AN EXPANDED AND GENEROUS TABLE:
IS HYBRID WORSHIP IN YOUR FUTURE?

There are no silver linings from the COVID19 Pandemic. Too many people have died, too many people are now struggling with day-to-day survival, and too many people's futures have been left in turmoil and doubt. This season in the life of humanity has been simply put, awful.

At the same time, during this time, churches have stepped into spaces that many would have never imagined they could. Congregations have answered the call to fight for social justice and institutional accountability; they have given resources of time, space, and prayer; and they have served, fed, and clothed those in need. In a time when all of our actions have been magnified through the lens of the pandemic, many churches have adapted in amazing and faithful ways.

This shift may not be more evident in any other area than worship. Communities have adapted to online spaces for worship, meetings, pastoral care, conferences, and more. It has not always been easy and not everyone thrives in this setting, but congregations have, across denominations, risen to the challenge in diverse and creative ways.

While there is no single, best way for people to gather for worship, as the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel begins to shine and the conversation about "going back" begins in earnest, the question for many congregations is this, "Once online worship is no longer the only option for you and your congregation, will you all have the willingness, energy, and capacity to birth, curate, nurture, and sustain a long-term digital space?" or more succinctly put, "What now?"

THE BIG QUESTION

"Once online worship is no longer the only option for you and your congregation, will you all have the willingness, energy, and capacity to birth, curate, nurture, and sustain a long-term digital space?" or more succinctly put, "What now?"

@BREYESCHOW

The decisions that are made about worship in the coming months must not be taken lightly but must be approached with communal discernment, reflective honesty, and faithful practicality. For those with inklings and dreams about hybrid worship, it is my hope that the questions I offer will help you and your leadership to understand different options, assess congregational willingness, energy, and capacity, and make faithful choices that will best equip you for the future.

Assumptions made by Bruce...
- "Church" is more than worship, but worship is still central to most congregations.
- Context matters and every leader must assess and translate for their particular spaces.
- How congregations meet for committee meetings and other small gatherings will be forever changed, but the desire for worship to return to "what it was before" is strong.
- "Hybrid Worship" requires much more energy and resources than many congregations have, so there may be more effective options than hybrid worship for these congregations.
- Worship is not a competition, numbers are only a measurement, and engagement will be evaluated differently in every space.

WORSHIP OPTIONS DESCRIPTIONS

WORSHIP OPTIONS	General Description	Opportunities	Limitations	Capacities
In-Person Only	What most churches did before the pandemic, only meeting in person at a geographic location.	"We get to see one another face-to-face again!"	"Because I do not live in the area, I won't be able to worship with you anymore."	What we used to do and we already do this well. Some staff adjustments for COVID19 precautions.
Zoom/Remote Only	Worship on Zoom, Meet, etc.: a remote, interactive, and in-the-moment online worship experience.	"Yes, my kids, my mother, and I can still worship together."	"It's been hard not to see people every Sunday and I will miss that."	A few upgrades for sound and cameras, but we already do this well.
Streaming	Sanctuary centered where remote participants watch others worship. Some online interaction.	"Wow, so many more people are watching." and "I get to watch worship whenever I want to."	"I miss being able to interact with everyone else at worship."	Cameras, sound, and technical staff for streaming.
Hybrid	In-person or remote, a service where people have essentially the same worship experience.	"We are all still around the same table!"	"Whoa, this is a ton of work." "How will we create a space where everyone has essentially the same experience?	Cameras, screens, sounds, the configuration of space, staff for technological support. Could use https://www.altarlive.com/

BRUCE REYES-CHOW coaching

© 2021 Bruce Reyes-Chow

In-Person and Zoom	Two completely separate services, each able to focus on and leverage its own unique setting.	"We already do both services really well, so this will give us a chance to reach more people."	"But I want to be able to get to know everyone."	See "In-Person Only" and "Zoom Only above.

WORSHIP OPTIONS ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

FUTURE WORSHIP OPTIONS	Initial Reactions and Questions	Why Yes? Benefits and Opportunities	Why Not? Limitations and Losses	Staff/ Volunteer Willingness, and Capacity	Staffing and Logistic Adjustments	Space and Technology Upgrades
In-Person Only						
Zoom/Remote Only						
Streaming						

AN EXPANDED AND GENEROUS TABLE

Hybrid					
In-Person and Zoom					

FIVE WAYS TO CREATE HYBRID SPACE

WAYS TO CREATE HYBRID WORSHIP	VISION, DREAMS, AND HOPES	CONGREGATION OBSTACLES	STAFFING OBSTACLES	DIRECTIONS AND STRATEGIES
REIMAGINE Resist simple replicating what has always been done: ritual, proclamation, children, music, guests, etc.				
DECENTER In language, content, and structure resist making geographic proximity the ideal experience of worship.				

INVITE Invite remote participants into leadership in order for systems to be changed by those who it benefits.			
ASSESS Evaluating the willingness, energy, and expertise of staff and volunteers. Adjust and add as needed.			
ENGAGE Create a community where remote folks will be missed if they are no longer able to regularly participate.			

HYBRID TECHNOLOGY CHECKLIST

HYBRID WORSHIP TECHNOLOGY	CURRENT SETUP	NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS	STAFFING CAPACITY	FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
SOUND How will you make sure that all participants receive quality and comparable sound quality?				

AN EXPANDED AND GENEROUS TABLE

VISUAL How will you avoid "watching worship" and create a space where all feel present in the space.				
INTERNET How will you broadcast, interact, and manage the technologies of hybrid worship? www.altarlive.com				
SPACE What physical changes need to be made to the physical space in order to create common space?				
POST How will you edit and share video and audio recordings in a way that draws folks back to the community?				

ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

[Leadership Survey](#)
(Open and Immediately make a copy)

Survey Page 1: Demographics

Survey Page 2: Initial Background and Definitions

Survey Page 3: Initial Responses and Reactions
- Long-form:
- Scale: Congregational desires, openness, resistance.
- Scale: Personal Preference
- Scale: Initial option for the future of the church.

Survey Page 4-8: for each option
- Congregation and Culture: Obstacles and Opportunities
- Scale: Congregational Willingness
- Staffing and Volunteers: Obstacles and Opportunities
- Scale: Staff and Volunteer Capacity
- Technology and Resources: Obstacles and Opportunities
- Other Thoughts

Survey Page 9: Final Questions
- Scale and Ranking: Ability to do it.
- Scale and Ranking: Impact on the world.
- Scale and Ranking: Growth of community.
- Scale and Ranking: Overall Faith and Risk.
- Long-form: What do you still need to know, learn, explore?
- Long-form: Any Last thoughts

BRUCE REYES-CHOW coaching

© 2021 Bruce Reyes-Chow