

Transforming The Way They Do Church

April 15, 2021



When the Covid-19 pandemic hit Grace Chapel of Lexington, Massachusetts (www.grace.org) the church had to move fast!

Close all of the buildings on their five campuses and figure out a way to do church differently. Already experienced in live streaming their Sunday services over YouTube, Grace had to transition to an all-digital environment.

Grace redeployed their Pastor of Student Ministries at their Lexington campus to become the new Pastor of Digital Ministry and hired their Pastor in Residence to become the Pastor of Online Community. They also brought in expertise from NECF (www.necfglobal.com) to navigate the tricky waters of digital media.

Starting with the contemporary service, Grace offered music and messages using tools such as Acapella and YouTube Premier. They quickly realized, however, that they were overlooking a smaller but more vocal contingent of the congregation that preferred a classic service. Grace pivoted quickly and created an additional Sunday experience that included traditional hymns and other classical offerings.

A year later the Sunday experience at Grace is thriving. The attendance numbers are strong, the church's reach is expanding and they are on budget! They also embarked on an ambitious campaign to raise \$2 million to bring in additional technology and expertise to really kick their Sunday experience into high gear.

As the church prepares to reopen their campuses in the Fall they are now grappling with what the new normal will be like. Rather than being an "either / or" experience (either physical worship services or digital worship services) they have decided to be a "both / and" environment offering both physical live worship at their campuses as well as on-demand worship experiences online. They even coined a new term to describe their offerings... "phygital".

As Grace Chapel's Senior Pastor likes to say "*the church has left the building*"!

"We had to move and change at an unusual pace for the church. While the pandemic presented us with issues it also provided an opportunity to try new ways to reach and serve people who may not want to walk through the front doors of a church building. Our people now understand that Grace Chapel is not

a group of buildings but a community of people who are seeking and following their faith journey whether that be in person or online.” – Mark MacDonald, Executive Pastor

In this ever changing world it is either disrupt or find yourself disrupted. At Grace, who strives on being cutting edge and relevant within the culture it serves, it is embracing change and seizing the day!

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