



# Church in the Digital Age

Examining How Digital Platforms Affect the Nature of Church

By Rachel Bovee

Nov. 2020

# Overview:

Hello! My name is Rachel. This pitch deck is for my Senior Communications Major at Gordon College. This project looked to examine how digital platforms affect the nature of church. The idea of this project grew from the increase in digital usage from churches due to COVID-19. Many churches were forced to shut their physical doors in March 2020. I wanted to research how churches interact with these platforms. This deck is a collection of my own work I have done through surveys, interviews, and my own collection of research. I hope you find it helpful as you navigate digital platforms.

# Table of Contents

Why This Matters	1-2
Digital Media Statistics	3-8
The Nature of Church Survey	9-22
Feedback from Pastors and Ministry Leaders	23-39
External Platforms for Digital Communication	40-42
Closing Remarks	43-44

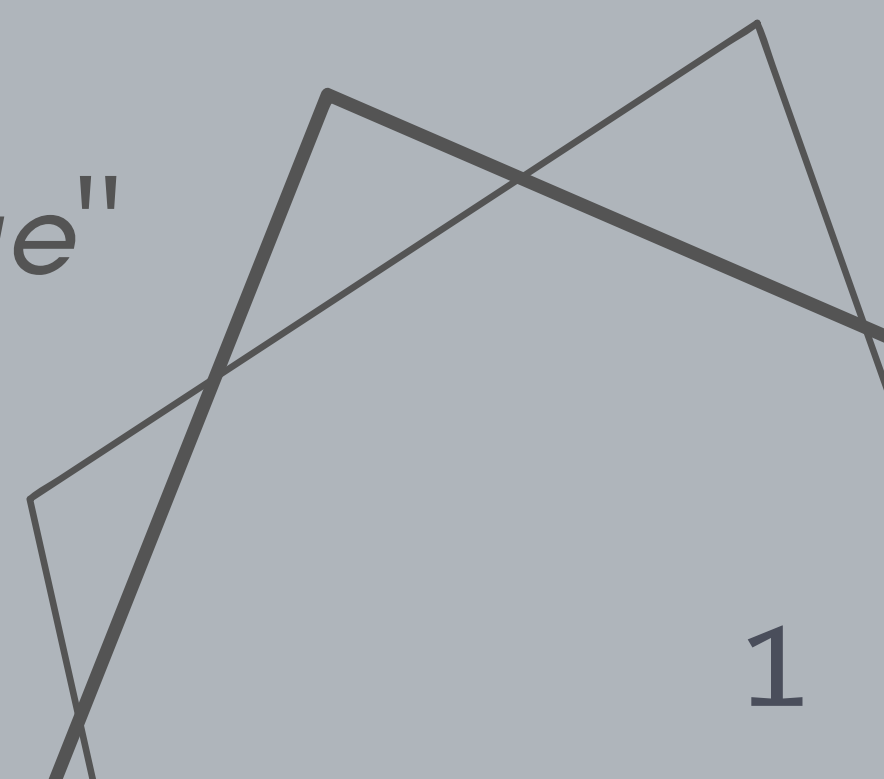


# Why this matters:

As a Communications major, I believe that it is important to study new mediums. Digital platforms have heavily impacted our society. It is important to study their affects so we know how to be good stewards of the mediums we use.

*"The medium is the message"*

-Marshal McLuhan



# Why this matters:

*"I love preaching and believe in the power of the pulpit, but anytime you can put something on the screen, there's a certain amount of impact you can have because we are fearfully and wonderfully made with this visual cortex, and I think it's up to us to really steward it."*

Mark Batterson, lead pastor of National Community Church in Washington D.C

"He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

Mark 16:15

# Digital Media Statistics

3.96 Billion People (51% global population) use Social Media Today According to DataReportal.

<https://datareportal.com/>

# According to PewResearch.....

- ▲ 72% of American adults use Social Media.
- ▲ 79% of users are between ages 18-29.
- ▲ 74% of users visit Facebook everyday.
- ▲ 75% of women use Facebook compared with 63% men.

## Youtube and Facebook are the Most Popular Platforms

- 7 in 10 adults use Youtube (73%)
- 7 in 10 adults use Facebook (69%)
- 4 in 10 adults use Instagram (37%)

<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/16/facts-about-americans-and-facebook/>

# According to PewResearch.....

- ▲ The range of millennial users from 2012–2019 remains unchanged, while it has grown among Boomers, Gen. X and the Silent Generation.
- ▲ The younger generations are more likely to say that social media has a positive impact than older generations.
- ▲ Americans are less positive about social media's societal impact than 4 years prior.



# American Adults Daily Usage of Social Media:

<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>

Platform

Facebook

Instagram

Snapchat

Youtube

0%

25%

50%

75%

Daily Percentage of Adults

# According to ReachRight.....

- ▲ 50% of Americans belong to a church.
- ▲ Social media users spend 50% of their online time using social media and streaming video.
- ▲ 60% of people prefer to give online.
- ▲ Churches can increase tithes by 32% by offering online tithe.

## Youtube Has Over 2 Billion Users

Millennials are the biggest audience.

Over a billion hours of video is watched daily.

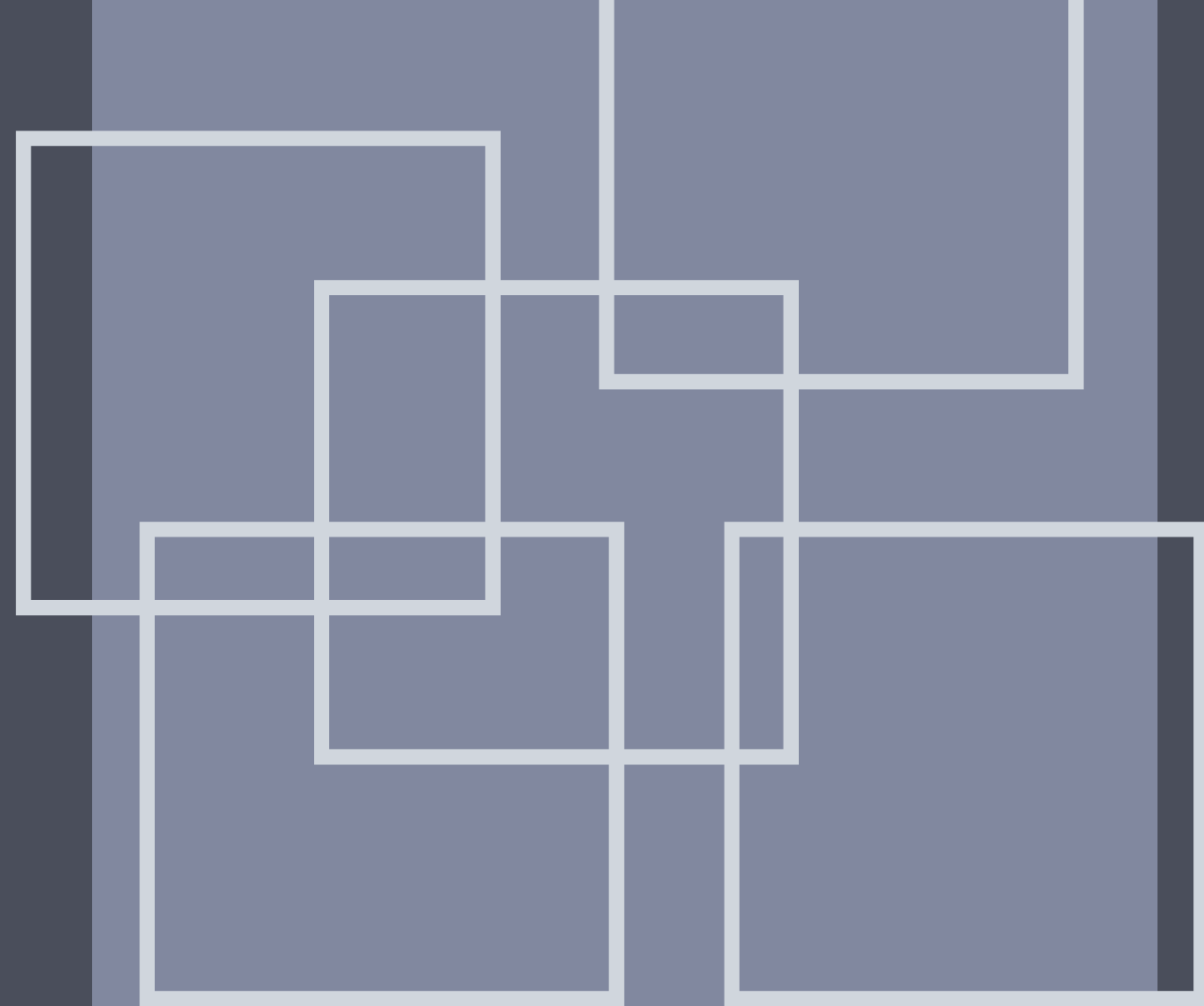
70% of views come from mobile devices.

# According to Barna.....

- ▲ About 52% of churchgoers prefer physical gatherings, 9% say they prefer digital gatherings, and 35% claim a preference for both.
- ▲ 29% of practicing Christians and 20% of non-practicing Christians say they take advantage of digital options on a day other than Sunday.

# The Nature of Church Survey





# Survey Overview:

This survey was conducted from Nov 16–Nov 20. About 124 people participated providing feedback on their digital church experience. People in the survey ranged from ages 13–90 from a wide variety of church traditions. The purpose of this survey was to understand how people interact with digital platforms as it relates to church.

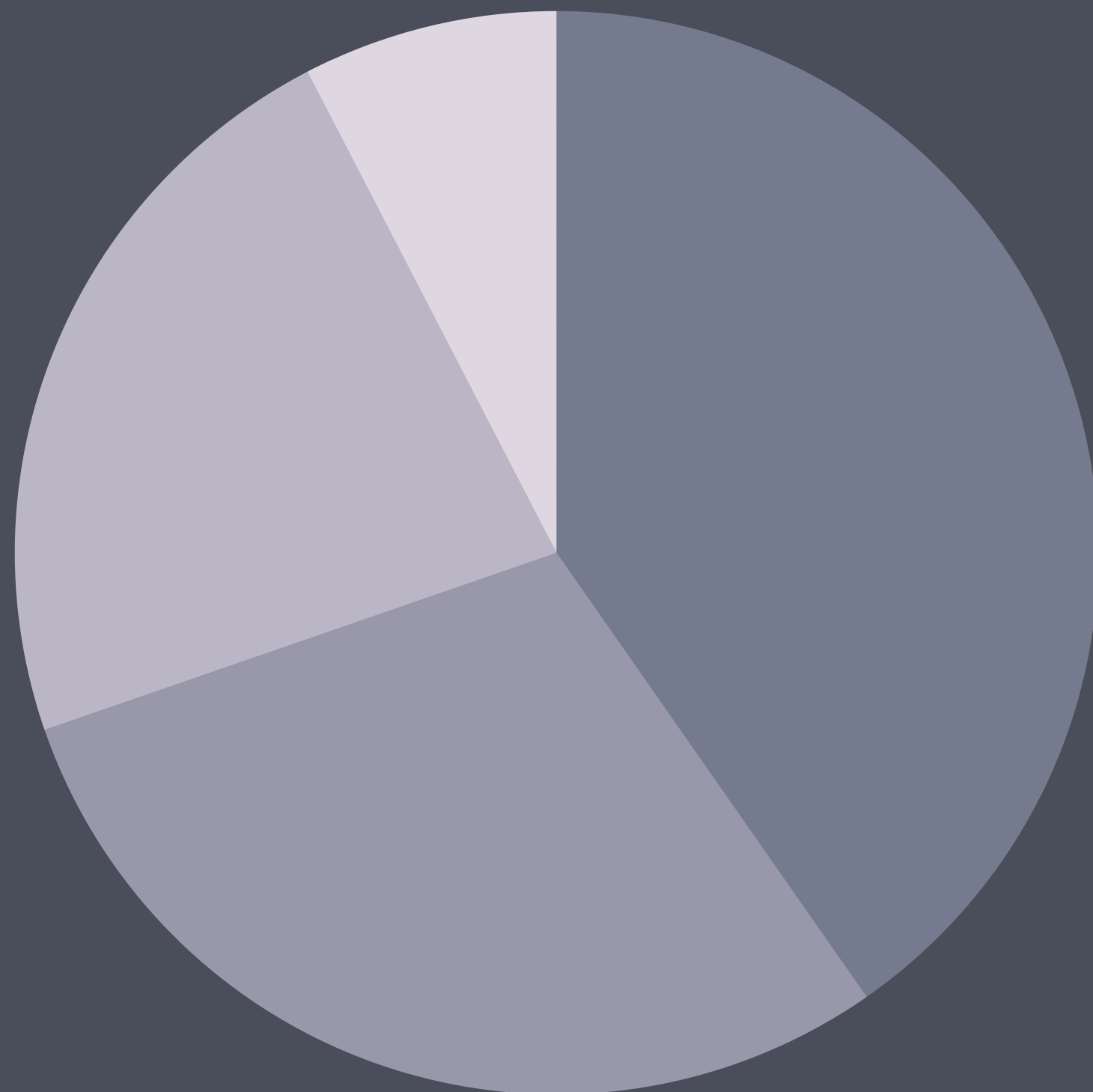
- 81% said their church is meeting in-person.
- 94% said their church is online or uses digital platforms.
- 56% said they attend church in-person.



## Survey Results



Average  
22.7%



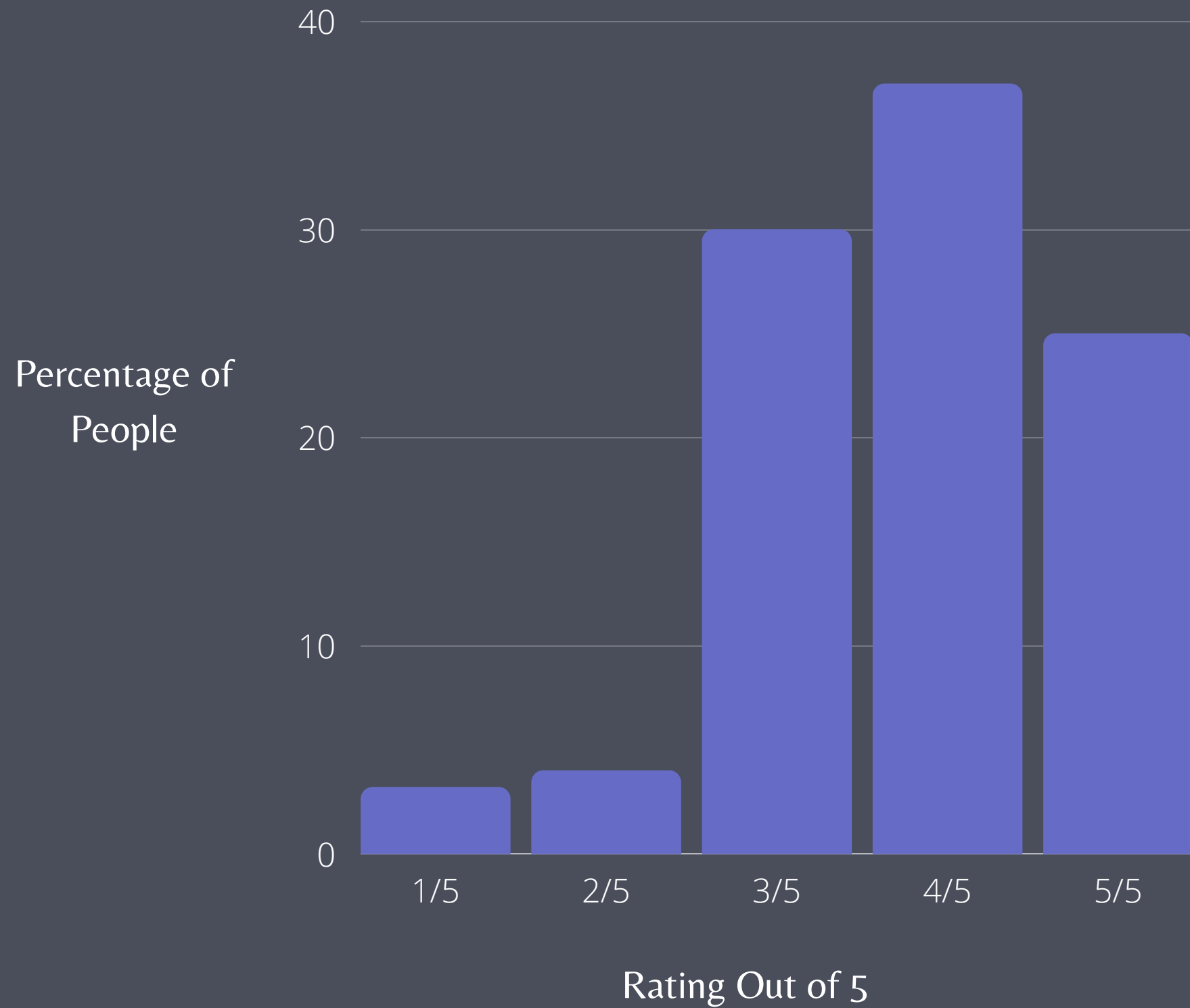
Weak  
7.6%

Very Strong  
40.3%

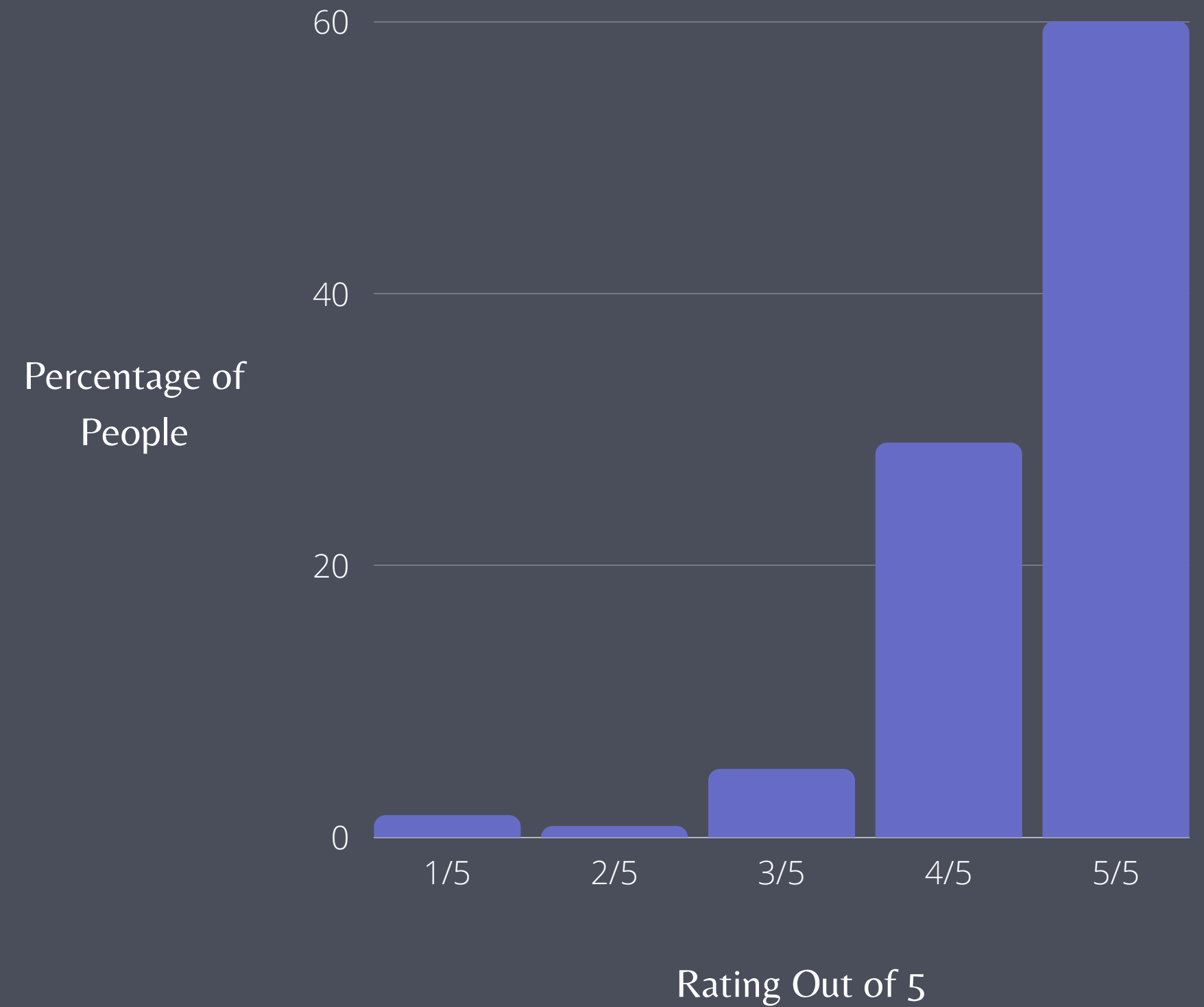
Rate Your  
Ability To Use  
Technology

Strong  
29.4%

# Rate Your Digital Church Experience:



# Rate Your In-Person Church Experience:





- The majority of people who rated their ability as weak, rated their digital church experience 3/5 or below.
- The majority of people who rated their experience with digital church as 5/5 , rated their ability to use technology as 5/5 or 4/5.
- The majority of people who feel extremely or very engaged with church online, rated their ability to use technology as 5/5 or 4/5.

# Top Reasons People Attend Church Online:

19% said it was unsafe

7.3% prefer to learn and worship in their home

6.5% said health reasons

15% said it was more convenient

6.5% do not live near their preferred church

# Top Reasons People Attend Church In-Person:

52% prefer to  
worship and  
learn in-  
person

21% said family  
and friends

3.2% said it  
was more  
convenient

31% feel safe  
in their church

16% said they  
have an  
obligation to  
attend in-  
person



# Methods People Use To Connect To The Church



61% use  
YouTube

55% use  
Facebook

38% use  
Instagram

50% use  
Email

40% use  
Zoom

# Digital Platforms People Are The Most Comfortable With

67% said  
YouTube

65% said  
Facebook

17% said  
Twitter

56% said  
Zoom

59% said  
Instagram

56% said  
Email



# Digital Platforms People Struggle With



17% said  
GoogleMeet

16% said  
Twitter

2% said  
Instagram

6% said  
Facebook

15% said  
TikTok

7% said  
Zoom



# Common Struggles People Have With Digital Platforms



*"Technological issues makes it harder for me to engage."*

*"Major fatigue from using digital platforms all the time ."*

*"Poor Internet Connection. "*

*"Live video streams can be finicky and unreliable. "*

*"Confusion or difficulties when switching between platforms."*

*"Keeping up with new features and advancements."*

# Common Reasons People Feel Less Engaged:

"Too many distractions at home."

"It feels impersonal "

"My short attention span"

"Not being able to receive the Eucharist."

"Lack of Interaction"

"No person-to-person contact"

"Lack of Presence"

"Lack of Accountability"

"Lack of Conversation"

"Lack of Socialization"

"Lack of Engagement"

"The digital aspect of church doesn't seem as genuine compared to being physically at church."

"Screen Fatigue"



# Suggestions for Enhancing Digital Platforms:

"Make it easier for the older generations to navigate."

"Better equipment"

"More Interaction"

"Develop a welcoming digital platform"

"Follow up with personal connection"

"Less commercialized"

"Break out rooms"

"More Connection"

"Host Tutorials or Sessions"

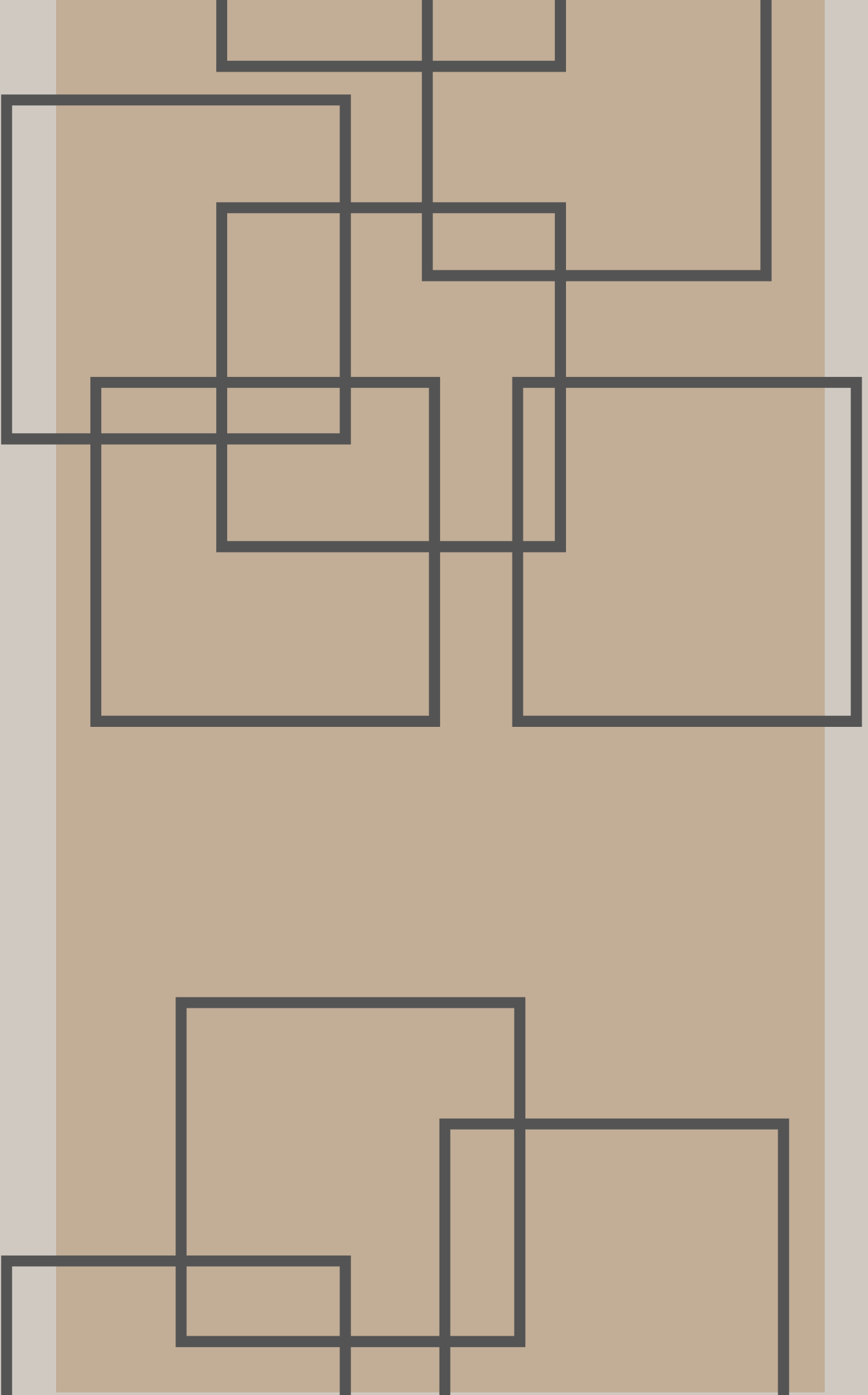
"Utilize the Chat feature more"

"Enhance Digital Worship"

"Make it more Personal"

"Have a space where people can connect with each other after the service."

"Engage with the community more"



# Feedback from Pastors and Ministry Leaders



## Starting Out...

Many Pastors and Ministry Leaders struggled when their churches went fully online in March of 2020. Some churches were already experienced with online platforms and were even streaming their church for a few years. But most churches were not equipped or ready to go fully online. It completely changed the way churches carried out ministry. The next part of my project includes feedback from other Pastors and Ministry Leaders. I did this through interviews and surveys. I interviewed 6 leaders and received feedback from 20 churches.

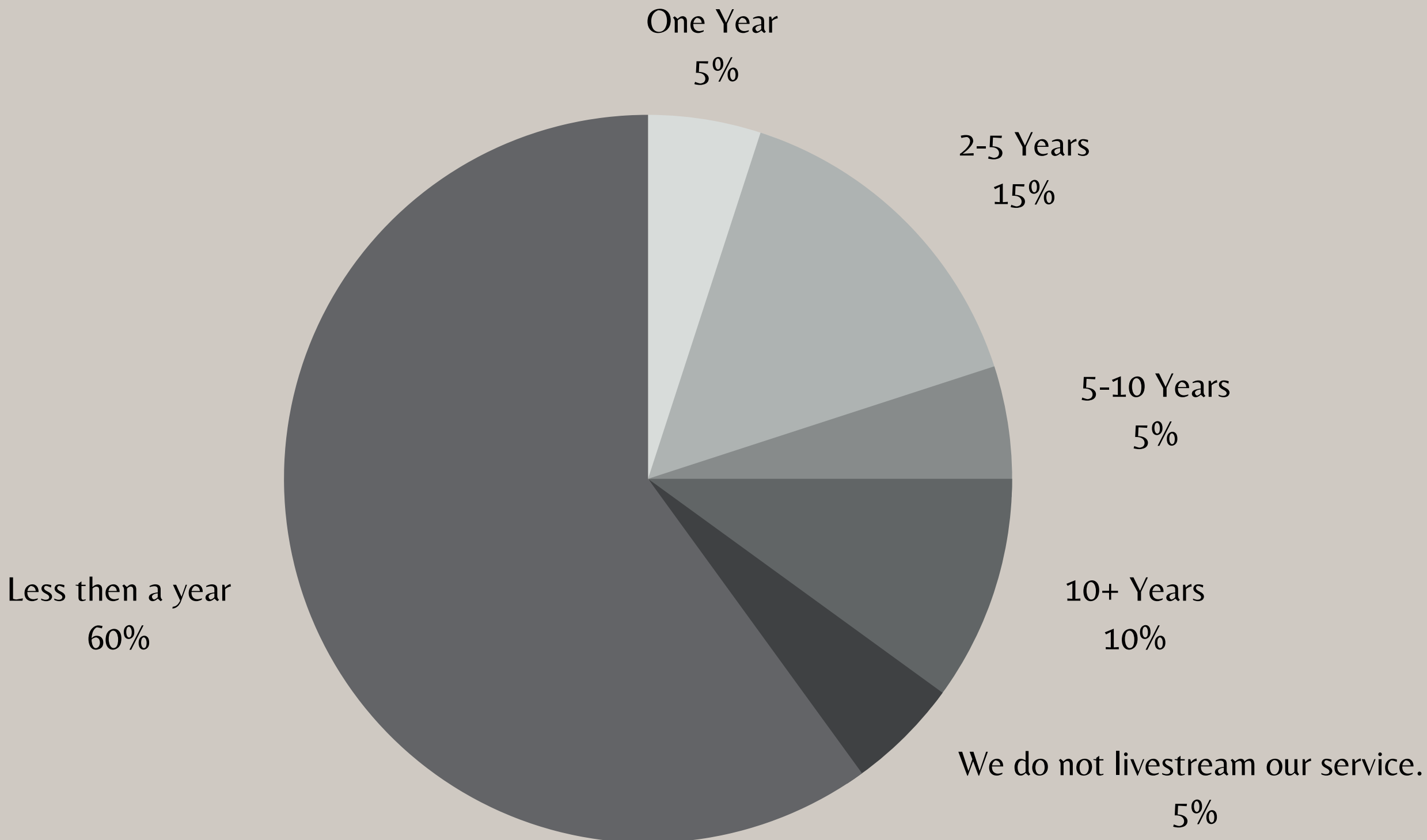
# How Ministry Has Changed

- Churches have started to livestream their services and plan to do so even when they gather in-person.
- Some Pastors share the gospel message more frequently since their viewers may be new or watching for the first time.
- Many leaders have tightened up and condensed their services to accommodate for shorter attention spans and screen fatigue.
- Many churches have created or implemented new positions like Pastor of Digital Communications, Media Coordinator, Communications Director, and Pastor of Online Ministries.

*"If we can lift up Jesus with these various platforms, that is our job. It is up to God to work out the details."*

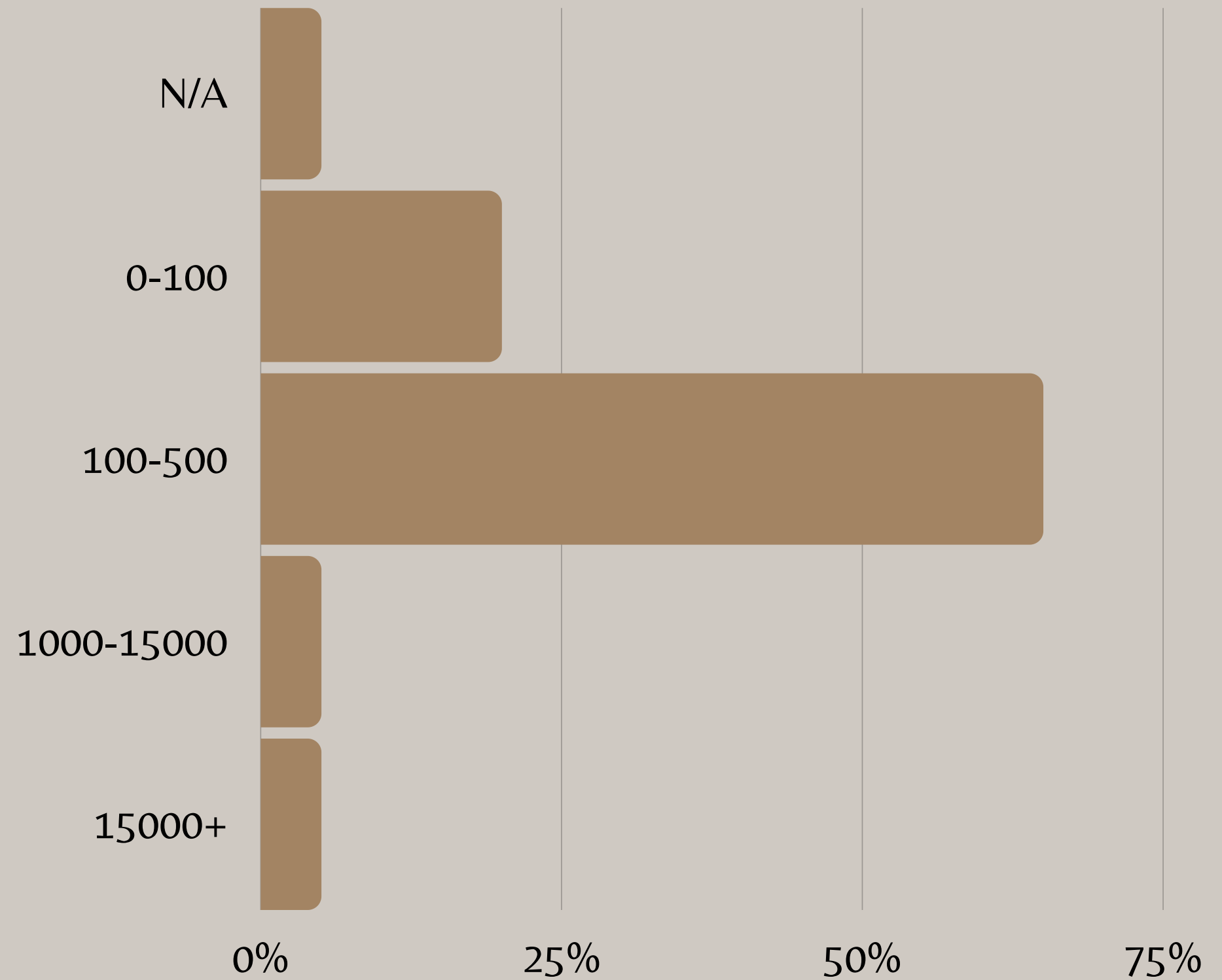
-Pastor Carl, Reach Out Church

# How many years has your church livestreamed your service?



# How many people view your livestream service?

Viewers



Percentage of Churches

# Platforms Churches Utilize

100% use  
Zoom

95% use  
Facebook

60% use  
Instagram

25% use  
Twitter

95% use  
Email

90% use  
YouTube

30% use  
Vimeo

10% use  
Google  
Meet

# Digital Platforms



70% of leaders said they have the Most Success with Facebook.

30% of leaders said they have the Most Success with YouTube.

33% of leaders said they have the Least Success with Instagram.



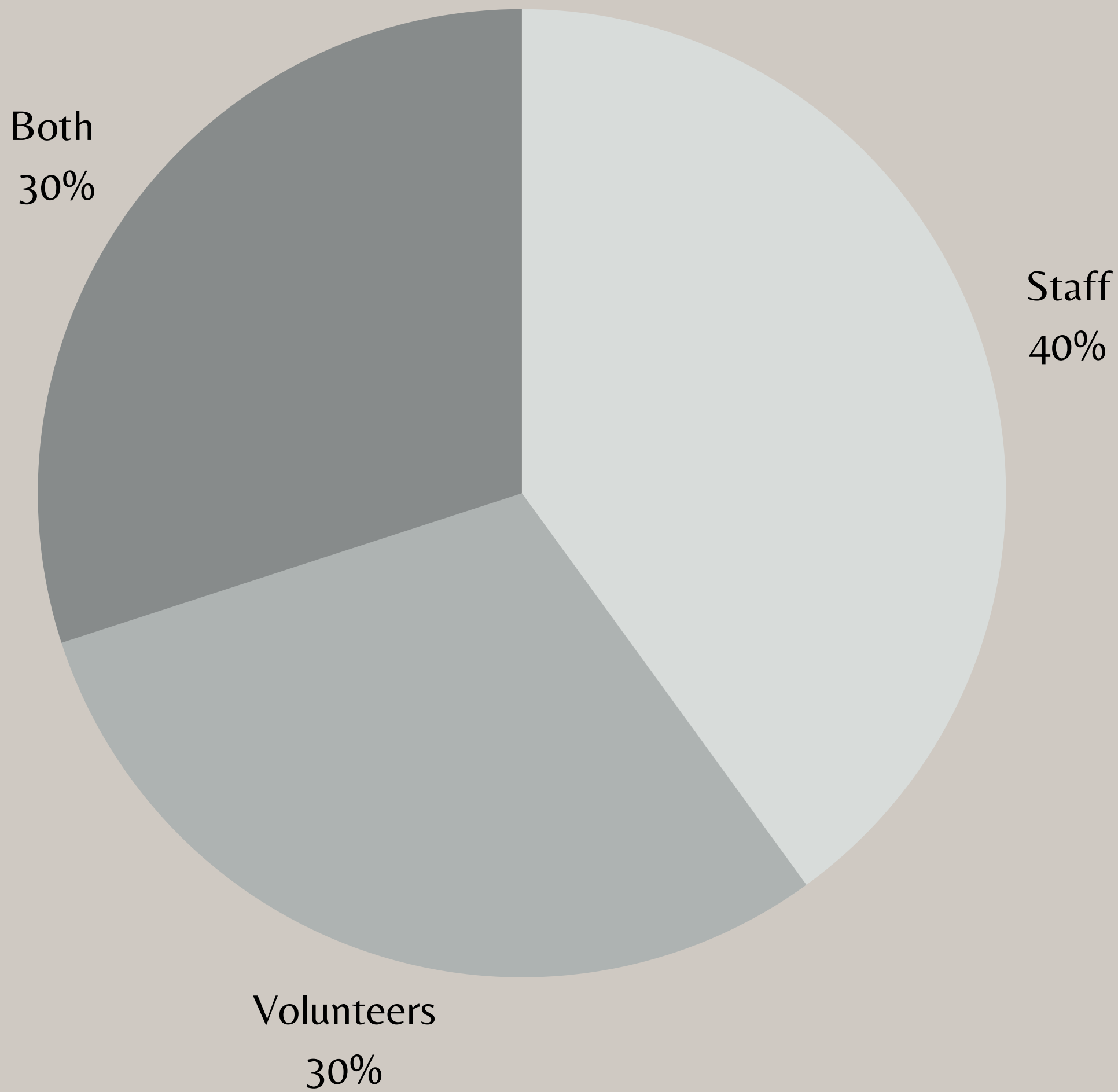
60% of leaders said they do not have a digital marketing strategy in place.

30% of leaders do not have a person or a team overseeing digital marketing.

60% of leaders factor in digital marketing as a part of their budget.

## Digital Communications





# Who Operates Your Digital Communications?



# Struggles Churches Have With Digital Platforms

Having enough  
trained people  
with the necessary  
skills/abilities

Internet  
Struggles

Producing  
Engaging  
and Quality  
Content

Incorporating  
Musicians and  
Worship

Keeping  
People  
Updated

Preaching to  
a Camera

Finances

New  
Equipment

Filming and  
Editing

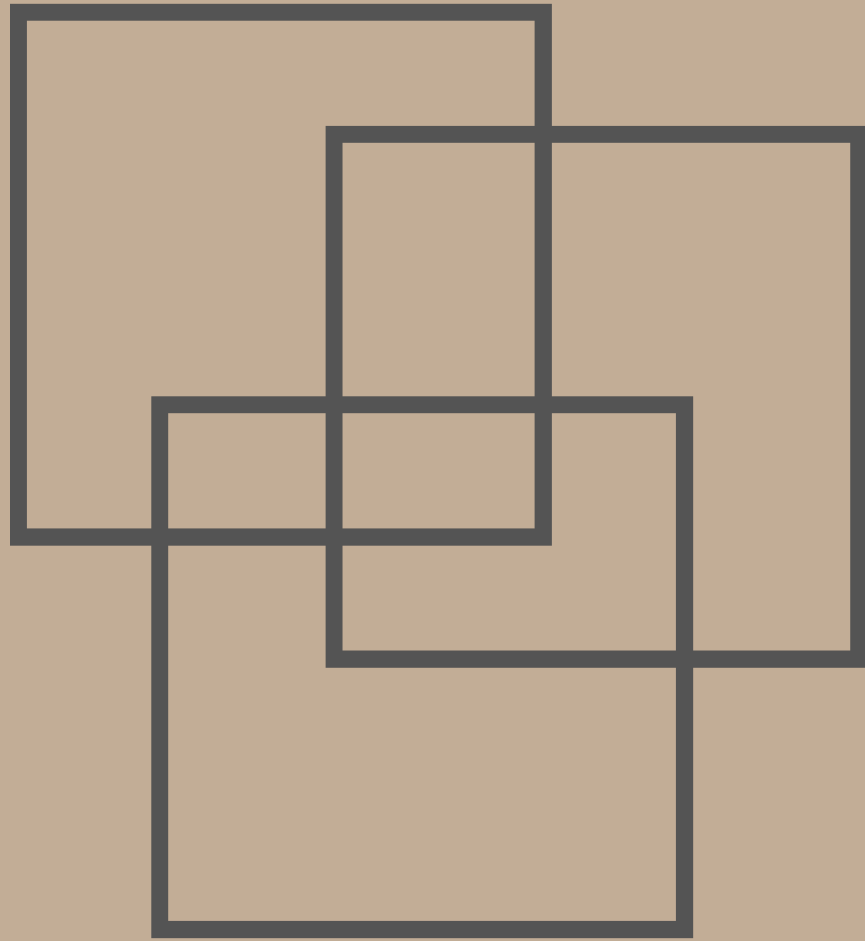
Sound  
Quality

# Advantages of Digital Platforms

- Digital Platforms give churches a farther and wider reach into people's lives.
- Digital Platforms have allowed churches to reach people all over the world and it has reinforced the concept of a unified, global church.
- It has given leaders to opportunity to connect people that would otherwise be separated.
- It has opened doors for new forms of ministry and service opportunities.

*"The most meaningful experience is in-person, but it doesn't mean digital is bad. It just means it looks a little different."*

-Pastor Scott Miller, Grace Chapel



## Questions Leaders Ask Approaching New Platforms

- How are we leveraging these platforms?
- Where are we at and where do we want to go?
- How can we foster more shared experiences with people?

*"I want to be a student of this. God called me to preach and part of preaching includes technology. I want to treat it as ministry."*

-Pastor Aaron Rios, GardenCity Church

# Challenges with Digital Platforms

- Digital Platforms leave people wanting more. Often people do not feel connected through technology.
- People are getting comfortable sitting at home and fall victim to a consumeristic view of church.
- People are becoming removed as they develop their spirituality outside of the church.
- Social media can be an unhealthy environment and it is important to be aware of how people use those platforms.

*"Church isn't just about content, it is about connection. People are not hungry for content, they are hungry for connection."*

-Pastor Michael Davis, Genesis Church



# What Leaders Have Learned

This new adventure navigating digital platforms due to COVID-19, has allowed leaders to reflect and examine their ministry efforts.

- This time has solidified the need and biblical precedence for Christians to be in community with one another.
- It has allowed Pastors to examine their discipleship methods in regards to their congregation and other leaders .
- Pastors have examine their discipleship methods in regards to their congregation and other leaders .

*"Gathering of churches is a taste of what heaven will be like."*

-Pastor Michael Davis, Genesis Church



# Digital Ministry Advice

- Take time to look back and see where God has taken you. Remember his faithfulness. Remember he will guide you through new experiences.
- Make sure what you see online is what you get in-person.
- Learn who your people are. Learn who is a part of your congregation.
- Give people to opportunity to join in and empower them to use the gifts God has given them to help your ministry grow.

*"The completeness of sanctification happens in community, when we get together and confess, pray, laugh, and work together."*

-Eddie Martinez, Director of  
Communications, Netcast Church





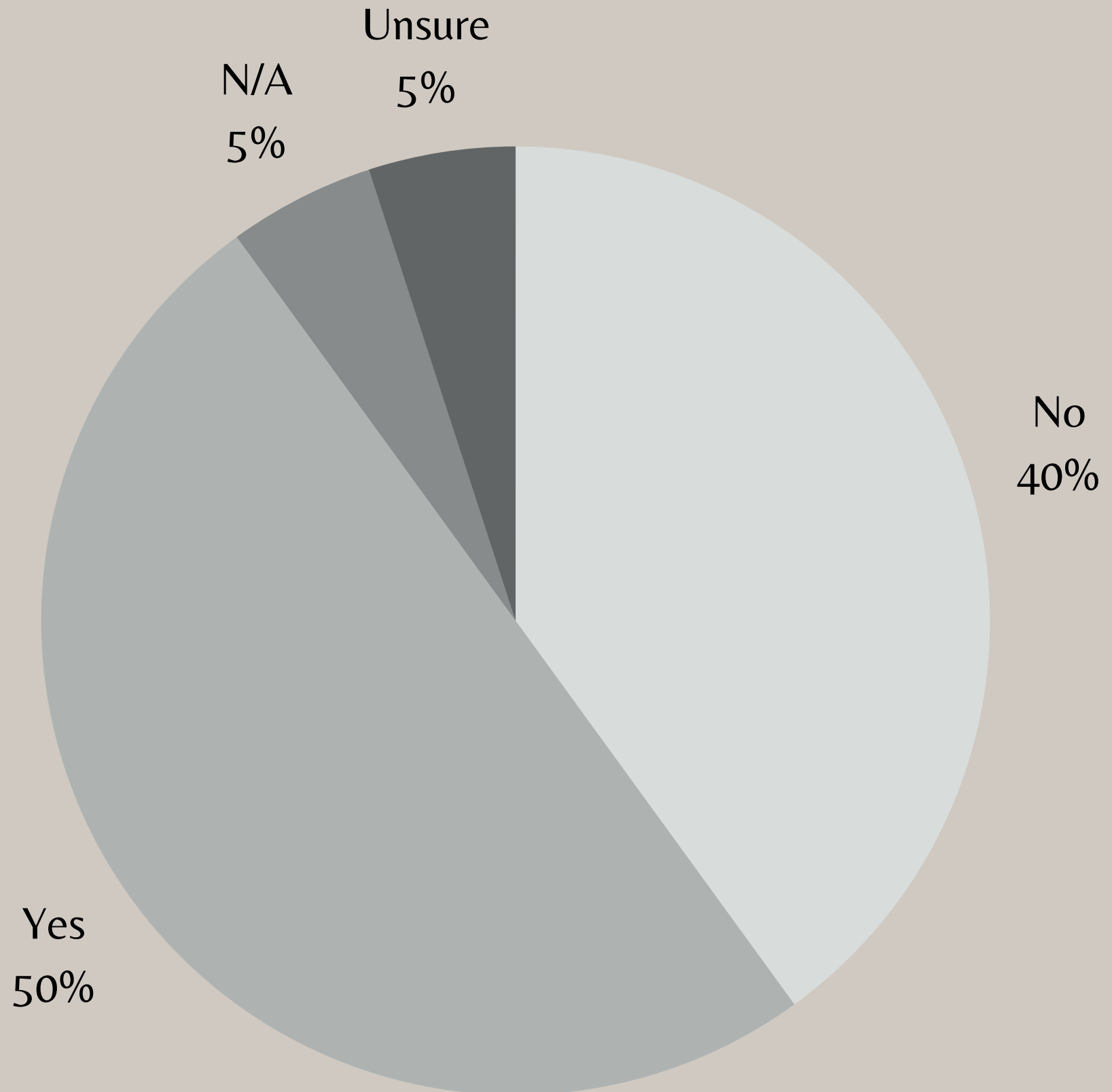
# Digital Ministry Advice

- Don't feel pressured to do everything at once. Start simple and build from there. Figure out what is one area your church could grow in.
- Think about creating material that will breadcrumb people into church.
- Focus on what God is doing in your church and don't compare your church to others.
- Don't be afraid to reach out to other churches and leaders.

*"We all have something to learn. When you don't think you have something to learn, that is when you stop learning."*

-Kika Gohbrial, Young Adults Pastor,  
Arabic Evangelical Baptist Church

# Do you use external companies or platforms for digital marketing purposes?



# External Platforms Churches Use For Digital Marketing Purposes

## Churchstream.tv

Churchstream.tv is a platform that equips and guides churches to livestream their services. Churchstream specifically works with each church to figure out how they can best utilize this platform to fulfill their church's vision.

## StreamMonkey

StreamMonkey is a streaming platform that allows for streaming across multiple channels. It has data analytics including viewer, usage, and locations to understand your audience.

## Castr

Castr is a simplified live video streaming solution for businesses, broadcasters, gamers, educational, and religious organizations. Their services include livestream, multi-stream, video hosting, and IP camera streaming.

# External Platforms Churches Use For Digital Marketing Purposes

## MailChimp

MailChimp is a software which gives you the ability to create and manage mailing lists, newsletters, automated campaigns, and more.

## Meetups

Meetups is a platform that organizes groups. It is specifically design to help people to find and build local communities. The purpose is to create real human connection.

## ChurchOnline

ChurchOnline Platform allows churches to broadcast live or stimulate a live broadcast. Viewers can message and chat in real time.

## Subsplash

Subsplash is a software that equips churches with mobile apps, websites, online giving, and other media to help churches grow and engage their audience.

# External Platforms Churches Use For Digital Marketing Purposes

## MediaShout

MediaShout is a software specifically for church presentation marketing including sermons, worship slides, social media, and other digital presentation.

## Church Marketing University

Church Marketing University is a company that looks to help churches market through personal assessments, consultations, and coaching. They also produce free tools, articles, guides and resources.

## ProChurch Tools

ProChurch Tools has free resources and tools for churches to use including podcasts, blogs, and videos.

## Hubspot

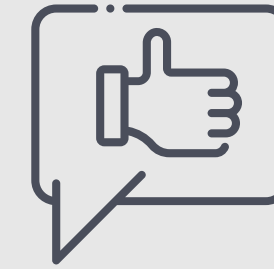
Hubspot is a full marketing software for inbound marketing, sales, customer services, and CRM software. They also provide resources, tools, and methodology to assist companies.



## Key Points



- People are designed for personal connection.
- Digital Platforms are a very powerful and useful tool when managed properly.
- As we look to steward these platforms well, it is important to check our hearts and motives.
- Ultimately, we must trust in God to guide our ministry efforts as we look to connect the body of Christ through in-person and digital means.



Thank you for viewing my project! I would like to thank everyone who contributed to my project. Everyone's feedback was extremely helpful. I would also like to thank all the Pastors and Ministry Leaders that gave up their time to meet with me. I hope that this deck will be helpful in some way to anyone who is looking to use digital platforms for ministry. If you have any questions or comments please feel free to reach me at [Rachel.Bovee@gordon.edu](mailto:Rachel.Bovee@gordon.edu). May God bless you and your ministry!