TECHNO-DOXOLOGY
Technology in the service of the praise of God
Report of Consultation in Lanark 8th March 2018

A whole new generation cannot be separated from their smartphones and tablets. In these there is power to help to sustain people on their spiritual journey and nourish their inner life (John Chalmers, *Life and Work* December 2017).

This is the report of a Consultation on today's digital landscape and the church's response, particularly in relation to worship. It was held on March 8 2018 in Greyfriars Parish Church, Lanark, having been postponed from January due to extreme weather conditions.

1 Setting up the consultation

The original format was the regular Study Day of the Church Service Society but from an early point in the planning partnerships grew with other individuals and bodies who were active in this area, and the day became a co-operative venture. They included Dr Graham Maule of the Wild Goose Resource Group of the Iona Community as main speaker, the Resourcing Worship section of the Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, including the Committee on Church Art and Architecture, Ishbel Smith, who works with candidates for the ministry at New College on their conduct of worship, and who is a member of Ministries Council, who designed and led the afternoon session, and the minister of Greyfriars Parish Church, Lanark, where the church had undergone recent radical refurbishment, which had included the installation of advanced communications equipment. Conversations and exchanges also took place with the Very Rev Albert Bogle of Sanctuary First; with the Rev David Scott (Traprain), regarding an initiative in the Presbytery of Lothian; and with the Department of Communication of the Church of Scotland. This had been intended as the Study Day for 2017 but the opportunity for these wider consultations led to postponement until early 2018.

2 The questions we came with

In the publicity for the consultation, these questions were posed:

- building techniques, stained glass, the invention of printing, more

versatile musical instruments, new furniture design, could all be said to have enhanced worship; why not new communications technologies?

- are new technologies 'extras' to the 'real business' or are they themselves potentially new 'signs' that carry worship and indeed help it to be more fully realised?

- how do we ensure these deepen rather than dominate or distort?

- is their use automatically a step forward?

- if social media are intrinsic to daily life, why not to worship?

- does the use of projection on to screens increase or reduce participation?

- how may we include new generations without excluding the older?

- do we risk turning congregations into consumers?

- do we sometimes turn to technology to make up for (unidentified) things lacking in our congregational life?

- how far is too far in making alterations to the sanctuary?

- can the church's use of such media help address their frequent misuse in daily life and affirm their potential in enhancing relationships and enabling personal growth?

- in screening services, can viewers experience the same quality of worship as they would if present in the church?

3 The format of the day

The purpose of the day was to join in the conversation across the church on these matters, and to do so critically, addressing practical, theoretical, theological, liturgical, ethical and aesthetic issues. The Consultation would also be a forum for sharing experience and new ideas. It was hoped that there would be outcomes to share widely across the churches.

There were forty-four participants, including consultants. About ten presbyteries were represented and around 26 congregations. The company also included Mildred Syangandu from the United Church of Zambia, working with Iain May at South Leith parish church.

The format was interactive. We adopted one of the layouts made possible by the refurbishment of the church and used themselves by the congregation – the people seated around tables, with about six to a table. This applied throughout the day, which ran from 10.15am until 4.00pm, but came into its own during the afternoon when the whole company together addressed a series of questions.

4 A initial case study: Lanark Greyfriars

Rev Bryan Kerr, minister at Greyfriars, set the context by giving an account of the recent changes to the building and of the expansion of the congregation's work that this has enabled. The church had undergone a major £100,000 refurbishment to transform it into a community hub for Lanark fit for the 21st century. This had also resulted in the creation of a versatile and flexible space to enable the congregation to worship in more imaginative ways. The new look church, which had been redecorated, rewired and fitted with new carpets and heating system, was officially re-opened by the then Moderator, the Rt Rev Derek Browning, on 3rd September 2017.

At every stage the congregation was kept up to date and much prayer and discussion took place. Research was carried out amongst those born between 1982-2004, seeking what they wanted from a building open to the community as well as a worship centre. They asked for a sanctuary – but modern, quiet, welcoming, informal. Replacing the pews with chairs and installing remote-controlled blackout window blinds meant the building was suitable for a range of activities. The new layout enabled Holy Communion in the round; a café church layout; a labyrinth; a theatre for cinema, drama, and concerts; flexible layouts for group events (e.g. involving children), social gatherings, and conference settings (apart from our own it was used for training days for local businesses who could use the new IT facility). The make-over also enabled the church service to be broadcast every Sunday to sick members, into nursing homes, and to anyone interested. A wedding had been streamed for a soldier in Afganistan to watch, and funerals for those unable to be there. Becoming a community hub, with an entertainment licence and the requisite safety certificates, had engendered income as well as bringing in the community. A significant link between the old and the new was the fashioning of Communion plates from the wood of the old pews.

5 Main address: Technology and Worship – theory and practice

This was given by Dr Graham Maule of the Wild Goose Resource Group of the Iona Community, artist and hymn writer. The following is a summary of the address.

There are many ways technology can serve mission; this paper focuses on liturgy only. Does what we think technology achieves actually take place in practice? It is necessary to develop a critique to enable better choices and to avoid damage and alienation. Six (mostly Christian) recent and current writers offer a foundation.

Jacques Ellul **(1912-1994), philosopher, sociologist, theologian, who famously said: 'Think globally, act locally'.** Virtually everything in our natural and cultural environment has been affected by *La Technique*, a way of organising the whole of society. In the mid twentieth century, when people spoke of the 'death of God', when society lost coherent narratives provided by religion and philosophy, belief in Progress took its place. Where in the natural world we used to find sacred wells, today we invest sacredness, i.e. unquestioning acceptance, in technology. Ellul asks: Do we challenge technology enough? Have we made it our golden calf? We need to ask: to what extent is our faith in this particular piece of technology critical and to what extent uncritical?

Ivan Illich **(1926-2002), Roman Catholic priest and cultural critic; most famous book *Deschooling Society* (1971).** Tools are extensions of human ability, but are they 'convivial' or do they control us? [Conviviality = life in its fullness.] Do they enable creativity or reduce it? How broadly useful are our tools? As the power of machines increase, people become more and more like *consumers*, no longer *agents*. Previous skills become obsolete (cf mental arithmetic verses the calculator). How much do our tools / technologies and our way of using them allow us to shape reality and how much the opposite? The cleverer our tools the more we are enslaved by them and by the experts who provide and operate them. Question to be asked: to what extent is this example of technology convivial (liberating) or captivating (enslaving)?

Paul Virilio **(b.1932), French cultural theorist, who famously said: 'The invention of the ship is also the invention of the shipwreck'.** The bigger something is, the bigger the accident. Each new technology is a speeding up

of previous ones. The faster you go, the further ahead you have to look to keep on track; you can become fascinated, so much so that lateral vision is curtailed. Speed flattens vision. <u>We need to ask: what is this particular technology's accident?</u>

***Marshal McLuhan* (1911-1980), philosopher and student of the media, who famously said: 'The medium is the message'.** He also coined the term 'the global village'. He controversially argued that it doesn't matter what is the content of a technology; in itself the technology is empty and yet has its effect. A light bulb opens up a space but it is empty space. The medium / technology is not itself innocent. <u>The question to be put: what is the distinctive strength – the unfamiliar but good news – of this example of technology?</u>

***E F Schumacher* (1911-1977), statistician and economist, who famously said: 'Small is beautiful'.** Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex and more violent. It takes a touch of genius – and a lot of courage – to move in the opposite direction. From bigness comes impersonality, insensitivity and a lust to concentrate abstract power. Thus, Schumacher seeks human-scaled, decentralised, technology. <u>The big question for him: is this particular technology appropriate?</u>

***Alastair McIntosh* (b.1955), Scottish writer, ecologist and land reformer.** Do we use our tools / technologies for the building of community, and in the interests of humanity? Do they serve the rhythms of the soul, the rhythm of being? Only if they do can we dodge the pitfalls of idolatry, the worship of false gods. <u>His question: to what extent does this technology serve to make us more actively human, to enable life in its fullness?</u>

But what about the traditional technologies of liturgy? Language, stone, book, bell, candle … and so on. We should not forget that liturgy from its beginnings has been increasingly served by technology.

TECHNOLOGIES OF LITURGY

Language ■ Stone ■ Book ■ Bell ■ Candle ■ Bread ■ Wine ■ Bible ■ Chair ■ Lectern ■ Hymnsheets ■ Wall ■ Door ■ Stairs ■ Floor ■ Surface Material ■ Cup ■ Thurible ■ Vestments ■ Alb ■ Pew ■ Carpet ■ Stained Glass ■ Lighting ■ Cloth ■ Chalice ■ Communion Tokens ■ Prayer Book ■ Attendance Cards ■ Censer ■ Purificator ■ Cross ■ Table ■ Altar ■ Ciborium ■ Sanctuary Rail ■ Iconostasis ■ Rood Screen ■ Stole ■ Rosary Beads ■ Crib ■ Church Stick ■ Font ■ Sculpture ■ Kneelers ■ Chasuble ■ Banners ■ Patten ■ Balcony ■ Pulpit ■ Cutty Stool ■ Service Sheet ■ Heating System ■ Collection Plate ■ Hymn Boards ■ Tabernacle ■ Drum ■ Organ ■ Mirror ■ Communion Plate ■ Ceiling ■ Lectionary ■ Pall ■ Stole ■ Vase

TECHNOLOGIES OF LITURGY

Electric Lighting ■ Dimmer ■ Loop System ■ Overhead Projector ■ Slide Projector ■ Flipchart ■ Electric instruments ■ Audio Recorder ■ CD, Mp3 & DVD Players ■ Microphone ■ Extension Lead ■ Internet Connection ■ PA Speakers & Amplifiers ■ Video Camera ■ Video Recorder ■ PC/ Laptop ■ Screen ■ Media Projector ■ Headset ■ PA Desk ■ Radio & Wifi Technology ■ Social Media ■ Website

For example, up to 100 years ago our spaces were themselves designed to be public address systems: the high pulpit so that the voice would be unimpeded, the sounding board above; walls that reflect rather than absorb; bare floors. Sometimes there was too much resonance; in such circumstances, it is the vowel sounds that suffer first, and thus a form of speaking developed which elongated the vowels – the 'pulpit voice'. The current taste for carpeting and 'comfort' inhibits hearing and other technologies become necessary.

In a service of worship technology takes its place within 'ritual', which is the orchestration of a sequence of various media. We should also remember the derivation of the word: *techne* means art or craft. One of the most significant technologies in worship is congregational song, i.e. *unaccompanied* congregational song. It is a gift, a creative art that we have: liberating, cheap, portable. When we talk of technology in worship we are potentially talking of tools that are 'appropriate', personal.

APPROPRIATE LITURGICAL TECHNOLOGIES?

Pens ■ Paper ■ Envelopes ■ Cardboard ■ Boxes ■ Writing Pads ■ Gloves ■ Reading Lamps ■ Blotting Pads ■ Nails ■ Saw ■ Hammer ■ Rope ■ Coins ■ Adhesive Tape ■ Clay ■ Fruit Crate ■ Fishing Net & Floats ■ Polystyrene Blocks ■ Found Objects ■ Seeds ■ Planter Tray ■ Keys ■ Welcome Mat ■ Postcards ■ Newspapers ■ Magazines ■ Cloth Strips ■ Stones ■ Cushions ■ Wool

■ Drama ■ Dance ■ Sound ■ Silence ■ Movement
■ Stillness ■ Unaccompanied congregational song

Such technologies are really 'vocabularies', and we employ a range of vocabularies in worship. But it is important to remember what these vocabularies are expressing. St Mary's Cathedral in Glasgow (Scottish Episcopal Church) has experienced a 15% - 20% growth in the last year or so. The reason was less technological wizardry but the pastoral relationships that the vocabularies expressed. After the social media furore which arose around the invitation to a Muslim to read from the Koran, people realised that here was a place of hospitality, justice, love, inclusiveness.

Applying the principles: the screen

The example taken was the screen, and a series of slides was prepared to illustrate aspects of this: biblical images, the use of physical (stone, wooden) screens in some branches of the world church (indeed, in our own history in the West) to delineate space, the place that screens in general and in all their variety have in contemporary society. This part of the paper had to be truncated because of time constraint. The following points were among those made.

Reference has already been made to the high pulpit. Apart from its original 'PA' purposes, this came to be seen as expressing unassailable authority. The preacher was 'six feet above contradiction', the people became a passive audience. In itself the screen is neutral but it similarly can become a single point of power and authority. A screen can hide as well as reveal.

Clearly screens have great advantages. They can magnify words for the visually impaired, they can engender a posture for better singing. Text, however, is not its best use, but rather images, reflective material. For we are embodied persons; we need to engage not just head and ears. PowerPoint is a business meeting medium.

But with this, there are downsides. Screens need a degree of darkness – they are great at night! The worst time is when there is bright light – like at 11am in the northern latitudes where light comes in at an angle! Sometimes this can render the screen partially unviewable. Technology can fail us.

Chairs are another example of technology. People can position themselves at the back where hearing is difficult and singing is fragmented – you in your small corner and I in mine! Chairs should be used so that people can sit *together.* The

simple technology of a piece of rope – closing off rear pews – is effective!

There are aesthetic challenges in how screens look and are mounted, and indeed of other technologies also.

The following points were also made:

It is often the case that the software that is offered as a resource for using technical methods of communication can be limited – in approach, in theology. It is important to make people theologically aware; your worship teams need to be well educated and prepared for the task.

For the successful use of technology in worship, it has been suggested that you need a team of six, otherwise it is unsustainable.

6 The afternoon session

Although there was a panel of 'consultants', the focus was on the interaction between those gathered round the tables. The consultants, those who had come bringing particular experience, would share in this process, moving round the tables during the afternoon so that all could meet them and draw on their expertise; they would help facilitate the groups and would report as requested. The reporting would not be exhaustive, the focus being not on outcomes but on the opportunity for people, themselves experienced in this matter in different ways and at different levels, to share with others what they knew and the questions they had.

Discussion was based round three areas: the use of technology in worship; the use of technology in a building; the use of technology outside the church campus. Within these, three 'questions' would be put but the questions were not to be 'answered' as such but act as stimulus for what people wished to say and share. They were:

Use of technology in worship

- How have you experienced technology enhancing or distracting from worship and how would you wish to replicate or avoid that?

- Is there a danger of technological considerations getting in the way of full and engaging worship?

- Would Calvin, Knox and Benedict have used PowerPoint? If not, why not?

Use of technology in a building

- How far is too far in changing a sanctuary to adapt to modern technologies?

- What liturgical considerations legitimately impact on the adaptation of a sanctuary to accommodate technology?

- When should a church spend (or not spend) on technological changes?

Use of technology outwith the church campus

- Is modern technology the saviour or false messiah of today's church?

- If social media provides a new forum for preaching, should we draft our tweets as theologically carefully as we prepare our sermons?

- In your experience, does your church use social media to preach only to the converted (and is that necessarily a bad thing)?

7 Interviews

First, Ishbel introduced and interviewed two of the consultants from whom we had not yet heard. She asked about their role and tasks, and invited them to describe their best and worst experiences of the use of technology in worship.

Phill Mellstrom is Worship Development Officer with the Mission and Discipleship Council. As his worst experience, he instanced a church with lots of pillars who had opted for many small screens. When asked why, they explained it was 'for the kids', because they like to play games. But why come to church for this? The right questions were not being asked.

- His example of good practice was an event called 'Remnant'. The idea was to take a piece of left-over cloth – a remnant – and let it represent a memory. The remnants were then taken to different stations around the room. One was 'Where was God' in our remembering of the event, 'Where *is* God' in our remembering, and 'Where will God be' as we remember and deal with/process/pray around this memory. To help people and to set the mood, there was a soundtrack of various songs from different generations, with noises like the sea lapping on

the beach, children laughing etc., all mixed with lots of reverb so it sounded distant. The soundtrack was played throughout and various lighting effects were used at each of the prayer stations. The use of technology was subtle and was very effective in creating an ambience in keeping with the concept of the event.

Judith Roebuck has the task, with the Committee on Art and Architecture, of monitoring Ecclesiastical Exemption. An example of bad practice was in a church with columns and balconies where it was difficult to mount a screen. These were placed on arms attached to the top ends of the balconies, which stretched round the church, but the mounting greatly detracted from the appearance of the screen. The physical didn't meet people's expectations.

- Her good practice example was the sensitive use of lighting, like that in this historic Dalmeny Kirk. *The 360 degree record of this and of a growing number of other church buildings is gradually being mounted on the Church of Scotland's website under 'Art and Architecture Resources > Carta 360 and on the Church's YouTube channel.*

Ishbel Smith spoke of visiting candidates in churches, where she found considerably more bad practice than good. Insufficient thought was often applied to putting words on screens where, for example, the Bible reading was shown while it was being read, but (unintended) in a different version. Also, this caused you to notice if the reader made an error and this was distracting. In her view, the Word should be heard to be read, not read while being heard. Another example was the church where (as was common) the only thing to appear on screens was words, and no images – except for an image of the exterior of the church, which people had seen on their way in and thus it was redundant. Further, there was a case where the sign language interpreter could not see the screen at the same time as looking at those for whom the signing was being made. Quality is also important; an example was a poor film from YouTube shown during a nativity play. There have also been microphones which don't work, and people not knowing how to use them. She commented that we should always be ready for when nothing at all works.

8 The discussion round the tables

The participants round the tables then addressed the three broad areas. What

follows is based on the reporting of facilitators with added comments relating to the questions made by some of the participants following the Consultation. This is not intended to be a coherent account but an attempt to capture main points. Questions (already listed above) are not reproduced here.

The use of technology in worship

Graham Maule's paper had listed over 90 'tools' / technologies that have been appropriated by the church at worship. At various times some have been rejected as carrying content that was inimical to the practice or theological beliefs of a given group or of a particular era.

Was not technology responsible for the spread of Protestantism, with the time of reformation coinciding with the invention of the printing press? The printed word is now 'built in' to the way we worship.

The question is: how do we select and employ the tools on offer so that they integrate with and enhance worship and, like older examples, become essential components in the ritual?

Where new technologies disturb or dominate worship, this can be because they are of poor quality. Churches can over-reach themselves by installing cutting edge systems but without developing the expertise, as well as a necessary discernment, to use them.

It was suggested that digital technologies required a team of people (up to six persons perhaps) so that people did not find themselves constantly at the 'delivery end' and unable to take part fully in worship, and also so that there was know-how to access updates etc. and to keep the equipment in good condition (e.g. batteries in microphones). Technology was not labour-saving!

Also necessary was *discernment*; users need to be educated / educate themselves not just about the technologies in question but about what worship is and how it 'works'. Indeed, there are some *long established* technologies which continue to require trained people, such as teaching new hymns, and of course leading and co-ordinating worship.

Training is not of course confined to new media. Audio visual aids have been

in place for a long time but still regularly people seem not to understand them and there is much bad practice.

It was felt that, often, new media were allowed to <u>drive</u> worship rather than act as a vehicle for it. A plea was made for a holistic approach when a new process was enabled to merge with what was in place.

- An example of this was the a 'tree of life' laid out on the floor of a central Edinburgh church which people could walk through. Although many 'tools' were used in physical layout and in interpretation, a user commented that it was 'great to be in a space which was technology-free'! We can benefit from the extra dimensions offered by new media without noticing their presence.

It is not just modern digital technology that is under review today; some other technologies are now embedded and accepted as normal, but they give the wrong messages. An example might be the small cubes of bread and the individual glasses at Communion.

It was recognised that a new 'medium' was not necessarily 'better' or an 'advance' on what was done before and does not necessarily take us forward. An example is putting the words of hymns on screens. This is felt by many to change our relationship with the hymn, in that we are no longer 'dwelling within it' but being 'fed' it verse by verse. However, screens can improve the quality of the singing – people's heads are up and they can breathe better.

In relation to this it was noted that in some churches screens had completely replaced hymn books. In our tradition, hymns are seen as reflective material, at home or before a service begins. For both reasons, where there are screens perhaps hymn books need also to be available – and indeed many prefer when singing from a screen to have the book in their hands to refer to, checking back on the 'argument' or looking ahead to the period from which the hymn comes. When we sing, we are 'dwelling' in the hymns not reacting to lines of text, with no opportunity in advance to know what one is about to sing and invest in it mentally, spiritually, emotionally. Also, we may even want to look at a remembered hymn during other parts of the service.

In fact, the development of the use of screens raised quite a number of points which apply across the board. They included –

What are they most useful for? The most common use was probably *text*, whereas perhaps their chief advantage was that they enabled the employment of *images*, just as stained glass had done for our predecessors and still does for us today.

- In one church, where a new Christmas event involving adults and children was being planned (see also under social media below), the mums asked that the complete Christmas story should be read. The minister felt children would lose focus during this and prepared a PowerPoint of clip-art slides to match the progress of the readings and projected them on to the wall beside the pulpit. The children were fascinated – and the move also involved a husband who was not a churchgoer but whose expertise was given a place.

An example of a questionable use of text on screens might be the showing of the passage of Scripture that was being read. Sometimes this could be a different version from the one read (perhaps because that is what the software offered), and was thus distracting, or the reader made an error and this was seen by everyone. On this issue, many felt that the tradition of 'hearing' the Word was important. However, others disagreed, one suggesting that in a passage with difficult names it was helpful to see what they were, and another finding that a different translation to the one being read helped comprehension.

It was often assumed that screens assisted participation but there was a point of view which felt they reduced it. On the 'assist' wing, one minister noted:

- At baptismal services, where often there were many in the congregation who rarely came to church, I found it fascinating to see them all, particularly young people, following every word. Without the words on the screen, chances are their minds would have been miles away!

A contrary view was that screens could be an unwitting exercise of power over people and thus reduce their freedom to worship *see also main address*. In relation to this, the point was made that some denominations made more room for senses other than the visual and now churches were learning and benefitting

from other traditions. Using a screen could 'squeeze out' other senses (but perhaps this underlines the importance of what we put on it).

On the question of power, was there even a tie-up with the earlier, medieval, rood screen and indeed with the screens that closed off holy space in some branches of the church, like the Orthodox, where the majority of worshippers are kept outside? There are issues here of inclusion and exclusion, who were privileged and who were not. In a sense, modern screens could represent a re-introduction of authority (e.g. when the pulpit was removed). A screen can hide as well as reveal.

Another aspect is that we ought to consider using screens more imaginatively.

- An example was five or six projectors throwing psalms (in this case) on to the walls, the roof, the floor, through archways etc. People moved between them (not captivated and kept static) and at their own time, injecting a greater participation into worship and also a peacefulness and a listening attitude. Images can also be treated in this way.

The motive in drawing on modern technologies is often given as reaching <u>young people</u>. A problem with that is that we are often more out of date than the young people we want to reach.

There was discussion about whether the control of the technology is a way to involve younger people although it was considered that you didn't get as much out of the worship if you were concentrating on the technology.

Other general points were that the nature of liturgy is dramatic; the theatre is the closest of the arts to worship. We must let that come through. Sometimes simply highlighting is enough to make a difference.

- The use of the medieval flute in that day's opening worship may be an example.

Speaking of drama and allowing the shape of the worship to 'carry' as a play does, we should be wary of 'driving' it too much. 'Don't over-entertain'. A crucial principle is 'less is more'.

<u>Light</u> can be a more powerful technology than we often allow.

- Instead of just lighting overhead, use lighting to set up different atmospheres, spaces.

It is important to bear in mind that there are very different tools and that they do different things. We need to discriminate. Technology is a tool box – but you don't use a circular saw to hammer in a nail.

We shouldn't be afraid of failing. 'Sin boldly' then reflect on it, so that we become more insightful, wiser.

Use of technology in a building

Very early in the discussion the issue of congregations' attitudes to change was raised. This should not always be dismissed by the more adventurous as lack of vision or clinging to the past. There are many reasons for resistance: emotion, history, theology, how people understand and experience worship, all different but all needing to be unpacked. In so doing, as well as the reluctant grasping the appropriateness of a proposal, the 'moderniser' may be challenged to think more carefully.

- When change is proposed, seeing what others have done is helpful. The best way to engage with new technology was in conversation with others who have developed or learnt from its use (our host church had so far received seven visits from other congregations – all at different stages in their journey).

- It is also important to generate discussion within the congregation, when we might become aware of mixed views; do they all enjoy worship as it is?

Finally, it is not only people who lead or who operate the technology that need training; worshippers themselves, although they often have sound 'gut knowledge' from long experience, need 'training' in the direction of greater discernment.

It was feared that new technologies were often being imposed when there was no real demand or vision for it. Before spending money on installations, we should understand the motivation for doing so. Too often, such innovations are 'vanity projects' so that a church can say 'We are of the moment, in the vanguard'.

Often people were not convinced that a new technology would encourage new people. New people may be looking for what the church already offers.

There was also the consideration that all new systems rapidly become obsolete, and that we need to be aware of that.

So: always ask if what is being proposed is serving God / helping people to find God in their lives and worship, and: it must always be considered whether changes will enhance or distract from the integrity of the building. There is danger of turning our sanctuaries into conference centres, where the technology overpowers the space, is 'out of scale' with the context. (And if it is right to go ahead, it needs to be done well and installed professionally; we should not make do with amateur, temporary solutions.)

Use of technology outwith the church campus

- *Reference should be made to the contribution of Albert Bogle, based on the Sanctuary First initiative (Section 9 below) and to the 'case study' of Lanark Greyfriars (Section 4 above). See also the contribution (Section 9 below) from David Scott and the YouTube film showing how, in a parish with several centres of worship and only two ministers, the sermon can be 'given' in different locations simultaneously, in the context of locally-led worship.*

Worship has never been 'sealed off' from the community around it. Special events such as baptisms and weddings bring in those who do not habitually attend church; high festivals bring others; each week churchgoers mingle with the life of the community; its phraseology, its stories, its songs are reference points in the wider culture. We should be alert as to how technology can enable Sunday worship to 'spill over' into the life of the world.

The technologies under discussion may particularly come into their own at a time when the church is not the centre for the community in the same way as before, as a kind of window into the church.

Social media (such as Facebook) can act like a church notice board. Another analogy used was that it is like the church bell, keeping the invitation open, bringing people into church.

- Ringing of a bell attracts. A school came into church; the pupils heard the organ and wouldn't leave. We should use such media to arouse curiosity about church. We are counter cultural, we are different; we have insights that no-one else has; we have worship and ritual. Use social media to make people curious, to tickle their fancy.

- *See also the main paper (Section 5 above) and the part social media played in bringing growth to a Glasgow congregation.*

- *See also the quotation at the head of this report.*

Social media tend to be used principally as an extension of the newsletter/ parish magazine. There needs to be more guidance on how to use social media more effectively; a strategy of engagement needs to be worked out.

Sometimes social media only reaches the converted, but that may not be a fault in that opportunities are given for challenging people at the level of their spiritual lives.

Social media is not saviour but servant. Where social media is used it is as an adjunct to physical engagement in the community.

Some ministers, it was said, are dismissive about social media; they may not see the relevance because they do not use it themselves; yet is 'natural' for many in the congregation, not least younger people, and their skills may be drawn upon.

Social media may even 'assemble' the church, or gather people for worship and make possible what might not otherwise be so easily achievable. An example was:

- Prior to Christmas, I heard that the young mums were very keen to be involved in the Christmas Eve Family Service, and in fact plan something themselves. In the past couple of years, I could never ascertain how many children would be there – to do a Nativity play or anything. However, this year, one of the mums sent Facebook messages round them all, rallied them all to dress the children up as the various characters (and the costumes were excellent, having been done at home), choose a song (actually a bit naff!) for them to sing –

that's all they actually did – walked in, sang the song, sat down while someone read a poem, and glow-sticks were handed out at the end.

Social media is not a preaching tool *per se*. Nevertheless, careful consideration should be given to the person responsible for posting content, as they then become the mouthpiece of the church. (But we remember that no single version of social media is the only one and also that many people still rely on traditional methods of communication.)

Tweets should be carefully prepared. They should not be 'thrown off' but be of quality, and behind this careful thought and deliberated strategy is needed, since once it is 'out there' you can't take it back. Also, absent is the body language or nuance of the direct encounter and the message must work with that.

- The example was given of one Council Secretary who fills a couple of hours on a Sunday preparing the Twitter messages for the coming week.

  Social media may also help to widen the pastoral reach of minister and congregation. Someone reported:

- We are in the process of finding new elders, and one idea that sprang from a brain-storming session was to have what at the time we called 'virtual elders!' Of course, there is no such thing as a virtual elder, but we were thinking of the young mums' network. We may end up calling them 'pastoral workers' but it will be another way of linking up congregation, and indeed the local community, with the minister.

One person noted that they have never been moved by social media as much as they have 'live' worship.

9 Contributions from those not present

a) The Very Revd Albert Bogle, Sanctuary First, Presbytery of Falkirk

Technology is neither good or bad. It is a tool in many ways to be used in both corporate and private worship but in such a way that it enables truthful

worship. Like all tools we need to ensure that it doesn't obscure the passion and the intention of the heart and mind to worship God.

However, it will not be technology that renews the church. It is Spirit-led creativity that knows how to use worship, perhaps as a missional tool in public and private devotions.

I'm particularly interested to see how social media has been developing using technology to deliver scripture and prayer into the hand that holds a tablet or a smart phone.

All forms of our technology, be it architecture or music or the fruits of the digital revolution, need eventually to submit to the place of silence in worship. To be still to know God. (The smart phone like a book can be silent.) Prayer and imagination and vision often operate at best in silence. I have come to see the significance of silence and how it can be weaved around a holy place or space, be it on the ground or the internet. I'm not joining the Quakers just yet! – but 21st century people are looking and longing for space and silence.

We also need to ensure that our imaginations are not controlled by the constraints of technology in worship. However, that is another area.

I started using screens and projectors, moving images, music, and even candles and smoke machines, in the early 90s. However, while it is useful to have the freedom to experiment and while the creating of moods and atmospheres are important elements in public worship, it is the preparation and practice of the heart before worship that transforms a performance into more truthful worship and shapes our community worship and practice.

b) The Revd David Scott, Traprain, Presbytery of Lothian

David reported on a project involving his parish and the neighbouring Athelstaneford *with* Whitekirk and Tyninghame, conceived by him and his colleague Revd Joanne Evans-Boiten. He wrote:

"I thought you might be interested in the Technology Pilot which we undertook over six weeks in the summer with our neighbouring charge. The purpose was to see whether the preaching of the Word could be sustained in situations

where the minister was not available to preach. We made a twelve-minute film about the Pilot –

https://youtu.be/8lrw78osihw

As you can see, people responded well, both in their leadership of worship and in their appreciation of the filmed sermons."

10 The worship of the day

Both opening and closing worship reflected the theme of the day.

Opening Worship was a rewriting of the ancient office of Terce. The theme of technology was reflected in material derived from Scripture, by the way the space was used in dialogue, and by the use of recorded music. *This appears in the next item within this issue of the Record.*

Closing worship consisted entirely of the singing of a hymn (CH4 612) on divine and human creativity:

<div align="center">

Come to us, creative Spirit,
in our Father's house,
every human talent hallow,
hidden skills arouse,
that within your earthly temple,
wise and simple
may rejoice …

</div>

and which ended with a doxology. The tune used was *Angel Voices* (498) from a hymn of similar theme. The 'technology' of unaccompanied singing was used. The minister of Greyfriars dismissed us and pronounced the Benediction.

11 Afterthoughts and assessment

From Ian Scade, Sorn Parish Church

I just wanted to thank you for the efforts you and your group put into the Lanark event. I always find Lanark has lots of life and it is actually quite a central location for the south of Scotland.

The content of the day was not what I was expecting (which was detailed advice on technology for churches) but a much deeper and more meaningful day (much more doxology than technology), with the tone set by Graham Maule who really dug deep back into the past to give us fundamental principles on which to base our thinking. In the words of the song, 'he sent us homewards to think again', and that has been liberating for me, being one of those who has always been driven to keep up to date with technology.

The main learning point for me was that our ancestors have developed the design of our buildings over centuries to facilitate worship and we should be very careful when we start to interfere with this, especially in listed buildings. I am now more focussed on how to make more appropriate use of the space and that, by accident or design, helps to resolve the main problems associated with introducing screens into a T-shaped building.

It was also good to meet the other delegates, some of whom had been very helpful to me (from a distance) over the years.

From Rev Elspeth MacLean, Forth: St Paul's

Thanks so much for an excellent day yesterday in Lanark. It was not what I was expecting, but I don't really know what I was expecting, but I am so very pleased that I was there.

The worship at beginning and end really made the day for me. The use of Psalms was inspirational, so thanks very much for that. And the presentation by Graham Maule opened up the whole subject of technology in surprising ways.

Thank you very much for a really thought-provoking and stimulating day.

From Felicity Burrows, Mission and Discipleship Council

It was very interesting to visit Greyfriars church and to hear the process of consultation and decision-making that the congregation had gone through, and the compromises that were needed. I very much enjoyed Graham's talk – a tour of 20th century philosophers is not what I'd expected! – and was very thought-provoking. It resonated with the discussions that we'd had here in 121 about the appropriateness of technology and whether we are driving

it or being forced into reluctant compliance. There is a very narrow view of what technology is available or appropriate. I loved Ishbel's description of the 'technology-free' labyrinth at St Andrew's and St George's West in Edinburgh that was in fact bristling with technology.

I don't know what expectations people were bringing to the day, but the talks and discussion topics were very wide-ranging and I hope they have prompted some deeper questions about how to develop and deepen our worship in the 21st century with (or without) the aid of the available technology.