Technology in Worship

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I. INTRODUCTION - THE PLACE OF TECHNOLOGY IN WORSHIP

A. Why would we want to use technology in worship?
1. It's unavoidable (even Bibles and hymnbooks are a form of technology).
2. To connect with the world around/within us:
   a) Len Sweet: TGIF Culture (Twitter / Google / Instagram / Facebook).
   b) We are, and always have been, media-driven people.
3. To follow the biblical mandate to "become all things to all people" (1 Cor. 9:20-22).
   a) Psalm 22.
   b) Acts 17:22-23.

B. Where does technology fit into worship?
1. Three facets of worship:
   a) Purpose.
   b) Practices.
   c) Packaging.
2. Technology falls squarely into the realm of packaging.
   a) Which means that it is there to enhance and beautify our worship - to serve it.
   b) It can help to make our services communicate better, and have a greater "attractiveness".
   c) But, it must never become a focus of/in worship.

C. Limits and dangers of using technology in worship:
1. Using technology for its own sake - Making the packaging the purpose.
   a) "Millennials aren't leaving the church because they don't find the cool factor there. They're leaving the church because they don't find Jesus there!" - Rachel Held Evans.
2. Using technology we aren't equipped to use - The "best" equipment is not always best.
   a) Eg. Digital versus analogue sound desks.
3. Allowing technology to rob us of value - Neglecting to think through the implications.

II. USING TECHNOLOGY IN WORSHIP

A. Primary uses of technology:
1. Four "types" of technology:
   a) Communication - Adds strength and clarity to message.
   b) Presentation - Creates "atmosphere," enhances participation and aesthetics.
   c) Connection (Social media, SMS, Web) - Connects with people, builds community.
   d) Personal Convenience - Paperless ministry.
2. Keep the purpose and platform in mind at all times.

B. Basics for technology use:
1. Know your equipment - and rehearse how you will use it until you are sure.
2. Use it with purpose - not just because you have it.
3. Ensure basic aesthetic sensitivity to avoid technology getting in the way.

C. Principles for using technology well in worship:
1. Marshall McLuhan - "The medium is the message."

a) Keep the "message" front and centre, and ensure the technological message is aligned.
b) Less really is more!
2. Do not allow technology to move us into a new version of Gnosticism:
    a) Avoid becoming too focussed on people's heads - engage the whole person.
    b) Use technology to tell or enhance narratives, or to facilitate connection.
    c) Use technology as a language - different people speak differently:
        (1) The elderly require slower transitions and more stable images than younger people.
    d) Allow technology to act as symbol, metaphor and image, more than just word.
    e) Make your technology part of your ritual expression, engaging all the senses.

III. Conclusion

A. There is no church that does not use some form of technology.
1. What is acceptable in one context/time is not necessarily so in others.
    a) So be sensitive to the people you are reaching/leading.
2. Technology can be a gift or a curse.
    a) But, with sensitive and careful use, it can enhance and deepen worship in wonderful ways.
B. Make your technology use a ministry - not an add on.
1. If you are going to use technology, do it well - budget, train, evaluate.
2. Get the right people doing the right jobs:
    a) Don't get tone deaf people to mix sound.
    b) Don't get your youth group to run the church's Facebook page.
3. Always measure your use against your vision, values, mission, and identity as a community.