

Multicultural Education

Research Article

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THE NECESSITY OF UTILIZATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CHURCH GROWTH: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP IN USA

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ABSTRACT

We are in the fourth industrial revolution, sometimes known as the age of intelligence. Hyperconnectivity serves as its foundation, while big data and artificial intelligence are its driving forces in the digital world. We have access to a wealth of knowledge and information thanks to social networking service (SNS) and the Internet. Particularly after the COVID-19 broke out, virtually all Christian churches around the world have embraced online digital worship and a variety of online learning and training opportunities. This is due to the fact that using social media and digital technologies to contact people in this postmodern age is the most straightforward option. The goal of this study is to demonstrate that, in order to more effectively spread the gospel to people around the globe, churches need to thoroughly assess and enhance their online ministry. The University Bible Fellowship in Chicago, Illinois, will be specifically examined as part of this paper, along with recommendations for how things might be done better in the future.

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Church, discipleship, Gospel, UBF, UDTSM

Article History:

Received: 19th Feb 2023
Accepted: 27th Mar 2023
Published: 15th Apr 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

Christianity is a religion of evangelism. The founder of Christianity, Jesus, says, “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus commanded his disciples to go all over the world and spread the gospel through discipleship (Choi, 2023; Yang & Chung, 2023). In this order, disciples took care of other disciples, and those disciples took care of other new disciples (Kim & Chung, 2021; Yang, 2010; Go et al., 2021). Christianity is now acknowledged as the religion with the highest number of adherents in the world due to the heritage and history of its disciple-making ministry.

At the end of the 19th century, Western missionaries came to Korea and preached the gospel, and Korea experienced the history of church revival to such an extent that about 20% of the current South Korean population has become Protestants (Chung, 1987; Chung, 1988; Seo et al., 2021). Missionaries built schools and hospitals to meet Koreans (Kim & Chung, 2021; Kim et al., 2022a; Jeong & Chung, 2022). Children who had not been able to receive normal school education due to poverty flocked to the mission schools and received modern democratic education based on the Bible, and patients who were waiting for death from tuberculosis or Hansen's disease were treated and were able to start a new life (Seok et al., 2020; Jeong et al., 2021). They learned how to become disciples of Jesus from missionaries and laid the foundation for the miraculous revival of the Korean Church (Kim et al., 2022b).

One of these mission's outcomes was the birth of the University Bible Fellowship (UBF), a Protestant

Christian community, in South Korea (Chung et al., 2021). In 1961, UBF was founded in Gwangju, South Korea, by American Presbyterian missionary Sarah Barry (1930–present) and Korean Pastor Samuel Chang-Woo Lee (1931–2002). In the early 1970s, UBF began missionary work in developed nations including the United States and Germany (Chung, 1991; Chung, 1992; Chung, 2003; Kim et al., 2023). There is currently a church serving as the organization's Headquarters in Chicago, USA, and UBF has branches in many of the nation's major cities (Barry, 2007; Seon & Chung, 2021; Seok et al., 2021). Before the COVID-19 epidemic, about 3,000 members often attended Sunday UBF USA services. Prior to 2019, the Sunday 11:00 AM service was attended by close to 300 members of the Chicago Headquarters Church, but as of April 2023, only about 250 people still attend face-to-face worship services. Average about 50 UBF members attend online home worship services.

In this study, it will be argued that the "Use of Digital Technology and Social Media (UDTSM)" should be strongly advocated for all churches, including UBF (Choi, 2023). So, as part of the methodology of this study, the precise reasons for this use will be looked at, followed by an explanation of the current state of UBF UDTSM in USA, and a recommendation of enhanced UDTSM tactics for further UBF ministry. This paper also makes the case that traditional practices like in-person worship and various forms of discipleship instruction that have been put in place over time should never be abandoned. This means that UBF is by no means a "cyber church" and should not be regarded as that kind of church in the future as well. This is not because we are starting a new "digital church," but rather because we are actively in support of UBF preaching the gospel of Christ and attempting discipleship through UDTSM in the digital age. These new endeavors are necessary for pastoral and missional reasons in our postmodern lives, especially in light of the COVID-19 problem. It is also essential to employ digital ways to reach out to non-believers who had already embraced the digital era. This study primarily aims to enhance UBF's future ministry, but it also has a more general goal of motivating all Christian churches to evaluate their present ministries and develop a plan for the future. In order to demonstrate how UDTSM has been successfully used by Christian churches other than UBF, we shall provide a number of examples.

2. THE NECESSITY OF UDTSM FOR UBF MINISTRY

2.1. Go

Any evangelist must make contact with people in order for the Gospel to spread. University students are the target audience for UBF's goal, thus getting in touch with them requires a campus visit (Yang, 2010; Lee, 2020). It should be emphasized, though, that there is now also internet interaction available in addition to face-to-face communication. Campus younger generations see technology as a way of life. For them, social media and digital technologies are accepted as essential for productive communication in their culture. Churches must go where people are – online – if they are to effectively share the Gospel and guide Jesus into discipleship.

2.2. Make Disciples

As discipleship does not happen by sprinkling individuals with biblical information, dialogue is fundamentally important (Chung, 1995; Chung, 2001; Kim, 2017; Kim, 2021). When we collaborate to improve lives by using the Bible's teachings, we are doing discipleship ministry. Digital and social media platforms can be used to encourage spiritual discipleship rather than just encouraging potential Christians to physically join a church. Instead of simply using social media and other platforms to invite people to different church activities or programs, we may use these tools to invite them to conversations, Bible studies, and other life-changing experiences.

2.3. All Nations

Some people might believe that true discipleship can only take place in person, not online. It is generally accepted that face-to-face, in-person ministry is necessary for discipleship ministry (Chung, 2016). Nonetheless, many people were unprepared when the churches' doors shut. If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it is that we must develop plans for those who cannot or will not enter the church building but yet need Jesus. Go into the entire globe and share the gospel with all of creation, commands Jesus (Mark 16: 15). Going into the world in the twenty-first century involves making intentional posts on social media sites like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and others with the goal of making disciples of Jesus.

2.4. Apostle Paul's Distance Hybrid Church Model

It is clear from an examination of the apostle Paul's ministry in the New Testament that his efforts reflected a hybrid approach. By his sermons (Acts 13-17) and epistles, Paul exemplified both face-to-face and written ministry. To instruct, motivate, and keep in touch with his disciples, he made extensive use of the technology available at the time. Paul's time used letter writing as the technology. For today's church leaders, Paul's letters offer a biblical and theological framework for embracing hybrid and online learning (Colin, 2022).

2.5. Dave Adamson's Digital Discipleship Ministry Model

Adamson's MetaChurch strategy entails engaging with individuals both online and offline in order to introduce them to a church community (Adamson, 2022: 115). He argues that more and more people will establish their first contact with a church online in the future. It implies that new connections to churches could be made through Facebook or Instagram. Also, they might view a Tik Tok video or a live YouTube clip. They might spend around 60 seconds on YouTube Short before moving on to a 4-minute tweet-length sermon clip, a 37-minute sermon in its entirety, and then a complete sermon series on the website. Before they enter the actual church building, any of these things could happen (Adamson, 2022: 115). We wholeheartedly concur with Adamson's assessment of these potential actions.

2.6. Hannah Denney's Model

One of the challenges of social media outreach is getting the audience to notice the social media page, particularly when a ministry is just starting and has hardly any followers. For prospective freshmen and/or transfers, the university may already have a page on Instagram (Denney, 2020). Another way to look at it is as having a survey with a student and following them on Instagram. It can be assumed that a student is interested if they follow back on Instagram. It can imply that they are interested in learning more about the ministry. The ministry must then come up with strategies for keeping in touch with students who have shown an interest. These students can be linked up with student ministry leaders. Denney says:

Hi! Congratulations on graduating high school this year! We are so excited to welcome you and are looking forward to when we all get to be in person again. We are excited to announce a new way for you to connect with current students we are calling Coffee Meetups! We'll pair you with a current student to talk about college, the town's social life, or anything else, and you can get a free Starbucks coffee on us! To participate, fill out this short questionnaire below, and we will try to pair you with someone with a similar major or interest! These meetings can be done online over Zoom or in person! It's never too early to start making friends (Denney, 2020).

A few of the team's leaders might follow up with the students and have a coffee chat with them. They might then be guided to Jesus in this manner, and hopefully begin to gradually develop a gospel faith.

When using social media to engage with students on a college campus, Denney's Model for College Ministry demonstrates a very practical strategy. Denney digs deep into college students' lives, locating them in the digital sphere, bringing them out into the open via social media, and enhancing their lives in Jesus. Other discipleship ministries focusing on campus missions, such as UBF, can use this practical experience to enlist, engage with, and lead the students to Jesus and discipleship. Campus ministry leaders need to understand how to adjust and modify their methods in order to connect with students and succeed in achieving their main objective: proclaiming the Gospel. This plan needs to be put into action, and the campus ministry must work closely with a good team of leaders who are really interested in the student ministry. Also, in order to gain support and assistance from the institution, the ministry leaders must establish a strong rapport with the faculty. Joining the campus ministry as a professor or student who is formally recognized on campus and has an advisor is one of the finest ways to achieve this goal. In actuality, the first American missionaries for UBF who immigrated from Korea in the 1970s attended prestigious colleges in the country, earned doctorates, worked as professors at nearby universities, and were in charge of the UBF American campus revival ministry. Professor Paul Hong from Toledo serves as an excellent example of how this lovely UBF heritage is still relevant today (MSLBC, 2022: 304-305).

2.7. Jason Moore's Both/And Hybrid Worship Model

Moving from a monologue to a conversation with the congregation is possible with the Both/And worship approach. Prior to the pandemic, traditional worship was typically one-sided, focused on the pastor rather than the congregation. Chat, Zoom, messaging, and other communication tools are now available for use during worship. The following two technology examples, provided by Jason Moore, illustrate what is possible in terms of dialogue. First, Digital Greeting at the beginning of worship goes like this:

Friends, we're so glad to be gathered this morning for worship both here in the building and online. For those of you here in person, I'm going to ask you to do something we didn't use to do in worship. Take out your phones. Mute them and navigate to our Facebook livestream. For those of you online, you are already one step ahead of us – that's how you are seeing us right now. Navigate to the chat and take a moment to greet one another right now, let's pass the peace of Christ in these moments from wherever we are worshipping from.”⁹⁹They can use QR codes in print form or on the screen to help people navigate to the Facebook or YouTube page quickly. As the congregation becomes familiarized with this ritual, it will become easier and easier as it goes. The beauty of this dialogue is that it allows everyone to participate regardless of where they are worshipping. It also eliminates a lot of the physical contact that used to be associated with this time of worship (Moore, 2022: 86).

Second, Real-Time Reflections and Questions. Moore analyzes a passage from a collection of inquiries titled "questions for God." People are first invited to submit their queries in real-time both in person and online as part of the service. These inquiries can have a significant impact on the sermon the pastor will deliver a bit later. The pastor says that congregants can text, talk, or write their inquiries on a slip of paper and give them to an usher who is walking around the aisles. A preacher would deftly address each query while leading worship. Everyone can take part in the service in this way. The congregation's dispersed worshippers are influencing the service's content. Conversation turns listeners into participants and converts onlookers into online believers. By doing so, they produce moments of worship that transcend the location where people are worshipping and the equipment used to facilitate them (Moore, 2020: 87).

In addition to the above two aspects, Moore contends that talking to people at home in real time while the room is occupied with something else is another method to engage the online audience with a different moment. Someone on camera may be speaking straight to the audience watching at home when anything in the room does not translate. This person may not be addressing the room. A time of communion would be an excellent illustration. When a pastor is leading the communion service (setup), the mic is turned on in the room's speakers. Once the pastor is done calling people to come forward to receive communion, they switch off the sound system in the space and leave the mic on for online. The pastor will then address the internet audience directly while gazing into the camera. This could involve a variety of discussions, such as how to take communion at home, what it means and why people do it, and sharing the details of one's first communion (Moore, 2022: 87).

3. CURRENT STATUS OF UBF MINISTRY IN ILLINOIS, USA

3.1. Website of the UBF Global Mission Headquarters: ubf.org

Ubf.org is a gorgeously designed website with a wealth of information. Pictures of recent UBF operations around the world are displayed on the website's front page, along with a number of announcements about global mission activity (Choi, 2023: 88). An online mission support page featuring campus mission YouTube channels can be found under "UBF Online Support." These platforms for sharing the gospel and studying the Bible have been developed by UBF missionaries and local leaders. They invite viewers to visit, subscribe to, and "like" these YouTube channels in order to support their YouTube ministries (Choi, 2023: 88-89).

On YouTube, UBF TV has been available since December 28, 2019. Almost 70,000 people have watched the channel as of the date of this report. News pieces produced by volunteer workers are included. They offer webinars, testimonies, ministry news, and other things like broadcast forums. When noteworthy events happen, UBF TV broadcasts them. There are more than 1,000 subscribers right now (Choi, 2023: 89).

3.2. Resources for UBF's Digital Ministry

Ubf.org on the "Resources" part of Online Support's website (<https://ubf.org/onlineresdetail/6>), there is a video that explains how to establish an online ministry on Facebook for Covid-19. Another video explains how to utilize Facebook to invite students to Bible studies and group gatherings.

"UBF Bible Reading Support" is made to support faithful Bible reading (<https://ubf.org/online/biblereading>). This program encourages us to make it a habit to read the Bible on our smartphones. The services include the Bible Reading Plan, Reading and Writing Daily Bread, Different Bible Resources, Personal Prayer Diary, Bible Rating Service, and Voice Service.

YouTube channel for Tent-makers, "A Life Following God's Word" is the name of this YouTube channel project (<https://ubf.org/online/tentmakers>). Young people find personal testimonies to be more compelling and engaging. Missionaries and local leaders share their testimonials about what Jesus has done in their lives on this YouTube channel.

"Bible Study Free" is one of the initiatives the UBF Online Mission Support Team started to assist the digital ministry, particularly during the pandemic that has affected the entire world (<https://ubf.org/online/biblestudyfree>). Simply put, this website serves as a platform for students and Biblical teachers to arrange Bible lessons. How it works: As students register for Bible study, the online mission support team thoughtfully matches them with mentors who are Bible instructors and missionaries.

Archives of online forums and webinars. Three separate languages have online forum archives: English, Korean, and Spanish. The members of these forums can learn more about a variety of topics to help them better understand the ministry, including "Restoration of spirituality for mission life," "Understanding and Adaptation of Foreign Culture: Gospel, Culture, and Mission Strategy," and "The Spiritual Education for Children and Second-Generation Missionaries at House Church Ministry" (Choi, 2023: 92-93). The subjects, dates, and times of the forums, as well as the intended audience, panelists, and moderators, are made public in advance. For those who require copies of the presentation resources, they are attached here.

Mission Committee for Technology and Social Media. An "IT/Social Media Mission Committee" with a chairperson has been established inside the UBF Global Mission Department (<https://ubf.org/wmd/itsns>). We cannot overstate the value of IT and social media in the modern world, it says. For instance, Gen Z students in their early 20s, the primary demographic for our purpose, spend more than 6 hours per day online via smartphones and are continuously interacting with others on social media. Via social media, they receive a lot of news and information. Creating quality content for social media campaigns is becoming more and more important. A comprehensive IT and social media mission strategy will be developed by this committee.

Online worship service for UBF North America (Choi, 2023: 95-96). When the Covid-19 pandemic began, the UBF North America has seen a tremendous surge in online worship attendance. Prior to Covid-19, those who listened to Sunday worship messages that had been recorded on UBF websites were those who were already physically present at the services and were doing further study on the lessons for themselves or for their Bible students. Since the lockdown was imposed in March 2020, every UBF member has been required to attend online, and later hybrid worship services that are both in-person and online after the lockdown was discharged. Nonetheless, many of the regular physical attendants who had been online since the pandemic began remained online, particularly those who had children. Based on the Covid-19 constraints put in place in each jurisdiction, each UBF chapter in North America has created its own style of worship services. Some small UBF chapters returned to in-person worship services because they could not continue to offer the hybrid option owing to a lack of manpower to administer it or simply because it was their preference.

3.3. UBF USA Online Educational Programs

The "Emerging Leaders Cohort" (ELC) comes first. The Cohort places special emphasis on the triune, relational, and holistic components of Christian discipleship. To be "triune" is to develop and demonstrate the grace of taking part in the God-glorifying, Christ-centered, and Spirit-filled kingdom of the triune God. The word "relational" denotes the need to strengthen the relationship facets of the Christian life with God, the church, and the wider community. According to our perception of the need for a wider understanding of salvation, a wider view of God's mission, and a balanced personal existence, "holistic" refers to developing a person's entire life and ministry (<https://ubf.org/edudept/onlineschool>).

Second, UBF HQ Online School. This UBF leadership online school has a strong continuing education curriculum to help and prepare leaders, including chapter directors, to be obedient and capable ministers of Christ. It is essential for UBF Headquarters to create high-quality education and training programs that are timely, relevant, and efficient to support local UBF ministries given the special needs, time restrictions, and resource limitations of our leaders. With an emphasis on UBF mission, vision, and core values, the UBF online education program was created with this objective in mind and was intended for leaders to complete fundamental courses online that are roughly similar to a condensed Master of Divinity (M. Div.) degree at a theological institution. Its goal is to create leaders who need a solid biblical and theological background, strong leadership skills, and a character like Christ. UBF plans to create a wide variety of courses for mission field leaders in languages other than English in the long run (such Korean and others). Their immediate objective is to provide an English core program (<https://ubf.org/edudept/onlineschool>).

Third, a UBF Headquarters online cohort called “Women Encouraging Women” (WEW) was established to support, motivate, and empower female leaders in North America whose ages range from 18 to 55. This cohort consists of tracks covering a variety of topics that meet for 1.5 hours each session and last between 8 and 10 weeks. The optimal cohort size would be 10 participants who commit to the entire track. Through discussions, companionship, prayer, and moments of instruction, they aspire to forge lasting connections throughout their time together (<https://ubf.org/articledetail/17131/Women%20encouraging%20women>).

Fourth, “Vision Academy for Next Generation Online (VANGO).” In order to prepare young people for their healthy Christian living and for learning servanthip in the Lord, the VANGO seeks to provide biblically based courses that assist them in dealing with topics and challenges that are practical to their lives. Marriage, careers, evangelism, social justice, loneliness, depression, personal finance, and the meaning of life are some of the subjects explored in these classes. These issues are also among the real difficulties that young people face. Young members can communicate with peers from around the world on a learning platform provided by the Academy, especially those who are in small ministries. The principal teachers for the courses are seasoned experts who can add interest to the lectures by bringing in additional guest lecturers (<https://academy.visionubf.org/>).

4. THE CENTRAL ILLINOIS UBF CHAPTER (CIUC) AS A MODEL FOR IMPLEMENTING UDTSM

4.1. Brief History of CIUC

Since 2007, Dr. John Lee and his wife, Becky Lee, have pioneered the CIUC. Dr. Lee moved to the city to practice medicine while also serving as a disciple-maker in the UBF student ministry near the University of Illinois at Springfield. He and his wife initially went to campuses to invite students to Sunday worship services and Bible studies. Although progress was initially slow, Dr. Lee persisted in praying for God's work there. The ministry gradually expanded until it could include UBF family members as well as an average of 30 student participants (Choi, 2023: 102). Furthermore, the ministry was reinforced when a second generation missionary couple, David A. Choi and his wife, Jieun Heo (Physician) moved from Chicago to join the ministry in 2016.

4.2. Beginning Stage for Utilizing UDTSM

By holding their worship services on Sundays on campus, CIUC's ministry stands out from those of other UBF chapters. The University of Illinois at Springfield determines their meeting times and the location of their meetings. They had to physically post information about their worship session in the halls of the dorms and public spaces, or they could use the school's announcements page, before fully embracing social media and digital technology (Choi, 2023: 102-106).

These techniques had several flaws. The announcement page, in this example, only appeared on the day of the event, which was Sunday morning. If students slept in or neglected to check the message board, it would be very simple for them to miss the notification. It took a lot of effort and was not very successful at reaching the students to post advertisements in the buildings.

In order to publicize events, Dr. Lee came up with a plan to use social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. They were able to use social media to personalize their ads and make them more appealing. They were also able to send out information about their events a few days beforehand. Also, there was typically space for meetings on Sunday mornings prior to the epidemic as long as schools were in session. But, when the

university closed for the summer and winter breaks or for holidays, they were obliged to either join another ministry, gather in homes, or even cancel service in favor of a straightforward Bible study or discussion. Several students avoided gathering in houses because they believed it to be unreliable worship.

The ministry's leaders began using digital technology to communicate with students during the epidemic when the campus was closed and no meeting rooms were made available for their use. As they were unable to meet in person, they chose to record their service in advance and post it on YouTube, Facebook, and Vimeo for students to view. Despite their best efforts, Dr. Lee and his wife discovered that this was not the most fruitful approach. Also, students were dispersed and watched the service on their own schedules, so they had no idea who was watching. Lee came to the conclusion that there was no connection, community, or interaction with the students.

Then Lee made the decision to offer a live Sunday service via Zoom. This made a difference right away. While less than 10 people typically joined their recorded services and stayed the entire time, with a predetermined time and platform to meet as closely as possible to an in-person service under the given conditions, an average of 30 individuals would join their Zoom Sunday service sessions. Former members and students who had moved or graduated were given the opportunity to reconnect with their ministry during Sunday services. The people who had relocated but were unable to join another ministry for whatever reason benefited the most from this.

When the campus reopened after the pandemic subsided and allowed in-person services to resume, they made the decision to use a hybrid model because it was such an amazing experience to be able to use digital technology to reconnect with former student leaders even though they were hundreds of miles away. Zoom attendees were given the opportunity to actively participate in the worship service by leading in prayer, reading from the Bible, or serving as the presider in addition to being given the opportunity to move beyond the role of spectator.

4.3. Fruits of UDTSM in CIUC

Prior to the pandemic, Facebook was their primary social networking site. The platform with the most active users was Facebook since it was simple to use. Yet after speaking with students, they discovered that while Facebook was the most widely used social media website among all users, younger students preferred using other sites for networking and communication. Before, during, and after the pandemic, many students preferred sharing their Snapchat ID rather than their Facebook account or even their phone number. This led Dr. Lee and his UBF coworkers to use additional well-known social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram. They also significantly boosted their use of digital technologies, getting to know Zoom, YouTube, Vimeo, PayPal, CashApp, and Chime. Students were able to offer their tithes and contribute to God what they could after the leaders set up a means for them to give online using these applications, ensuring that the ministry would not face any financial difficulties as they carried out their campus work (Choi, 2023: 106-109).

4.4. Positive Evaluation of CIUC Ministry

Because of their commitment to using social media and other digital tools to engage with students in whatever way possible, students on campus chose CIUC as the “best” organization to represent them for the academic year 2021–2022. This illustrates how the accomplishment is closely related to the participation of students (Choi, 2023: 109).

Prior to the epidemic, there would be an average of 10-15 students attending each week. On average, 25 individuals would attend their service, when leaders are included. Attendance drastically decreased to under 10 during the epidemic in 2020 because they were unprepared and unsure of how to use technology effectively. The number climbed dramatically to between 40 and 50 persons, including leaders and their families, after they were able to use Zoom technology. In 2021, the campus began to progressively open its spaces and allow Sunday worship services to take place in the university building. At the beginning of 2021, there were about 15 attendees; as the year progressed, the number gradually rose to pre-pandemic levels of about 25. Near the conclusion of the year, there were about 25 attendees in person, which was about the same as before the pandemic. Nevertheless, because they were now using a hybrid model with Zoom, this made it possible for an additional 5 to 10 people per week to participate via Zoom. They saw a minor uptick in 2022, going from approximately 20 each week to roughly 30. Average Sunday attendance figures in 2023 are comparable to those

in 2022 (Choi, 2023: 110).

The CIUC thinks that the pandemic had a favorable effect on the number of attendees for Sunday Worship Services, even though the majority of American churches struggled to keep their members for worship services. Especially with the aid of technology, it gave individuals a place to congregate through trying times. Using technology like zoom also made it possible for them to get in touch with people who had left the ministry for a variety of reasons, like graduation or a new job, but had not yet found a new church to attend. As a student ministry, their largest challenge to membership development and retention has been the high turnover rate brought on by the simple fact that students graduate and leave the tiny town to seek employment elsewhere. But, thanks to technology, students can participate in their Sunday service from a distance even if they are hundreds of miles away.

4.5. Areas to be Strengthened for CIUC Ministry

While the CIUS' ministry has been highly successful, it should not be forgotten that there are a number of challenges that could provide difficulties for this ministry. Their workload increased recently as the ministry expanded and they were involved in establishing a new chapter at a nearby institution. Moreover, representatives of the ministry have been invited to speak at conferences and share ministry success stories at national gatherings. They are forced to dispatch their available workers to numerous meetings as a result. Little problems start to appear when technology, like Zoom, is not managed by a specialized team. Sometimes they would arrive too late to let the students wait outside the room in, and other times there would be technical issues like a broken camera or audio.

Distractions would also exist, such as when users of Zoom do not muffle their audio and random noises play throughout the service. Students' inability to participate owing to technical issues would harm the continued integration of a hybrid approach. It is simpler for them to transfer and minimize obligations to those who are on Zoom in order to eliminate problems. Due to the accessibility of Zoom, students might not prioritize attending worship services in a mixed paradigm. People are utilizing Zoom as a justification for skipping the effort to get up early and attend the worship service in person. They are forced to discontinue the Zoom streaming services for Sunday worship because there is not enough staff to oversee all of these activities and the digital ministry. We advise the ministry's leaders to reorganize, recruit additional volunteers, and manage funds wisely so that they would not burn out while continuing to grow the discipleship ministry by utilizing social media and digital technologies (Jeong & Chung, 2022; Guk & Chung, 2022; Choi, 2023: 112).

Using social media and technology more skillfully for an expanding ministry is still another area that requires improvement. The ministry has expanded greatly since the pandemic, but its social media usage strategies have not changed. Due to the growth of students, they are employing the same social media usage tactics and strategies, they are simply investing more time in it. We advise using social media in more inventive ways to connect with students so they spend less time on the same activities and more time productively on other activities.

How social media and technology will alter the dynamics of interactions and relationships is one of the concerns with growing usage of these tools in the ministry. Naturally, there will be less face-to-face communication as we become more reliant on social media. It will take strategic planning to help ministry leaders reach out to students and avoid relying solely on communication via phone or computer. It will also require employing other tools to help ministry leaders reach out to students.

5. SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR UBF MINISTRY'S FUTURE DIRECTION

UBF has been a student-oriented campus mission organization. From the beginning of the ministry until now, its focus has been to plant faith in Christ and hope for the future in the hearts of college students who could grow to be future leaders (Chung, 1991; Lee, 2020; Yang & Chung, 2023). The ministry has been very successful for the last 60 years (Kim et al., 2023: 1-9). However, as attendance at UBF churches has decreased globally, the ministry has recently struggled to sustain membership. The UBF has admitted that in order to continue campus ministry for college students, which was the initial goal, it needs to evaluate the ministry and come up with new strategies. There is a need for new generation leaders to take over the ministry as many leaders who have served in the church for many years retire.

The UBF needs to be aware of the growing need for digital discipleship given how technology is more

important to Gen-Y and Gen-Z than it was to earlier generations (Choi, 2023: 10). The most recent instrument UBF might use to involve the current and upcoming generations in its discipleship ministry is possibly digital technology. We have discovered that there are both advantages and disadvantages to UBF digital ministry. The following are some benefits of UBF's digital ministry. As previously indicated, UBF.org and the Chicago Headquarters chapter website (chicagoubf.org) both provide a wealth of knowledge and useful material. Information regarding the youth and children's ministries can be found on the Chicago UBF website. Several ministry-related topics are covered on the website. In a number of universities in the Chicago area, campus ministries are currently active. Every campus ministry's leaders and members are putting forth a lot of effort to draw in new members and reaffirm the message to those who are already there. While some campus leaders are very active in using social media for their ministry, others are not as active in recruiting new members and communicating with existing ones.

5.1. The Needs of UDTSM More Effectively

Despite the fact that UBF.org includes a vast amount of material and content, most of it is constantly updated to reflect the organization's current successful work. Yet some information has been omitted, and updates have not been made in a while. There are numerous UBF YouTube channels that are highly important and include moving testimonials and presentations, but they do not receive a lot of viewership. Leaders in the UBF must devise strategies to capture viewers' interest and increase hits. Building connections within the local community, on campus, and among churchgoers can help them to shift their current emphasis from content to context. Rather than distributing content, context is more crucial. Even if they spend a lot of time creating valuable content, it will be useless if just a small audience consumes it. More viewers will be encouraged to watch if social media and digital technology are used effectively.

5.2. For Recruiting New Members

New Members and Insiders should be the categories for everything UBF posts on social media. Social media is crucial for recruiting and connection for churches that prioritize campus ministry, as was already mentioned. Furthermore, whether or not a church places a strong emphasis on discipleship is a crucial consideration. The name of the church and its community should be known to everyone on campus or in the neighborhood. It is crucial to inform people about the ministry because it is acknowledged that those who are ignorant about UBF are uninterested in the organization's work. This is particularly important for UBF leaders who oversee campus ministries at colleges. Using regional hashtags to participate in regional discussions and making posts that honor charitable organizations, school events, and professors are a couple of strategies on how to achieve this on a college campus. Moreover, UBF pastors who have had success in digital ministry might serve as a resource.

5.3. For Insiders

The majority of content should be reserved exclusively for insiders. The purpose of these posts is to foster closer ties between members of the UBF community and UBF personnel. Facebook and Instagram live videos, invitations to church events, milestones and celebrations, and anything uploaded on a church website or Facebook group might all fall under this category. In order to raise awareness of the church in the neighborhood or on campus, insiders also share posts that are created specifically for them to share on their own social media platforms. The goal is to produce content that enables people to communicate their faith and invite their family and friends to church.

Similar to how there are people who attended a church but had horrible experiences there and as a result posted negative reviews on social media, UBF also had a few people publishing unfavorable opinions about UBF on YouTube and social media. Nonetheless, the UBF web staff worked hard to respond to these critical remarks by drawing in more visitors for more clicks and subscriptions so that the rankings of official UBF video might rise. In reality, UBF has made significant progress in getting UBF websites to appear on the front page of search engines like Google, YouTube, and Yahoo. Social media use for communication is generally more common among younger generations of UBF members than it is among older members, who are less acclimated to it. It would be ideal for UBF to offer succinct educational sessions to help these less tech-savvy members learn how to utilize social media and post UBF information on their personal social media accounts.

5.4. For Establishing Leaders for UDTSM

We suggest that large chapters like Chicago UBF appoint a digital ministry pastor who can oversee, develop, and motivate others for the digital ministry in light of the significance of this field. Financial constraints might preclude the chapter from hiring a new digital ministry pastor, but if one of the present staff members is chosen for this role, the economic impact on the chapter may not be as significant. Establishing a link between the staff and a chapter that has achieved success in digital ministry is another method of training workers for the field. We think that there are plenty of competent lay leaders and members of UBF who can impart knowledge on how to manage a fruitful digital ministry.

5.5. Financial Concerns for UDTSM

While the original author of this paper served as UBF North America's financial director, concerns about the financial implications of implementing digital ministry in UBF initially appeared a while back. The existing budget for digital ministry is insufficient to carry out the necessary tasks for effective digital ministry, according to the technical director of UBF, who has expressed his sorrow. Since he didn't want to shoulder all the criticism or responsibility for a poorly run digital ministry, he truly wanted to resign from his position. Using digital technologies and social media for discipleship ministry is significantly hampered by a lack of financial support. In our opinion, the senior UBF pastors need to appreciate the worth and significance of digital ministry and make investments in the organization's future as well as the Christian education of their children. A chapter director can assign one online pastor to find young volunteers to run several aspects of their online ministry at the same time. On the other side, in order to adopt digital ministry, pastors and personnel must refresh their technology abilities. There may not be many more ongoing expenses if people become used to the digital ministry.

6. CONCLUSION

People use the internet for a variety of things in this digital age, and the majority of today's youth spend most of their time online, often to the point of addiction. The Church's current issue is how to participate in discipleship ministry with people who are used to being linked via the internet and contemporary digital technology. A paradigm shift in how Christians go about carrying out their mission of discipleship has been brought about by the world's technological advancement and is now being faced by Christian churches. Thus, the Church must respond to this wave of change appropriately. This does not imply that our local churches should cease proclaiming the gospel and integrate into the new culture, but rather that they should make better use of the new digital culture to reach out to the people in this generation.

At the same time, we should be aware of some of the drawbacks of digital ministry, including the fact that some activities carried out online through cyberspace have trouble evoking a more personal sense. Taking part in important occasions like baptism, communion, marriages, and funerals online, for example, results in a lower degree of connection and closeness than doing it in person. Furthermore, in order to effectively carry out its goal, this digital ministry must address certain significant concerns with more qualified professional employees and its budget. It has been apparent, though, that the value of putting digital discipleship tactics into practice to advance gospel ministry weighs far more heavily than the negative effects that have been uncovered and should be addressed in order to advance by turning to the next generation. If the Church is to overcome current issues and get ready for the future, all pastors must become experts in digital ministry, especially at this time when young people are fleeing the Church all over the world. We all need to be fully aware that unless the Church makes an investment in developing digital professional pastors for the future ministry, its future prospects will never be bright. In the same way that Jesus gave all of his commitment and time to raising 12 disciples over the course of three years, it is not at all surprising that the Church today is putting forth great effort to develop spiritual leaders who can effectively navigate the digital age.

Briefly put, numerous initiatives utilizing these digital techniques will present chances for the gospel to be spread to a large number of people and eventually have the result of establishing those people in the local churches that have historically existed. The findings of this study, although offering some suggestions for the UBF ministry's future, can also be applied to congregations belonging to other Christian denominations.

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