:7-8

Ozili, P.K. 2020a. COVID-19 in Africa: socioeconomic impact, policy response and opportunities. *MPRA Paper No 996617.* https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/99617/. Accessed on April 6 2021.

Palakeel, J. 2011. Theology and technologies of communication. *Media Development* 3/2011.

Palinkas L .A., Horwitz S.M, Green C. A, Wisdom J.P, Duan N, & Hoagwood K. 2015. "Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data - collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research." *Administration and policy in mental health* 42 (5):533-44. doi: doi:10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y.

Parasian, N. & Yuliati, Y. 2020. Video conference as a mode of communication in the pandemic era, https://www.attantis-press.com.proceeding. Accessed on May 17 2021.

Park, S.Y. 2009. "An analysis of technology acceptance model in understanding university. Doi: https://doi.org/10.18434/M32189. Accessed on March 12 2020.

Parker, A. & Tritter, J. 2006., Focus group and methodology: current practice and recent debate. *International Journal of Research Method in Education,* 29, 23-37.

Patton, M. 1990, 2005. *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage. Pearcey, S., Gordon, K., Chakrabarti, B., Dodd, H., Halldorsson, B. & Creswell, C. 2020. Research review: The relationship between social anxiety and social cognition in children and adolescents: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry.* https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp. 13310.

Pearson, J & Nelson, P. 2000. *An introduction to human communication: Understanding and sharing.* Boston, MA: McGraw – Hill.

Pearson, D. & Vossler, A. 2016. Methodological issues in focus group research: The example of investigating counsellors' experiences of working with same-sex couples. *Counselling Psychology Review,* 31 (1).

Perkins, P.W. 2012. The manifestation of biblical community understanding in a Facebook community: A qualitative study among Christian college students. *Doctorate dissertation.* Liberty University: Lynchburg, VA.

Peterson, R.S. 2016. The Imago Dei as human identity: a theological interpretation. *Journal of theological interpretation supplements* vol. 14. Penn State University Press.

Pew Research Centre's Internet and American life project, 2017. S.N.F.

Pew Research Centre Spring 2017. Global Attitude Survey. *Pew Research Centre for the People & and the Press.*

Phillips, P. 2016. Wesley's parish and digital age? *Holiness: the journal of Wesley house Cambridge* vol 2, issue 3. (Holiness and contemporary culture), 337-358.

Pillay, J. 2020. COVID-18 shows the need to make church more flexible, *An international Journal of holistic mission studies*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378820963156

Postman, N. 1992. *Technology: The surrender of culture to technology.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Potgieter, A. 2019. Digitalization and the church – a corporeal understanding of church andthe influence of technology. https://resipository-up.ac.za/handle/2263/2559. Accessed on March 14 2019.

Powell, A. 2019. The image of God. https://www.linkedin.com. Accessed on May 4 2019.

Prasad, M. & Garcia, C. 2017. How to conduct a successful focus group discussion. https://static1.squarespace.com. Accessed on February 23 2021.

Prior, M.T. 2020. *Confronting technology: the theology of Jacques Ellul*. Pickwick publication Eugene, Oregon.

Ramunddal, L. & da Silva, A.B., 2021. Theological normativity and church development. On The significance of theological normativity for church development. *Scandinavian Journal for Leadership & Theology*. 3/8.

Ray, A., Bala, P.K. & Jain, R. 2021. Utilizing emotion scores for improving classifier performance for predicting customer's intended ratings from social media posts. *An International Journal, ISSN: 1463-5771.*

Reinke, T. 2021. *God, technology, and the Christian Life.* Crossway Books

Religion News Service 2012, Seven years in Pope Twitter accounts garners success,

criticism and comic. https://religionews.com   Aceessed on June 13 2019.

Reno, R.R. 2010. *Genesis, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible.* Grand Rapids: Brazos Press.

Representative Agenda 2018. Methodist Church Ghana. Accra: Sankofa Press.

Rice, J. 2011. New models of the church in a new media world [web log post]. http://cpx.cts.edu/newmedia/blog/new-media-project/2011/08/05/new#

Accessed on March 16 2022.

Richards, E.R. 2004. *Paul and First Century Letter Writing*. IVp Academic.

Richard, T. 2002. International Journal of social research methodology. doi:10.1080/13645570210146267 Accessed on March 16 2021.

Rondan-Cataluna, F.J., Arenas-Gaitan, J. & Ramirez-Correa, P.E. 2015. A comparison of the different versions of popular technology acceptance models: a non-linear perspective. *Kybernetes* ISSN: 0368-492X.

Rogers, E.M.1983. *A diffusion of innovation. 3rd Ed. The Free Press.* Macmillan publishing co. inc. New York: USA.

Rogers, S. 2019. The role of technology in the evolution of communication. https://www.forbes.com Accessed on June 15 2021.

Rouse, M. 2016. What is social media? http://whatis.techhtarget.com/definition/social -media. Accessed on May 14 2020.

_____2020. Social media. https:// whatis.techtarget.com/definition/social-media Accessed on April 4 2019.

Rubin, J. 2012. "Printing and protestants: empirical test of the role of printing in the Reformation", *MPRA Paper*

Rushkoff, D. 2017. Throwing rocks at the Google bus: how growth became the enemy of Prosperity. *Penguin.*

Ryrie, C.C. 1999. *Basic Theology: a popular systematic guide to understanding biblical truth.* USA: Zondervan publishing house.

Sanhokwe, H. 2022. The dimensionality of the UWES-17 and UWES-9: Testing second-order And Bifactor. *Journal of Psychology in Africa* 32(2):115-122.

Sago, B. 2013. Factors influencing social media adoption and frequency of use: an examination Of Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google+ International. *Journal of Business and Commerce.* Vol. 3, No. 1 (ISSN:2226-2436.

Sasu, D.D. 2021. Number of internet users in Ghana 2017-2021. https://hardly.ward@statista.com. Accessed on 4 September 2021.

Saunila, M., Ukko, J. & Rantala, T. 2019. Value co-creation through digital service capabilities: The role of human factors. *Journal of Information Technology and People, vol.32 Is. 3* Emerald Publishing Limited.

Sauro, J. 2015. How to measure the reliability of your methods and metrics. https://measuringu.com. Accessed on May 4 2022.

Sawyer, R. & Chen, G-M. 2012. "The impact of social media on intercultural adaptation." *Intercultural Communication Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2. 151-169.

Schmitt, B. 2019. Christus Vivit: Pope Francis on digital media and young people.

       htpps://mcgathblog.nd.edu   Accessed on May 6 2020.

Schonfeld, D.J. & Bernard, P. 2008. Dreyer in *developmental behavioural pediatrics vol 34 (1).*

Schuurman, D., 2017, 2022. "Technology and the Biblical story", *Pro Rege,* vol 46: No1, 4-11.

Schwarz, H., 2017. The Trinity: The central mystery of Christianity. *SAGE journal* vol 76 Issue 2.

Scott, D.M. 2011. *The new rules of marketing and PR: How to use news releases, blogs, podcasting, viral marketing, and online media to reach buyers directly.* Hoboken, NY: vol John Wiley & Sons.

Segan, C. 1997. *Pale blue dot: a vision of the human future in space*. New York: Ballantine. Shrestha, N. 2021. Factor analysis as a tool for survey analysis. *American Journal of Applied Mathematics and Statistics*, 9(1):4-11.

Sideridis, G.D., Tsaousis, I. & Al-Sadaawi, N. 2019. An application of reliability estimation in longitudinal designs through modeling item-specific error variance. Doi:10.1177/0013164419843162/ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4393-5995 Accessed on August 23 2021.

Silverman, D. 2016. Qualitative research. Fourth edition; SAGE Publications Ltd.

Sim, J. & Waterfield, J. 2019. Focus group methodology: some ethical challenges. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-019-00914-5. Accessed on May 16 2022.

Simango, D. 2012. "The meaning of the Imago Dei" *OTE,* 25/3, 638-656.

Sims, B.D. 2005. 2009, "*The Effect of Technology on Christianity: Blessing or Curse."* Broadman Publishing. *https://www.dbu.edu/friday-symposium/schedule/archive/_documents/the-effect-of-technology-on-christianity.pdf.* Accessed on March 2022.

Smedra, D.R. 2013. From God to us: the divine chain of communication. https://withchrist.org. Accessed on April 30 2020.

Smit, B.& Onwuegbuzie, A.J. 2018. Observations in qualitative inquiry: when what you see is Not what you see. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094061918816766. Accessed on May 8 2020.

Smith, S.J. & Okolo, C. 2010. Responses to intervention and evidence-based practices: where does technology Fit? https://doi.org/10.1177/0731948710033 00404. Accessed on September 2019.

Smith, R.D. 2013. *Strategic planning for public relations.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Smith, P. 2015. Online mission and ministry: a theological and practical guide.

London, UK: SPCK

Smith, B.G. & Dugan, A. 2017. What's at Stake? An analysis of employee social media engagement and the influence of power and social stake. *Public Relations Review* Vol. 43, Issue 5.

Snaith, N. 1974. "The Image of God". *Expository Times* 86.

Social networking statistics, statistics brain. 2012. http://www.statisticsbrain.com/ socia-networking-statistics. Accessed on June 26 2020.

Spadoro, A. 2014. *Cybertheology: thinking Christianity in the era of the internet.* New York: Fordham University Press.

Sproul, R.C., 2020. What does the word "Gospel" mean in the New Testament? https://www..ligonier.org Accessed on July 3 2020.

Sprout social index report. 2017. https://www.media.sproutsocial.com. Accessed on May 2 2022.

Soukup, P.A., Francis, J.B & David, C.R. 2001. 'The influence of information technologies ontheology.' *Theological Studies* 62 (2):366-377.

Soukup, P. & Glader, P. 2020. A debate between Paul Soupkup, SJ and Paul Glader

on how digital culture is affecting media education on religion. *Church,*

communication and Culture vol 5 – issue 2

Standing Order and Constitution of the Methodist Church Ghana. 1986. Accra: Alpha Press.

Stake, R.E. 2010. *Qualitative research: studying how things work.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Stein, C., Morris N. & Nock, N. 2012. "Structural equation modeling". Methods in molecular biology. *(Clifton, N.J)* 42(5):850: 495-512.

Stetzer, E. 2015. Why your church should be on social media right now. http"//www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/February/why-your-church-

should-be-on-social-media.html. Accessed on June 30 2021.

Stoddard, A. 2021. Social media and holiness: *Wesleyan accent* 76, vol. *7.*

Stokel-Walker, C. 2017. How smartphones and social media are changing Christianity. BBC Future, BBC. Accessed from www.bbc.com/future/ article/20170222-howsmartphone-and-social-media-are-changing-religion 23/2/2019. Accessed on July 6 2021

Stott, J.R.& Aboagye-Mensah, R.K. 2006. (ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo) *Africa Bible Commentary*. Nairobi, Kenya: Worldalive publishers.

Straub, D.W. 1994. The effect of culture on IT diffusion: E-mail and Fax in Japan and the US. *Information Systems Research*, 23-27

Strauss, A.L. 1987. *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stronge, S. 2015. The Facebook hypothesis of personality and social belonging. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 44(2), 4-11.

Strzelecki, A. & Rizun, M. 2020. Students' acceptance of the covid-19 impact on shifting higher education to distance learning in Poland. *International Journal of environmental research and public health*. 1-19

Students' behavioural intention of e-learning". 2020. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12(3):150-162.https://measuringu.com.measuring.reliability.of.your. methods.and.matrics. Accessed on June 4 2020.

Sturgil, A. 2019. Scope and purposes of church web site. *Journal of media and religion* 3(3) 165-176. DOI: 10. 1207/s15328415jmr033. 3

Sudaryati, H.M. 2017. 'Social Media Influence of Spiritual Discipline of Students (Rating of Participants of Training 2016 Religious SMA Catholic, Teachers).' *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*:450-453.

Swee-Hong, L & Lester, R. 2017. *A history of contemporary praise and worship: understanding the ideas that reshaped the Protestant church*. Rapids: Baker Academic.

Sweet, L. 2012. *Viral: how social networking is poised to ignite revival.* Waterbrook Press. Swinton J. & Mowat H. 2016. "*Practical Theology and Qualitative Research."* London, UK: SCM Press.

Synder, T. 2021. What approach to digital worship is best for your church. http://churchleadership.com Accessed on April 3 2022.

Synod Agenda of the North America Mission Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana. 2012. Holy press, Canada.

Szterszky, S. 2018. Ice dance. Imago Dei and the existence of God – Focus on the Family. https:www,focusonthefamily.ca. Accessed on April 24, 2021.

Taherdoost, H. 2016. How to design and create an effective survey/questionnaire; A step by step guide. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM) vol.* 5 (4), 37-42.

Tarimo, F. 2020. The analysis of the social media among the youth in the catholic diocese Of Moshi and the implications for youth faith sharing. https://collected.jcu.edu/mastersthesis/15/. Accessed on May 5 2019.

Tarus, D. 2016. Imago Dei in christian theology: the various approaches. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities,* vol. 5, 18-25.

Tertullian, Q.S.F. 1914. *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*. Translated by T. Herbert Bindley. London and Hungary: Richard Clay and Sons.

Thacker, J. 2021. What is a Christian's responsibility in a technological age? Book review. https://arknsasbaptist.org/post/what-is-responsibility-in-a-technological -age. Accessed on March 2022.

The Constitution and standing orders of the Methodist Church Ghana. 2001. (ed). Alpha press.

The Gutenberg Bible/Digital PUL. 2019 – Princeton University.

The Methodist Church Ghana Recorder, 1961. Accra: Alpha Press.

Thomas, H.E. 1961. Our Methodist Faith: an annotated syllabus of Methodist doctrine. https://books.google.com. Accessed on July 4 2019.

Thorp, Z. R. 2013. Communication & Theology: The Communicative nature of God in the theology of Jonathan Edwards. *Unpublished Thesis,* Stephen F. Austin State University.

Togarasei, L. 2007. "Braodcasting the Word: modern Pentecostal churches' use of media Technologies". *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 129*

Triandis, H.C. 1976. *Variations in black and white perceptions of the social environment*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

_____ 1977. *Interpersonal behaviour*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole

Trobisch, D. 2001. *Paul's Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins*. Bolivar, Missouri: Quiet Waters Publication. *The Gutenberg Bible 2017*. Easten Press.

Turculet, M. 2017. "Ethical issues concerning social networks" *Procedia - Social and*

be behavioural sciences. https: // www.sciencedirect.com/science/ article/ pil/51877042814050307.

UNESCO, 2017. *Qingdao Statement: Strategies for Leveraging ICT to achieve Education 2030.* Paris.

USCCB, 2015. Social media guidelines. http://usccb.org/communications/social-media- guideline. Accessed on April 24 2020.

Van den Berg, J.A. 2017. Tweeting dignity: A practical theological reflection on Twitter's normative function. *Unpublished thesis.* submitted to The University of Queensland.

_____2018. Tweeting God: Practical theological analysis of communication of Christian's motif on Twitter. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to The University of Queensland.

Van Dijck, J. & Poell, T. 2013. Understanding social media logic. *Media and Communication* Vol. 1 issue 1: 2-14. DOI: 10. 12924/mac2013.01010002.

Van Esch V. E. 2013. Justification of a qualitative methodology to investigate underpinning constructs for mass media social marketing campaigns. *Journal of business theory and practice,* ISSN 2329-2644. Vol. 1, No. 2.

Van WYK, A.G. 1995. From applied 'theology' to 'practical theology'. *Andrews univ. sem. studies,* spring, vol. 33, no. 1, 85-101.

Varrella, S. 2021. Leading social media platforms in Nigeria 2020 statista. Scientific research Publishing. https://scirp.org.referencespapers Accessed on July 2022.

Vatican, 2009. Feast of Saint Francis de Sales. *Liberia Editrice Vatcana*

Verma, N. 2021. How to technology changes human life. https://timesof india,Indiatimes.com.Accessed on March 12 2022.

Velcic, B. 2012. The image of God and his moral responsibility. https://www.researchgate.net.Accessed on July 1 2020.

Venema, C.P. 2018. "The assurance of salvation in the canons of dort: a commemorative Essay" (Part One). *MAJT* 29:23-46.

Venkatesh, V. & Davis, F. D. 2000. A Theoretical Extension of the Technology Acceptance Model: *Four Longitudinal Field Studies, ‖ Manage. Sci.,* vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 186–204.

Venkatesh, V., Moris, M.G., Davis, F.D. & Davis, G.B. 2003. User acceptance of information Technology toward a unified view. *MIS Quarterly*, 27, 425-478.

Verschoor-Kirss, A. 2012. 'Even Satan gets likes on Facebook: The dynamic interplay

of religion and technology in online social networks.' *Journal of Religion & Society* 14 (1):1–12.

Vester, M. 2010. 'A social media toolkit for journalism classroom.' *Rhodes journalism review. No. 3.*

Viviana, M. & Pasi, G. 2017. Credibility in social media: opinions, news, and health information - a survey. https://doi.org/10.1002/widm,1209.

Von Rad, G. 1961. *Genesis: A commentary,* ed., trans. John H. Marks. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.

Vosko, R. 2011. 'Liturgical technology, social media, and the Green Church.' *Liturgical Ministry* (Spring), 91.

Walls, A. 1996. *The missionary movement in Christian history: studies in the transmission of faith.* Orbis.

Wallis, W.B. 1972. "The use of Psalm 8 and 110 in 1 Corinthians 15:25-27 and Hebrew 1 and 2" *Journal of the evangelical theological society* 15:25-29.

Walton, J.H. 2000, 2001, 2009. *Genesis* - The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 224.

Walvoord, J.E & Zuck, R.B. 1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary: an exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty*. USA: SP Publications, Inc

Waltz, A.K. 1991. *A dictionary for United Methodists.* Abingdon Press.

Ward, M. Jr. 2012. *Digital Ministry*. USA: DayOne Publications.

.2012. Technology giveth and taketh away. *Unpublished manuscript*.

Ward, P. 2017. *Introducing practical theology: mission, ministry, and the life of the church* Baker Academic.

Waqas, A.K.A & Hashim, H. 2020. "The critical success factors of professional networking sites' Adoption by university students". *Test engineering and management* 82(2):653-673.

Wax, T. 2011. The Apostle John's view of technology. https://www.thegospel coalition.org.

Weisgerber, C. 2013. "Social media & the church: What can Facebook, Twitter, & YouTube offer your church?" https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/867a9aa1db5 93aa0322 cf266698fdb8444520209.Pdf Accessed on September 9 2019.

Weiser, A. 1962. *The Psalms: A Commentary,* Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: SCM Press.

Wells, C. 2022. Pope's Communications Day Message: 'Listening is essential for dialogue. https://www.americanmagazine.org. Accessed on February 2022.

Welsh, E. 2002. Dealing with data: using NVivo in the qualitative data analysis process. *Forum: qualitative social research, vol. 3(2) Art. 26.*

Wenham, G.J. 1987. *Genesis 1-15, Word Biblical Commentary, 52 vol s.*, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glean, W. Barker, and John, D.W. Watts. Waco: World Books/Nashville:Nelson.

_____.1991. *Genesis 1-15, WBC. Dallas, Texas*: Word Books.

_____ 2004. *"Pondering the Pentateuch. The search for a new paradigm". 114-116 in the face of OT studies: a new paradigm". A survey of contemporary approaches ed. By David W. Baker and Bill Arnold.* Grand Rapids ML: Baker.

Westerman, C. 1987b. *Genesis 1-11: A commentary.* Minneapolis, Augsburg.

Westerman, D., Spence, P.R. & van Der Heide, B. 2013. Social media as information source: recency of updates and credibility of information. *Journal of computer-mediated Communication*, *Volume 19, issue 2.* 171-183.

White, P. & Niemandt, C.J.P. 2015. "Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches' Mission Approaches." *Journal of Pentecostal theology,* 24, no.2, 241-269.

White, P., Tella, F. & Ampofo, M.D. 2016. A missional study of the use of social media (Facebook) by some Ghanaian Pentecostal Pastors. www.koersjournal.org.za Accessed on May 2020.

White, C. 2021. Pope Francis approves further restrictions on Latin Mass to ensure adherence to Vatican II. https://www.ncronline.org. Accessed on Maech 16 2022.

Whitehead, J.L., Jr. 1968. Factors of source credibility. *Quarterly Journal of Speech,* 54:1, 59-63 DOI:10. 1080/0033563809382870.

Widjaja, F.I. & Boiliu, F.M. 2020. The use of technology According to Christian Faith in the era of Industrial revolution 4.0. Advances in social science. *Education and Humanities Research,* vol 560.

Wiles, J. 2021. Health geographies 1: unlearning privilege. https://doi.org/10. 1177/03091325211043193. Accessed on April 5 2022.

Wilson, G.H. 2002. Psalm 1. *International version applied commentary*: Grand Rapids, Zondervan.

Wikle, T. 2015. Technology and the changing geography of religious media. https://researchgate.net/publication/283758484.

Wilkinson, S., 1998. Focus group methodology: A review. *International Journal of social Research methodology*, 1, 181-203.

William, M.D. 2013. First calling: the imago dei and the order of creation in Presbyterian. *Covenant Seminary Review*, vol 39, no 1.

Williams, R. 2015. Community, discipleship and social media. https://journals.sagepub.com. Accessed on March 16 2020.

Wimmer, R.D. & Domnick, J.R. 2011. *Mass Media Research: An Introduction,* (9th Edition), Boston, USA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Wise, J. 2014. 'Social media and Christian ministry: Reaching the world for the kingdom of God'. http//www.christiantoday.com/edstetzer/2014/February/social-media-and-Christian-ministry-reaching-world-for-king.html. Accessed on April 20 2020.

_____.2014. *The social church: A theology of digital communication.* Moody Publishers, Chicago.

Wolterstorff. N. 1980. *Art in Action.* Grand Rapids, ML: Eerdmans.

Wong, L.P. 2008. Data analysis in qualitative research: a brief guide to using NVivo. *Malays Farm Physician,* 3(1), 14-20.

Woodberry, R.D. 2012. "The missionary roots of liberal democracy", *Review*, 106, 244-274.

Woode, J. G. 2017. *Using technology for your Church: A guide for pastors and church leaders*. Targu Maures, Romania: FaithVenture Media.

Wright, C.J.H. 1983. *An Eye for an Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today*.Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 43.

Wu, J.H. & Wang, S-C. 2005. "What drives mobile commerce?'' *Information & Management* 42(5):719-729.

Wyche, S.P. 2010. *Investigating religion and computing: A case for using standpoint theory in technology evaluation studies.* Georgia Institute of Technology.

Yan-Rong, G., Qing-Dong, C., & Yan, Y., 2020. The origin, transmission and clinical therapies on coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak – an update on the status. *Military Medical Research* 7. No 11.

Yilmaz, K. 2013. Comparison of Quantitative and qualitative research traditions: Epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences. *European Journal of Education*, 48, 311-325. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12014

Young, S.D., Shakiba, A & Montazeri, M.S. 2014. The influence of social networking technologies on female religious vail-wearing behaviour in Iran. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles. Accessed on April 4 2021.

Zukowski, A. 2012. Connecting faith in a digital culture. *Momentum* vol. 43, no. 3.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PERMISSION LETTER TO MCG

The Very Rev. Joseph Atuahene Methodist Church, Ghana Toronto Circuit, Toronto, Canada
August 5, 2020
The Methodist Church Ghana Head Office
Accra

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Administrative Bishop:
I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at selected churches in three dioceses of the Methodist Church Ghana (MCG). As you may be aware, I am currently enrolled in a PhD programme at the SATS. I am in the process of conducting my field data collection for my dissertation titled "A *Practical Theological Exploration into the Methodist Church Ghana's Use of Social Media"*.

I hope that the Church administration will allow me to work with some selected churches to collect data. The data will be collected and analyzed from three dioceses. The selected dioceses are Accra, Kumasi, and North America Mission Diocese (one of the diaspora dioceses consists of the churches in Canada and the United States of America which the MCG determines governance, organisational and administrative structures). These dioceses represent a broad spectrum of the Church and cover a significant fraction of the country and a widespread of the Church's activity nationwide and the diaspora. In each diocese, three churches, including the cathedral, will be selected. I intend to sample churches to reflect the variation and to capture the impact of ethnicity and urbanization, among other factors.

If approval is granted, 15 participants will complete an online survey. The questionnaires will be administered to 3 Ministers and 12 Lay. The ministers will include 1 Bishop, 1 Superintendent Minister, and 1 other Circuit Minister. The anticipated Lay members will include Stewards, Local preachers, Leaders, and other lay members. Additionally, focus group discussions will be conducted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The results will be pooled for the dissertation, and the individual results of this study will remain confidential and anonymous. Should this study be published, only pooled results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either the church or the individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. You may contact me at my email address: owusuatuahenej@gmail.com.

If agreed, kindly provide a signed letter of permission acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this survey within the MCG.

Sincerely,
Joseph Owusu Atuahene

APPENDIX B: MCG RESPONSE TO PERMISSION LETTER

THE METHODIST CHURCH GHANA
CONFERENCE OFFICE - WESLEY HOUSE

In case of reply the
number and date of this
letter should be quoted

Telephone Office: (233-0302) 679 223
(233-0302) 670 355

E252/2 Liberia Road, P. O. Box 403, Accra, Ghana, W/A
Telegram & Cables: "METHODIST ACCRA"
Fax:(233-0302) 679 224
Email: info@methodistchurch.org.gh;
conferenceoffice@methodistchurch.org.gh
Website: www.methodistchurch.org.gh

MCG/HQ/ABO/SS/260/19

Our Ref No:_____

November 27, 2019

Date: _____

The Very Rev. Joseph Atuahene
Methodist Church Ghana
Toronto Circuit,
Toronto - Canada

Dear Very Rev Atuahene,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY
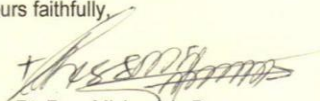
I send you warm greetings from The Methodist Church Ghana Conference Office, Accra.

The church has received and noted your letter requesting for permission to conduct a research study at selected churches in six Dioceses of The Methodist Church Ghana.

The Church consents and grants you the permission to go ahead and conduct this research for your dissertation within the mentioned Dioceses of The Methodist Church Ghana.

We wish you fruitful and successful studies.

Yours faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. Michael A. Bossman
ADMINISTRATIVE BISHOP

Cc: The Bishop's Deputy, NAMD

"In all these things we are more than conquerors". (Romans 8:37)

232

Ethical Clearance Review Form for Empirical Research

1. Name of Student / Researcher	
Joseph Owusu Atuahene (Very Rev)	
2. SATS student number (if applicable)	
Type here	
3. Current email address	
owusuatuahenej@gmail.com	
4. For which SATS programme are you registered? (Mark with and 'X')	
Bachelor of Theology (BTh)	
Bachelor of Theology Honours (BTh Honours)	
Master of Theology (MTh)	
Doctor of Philosophy in Theology (PhD)	**'X'**
The research is not done for degree purposes	
5. What is the title of your article/project/thesis?	
A Practical Theological Exploration into the Methodist Church Ghana's Use of Social Media".	
6. In which academic discipline and sub-field does this research fall?	
Theology – Practical Theology	
7. What is the name of your supervisor or study leader?	
Dr. Roger Tucker	
8. What is the name of your co-supervisor or deputy study leader (if applicable)?	
Type here	
9. Provide details about research assistants or team members (if applicable).	
Type here	
10. Briefly describe the empirical research component of your project.	
The empirical component of the study involves the collection of field evidence from up to 15 churches from the 3 dioceses within the Methodist Church Ghana (MCG) Conference. This component of the project is to understand how the different churches are using social platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp for ministries, identify the variation among churches of varying backgrounds including ethnicity and culture, to ascertain the challenges and benefits of using such platforms.	
11. Provide details about the place and community where the research will take place.	
The data collection will be conducted using online survey tools and online focus group discussions. Therefore, respondents could respond from anywhere internet access may exist. Overall 15 Methodist Churches in 3 dioceses of the MCG will be involved.	

12. Provide information about the leadership or authorities whose permission should be obtained for the research.
Permission will be sorted from the Head Office of the MCG Conference.
13. Provide information about how you will obtain permission from the relevant leadership or authorities for your research.
A letter requesting permission to carry out research in the churches has been prepared (See appendix 1 and appendix 2).
14. Provide information about how you will obtain goodwill permission from interest groups in the area or community.
With permission granted by the head office of the MCG, I will request the participating dioceses to inform the selected churches in their jurisdictions. I will also write to the individual churches to establish a cordial relationship with the leadership.
15. Describe the research methodology you will use in the empirical component of your research.
The study will primarily be exploratory qualitative research using both primary and secondary sources.
16. Describe the data-gathering techniques you will use in your empirical research.
The methods for collecting primary data will include administering of a well-structured questionnaire covering at least four key components. Additionally, focus group discussions, as well as observational data, will be collected. The observational data will include obtaining a first-hand experience on how the platforms are used during service (but will not include a video recording). Where applicable, the researcher will participate in online services and request to join some group messaging platforms.
17. How will you select and recruit participants for the research?
Data will be collected from 3 dioceses of the MCG that were used prior to completing the proposal). In each diocese, five churches, including the cathedral, will be selected. Participants to be selected will include ministers and lay members (adult and youth) of the selected churches who have direct or indirect involvement with the use and/or management of the platforms.
18. Describe the criteria you will use for participant selection and recruitment.
The researcher intends to use purposeful sampling to reflect the variation and to capture the impact of ethnicity and urbanisation, among other factors. The ministers will include one Diocesan Bishop, one Superintendent minister and one other Circuit Minister. The anticipated lay members will consist of Stewards, Local preachers, Leaders, and other Lay members.
19. How many participants do you plan to involve in the project?
15 respondents, including 3 ministers and 12 lay persons across 3 dioceses of the MCG, will be engaged for the survey data using the structured questionnaire. Also, four focus groups of five members per discussion will be organized.
20. Provide more details about the age range and gender balance within the participant group.
Ministers and adult lay members will have a varying range of ages. The anticipated young

people to be involved in the focus group discussion would age between 18-35 years.

21. How many of the participants will be under the age of 18 years?
None

22. If your research will include participants from vulnerable communities, provide more details.
At least four of the churches to be selected will include poverty stricken communities with high incidents of crime and high rates of illiteracy, to understand their use of the selected social platforms in church services.

23. How will you make sure participants from vulnerable communities are not exploited by the research?
The participants from vulnerable communities such as poverty stricken communities with high incidents of crime and high rate of illiteracy will not be exploited by the research, because the data to be collected will largely be centreed on the view and experience of the platform usage in the church.

24. What will be expected of participants during data gathering?
Participants will be expected to express the experiences, challenges and expectation of the platform usage at Church through one of the data collection tools

25. How will you obtain informed consent from the participants?
Consent forms have been prepared and will be explained to participants and have them sign to confirm their participation prior to the data collection

26. If the participants are under 18 years old or mentally or legally incompetent to consent to participation, how will you obtain their assent and/or from whom will you obtain proxy consent? Please describe.
No participant will be under 18 years

27. If the participants are under 18 years old, or mentally or legally incompetent, how will you make it clear to them that they may withdraw from the study at any time? Please describe.
No participant will be under 18 years

28. How will confidentiality and/or anonymity be maintained to ensure that participants are not identifiable to persons not involved in the research?
Information produced by this study will be stored in the researcher's file and identified by a code number only. The code key connecting names to specific information about participants will be kept in a separate, secure location. Information contained in the records may not be given to anyone unaffiliated with the study in a form that could identify the participant without their written consent, except as required by law.

29. Will the participants be at any risk (e.g. physical, psychological, legal, social) if they participate in the research? Please provide details of the risk(s) or motivate if your answer is "no risk".
The researcher does not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

30. How will you support the participants if anyone experiences any kind of trauma as a result of the research?
The researcher does not anticipate any kind of trauma as a result of the research.

31. Which direct or indirect benefits will the research have for the participants? And for the community and society in general?
There will be no direct benefits to participants; however, the study will enable the Church to understand the use of the Internet and social platform, especially during the challenging period of COVID-19, to identify the challenges and help to formulate strategies for improving their use for the furtherance of the gospel.
32. How will the data be analyzed?
The data will be analyzed using Nvivo tool for qualitative research.
33. Describe the statistical procedures that will be used.
The survey data will be analyzed using Nvivo to provide information on demographic characteristics of participants, various tools and how they are used, factors affecting the use of the platforms and their ranking among other things.
34. How will the data be stored during the research to keep it safe and prevent unauthorized access?
Confidentiality of the data will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. Data may exist on backups (with passwords) and server logs beyond the timeframe of this research project.
35. What happens to the data on the completion of the research?
The focus group discussions will be audiotaped. The audiotaped material will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of the research; however, the transcribed material will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.
36. How and to whom will the results of the research be made available?
The data collected will be analyzed and used for my dissertation. A manuscript will also be written to be published in a peer-review journal. Copies of the published manuscript will be shared with participating churches.
37. How will the findings be reported to the research participants?
A copy of the research findings will be shared with head office from which permission was obtained for the research to be carried.
38. Have you ever been formally accused of unethical conduct, or is there any reason why you should not be allowed to obtain personal information from others? Please provide relevant detail in your response.
No
39. Is there any other information that SATS' ethics committee should take note of? If yes, please provide relevant details.
No

DECLARATION

Please sign and submit the following statement by adding your name in the box below:

I declare that the above information is correct and that I did not withhold any important ethical information.

I shall conduct the research according to the above protocol.

I shall immediately notify my supervisor and/or the Ethics Committee if I become aware of unethical aspects or anything that might pose a risk to people or institutions involved in the research.

I shall immediately report to the Ethics Committee if I deemed it necessary to make any adjustment(s) to this research protocol.

I shall report research results accurately and will not follow or allow any dishonest practices in the publication of the research.

Sign here:

Date of Submission: August 5, 2020

Name of Researcher – *Very Rev. Joseph Owusu Atuahene*
Title of study – "*A Practical Theological Exploration into the Methodist Church Ghana's Use of Social Media"***.

Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study, circle the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If you do not understand anything and would like more information, please ask.

• I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in verbal and / or written form by the researcher.	**YES / NO**
• I understand that the research will involve: an online survey questionnaire and or an in-person interview which could take up to 45 minutes to complete	**YES / NO**
• I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without having to give an explanation.	**YES / NO**
• I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study.	**YES / NO**
• I understand that any audiotape material of me will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of your research.	**YES / NO**
• I understand that you will be discussing the progress of your research with others at SATS.	**YES / NO**
• I freely give my consent to participate in this research study and have been given a copy of this form for my information.	**YES / NO**

Signature:

………………………………………………………….………….

Date:

……………………………………………………………………………

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Introduction

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled *A Practical Theological Analysis of the usage of specific video conferencing, text messaging and digital administrative tools in congregations belonging to the "Methodist Church Ghana"*.

I will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. This study is being led by Very Rev. Joseph Owusu Atuahene, Faculty of Theology. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Rev. Dr. Roger Tucker.

What the study is about

This research is being conducted to understand the use of the social media platforms in church and to develop strategies to enhance church worship with modern technological tools.

What you will be asked to do

The study will involve three data collection options. These include an online survey, online questionnaire and focus group discussions. I will ask you to participate in one of the data collection modes.

Risks and discomforts

I do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefits to you; however, the study will enable the church to understand the use of ICT, identify the challenges and help to formulate strategies for improving ICT use for the furtherance of the gospel.

Audio/Video Recording

The interview and focus group discussions will be audiotaped because I will not be able to record everything we talk about, and therefore having a recording will enable me to get all the information I need when writing my report. The audiotaped material will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of the research; however, the transcribed material will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

Please sign below if you are willing to have this interview and or focus group discussion audio recorded. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

☐ I do not want to have this interview recorded.

☐ I am willing to have this interview recorded:

Signed: Date:

Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security

Information produced by this study will be stored in the investigator's file and identified by a code number only. The code key connecting your name to specific information about you will be kept in a separate, secure location. Information contained in your records may not be given to anyone unaffiliated with the study in a form that could identify you without your written consent, except as required by law.

Please note that the survey is being conducted with the help of SurveyMonkey, an online survey platform not affiliated with South Africa Theological Seminary and with its privacy and security policies that you can find at its website. I anticipate that your participation in this survey presents no greater risk than the everyday use of the Internet.

Please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I am taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that a third party could read information sent through email.

Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. Data may exist on backups and server logs beyond the timeframe of this research project.

Sharing De-identified Data Collected in this Research

De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance Internet and social platform usage among churches. We will remove or code any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, by current scientific standards and known methods, no one will be able to identify you from the information we share. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee the anonymity of your data.

Taking part is voluntary

You have the right to know what you will be asked to do so that you can decide whether or not to be in the study. Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to be in the study if you do not want to. You may refuse to be in the study, and nothing will happen. If you do not wish to continue to be in the study, you may stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have questions

The principal researcher conducting this study is Very Rev. Joseph Owusu Atuahene, a graduate student at SATS. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Very Rev. Joseph Owusu Atuahene at owusuatuahenej@gmail.com. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact Dr. Roger Tucker at roger@tucker.com.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Do social media strategies help church leaders in the MCG disseminate the gospel? The focus group discussed the following questions:

1. What would you describe as the general experience of church members using Zoom and WhatsApp regarding (a) information accuracy and (b) credibility of platforms?

2. In your view, what is the impact of zoom and WhatsApp on disseminating the gospel in your local congregation?

3. How have our doctrinal beliefs and practices of the Methodist Church or the Culture and traditions influenced the adoption of these technologies for services or congregational use?

4. What would you do differently if you were to begin the adoption process all over/ What would be your recommendations for new congregations looking to adopt zoom and WhatsApp for their congregation?

APPENDIX G: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SEMINAR

1. How do you use social media? If you do not use social media, why not?

2. Have you seen social media used for good? How have you seen it used for harm?

3. To what extent has social media affected your church communication?

4. How does social media usage affect your "real life" communication and relationships?

5. How can you describe the role of social media in your church communication in COVID- 19?

6. What guidelines should Christians/the church adopt when they post, tweet or pin?

7. How can social media presence be improved in the church?

8. How has and can the church benefit from the use of social media?

9. Post COVID-19, how should the church use Zoom, WhatsApp, or any other social media platform?

APPENDIX H: METHODIST CHURCH GHANA POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR ICT INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE

- To introduce ICT in all aspects of the church's ministry, including evangelism, Administration, finance, training and outreach
- To Network Headquarters, Diocese, Circuit, Societies and all Church institutions to support evangelism and administration
- To transform the church website onto a portal for internal and external communications and outreach
- To use the Internet, Radio and TV to improve communications, administration and ministry

MISSION

To use ICT to propagate the gospel to increase membership strength and enhance efficiency in church administration at all levels.

ACTIVITIES/GOALS

To realize the vision behind the ICT policy, the following goals have been set:

- Set up ICT Infrastructure Development Advisory Committee
- Set up ICT Department to facilitate the church's vision for ICT
- Provide incentive to professional and technical staff to ensure the development of the Church's ICT sector (including software, hardware and training) and the use and maintenance of ICT infrastructure.
- Develop an enabling regulatory framework for ICT related issues.
- Establish an efficient and cost–effective ICT infrastructure that provides equitable access to local, national and international networks.
- Set up Methodist Church Ghana connexional databases or Datacentre(local & Cloud) that is reliable, secure, up-to-date and easily accessible. These would be open to all Methodist institutions, Diocese, Circuits, and Society.
- Promote widespread use of ICT applications at all level including institutions and the church's facilities for effective evangelism, administration, research and training.