TRINITY COLLEGE OF THE BIBLE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# THE USE OF VIDEO MEDIA TECHNOLOGY IN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCHES

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BY

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# ABSTRACT

## THE USE OF VIDEO MEDIA TECHNOLOGY IN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCHES

## Daniel Andrews

This paper examines how healthy evangelical churches in a rural setting in Iowa use Video Media Technology (VMT).  It also summarizes the survey results of seventy-two churches, briefly examines whether or not the Bible approves the use of visual images, and provides a definition of what constitutes a healthy church.

The survey was conducted in twelve evangelical denominations in Iowa; the regional minister of each denomination chose what churches were deemed healthy. The churches were surveyed on how and why they were using VMT. The survey was conducted by email and phone in February and March of 2015.

Every church in the survey used VMT in some capacity. The vast majority (88%) used it weekly. The most common use was to project words for singing. The pastor was the most important force behind the use of VMT. The most important reason for using VMT was to help the church be more culturally relevant and reach younger families. Churches designated time and volunteers as their most important needed resource.

# <u>Introduction</u>

"Where have all the children gone?" That question or a form of that question is heard often in my church. I pastor a small church in a rural county in Iowa. Victor, Iowa is a town of under one thousand people and has a long and proud history. Established largely by German immigrants seeking farm land in the 1850's and 1860's, Victor was once a vibrant, active community. I have heard many stories from the elderly in my congregation about streets being packed on Saturday evening, as farmers and community members would gather to do their shopping, sell their goods and enjoy the company of one another. But the glory days of Victor are gone and in the past half century, the town has seen highs and lows—reaching its highest population in 1980.[1] However, since 1980, Victor has seen a steady decline which has accelerated in the present decade.

When I moved here in 1997, Victor was still a vibrant, active town, but over the last decade there has been a slow drain in the population, especially among the young people who grow up in the community. They graduate and head off to college and rarely return. This dynamic has resulted in a significant demographic shift. The shift can be seen clearly in the number of school-age children. In 1997, there were 469[2] students enrolled in our K-12 public school. This year the number has dropped to just 318[3]--a loss of 32%. This loss is explained in part by the shift away from a rural life to a more urban life. Iowa has seen this significant change occur over the last century. In 1910, 48.1% of Iowa's

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[1] Gary Krob, "Total Population for Iowa's Incorporated Places: 1850-2010," State Data Center of Iowa, September 02, 2014, accessed October 22, 2014, http://www.iowadatacenter.org/archive/2011/02/citypop.pdf.

[2] Iowa, Department of Education, *1996-1997 Iowa Public School PreK-12 Enrollments by District, Grade, Race and Gender,* April 24, 2014.

[3] Iowa, Department of Education, *2013-2014 Iowa Public School PreK-12 Enrollments by District, Grade, Race and Gender,* January 27, 2014.

population resided in a rural county.[4] By 2010, the percent had dropped to only 26.5%.[5]

Most predict that this trend away from rural life is unlikely to end anytime soon.[6]

The reduction of population in rural communities, however, does not account for the entire drain of young people. While in the last decade, the overall the population of rural Iowa declined by 3.5%[7] generally and 6% in Victor specifically, the school-age population in Victor dropped by twice that amount or 12%.[8] The "graying" of rural Iowa is a trend that is expected to continue. The Iowa Department of Aging recognizes the increasing percentage of those over sixty-five in the rural counties of Iowa.[9] Tim Albrecht, a spokesman for Governor Terry Branstad, suggests that by 2040, half of Iowa's rural counties will have more people over sixty-five than under that age.[10]  David Peters at Iowa State University suggests that the decrease in population and increase in age is resulting in economic struggles, increasing isolation, increased commutes, and the

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[4] While there is some disagreement as to the definition of "rural", the definition for this paper will be that adopted by the Office of Management and Budget (http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/bulletins/2013/b13-01.pdf ). In general
- Metropolitan Statistical Areas have at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties.
- Micropolitan Statistical Areas have at least one urban cluster of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties.
- (http://ric.nal.usda.gov/what-is-rural)

[5] David Peters, "Iowa Population Over 100 Years," Iowa State University Department of Sociology, , accessed October 1, 2014, http://www.soc.iastate.edu/dpeters/pubs/PM3010.pdf.

[6] Ibid., 10.

[7] Ibid., 3.

[8] U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Victor, Iowa Population: Census 2010 and 2000 Interactive Map*", , accessed October, 1, 2014, http://censusviewer.com/city/IA/Victor.

[9] Iowa State Plan on Aging, "Balancing Long-Term Community Support Services for Aging Iowans", Iowa Agining.gov, Des Moines, IA, FFY 2014–2015.

[10] Reid Wilson, Iowa Sees Rapidly Aging Population, *Washington Post*, September 16, 2013, accessed September 29, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2013/09/16/iowa-sees-rapidly-aging-population/.

loss of community attachment.[11] This loss of community attachment is not just seen in social networking, but also in church attendance.

Many churches in rural Iowa are struggling. A recent survey in the neighboring state of Nebraska found that one third of the people living in towns of 1,000 or fewer were afraid that their church would need to consolidate or close in the near future.[12] My research indicates that the response would be similar in Iowa. With the population decreasing and aging, churches are fighting to survive. However, while many are struggling, there are still churches which are growing and reaching their communities. These churches adapt to the changing population in different ways, because of different influences, but as their communities age, they find ways to minister effectively. One of these ways is through the use of Visual Media Technology (VMT).

Our society has seen an avalanche of VMT. Once VMT was largely limited to televisions and movies, but with the invention of "smartphones" and other electronic devices, VMT surfaces in nearly all areas of life. Screens dominate almost every waking hour--for both the young and the old. Although it is more common among the young, the old are also becoming dependent on VMT. With nearly 75% of twelve to seventeen year olds owning a cellphone, they are rarely away from a screen.[13]  The Kaiser Family suggests that the average young person (age eight to eighteen) spends an average of seven

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[11] Ibid., 10-12.

[12] Rebecca Vogt et al., "Quality of Life in Nonmetropolitan Nebraska," University of Nebraska, accessed January 15, 2015, http://ruralpoll.unl.edu/pdf/12wellbeing.pdf.

[13] Marjorie Hogan, "Managing Media: We Need a Plan," America Academy of Pediatrics," accessed January 15, 2015, http://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/Managing-Media-We-Need-a-Plan.aspx.

and a half hours a day looking at a screen.[14] Other studies[15] have found that high school

students spend up to eleven hours a day; this is more time than spent in sleep, at school,

or in any other activity.  But school-age children are not the only ones heavily using

technology devices. The average adult spends eight and a half hours a day in front of a

screen. Time spent viewing an electronic display was consistent across all adults.[16]

Churches in general and especially rural churches have been slow to adapt to the

general publics' use of VMT. The percent of churches using projection equipment has

doubled in the last decade, but it is still only used in 32% of churches nationwide.[17] The

reluctance to use VMT ranges from theological reasons to tradition to the lack of both

personnel and financial resources. Most of the heathy churches in rural Iowa are using

VMT as a part of their approach to worship. It is the purpose of this study to examine

how these churches engage VMT in the weekly Sunday morning worship service.

## Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this paper is to examine how healthy, evangelical, rural churches

in Iowa are using VMT in their worship service.

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[14] Victoria Rideout, Ulla Foehr, and Donald Roberts, *Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-year-olds* (Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010), accessed January 15, 2015, http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/8010.pdf.

[15] Numerous studies have recently been conducted as to the number of hours spent by teens (Rideout, Foehr and Roberts – Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010; National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, *TV Watching and Computer Use in U.S. Youth Aged 12–15*, 2012, 2014; Screen Media Usage, Sleep Time and Academic Performance in Adolescents: Ministry of Science and Innovation June 2014)

[16] Brian Stelter, "8 Hours a Day Spent On Screens, Study Finds," New York Times, accessed January 15, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/27/business/media/27adco.html?_r=0.

[17] Mark Chaves, Shawna Anderson, and Jason Byassee, "American Congregations at the Beginning of the 21st Century," accessed September 29, 2014, http://www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/Docs/NCSII_report_final.pdf.

# Literature Review

Few would disagree that America has become a media-obsessed society. With the average teenager spending nearly half of their waking hours in front of some type of screen,[18] and adults, not far behind them, spending over eight hours every day sitting in front of a screen,[19] it is clear that VMT consumes us. It is also clear that churches are following the trend of the general population. According to Sally Morgenthaler, there was a 625% increase in the use of film clips during church worship services from 1999 to 2004.[20] Exactly how many churches are using VMT has been the subject of numerous studies.

In 2003, Steven Koster[21], with the help of the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship, conducted a survey of churches located in Kent and Ottawa counties in Michigan. He found that nearly 60% of churches used some form of VMT in their worship services. The survey looked at all churches and was not limited to a single denomination or church tradition. The study examined both how and why churches were using VMT. It found that there was a growing number of churches who were using VMT on a regular basis, and that evangelicals were the most likely to use VMT. Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics were the least likely.[22]

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[18] Victoria Rideout, Ulla Foehr, and Donald Roberts, *Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-year-olds* (Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010), accessed January 15, 2015, http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/8010.pdf.

[19] Brian Stelter, "8 Hours a Day Spent On Screens, Study Finds," New York Times, accessed January 15, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/27/business/media/27adco.html?_r=0.

[20] Sally Morgenthaler, "Film and Worship: Windows in Caves and Other Things We Do with Perfectly Good Prisms" *Theology, News and Notes*, Spring 2005, 13-15.

[21] Steven Koster, "Visual Media Technology in Christian Worship" (master's thesis, Michigan State University, 2003), 1, accessed March 13, 2014, http://www.calvin.edu/cicw/resources/stories/visual_tech.pdf.

[22] Koster provides a nice summary of the surveys examining the use of VMT leading up to his study in 2003, therefore this paper will not mention any other surveys prior to 2003.

Since 2003, there have been numerous studies--academic, denominational, and commercial—looking at how churches take advantage of VMT in worship. The Barna Group found that by 2005, 62% of Protestant churches were using some form of large-screen projection[23]. It was a significant increase from the 39% they had found just five years earlier. The larger a church the more likely they were to use an LCD projector. Thus, 47% of small churches, 70% of mid-sized churches and 81% of large congregations project media. In 2008, Barna did a follow-up that found that the increase continued, but the growth rate had slowed. The 2008 research showed that 65% of Protestant Churches used large screen projection.[24] The projectors were not just used for words or text, but the survey found that 57% of the churches with large screen projection used them for movie clips or other video segments during the service. The churches least likely to do so were those described as liberal or small.

Beginning in 1998, *Sound & Communication Magazine*[25] began a regular survey of how churches use VMT. The survey is largely aimed at those selling and installing sound and communication equipment. The 18th Annual (published in July of 2014) of this survey, provides a thorough look at how churches across the entire spectrum of denominations are using and planning to use VMT. It included many interesting notes on who chose or purchased equipment, how budgets were set, and whether or not the church was planning on upgrades in the next year to eighteen months. It found that 7% were

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[23] George Barna, "Technology Use Is Growing Rapidly in Churches," Barna Group, September 13, 2005, accessed March 25, 2015, https://www.barna.org/barna-update/5-barna-update/172-technology-use-is-growing-rapidly-in-churches#.VRK60_nF-Vp.

[24] George Barna, "New Research Describes Use of Technology in Churches," Barna Group, April 28, 2008, accessed March 25, 2015, https://www.barna.org/media-articles/40-new-research-describes-use-of-technology-in-churches.

[25] David Silverman, "18th Annual Worship Center AV Survey," *Sound and Communications*, March 16, 2015, 95-106, accessed March 26. 2015, http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/b0ac9279#/b0ac9279/1.

planning on installing video projection, and 19% hoped to install ancillary displays in the next 18 months.[26]

The survey found that video was important to most churches, but far and away the most important system to 80% of the churches was the sound system; only 12% considered video the most important.[27] The survey also found that 77% of churches did not broadcast their services. Of those that did, the most common form of broadcasting was streaming on the internet (17%).[28]

The Association of Religion Data Archives[29] also produces a regular national congregation study. The most recent in 2012, found that 35% of churches were using visual projection in worship services. They found that Roman Catholic churches were the least likely to use it, with only 7% usage, while conservative, evangelical churches were the most likely at 54%. Its general finding was that the larger the congregation, the more likely visual projection would be used.[30] Also, it found that there was a consistent growth pattern from their first study in 1998.[31]

Not only has the use of video projection increased, but more churches are using multiple projectors or flat panel TV's to project visual media. A 2014 study by TFCinfo concluded that 75% of churches stated that they own at least one flat panel display thirty-

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[26] Ibid., 5.
[27] Ibid., 9.
[28] Ibid., 11.
[29] Mark Chaves, "National Congregation Study," Association of Religion Data Archives, 2012, accessed March 24, 2015, http://www.thearda.com/ConQS/qs_254.asp.
[30] While it increased consistently in congregations of up to 1,000, it actually decreased some in congregations of over 1,000.
[31] 1998 there were 12% of churches using visual projection, 27% in 2006 and 35% in 2012.

two inches or bigger.[32] There has also been a large increase in the number of churches having multiple projectors installed. In 2004, there were only 16% with multiple projectors, but as of 2014, 51% were using multiple projectors.[33]

U.S. Congregational Life, based in Louisville, KY, conducted one of the largest surveys ever. In two waves, over 5,000 congregations were surveyed on nearly every aspect of their church life. In the second wave in 2008/2009, it found that only 35% of these churches used visual projection equipment. The percentage of Conservative Protestant Churches, however, was at 60%.[34]

A 2011 Study on Technology and Internet Use found that there was only a slight increase in churches using video projection from 2005 to 2010. Still, the number of churches using video projection was 67%, up from 66% five years earlier.[35]

While there have been many surveys examining the use of VMT in worship, most concentrate on large churches, in multiple denominations, across major portions of the United States. Small churches are often included in the surveys, but they are not the primary focus. This study will examine only healthy, evangelical churches in a town and country setting in Iowa.

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[32] Tanya Lippke, "Video Display Use in American Churches Continues to Increase, 75% Have Incorporated Flat Panel Displays," Display Central, February 17, 2014, accessed March 25, 2015, http://www.display-central.com/free-news/press-releases/video-display-use-american-churches-continues-increase-75-incorporated-flat-panel-displays/.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Susan Barnett, "Elements Included in the Congregation's Largest Worship Service, by Faith Group," U.S. Congregational Life Survey, October 26, 2011, accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.uscongregations.org/blog/2014/02/17/elements-included-in-the-congregations-largest-worship-service-by-faith-group-20082009/.

[35] Scott Thumma, "Virtually Religious: Technology and Internet Use in American Congregations," Hartford Institute for Religion Research, March, 2011, accessed March 25, 2015, http://www.hartfordinstitute.org/research/technology-Internet-use.html.

# Biblical Examination of the Use of Visual Images in Worship

Before spending time examining the perceived benefits of video media in the worship service, the question must be asked, "Is it acceptable?" That is, does the Scripture allow for such a practice or is it prohibited? Too much of modern Christianity has been influenced as much by pragmatism as by the Bible.

> The overall results of such different trends as prosperity piety, positive thinking, engineered revivalism, and the church-growth movement has been to stamp pragmatism indelibly on the evangelical soul. The concern "Will it work?" has long overshadowed "Is it true?" Theology has given way to technique. Know-who has faded before know-how. Serving God has subtly been deformed into servicing the self.[36]

So before exploring the use of VMT in healthy, rural, evangelical churches, it is important to step back and examine what the Bible has to say on the subject. Many, especially from the reformed tradition, have taken issue with the use of visual images in worship and especially in preaching. From the earliest days of the Reformation, roadblocks were set up against the use of images in worship. In 1530, Martin Bucer published his thesis entitled *That Any Kind Images May Not Be Permitted.* In this work Bucer argued that the use of any images violated the first and second commandments as the use of images would lead the Church to idolatry.[37]  But the strongest and most common opposition was led by John Calvin. In summarizing the teachings of Calvin, Terry Johnson expresses the arguments against the use of images in worship this way:

1. Images imply the inadequacy of God's self-revelation in words.
2. The use of images leads to idolatry.
3. The use of images in worship violates Scripture.

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[36] Os Guinness, Fit Bodies - Fat Minds, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 59.
[37] Carlos M N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 93.

4. Images are distracting.[38]

He concludes Calvin's teaching as follows:

> Calvin argued that the only visual aids that God has given to the church
> are the "living and symbolical ones,"[39] namely the sacraments of the
> Lord's Supper and baptism. Images derived from "human ingenuity"
> distract attention from the God-ordained means of grace: the word,
> sacraments, and prayer.[40]

The Reformers are not alone; many in the modern world have also taken issue

with the use of images in worship. Arthur Hunt in *The Vanishing Word* argues that the

Judeo-Christian worldview differs from the pagan worldview in that it is word-

dependent, as opposed to image-dependent, and as society moves to the use of images it

is in danger of falling into a pagan "high-tech version of the Dark Ages."[41]

> The devaluation of the word and its hostile supplanting by the image is a
> direct assault upon "the religion of the Book". In accordance to this
> thought, we are all in danger of becoming pagans. Not just pagans, but
> mindless and defenseless pagans who would prefer to have someone tell
> us how to think and behave…I want to show in the following pages how
> Tomorrowland has the potential to become a total triumph for idolatry.[42]

Hunt recognizes that some of the Old Testament prophets and God Himself did

use images, and that even the Tabernacle and Temple used graphic pictures, but he insists

these were always used to communicate propositional truth.[43] He goes on to argue:

> Thus far I have attempted to establish that technology is not neutral, that it
> has the potential to change our beliefs and behaviors; and nowhere is this
> more evident than in America's shift from a print-oriented culture to an
> image-oriented one. Out of absolute theological necessity Judaism and

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[38] Johnson Terry, "The Christian Use of Visual Art in Worship Today," The
Highway, http://www.the-highway.com/visual-art-in-worship_Johnson.html (accessed June 16, 2014).

[39] John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. 1 & 2, The Library of Christian Classics,
Vols. XX & XXI (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), I.xi.13., p. 113-114.

[40] Johnson Terry, "The Christian Use of Visual Art in Worship Today," The
Highway, http://www.the-highway.com/visual-art-in-worship_Johnson.html (accessed June 16, 2014).

[41] Arthur W. Hunt, *The Vanishing Word: The Veneration of Visual Imagery in the Postmodern
World*, Focal Point Series (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2003), 26.

[42] Ibid., 25.

[43] Ibid., 36.

Christianity are word-dependent, in contrast to paganism, which is image-dependent. [44]

Marva Dawn, a professor at Regent College, was one of the first modern evangelical academics to call into question the use of many contemporary types of worship. In her book "*Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*" she argues:

> Christian worship at the turn of the century is being affected adversely by aspects of our culture that "dumb down" everything. Consequently, we must be careful lest our character as individual Christians and the character of our communities lack sufficient substance to reach out to the world around us and to influence the culture.[45]

Retired Yale Professor Edward Tufte, an expert in graphic representation, argues that the use of any presentation software, such as PowerPoint, is antithetical to any teaching. In his article "Power corrupts: PowerPoint corrupts absolutely", he argues, "The standard PowerPoint presentation elevates format over content, betraying an attitude of commercialism that turns everything into a sales pitch."[46]

These and many more have argued against the use of visual images and media in worship. Therefore, it is important to briefly examine, what does the Bible say? Does the Bible allow images in worship or are they condemned?

Paul does inform us, "*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ*" (Rom 10:17 [ESV]), but does this Scripture forbid the use of images in preaching? While faith comes from hearing, does all understanding only come from hearing as well? Does the use of images in preaching argue against a "word-dependent"

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[44] Ibid., 156.

[45] Marva J. Dawn, Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-century Culture (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995), 4.

[46] Edward Tufte, "Powerpoint Is Evil," Wired, September 2003, 1, accessed February 25, 2015, http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/11.09/ppt2.html.

ministry? Is the use of images idolatry, or does it at the very least lead to idolatry? These questions will now be addressed.

### Visual Illustrations vs. Idols

First one must differentiate between visual illustrations of God's truths and the attempts to visualize God Himself. Throughout human history, there has been a desire by mankind to attempt to conceptualize God and make images of Him. The desire to see God is something that can only be fulfilled in the second Person of the Trinity. Jesus in the upper room clearly tells His disciples that He is the visible image of God: "*Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.'*" (Jn 14:9) And Paul clearly states it again in his letter to the Colossians, "*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*" (Col 1:15) Therefore any other attempt to give God any type of visible form is condemned. Both Moses in the Ten Commandments, and the Apostle Paul in Romans condemn such practices.

> You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." (Ex 20:10)

> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things" (Rom 1:22, 23)

However, condemning attempts to give God a tangible form is not the same as condemning illustrations of the truths God has shared with us.

### God Used Visual Illustrations

Second, one must acknowledge that God did use visual illustrations to teach people about Himself, and He commanded His prophets to use visual illustrations. In the

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very passage where Paul condemns the worship of images, he also expresses the value in

sight. In verse twenty of Romans 1, Paul expresses that all humanity is without excuse

because everyone has seen, not just heard of, the eternal power of God.

> **20** For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal
> power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through
> what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Rom 1:20 [NASB])

> It is true that the "clearly seen" (καθορᾶται) does not mean the physical eyes

alone, for animals have eyes, but do not see God. It is when the eyes are used together

with the soul God has given mankind, that invisible God becomes visible. Frederic Louis

Godet in his commentary on Romans expresses it this way:

> The animal sees as man does; but it lacks the νοῦς, understanding
> (whence the verb νοεῖν, νοούμενα), whereby man ascends from the
> contemplation of the work to that of the worker. These two simultaneous
> sights, the one sensible, the other rational, constitute in man a single act,
> admirably characterized by the expression of spiritual contemplation, used
> by the apostle.[47]

> Cranfield further explains that this use of καθορᾶται illustrates the importance

of physical sight--leaving mankind without excuse.

> But the fact the oxymoron ἀόρατα … καθορᾶται is clearly deliberate
> should probably encourage us to understand καθορᾶται (and therefore
> also νοούμενα) as referring to physical sight and the sentence as a whole
> as a paradoxical assertion that God's invisible attributes are actually seen
> in, and through His creation.[48]

> This "seeing" is not the result of extensive research and study, but rather God has

placed His existence in the core of humanity, so that when creation is viewed, it quickly

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[47] Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 1977), 103-4.

[48] Charles E. B. Cranfield, vol. 1 *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: Clark Limited, 1980), 115.

and clearly points to the reality of God.[49] Humanity is able to easily determine by looking at what God has created, that He exists, and is a majestic and powerful being. This has been true since the time of creation.[50] Therefore, creation stands as the greatest of all visual images to teach truths about God. It does not reveal all that one needs to know about God, but it does reveal truths about His attributes and character. Paul's entire point is that the revelation is sufficient to leave mankind without excuse.

King David agrees. One can easily envision the shepherd boy David staring into a starry sky when he declares:

> The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
> Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.
> There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.
> Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
> (Ps 19:1-4)

Paul and King David are not the only ones who value seeing creation, so does Job. There are few better illustrations of God using visuals to illustrate truth about His nature and majesty than Job's testimony. This book opens with God presenting Job to Satan as an illustration of a man who loves and follows Him. Satan asks and receives permission to test Job's faithfulness which takes place in horrific ways. He loses all his children and all his possessions; his wife encourages him to curse God and die. Finally, even his health is taken from him. All of this takes place in the first three chapters of the book. The bulk of the book is made up of Job's friends coming and attempting to convince and prove to Job that he deserves the judgment and pain he is suffering. Job pushes back and continues not just to defend himself to his friends, but also to God.

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[49] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, vol. 6 of *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 86.

[50] Kenneth Samuel Wuest. *Romans in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 30.

In his final discourse Job declares, "*Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!*" (Job 31:35). Job felt his suffering was undeserved, and that if God were to show Himself, he would be exonerated. Then as the book ends, God does show up. God does choose to answer Job, but the answer was not what Job had expected.

Beginning in chapter 38, God presents Himself in a whirlwind and speaks to Job, and in more than simple speech, God takes Job to the majesty and intricacies of His creation. While it is impossible to know if the whirlwind was showing Job each of these items physically, as He discussed them, there is little doubt that Job had seen, and could possibly have at that very moment seen, each of the observable items God used as illustrations. God begins with the clouds – Job 38:9, 34-38;  and continues to the springs of the sea – Job 38:16; snow – Job 38:22; hail – Job 38:22; rain – Job 38:25-30; constellations of stars – Job 38:31-33; and wild animals (lion, raven, mountain goat, wild donkey)-Job 38:39-39:8.

God then commands Job to "behold" or look at two animals. While the exact identity of both the behemoth (Job 40:15-24) and leviathan (Job 41) are much debated, the bigger point is not. God tells Job to see, to examine, to look at these creatures and realize, that not only did He make Job, but He also made these two amazing animals. These animals could never be controlled by man, and yet were entirely under the control and sovereignty of God the Creator. This appeal for Job to see creation, demonstrates God as the One Who has sufficient power to bring all things in creation under His control. It clearly affirms His credentials as King of not just creation, but of Job as well.[51]

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[51] Dennis J. McCarthy "Creation" Motifs in Ancient Hebrew Poetry, *Creation in the Old Testament"* (ed. Bernhard W. Anderson: Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) p. 83.

While probably not a technical theophany, in that Job never actually saw God, Job is given one of the rarest of all human experiences – a personal encounter with God.[52] God has used the visual images of His creation to expose the truth of His sovereignty over all things. God could have chosen words alone to defend Himself, but He didn't, He chose to use the visual illustrations of His creation, if you will, images in preaching.

God showing Job His grandeur leaves Job amazed by the majesty of God and the wickedness of himself. Why? As Job puts it:

> [5] I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
> but now my eye sees you;
> [6] therefore I despise myself,
> and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:5,6)

God clearly used more than just Job's ears to instruct him; He used his eyes as well.

Job's lesson in visuals is scarcely solitary. God would use visual images to teach many of His servants. Noah witnessed the greatest judgment the world has ever seen, with every human being, other than the eight individuals on the ark, dying. Seeing the devastation of a planet flooded by water, God gives a promise that He would never flood the world again. This promise is reinforced with a concrete image, a rainbow, a visual reminder of God's grace.

> [14] When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is **<u>seen</u>** in the clouds, [15] I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh…[16] When the bow is in the clouds, **<u>I will see it</u>** and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth. (Gen 9:14–16, emphasis added)

When God appears to Moses in the burning bush and calls him back to Egypt to deliver the people of Israel, Moses balks at the command. To help Moses, God presents him with three visual images: the staff turned into a serpent (Ex 4:2-4), a hand turned

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[52] Henry Gariepy, *Portraits of Perseverance* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1989), 207.

leprous (Ex 4:6-8), and water turned into blood (Ex 4:9). But these visual images were

not given for Moses only, since God commands Moses to have Aaron "speak" all He had

told them so that all Israel would learn from both the words and the signs. Moses and

Aaron do exactly that:

> Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the
> people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to
> Moses and did the signs in the **sight** of the people. And the people
> believed; (Ex 4:29-31, emphasis added)

Many of the prophets were also given a visual reminder of God's presence and

power. Elijah is shown an earthquake and a fire, although it is out of a still small voice

that God speaks (1 Kgs 19:9-14). Jeremiah is shown a potter's wheel (Jer 18:1-23).

Ezekiel is shown four living creatures surrounded by a flashing wheel (Ez 1:4-28).

### Jesus Used Visual Illustrations

Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity, when He came to earth also chose to use

visual images in His teaching. While there are many references to possible object lessons,

such as a millstone, sower of seed, mustard seed, a pearl, a net, tares and wheat, etc.,

these could be explained as verbal images, rather than visual. The Bible does not

specifically state that Jesus picked up a mustard seed and said, "Look at this." However,

there are times when Jesus did do just that.

In Matthew 18, the disciples come to Jesus hoping to determine who was the

greatest in the Kingdom. In order to help them understand it was not a contest of

goodness, but a reception of grace, Jesus makes His point with the use of a visual image,

a child.

> And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said,
> "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will

never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this
child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 18:1–4)

As everyone is looking at the child, Jesus makes His point. The little child stands as a living, but very much visual, image to aid in His teaching. Everyone was familiar with what children looked like and thus He could have painted a verbal picture, but He choose to use a visual illustration.

A second time occurs in the final days of His earthly life, when Jesus is in the temple and is challenged by a Pharisee concerning taxes. Hoping to entangle Him in His own words, the Pharisee asks about the value of paying taxes to Caesar. Before Jesus answers the question, He first asks for a coin:

But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you
hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a
denarius. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is
this?" (Mt 22:18–20)

Christ once again used a visual image to make an important point. While it is true that Jesus never used pictures or images per se, He certainly did make use of objects whose sole purpose was to present a visible illustration, and He would use these visual illustrations to teach. He could have used only His words, but He did not.  He strengthened His words by using an image.

**<u>The Prophets Used Visual Illustrations</u>**

God used visual images, and He also commanded His prophets to use them.  As the nation of Israel comes out of Egypt, God commands Moses to build a tabernacle. God is extremely careful to give detailed instructions on every aspect of its construction (Ex 25). In fact, nearly a third of the entire book of Exodus is dedicated to instructions

concerning the construction of the tabernacle and the parts associated with it.[53] The

tabernacle, combined with the Shekinah glory hovering over the tabernacle, will become

one of the most important optical images in the entire Old Testament.

Many of the items Moses built or used, however, were visible items which would

endure for generations—each individually explaining truth. Other of God's prophets were

asked to use very specific object lessons; these were visual illustrations of the truth God

wanted to share. Hosea was given one of the most difficult object lessons. He was

commanded by God to marry a prostitute. But it was after she left him, and Hosea

redeems her, that God makes His point:

> And the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by
> another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of
> Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins." (Hos 3:1)

Jeremiah was given the command to carry around an ox yoke (Jer 27:2). One

commentator went as far as to describe the action as a video ahead of its time.[54]

While many of the prophets were instructed by God to use visual illustrations, few

were told to do it more often than Ezekiel. Ezekiel becomes much more than a preacher,

he becomes a sign to the nation of Israel, one they could see, not just hear.[55] Bernard

Lang calls Ezekiel and his teaching "prophetic street theater."[56]

In chapter one, Ezekiel's story begins with God revealing Himself to Ezekiel in a

visual way. Exactly what Ezekiel sees is extremely difficult to know. It is clearly

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[53] Quentin J. Schultze and Robert Woods, eds., *Understanding Evangelical Media: The Changing Face of Christian Communication* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2008), 108.

[54] Rick Blackwood, *The Power of Multi-Sensory Preaching and Teaching: Increase Attention, Comprehension, and Retention* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2008), 77.

[55] Serenius, Vernon A. P. *On the Making of a Prophet: An Interpretative Look at the Prophet Ezekiel, with Application to the Prophetic Office of Our Time*. Alexandria, MN: The Author, 1970. 71.

[56] J. Lust, ed., *Ezekiel and His Book: Textual and Literary Criticism and Their Interrelation*, vol. 74 of *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), 300.

something that Ezekiel had never seen before, and it is something that becomes quite hard to explain. He describes it in great detail--four creatures with strange faces, extra lights, and, what Ezekiel describes as, wheels. It was God speaking to him with visual aids. Ezekiel struggles to describe what he saw and it may never fully be understood exactly what he did see, but it is certain that it was a visual display that left a lasting impression on Ezekiel.

This spectacular visual image gives way to a very simple, but easily understood illustration. Ezekiel in chapter 3 is given a scroll: one that is written on both front and back. Ezekiel is then told to, "Take, and eat." The scroll tasted sweet to him (Ez 3:3), and once he had ingested the scroll, he was commanded to go and speak the truth of the scroll. This very obvious object lesson helps Ezekiel and all teachers in the future to understand that before a prophet can give God's Word to others, he must first receive and internalize the Word himself. Ezekiel does do that, and he then goes and shares the Word of God to Israel.

In chapter four, visual illustrations move beyond Ezekiel's eyes alone and teach all the people of Israel God's truths. God commands Ezekiel to show a visual illustration of the coming of the siege. He is to take a block of clay, an iron pan, a storage jar of grain, water, excrement, and himself. He is commanded to lay out the block and iron pan, and then lay on his left side for 390 days. During this time he is to make bread and cook it over the excrement. After the 390 days, Ezekiel is to turn on his right side for forty days. It is hard to imagine how the predicted siege could have been more elaborately displayed.

In chapter five, Ezekiel is told to shave his head and beard. The hair is to be weighed and divided into thirds. A third is to be burned inside the city, a third is taken and scattered around the city, and a third scattered outside the city. Each of the thirds represent people in the city. A third will die of plague. A third will be killed by the sword. A third will be scattered.

In chapter eight, God uses more customary visual images. God could have simply told Ezekiel of the evil that Israel was doing, but He chooses rather to show him. God takes Ezekiel first to the north gate of the inner court, and there he sees a hole in the wall (Ez 8:7). He sees images of unclean animals on the wall; he sees men worshipping not Jehovah, but idols. God then moves Ezekiel to see a group of women mourning the god, Tammuz, while a group of 25 men worship the sun. All of this was to illustrate the evil of the people. God desired Ezekiel not only to hear of their wickedness, but also to see it.

In chapter ten, Ezekiel is given the chance to see God's Spirit leave the temple. Ezekiel once again is given the chance to see those things which are almost indescribable. The cloud of God's glory rises above the temple symbolizing God's glory leaving the temple. God could have chosen to tell Ezekiel that He was leaving the temple because of the sin of the people, but God chose to show Him. In this display, Ezekiel is given a glimpse into imagery of heaven with cherubim, living creatures, and the cloud of God's glory. The spectacular display works to make the point in a way that words alone would have struggled to do so.

In chapter 12, Ezekiel is back to visual displays to teach the people of Israel. God commands Ezekiel to dig through the city wall at night. God could not have been clearer, "Do not tell them, but show them."

> [5] **In their sight** dig through the wall, and bring your baggage out through it. [6] **In their sight** you shall lift the baggage upon your shoulder and carry it out at dusk. (Ez 12:5-6, emphasis added)

This was not simply theater; it was the purposeful illustration of what was about to happen to the people. God was clear; once the people had seen Ezekiel, then he was to say to them, *"Say, 'I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them. They shall go into exile, into captivity.'"* (Ez 12:11)

God commanded Ezekiel to speak and to preach to the people, but he was also told to perform many, very visual illustrations to help the people understand. Ezekiel, at the instruction of God, did show the people God's Word.

It is true that New Testament teachers do not seem to make use of visual images as much as Old Testament prophets did, but one cannot disregard the teaching style God commanded His prophets to use.

Therefore, as one considers how God the Father taught, how Jesus taught, and how God commanded His prophets to teach, it becomes clear that God wanted both ears and eyes to receive the lesson. He did speak, but He also presented this teaching with visual examples. If this is true, then it seems reasonable to assume today that Scripture does allow for the use of visual illustrations in preaching and teaching.

# What is a Healthy Town and Country Church?

When one begins to define a "healthy" church there are nearly a limitless number of possible ways to do so. One could consult different tools such as Natural Church Development[57] or Leadership Transformation[58]. One could also consult a nearly endless supply of books written on the subject such as Mark Dever's *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*[59] or Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Church*[60] or many, many others.

Each of these works is valuable, but most are aimed at large churches in large communities. While to some degree all churches need similar qualities to be healthy, a small church in a town and country setting faces unique struggles and joys. The standard for health in a town and country church is different.[61]

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[57] Christian A. Schwarz and Christoph Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998).

[58] Kevin Miller, "Church Health Assessment Tool," Leadership Transformations, accessed April 16, 2015,http://www.leadershiptransformations.org/church-health-assessment-tool.htm.

[59] Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, third ed. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013).

[60] Richard Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub., 1995).

[61] Lyle E. Schaller, *The Small Church Is Different!* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1982), 28-40. gives a wonderful picture of 20 differences of the small church.

1. The small church is tough
2. The long-established Anglo church is usually built around a ministry of the laity
3. The small church is a volunteer organization
4. The small church cares more for people than performance
5. The small church rewards generalists
6. The grapevine is an asset in the small church
7. The small church has a different system for financial support of the congregation
8. The small church is intergenerational
9. The small church is relational
10. The small church uses an internal clock (we begin around 11:00)
11. The small church follows a different calendar
12. The small church has a place for everyone!
13. Kinfolk ties are more important in the small church
14. Individuals, not committees, often do the work in small churches
15. The small church often is a participatory democracy
16. Social meetings dominate the agenda in small church
17. The small church is easier to comprehend
18. A majority of small churches are subsidized
19. The small church tends to rely on an "attractional" model in new-member recruitment.
20. The piano is often the central musical instrument in the small church

The twentieth century saw the explosion of megachurches, seeker-sensitive worship styles, and the church growth movement. All have added to the belief that people perceive a healthy church as a large, growing church. But historically the church has not been large. For 95 percent of the church's history the Church has been made up of small units, rather than the massive mega-churches that have dominated the last 5 percent.[62] Dudley suggests that mega-churches have not always been the norm:

> History is on the side of the small church. Bigness is the new kid on the block. Historically, Protestant denominations in the United States have been comparatively small. At the time of the Civil War, the size of the average Protestant church was less than one hundred members. A few large churches were in the center of the city, or at the center of the ethnic community. By the turn of the century, the average congregation still had less than one hundred fifty members.[63]

But as we entered the twentieth century much changed. Society moved to larger, urbanized centers with fewer and fewer people calling the farm home. With that change taking place, everything seemed to shift. Large department stores were introduced and soon replaced mom and pop businesses. Local grocery stores were replaced with one-stop shopping, and the small, local church was largely replaced, often, though not always, in larger metropolitan communities by churches having thousands of worshippers in attendance. While it is true that 60 percent of Protestant churches in America have less than one hundred adults attending, and the average church attendance is just eighty-nine,[64] these small churches no longer account for a majority of church attenders on a normal weekend. Today 50 percent of all church goers attend the largest 15 percent of

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[62] David R. Ray, *Small Churches Are the Right Size* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982), 30.

[63] Carl S. Dudley, *Making the Small Church Effective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 23.

[64] George Barna, "Small Churches Struggle to Grow Because of the People They Attract," Barna Group, September 2, 2003, accessed May 11, 2015, https://www.barna.org/barna-update/5-barna-update/126-small-churches-struggle-to-grow-because-of-the-people-they-attract#.VVEPw_lVhBc.

churches, while the smallest 50 percent of churches account for only 15 percent of attendees.[65]

David Ray in his book, *Small Churches are the Right Size*, suggests six reasons that small churches have been replaced by larger churches:

1. In the twentieth century the U.S. became an urban and centralized nation rather than a rural and dispersed nation
2. The revolution in transportation that allowed people to travel to churches
3. The communications revolution and development of amplification systems allowed more people to easily hear the preacher
4. Growth of denominational structures
5. Local churches needed many people to pay for their superstructures
6. Size became synonymous with success.[66]

Arguably, the last reason in that list becomes the strongest reason as most in America are quick to equate size with success and thus health.

While the shift toward larger churches has been significant in America, size is not always equated with health everywhere in the world. Few places are seeing the church grow faster—meaning having more people converted to Christianity--than China. However, because the Chinese government limits the size of gatherings, most congregations are extremely small. The book, *Operation China*, details how the explosion of Christianity has taken place through very small churches. In fact, there is a story of over 300 people coming to Christ, and 31 churches being started, in a single town.[67]  The church in China demonstrates that size isn't required for health.

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[65] Dudley, 22.

[66] David R. Ray, *Small Churches Are the Right Size* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982), 31-33.

[67] Paul Hattaway, *Operation China: Introducing All the Peoples of China* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2000), 234.

While both large and small churches can be vigorous, healthy small churches will look different than their larger counterparts, and that is particularly true when the church is located in a town and country setting. As has been noted earlier, small towns across America are declining, and the struggle of the community places a great deal of stress on the town and country church. But the news is not all bad. W. Scott Moore in his study, *Rural Revival: Growing Churches in Shrinking Communities* suggests there are actually advantages available to rural churches. Three of these unique advantages are:

1. Perseverance of the rural church – the church is the most resilient institution in the community
2. Shared optimism – the church witnesses to a hope beyond decline
3. The considerable lack of competition[68]

These and many more advantages that could be listed, but what characteristics are present in a healthy town and country church? For the purpose of this paper, it will be suggested that a healthy town and country church contains each of the five qualities put forward by John Benton, in his book *The Big Picture for Small Churches.*[69] He suggests a small church must contain each of the following:

1. Quality Presence
2. Quality Welcome
3. Quality Teaching
4. Quality Hospitality
5. Quality Prayer[70]

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[68] W Scott Moore, *Rural Revival: Growing Churches in Shrinking Communities* (Rogersville, AL.: Eleos Press, 2012), ix-xi.

[69] John Benton, *The Big Picture for Small Churches, and Large Ones, Too: How to Thrive and Survive as a Small Congregation* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2005).

[70] Ibid., 57-59.

**Quality Presence**

God has called His church to love Him (Mt 22:37), to love each other (Jn 13:34-35), and to love our neighbors (Lk 10:25-37).[71] It is the opportunity to love our neighbors, those outside of the church, from which the first quality is derived. God sent Jesus to show forth His presence, His glory, and His grace in the world.

> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth… No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (Jn 1:14, 18)

Jesus was sent into the world by the Father, so He sends us to be God's presence in the world (Jn 20:21).

The town and country church has a unique opportunity that few of its metropolitan, sister churches have. With many businesses and institutions closing in small towns, and with fewer and fewer places left in the community to provide a place of community identity and meaning, the church is often given a unique opportunity to fill such a role. The church must not shelter itself from the community, but step up and meaningfully engage in the community, dwell among the community, and show forth God's grace and truth. As a town's commerce dims, the church has incredible chance to shine all the brighter. With the reduced competition, the church has the opportunity to live out the love of Christ in a way that is seen by all in the community. The healthy church must be incarnational in its willingness to lovingly interact with the community, in such a way that Christ is seen and felt.

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[71] Jim Renke, "Missional Approach for the Church" (lecture, Greenhill Baptist Church, Cedar Falls, IA, May 9, 2015).

**Quality Welcome**

It is absolutely true that the Gospel has a "Go and Tell" aspect to it, and yet the

Bible is also filled with illustrations of "Come and See" (Jn 1:46; 4:29). The church is

sent, but this does not exclude all attractional efforts.  Ed Stetzer argues in his book,

*Breaking the Missional Code*, that there is still a place for an attractional model in the

midst of a missional ministry.

> In North America, "come and see" church outreach is still
> effective in many contexts but, usually, only when combined with
> relational approaches. In many places in North America,
> attractional is still missional, but it must be combined with
> incarnational ministry.[72]

Few places are more receptive and open to such a model than the small town in

the Mid-west. Tradition and history are still strong in most of these communities, and

many citizens are still open to an invitation; however, this invitation must be offered with

a warm welcome.

Jesus earthly ministry was marked by His willingness to welcome anyone. It was

this practice that endeared Him to the masses, and alienated Him from the religious elite.

It was this very truth that led Jesus to give the great stories of the lost sheep, lost coin,

and lost son in Luke 15. The Gospel writer begins the chapter with these words:

> Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear
> him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This
> man receives sinners and eats with them." (Lk 15:1–2)

While it would seem the small town-small church would be an incredibly

welcoming place--that is not always the case. In fact, being small often leaves

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[72] Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 65.

congregants embarrassed, but Benton suggests that the problem is much more than just

embarrassment:

> If people, come along to church and there are only a few present, there is a tendency to feel embarrassed by the lack of numbers. But the feeling of embarrassment often has its roots in wanting to be impressive. Rather, we need to welcome people with a genuine love for them. We might even say something like, "There are not too many of us, but I hope you will feel at home here."[73]

The healthy church must be a place where everyone who comes receives a loving and

genuine welcome.

### Quality Teaching

The small church must not fail to communicate the truth of God in accurate and

interesting ways simply because there are currently fewer people attending. If the Bible

provides both the power of salvation (Rom 10:14-17), and the authority for life (2 Tm

3:15-17), the preaching and teaching of God's Word must stand at the center of a healthy

church. It is the author's belief that expositional preaching ought to be the core of the

church's teaching. Albert Mohler defines expositional preaching this way:

> Expository preaching is that mode of Christian preaching that takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible. All other issues and concerns are subordinated to the central task of presenting the biblical text. As the word of God, the text of Scripture has the right to establish both the substance and the structure of the sermon. Genuine exposition takes place when the preacher sets forth the meaning and message of the biblical text and makes clear how the word of God establishes the identity and worldview of the church as the people of God.[74]

Often small churches struggle because the talent level of their musicians is not

equal to their counterparts at large metropolitan churches. True worship is not about the

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[73] Benton, 90.

[74] Albert Mohler, "Expository Preaching and the Recovery of Christian Worship," Albert Mohler, August 10, 2005, accessed April 16, 2015, http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/08/10/expository-preaching-and-the-recovery-of-christian-worship-part-two/.

style or quality of the music. True worship takes place when a person is confronted by the truth of God's Word and responds with joyous gratitude and obedience.[75] Thus, the quality teaching of God's Word must be at the core of any healthy church.

With the explosion of modern technology the town and country church has access to many tools that make the teaching and preaching of God's Word more effective. Online resources, such as sermon text or audio at the click of a mouse, give the pastor many tools previous generations could never have imagined. Technology also makes available many high quality visuals to aid in worship. These new tools give the opportunity for every town and country church to share God's Word with accuracy, clarity, and enthusiasm. There is no excuse for a poorly prepared sermon.

### **Quality Hospitality**

Hospitality is the willingness to open up believers' lives and homes to others and is a fundamental Christian virtue which has been a part of the church's life from the earliest of days. True Biblical hospitality is more than simply having family and friends over for a meal. It strives to meet the needs of others, especially those who are the neediest, not to build up the reputation of the hosts.

> Hospitality, because it was such a fundamental human practice, always included family, friends, and influential contacts. The distinctive Christian contribution was the emphasis on including the poor and neediest, the ones who could not return the favor. This focus did not diminish the value of hospitality to family and friends; rather, it broadened the practice so that the close relations formed by table fellowship and conversation could be extended to the most vulnerable.[76]

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[75] Benton, 115.

[76] Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 6.

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This was most definitely true of the early church. In Acts 2 it reads: "*and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.*" (Acts 2:46-47) The Apostles commanded hospitality to be an important part of church life (Rom 12:13; 1 Tm 5:10; Heb 13:2; 1 Pt 4:9).

Of all the qualities manifested by healthy churches, hospitality may be the one where small town and country churches have the biggest advantage. Larger churches in metropolitan settings often must consider attenders in groups, while the small church has the ability to know people on a one-by-one basis.[77] Not only is the town and country church able to take a more personal interest, but being at the center of the community, each church has the opportunity to be more aware of and attuned to the needs of the community. A healthy town and country church is a hospitable church.

### Quality Prayer

Prayer is absolutely necessary for all ministries. It is true that the pastor and church leaders must be personally in prayer, but the church as a group must also pray. Unfortunately too often prayer is viewed as a personal activity, but many of the examples of prayer in the Bible are corporate prayer.

The people of God often practiced corporate prayer (Neh 9; Is 34:7; 2 Chr 7:14; 30:37; Jl 1:14). It was expected that people would gather in the temple to pray--so much so, that Jesus called it a house of prayer (Lk 19:46). Jesus' best known instruction on prayer was aimed at entire assembly prayer. Jesus did not command believers to say

[77] Benton, 118.

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when praying, "My Father who is in heaven...", but rather a corporate, "*Our Father who is in heaven…*" (Mt 6:9). The night He was betrayed in the Garden, Jesus practiced such praying by asking His disciples to pray with Him (Mt. 26:36-46).

But in no place was corporate prayer more important than in the early church.

> The average Christian today considers prayer almost entirely a private activity, while the early church reversed that and thought first of corporate prayer and then of individual prayer. The early Christians formed a worshipping community, with their worship and prayer in the Temple and in house churches much more explicitly described in Acts than that of the apostolic band in the Gospels. [78]

The church was begun as 120 believers gathered in the upper room waiting for God's blessing. "*All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.*" (Ac 1:14). The church turned to group prayer when troubles arose (Ac 12:5); the church prayed together as one when choosing leaders (Ac 16:3). Every area of the church was bathed in prayer, and God continues to expect the church to be a place of prayer.

Large numbers are not required for corporate prayer. The smaller church is very qualified to practice quality prayer. In Matthew 18, Jesus tells His disciples, "*Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*" (Mt 18:19–20) Jesus is clear; effective, obedient prayer does not require hundreds or even dozens of worshippers – two or three are enough. However, Jesus is also clear

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[78] Grant Osborne, "Moving Forward on Our Knees: Corporate Prayer in the New Testament," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53, no. 2 (June 2010): 243-67, accessed May 14, 2015, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/53/53-2/JETS_53-2_243-267_Osborne.pdf.

that it is only when the two or three are in agreement. The context of the passage covers

dealing with offenses. It is only when believers are united in both purpose and passion

that God hears and answers. This unity should be easier in smaller churches, where the

pastor and leaders are able to give greater attention to each member and together the

church should be united in prayer.[79]The healthy town and country church is a church

committed to and practicing unity in prayer.

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[79] Benton, 138-139.

# The Method

The survey used for this paper was designed to find out how healthy evangelical churches in town and country settings were using VMT. The process began by selecting evangelical communities which minister in a town and country setting in Iowa. A list was compiled which included the following denominations: American Baptist, Assemblies of God, Brethren, Christian, Conservative Baptist, Converge Worldwide, Evangelical Free, General Association of Regular Baptist, Independent Fundamental Church of America, North American Baptist, Nazarene, Open Bible, Southern Baptist, and the United Church of Christ. Once the list was compiled, there was an attempt to contact each of the regional offices and ask the regional staff to share the names of the churches they considered healthy. The request was sent by email. After two weeks, follow up phone calls were made, and where there was no contact, another email was sent.

Several of the denominations were quick to respond and were easy to work with, while others were more difficult. After several phone calls and emails, all denominations were contacted. Some of the denominations declined to take part in the survey. Others, even after contact was made, failed to share a list of healthy churches. In all, ten of the fourteen denominations provided lists of healthy, evangelical churches.

With the help of the denominational leaders a list of eighty-eight churches was compiled. An online survey was composed and emailed to each church. Eleven of the eighty-eight churches responded to the initial email contact. After a week, a second email was sent, and an additional nineteen churches responded. After two weeks, an attempt was made to contact the remaining churches by phone. Each church was called a minimum of three different times. Different days of the week and different times of the

day were chosen in an attempt to gain the greatest possible response. After the phone attempts failed to make any contact, one final email was sent.

Two churches declined to be surveyed, and no contact was made, nor response received, with another fourteen churches. In all, seventy-two out of the eighty-eight churches, or 81%, participated in the survey. Thirty participated through email and forty-two by phone. Responses from the seventy-two participating churches were compiled and analyzed.

# The Study

## Demographics of Healthy, Evangelical Churches

The first nine questions in the survey were largely demographic in nature, but the results provided some interesting insight into a healthy town and country church. The denominational breakdown of the responding churches is shown in Figure 1. It is not known how the breakdown in this survey compares to the denominational breakdown of all churches in rural Iowa since there have been few studies done on how denominations in Iowa compare numerically. Gallup, in 2004, did a very general breakdown listing 63.5% Protestant, 5.4% other Christian, 19.5% Catholic, 0.7% Mormon and 0.1% Jewish[80]. A call to the University of Iowa's Department of Religion revealed that there had been no academic studies conducted on the subject in the past ten years at the University and none were known to have been conducted by others.[81]
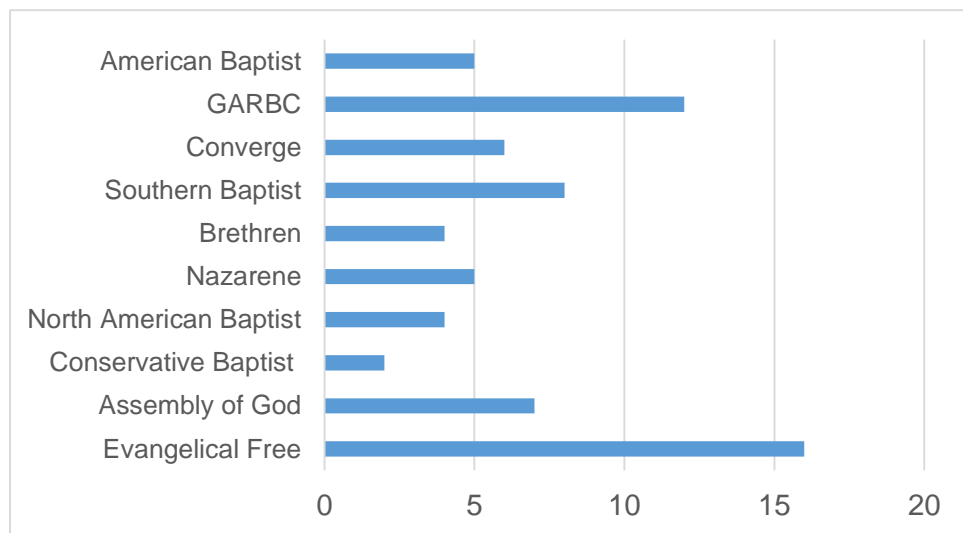


*Figure 1: Denominational Breakdown of Churches*

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[80] Jeffrey Jones, "Tracking Religious Affiliation, State by State," Gallup, June 22, 2004, accessed April 14, 2015, http://www.gallup.com/poll/12091/tracking-religious-affiliation-state-state.aspx.

[81] Maureen Walterhouse, phone conversation with author, Iowa City, IA, United States, April 14, 2014.

The denominational analysis of the churches does seem to have an impact on both the use of VMT and the numerical growth of churches. The American Baptist churches
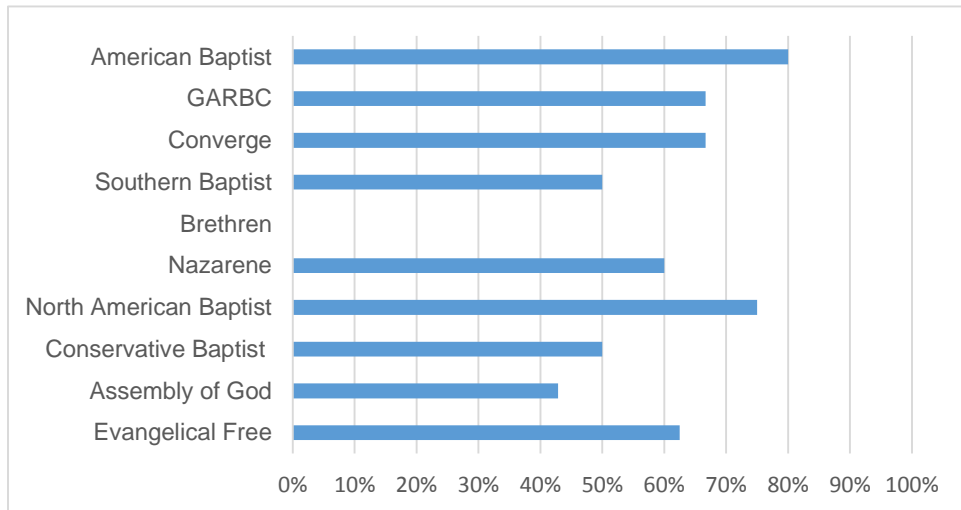


*Figure 2: Percent of Churches Increasing Numerically by Denomination*

were the most likely to be growing numerically, while none of the Brethren churches had seen numerical growth over the past ten years.

It was also interesting that two of the denominations who were experiencing the smallest numerical growth (Brethren and Southern Baptist), were also two of the denominations with the smallest percentage of VMT use on a weekly basis.
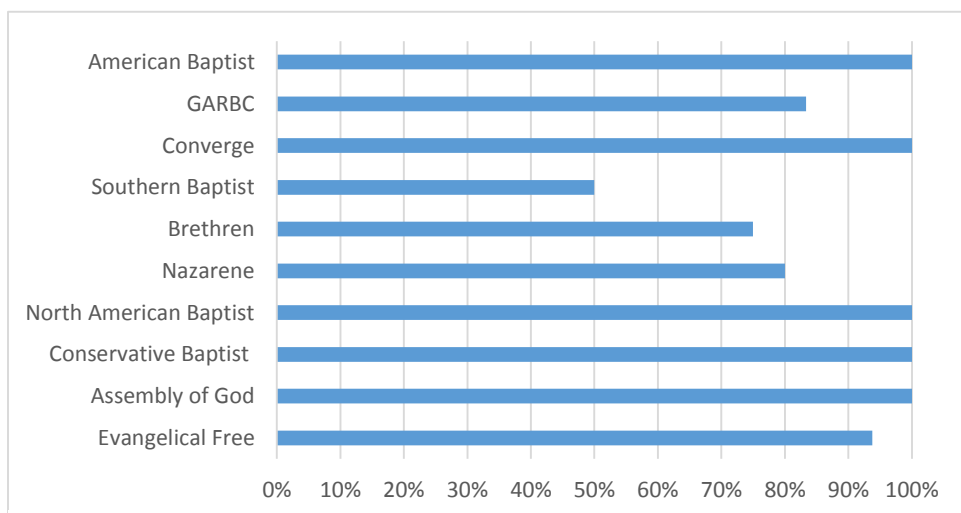


*Figure 3: Percent Using VMT on a Weekly Basis by Denomination*

## Size of Church

Much like national trends for all churches[82], the largest percentage of churches were under seventy-five attendees. While there were no true megachurches[83], all other sizes of churches were represented. Basically half of the churches averaged over 125 congregants; the other half averaged below 125.
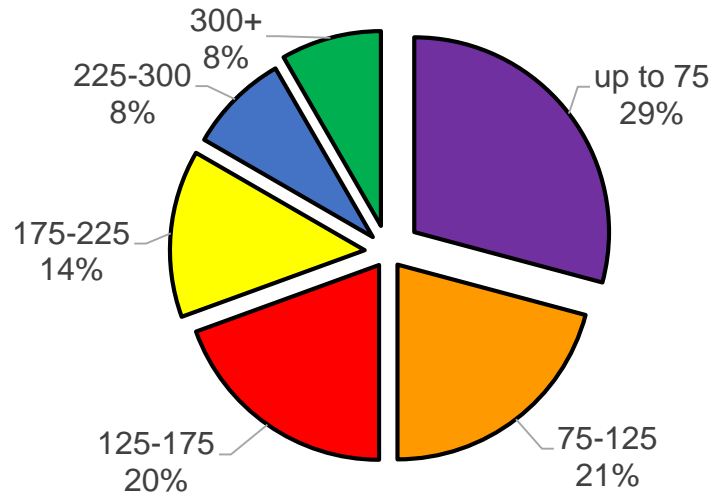


*Figure 4: Size of Congregation*

Church size does correlate with or have influence on the use of VMT. All of the churches with attendance over 125 used VMT weekly, and most in a variety of ways, as in: text for singing, announcements, and sermon outlines. Of the 11 churches which did not use VMT weekly, one of them was from the group size of 75-125, while the rest were the smallest of churches. The primary reason given by those churches for not using VMT was a lack of training or resources.

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[82] Mark Chaves, "National Congregation Study," Association of Religion Data Archives, 2012, accessed March 24, 2015, http://www.thearda.com/ConQS/qs_254.asp.

[83] "The term megachurch generally refers to any congregation with a sustained average weekly attendance of 2000 persons or more in its worship services." Scott Thumma, "Megachurch Definition," Hartford Institute for Religion Research, accessed April 15, 2015, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/definition.html.
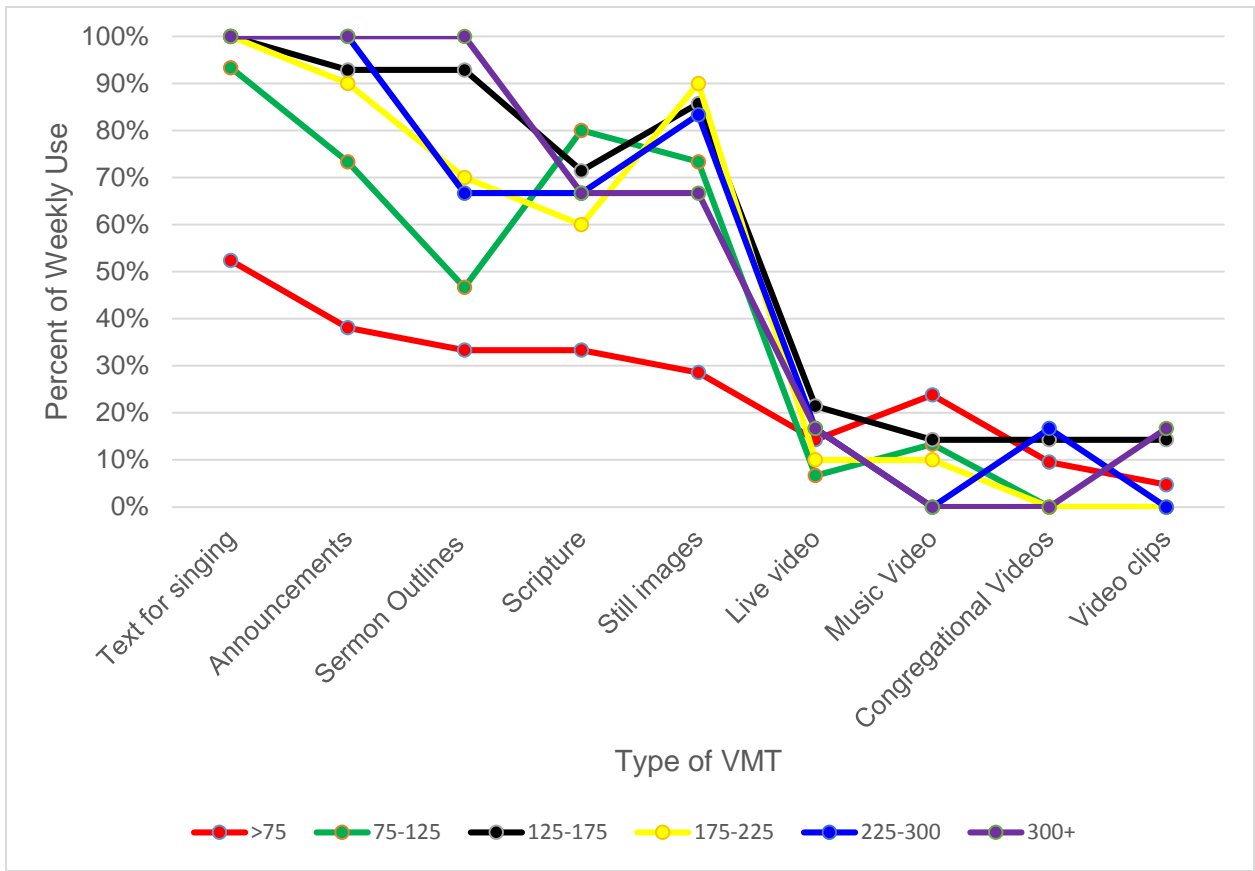
*Figure 5: Weekly Use of VMT by Church Size*

The trends as to what type of VMT is used is very similar in all the different sizes of churches. Text for singing, announcements, and sermon outlines compose the most common use in each size group. However, it does become very clear that the larger the congregation, the more likely they are to use VMT weekly. The smallest churches were at or near the bottom of every type VMT use. The one exception was the use of music videos. In this category the smallest churches were the most likely to have a weekly music video. More study may be worthwhile to determine the cause for this. Perhaps they are using technology in lieu of what live worship bands provide for the larger churches, or this may be a coincidence.
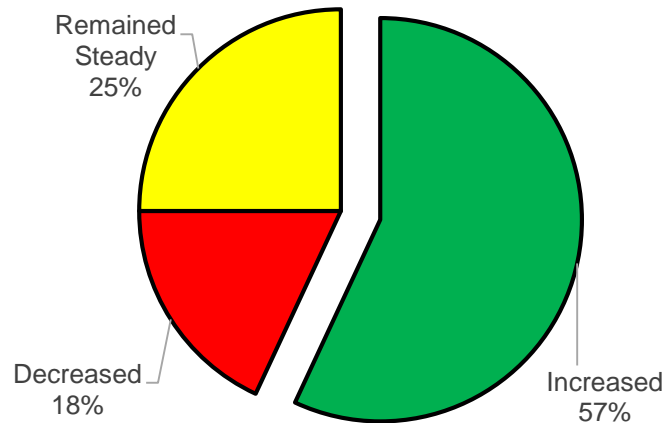
*Figure 6: Change in Church Size*

**Change in Size of Church and Community**

The vast majority of the churches were growing or remaining steady (82%). Only thirteen of the seventy-two churches (18%) were decreasing in attendance. Of those that were decreasing about half were in communities which were also decreasing. Only three churches were in communities which were growing.

This percentage of growing churches is in contrast to the majority of churches in America today. The Malphurs Group shared statistics from several organizations all of which found that between 80%-85% of churches across America were either plateaued or declining.[84] At a recent conference, Eddie Hammett was even grimmer. He suggested that in the research he had done, it is his belief that up to 60% of all churches will close in the next 20 years due to declining numbers and aging congregations[85]. Although beyond the scope of this study, it would be interesting to compare the use of VMT in all churches

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[84] Aubrey Malphurs, "The State of the American Church: Plateaued or Declining," The Malphurs Group, September 5, 2014, accessed April 15, 2015, http://www.malphursgroup.com/state-of-the-american-church-plateaued-declining/.

[85] Eddie Hammett, "Reaching People under 40 While Keeping People Over 60" (lecture, Vermeer Company, Pella, IA, April 6, 2015).

in Iowa to see if the failure to adapt to VMT correlates to the bleak outlook for churches'

continued existence. While the contrast between all churches and the group of surveyed

healthy churches is stark, it shouldn't be surprising, since these two groups are not

comparable. One of the most commonly accepted signs of a healthy church is numerical

growth.

What seemed more surprising was that the vast majority of the healthy churches

surveyed were located in growing or stable communities. Only 25% of the churches

surveyed were in towns with declining population. This stands in glaring dissimilarity to

reality for most of rural Iowa. A recent Iowa State University / U.S. Census study found

that 60% of Iowa's small towns were declining in population.[86]

It is beyond the scope of this study, but it would extremely interesting to study the

relationship of a healthy town to a healthy church. Does a growing town make it more

likely for a church to be healthy, or is the health of community significantly impacted by
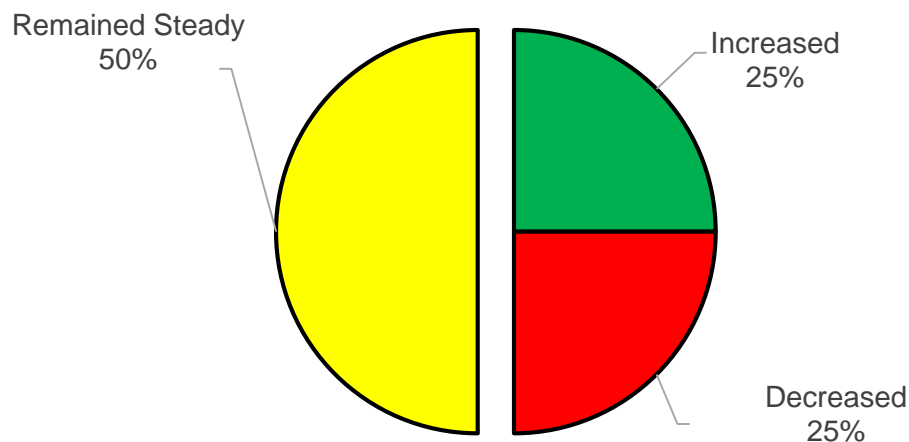
the health of its churches?



*Figure 7: Change in Community Size*

[86] Liesl Eathington "ISU Analysis of Census Data Shows Majority of Iowa Communities Are Shrinking," Iowa State University, May 27, 2014, accessed April 13, 2015, http://www.news.iastate.edu/news/2014/05/27/iowapopulation.

## Age of Church and Building

The largest group of churches (40%) were those over one hundred years of age with the second largest group (19%) being fifty plus years of age. The age of the church had a significant impact on numerical growth. Of those churches who were over one hundred years old, only 31% were growing, while 100% of those churches under 10 years old and 75% of those churches from 10-20 were growing numerically. This is consistent with other national trends. Numerous denominational studies and academic research have consistently shown that young churches both grow faster in attendance, plus grow more through actual conversions to faith--at times, up to four times faster.[87]

While the age of the church had a large impact on growth, it had little impact on the use of VMT. The percentage of VMT use of older churches versus younger churches was nearly identical with both groups having about 89% of churches using VMT.
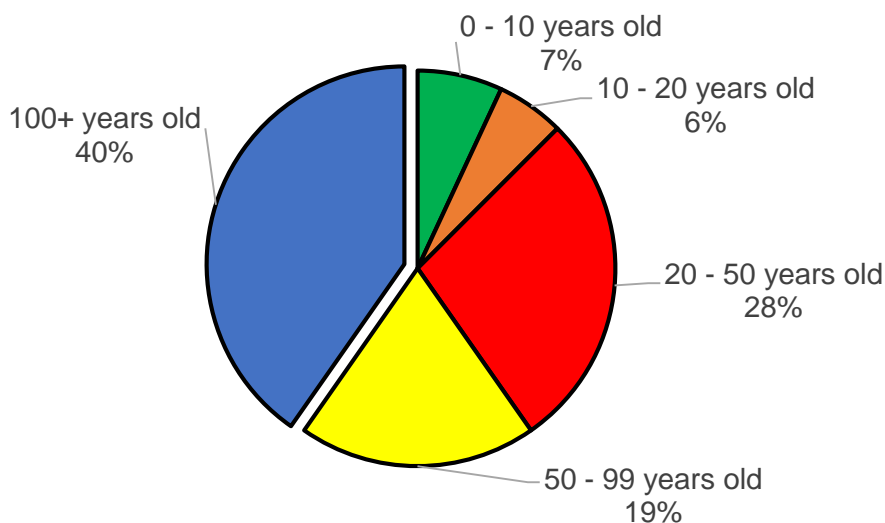


*Figure 8: Age of Church*

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[87] C Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest: A Comprehensive Guide* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2010), 33.

While the majority of surveyed churches are well over 50 years old, their buildings' ages are much younger. Nearly 75% of all church buildings are under the age of 50, with the largest percentage being in the 20-50 year category. The age of the building seemed to have little to do with the use of VMT. There was basically no difference in the percentage of those churches having a building constructed in the last 20 years, to those who building was over 100 years old when it came to using VMT weekly. Both groups had approximately 90% of the churches using VMT weekly.
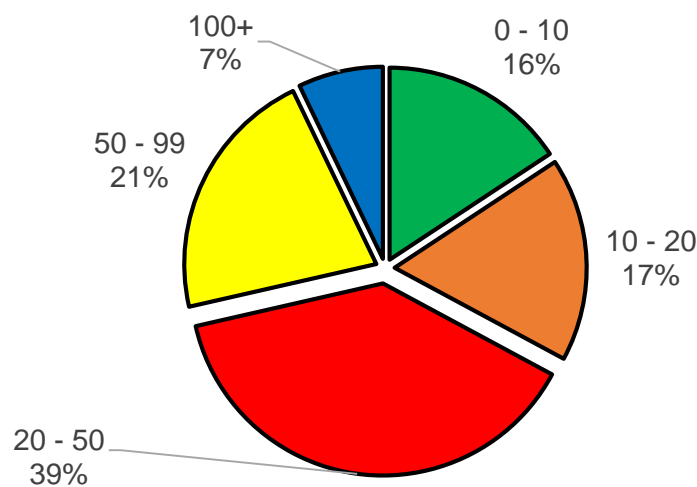


*Figure 9: Age of Church Building*

**Age of Senior/Solo Pastor**

The vast majority of the pastors were between the ages of thirty-six to sixty-four. Only three churches were pastored by individuals over the age of sixty-five and the second smallest group were those under the age of thirty-five. The average age of the

45

pastors does seem to be slightly below the national average of fifty-five[88], as 60% of the pastors were under the age of fifty.

The age of the pastor seemed to have little impact on the use of VMT or the growth of the church. All ages were very similar in both areas. The group most likely to use VMT on a weekly basis was in fact those whose pastor was over 65 years old, but the sample size was only three, so it probably was not significant enough to draw any general conclusions. Churches growing numerically were evenly dispersed throughout all ages of senior pastors.
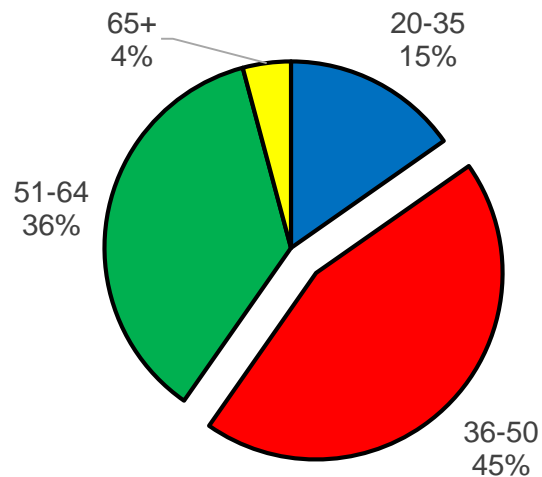


*Figure 10: Age of Senior / Solo Pastor*

**Number of Full-time Staff**

Nearly half of the churches were served by only one full-time pastor. There was no demographical statistic that had a greater important impact on the use of VMT than the number of full-time staff. It impacted both how often VMT was used and how it was used. All of the churches who had 2 or more staff used VMT on a weekly basis. Those with no full-time staff members were the least likely with only 60% using VMT weekly.

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[88] Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, "Associate Pastors," U.S. Congregations, September, 2010, accessed April 15, 2015, http://www.uscongregations.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Associate-Pastors-with-cover-page-without-appendicies.pdf.

The churches with multiple staff were also far more likely to use a variety of VMT. Of

the 4 churches who used video clips from movies and TV on a weekly basis, three of
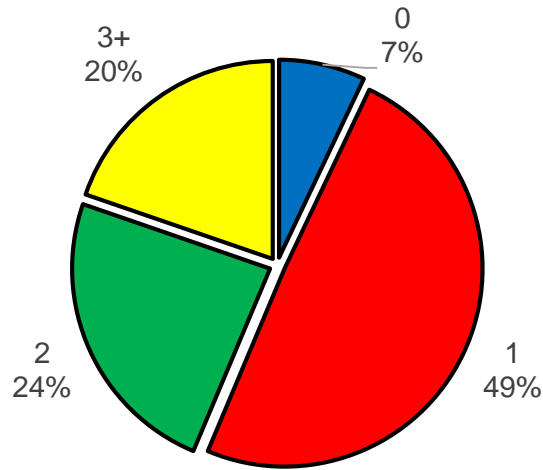


*Figure 11: Number of Fulltime Staff*

them were churches that had three plus full-time staff members. Those churches who

used videos made by the congregation on a weekly basis, four of six were from the group

with three plus full-time staff members. Only one of the churches with three plus full-

time staff never used video clips from movies or TV. Those churches with multiple staff

members were more likely to use more forms of VMT than those with one or no full-time

staff.
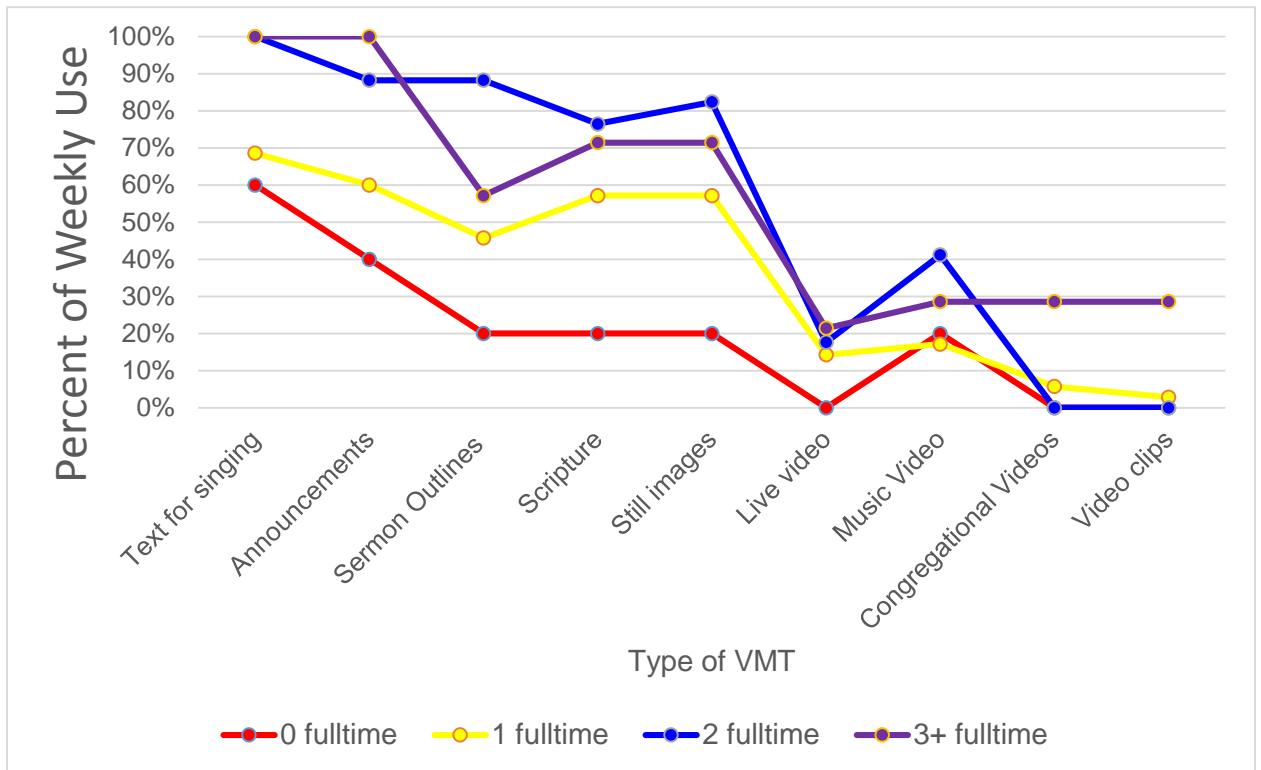
*Figure 12: Weekly VMT Use by Staff*

It also became very evident that those with multiple staff dedicated more weekly

hours to the preparation of VMT. Interestingly, those with no full-time staff dedicated

more hours than churches with a single staff member. But as the number of staff

members increased, so did the hours spent preparing the VMT.
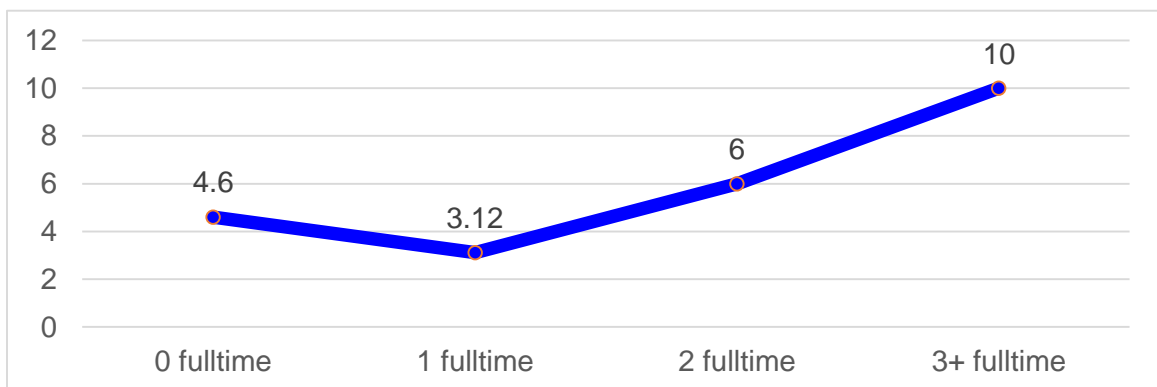


*Figure 13: Hours Spent by Number of Staff*

While not as great an impact on numerical growth as the use of VMT, more full-time staff generally made the church more likely to be growing numerically. Most (64%) of churches with three plus staff members were growing, while only 40% of those with no staff were growing numerically.
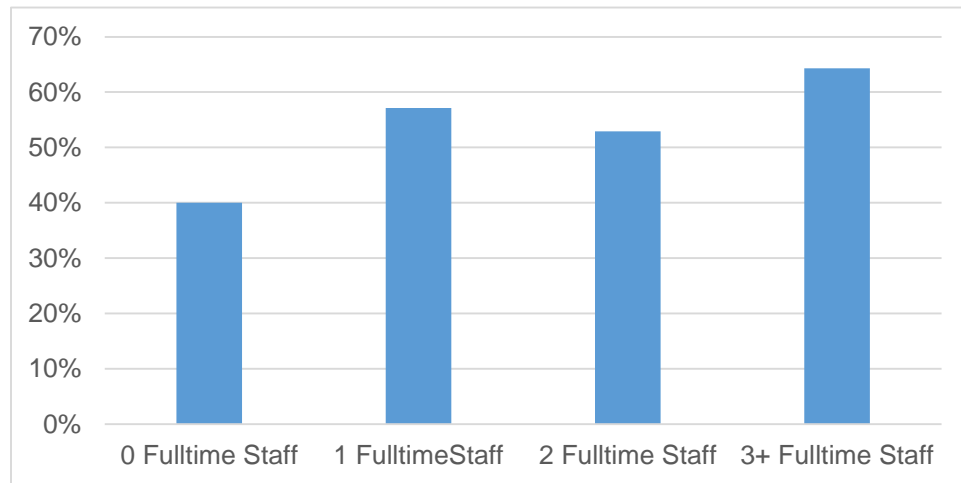


*Figure 14: Church Growth by Staff*

**Frequency of Video Projection in Worship**

An important question involved the frequency with which different types of VMT were used in worship. It was determined that 100% of the churches contacted used some form of VMT. Only six of the churches contacted did not use VMT on a weekly basis. Of those, two used videos from movies or videos made by the congregation at least yearly, and four used VMT a few times a year. Their primary use of VMT related to denominational promotions or missionaries. One of the churches had to borrow a projector in order to do so, but every church contacted, communicated that they did use VMT in some manner. Most (88%) of the churches used some form of VMT on a weekly
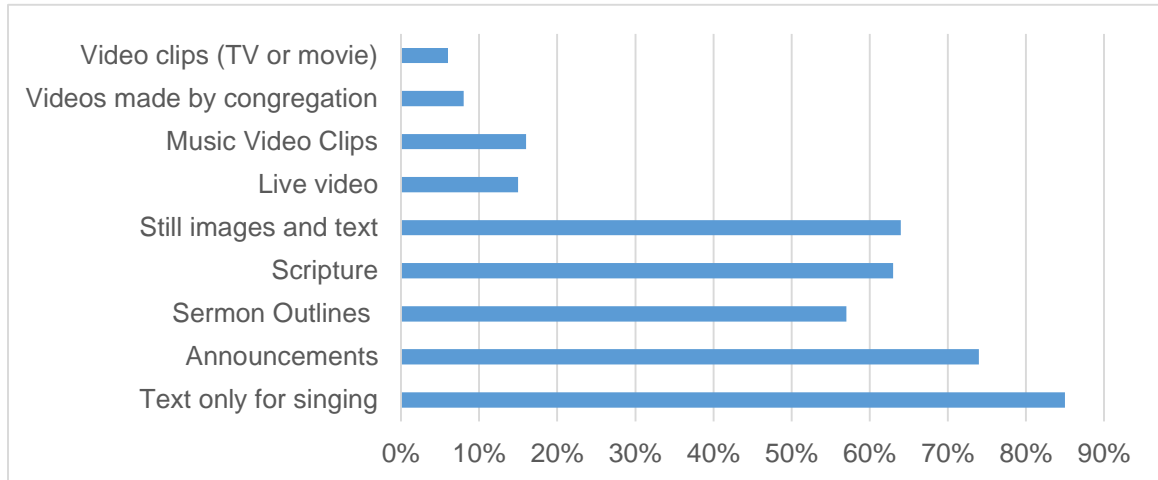
*Figure 15: Type of VMT Used Weekly*

basis. This stands in contrast to the most recent national studies which found only 54% of conservative, evangelical churches used VMT[89]. Again, perhaps, the two groups are not comparable.

The VMT use highest category was projection of text for singing. 85% of the churches projected text for songs weekly. Projecting words seemed to be an all or nothing practice. Very few churches choose never to project words, nor do they project words on anything other than a weekly basis. Only five churches who projected words did so less than every week.
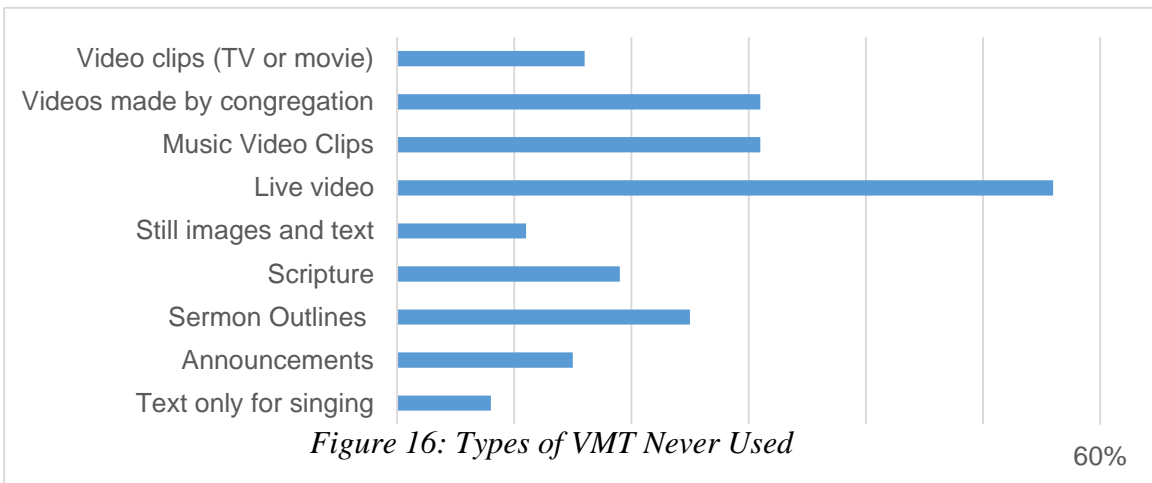


*Figure 16: Types of VMT Never Used*

60%

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[89] Mark Chaves, "National Congregation Study," Association of Religion Data Archives, 2012, accessed March 24, 2015, http://www.thearda.com/ConQS/qs_254.asp.

The least common category of VMT use was for live video. Only 15% use live video weekly, and 56% never use it. The author concludes that the cost involved in live video is relatively expensive and would consume a large portion of a smaller church's budget; this may have bearing on the minimal use of live video.

In many ways VMT has become the new song book. Only one church said they specifically had no interest in ever pursuing such an option. The only other negative comment was a pastor who shared his concern that projecting words hindered those who



Yearly 0%
Never 8%
Quarterly 6%
Monthly 1%
Weekly 85%
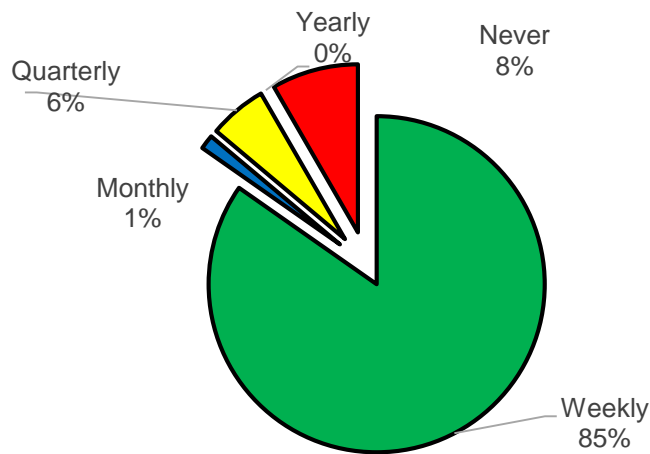
*Figure 17: VMT for Singing*

read music. He went on to express concern for the long term musical health of the church. It was his belief that the church was a common place for individuals in the past to learn to read music. With hymnals becoming scare, it was his concern that people would be less likely to learn to read music or to practice what they had learned, resulting in a decline in the musical health of church members.

For those who were not currently projecting words, only one church specifically chose not to. The rest were not projecting words because of the cost in both production hours and equipment.

The size of a church seemed to play a big role in projecting text for singing. Of the churches never projecting words, five of six churches were under seventy-five in
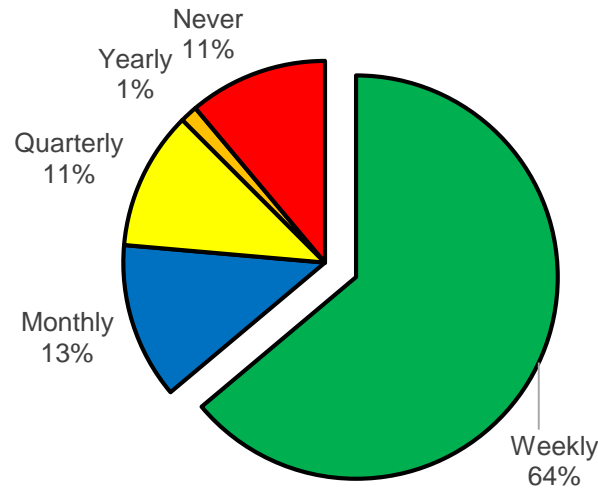


*Figure 18: Use of Images*

attendance. The other church was under 125 on an average Sunday. Thus, every church with over 125 attendees projected text for singing weekly.

How they projected it was somewhat mixed. Many of them used still images or moving images as backgrounds, while some used solid color backgrounds with only text on them.  Still images for background to projected song lyrics surfaced as the most common form of still image VMT use. It would be helpful to explore the software used for projection and attempt to understand if the use of a particular software had impact on how the projection was accomplished.

While most churches used VMT for singing, a smaller percentage used it during the sermon. More than half (57%) of churches projected an outline or information for the sermons weekly. Another 15% chose to weekly project the Scripture explained in the sermon, but did not project a sermon outline or other information. Few regularly used images to communicate the truths of the sermon. In all, only six churches (8%) never used anything projected during the sermon. One church shared it deliberately avoided projected images during sermons. Philosophically it was very concerned that the emphasis be upon the spoken Word, and it believed anything projected during the sermon would take away from that focus and become a distraction. It was especially concerned about images.
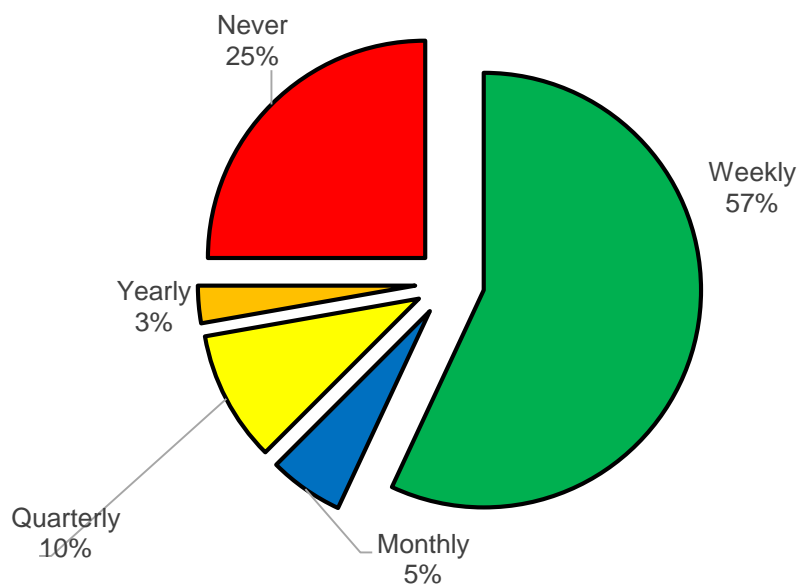


*Figure 19: VMT Used for Sermon Outlines*

Of all the forms of VMT, the use of video clips from television or movies finished as the most sporadic. While 77% of churches used video clips to illustrate sermon points, very few (6%) used them every week. The highest percentage of churches (38%) used video clips only on a quarterly basis.
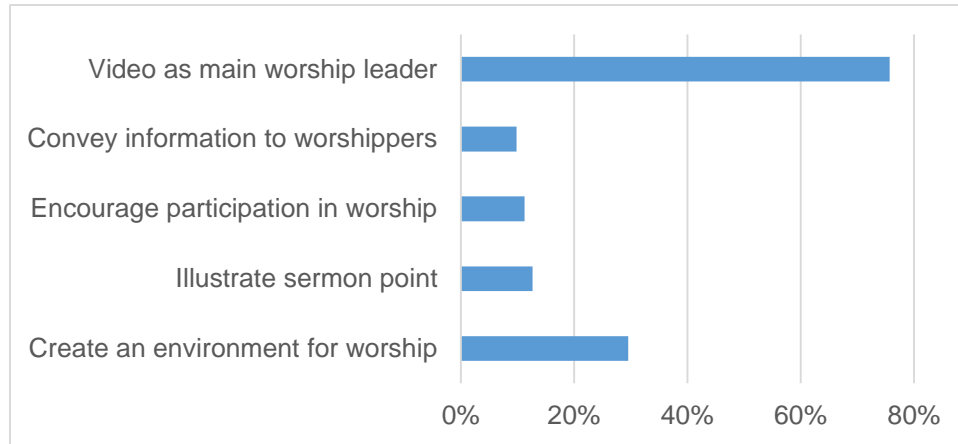
*Figure 20: Weekly VMT Used for These Purposes*

**<u>Video Projection Used to Achieve Five Purposes</u>**

Five different purposes were given as to why VMT was used. The most popular reasons for using VMT matched nicely with the way VMT was used. Most (82%) churches used VMT to encourage participation in worship--largely in the form of singing. Also 80% used VMT to convey information, and this was usually announcements.

Far and away the least popular reason to use VMT is as the main worship leader. Only 10% of churches were using it weekly with 76% never using it. The churches that were least likely to use it as the main worship leader were the smallest churches. The largest churches were the most likely with 20% of them using VMT as the main worship
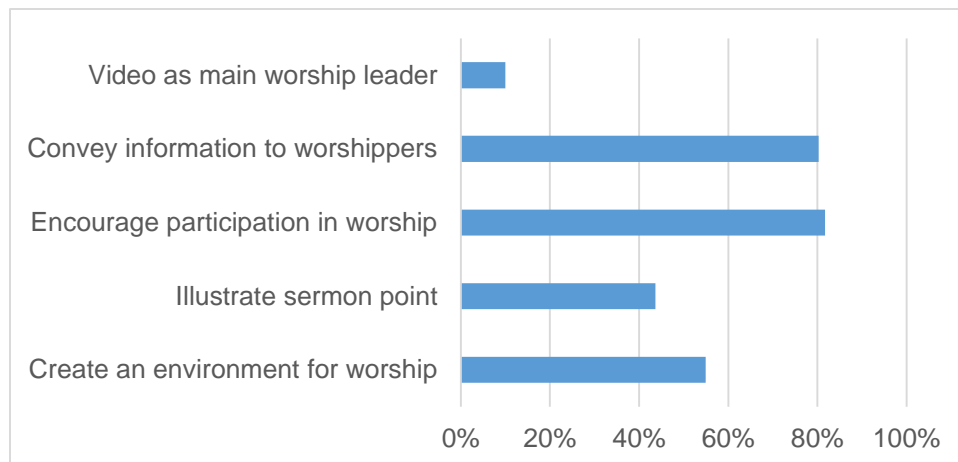


*Figure 21: VMT Never Used for These Purposes*

leader on a regular basis. Just as with the use of video clips, VMT of all types (video clips, pictures, testimonials, charts, graphs, etc.) were used by most churches, but on a much more irregular basis. Only 13% never used VMT to illustrate a sermon point, while 44% used it on a weekly basis, and 44% used it on a less than weekly basis.

### VMT Used to Reach Those Unable to Attend Worship

While every church took advantage of VMT at some point in the worship calendar, few churches considered VMT to reach those unable to attend. Many used audio recordings available both on the church website and on local radio. One church related that they had been on the radio for the past 50 years. The size of the church had little to do with live video streaming of the church service, as just as many churches under seventy-five in attendance (two) as churches over 225 (two) were streaming live each week on the internet. However, all but two of the larger churches were recording the
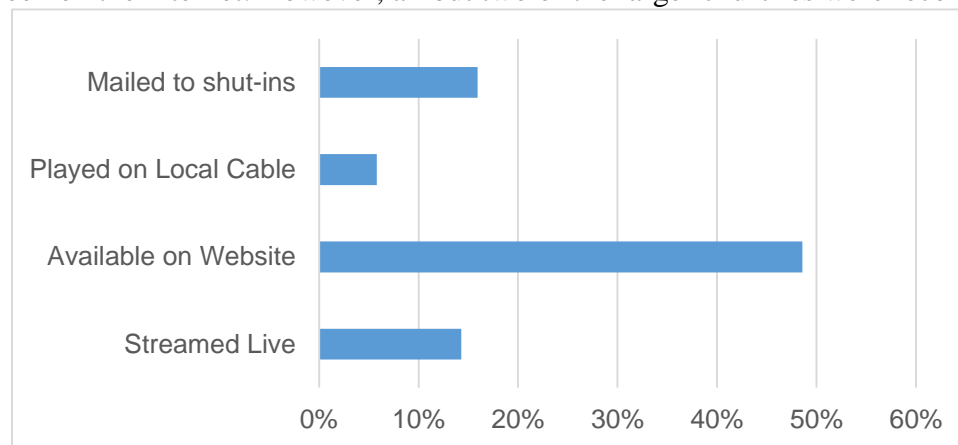


*Figure 22: Weekly Use of VMT to Reach Those Unable to Attend*

worship service and making audio of the service available online. One of those two, is temporarily meeting in a school while a new facility is being built. They had been recording and plan to return to recording their services once the new building is built. Overall, only 23% of smallest churches were recording services with video, while 83% of largest churches were.
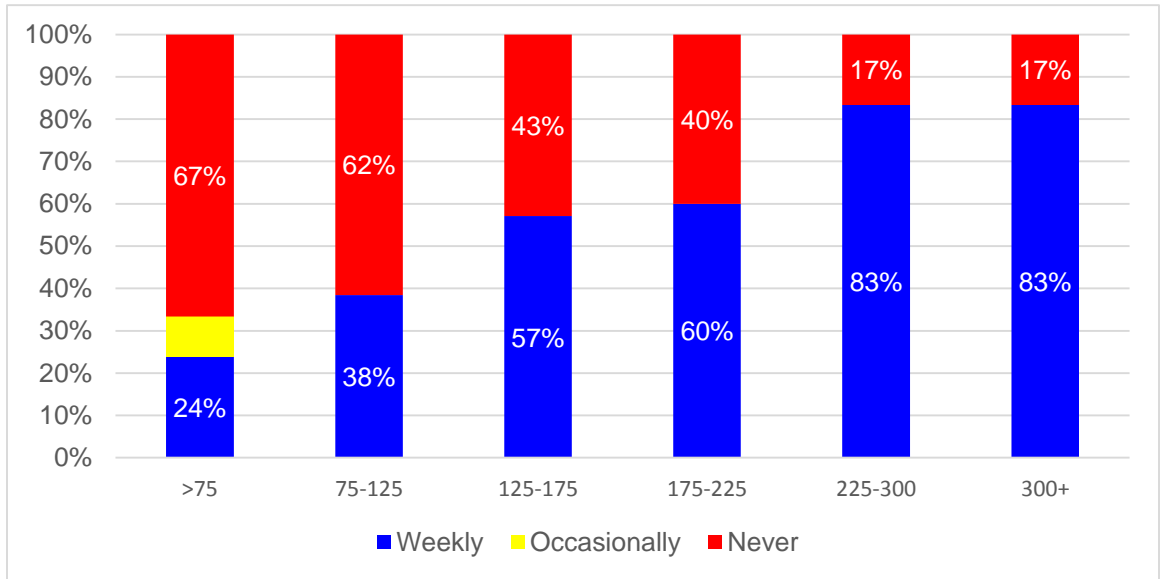
*Figure 23: Services Recorded and Made Available on Church Website, by Size of Church*

Many who were not using video to reach those unable to attend, shared that it was their intention to begin soon, but at this point they had yet to begin. Of those who use it, the most common form was to make video recordings of their services available on the church's website. Just under half (49%) recorded the worship service and make it available to anyone online.

Unlike the use of VMT during worship, which is often done only occasionally, services were recorded almost always every week, or they were not recorded at all. There were only two churches surveyed that recorded their church services occasionally; every other church did it weekly or never.

## The Driving Force Behind the Use of VMT
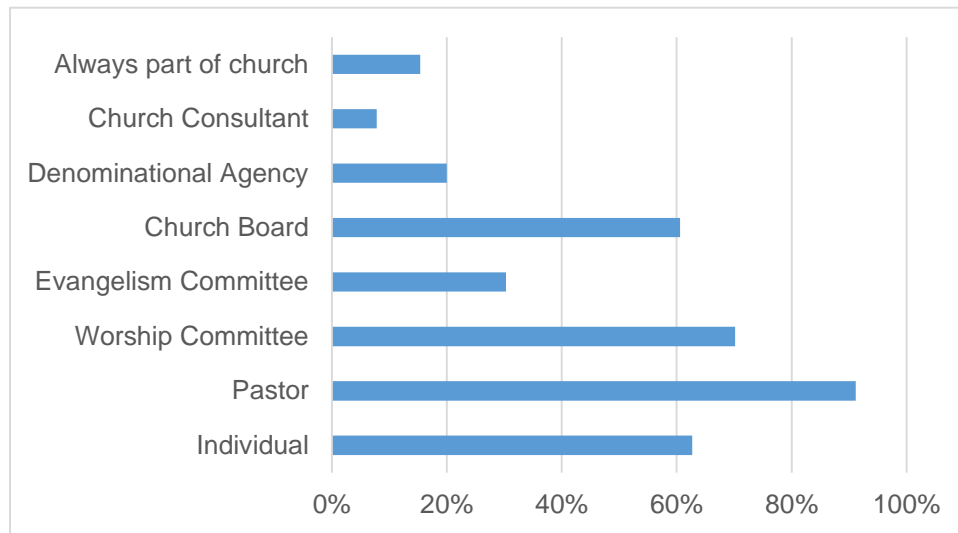


*Figure 24: Driving Force Behind Use of VMT*

Nearly every church had multiple individuals or groups who played an important role in why the church decided to use VMT. For a small group of the churches (ten), VMT has been a part of the church since its beginning. Overall no one was more important to the use of VMT in the church than the pastor. The pastor played an important or very important role in the decision to use VMT in almost all (92%) of the churches. Only three churches shared that the pastor was a somewhat unimportant reason
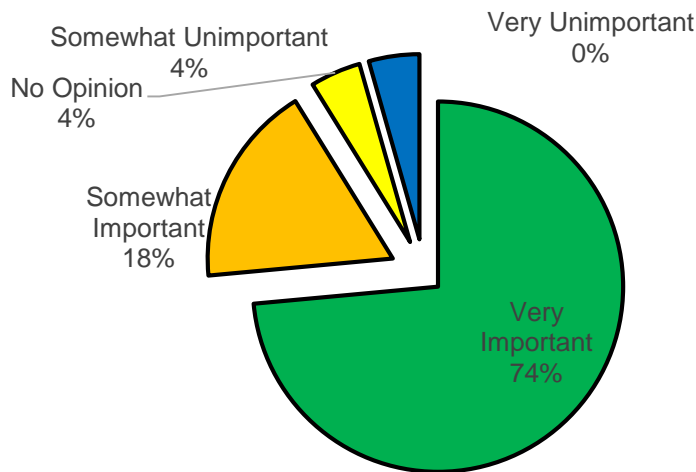


*Figure 25: Role Pastor*

for the use of VMT and no church considered the pastor very unimportant. In the three

churches where the pastor was somewhat unimportant the pastor was over the age of

fifty.

The denominational agency seemed to play little role in the decision to use VMT.

Of the churches surveyed, the only denomination to assign the denominational agency as

an important part of the decision to use VMT was the Church of the Nazarene (80%).

They were the only denomination with even half of the churches finding the

denominational agency a driving force in their decision. The Conservative Baptist,

Evangelical Free, General Association of Regular Baptist, and the North American

Baptist, felt the denominational agency played no role whatsoever in their decision

making process.
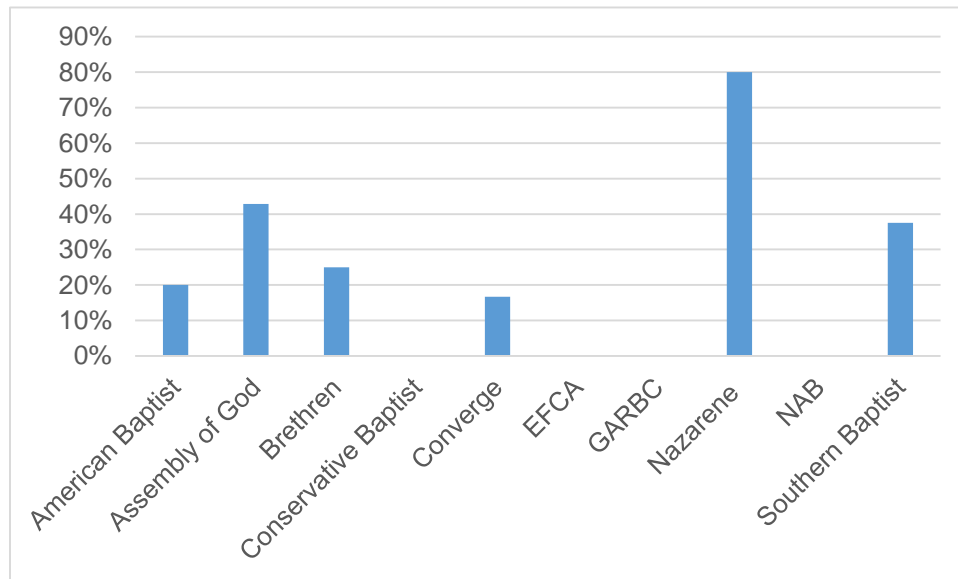


*Figure 26: Denominational Agency's Role in Use of VMT*

**Reasons for Using VMT**

While there are many possible reasons for taking advantage of VMT, this survey

examined seven possible reasons for its use. Only two of the reasons failed to have at

least half of the churches give some importance to that particular motivation. Those two

reasons were donated equipment and keeping up with other churches in the community. Keeping up with other churches was the least important reason.

Churches selected reaching younger families in the community as their top reason for integrating VMT into their services. Almost half (45%) of the churches surveyed said that it was a very important reason for using VMT and another 33% said it was somewhat important. Finding contemporary relevance (42%) and evangelism (36%) were very important reasons as well. The only reason that was fairly evenly split in church responses was exploring artistic approaches to worship. Exactly 50% of churches felt it had some importance, while 30% felt it was of very little importance. Sixty-seven
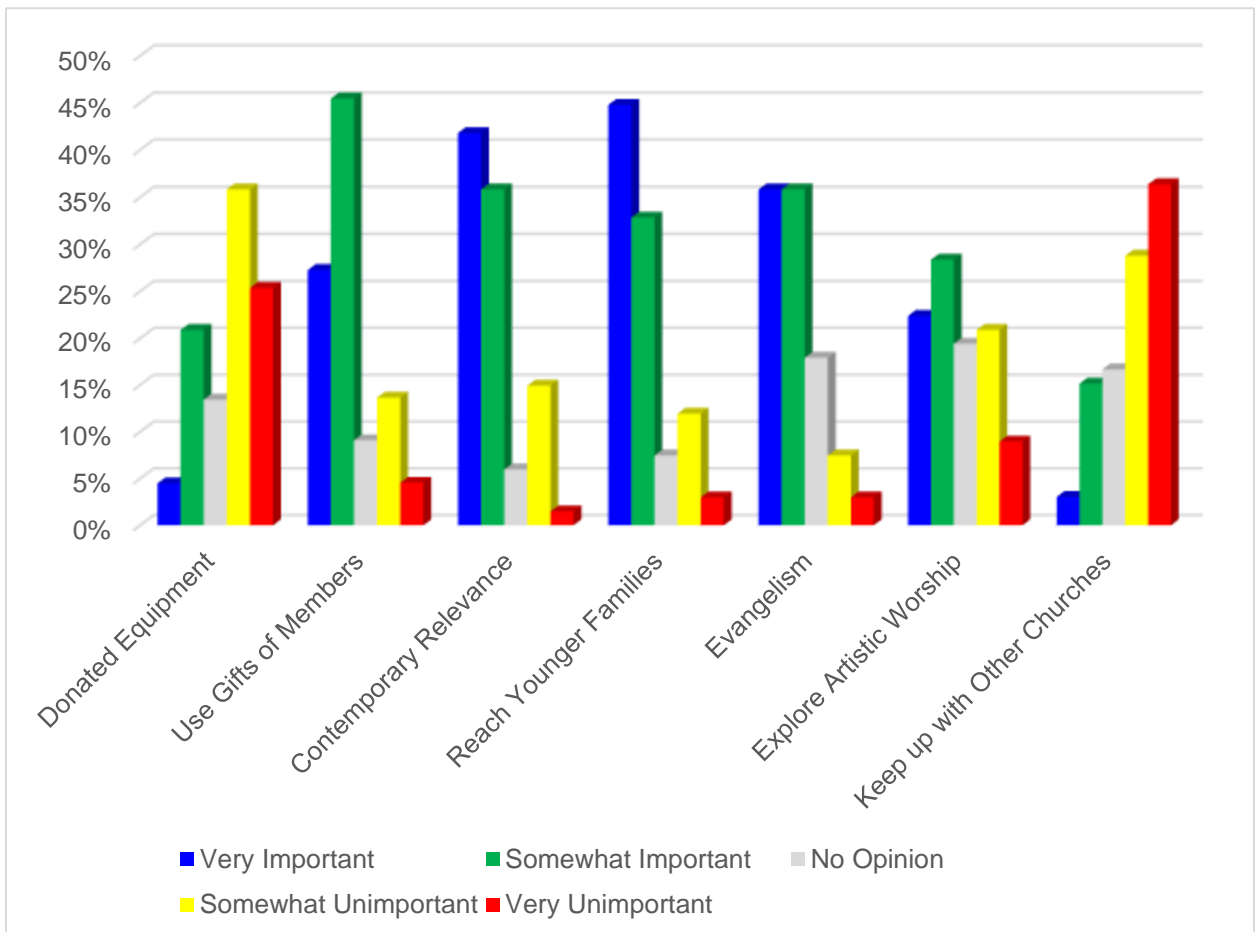


*Figure 27: Reason for Using VMT*

percent of churches in The Assembly of God denomination held exploring artistic worship high in value which topped all other denominations. It was the least important to General Association of Regular Baptist with only 16% placing any importance on exploring artistic worship.

### **Reasons for not Using VMT**

Because there were only six churches who did not use VMT on a weekly basis, the sample size was too small to form many conclusions as to why healthy, evangelical churches were not using VMT. Church tradition was an important reason for four of the six churches. One felt tradition played a very important role, and three others felt it was somewhat important. Almost all of the churches felt that a lack of budget and lack of training played an important role with the lack of training being the most significant reason. The churches which did not use VMT regularly were smaller churches where resources and training were scarce.

One church did express a great hesitancy to use videos in the service because of a theological viewpoint. The church did use VMT for projecting song lyrics, but in their opinion the focus should be on the spoken Word not on visual images.
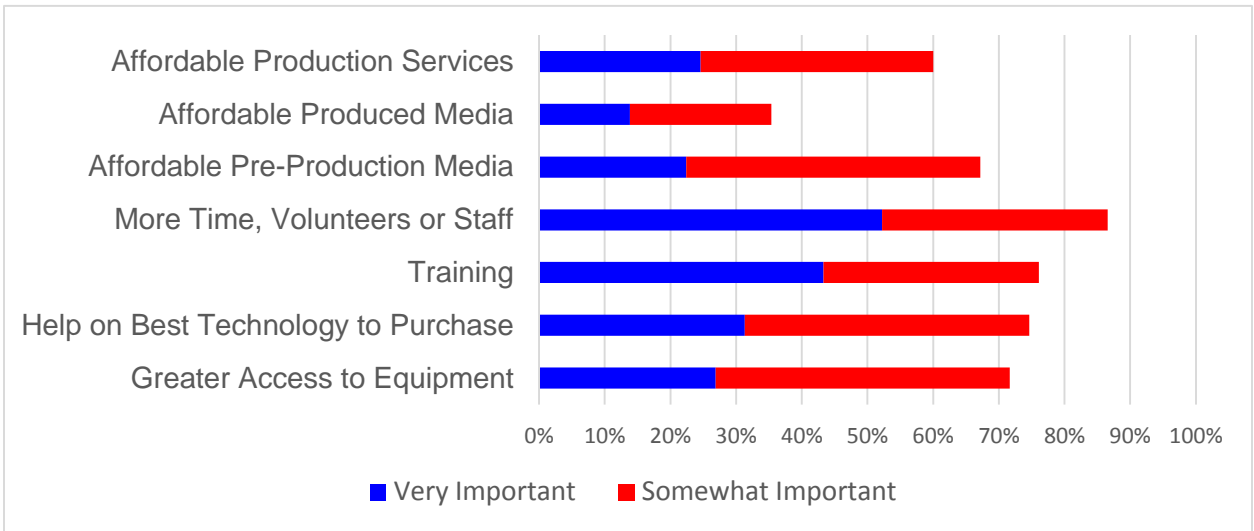
*Figure 28: Reasons for Not Using VMT*

### Importance of Resources in Improving VMT Use

Nearly every church felt some of the resources, as mentioned below in Figure 29, would be helpful. Only five of the churches considered all of the resources unhelpful. Because nearly every church already had some access to projection equipment, access to more equipment was the least important resource needed. It was followed closely by access to affordable production services.
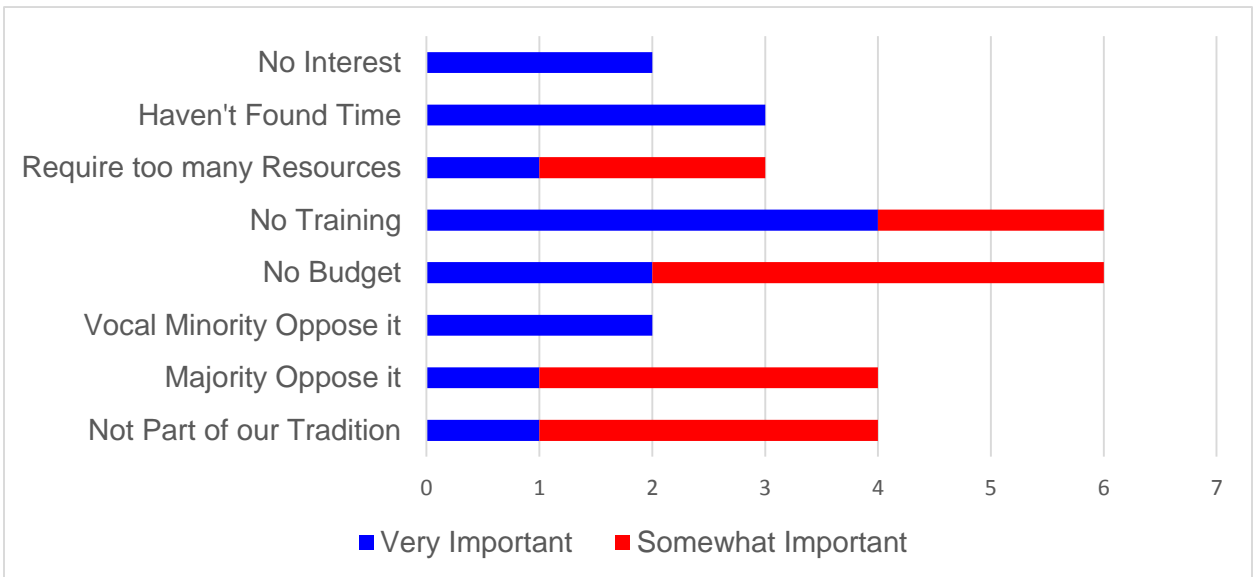


*Figure 29: VMT Resourced Considered Helpful*

61
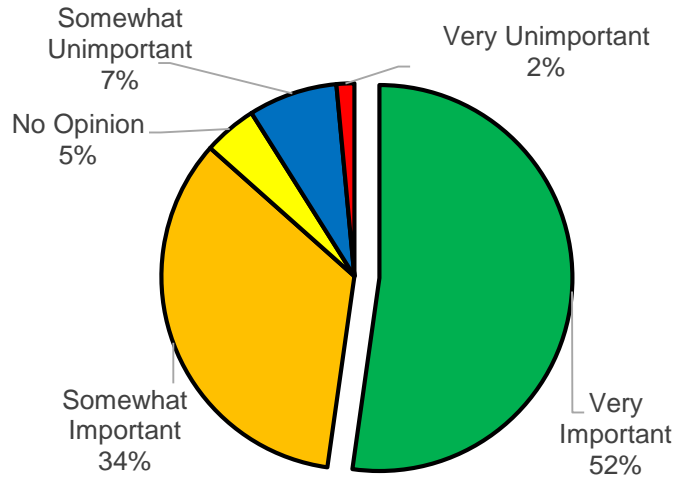
*Figure 30: More Time, Volunteers or Staff*

The most helpful resource needed was more time, volunteers, or staff. Most churches (86%) desired more help with the use of VMT. The need for more help was consistent across denominational and size analysis of the churches. Only one church considered the category of more time or volunteers very unimportant.

The second most important resource needed was training. Eleven churches believed more training was not necessary, but the sizable majority felt it was very important to get more training, especially experience that would make better use of the VMT equipment they already possessed.
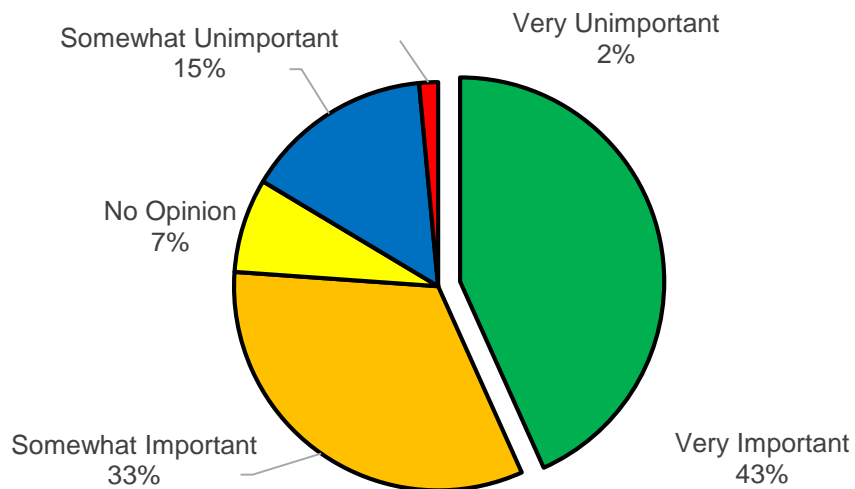


*Figure 31: More Training*

## The Impact of Removing VMT

Because nearly 90% of the questioned churches used VMT on a weekly basis, it is not surprising that the vast majority of churches suggested that a hypothetical removal of VMT would have an impact on the worship service. Most of the churches suggested that to do so would have a substantial or significant impact on how worship was currently conducted. Only two churches, both of which had less than seventy-five in attendance and who did not use VMT on a weekly basis, stated that removing VMT from their worship service would have no impact.
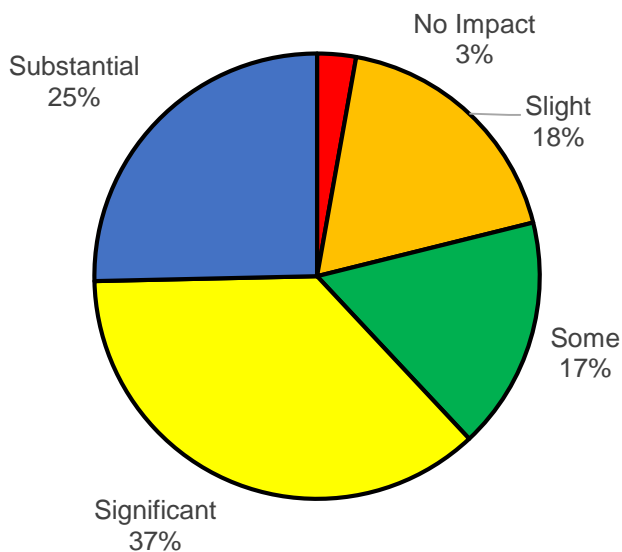


*Figure 32: Impact of Removing VMT*

The frequency of VMT use correlated closely with the answers given to this issue. Of those who did not use VMT on a weekly basis, two felt it would have no impact, and four others felt it would have a slight impact. Every church which believed it would have a significant or substantial impact used VMT every week. The size of the

church also impacted the results. The largest churches believed it would have a solid impact. Of the churches with over 300 in attendance, all but one believed it would fundamentally change the way that worship was conducted in their church. The other churches, over 300, believed it would require significant adjustments to the worship service if it were removed. For most of the churches VMT is an extremely important part in the way worship is conducted, and it could not be removed without having a major impact on the way worship is conducted.
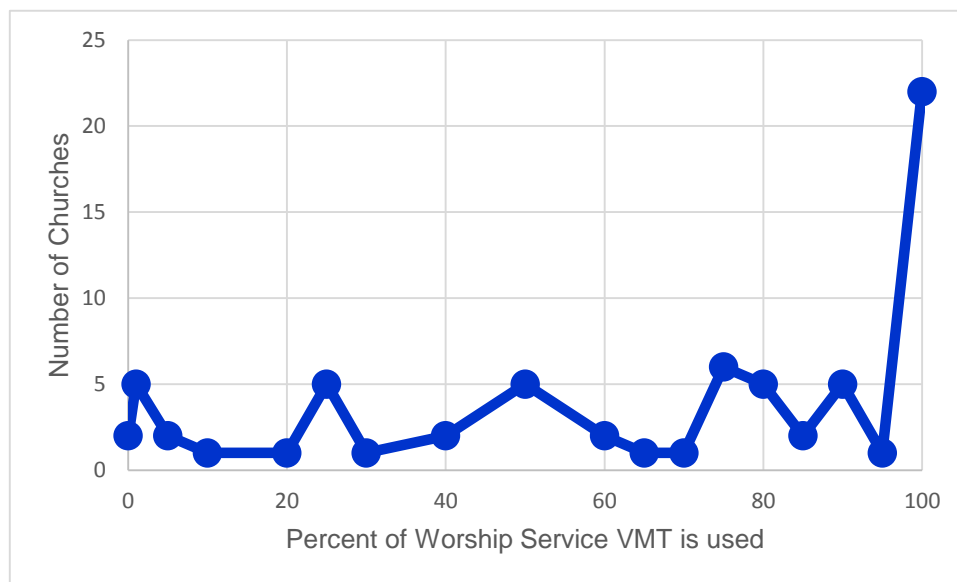


*Figure 33: Percent of Worship Service*

### **Percent of Worship Time with VMT**

For the majority of churches VMT has become something that is almost always integral to the worship service. For 29% of the churches, text or images are projected on a screen in 100% of the worship service, and for 60% of the churches, something displays on a screen for at least 75% of the worship service. Still the most widespread portion of the worship service where VMT succeeds best is during singing, but churches are increasing their use of VMT during every part of the service. The most popular form of

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VMT continues to be text. Some form of text is used by most churches surveyed for the bulk of the worship service.
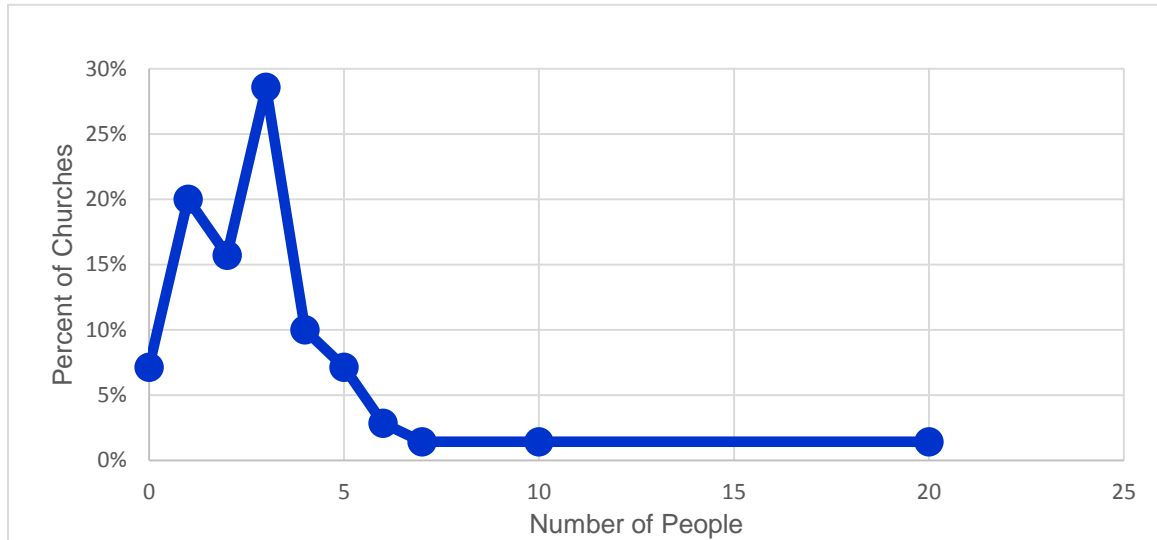


*Figure 34: Number of People Involved with VMT*

### **Number of People Involved in VMT**

The number of individuals who were involved weekly in the production of the VMT for use in worship varied greatly. For most of the churches the number was one to three people each week. They were not always the same one to three people as many of the churches expressed that they had teams which would switch off during the church calendar. It is expected that the larger churches had more people involved. In fact one of the largest churches had a group of more than twenty people helping each week with VMT; however, this was not true of all the larger churches. Some with multiple staff had a worship pastor or administrative full-time staff member do all or at least most of the production each week.

### Number of Hours Spent on VMT

The importance of VMT is clearly seen in the number of hours that are dedicated to VMT production and preparation each week. While the number varied greatly from church to church the average was over five hours a week per church and the median was
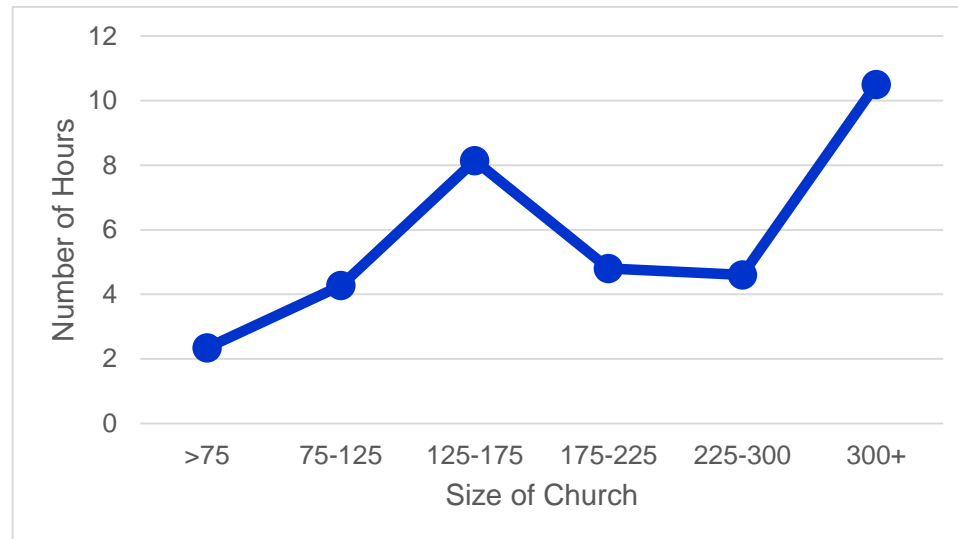


*Figure 35: Hours Spent on VMT by Church Size*

three hours per week. A sizable group of the churches spent very little time on VMT with thirteen churches appropriating less than an hour each week. Others dedicated substantial amounts of time with twelve churches spending over ten hours a week, and one church spending forty hours each week. As to the number of hours spent, it seemed that the size of church mattered less than the denomination of the church. The American Baptist and Assembly of God denominations spent markedly more time each week in preparing VMT than the other denominations.
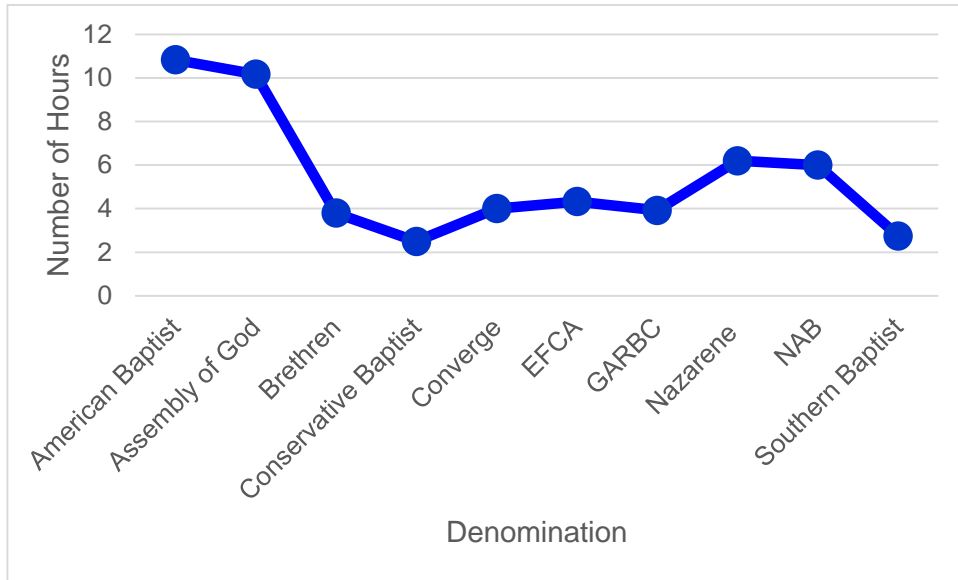
*Figure 36: Hours Spent on VMT by Denomination*

# <u>Summary</u>

Video Media Technology has been widely accepted into the worship service of healthy, evangelical churches in town and country settings in Iowa. The average church will use VMT for 68% of the church service, with one to three people spending five hours preparing the VMT. The song portion of the service dominates VMT use. All but 3% of the sampled churches suggested that the removal of VMT would have some impact (61% saying significant to substantial impact) on their worship.

While VMT has been widely accepted as a tool to project words and announcements, far fewer churches are using it during the sermon portion of the service. A slight majority (55%) of churches did use VMT to create an environment for worship, only 44% of the churches used VMT weekly to illustrate sermon points, and even fewer, 29%, used moving images in the form of video monthly to illustrate sermons.

Although firmly established as a part of the service, only 50% of churches use VMT to communicate with those unable to attend services. The most common media resourced was the internet, as 50% of the churches video recorded the church service and made it available to be streamed on the church's website. Many more were making audio available online, but video is lagging well behind as a media through which to share the service.

Many groups and individuals have influence on how and when the VMT is used, but no one was more responsible than the pastor. In 95% of churches that used VMT regularly the pastor held important sway. The least influential group was the

denomination with only 8% suggesting that the denomination had any impact on their choice to use or not use VMT.

Churches declared the most important reason for using VMT was to reach younger families and provide improved contemporary relevance. Seventy-eight percent of the churches said that they were using VMT on a regular basis for these two reasons. Keeping up with the other churches in the community ranked by far the least important reason since 65% of the churches suggested that it played little or no role in their decision to use VMT.

A few churches who were not taking advantage of VMT regularly stated it was because of theological or philosophical reasons, but the majority who were not using VMT attributed it to diminished time and resources. Having neither designated budget funds nor appropriate training surfaced as the most commonly stated reasons for not involving VMT at all. Even for the churches who were using VMT, more time, volunteers, or staff to do the work were thought to be the most helpful resource that could be provided them. Churches also selected training for those who were currently doing the VMT work as a valued source of help.

Every church that was surveyed displayed VMT in the worship service at some point during the year, with the vast majority using it every week. The most common form of VMT use was the projection of lyrics for the purpose of congregational singing, but sharing church announcements through VMT, followed closely behind. In some way VMT has become the modern hymnal and bulletin for most of the churches contacted.

# **Further Study**

This study was limited to healthy, evangelical churches in the state of Iowa and thus is not necessarily indicative of wider trends. It would be valuable to do a national study of healthy, evangelical churches, or a study of all churches in one or more states, to see how those results would compare to this study or a study.

This study was also inadequate with respect to the denominations it was able to survey. It would be helpful to find a way for a wider group of denominations to participate in the survey. Finding the best way to get more churches to participate would make the results even more helpful.

The study concluded that a much larger percentage of healthy churches were found in stable to growing communities. The stable, small towns in Iowa are greatly outnumbered by those which are shrinking, and in some cases, even dying. It would be a very interesting study to examine the relationship between the health of a community and the health of churches within its limits. Does the health of a community play a significant role in the health of the church? Are churches more likely to be healthy in growing communities? Is it perhaps the church that is impacting the community, so that healthy churches help improve the overall wellness of the community so to make it more likely to be stable or growing? Do pastors simply have a more positive view of the community if the church is healthy? Or is there some completely distinct reason for why so many healthy churches were in growing communities?

While the survey did cover motivational goals for using VMT, it did not measure whether or not the churches were successful in accomplishing those goals. Since reaching

younger families in the area stood out as the most important reason for using VMT, it would be thought-provoking to study whether or not the churches were successful in accomplishing that task. Does incorporating VMT in worship make a church more relevant in reaching out to young people?

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# Appendix A: Instrument

Dear <Church Name>

Greetings.

My name is Dan Andrews. I pastor a small church in Victor, Iowa and am currently enrolled at Trinity College of the Bible and Theological Seminary working on my Doctor of Ministry degree. As part of that degree, I am formally studying the use of Video Media Technology in healthy town and country churches.

I am asking you to be part of this evaluation by completing an online survey. The survey includes 19 questions and should take you less half an hour to finish. Even if you don't use Video Media Technology in your church, your help is needed. I would like to set up a time when I could visit with you by phone. I will be calling in the next week to set up such a time.

Thank you very much in advance for your participation in this survey. I greatly appreciate your help in this study. I will be posting the results of the study on our church's website (www.victorbaptist.org/VMT) this summer.

Sincerely,


Dan Andrews

# The Survey

Please answer the following questions by writing in the blanks provided or circling the appropriate letter. [90]

**Church background:**

1. What is your denomination or affiliation?

Please be as specific as possible, i.e., "American Baptist" rather than just "Baptist".

_____

2. Approximately how large is your congregation? (Number of attenders--not just members--in a normal worship service)
   A. up to 75
   B. 75-125
   C. 125-175
   D. 175-225
   E. 225-300
   F. Over 300

3. Over the past ten years has your congregation:

   A. Increased
   B. Decreased
   C. Remained Steady

4. Over the past ten years has your community:

   A. Increased
   B. Decreased
   C. Remained Steady

5. What is the age breakdown of your congregation? (Percentage of attenders on an average Sunday – please have the total equal 100)
   A. 0 – 18 _____
   B. 18 – 35 _____
   C. 35 – 50 _____
   D. 50 – 64 _____
   E. 65+ _____

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[90] Many of the questions were inspired by a Master's Thesis (Steven Koster, "Visual Media Technology in Christian Worship" (master's thesis, Michigan State University, 2003), 1, accessed March 13, 2014, http://www.calvin.edu/cicw/resources/stories/visual_tech.pdf.) and a subsequent email conversation, March 16-17, 2014.

6. How many years has your church been in existence?

   A. 0 – 10
   B. 10 – 20
   C. 20 – 50
   D. 50 – 99
   E. 100+

7. How old is your church building (in years)?

   A. 0 – 10
   B. 10 – 20
   C. 20 – 50
   D. 50 – 99
   E. 100+

8. What is the age of senior / solo pastor?

   A. 20-35
   B. 36-50
   C. 51-64
   D. 65+

9. How many full-time staff do you have?

   A. 0
   B. 1
   C. 2
   D. 3+

10. How often do you use video projection to present the following in worship?

| | Weekly | Monthly | Quarterly | Yearly | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Text only for singing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. Announcements of church events | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. Sermon Outlines (text only) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. Scripture | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. Still images and text | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| F. Live video cameras on screen | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| G. Music video clips | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| H. Videos made by your congregation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I. Video clips or segments (from TV or Movies) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| J. Other _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

11. How often do you use visual media to achieve this <u>purpose</u> in worship?

| | Weekly | Monthly | Quarterly | Yearly | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Create an environment for worship (i.e. background visuals, music, music video clips) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. Illustrate sermon point (movie clips, pictures, testimonials charts, graphs) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. Encourage participation in worship (lyrics, prayers, readings) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. Convey information to worshippers (welcome messages, announcements promotion of upcoming events) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. Video as main worship leader (recorded sermons, words and music for singing) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

12. How often do you use the following visual media to reach those unable to attend worship?

| | Weekly | Monthly | Quarterly | Yearly | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Worship services streamed live on the internet | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. Worship services recorded and made available on church website | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. Worship services recorded and played on local cable channels | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. Worship services recorded and DVD mailed to shut-ins | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. Other _____ | | | | | |

13. Who is the driving force behind the use of visual media in your worship service, and how strongly do they feel about the use of visual media?

| | Very Important | Somewhat Important | No Opinion Either Way | Somewhat Unimportant | Very Unimportant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Individual or small group with interest | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. Pastor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. Worship Committee | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. Evangelism Committee | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. Church Board | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| F. Supervising Authority (denominational agency) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| G. Church Consultant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| H. Part of our church since beginning | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

14. How important are the following reasons in your use of visual media?

| | | Very Important | Somewhat Important | No Opinion Either Way | Somewhat Unimportant | Very Unimportant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. | The equipment was donated | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | or inexpensive | | | | | |
| B. | Wanted to use the gifts of members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. | Wanted better contemporary relevance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. | Wanted to connect better with the younger families in our community | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. | Wanted to increase outreach or evangelism | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| F. | To explore artistic approaches to worship | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| G. | Wanted to keep up with other churches in our community | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| H. | Other _____ | | | | | |

15. If you do not use visual media how important are the following factors in your choice?

| | | Very Important | Somewhat Important | No Opinion Either Way | Somewhat Unimportant | Very Unimportant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. | No part of our tradition | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. | Majority of the congregation would oppose it | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. | Vocal minority of the congregation would oppose it | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. | No budget | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. | No training or expertise | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| F. | It would require too many scarce resources | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| G. | Would like to, but haven't found the time or resources yet | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| H. | Just no interest | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I. | Other _____ | | | | | |

16. How useful would the following resources be for improving the way you use visual media in your worship?

| | | Very Useful | Somewhat Useful | Un-Certain | Not very Useful | Not at all Useful |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. | Greater access to equipment (money to purchase or donation Of equipment) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. | Direction on best technology to purchase | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. | Training on how to use the technology | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. | More time, volunteers, or staff to do the work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. | Access to affordable pre-production media clips or music to be used | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| F. | Access to affordable high-quality productions to be used without need for modification | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| G. | Access to affordable production services to create media | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| H. | Other _____ | | | | | |

17. How would removing all video media equipment/visual media technology impact your worship service?

A. No impact; we would continue worshipping without missing it.

B. It would change slightly, but not affect our basic worship or the flavor of our organization.

C. It would change somewhat; we would have to make some minor adjustments to our worship, and the flavor of our organization would be somewhat different.

D. It would change significantly; we would have to make definite adjustments to our worship, and the flavor of our organization would be significantly different.

E. It would change substantially; we would have to make major adjustments to our worship, and the flavor of our organization would be substantially different.

18. In worship services that use visual media, approximately what percent of your worship time includes visual media?

    _____ %


19. How many people (staff and/or volunteers) are involved in developing visual media for worship in a given week?

    _____ %


20. How many hours per week are spent by congregation (staff and/or volunteers) each in developing visual media for worship?

    _____

# Appendix B: Raw Data

1. What is your denomination or affiliation? Please be, i.e., "North American Baptist" rather than just "Baptist".

2. In what town is your church located? (for those in the country, what town is your mailing address)

3. Approximately how large is your congregation? (Number of attenders--not just members--in worship service)

|  | Number of Response(s) | Response Ratio |
|---|---|---|
| up to 75 | 21 | 29.1% |
| 75-125 | 15 | 20.8% |
| 125-175 | 14 | 19.4% |
| 175-225 | 10 | 13.8% |
| 225-300 | 6 | 8.3% |
| 300+ | 6 | 8.3% |
| No Responses | 0 | 0.0% |
| **Total** | 72 | 100% |

4. Over the past ten years has your congregation:

|  | Number of Response(s) | Response Ratio |
|---|---|---|
| Increased | 41 | 56.9% |
| Decreased | 13 | 18.0% |
| Remained Steady | 18 | 25.0% |
| No Responses | 0 | 0.0% |
| **Total** | 72 | 100% |

5. Over the past ten years has your community:

|  | Number of Response(s) | Response Ratio |
|---|---|---|
| Increased | 18 | 25.0% |
| Decreased | 18 | 25.0% |
| Remained Steady | 36 | 50.0% |
| No Responses | 0 | 0.0% |
| **Total** | 72 | 100% |

6. How many years has your church been in existence?

|  | Number of Response(s) | Response Ratio |
|---|---|---|
| 0 - 10 | 5 | 6.9% |
| 10 - 20 | 4 | 5.5% |
| 20 - 50 | 20 | 27.7% |
| 50 - 99 | 14 | 19.4% |
| 100+ | 29 | 40.2% |
| No Responses | 0 | 0.0% |
| **Total** | 72 | 100% |

### 7. How old is your church building (in years)?

| | Number of Response(s) | Response Ratio |
|---|---|---|
| 0 - 10 | 11 | 15.2% |
| 10 - 20 | 12 | 16.6% |
| 20 - 50 | 27 | 37.5% |
| 50 - 99 | 15 | 20.8% |
| 100+ | 5 | 6.9% |
| No Responses | 2 | 2.7% |
| **Total** | 72 | 100% |

### 8. What is the age of the senior / solo pastor:

| | Number of Response(s) | Response Ratio |
|---|---|---|
| 20-35 | 11 | 15.2% |
| 36-50 | 32 | 44.4% |
| 51-64 | 26 | 36.1% |
| 65+ | 3 | 4.1% |
| No Responses | 0 | 0.0% |
| **Total** | 72 | 100% |

### 9. How many full-time staff do you have?

| | Number of Response(s) | Response Ratio |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 5 | 6.9% |
| 1 | 35 | 48.6% |
| 2 | 17 | 23.6% |
| 3+ | 14 | 19.4% |
| No Responses | 1 | 1.3% |
| **Total** | 72 | 100% |

### 10. How often do you use video projection to present the following in worship?

1 = Weekly, 2 = Monthly, 3 = Quarterly, 4 = Yearly, 5 = Never

| | Weekly | Monthly | Quarterly | Yearly | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Text only for singing | 61<br>85% | 1<br>1% | 4<br>6% | 0<br>0% | 6<br>8% |
| Announcements of church events | 53<br>74% | 4<br>6% | 4<br>6% | 0<br>0% | 11<br>15% |
| Sermon Outlines (text only) | 41<br>57% | 4<br>6% | 7<br>10% | 2<br>3% | 18<br>25% |
| Scripture | 45<br>63% | 6<br>8% | 4<br>6% | 3<br>4% | 14<br>19% |
| Still images and text | 46<br>64% | 9<br>13% | 8<br>11% | 1<br>1% | 8<br>11% |
| Live video cameras on screen | 11<br>15% | 4<br>6% | 8<br>11% | 8<br>11% | 40<br>56% |
| Music video clips | 11<br>16% | 11<br>16% | 19<br>27% | 7<br>10% | 22<br>31% |
| Videos made by your congregation | 6<br>8% | 4<br>6% | 25<br>35% | 15<br>21% | 22<br>31% |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Video clips or segments | 4 | 16 | 27 | 8 | 16 |
| | 6% | 23% | 38% | 11% | 23% |
| Other | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| | 24% | 12% | 18% | 6% | 41% |

- Denomination announcements
- I just came to this church to take over as the new Sr. Pastor. Under the previous pastor the church greatly declined though he did use multi media. He just didn't have a positive cross over in his sermons being relevant and practical and no leadership direction. GREAT MAN of God just difficult cross over. I come from a 5k member church from San Jose California and so I know the value and how to maximize things to cross over. Say that humbly, I was just blessed enough to experience it.
- Not sure how to answer the first one. We always project text for singing in both services now but not without a background. The background is typically moving, not just still. We use Media Shout and will be moving to Pro Presenter.
- Showing DVD for services
- Use it only for missions
- video from missionaries, denominations promo, Christian movies
- We generally just use video projection for lyrics and sermon outlines.
- We use Power Point projection. If this doesn't qualify as video projection than we rarely to never use video recorded clips of any kind.
- We use ProPresenter on n iMac
- We use text & music from Digital Songs & Hymns quarterly

11. How often do you use video media to achieve this purpose in worship?

1 = Weekly, 2 = Monthly, 3 = Quarterly, 4 = Yearly, 5 = Never

| | Weekly | Monthly | Quarterly | Yearly | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Create an environment for worship (i.e. backgrounds, music video clips) | 39 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 21 |
| | 55% | 4% | 7% | 4% | 30% |
| Illustrate sermon point (movie clips, pictures, testimonials, graphs) | 31 | 14 | 14 | 3 | 9 |
| | 44% | 20% | 20% | 4% | 13% |
| Encourage participation in worship (lyrics, prayers, readings) | 58 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 8 |
| | 82% | 4% | 3% | 0% | 11% |
| Convey information to worshipers (welcome, announcements) | 57 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 7 |
| | 80% | 4% | 6% | 0% | 10% |
| Video as main worship leader (recorded sermons, words & music) | 7 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 53 |
| | 10% | 3% | 3% | 9% | 76% |

- We use PP, but rarely to never do we use video recorded messages or clips.
- We only use video to lead worship once a year, during our annual conference, when we show the service in near-real-time for our worship time.
- We have a worship team that leads music during our worship and the words are projected on screen.

12. How often do you use the following visual media to reach those unable to attend worship?

1 = Weekly, 2 = Monthly, 3 = Quarterly, 4 = Yearly, 5 = Never

| | Weekly | Monthly | Quarterly | Yearly | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Worship services streamed live on the internet | 10 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 59 |
| | 14% | 0% | 1% | 0% | 84% |
| | 34 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 34 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Worship services recorded and made available on church website | 49% | 1% | 1% | 0% | 49% |
| Worship services recorded and played on local cable channels | 4<br>6% | 0<br>0% | 1<br>1% | 0<br>0% | 64<br>93% |
| Worship services recorded and DVD mailed to shut-ins | 11<br>16% | 6<br>9% | 4<br>6% | 1<br>1% | 47<br>68% |
| Other | 4<br>25% | 0<br>0% | 0<br>0% | 0<br>0% | 12<br>75% |

- Audio CD mailed out to shut-ins
- Do radio
- LIVE BROADCAST OF WORSHIP SERVICE ON LOCAL AM RADIO WEEKLY (FOR OVER 50 YEARS)
- Our weekly recordings on the website are audio only (Not video)
- We also sell are sermon on a weekly biases
- We audio record all services and make them available on request. Video is not generally recorded.
- We have a church app that is updated weekly.
- We only offer audio recordings online after the fact- never live streamed.
- We podcast our sermons and make them available via our website
- We were doing digital recordings of worship services before going to the school and posting them weekly on the web-site. We haven't gotten this up and running again yet. Hope to have weekly video in the new facility? We'll see;)?

13. Who is the driving force behind the use of visual media in your worship service, and how strongly do they fell about the use of visual media?

1 = Very Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 3 = No Opinion, 4 = Somewhat unimportant, 5 = Very unimportant

| | Very Important | Somewhat Important | No Opinion | Somewhat Unimportant | Very Unimportant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Individual or small group with interest | 25<br>37% | 17<br>25% | 20<br>30% | 4<br>6% | 1<br>1% |
| Pastor | 50<br>74% | 12<br>18% | 3<br>4% | 3<br>4% | 0<br>0% |
| Worship Committee | 27<br>40% | 20<br>30% | 14<br>21% | 5<br>7% | 1<br>1% |
| Evangelism Committee | 7<br>11% | 13<br>20% | 36<br>55% | 8<br>12% | 2<br>3% |
| Church Board | 14<br>21% | 26<br>39% | 15<br>23% | 9<br>14% | 2<br>3% |
| Supervising Authority (denominational agency) | 3<br>5% | 10<br>15% | 25<br>38% | 14<br>22% | 13<br>20% |
| Church Consultant | 3<br>5% | 2<br>3% | 31<br>48% | 9<br>14% | 19<br>30% |
| Part of our church since beginning | 4<br>6% | 6<br>9% | 25<br>38% | 1<br>2% | 29<br>45% |
| Other | 2<br>15% | 1<br>8% | 7<br>54% | 0<br>0% | 3<br>23% |

- As a part time secretary I put together the visual Power Points for announcements and worship lyrics. I would be inclined to "amp up" the worship, but my limited involvement doesn't make that easy. The worship team never has videos to share on Sunday mornings to stimulate worship. They focus on instrumental and vocal performances.

- Children ministries
- Have a full time Media Director and worship pastor that drives the use of tech
- It's our pastor, working with a small group of talented, motivated people.
- Last 20 years, or so
- Mission's Committee - Mission's update
- more common in curriculum, more viable media tool
- We have a Audio/Video & I.T. Team that works with this every Sunday - they are a very important part of our visual media

14. How important are the following reasons in your use of visual media?

1 = Very Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 3 = No Opinion, 4 = Somewhat unimportant, 5 = Very unimportant

|  | Very Important | Somewhat Important | No Opinion | Somewhat Unimportant | Very Unimportant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The equipment was donated or inexpensive | 3 | 14 | 9 | 24 | 17 |
|  | 4% | 21% | 13% | 36% | 25% |
| Wanted to use the gifts of members | 18 | 30 | 6 | 9 | 3 |
|  | 27% | 45% | 9% | 14% | 5% |
| Wanted better contemporary relevance | 28 | 24 | 4 | 10 | 1 |
|  | 42% | 36% | 6% | 15% | 1% |
| Wanted to connect better with the younger families in our community | 30 | 22 | 5 | 8 | 2 |
|  | 45% | 33% | 7% | 12% | 3% |
| Wanted to increase outreach or evangelism | 24 | 24 | 12 | 5 | 2 |
|  | 36% | 36% | 18% | 7% | 3% |
| Wanted to explore artistic approaches to worship | 15 | 19 | 13 | 14 | 6 |
|  | 22% | 28% | 19% | 21% | 9% |
| Wanted to keep up with other churches in our community | 2 | 10 | 11 | 19 | 24 |
|  | 3% | 15% | 17% | 29% | 36% |
| Other | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
|  | 25% | 13% | 25% | 0% | 38% |

- Many of those involved don't know/understand the technology. Leadership has little desire to be technologically up to date and don't know how to use many basic features. New volunteers have shown interest and younger people are getting involved making this transition easier.
- We wanted to keep our members more engaged in the worship service.
- I use visual media to illustrate my sermons with appropriate media (pictures, maps, etc.) to help people grasp the point I am trying to make so they can understand the point of the Word of God in the sermon.
- Visual media is not used
- Wanted to aid in the worship of our Lord, Jesus Christ - A/V is used to better serve our people to the end of glorifying God.

15. If you do not use visual media how important are the following factors in your choice?

1 = Very Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 3 = No Opinion, 4 = Somewhat unimportant, 5 = Very unimportant

|  | Very Important | Somewhat Important | No Opinion | Somewhat Unimportant | Very Unimportant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not part of our tradition | 1 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 2 |
|  | 7% | 21% | 43% | 14% | 14% |
| Majority of the congregation would oppose it | 1 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 2 |
|  | 7% | 21% | 50% | 7% | 14% |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Vocal minority of the congregation would oppose it | 2 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 2 |
| | 14% | 0% | 50% | 21% | 14% |
| No budget | 2 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| | 15% | 31% | 46% | 8% | 0% |
| No training or expertise | 4 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| | 31% | 15% | 46% | 8% | 0% |
| It would require too many scarce resources | 1 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| | 10% | 20% | 60% | 10% | 0% |
| Would like to, but haven't found the time or resources yet | 3 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 0 |
| | 25% | 0% | 67% | 8% | 0% |
| Just no interest | 2 | 0 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| | 17% | 0% | 75% | 8% | 0% |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| | 14% | 0% | 86% | 0% | 0% |

- We do use media
- We use visual media so I answered "No Opinion"
- I am very hesitant to use videos in the service from a theological viewpoint, in that I believe that the focus should be on the spoken Word.

16. How useful would the following resources be for improving the way you use visual media in your worship?

1 = Very Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 3 = No Opinion, 4 = Somewhat unimportant, 5 = Very unimportant

| Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option. | Very Important | Somewhat Important | No Opinion | Somewhat Unimportant | Very Unimportant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Greater access to equipment (money to purchase or donation of equipment) | 18 | 30 | 3 | 14 | 2 |
| | 27% | 45% | 4% | 21% | 3% |
| Direction on best technology to purchase | 21 | 29 | 4 | 11 | 2 |
| | 31% | 43% | 6% | 16% | 3% |
| Training on how to use the technology | 29 | 22 | 5 | 10 | 1 |
| | 43% | 33% | 7% | 15% | 1% |
| More time, volunteers, or staff to do the work | 35 | 23 | 3 | 5 | 1 |
| | 52% | 34% | 4% | 7% | 1% |
| Access to affordable pre-production media clips or music to be used | 15 | 30 | 7 | 15 | 0 |
| | 22% | 45% | 10% | 22% | 0% |
| Access to affordable high-quality productions to be used without need for modification | 9 | 14 | 33 | 7 | 2 |
| | 14% | 22% | 51% | 11% | 3% |
| Access to affordable production services to create media | 16 | 23 | 11 | 12 | 3 |
| | 25% | 35% | 17% | 18% | 5% |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| | 0% | 0% | 75% | 0% | 25% |

- More time out of schedule