PREACHING AND TECHNOLOGY: A STUDY OF ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

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Historically, various technologies, print and the television, for example, have been adopted by religious groups to spread their teachings and faith. Presently, many churches are adopting various digital technologies to accomplish this aim. This study examines the adoption of digital technologies into preaching to determine the effects of this adoption on the sermon as a genre and preaching as a rhetorical practice. It contends that understanding genre expectations, which are steeped in the traditions and values of a community, is key to understanding how and why digital technologies are used in particular ways and further, how those uses shape or fail to shape a preacher’s *ethos*. The study employs a combination of survey and case study research to determine how both preachers and congregants understand the sermon as a genre and how those understandings influence the practice of preaching and the adoption of digital technologies.

The results of the study indicate that many preachers and congregants privilege the spoken word in the sermon because, for both historical and theological reasons, they perceive the sermon as an oral genre. As a result, they situate digital technologies as supplementary or peripheral to the oral act of preaching. Such a separation is a method for preserving existing practices, beliefs, and values, while simultaneously adopting new technologies. However, as long as preachers and congregants expect the sermon to be an oral genre and evaluate preachers by those expectations including digital technologies in the sermon will not help preachers construct or maintain *ethos*. This study concludes by
articulating two options for building *ethos* through the use of technology: (1) to reconceive the sermon as a multimedia genre that integrates digital technologies as integral to the sermon, thereby taking advantage of their affordances, or (2) to use digital technologies to improve congregational *ethos* through accessibility. Digital technologies may allow congregations to become more user-friendly, thereby increasing their *ethos* as a whole. Ultimately, this study suggests that the sermon is a genre in flux, being reshaped by the introductions of new technologies, and that further study is necessary to fully understand preaching in an increasingly digital culture.
To my beloved husband without whose love and support I could never have completed this project

To my little loves, so you know that all things are possible
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INTRODUCTION. PREACHING AND TECHNOLOGY: A STUDY OF ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

The connection between rhetoric and Christianity dates back to the earliest days of Christianity as an organized religion. In fact, George Kennedy (1999), in *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition*, connects rhetoric and religion long before the rise of Christianity. He argues, however, that the emphasis on teaching and converting through preaching in Christianity made it an ideal site for rhetorical practice. Church fathers such as Augustine directly called for the use of secular rhetorical strategies in service of the mission of the church (Kennedy, 1999, p. 182). Augustine, it could be argued, was calling for “remediating” secular rhetorical strategies—removing them from their original contexts and uses, but keeping the vestiges of those contexts because those vestiges would be recognized and valued by hearers accustomed to a certain style of oratory. Osborn (1999) claims that Christian preachers appropriated rhetorical devices, such as exemplum, maxim, catalog of virtues and vices, dialogue, and diatribe, that were commonly associated with both philosophers and moralists. Using accepted and recognized rhetorical strategies on “new” content was a rhetorical move to develop a relationship between speaker and hearer that would create an opportunity for persuasion and, perhaps, conversion.

The sermon, then, was a genre born out of remediation—“the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms” (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 273). As it came to be a genre in its own right, separating itself from the classical rhetorical categories of judicial, deliberative, and epideictic, preachers made use, and continue to make use, of the sermon’s heritage of remediation by making use of remediation in their preaching. But rather than remediating only the strategies of rhetoric, they also began to remediate cultural artifacts in their preaching by citing and alluding to scripture passages and other doctrinal writings by the church fathers. Edwards (2004), describing the early church sermons of Justin Martyr says, “The argument is developed by frequent quotations from Scripture. These are remarkable not only for their quantity but also for the range of materiel regarded as canonical” (p. 16). Preachers also
used verbal illustrations from edited collections or from other sermons. As printing became more ubiquitous and affordable, sermons were remediated in more ways, appearing in print as documents to be read, rather than oral performances to be heard. Although some sermons appeared simply as transcripts of preached sermons for those who had been unable to hear them, others were produced as manuscripts designed not to be preached out loud, but only to be read silently (Campbell, 2010). John Wesley, a Protestant reformer and founder of the Wesleyan church, argued that oral sermons were for the proclamation of the gospel, focused on conversion, while those composed only to be read were for nurture and reflection of existing faith (Edwards, 2004). Clearly the technology of printing caused some remediation of the sermon from an oral performance to a print-based document. This remediation was furthered by the annotation of published sermon manuscripts by the publisher to include extra notes or commentary. This practice highlighted the textual, print-based nature of the sermon, and in some ways removed the sermon from its highly oral context in the worship service. However, in practice, the sermon, in the worship setting, remained and remains a primarily oral genre.

Despite being situated as an oral genre, the sermon’s orality is being challenged in the age of digital technology. Many scholars of preaching advocate reshaping the sermon from a purely oral genre to a multimedia genre that resonates more clearly and powerfully to the current multimedia culture. As a result, preachers are increasingly using digital technology to remediate, and to remix or to a variety of media in their sermons. Lessig (2008) describes remixing as to collaging media from a variety of sources together, removing them from their original context and purpose, and repurposing them to convey some other message. Remixes are most successful when audiences both recognize the original context of the media and the novelty of its use in a new context. Although preachers of early sermons remediated the church fathers, illustrations, and other sermons, they generally relied on religious texts and contexts for artifacts to remediate. As early as the preaching of Gregory the Great in the Middle Ages, however, this practice of remediation began to include non-religious illustrations to explain religious doctrines (Edwards, 2004). This practice of remediating other print-based examples continued throughout the
history of preaching and continues today. In one of the most widely used contemporary manuals for preachers, Crum (1988) exhorts preachers to engage hearers on multiple levels, sensory, experiential and in words. Yet while these preachers remediated both religious and non-religious materials in their sermons, they did so by remediating these examples in oral form, meaning that they either converted written text into oral speech or they repurposed oral speech from other contexts into the sermon. What is noteworthy is that the remediation preachers did was text-based and speaker-based, thus maintaining the oral nature of the sermon.

In the twenty-first century, preachers can remediate not only religious or secular texts but also any number of digital media—including music, television clips, film clips, photographs, and digital graphics—by taking them from their original cultural context and re-using them in the context of the sermon. While on the surface this practice seems to be simply an extension of the historical practice of remediation in preaching, it has some distinct differences to previous remediation practices because digital technology introduces elements of the visual to the sermon delivery that previous remediation did not and thereby necessitates a reshaping of the genre from purely oral to multimodal.

That is not to say that there was no visual remediation in preaching prior to the introduction of digital technology. Roxanne Mountford (2001), in “On Gender and Rhetorical Space,” describes the ways preachers have historically used the physical space of the pulpit to communicate both their authority and their message. Troeger (1996) notes that “the visual arts were so central to the presentation of the gospel in the Middle Ages that they even influenced the ways preachers spoke and gestured” (p. 12). Moving forward in history, Edwards (2004) reveals that Renaissance preaching manuals focused on gesture as a central visual element of delivery and persuasion. Wilson (1992) also argues that preachers in the 18th century made use of visual aids: “the rope as a scourge in acts of contrition, a human skull (another common aid for spiritual contemplation) in a sermon on death; a large picture of someone who was damned was processed for the sermon on hell (the same picture would be blessed the next night)” (p. 118).
What I argue distinguishes historical examples of remediation from contemporary digital remediation is that they were still preacher/rhetor-centric with none of these examples taking attention away from the preacher/rhetor as speaker, but instead acting as an extension of the speaker. By contrast, the present digital remediation in preaching has the potential to take attention from the preacher/rhetor as speaker by directing attention to an image on a screen or by infusing a new voice or voices into the space of the sermon. Wilson and Moore (2008) argue that “The screen is the stained glass of the digital age, except now we have the privilege of working in a dynamic rather than static form” (p. 43). What Wilson and Moore overlook, however, is that including dynamic media into the historically speaker-centered and oral genre of the sermon requires re-envisioning the sermon to not only accommodate, but embrace the affordances of digital technologies. Rather than the remediated elements being seamlessly integrated into the sermon by connection to the preacher’s voice and position as speaker, they must be disruptive to the traditional flow of the single speaker sermon, and thereby draw increased attention to both themselves and to their relationship to the preacher/rhetor.

Although digital technology has the capacity to shape the future of the sermon, it also poses a serious challenge to the authority many Christian denominations invest in the spoken word, and which is made manifest in the sermon. The oral nature of the sermon is directly connected to belief in the power and authority of the spoken word. Many scholars of preaching argue that including additional media negatively disrupts the sermon by directing attention away from the speaker and the central message the speaker conveys. They argue that disruption caused by the use of additional media diminishes the work and role of the pastor as preacher, and thus strips value and authority from that position (Armstrong, 2001; Fortner, 1996; Resner, 1999). However, others construe this disruption as positive or productive because it creates a more worshipper, rather than preacher-centered experience that is designed to meet the needs of the parishioner (Fast, 2001; Cargall, 2007; Wilson & Moore, 2008).

In addition to the potential disruption these media can cause to the traditional single speaker model of the sermon, digital remediation in preaching becomes more visible because it often relies
heavily on the concept of remix, which leaves the original context of the artifact visible because it is not only the artifact, but the context, that carries meaning for the hearers (Lessig, 2008). For example, historically, preachers remediated their sermons by attributing them to church fathers, so that people who valued the work of the church fathers would be more likely to read them or use them in churches (Edwards, 2004). The alleged context of the sermons gave them credibility and merit. In the digital age, preachers remix scenes and images from popular television shows, films, YouTube videos, commercials, print ads, photographs, and clip art with the intention that their audiences recognize them and also recognize the contexts these scenes and images carry with them may be applicable to the sermon’s message. For example, Cargall (2007) encourages preachers to use popular films as the basis for their sermons, connecting situations in the films with biblical texts. He argues not only for explicitly using the film, but also that doing so can help the preacher “speak” the same cultural language as his/her hearers. This practice of remix should make the resulting remediation literally more visible, and, thus, more noticeable to both preacher and hearers.

This project examines how this more visible remediation and remix, a result of incorporating digital technologies, is affecting the sermon as a historical genre and its corresponding rhetorical practices. In his introduction to Communication and Change in American Religious History, Leonard Sweet (1993) describes the guiding premise of his book as answering the question, “whether changes in communications technology in a culture are of major importance to the Christian church in the late twentieth century” (p. 4). This study attempts to answer Sweet’s question and extend the study of pulpit oratory into the twenty-first century by focusing on the ways preachers incorporate twenty-first century digital technologies into the historical practices of preaching and remediation. More specifically, it seeks to demonstrate that the practice of using digital technology, and the accompanying practices of remediation have the ability to alter both the historical genre of the sermon and its accompanying rhetorical practices of preaching. Such changes necessitate a re-imagining of the relationships between the preacher/rhetor, congregant/hearer, the sermon genre and technology. By collecting data from preachers
who use digital technologies in their preaching and supplementing that data with input from their congregation members, this project examines the preacher’s understanding of why and how he/she remediates cultural artifacts in his/her preaching with those digital technologies and how his/her congregation members respond to that remediation. With such an understanding, I discuss and clarify how the sermon could/should change as a genre in response to both new technologies and the new exigencies and cultural contexts they create, as well as the resistance such changes might meet in religious communities that highly value the spoken word and orality.

The following chapters begin by situating the sermon as a historical genre and preaching as a historical rhetorical practice. Working from this framework, I detail the results of a large-scale survey and three case studies designed to examine how preachers and congregations are actively engaging with the adoption and integration of digital technologies into both worship more broadly, and more specifically, to preaching. These results indicate that the conflict about introducing technology into the sermon briefly described above has implications for how preachers and congregants understand sermons, technology, and the relationships between the two. More importantly, this study indicates that whether preachers resist or embrace digital technologies, those attitudes about technology and the technologies themselves are actively reshaping preaching as a rhetorical practice and the sermon as a genre.
CHAPTER I. “IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD”: PREACHING AS RHETORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PRACTICE

In this chapter, I begin by bringing together a diverse body of literature from rhetoric and theology that will frame this project. I have framed this section by approaching the sermon as a historical rhetorical practice and the sermon as a historically oral genre. The first section discusses the historical study of preaching as a rhetorical practice and the historic connections between rhetoric and theology. Following this discussion of preaching as a rhetorical practice, I focus on the sermon as a genre, specifically discussing its purpose and function, drawing on historical work from rhetoric and theology. After establishing the sermon as a historical genre, I look to the work of new media scholars to explain the practices of remediation and remix that have historically been part of preaching. This section also highlights how digital media are changing the practices of remediation and remix in contemporary preaching. After looking at the sermon itself, I focus on the preacher as rhetor. Using both theological and rhetorical sources, I discuss extensively at how ethos and authority are construed and constructed in preaching. Based on the literature, I provide working definitions of both ethos and authority. Finally, because ethos and authority are not situated solely in the rhetor, but are also intimately connected to audience, I discuss at the audience of preaching, articulating the relationship between introducing digital technologies into the sermon as a way to effectively reach a contemporary audience. Following this section, I outline the research questions that arose from the literature and describe the remaining chapters that present the study that I designed and executed to answer these questions, as well as the results of that study.

Preaching as Historical and Rhetorical Practice

Historical Place of the Sermon in Rhetoric

Preaching, or pulpit oratory, has long been part of the rhetorical tradition as a valued form of public speaking. The chief aim of the sermon is persuasion—persuasion to believe, persuasion to act—which is one reason the sermon from its infancy relied heavily on rhetorical strategies. But it has also
been recognized as distinctly different from its counterparts of judicial/bar and deliberative/governmental oratory. Its extra-temporal goals imbue it with a different sense of purpose, of value, and of authority than its temporal counterparts. Pulpit oratory, because of its connection to morality and to immortality, positions successful persuasion not only as a worthy aim, but as a necessary one, as literally a matter of life and death.

Pulpit oratory was a central part of rhetorical education and the rhetorical tradition from late antiquity through the late nineteenth century. Krul (1971), in Murphy’s (1971) collection that examines works by medieval school masters and the roles these works played in the rhetorical curriculum, reveals that the thematic sermon, which appears in the thirteenth century, is attributed by various scholars to interest in the works of Aristotle and to the influence of Ciceronian rhetoric. Further, Edwards (2004) asserts that “especially in the golden age of the Fathers, when all of the great preachers had been trained as rhetoricians, and in the Renaissance, Reformation and Romantic periods, when the recovery of classical rhetoric had considerable influence on preaching” preaching was a part of a general rhetorical education (p. 12). With the increase in opportunities for college educated people and the corresponding decrease in the number of people going into the ministry, the study of pulpit oratory as a fundamental part of the general curriculum has declined, with the exception of seminaries and training institutions for pastors. While the study of pulpit oratory is no longer central to undergraduate education, the practice of preaching continues as part of Christian worship and it continues to rely on its foundations in rhetoric and rhetorical practice. Because of this connection to rhetoric, it continues to be a subject of study by rhetoricians, not for the purpose of practice, but for deeper understanding of the practice of rhetoric in actual context and for a deeper understanding of the connections between current and historical rhetorical practices, which Kennedy (1999) argues play a central role in situating, analyzing, and criticizing new technologies.
Orality and the Sermon

As noted in the introduction, preaching was, from its inception, an oral, rhetorical practice, born from the oral, rhetorical traditions of Greece and Rome. These traditions were instrumental in situating the sermon as an oral genre. However according to Kennedy (1999) Judeo-Christian rhetoric departs from its historical roots in secular historical practices “in that this truth is known from revelation or established signs sent by God, not discovered by dialectic through human effort” (p. 138). Christian belief situates God as the source of all truth, and thus privileges the means by which he communicates that truth, the spoken word. The sermon, then, becomes not simply a communication of that truth, but a manifestation of it. Sermons are spoken because preaching, at its core, is a remediating of Scripture—God’s Word spoken to His people—re-spoken by the preacher, who speaks on behalf of God. This is particularly powerful for denominations who believe that faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Thus, the oral nature of the sermon is a necessity for it to bring hearers to faith, but how preachers communicate their messages orally—the rhetorical strategies they employ—and what hearers respond to is dependent on local context.

Purpose of the Sermon

O.C. Edwards (2004) argues “there is no activity more characteristic of the church than preaching” (p. 3) and Kennedy (1999) notes that Christianity has, as part of its mission, a specific call to preach. The sermon, as a genre, serves to identify the social situation in which it exists, a notable characteristic of functioning genres according to Devitt (2004). It is a distinct mark of the Church¹, a unique mode of public speech that allows hearers to know they are in a Christian worship service. But beyond identifying the social situation for hearers, the sermon has historically been given a variety of functions within the service. Ideas about the purpose of the sermon are highly influenced by the work of St. Augustine, whose rhetorical training influenced his preaching and his writings on preaching.

¹ “Church” is a broad-reaching term that refers to the universal church—all Christians regardless of denomination or historic time period. “church” on the other hand may refer to a specific congregation or to the actual physical structure a congregation uses for worship.
Augustine (trans. 1958) identifies three purposes of the sermon: to inform, to delight and to persuade. He argued that one could not persuade without first informing and that one could not inform or persuade if one did not keep an audience’s attention by delighting them. But for Augustine, the ultimate aim of all preaching is persuasion to belief in Christian doctrine and persuasion to a life commensurate with that belief. Later Protestant theologians, like Martin Luther and John Calvin, saw preaching as a matter of salvation because through preaching people are convicted to believe (Edwards, 2004). Calvin also claimed that the preacher “frequently exhorts the congregation in order that a resistant will might be changed” (Wilson, 1992, p. 102). This belief persisted throughout history, with preachers in the eighteenth century claiming, “‘The two principal branches of preaching,’ … ‘are, first to tell the people what is their duty, and then to convince them that it is so’” (Edwards, 2004, p. 416).

In the contemporary context, Augustine’s general aims remain a part of the purpose of preaching. Edwards (2004) says, “Persuasion, as such, is not what we are trying to accomplish in all sermons—but preaching is motivated behavior—it is trying to accomplish something” (p. 833). In her study of preaching in African American churches, Beverly Moss (2003) identifies this “something” as teaching or educating, converting or transforming, problem-solving, edifying, and/or advocating as possible purposes of preaching. Shields (2000) gives a more specific definition: “One purpose of preaching is to offer people a vocabulary by which they can better express and therefore understand reality as including dimensions of divinity and eternity and to identify themselves as persons under the reign of God” (p. 3). Despite the varied understandings, the general end goal identified by Augustine remains virtually unchanged—to persuade the audience to belief and/or trust in Christian doctrine and to endorse and encourage a life—in worldview and practice—commensurate with that belief.

**Persuasion in the Sermon**

While it is readily agreed that the primary aim of the sermon is some sort of persuasion, whether to encourage belief or to motivate some action, the way that this persuasion takes place is much less clearly decided. Traditionally, the sermon was a site where the preacher spoke to an audience who
listened. The preacher persuaded by appeals to *logos*, in the most literal sense, in the words from biblical texts. In addition to appealing to the *logos*, in the most literal sense, preachers also persuaded by appeals to *pathos*, and in some contexts, these were valued equally to, if not more than, appeals to logos. Appeals to *pathos* were particularly prominent beginning in the seventeenth century in response to a prevailing belief that genuine faith was not simply a rational act of the mind, but also an affective experience. In revival meetings, preachers who were able to arouse such emotions in people that they had physical responses were highly esteemed as good preachers (Edwards, 2004). Victorian preachers relied heavily on *pathos*, especially pity and fear, in sermons that responded to what they saw as challenges to traditional Christian faith (Edwards, 2004). Preachers also appealed to *ethos* in a variety of ways. In some contexts, preaching without a prepared manuscript gave the preacher *ethos*. In others, their position as ordained pastor, vetted by the institutional church body, gave them *ethos*. And in yet others, having a spiritual or divine call gave them *ethos*.

That idea of the divine call and of ordination complicates the process of persuasion in the sermon. As Resner (1999) explains:

Some, operating with rhetorical principles as primary, have followed Aristotle to draw the conclusion that the person of the preacher, as with any orator, is perhaps the most important. Others, operating with theological assumptions as primary, have argued that since preaching is nothing less than God’s word for which God alone is responsible and which God alone makes efficacious, then any talk of human person making the word ‘more efficacious’ is idolatrous (p. 134).

This variable complicates the relationship between rhetor and message by situating the preacher either as the primary speaker and originator of the message or as an instrument by which God speaks His message to the audience. So while the preacher is a rhetor, crafting and delivering a message, he or she is not necessarily the only speaker or voice the audience must consider. This additional voice also complicates ideas of persuasion in the sermon—persuasion is an act, not only of the preacher actually speaking, but
also of God. So what is the role of the preacher/rhetor in the sermon? In some ways, this belief seems to let the preacher off the hook, as he/she is not ultimately responsible for whether or not the hearers are persuaded by the message. But in actuality, he/she is still responsible—as a trained theologian, and as the mouthpiece of God, so to speak—to provide the best possible channel through which God can work.

**Remediation & Remix in Preaching**

The question of who is speaking in the sermon is further complicated by the practice of remediation that has been part of preaching since it emerged as a distinct genre and rhetorical practice. By remediating practices, artifacts, and texts, preachers brought additional voices, albeit recast in their own, into the sermon in an almost invisible way—people recognized the source of the voices, but were more focused on their use in a new setting and for a new purpose. The remediation of secular rhetorical practices for divine purposes served as one of the foundations for the rhetorical practices of preaching in the early Church. Scott Gibson (2008) writes:

> The type of originality that we produce as preachers is more of a “third-hand” originality, as coined by John W. Etter. He writes, “The originality which enters mostly into our sermons is third-handed, and consists of our own and other men’s ideas, appropriated to ourselves by a process of mental digestion and assimilation, and expressed in words and methods of our own” (p. 40).

Early preachers borrowed forms from secular rhetoric; they borrowed conventions for delivery and establishing authority. Augustine (trans. 1958), in one of the earliest works on preaching advocates the use of secular rhetorical practices by preachers in order to help hearers understand the message. Additionally, Osborn (1999) argues that “deliberately chosen rhetorical form, for all the vigorous protestations to the contrary, is a striking feature of most Greek and Latin preaching from these early centuries after the apostles” (p. 411). In the Renaissance period, preachers made extensive use of catalogues of tropes and rhetorical devices to craft eloquent sermons. According to Glenn (1997), “style made the rhetorical man, for eloquence was the greatest human achievement” (p. 137). In the 20th century,
preachers turned to inductive preaching, a method popularized by Craddock (1979), to draw on congregation member’s specific experiences to teach about more general precepts.

Bolter and Grusin (2000) describe two distinct ways remediation can manifest itself: immediacy and through hypermediation. For the most part, remediation as a practice in preaching often goes, by design, unnoticed in the actual preaching. This aligns with Bolter and Grusin’s (2000) concept of immediacy—“a style of visual representation whose goal is to make the viewer forget the presence of the medium” (p. 272). The goal of most preaching was to make use of accepted rhetorical practice to bring the attention to the content, rather than the form or delivery of the message. By incorporating practices and strategies, preachers hoped to meet the expectations of their hearers in terms of delivery, organization, style, and by doing so, take the emphasis off how the message was delivered and persuade hearers to belief and action by meeting their expectations for proof and logical argumentation. The goal was to make the sermon feel familiar, despite its radical content. Clearly, I am extending Bolter & Grusin’s concept beyond the visual, although the visual is certainly present in preaching, but I believe this extension holds in a new media culture where audio and visual are inextricably intertwined.

Although most remediation common in preaching leans toward immediacy, many preachers also take part in the more visible or recognizable practice of hypermediation or remixing. Hypermediation is Bolter and Grusin’s (2000) term for “a style of visual representation whose goal is to remind the viewer of the medium” (p. 272). While in immediacy, the goal is to keep a familiar feel, but to use a technique or strategy in a way that removes it from and obscures its original context, remixing relies on audience members recognizing and valuing the original context and seeing the connection between the old and new context. Gibson cites J.M. Driver, who calls this practice “combinative originality.” Gibson further quotes Driver as claiming, “Ours is to be the originality of treatment, of combination, of presentation, of application of what is already existent and at our command. Nor is this sort of originality to be depreciated. It is really the higher sort” (p. 40). While textually-based remediation and remix has been both an accepted prevalent practice throughout the history of the sermon, remixing with digital media is
becoming increasingly common with the advent of multimedia preaching where preachers can more easily bring audio and visual elements into the sermon. The use of the visual makes remixing more visible and recognizable, in contrast to the more subtle practice of immediacy. And unlike immediacy, whose goal is to keep things running smoothly, hypermediacy has the potential to disrupt the expected flow of events by allowing the media, and the voices contained therein, to enter what was previously the single-voiced space of the sermon.

As a result, preaching a sermon that embraces hypermediacy presents a challenge to the oral nature of the sermon genre. While the practice of immediacy requires very little change to the existing sermon genre and its accompanying rhetorical practices, due in part to the historical connections between the sermon and historic rhetorical practices, hypermediacy requires rhetorical practices that intentionally draw attention from the spoken word of the preacher to other media. Hypermediacy, therefore, requires new rhetorical practices for preaching that address both the necessity of orality in the sermon and the affordances of digital technology for preaching. Digital technologies are catalysts for re-examining and re-shaping the dominance of orality in the sermon genre.

In *Remix Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*, Lessig (2008) argues that remixing is receiving increased attention because of its digital nature that involves media other than text, for which we have well established practices for legal and ethical use. Remixing complicates issues of authority and *ethos* in preaching because it raises concerns about ethical use of ideas and artifacts, about who is speaking in a sermon—that is who must the audience members evaluate for credibility—and about what is valued as authoritative in preaching (Gibson, 2008). Successful preaching, as many articles and books for preachers on the topic of preaching and technology indicate (Cargall, 2009; Yurs, 2009; Wilson & Moore, 2008), balances the smooth integration of immediacy with the disruption of hypermediacy to allow for space for both the singular voice of the preacher and the multiple voices of the digital media.

Although remediation and remixing have historical precedent in preaching, these practices are not without complications and conflicts that are heightened by the use of digital technologies. Just as the
technologies of text and printing changed how sermons were composed and delivered, digital technologies are altering the sermon as a genre and the rhetorical practices of preachers for composing and delivering that genre. This study examines, from both the preacher’s and the congregant’s perspectives, the ways digital technologies have altered, are presently altering, and may continue to alter the sermon genre and its corresponding understandings of the ethos of the preacher/rhetor. Further, it examines the role that religious beliefs and values play in determining if and how preachers and congregants embrace or resist digital technologies as a viable part of a sermon.

Authority & Ethos in Preaching

From Corporate to Individual: Shifts in Authority

When Armstrong (2003), in “Semper Reformanda,” argues that “true authority never comes from within our human persona or from the office (or gifting) itself, but from a divinely given mandate and from a scripturally based message,” (p. 33) he represents an opinion that is increasingly becoming suspect because it locates authority in corporate authority, namely the accepted texts, traditions, and mandates of corporate church bodies. Armstrong, by situating authority in God, via the divine mandate and Scripture², places it outside both the realm and control of local forces of communities and individuals. For Armstrong, the key to pastoral authority is to remember that despite increasing professionalization of the ministry, being a pastor, and a preacher, is not just any job, but a divinely instituted one. In a sense, Armstrong positions the preacher in the same fashion as Campbell’s (2010) “media as conduit”—the preacher is the channel through which God speaks; thus authority and ethos are almost entirely separated from the individual preacher. This reflects the earlier discussed belief that positions the spoken word, delivered by the preacher, as authoritative because the spoken word of God has the power to cause belief

² I use the term “Scripture” to refer to the canonical texts that make up the Bible. The capitalization denotes the authority invested in those texts by many Christian denominations which has a direct bearing on their understandings of preaching as a rhetorical act and the sermon as an oral genre.
or other events. Thus, the message is more important than the messenger. This view of the message finds its basis in the external authority of Scripture, both as a text and as the word of God.

However, the tradition of finding authority in text, scriptural or secular, is diminishing the current context. The prevailing sentiment is that religious communities in America are moving away from strict adherence to and strict faith in a written text. This is not true of all sects or denominations, but it is the case for many. As Edwards (2004) notes:

Most Christians have been willing to assume that the Bible is normative for their belief, but the way its authority has been brought to bear has varied enormously. Thus the preacher whose invention involves an appeal to the Bible has to make this appeal in accordance with the criteria acknowledged by those who will hear the sermon (p. 833).

Additionally, J.H. Armstrong (2001) argues that the Bible is now viewed and used in preaching as a manual for daily living or another self-help book. The Bible no longer serves as a normative document that prescribes certain beliefs, practices and values, but rather is more often viewed as a historical or literary text. Similarly, Edwards (2004) asserts that whereas previously the “Christian faith could be assumed to be what sociologists of knowledge refer to as ‘reality taken for granted,’” that is no longer the case (p. 139). Further, M.W. Alcorn Jr. (1994) argues that diminished ties to family, community and religion allow people to construct their lives without the constraints of these ties, making religion less of a norming force.

Similarly, appeals to any outside source that claims authority are met with an increasing distrust of institutional authority and claims of external authority. According to Allen et Al.: “In the postmodern setting, the preacher cannot simply invoke an external source (tradition, empirical observation, or logical deduction) as sufficient basis for a congregation’s assent” (p. 37). Further, Rebecca Fast (2001) argues that: “Today authority is not inherent in mere words until the audience willingly grants it” (p. 67). However, if a preacher is to invoke an external source of authority, science is becoming an option. Lewis (2010) argues that preachers look to science because it is generally viewed as authoritative and “possesses
both a ‘mystique of authority’ (Levine, 1990, p. 228) and greater social status than any particular religion” (p. 23). At the other end of the spectrum of evidence, Resner (1999), citing the work of Richard Thulin, argues for the use of personal experience on the part of the preacher as a means of gaining authority. Resner claims “hearers are willing to grant [such] authority to preachers that they hear talk from their own lives in terms of the presence and activity of God attested to by Scripture and theology alike” (p. 161). Whether preachers draw from science or from personal experience, neither is the traditional scriptural source of authority, which signals that Christianity and its texts no longer hold, as a general rule, the authority they once did.

Stewart Hoover (2003), in “Religion, Media, and Identity: Theory and Method in Audience Research on Religion and Media,” argues that the “most important trend in religion is ‘personal autonomy’ in matters of faith. Increasingly today, religion is seen as a project of the autonomous, reflexive self” (p. 11). Allen et Al. (1997) relate this trend to what they term as “folk postmodernism” in which people have “strong individual values, beliefs, and opinions. But because of their individualism, suspicion of institutional authority, and openness to a wide variety of beliefs and opinions in others, they are reluctant to articulate universal claims for those values and beliefs” (p. 25). While Hoover and Allen et Al. see this as a recent trend, Martin E. Marty (1993), in “Protestantism and Capitalism,” argues that this “trend” began much earlier with the early Protestant push for literacy, which encouraged not only the religious reading intended to build community, but “the development of individualism that often led your aspirants from continued participation in that community” (p. 93). Marty further demonstrates that the adoption of a new technology, print, changed the perceptions of authority, and the necessity and function of community membership. Although Marty characterizes this as a broad Protestant trend, Clark (2006) argues that the desire for simultaneous individual autonomy and community membership is a distinctly American phenomenon because of the unique blend of religion and libertarianism that was foundational to early America. He claims that “people express and assert a religious identity in ways that reflect the
secular individualism that seems primarily to constitute the American character with the contradictory aspirations that follow from identification with a religious collectivity” (p. 225).

Whether this shift is the result of a broad Protestant understanding or a uniquely American positioning, this increase in autonomy and attention to the individual as member of a community is accompanied by an interesting shift towards a different type of corporate authority as well. Allen et Al. (1997), claim “the preacher’s authority is no longer rooted in his or her office as an ordained person, or finally even as an educated thinker. A preacher’s authority for postmoderns rests in his or her ability to persuade the listeners that the vision (or a claim) is right and true and therefore compelling. Authority is rooted in the community of listeners” (p. 44). While Allen et Al. and Hoover seem to contradict one another, they are actually identifying two facets of the same phenomenon—a move away from externally imposed, corporate or institutional identity and authority towards locally situated, communally-based identity and authority. The shift is not so much to complete individual autonomy for all things—community requires some degree of consensus—but a shift away from external authority imposed on both the individual and the local community. Such a shift, then, must change the ways that preachers establish authority and negotiate their ethos within their congregations.

The tension between individual and communal authority has profound impacts on how preachers position themselves and their message. Moss (2003) notes that in African American churches, parishioners expect a degree of separation between preacher and congregants, and they also find comfort and credibility in seeing the preacher as part of the community (p. 65). Resner (1999), citing Thulin, argues that “the speaker’s most important credential to be shared is that the speaker somehow shares a common life with the hearers” (p. 163). So while ethos is a matter of the individual speaker, for preachers, it is also a matter of how the preacher positions him/herself in the community. According to Resner “the rhetor’s character proves itself persuasive when it lines up with the listening community’s own standards for credibility” (158). Kenneth Burke (1955) elaborates on this idea in his Rhetoric of Motives, where he posits that identification is central to persuasion, arguing that “You persuade a man only insofar as you
can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his” (55). Working from a similar premise as Burke, Cargall (2007) argues that preaching is both oral and aural, meaning that it is spoken, but also heard and processed. Cargall argues a successful preacher must not simply speak the same dialect or language as his parishioners, but “the oral part of preaching must be done in the cultural language or idiom of the hearers if its aural component is to succeed as well” (p. 6). Thus, credibility and ethos are inextricably linked to notions of community, community values, and community identity.

But authority is situated not only in identifying with other voices; it is also in letting those voices be heard. M.W. Alcorn Jr. (1994), in his essay on ethos, argues that “In modern culture, effective rhetoric never completely silences other voices. Modern selves, it seems, suffer a failure of repression. Modern selves can always, when they listen carefully, hear other competing noises, voices of opposition, in the background” (p. 18). To allow other voices to be heard calls for a shift in perception on the part of the preacher/rhetor. The sermon genre must become not simply the transmission of the preacher’s thoughts or God’s voice channeled through the single preacher, but a remix of voices. The remix still has many of the same goals as the traditionally conceived sermon, but in the remix version, God may speak through the preacher, through the Bible, through a YouTube video, through a work of art, or even through a rap song. The multiplicity of voices becomes a marker of authority—the willingness to allow other, even competing voices gives credibility and authority to the speaker and his/her message. According to Allen et Al. (1997), even “an honest statement of ambiguity contributes to the preacher’s credibility” (p. 43).

What must be noted in the above discussion, however, is the necessity of voice. The sermon remains an oral genre for most preachers and congregants. There is an expectation of the sermon as an oral and aural event. So while digital technologies offer the option to include multiple forms of media, to communicate voices in multiple forms, oral communication generally remains privileged, even in the language used to discuss including alternate perspectives and alternate media.
Ethos

In the introduction to a collection of essays on *ethos*, J. Baumlin (1994) outlines two competing conceptions of *ethos* that inform current approaches to *ethos*. He argues that in the Platonic tradition, “ethos defines the space where language and truth meet or are made incarnate within the individual. A Platonic definition of ethos and ethical argument, therefore, is premised on the moral, and ultimately, theological inseparability of the speaker-agent from the speech-act” (p. xiii). But this view of *ethos* seems to ignore context and the ability of speakers to deceive their audiences. Aristotle attempts to provide a more nuanced picture of *ethos* by “admitting not only the amorality of rhetoric but also the role of appearances in persuasion” (Baumlin, 1994, p. xv). For Aristotle (trans. 2007), *ethos* is demonstrated through “practical wisdom” [*phronesis*], and virtue [*arête*] and good will [*eunoia*],” (p. 112) which he posits people trust more so than logic when determining credibility. Essentially a credible speaker will be persuasive because he/she exhibits all of these qualities, while failing to exhibit them indicates a weakness of character or intellect.

Although the Aristotelian tradition has become the dominant tradition in rhetorical studies, in the Christian tradition, *ethos* remains a combination of both Platonic and Aristotelian traditions. Preachers can, and do, in the Platonic sense, embody their *ethos*. Their *ethos* extends beyond the speech act of the sermon itself to their bearing in the worship service, to their interactions with congregants on and beyond Sunday mornings, and to their manner of living, both actual and perceived. R. K Hughes (2001), in “Restoring biblical exposition to its rightful place: Ministerial ethos and pathos” defines pastoral *ethos* as “simply what you are—your character, you as a person, and therefore, you as a preacher handling God’s word before the flock of Christ” (p. 86). Part of what gives preachers credibility and authority is that they believe and thus embody what they preach. This conception of *ethos* is further bolstered by the notion that preachers speak on behalf of God or as conduits of God, which makes their *ethos* inextricably connected to their body and person that gives physicality and presence to God. Armstrong (2001) claims, “Pastors are weak human instruments who must be filled with divine authority….True authority never comes from
within our human persona or from the office (or gifting) itself, but from a divinely given mandate and
from a scripturally based message” (p.33). Similarly, Hughes (2001) says of a pastor’s *ethos*: “Ethos has
to do with the condition of your inner life and with the work of the Holy Spirit within you, especially as it
relates to the text that you are preaching” (p. 86).

But at the same time, preachers are also rhetors, in the Aristotelian sense, who have the ability to
influence people’s perceptions of them—they have the ability to construct, by their uses of authority, how
they are perceived. As Fleckenstein (2008) argues: “ethos is not discourse divorced from the parameters
of the material. It is language and life combined, constrained by both” (p. 11). For preachers, *ethos*,
despite its connection to the holiness of God embodied in the preacher, cannot escape its connection to
language and experience, and thus can be in some ways controlled and constructed by the preacher. In his
They easily detect a note of insincerity. They can tell from our preaching when we are angry or
discouraged. They recognize also when we are sincere, when what we are saying is important to us, and
(perhaps most important) when we care deeply for them” (p. 127). Thus, the preacher’s *ethos* is unique in
the sense that it is neither Platonic nor Aristotelian, but a mash-up, to borrow a term from Lessig (2008),
of both. A preacher’s *ethos* combines a sense of internal, embodied *ethos* with a sense of external,
constructed *ethos* that is built on marks of authority. One of those potential marks of authority examined
here is the use of digital technologies and its impact on the ways parishioners perceive technology-using
preachers and their sermons.

**Dual Roles of Preacher**

As a result of the multiple roles the preacher inhabits in the congregational community, *ethos* is
manifested in a variety of ways by the preacher. Depending on the role, the type of *ethos*—Platonic or
Aristotelian—that a preacher needs changes. According to Armstrong (2001), pastors are often seen as
problem-fixers (p. 32). Additionally, Gibson (2008) says that pastors are seen as the “visionary or CEO,
transforming the model for the pastoral ministry from pastor to executive, or even an entertainer or
motivational speaker” (p. 54). The preceding models reveal that there is an expectation for pastors to lead their congregations—to be in charge. Rebecca Fast (2001) also points out that preachers set themselves apart in this leadership role by using titles like “pastor” or “reverend,” which carry with them connotations of authority and specialization.

Yet, according to Moss (2003), the pastor has the unique position of being both the leader and a member of the congregation. And this positioning is central to establishing the preacher as authoritative and credible. Ethos comes from negotiating both the roles of leader and community member simultaneously—there is a certain degree of authority that comes from seeing the pastor move from the pew to the pulpit; he/she is a member of the community that is permitted by the community to step out from the community to speak to that community.

**Authority & Ethos Defined**

As the above sections indicate, *ethos* and authority are intimately connected. These terms are often used interchangeably and even my attempts to separate them will not be fully successful because of the overlap between the two. But because of the sets of dual roles inhabited by preacher, it is necessary to try and make a distinction. For the purposes of this study, *ethos* refers exclusively to the character and credibility, actual or perceived, of the speaker/preacher. It refers to both the temporal and spiritual character of the preacher—both of which may be considered by audiences. *Ethos* is the way the preacher presents and constructs him/herself as a speaker in preaching through his/her use of accepted marks of authority, and more broadly how he/she interacts with congregants outside of the Sunday sermon. *Ethos* is specific to the context and character of the individual preacher.

Authority refers to the external tools or marks by which a speaker may construct or reveal *ethos*. In the Christian context, for example, the Bible might be viewed as an authoritative text, and thus use of the text might build the *ethos* of the speaker by demonstrating knowledge and/or similar beliefs on the between the speaker and the hearer. Or authority might reside in the preacher’s position as a community member, as a trained expert or as a vetted, ordained member of the clergy. It might also reside in the
connection of the preacher’s personal experiences to both the congregational community’s experiences and to the theological precepts he/she is presenting. This distinction will help distinguish between the almost intrinsic ethos of the preacher—his/her personality and life outside of the pulpit,—and the ways he/she communicates that ethos to audiences through external tools and marks of authority.

**Preaching and Technology**

**Technology as Audience-Centered**

The previous sections have dealt with two parts of the rhetorical situation of preaching: the message and the rhetor. This section focuses on the audience. Darius Salter (2008), in *Preaching as Art: Biblical Storytelling for a Media Generation*, calls for a re-visioning of the sermon as story to meet the needs and expectations of current parishioners. By situating the Bible, and the sermons developed from it as story, rather than didactic or judgmental speech, preachers will be more able to convey their message. As his title infers, Salter argues for a media-like approach to preaching, in which preaching is engaging, and makes use of many of the devices of television and film including vivid imagery, scene setting, character descriptions, dialogue and many other aspects of good story telling. He claims that such a shift is necessary if preachers hope to compete with the deluge of images that people see every day.

However, Salter’s approach to remediate the sermon in terms of media is limited by its focus on remediating the visual with the oral. Salter leaves little room for the actual visual, oral, or aural representation that is possible with digital technologies. Perhaps Salter, because of the value placed on the spoken word in the sermon, was unwilling or unable to view the sermon as anything other than an oral delivery. In the current context, preachers are exceeding Salter’s call by using digital technologies—video, audio, graphics, photographs, and so forth—in the delivery of their messages. Hamilton (2003) argues that “There is no doubt that the use of multimedia in worship and preaching is here to stay. It can be a powerful tool to enhance the worship experience and to aid in the communication process of your preaching” (p. 45). Similarly, Shields (2000) argues “Hypermedia in our computers and increasing responsiveness from our televisions will make it harder and harder for people to sit quietly and listen to sermons. We must try to bring more than auditory sense into direct play in the preaching moment” (155).
Digital technology is seen as a way to improve communication by accommodating different learning styles, to engage hearers in modes they are familiar with and accustomed to, and/or as a way to make the content of sermons relevant by connecting the historic Biblical texts and precepts to contemporary contexts. It is also seen as a disruption of the traditional sermon form, which Fast (2001) argues forces hearers to be passive listeners, who resist by doing other things during the sermon. Such disruption occurs, according to Wilson and Moore, when “Media is not simply an add-on to the existing means of communicating the gospel in worship, but an emerging, fundamentally new system of communication, equal to oral and written word” (p. 7). They articulate the need to re-envision the sermon genre to embrace digital technologies rather than to pigeonhole the technologies into the existing genre that privileges the oral. Further, they argue that digital technologies cannot do much to reach a multimedia culture if they are used as devalued supplements, rather than as means of communication in their own right. At its heart, the move to multi-media preaching seems to be primarily concerned with the audience—concerned with how and how much of the sermon the audience is “hearing” and how the audience is responding to the sermon’s message.

This move to multimedia for improved communication and engagement is not unique to preaching and theology. In fact, preachers are drawing on much of the same understanding of literacy and engagement that drives much of the scholarship on digital writing and visual rhetoric. Cynthia Selfe (2007), in her introduction to *Multimodal Composing*, states that “the multiple purposes and audiences for which we write demand multiple approaches for communicating our message” (p. xi). Selber’s (2004) *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age*, in its title and throughout its pages, argues that we are in an age where people are literate in not one way, but multiple ways. Similarly, Kress (2004) not only argues for multiple literacies, but also asserts that different modes, such as sound, image, and even physical bodies, convey information and ideas differently, emphasizing or de-emphasizing different aspects of a particular message, and thus making the choice of mode or combination of modes intimately connected to the rhetorical aims of the rhetor. Finally, James Paul Gee and Elizabeth Hayes (2011) argue that the use of
technology not only recognizes the many literacies of hearers, but ultimately puts them in a position of authority by recognizing the “non-expert” listeners as having wisdom. While preaching literature may not use the same terminology of multiliteracies, the concerns here echo those detailed above—reach people in the modes that are comfortable, familiar and engaging, in other words, the modes in which they are literate. By doing so, all rhetors increase their chances of being seen as relevant, a concern discussed by Selfe and Takayoshi (2007) in “Thinking about Multimodality.” They argue that “If composition is to remain relevant, the definition of ‘composition’ and ‘texts’ needs to grow and change to reflect peoples’ literacy practices in new digital communication environments” (p. 3). Again, this echoes the concern that part of being relevant is communicating in ways that people recognize as current and connected with their present literate lives.

**Technology Adoption Practices**

Despite the number of scholars and preachers embracing the affordances of digital technologies, not all preachers or congregations are readily adopting digital technologies. In the introduction to *When Religion Meets New Media*, Campbell (2010) argues that there has been a persistent belief, both within and outside religious communities, that science and technology are inherently opposed to religion and must be resisted as part of religious practice. But she also notes that not all religious groups are hostile towards technology and that many have begun not only to adopt, but to appropriate it for their own purposes. Campbell identifies three distinct approaches that churches, both individual and corporately, take to the adoption of technology. The first two represent extremes on the ends of a spectrum. On one end is complete adoption where the excitement over the technology and its potential leads to both early and uncritical adoption. On the other end of the spectrum is complete rejection of the use of technology because of its secular nature and fears of what that secular character will do to the sacred nature of the church.

But what is of more importance to this study of technology and remediation in preaching is the third, more mediated stance, where the technology is critically and purposefully integrated into a religious
community. In this approach, technologies are often modified or adapted for religious purposes, with unwanted aspects ignored or unused. This approach is aligned with the view of “media as social institution” in which “media must be understood in terms of their systems of production as well as the user’s reception of their form and content. Here both ‘content and technology matter’ but neither is determinative” (p. 48). This approach is described by Campbell as one that requires both technological and theological knowledge to view any new technology not only for its technical capabilities, but also for its inherent values and its potential conflicts with the religious community’s values.

The technology adoption practices of a church can reveal much about its attitudes toward technology. Identifying these attitudes is central to understanding how both preachers and congregation members see the use of technology in the sermon and how they understand the function of that technology within the sermon. In the case of this study, the value of the spoken word, as a manifestation of Christian belief about the way God communicates with his people, is a site of conflict between digital technologies and preaching practices. However, technology is also situated as a means of sharing the Gospel, a value in concert with Christian beliefs. This study examines how both preachers and congregants understand the use of technology in preaching, with the aim of understanding if and how incorporating digital technology impacts the relationships between the sermon genre, the historical rhetorical practices of preaching, and new digital technologies. Further, it seeks to understand how changes in these relationships influence the ethos of preachers, as they, and their congregants, embrace or resist digital technologies in the sermon.

**Research Questions**

My research questions examine the complex relationships between ethos, remediation, technology use, and preaching. More specifically my questions seek to determine how both preachers and congregants—sermon audiences—understand the sermon as a genre, how they understand the rhetorical practices of preaching, and how they understand and respond to the use of technology in preaching.

1. How do preachers and congregation members understand the sermon as a genre?
a. How do preachers and parishioners understand ethos and authority in the sermon?

b. Where do they locate that ethos and authority?

2. How do the understandings and expectations of preachers and congregation members revealed in question set 1 align? Where do they diverge?

3. How does the use of technology in preaching impact rhetorical practice for preachers?
   a. Why do preachers use technology in their preaching?

4. How does the use of technology in preaching impact rhetorical practice for parishioners?
   a. How do congregation members respond to preaching that incorporates technology?
   b. How does the use of technology in preaching by a preacher influence his/her congregation members’ responses to him/her, especially in terms of authority and credibility?

5. How do rhetorical choices and intentions of the preacher align with congregation members’ responses to the implementation of those choices?

To answer these questions, I designed a multi-phase study to collect data about preaching and technology from preachers and parishioners. The first phase of my study was an electronic survey, distributed to pastors from three denominations—Lutheran, Methodist, and Roman Catholic—who serve within 25 miles of a large, Midwestern city. The survey asked questions about congregational technology use in the worship service, pastoral technology use in preaching, general questions about preaching and interest in participating in further research. In the second phase, I selected from among those pastors who responded with interest in further research. Each pastor was interviewed by phone more specifically about his/her preaching preparation and practices. They were also asked about participation in further study that involved their congregations. Finally, in the third phase, I selected one congregation from each denomination for in-depth study. I interviewed each pastor in person, visited each congregation,
and collected data, via surveys, from congregants at in each congregation. By combining the data from all three phases, I developed an understanding of the roles technologies play in preaching and in perceptions of the preacher, which augments our understanding of how the use of technology has the potential to influence the ethos of preachers, as well as our understanding of the ways genre expectations inform digital technology adoption and integration.

**Project Overview**

This chapter attempted to situate the project as a way of extending the rhetorical tradition of preaching into the twenty-first century by examining the effects of technology use in preaching. Specifically, this chapter outlined preaching as a rhetorical act, focusing on the message and purpose of the sermon, the preacher as rhetor, and the role of audience in preaching. The message and purpose section discussed why sermons are preached by focusing on the aims of the sermon and the connections between the oral nature of the sermon and beliefs. Further, that section examined sermon delivery, including the use of remediation and remix in the sermon. The preacher as rhetor section focused on ethos and authority in preaching, offering definitions of each. Finally, transitioning to the role of audience, which is naturally connected to ethos and authority, the final section examined the current push for technology in preaching and how social assumptions, beliefs, and practices impact reactions and responses to technology.

**Chapter II  Collecting Multiple Perspectives: Researching Preaching through Multiple Methods**

Chapter 2 discusses the religious social shaping of technology theory (R-SST) put forth by Campbell (2010) and the ways it, in conjunction with Devitt’s (2004) theory of genre, shaped my inquiry in this project. Because of its focus on religious and community values, R-SST enabled me to see the relationships between attitudes and beliefs about the sermon as a genre and how those attitudes influence the adoption of digital technologies in preaching. Further, this
chapter explicates my rationale for choosing case study to represent the results of this study. Finally, this chapter explains my methods of data collection, including how I identified my research sites, how I designed the various data collection instruments, and the processes by which I collected the various data I present in the project.

**Chapter III  Trinity Methodist\(^3\): Integration and Expectation**

Chapter 3 presents the results of my research Trinity Methodist Church. This chapter provides a general overview of the church—location, demographics, reaction to the study, etc. It also presents a biographical sketch of the pastor who participated in the study. Finally, it presents a description of the worship space, the worship service, and how preaching is done at this particular congregation. Following this contextual information, the chapter presents the results of the study done at this particular congregation. Detailing both the pastor and congregants’ approaches to preaching and their understanding of the sermon as a genre, this chapter articulates the ways genre expectations shape the adoption of and incorporation of technology into the sermon and how these expectations and the use of technology influences the relationship between pastor/rhetor and congregants/audience.

**Chapter IV  Blink and You’ll Miss It Church: Doubts and Disconnects**

Chapter 4 presents the results of my research at Blink and You’ll Miss It Church, the ELCA church selected for the study. This chapter, like the previous one, provides a general overview of the church—location, demographics, reaction to the study, etc. It will also present a biographical sketch of the pastor who participated in the study. Finally, it presents a description of the worship space, the worship service, and how preaching is done at this particular congregation. Following this contextual information, the chapter presents the results of the study.

\(^3\) Names of congregations and pastors have been changed for anonymity.
done at this particular congregation, discussing how the incorporation of digital technologies into
the sermon at this congregation creates a disconnect between the spoken and visual message.
Finally, this chapter explicates the implications of that disconnect on the *ethos* of the two pastors
at this congregation.

**Chapter V  The Church On The Corner: Some Conclusions on New Beginnings**

Chapter 5 presents the results of my research at the Church on the Corner, the LCMS
curch selected for the study. Unlike the previous two congregations who have established
technology use, the Church on the Corner is in the process of introducing digital technologies
into worship and preaching. This chapter provides similar information to the previous case study
chapters, but situates that information in the context of lessons learned from the preceding two
case studies and the large scale initial survey of pastors, offering recommendations and issues to
consider going forward. Finally, this chapter presents the implications of the preceding five
chapters for the use of technology in preaching and pastoral *ethos*.

**Conclusion**

This project extends the study of the sermon as a rhetorical act into the twenty-first
century by examining how the use of digital technologies by the preacher impacts and the
sermon as a genre and preaching as a rhetorical practice. It demonstrates that digital technologies
have the potential to alter the rhetorical practices of preaching By connecting the new media
concepts of remediation and remix to the rhetorical practice of preaching, it argues that current
preaching practices can be an extension and modification of historical practices of remediation
and remix, but that such changes in rhetorical practice also necessitate changes in the sermon as
a genre. Genre expectations that privilege the oral in preaching are in conflict with many of the
visual affordances of digital technologies. The sermon, then, must be reconceived to integrate
and embrace digital technologies. Ultimately, this project demonstrates that preaching is an evolving rhetorical practice. By connecting these evolving practices, induced by digital technologies, to their impact on the ethos of the preacher, this study articulates the issues that arise as preachers and congregants negotiate the adoption and incorporation of new technologies into the historic genre of the sermon and it extends the study of preaching as a rhetorical practice into the digital age.
CHAPTER II. COLLECTING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES: RESEARCHING PREACHING THROUGH MULTIPLE METHODS

The study of preaching and sermons is a historical practice in the field of rhetoric. From Augustine and Robert of Basevorn, who wrote two of the earliest known manuals on preaching, to Hugh Blair and George Campbell, both trained preachers whose treatises on rhetoric included emphases on preaching as a rhetorical art, to Frances Willard’s rhetorical approach in advocacy of women’s preaching, the study of preaching and the study of rhetoric were intertwined. More recently however, attention to pulpit oratory by rhetorical scholars has diminished. Major journals like *Rhetoric Review*, *RSQ* and *CCCC* have published only 32 articles on the subject between 2001 and 2011. The majority of these articles focus heavily on preaching as a historical practice, on historical preachers, and on text-based study. While such study is certainly appropriate for historical sermons, where access to live delivery is not possible, it also sets a precedent for the study of preaching as a study of past acts, rather than a study of an active and dynamic rhetorical practice. This study extends the work of these text-based by applying their findings to current preaching practices.

Although I noted above that most studies examine preaching as a text and print-based practice, there are some studies such as Moss (2003) that do study preaching as a practice, rather than a text. Yet even Moss (2003) finds that homiletical scholars have a relatively singular focus on the rhetorical aims of the sermon. They focus on the preacher’s act of composing, use of specific device, or delivery. Or they focus on parishioners’ retention of information or ideas or parishioners’ engagement with the sermon while it’s being preached. Either study design, while

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having value for the particular group about which it obtains information, must speculate about the values, expectations, practices, and beliefs of the other group.

As I designed this study, my approach needed to acknowledge first, that preaching is an active rhetorical practice, and second that this practice involves both preachers and hearers. Such an approach necessitated not only examining sermons as manuscripts, but sermons as orally-delivered performances. Further, this approach necessitated working with both preachers and congregants to gain their varied perspectives on the sermon as a genre, the rhetorical practice of preaching, and the roles of digital technologies in the sermon. The study was designed to glean, from these perspectives, how preachers establish and maintain ethos. Further, this study was designed to determine whether a specific variable, the use of digital technology in the sermon, affects or changes how either of these groups understand the ethos of the preacher.

This chapter presents the five major research questions that I designed to investigate how technology impacts preaching and the preacher’s ethos for both preachers and congregation members. Following the description of the research questions, I detail the design of the study I created to collect data for this project. This study was designed in three major phases: (1) the initial survey phase, (2) the screening interview phase, and (3) the full study phase. This chapter discusses the design of each phase, including instruments and population, the actual data collection process, and the benefits and limitations of the methods and populations in each phase. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the ways the methods used in this study contribute to the study as a whole, and to the case studies presented in the following chapters.

**Research Questions**

In order to investigate the dynamic relationships between preaching, ethos, and digital technologies, I designed five primary research questions that investigate the perspectives of both
preachers who construct and deliver sermons and parishioners who then interact with both the preacher and the sermon:

1. How do preachers and congregation members understand the sermon as a genre?
   a. How do preachers and parishioners understand *ethos* and authority in the sermon?
   b. Where do they locate that *ethos* and authority?

2. How do the understandings and expectations of preachers and congregation members revealed in question set 1 align? Where do they diverge?

3. How does the use of technology in preaching impact rhetorical practice for preachers?
   a. Why do preachers use technology in their preaching?

4. How does the use of technology in preaching impact rhetorical practice for parishioners?
   a. How do congregation members respond to preaching that incorporates technology?
   b. How does the use of technology in preaching by a preacher influence his/her congregation members’ responses to him/her, especially in terms of authority and credibility?

5. How do rhetorical choices and intentions of the preacher align with congregation members’ responses to the implementation of those choices?

   These questions were designed to allow for the comparison of perspectives, with the goal of being able to determine not only what each group understands and expects of preachers and sermons, but what factors influence these understandings and expectations.

   Question 1 is a broad-based question designed to determine how preachers and parishioners understand the sermon as a genre. This question was designed to reflect notions of genre forwarded by Devitt (2004) that genre is an action that both constructs and identifies a
particular context. Devitt’s broad definition of context, which includes social and cultural values, suits this study, as the sermon is intimately connected to tradition and religious belief. Thus the question sought to discover what preachers and congregants understand as happening during a sermon—what its purpose is, what results it should accomplish, and what the acceptable means of accomplishing its goals are. Determining how each group understands the sermon as a genre has profound impact on how each defines a successful or effective sermon, and in turn, a successful and effective preacher. I contend that the label of “successful” or “effective” preacher is intimately connected to the preacher’s ethos. This seems an obvious connection—being “effective” is certainly a criterion for being a good speaker. But on the less obvious level, the label of “successful” or “effective” reveals how the preacher meets the expectations of his/her parishioners, which can only be done if the preacher knows and understands what those parishioners think the sermon does or is supposed to do.

However, demonstrating an understanding of his/her congregants’ expectations does not indicate that the preacher holds entirely the same values or expectations as his/her parishioners. Preachers and congregants come to any sermon from two different places. Congregants are generally only receptors of the sermon; they sit, watch and listen, but they are not actively involved in the delivery of the sermon. They are only exposed to the product of the sermon—the end result of the composing process. Thus, they generally do not position themselves as creators of the sermon, but as reactors to the sermon. In other words, the sermon is a text or performance created by another to arouse some sort of response in them. As a result, their experience of the sermon is much different than the preacher’s, as he/she interacts with the sermon not only at the time of delivery but also throughout the composition process.
For preachers, the rhetorical practice of preaching is an active process from composition to delivery. Composing is active work of reading, studying, praying, writing, and even collecting and/or composing digital media presentations. And while the purpose of composing may be to arouse reaction in their hearers, the types of reactions desired are varied, multiple and complex. Preachers may grapple with whose reactions to produce. Those who believe that they speak on God’s behalf will look to produce reactions they understand to be godly or faithful to God’s teachings, rather than foregrounding the reactions they personally desire from parishioners. So, in a single sermon, a preacher may attempt to invoke humor to connect with hearers, guilt to highlight a certain behavior, remorse over a certain behavior, joy over knowing that, through faith, such behave or can be forgiven, and hope that there is no longer need to fear punishment, and so forth. To achieve these many motives, preachers make a variety of choices during the composing process and delivery of the sermon—from the order in which to present materials, to what examples to use, to what Scripture passages or other authorities to draw on.

So with these varied perspectives on the sermon, two additional questions arise:

1. How do preachers and parishioners understand *ethos* and authority in the sermon?

2. Where do they locate that *ethos* and authority?

Because parishioners and preachers come to the sermon from different places and have different experiences with and of the sermon, it follows that they understand authority and *ethos* in preaching in different ways. Their expectations of what the sermon is supposed to do shape what they understand as authoritative in a sermon, and how they understand the credibility or *ethos* of the preacher. These questions attempt to determine what differences arise based on their expectations, and where despite differing experiences, their understandings converge, overlap, or diverge.
Question one, with its focus on understandings of the function of preaching, and specifically, *ethos* and authority in preaching leads into question two. Whereas question one focuses on what preachers and parishioners understand, question two compares the perspectives of preachers with those of their parishioners. The motivation behind this question is simple: to determine if what preachers and parishioners expect from a sermon aligns or diverges and how that impacts the way sermons are delivered and received. If the expectation of the preacher differs substantially from that of the parishioner, the probability of successful communication between the two is minimal.

While questions one and two investigate the sermon more generally from the preacher’s and parishioner’s perspective, questions three introduces a specific variable—the use of digital technologies in preaching. Question three asks, how does the use of digital technologies impact rhetorical practices for preachers? This question is designed to determine how digital technologies might influence all phases of the sermon from composition through delivery. While the obvious use of digital technologies is in the delivery, with use of PowerPoint slides or other multi-media presentations, digital technologies can also play a role in the composing process, from the internet as a source of information about biblical texts or practices, to digital versions of concordances or commentaries, to the software for composing the sermon and the form the composed sermon takes.

Surely the varied ways the use of digital technologies impacts preaching is worth study, but the more important question for this study follows from the how: why are preachers using certain technologies? What drives them to use digital technologies in their preaching? Shaping this question is the work of Heidi Campbell (2010), in *When Religion Meets New Media*, and what she calls “religious-social shaping of technology” (R-SST) (p. 41). She bases this approach
to the study of new media and religion on the social shaping of technology (SST) theory that is prevalent in sociology, science and technology studies. In SST “technology is seen as a social process and the possibility is recognized that social groups may shape technologies towards their own ends, rather than the character of the technology determining use and outcomes” (p. 50). Campbell adapts this theory specifically for studying the ways that religious groups make decisions about their adoption and use of technology. She argues that such an adaption is necessary because “while religious communities function similarly to other forms of social community—in that their choices related to technology are socially negotiated—they also are constrained by unique factors that need to be highlighted and considered” (p. 59). So she includes “a religious community’s beliefs, moral codes, and historical tradition of engagement with other forms of media technology” (p. 59). Campbell’s framework shaped my approach by leading me to design instruments that would elicit information about the values of the particular communities in which I was researching. Determining and understanding these values, particularly those connected to religious belief and tradition, aided me in making connections between those values, genre expectations, and digital technologies.

Although I find Campbell’s framework useful in that it accounts for many aspects of religion, I am also aware that I cannot ignore the ways the technology itself, although repurposed or shaped for religious ends, does not lose the values that are inherent in its original design, intent, and use. As Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe (1991) argue, because using technology often comes naturally, it is easy for users to forget that digital devices are “cultural artifacts embodying society’s values” and by uncritically using these devices, users can perpetuate those values, even when the values disagree with their own. Similarly, other scholars argue against viewing technology as absent of values or ideologies (Arola 2010; Selfe & Selfe, 1994; Wysocki
Despite its limitations, Campbell’s framework, meshed with Devitt’s theory of genre, serves as a means to understand, in part, the complex negotiations that preachers must engage in when choosing to adopt and use a particular technology.

Campbell’s framework also shapes the inquiry of question four, which complements the preacher-based perspective of question three. Question four focuses on the parishioner perspective and examines the reception of and response to preaching with technology. Specifically, this question links back to question one to see how the use of digital technologies connects with or diverges from the expectations parishioners have, as receptors, of the sermon. Further, this question seeks, through two sub-questions to determine how the use of digital technologies not only shapes the perception of the sermon as a genre, but of the preacher him/herself. Sub-question one investigates the responses of parishioners to preaching with technology by focusing on how the use technology helps or prevents the sermon from meeting their expectations or how the lack of digital technologies helps or prevents the sermon from meeting their expectations. The second sub-question looks at the relationship between the use of digital technologies, the success of the sermon and the impact of those two factors on the parishioner’s view of the preacher. Again, this inextricable connection between the sermon and the preacher directly impacts the ethos of the preacher by linking the success of the sermon to the credibility and believability of the preacher.

My final question is similar to question two in that it seeks to compare and contrast the preacher and parishioner perspectives on the use of digital technologies. As with the earlier question, the design of this question was intended to highlight where the design and composing choices of the preacher meet or fail to meet the expectations or needs of his/her hearers. Specifically, this question investigates how choices to use or avoid digital technologies in certain
situations, choices to use specific types of digital media or specific digital examples, or choices to use digital media in certain ways to convey messages are received by the congregants/audience. The goal was to determine how successfully the preacher translated his/her intentions to his/her parishioners by investigating if the preacher’s desired response was achieved or if parishioner expectations and experiences cause a different response to arise.

Data Collection
To address my research questions, I designed a three-phase research project to collect a variety of data from preachers and congregants. This design allowed me to collect data from churches in different contexts—denomination, size, location, congregational make-up, and worship style. It also included multiple phases to allow for data collection from both pastors and congregants to give perspectives on preaching from both the preacher/rhetor and the congregation member/audience point of view. Having both points of view was central to establishing how both groups viewed digital technologies and understood its role in the historic sermon genre.

Phase 1—The Initial Survey Phase
Instrument. The first phase of this study used an electronic survey to gather general information about the use of technology in churches during the worship service and the use of technology by pastors in preaching their sermons. Using Google forms, I created a survey that contained a mixture of 15 multiple choice and open-ended questions: 5 about church and pastoral demographics, 2 about church technology use during the worship service, 1 about the purpose of the sermon, 1 about sermon preparation, 4 about the pastor’s specific use of and attitudes about technology and preaching, and 2 about participating in further research. The multiple choice

5 The full version of the survey is included in Appendix A.
questions were included to allow me to easily compare technology use by church size, age of the congregation, or specific type of technology used. The open-ended questions were included to allow pastors to express their opinions on technology and preaching to better allow me to gauge attitudes. The open-ended questions also allowed for more expansive explanations of preaching practices and preaching preparation which would have been difficult for me to offer as multiple choice options. The survey served two purposes: (1) to gather data about how many churches use technology, what specific technologies they use, and how pastors generally feel technology impacts their preaching; and (2) to provide a pool of potential participants for further study in Phases 2 and Phase 3. The large pool of data collected from the survey provided a basis for establishing which practices are normative, at least among survey respondents, as well as which practices were unique to particular congregations or preachers. It also provided me with data to compare with the data I collected in the three case studies in Phase 3.

Participants had the option of remaining anonymous when they completed the survey, identifying only general characteristics about their churches and themselves. However, participants who wished to participate in further phases of this study were asked to provide contact information as the final question of the survey.

**Population.** The survey was sent to pastors of Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and United Methodist churches within 25 miles of a large Midwestern city whose e-mail addresses could be located on their denominational or congregational websites. While technology is commonly associated with mega-churches\(^6\) and non-denominational churches, this study focuses on three

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\(^6\) “megachurches can be defined as ‘large churches with more than 2,000 persons in attendance at Sunday services’” (Millard J. Erikson qtd. Edwards 786). These churches resist the traditional approach to church by avoiding historic liturgy and hymnody and traditional church design. This approach is intentional, coming from the belief that people who don’t attend church will be uncomfortable in a traditional church atmosphere, so making the church a place people are comfortable and a place people want to be will make the church successful in attracting new members.
mainstream denominations for several reasons. First, choosing mainstream denominations allowed for a larger pool of possible research subjects because of the number of churches in the identified research area. The larger pool of data allowed me to see a broader picture of practices and attitudes that would not be possible with a study of locally-available mega-churches. Second, these denominations were chosen because they have distinct orders of worship, systematized practices for training and certifying pastors, and doctrines about the pastoral ministry and authority of the pastor and the Bible. Finally, they also represent denominations with a national and/or international governing body that provides, at least on paper, some consistency in doctrine and practice. These central bodies also maintain lists of congregations that are easily searchable and provide names and e-mail addresses for pastors.

To locate churches, I used the “Find a Church”\(^7\) or “Find a Parish”\(^8\) functions of these church bodies’ institutional websites. Each site offered the option to search for congregations within a certain radius. From the search results, I examined each congregation’s profile for contact information. If a profile listed a current pastor or pastors, I collected the e-mail addresses listed on the profile. If the e-mail address appeared to be generic, rather than a direct contact to the pastor, I checked for a link to a congregational website. If that website provided a direct e-mail address for the pastor, I used that address, rather than the one provided on the institutional profile. If no additional address was provided, I used the one provided on the institutional profile. For congregations with more than one pastor, I contacted each pastor individually, either at a direct e-mail or with two e-mails sent to the listed e-mail address. When any information was missing from institutional profiles, such as pastors’ names or contact information, but a link to a

\(^7\) http://www.lcms.org; www.umc.org

\(^8\) http://www.toledodiocese.org
congregational website was available, I used any relevant information on the congregational website. Profiles that did not include links to additional websites and were missing the name of a current pastor were discarded from the data pool because of lack of information. Profiles that did not list an e-mail address were also discarded, unless they provided a link to a congregational website where I was able to locate e-mail contact information.

Using this method, I compiled a list of 60 United Methodist, 43 Roman Catholic, and 81 Lutheran churches within 25 miles of the large Midwestern city that had the appropriate contact information. The list included Lutherans from the three major synods in the United States: Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) and Wisconsin Synod. All three were included because although they have the same general beliefs, they differ on some issues, including the ordination of women. In order, then, to give an accurate depiction of the Lutheran perspective, I included all three synods. The list also included some pastors multiple times because they are serving multiple congregations. I chose to include, and to contact them, in multiple because I am aware that, because of congregational contexts, they might preach differently at different congregations and wanted to give them the opportunity to participate for all the churches where they preach. If separate contact information was provided, I contacted them at each e-mail address listed.

**Data Collection.** The survey was initially distributed on Sunday, February 5, 2012 with the goal of hitting in-boxes on Monday morning. After the initial distribution, I received 27 responses over a period of 1 week. I also encountered nine e-mail addresses that were no longer valid or that returned to me with e-mail errors. In an attempt to correct this issue, I re-visited each denomination’s website and re-checked the information, as well as looked for additional contact information. I re-sent e-mails based on additional information where available and re-
tried original contact information where additional information was not available. After this process, seven of those e-mails remained undeliverable, based on available contact information. The following week, I re-distributed the survey with a second request, removing from the distribution list anyone who I knew had completed the survey. Following the second request, I received an additional 21 responses for a total of 48 responses out of 177 requests. This represents an approximately 27% response rate. Of those who identified themselves, these responses represent 12 Lutheran pastors, 1 Roman Catholic priest, and 8 United Methodist pastors.

Benefits and Limitations of the Electronic Survey Instrument

Benefits. The anonymous online survey allowed me to reach a broad population of pastors and to collect data directly into a central location in a consistent format. The online format allowed me to ask a mixture of multiple-choice and open-ended questions to collect a variety of data. Anderson et al. (2006) and Miller et al. (1997) both discuss the value of complementing objectively scored multiple choice questions with open-ended questions to produce a more well-rounded picture of the data and the population providing the data. Both studies reveal that participants chose answers in the multiple choice sections as a result of a variety of attitudes and experiences. By supplementing the multiple choice questions with the open-response, I too was able to gain insight into my participants’ responses. I limited the multiple-choice questions to demographics and questions about specific types of technology used, which allowed me to easily compare answers. While at the same time the open-ended questions allowed me to let participants speak for themselves, in the language and terminology they are comfortable with, giving me a more nuanced and detailed picture than if I had tried to speculate what choices to give in a multiple choice question. The open-ended format also
allowed participants to dialogue with me through the survey. Participants challenged my terminology and some of my assumptions, provided additional resources or information through links, and provided additional potential contacts, with contact information. While some of this certainly is possible in an off-line format, the online format facilitated space for my participants to feel comfortable speaking back to me, as well as to provide me with additional content and information in ways not possible offline.

The method of distribution allowed the survey to be anonymous because participants did not have to identify themselves on the survey and responses were catalogued only by date and time completed, with no additional identifying information. I designed the survey to be anonymous to allow pastors to participate in this phase without any obligation to participate further hoping this would increase response rate. Further, I did not want pastors to feel they might be held accountable by their congregations or by other pastors who read the research because they were identified by either denomination or name. Since the majority of pastors did not identify themselves, the ability to remain anonymous and still participate seems to have benefitted the survey.

**Limitations.** While the online survey had several benefits, it also had some limitations. While my response rate of 27% provided me with usable data, the method of distribution may have impacted the number and types of responses I received. Lauer and Ascher (1988) detail a number of reasons that response rates are low including out of date contact information, and the lack of willingness by participants to respond. As I detailed above, contacting pastors by e-mail addresses on institutional directories or local websites was not always successful. I suspect this is due to the movement of pastors from one congregation to another, to the fact that very few churches employ professional web masters to update and maintain their websites, so that
information becomes outdated, and to the slow processing of information changes by
denominational bodies or those maintaining denominational websites. Further, because I had no
prior relationship with the pastors I contacted, my e-mails may have been ignored, gone unread,
or been sent directly into junk folders and deleted. The timing of the distribution may have also
impacted response rate. The survey was distributed three weeks before the start of Lent, which is
a busy time for pastors who have extra services and extra sermons to prepare, so fewer may have
responded to the survey because of increased obligations at their congregations.

Of the responses I did receive, the majority of my responders were using digital
technologies in their preaching, which limits my ability to speculate how wide-spread the use of
technology is generally or how widespread the use of a particular technology might be because I
cannot compare with the number of congregations or preachers not using technology. Although I
attempted to collect data using “typical case sampling,” my results appear more as if I had used a
“homogenous sample,” based on the pastors who responded to my survey (Blakeslee &
Fleischer, 2007). This might have been caused by the topic of the survey, and that those who
don’t use digital technologies had no interest in or felt they were not fitting participants for my
research. As a result of population that answered my survey, my results are not fully
generalizable to broader contexts, but do speak clearly to the local context in which the survey
was administered.

My comparison of responses is also limited by the anonymity of the survey. Although I
had 48 responses, only those interested in participating in more research were asked to identify
their congregation’s name and denomination. So I have denominational data from only 21 of my
48 participants. While I don’t think this prevents generalization about the use of technology
based on the 48 responses, it does make connecting technology use to particular denominations, and their teachings and beliefs more difficult.

However, the largest limitation of the anonymous electronic survey is that I cannot ask for follow up from those that did not identify in their responses. As a result, I have had to interpret their answers to open-ended questions without the benefit of clarification. In order to make generalizations about the survey data I have had to make some assumptions to interpret and code about the data that may or may not be accurate. However, to compensate for the inability to clarify data, I have when possible used the participant’s own language and made my interpretations of that language clear, as well as the possibility that other interpretations are possible.

**Phase 2—The Screening Interview Stage**

In Phase 2, I screened participants for their willingness and ability to participate in the full research study. Each screening interview was a brief phone interview to decide which pastors and congregations were the best fits for the full research study. The interview consisted of 17 questions focused on three major areas: interest in the research, preaching schedule and practices, and preaching preparation practices. The questions about participating in research inquired about previous participation in research projects, specific reasons for interest in this research, and how they gauge congregation interest in and response to this research. After establishing attitudes toward research, the next questions sought specific information about the pastor’s use of technology in preaching. The final group of questions focused on sermon preparation, including frequency of preaching, typical preparation pattern, the use of additional help preparing digital sermon materials, like PowerPoint slides or videos, the regularity of

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9 The sequence of questions is available in Appendix B.
preparation schedule, and timeline for having a deliverable version of the sermon for me to see. My goal with these questions was to establish what to expect when working with a particular pastor and his/her congregation.

**Population.** After the two weeks in which I had the Initial Survey open to accept responses, I analyzed the responses of pastors who indicated an interest in participating in further research to select pastors for follow-up screening interviews. The purpose of these interviews was to help me find suitable potential participants for the full study. In selecting participants for the screening interviews, I used the following criteria:

- Pastor’s gender
- Pastor’s length of career
- Church demographics
  - Denomination
  - Age of Congregation
  - Location (Urban, Suburban Rural)
- Technology Use
- Distance from my location

I used these criteria to select possible pastors and congregations that represent a broad range of characteristics. I attempted to allow the criteria to vary within denominations in an effort to produce a more diverse picture of preaching practices, knowing that doing so, would limit my ability to generalize from the case studies. However, many of my volunteers for further participation were from large suburban churches, so despite my desire to provide data from a variety of settings, the pool of possible participants made this difficult. As a result of the lack of demographic diversity, I focused on diversity in pastors by looking at gender, age, length of
career, and length of time at their particular congregation. By focusing on differences between pastors, I sought to highlight the many variables involved in creating *ethos* when preaching with technology.

Based on the criteria listed above and my desire to create a diverse representation of preaching practices, I initially selected 3 Lutheran pastors, 3 United Methodist pastors, and 1 Roman Catholic priest to interview. I only had one Roman Catholic volunteer, so I contacted him to be sure he was willing to continue with the study and to determine what his preaching practices were. He identified his congregation as a large, more than 200 on a Sunday, suburban and between 50 and 100 years old. He also identified as being a priest with 33 years of experience and having served his present congregation for seven months.

The three Lutheran pastors represent two large suburban congregations and one medium, between 100 and 200 congregants on a Sunday, urban congregation. The pastor at the urban congregation is male and reported six years of experience, two at his present congregation. The pastors at both of the suburban congregations are female. One reported being a pastor for 27 years, with 17 years of service at her present congregation. The other reported two and half years of service, all at her present congregation.

The three United Methodist pastors represent two large suburban congregations and one medium suburban congregation. All three pastors are male. One, who serves a large suburban congregation, has 25 years of experience, 6 at his present congregation. The other large congregation pastor reported 33 years of experience and 6 years at his present congregation. The pastor at the medium-sized congregation reported 15 years of service, 10 at his present congregation.
After the initial contacts to these seven pastors, four responded affirmatively to participate in the screening interview: two female Lutheran pastors and two male Methodist pastors. The other Methodist pastor declined to participate due to his busy schedule. I received no contact from the Roman Catholic priest or the male Lutheran pastor. I re-contacted each one week after the initial contact and still received no reply, so these two participants were eliminated from the screening interview process.

As a result of the lack of contact from the participants I initially selected, I reviewed my list of potential participants and contacted an additional two male Lutheran pastors and one additional Methodist pastor. One Lutheran pastor was serving a small urban church, where he has been two years. The other Lutheran pastor was serving a medium-sized rural church, where he has been for seven years. The Methodist pastor was serving a large, suburban church, where he has been serving for the last five years of his 39 year career. Of these contacts, all three responded affirmatively to participating in the screening interview process.

**Data Collection.** I contacted each of the seven pastors by e-mail on a Sunday, two weeks after the initial e-mail requesting participation in the initial survey. The e-mail contained a brief explanation of the phone interview process as well as a detailed description of the full study in the informed consent document. The pastors were asked to respond to the e-mail to schedule the interview after review the attached materials. I also followed up with a second e-mail to those pastors I had not yet heard from one week from the first e-mail requesting an interview. The interviews took place at the conveniences of the pastors over the next two weeks.

The main purpose of the interviews was to determine a best fit for the full research study. The criteria I used in screening potential participants were:

- Interest in the outcome of the study
• Regularity of preaching schedule
• Use of technology
• Anticipated response of the congregation

Based on the responses to these interviews and these criteria, I selected three congregations, one ELCA, one LCMS, and one Methodist, and four pastors to participate in the full study.

Benefits and Limitations of the Screening Interview

Benefits. The primary benefit of the phone interview was actual, live contact with participants. Blakeslee and Fleischer (2007) posit that interviews are a means to “understand and make meaning of their participants’ experiences” (p. 129). Unlike the previous survey phase, the Screening Interview allowed me to ask for clarification during the interview process and to learn more about my participants than revealed in the text they used to respond to the initial survey. Using what Blakeslee and Fleischer (2007) call an “informal interview,” I was able to obtain answers to my predesigned questions, as well as answers to questions specific to the context of each pastor that arose during the interview (p. 132). This increased flexibility was essential to determining whom to select as full study participants because it allowed me to develop a well-rounded picture of each congregation and pastor, as well as to amend my list of questions based on situations that arose in previous interviews.

Limitations. The major limitation of my approach to the Screening Interview was that it was self-selected, meaning participants were asked to participate, but had to actively contact me to set up the interview. This process of self-selection limited my study because I did not always, based on the available data, get a positive response from the participant I thought was the best fit for the full research study. As noted above, Lauer and Asher (1988) report several possible
reasons for low response rate, including requests for too much information or time, and the time of year the survey or questionnaire is administered. I attempted to account for both the time of my participants and the time of year, knowing that spring can be a busy time for pastors because of the season of Lent, which often requires extra worship services and extra demands on the pastors’ time. However, my willingness to let pastors decide whether or not to participate, based on their schedules, meant I was completely dependent on them for having viable research participants. Those most willing to participate generally came from similar demographic categories as pastors and churches with similar demographics, which inhibited my ability to provide as diverse a picture of preaching practices as I had initially hoped.

**Phase 3—The Full Study**

In Phase 3, the Full Study Phase, I moved from the more general to the more specific, employing a case study approach to each of the congregations in the study. My data collection approach was in many ways modeled on Moss’ (2003) study in *A Community Text Arises: A Literate Text and a Literacy Tradition in African-American Churches*. Moss’ approach combined interviews with preachers and congregants, her own observations of the preacher’s sermon practices and performances, and the textual transcriptions of sermons she observes. She worked with a small sample, three churches, which she studied in depth, a model that also guided my approach to this project.

In addition the usefulness of her method, I also adopted some of Moss’ approach to ethnography. Moss, drawing on the work of Dell Hymes, identified her ethnography as “hypothesis-oriented” because it was focused on specific information (p. 14). This characterization also allowed her to include textual analysis as support for the conclusions she developed from observations and interviews. This approach suited my project because I was
seeking to determine how congregants responded to the sermons they “heard” and I draw on specific examples from the texts, as I parse out how certain uses of technology impact a preacher’s *ethos*. While Moss does not focus on the ways preachers build *ethos*—her concern is more with how they and their congregations build the text of the sermon together and how that challenges notions of literacy—her approach brings to light the importance of community and shared knowledge, which I argue is central to building *ethos* in contemporary preaching.

A final benefit of the case study approach is that it allowed for data collection using a variety of methods from a variety of sources, which supported my goal of providing both the preacher/rhetor and parishioner/audience member perspectives. To build my case studies, I relied on interviews with pastors, survey data collected from parishioners, and observations done while visiting each congregation. Using multiple instruments and collecting multiple perspectives on the same sermon allowed me to triangulate my data by providing multiple avenues from which to view the preaching situation. According to Blakeslee and Fleisher (2007) triangulation is necessary to confirm or challenge the researcher’s interpretation of events, and thus provide a more nuanced depiction of both the research process and the results. Further, Beverly Moss (1992), in “Ethnography and Composition: Studying Language at Home” argues that triangulation not only helps improve research, but is also central to providing validity to this type of study. Collecting data with a variety of methods and from a variety of sources allowed me to compose a more thorough representation of the rhetorical practices of preaching and the expectations of the sermon as a genre. It also allowed me to compare the intentions and perceptions of the preacher/rhetor to those of the congregants/audience members. This comparison is central to answering research questions 3 and 5 about where expectations and understandings align and diverge.
In order to build an accurate picture of the complex relationship between preacher, sermon, congregation, *ethos* and technology, Phase 3 required the participation of both the pastor and members of the congregation. Pastoral participation consisted of a series of interviews and observations. The first step was an approximately one hour in-person interview. During this interview, I asked more specifically about pastoral training, especially where preaching and technology use is concerned, about technology use and attitudes toward technology, and about preaching practices, including the use of technology. ¹⁰ After the first interview, I interviewed the pastor two more times via e-mail. Each interview took place in the week before a sermon is preached and focused on the pastor’s intentions for the sermon, specifically his/her goal(s) for the sermon and his/her strategies for accomplishing those goals, including digital technology use. These interviews were constructed similarly to the process tracing interviews Paul Prior (2004) suggests as a means for studying writing processes. I have adapted them from Prior’s suggestions because Prior focuses on print-based textual production, and while a sermon has a print-based component, the oral delivery is the primary manifestation of the sermon. Since I interviewed pastors at the intermediate stage, when the sermon was being composed, but had not been preached, I used Prior’s work as a basis for constructing questions about the process of composing, but also modified some to account for expectations of delivery. I then observed these two sermons, to capture all the elements the rhetorical performance, and collected when possible, the accompanying visual components of the sermon. Finally, the results of the congregational part of the study and the case study itself were shared with the pastor for his/her responses.

¹⁰ The full version of this interview is available in Appendix C.
Simultaneous with the pastoral component was the congregational component. Surveys were distributed to congregation members to determine congregational technology use outside of church, as well as attitudes about preaching and the use of digital technologies in preaching. The surveys were anonymous to encourage greater participation, since the results were being made available to the pastor. I wanted to ensure that congregation members felt comfortable expressing opinions without fear that they would be identified in some way or that they might offend someone with whom they had a personal relationship, namely the pastor. However, these surveys collected some demographic data such as age, gender, length of membership at the church, and reasons for choosing that particular church. The purpose of collecting this data was to look for correlations between certain demographics and certain attitudes and responses to technology and to preaching with technology.

To initiate this survey process, I spoke to the congregation on a Sunday morning to explain my research project and to request participation. I also provided each congregation with blurbs to include in their Sunday bulletins and in their monthly newsletters. These blurbs briefly explained both my presence in the congregation and the goals of my research. Once I had made this first contact, I distributed the surveys after the service to those who requested them by stopping by a table I had set up to answer questions and hand out surveys. The table also included a sealed box in which the anonymous surveys were to be returned. Parishioners had two

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11 The full version of this interview is available in Appendix G.

12 The full version of this survey is available in Appendix D.
weeks from the initial distribution of the survey to collect, complete and return the surveys in the provided envelopes.

After the initial survey, two additional surveys were distributed in conjunction with the observed sermons\textsuperscript{13}. These surveys asked questions about the specific sermons and for specific responses to these particular sermons. Similar to the initial surveys, these surveys were anonymous to allow those who shared their opinions to do so freely and without fear of directly offending the pastor whose sermons they were responding to. However, these surveys did collect basic demographic information—general age, gender, and participation in the previous surveys—to allow me to look for correlations between demographics and responses to preaching with technology. The majority of the remaining questions focused on the specific sermon itself—title, main point, most memorable points, points that most connected to the hearer’s life, points that were confusing, etc.—in an open-ended format. I specifically did not address technology in these questions because I wanted to see if congregants would bring it up themselves or if the immediacy, or seamless integrations, of the technology made it less noticeable to the parishioners than the effect it produced. The final questions did ask specific questions about the technology used in the sermon. The first provided a specific checklist of the technologies used in the sermon. I provided a list because I wanted to see which ones were noticed and which were either overlooked or so remediated as not to be noticed as technologies. The other three technology questions are open-ended and aim to determine what parishioners found most effective about the technology use and how that technology use related to the main point they’d identified earlier. The major purpose for asking these questions was to investigate whether and

\textsuperscript{13} The full versions of these surveys are available in Appendix E and F.
how parishioners were connecting the use of technology to communicating a specific message in the sermon.

**Case Study 1: Trinity United Methodist Church**

The first case study site, reported on fully in Chapter 3, was a medium-sized suburban Methodist church. This church is affiliated with the United Methodist Church (UMC), a large group of Methodist churches in the United States. The congregation is served by one male pastor and has two worship services on Sundays. The earlier service is labeled a “traditional” service and uses traditional liturgy and hymnody and no visual digital technology, although audio technology is used. The later service, the “Family-Style” worship, is less traditional and makes more use of digital technology.

**Pastor.** The pastor at this congregation, Pastor Bob, serves as the sole pastor. He has been at this congregation for 10 years, but has served as a pastor for 15 years. During the course of the study, he was transferred to another congregation, but I was able to complete all the preaching observations before he completed his time at Trinity Church.

**Congregation.** Trinity has a normal worship attendance of 100 to 150 people on a Sunday. The congregation at Trinity is primarily older, although some families with small

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14 Names of congregations and pastors have been changed for anonymity.

15 According to the National Congregational Survey, a continually running study of churches in the United States, congregations are considered large if they average between 301 and 2000 congregants for weekly worship. Churches drawing 100-300 are considered medium, and those with less than 100 are considered small. Similarly, USA Churches (2011), an independent organization that creates a directory of church information categorizes churches with less than 50 congregants as small; churches with 50-300 congregants as medium and churches with 301-2000 congregants as large.
children do attend the church. A total of 15 congregants participated in one or more of the surveys distributed throughout the case study period\textsuperscript{16}.

**Data Collection.** I collected data at Trinity Church over a period of 10 weeks between the end of March and the middle of June 2012. To begin the process, I interviewed Pastor Bob for approximately an hour and half to ascertain what the dynamics of the congregation were, his approach to preaching, and any specifics he could give me about his preaching practices and technology. Following this interview, we scheduled three Sundays for me to observe his sermons and distribute the three surveys that are part of Phase 3.

On the appointed Sunday, four weeks later, I spoke briefly to the congregation during the announcement portion of the service to explain the project and to recruit participants. Following that service, I distributed the first of three surveys. I left a sealed box in the narthex area of the church where surveys were returned at the convenience of the participants over the next two weeks. I returned two weeks later to collect the responses and distribute the second survey. I returned two weeks later to distribute the third and final survey and collected the accumulated responses. After another two weeks, I collected the responses to the final survey.

My final data collection steps were to analyze the data, comparing Pastor Bob’s intentions with congregant’s responses, and report it in case study form. I then provided Pastor Bob with the case study write up and a list of questions to respond to as he read the case study. I emailed him these documents and followed up with him one week later. This exchange served as the final interview and a means to triangulate my observations and analysis.

\textsuperscript{16} A detailed discussion of this population can be found in Chapter 3.
Case Study 2: Blink and You’ll Miss It Church.

For the first case study I worked with the pastors and congregation of a large, suburban Lutheran church. This church is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), the largest synod of Lutheran churches in the United States. The congregation is served by two pastors and has two worship services on Sunday. The earlier service takes place in the sanctuary and uses minimal digital technology. The later service takes place in the Family Life Center and fully integrates digital technology throughout the worship service.

Pastors. Two pastors serve this congregation. Pastor Lake, the senior pastor is a female with 27 years of experience. She has been serving this congregation for 17 years. The associate pastor, Pastor Sandburg, is a male who graduated from seminary two and half years ago and is serving this congregation as his first position.

Congregation. Blink Church has an average Sunday attendance of between 200-250. Like Trinity Church, this congregation is composed of primarily of people middle-aged and older. However, there are also families with children who attend. Over the course of the three surveys, 31 congregants participated in one or more of the surveys.¹⁷

Data Collection. Data collection began at Blink Church in April 2012 with interviews with both pastors. Following those interviews, we scheduled three Sundays when I would observe their worship services and preaching. As this congregation has two pastors, scheduling was more difficult because I wanted to observe both pastors preaching. However, they do not share the preaching responsibilities equally, so we had to extend the study 15 weeks from the initial interviews to find a schedule that would allow me to observe both pastors.

¹⁷ A detailed discussion of this population can be found in Chapter 4.
Three weeks after the initial interviews, I attended and observed both Sunday services. During each service I was given the opportunity to explain my project and recruit subjects.

Following the services, I distributed the first survey. Two weeks later I returned to collect the surveys that had been returned. Then, because of the scheduling conflicts detailed above, it was 13 weeks before I distributed the second survey. The following week I distributed the third survey. I returned three weeks later to collect the returned surveys. As with the previous case study, I distributed the completed report to both pastors for their responses. Pastor Lake responded to the report, but Pastor Sandburg did not. I used her responses to triangulate and better explicate my data for this case study.

**Case Study 3: Church on the Corner**

My third case study site is a small, urban, Lutheran church, served by a part-time pastor. This congregation is affiliated with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, the second largest affiliation of Lutheran churches in the United States\(^{18}\). The congregation has one service on Sundays followed by an extended fellowship time. They are in the process of integrating digital media into their worship service, so the use of technology is not consistent, but evolving.

**Pastor.** Pastor Lidstrom has been serving this congregation has been there for two years. He has been a pastor serving other congregations for a total of 31 years. His position at this congregation is what he calls “full-time/part-time” meaning that he is the only pastor serving the congregation, but the congregation is unable to pay him for full-time work, so he also holds a full-time administrative position in a local office of a synod agency.

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\(^{18}\) At one time, the ELCA and LCMS were one synod. They divided in the 1970’s over issues of church governance, the ordination of women, and the authority and interpretation of the Bible.
Congregation. The congregation at the Church on the Corner is small, with fewer than 50 attending on a Sunday. It, like the other two congregations, is dominated by older adults, but also has families with children who attend. However, the Church on the Corner, unlike the other two congregations, is predominately African American. Twelve congregants participated in one or more of the surveys in Phase 3.

Data Collection. I began collecting data by interviewing Pastor Lidstrom in March 2012. Following that interview we selected three Sundays on which I would observe worship and the sermon and distribute the surveys to congregants. My first visit was four weeks after the initial interview with Pastor Lidstrom. At this visit, I explained the project and distributed the first survey. I returned two weeks later to collect the responses to this survey that had been returned to the box. I returned three weeks later to observe Pastor Lidstrom’s preaching and distribute the second survey. Two weeks later, I returned for the final observation and to distribute the third survey. After another two weeks, I collected the box and all returned surveys. As with the previous two studies, I provided Pastor Lidstrom with the report of the research at his congregation and requested his response to the report.

Benefits and Limitations of the Combined Survey and Case Study Method

Benefits. Hoover claims that previous studies of technology and religion were unfulfilling because they relied to heavily on “the objectivist-quantitative methods preferred particularly in the United States” which “proved woefully inadequate to the study of something so subtle, complex and nuanced as religion, much less the emerging quasi-religions, spiritualities and meaning explorations of the contemporary era. (p.13). Using case studies provided numerous benefits to this study, with the foremost being the ability to collect data in multiple forms and with multiple instruments. While some of this data collected was indeed objective and
quantifiable, the open-ended questions in interviews and on surveys allowed for me to collect more nuanced perspectives, necessary for studying preaching as an active rhetorical practice. This multi-faceted data collection was also necessary to represent the large variety of perspectives in a single congregation. Collecting specific data over several weeks from each preacher gave me access to details of their composing process, their sense of their roles and positions in the congregation, and their relationships with technology. Spending time in the congregation allowed me to observe the dynamics and demographics of the congregation, as well as the relationship between preacher and congregation, both during preaching and in other parts of the service. By collecting data from congregation members, I was able to gather diverse responses representing at least some of the diverse perspectives in each congregation.

**Limitations.** While case studies can provide an immense amount of data about a specific location, group, or event, their benefit is also their weakness. Using case study allowed me to represent three unique congregations in depth, but it limits my ability to generalize my results because my method was so contextual and situational. Further, because congregational participation was voluntary, limited to adults age 18 and older, and dependent on attendance in church on particular Sundays, my case studies do acknowledge that the congregational perspective presented in them is limited to the perspectives presented in the responses, and that certainly other perspectives do exist in the congregation.

This limitation is particularly noteworthy because the populations that responded at each congregation were almost exclusively “churched” populations. Since the 1970’s, those who study trends in church growth and development have used the labels “churched,” “dechurched” and “unchurched” Newton (2009) identifies people for whom the church holds high credibility, is central to their social and/or cultural narrative, and who view the church as essential to the
community as “churched.” Generally, the churched have developed these views from long-standing experiences with a particular congregation or denomination. Hammond (2001) describes “dechurched” people as “those who once found faith and meaningful religious experience within a congregation, but then left due to negative experiences” (pp. 1-2). The “unchurched” are those who have no prior relationship with a church and generally deny or resist organized religious practice, though not necessarily the aims or benefits of spirituality (Fuller, 2001; Russell, 1980).

The primary way the dominance of a churched population limits this study is that a churched population has certain genre expectations, based on experiences and long-standing beliefs that may not be shared by a dechurched or unchurched population. Since genre expectations play a central role in understanding if and how digital technologies might be incorporated into a sermon, this study must necessarily temper its claims to acknowledge that responses to the sermon as a genre, to preaching as a rhetorical practice and to the use of technologies in preaching may be different in dechurched and unchurched populations. Further research with these populations would be necessary for developing a more nuanced understanding of the role of digital technologies in preaching.

One way I attempt to temper these limitations is to compare the larger data set from the initial survey to the more specific data sets from the case studies to determine if the case study sites lean toward the more general practice or are unique from it. While this practice still does not allow for broad generalization, it does allow for some determination of what practices and beliefs appear to be dominant, normative, or accepted, for the participants in the study and what practices and beliefs are variable in context or specific to a certain denomination or congregation.
Conclusion

This study was designed to elicit a diverse range of perspectives at every stage. Although phases one and two focused specifically on pastors, these phases were designed to collect data from a broad range of participants. The initial survey phase sought the perspectives of pastors with a range of experiences in a variety of congregational settings—large, medium, or small; newly established or historic, urban, suburban, or rural. The screening interview stage looked for further nuances in the experience of pastors, such as how long they had been serving a particular congregation and what their technology experiences were, to facilitate case studies that were both meaningful and unique. Finally, the full study phase collected data from pastors and congregation members to compare not only how the beliefs and practices of pastors and congregation members aligned or diverged, but how the beliefs and practices of members of the same congregation might converge and diverge and what this means for how preachers can effectively preach and build their ethos.

The following chapters report on the full study phase, with each congregation serving as a single case study. Each study highlights how technology is used in specific contexts and how those uses impact the ethos of the preacher at each congregation. The case studies also demonstrate how differences in congregational demographics, as well as pastoral training, experience, and demographics affect the use of technology in preaching, the perceptions of technology in preaching by congregation members, and the ethos of the preacher.

A goal of this study is to highlight the complex nature of preaching with digital technologies by highlighting many of the participants involved, not simply the preacher or a select group of congregation members. Further, this study demonstrates that integrating digital technologies into a historic genre requires negotiating the values, beliefs, and expectations of all of the groups who use that genre. By determining the varied expectations and responses to
preaching with digital technologies within a congregation, this study moves toward a greater understanding of how integrating digital technologies into a historic genre like the sermon influence, not only the genre itself, but the rhetorical practices surrounding that genre.
CHAPTER III. TRINITY METHODIST\textsuperscript{19}: INTEGRATION AND EXPECTATION

This chapter reports on the first of three case studies that make up this study. Trinity Church is a congregation that regularly uses technology in its worship service and represents a congregation that has integrated technology into all aspects of its worship service. The congregation has an established practice of using digital technology at their later of their two services. They have used this technology for approximately seven years, and use it before the service for displaying announcements and during the service for the lyrics to the hymns, the service liturgy, and the sermon. Their pastor, Pastor Bob, has been using digital technology in his preaching since he was in seminary and played a role in implementing the use of technology in the services. For his Sunday sermons, Pastor Bob uses a sermon subscription service that provides him with pre-made slides for his sermons. Although he generally starts with these prepared slides, he does alter the text and occasionally adds images to the slides to connect them better with the sermon he is actually preaching.

Although the congregation at Trinity has embraced the use of technology in the worship space and in the worship service, they have not adopted its use uncritically or unanimously. Many members embrace the use of technology as an alternate means of communication and to help them to focus on the sermon. But other members intentionally attend the early service, where technology is not used, to avoid it because they feel digital technology detracts from the service. This divide is rooted in understandings of the sermon as a genre and expectations about the oral nature of the sermon and of preaching. Most of the members, and even the pastor, situate

\textsuperscript{19} Names of congregations and pastors have been changed for anonymity.
digital technology as an extension of or supplement to the sermon that simply augments the oral presentation—a position Campbell (2010) describes as “media as conduit” where the media can be used in any way, by whomever for whatever purpose (p. 44). Essentially, the values of the technology are not inherent in the technology, and thus, its uses and properties can have different meaning in different contexts. This understanding of both the sermon as a genre and of digital technologies influences how they view the technology and how the technology is used in the service and the sermon—essentially as a replacement for paper and printed materials, rather than as a unique and transformative mode of communication.

This chapter explores in further detail and depth the relationship between genre expectations and technology at Trinity Church through a description of the church building, congregation and pastor. Following this description, I describe the results of three interviews with Pastor Bob and three surveys distributed to the congregation about preaching. Using this data, I conclude the chapter by articulating the ways the values of the congregation and Pastor Bob, including their expectations about the sermon as a genre and their beliefs about digital technologies, shape their use of those technologies and the implications of their approach to technologies for other preachers and congregations.

**Church Background**

Trinity Church sits on a corner lot in a suburban area, among houses, parks, a school, and another church. It is easily identified by its large sanctuary space, with a high, sloped roof and steeple. When pulling into the parking lot, I noticed that an addition has been made to the original building to provide space for gatherings and functions. The main entrance leads to a small narthex or gathering area, which leads directly into the sanctuary. Trinity has a traditional layout for its sanctuary, with rows of pews, all facing the front of the church. The walls are brick
and lined with windows. At the front, an altar sits in the center of the elevated chancel, flanked by a pulpit on the left and a lectern on the right. Behind the altar is a large, stained glass window, made up of various colored panels in an abstract pattern. The organ and piano are also located in the chancel area, behind the lectern. When the choir sings, they sit on the opposite side, behind the pulpit.

To the right of the lectern, mounted at an angle on the wall, is a large screen for the projection of parts of the liturgy, lyrics to the hymns and songs, as well as the Scripture readings and the slides for the sermon. The projector is mounted at the rear of the sanctuary and is controlled by a team of volunteers from a raised platform at the back of the church. Neither the screen nor the control platform at the back is original to the sanctuary space, and it is clear that adding the control platform required some alteration to accommodate the new technologies.

In addition to the sanctuary, Trinity has several classrooms for children’s Sunday School classes and Adult Bible class, as well as a space called the “Hall” which is a large, open, gym-like space with a kitchen that serves as a gathering place before and between services. Between services, coffee and donuts are available, and people gather around circular tables to socialize. It also serves as a space for meals and functions. But on Sunday mornings, parishioners spend the majority of their time in the sanctuary, coming directly into the sanctuary from the parking lot and exiting directly to the parking lot following the service.

In terms of attendance, Trinity is a medium-sized\textsuperscript{20}, church, with about 100 to 150 people attending worship each Sunday. The majority of attendees are middle-aged or older; of the 13 respondents to the initial survey I distributed, 12 reported being age 56 or older and one reported being in the 36–45 age-group. But there are also young families with children who attend that I

\textsuperscript{20} See Chapter 2 for a full explanation of church size categories.
observed during my visits. Those who responded to the surveys were also overwhelmingly female, with 12 of the 13 falling in this category. This demographic is slightly less representative than the age demographic, based on my observations. However, women do seem to outnumber men in the congregation. All of the survey respondents are established members of the congregation who have attended the congregation for at least six years and three of the respondents have been members for more than 40 years. All 12 who responded to the question about frequency of attendance reported attending nearly every Sunday.

Attendance is much higher at the later 10:30am service than at the earlier 8:00am service, with nearly two-thirds of Sunday attendees going to the later service. There are a couple of possible reasons for this disparity, including the times of the services and the type of worship at each service. The later service has special parts for children which may account for the number of families with younger children that attend the later service. Nursery care is also available for small children during the later service.

**Technology Use In and Out of Church**

In terms of the technology-use background of the congregation, the survey results reveal that respondents are frequent and regular users of a variety of technologies. 12 of the 13 respondents reported owning a computer and a cell phone, and also reported using each for at least an hour/day in an average week. Their internet usage followed a similar pattern with 8 reporting approximately an hour/day of usage, 2 reporting 2-4 hours of usage, and 2 reporting 5-7 hours of usage. Some respondents also reported personal use of iPods and gaming systems, while all 13 reported owning and using a television. Most of the respondents, as the age demographics might suggest, reported being retired or unemployed, but those who did report work usage indicated that a computer and internet access were the most common uses of
technology in the workplace. 2 respondents also indicated use of cell phones for work purposes. Although this was not a random sample of the congregation, based on these results, Trinity appears to be populated by people familiar with a variety of technologies who make regular use of technology. This, in part, might explain the increased attendance at the later service where technology is used during the service and certainly, according to Pastor Bob, played a role in the implementation of the technology in the first place.

However, the surveys also revealed that despite familiarity with and regular use of many digital technologies, some members were resistant to the use of these same technologies in the worship service. They did not see that use as a necessity or felt that it was a part of their secular life, but didn’t belong in the worship space or worship service. While no one overtly said that they were concerned about the secular values of technology impacting the worship experience or that they felt the values inherent in the technology would alter or impact the existing values of the church or congregation, their responses indicate that they don’t feel the technology belongs in the worship space and align them more with Campbell’s (2010) technology as a “mode of knowing” in which content is impacted by the media in which it is delivered (p. 45). In addition to the ways media influence delivery, van der Laan (2009) argues that it also influences composition of sermons. He argues that in using the internet to construct sermons, preachers are diluting and homogenizing Christianity by simply recycling ideas of others from the internet rather than creating new ideas through study of the Bible. Further, he argues that this failure to study the Bible leads sermons to be inspired by the internet, rather than God. His concern is that in moving to internet research, and using the internet uncritically to compose sermons, allows the values of the internet and those who construct and maintain it, to permeate sermons, even if they are contrary to the values of God, the Church, congregation, or pastor, and thus preachers must
not default to the internet for material. While van de Laan, like the members of the congregation who oppose the use of technology in worship, don’t oppose the use of technology entirely, they both clearly have ideas about what is appropriate and valued in the worship space, and that technology impinges on those things or devalues those things.

Because of this divide, digital technology is used at only one of the two services. The earlier service avoids the use of digital technology, especially the screen and projector. The later service makes full use of the available technology from pre-service and throughout the worship service. Despite the differences in technology use, the services have the same general parts, songs, and follow the same general progression, so the use of technology does not dramatically impact the design or mood of the service at this congregation.

**Services**

The 8:00am service is the traditional service. The screen and projector are not used in this service. Instead all the parts of the service are available in print in the bulletin or hymnals. It is traditional in the sense that it uses a standard liturgy and avoids use of digital visual technology. The service follows a standard trajectory beginning with a call to worship or welcome that identifies the theme for the day. This is followed by a congregational hymn during which people may submit prayer requests to the ushers, who deliver them to the pastor. Following the hymn is a time of prayer, led by the pastor. A lay person then reads a Scripture lesson, usually from the New Testament. This is followed by an additional hymn and a lengthy prayer led by the pastor. Before this prayer, the pastor provides updates on people who have been prayed for recently or added to the prayer list. During the prayer, he adds any additional requests that have been submitted. Following the prayer, the congregation does the passing of the peace, in which they move around the sanctuary and shake hands with one another, saying “God’s Peace” or “The
peace of the Lord.” This is followed by another song, which is a cue for congregants to return to their seats and prepare for the offering. Following the offering is another Scripture reading, from one of the four gospels. This is followed by a hymn and then the sermon, which is the focal point of the service. The pastor preaches the sermon from the pulpit and it generally lasts twenty to twenty-five minutes. The sermon is followed by a hymn and a benediction, which again refers to the theme of the day. Following the benediction, the congregation leaves the sanctuary as they are ready, greeting the pastor on the way out the door.

While the 8:00 am service is considered traditional, the 10:30 service is more of a blended service. It uses some elements of more contemporary worship, like the digital technology, but also retains many of the elements of the earlier traditional service. This later service uses the screen and projector throughout, but the service is also available in a printed bulletin, as it is in the 8:00am service. In this service, announcements and a welcome appear on the screen before the service begins. While the announcements are highly textual, they are often accompanied by photographic images or photographic backgrounds. This service follows a similar trajectory to the 8:00 am service, using the same general order and the same music. So the two services are not entirely different, but do have a different feel.

The major differences between this service and the earlier service are the inclusion of the children’s message and the use of technology. The children’s message\(^\text{21}\) occurs before the sermon hymn and is a simplified version of the sermon that the adults will hear. The children are invited to the front of the church to hear the message, which often involves some sort of object lesson or visual aid. These messages are interactive, with the pastor or leader asking the children

\(^{21}\) The children’s message is a part of the service where the children are called to the front of the sanctuary for direct instruction from the pastor. It usually takes its basis from the assigned lessons for the day, and sometimes is a child-friendly version of the sermon that will be preached as part of the worship service.
lots of questions and having them interact with the objects or perform some sort of actions. Following the children’s message, the children are allowed to leave for a children’s church in the Hall, rather than staying for the adult sermon.

In terms of the sermon, it is usually a similar message to the 8:00 am service, but this time it includes a PowerPoint presentation that highlights the major points or themes from the sermon. These slides generally have a background with an image that relates to the theme of the sermon, and text that indicates the main points or important words. The image remains the same on all the slides, and other images are not often included. The text is the main component and focus of the slides. This sermon is also generally shorter than the one at the 8:00 am service because this congregation prefers the service go no longer than one hour, so with the addition of the children’s sermon, and occasionally other events like baptisms or recognitions of special occasions, Pastor Bob shortens the sermon to stay close to the one hour expected by the congregation.

**Pastor**

Pastor Bob is a stocky, middle-aged man who has served at Trinity Church for ten years. Before serving this congregation, he served two other congregations, and was transferred to a new congregation shortly after we completed this research. In his position at Trinity, he is the sole pastor, which means he is responsible for all of the preaching at this congregation, as well as teaching, counseling, and some administrative and supervisory duties. He is also actively involved in several extra-congregational activities, including a local ministerial group of area
pastors, a Drug and Alcohol taskforce, and as a technology coordinator for the local conference\textsuperscript{22} of Methodist ministers.

Pastor Bob is unique to this study for a couple of reasons. First, he is the only pastor in this study who is a second-career pastor. Prior to attending seminary, he worked as an engineer for General Motors. He followed a job from New York to Ohio, and eventually decided to attend seminary here in Ohio. Second, while at seminary, he earned two degrees. He is not the only pastor in this study with multiple degrees, but he has, in addition to his Masters of Divinity—the degree awarded to all seminary graduates for the pastoral ministry—a Masters in Religious Communication. This degree focuses on using digital technology to communicate in religious situations, and directly informs his approach to preaching and the ways he incorporates technology in the service and in his preaching.

Pastor Bob’s degree in Religious Communication prepared him to use digital technology in religious settings. He also makes use of technology on a regular basis in his work as a pastor. He composes all his sermons digitally on his computer and relies heavily on internet-based resources for composing his sermons. He says:

\begin{quote}
The books I gathered in seminary, I’ll go back to them every once and awhile, but most of the research I do now is internet-based. You know, if I’m think, trying to think about something from church history, you know, what did Martin Luther do when he nailed the theses to the door. Yeah I can go find my Martin Luther book and my notes from seminary, but it’s a whole lot easier to go to Google and say Martin Luther 95 Theses, see what comes up and follow those threads.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{22}“Conference” is the term used by the United Methodist Church for a defined group of churches that generally share a geographic proximity, form a sort of local governance organization, and share resources.
He finds that using the internet and following “threads” is quicker than returning to his notes and books and that such speed is essential with the increased demands of the pastoral job. According to Pastor Bob:

the demands of the pastoral job, whether its care or administration or denominational obligations, or being out there in the community has shifted so much that. My dad tells a story of when he was growing up going through confirmation they asked the pastor how long “I spend an hour for every minute I preach” that’s 20 to 30 hours a week. I just don’t see most pastors having that time and, and so technology has revolutionized that. To be able to find huge amounts of information in short periods of time.

Pastor Bob is clearly comfortable using computer technology in the research and composing process. Although he uses pre-made slides from the sermon service he subscribes to, he is comfortable manipulating them by changing and adding text or adding additional pictures. He is also aware that he has a responsibility to use content from the internet and other sources ethically. When he manipulates the pre-made slides that he receives from the subscription service, he says he is conscious of copyright and tries to be very careful to respect copyright. His choice to use and to manipulate the pre-made slides is related to time. Pastor Bob likes the backgrounds and doesn’t feel it’s a good use of his time to build PowerPoint presentations from scratch when he can get the premade and alter them if he needs to. His limited time and desire to respect copyright factor in to how often he includes additional images because finding open source or un-copyrighted images is much more time consuming. Again, this comes back to, as he says above, the time he feels he has available to devote to both his sermon and, specifically, to the multimedia portion of the sermon.
Sermons

Pastor Bob describes the Methodist church as a “word-focused” church, where the sermon is the central part or the highlight of the service. People in the Methodist church come to worship to hear the sermon, so it plays a pivotal role in the worship service. When Pastor Bob preaches, he designs his sermons specifically around a focus and a function, a method he learned in his seminary training. So central to his sermon design is the question: “What do I want to accomplish with this particular sermon at this particular time?” As a result, his sermons are contextual to the time of the church year—Easter, Christmas—and/or to the life of the church—current local events, celebrations, secular holidays, etc.

In terms of the function of the sermon, Pastor Bob sees the sermon as an opportunity “to move people just a little bit and connect them just a little bit more or maybe God willing a lot more with their faith, as they’re on that journey of faith.” To do this, he relies heavily on storytelling and the creation of images, as well as humor. His sermons generally begin with an extended example or story to draw people in, which he then connects with the Scripture lesson that he is using as the basis of the sermon for the day. In the sermons I observed, he used a humorous story about gambling, a technological example about artificial intelligence and a scientific example about the biological causes of optimism. He also relies on what he calls a “conversational style,” which is he sees as necessary to getting people to listen to him and hear what he has to say. This style is more about speaking to people, rather than at them, and involves using personal examples and first person to demonstrate that he is speaking at the same level as his members, and not speaking down to them or elevating himself.

This style is part of what Pastor Bob sees as necessary to creating credibility and ethos. For him, ethos is centered in making “a connection between you and the congregation” not just in the sermon, but throughout the service. One of his main strategies for establishing this
connection is in his introduction to the service, where he talks about the weather, some local event or some humorous story that he finds. According to Pastor Bob, “humor is a great unlocker of peoples they come into the room with all sorts of agendas. They’re busy, or they’re not busy, they’re bored or they’re overwhelmed. Umm. And you kinda have to unlock that a little bit.” He sees humor as a crucial way to connect to people and encourage them to be open enough to listen to what he has to say. His humor generally finds expression in witty stories and the occasional joke. Yet while he feels strongly about the use of humor, what he identifies as most important is getting people “to unlock that emotional closet,” so that they are “better likely they are to let me in and let me teach them about whatever subject.” He notes that the most important part of creating ethos is to know the congregation and know what types of illustrations, whether humorous or touching, will most likely reach people on an emotional level, which will then open them to the message of the speaker. His approach reflects Moss’ (2003) contention that congregants respond to a preacher that they perceive as emerging from the pew to the pulpit or coming from the people and speaking the language of the people, both literally and through shared cultural knowledge.

In addition to the use of oral examples to form connections with congregants, Pastor Bob also uses the digital technology to emphasize points in his sermons and provide additional means for people to connect with his message. In some cases, the technology can guide the trajectory of the sermon. As noted above, Pastor Bob subscribes to a sermon starter service, which includes PowerPoint slides, which he consults early in his sermon preparation progress. If he likes the sermon suggestions, he generally uses those, and the PowerPoint slides as a starting point for the sermon. However, Pastor Bob then customizes the sermon to the context of the congregation and also sometimes changes the text on the PowerPoint slides to fit his sermon, or changes the order
of the slides to fit his sermon. He feels strongly that the use of digital technologies can improve interest and focus during the sermon and its content. However, he also is aware that the technologies should not take over the sermon, which he views as still a very much oral and aural event. The technology is meant to augment the spoken presentation, rather than replace it or overshadow it.

This understanding of technology, according to Fast (2001) who draws on Walter Ong, Lischer and Craddock, is founded on the belief that in Christianity “the written word must, at least in theological matters, be subordinate to the spoken word” (p. 46). God delivers his words orally and his son Jesus is identified as the Word Incarnate, giving primacy and authority to the spoken, rather than the written word. The ways that the sermon genre is shaped by these beliefs about the spoken word reflects Devitt’s (2004) contention that all “genre develops within, embodies, and establishes society’s values, relationships and functions” (p. 33). The practice of preaching is directly derived from this belief, where the preacher speaks on behalf of God or presents God’s word orally to the congregation. Even if a sermon is written, it is written for oral presentation, so the written word is in service to the spoken word. This understanding means that the written word, in the sermon genre, is understood as simply an extension or alternate form of the spoken word. Thus, writing the sermon down or constructing it as a manuscript should not impact its presentation as an oral genre because the written word simply supplements the spoken.

With such an understanding of how a technology like writing impacts the sermon, it’s easy to see how that same understanding could be and is applied to the use of digital technology. At Trinity, both Pastor Bob and the congregation identify the technology as an add-on, and even a distraction or detraction, to the main oral event of the sermon. However, Wilson and Moore (2008) in The Wired Church 2.0 argue that “Media is not simply an add-on to the existing means
of communicating the gospel in worship, but an emerging, fundamentally new system of communication, equal to oral and written word.” (p. 7). Their work echoes the claims Selfe (2007) makes about multimodal composition—the medium of composition impacts content and design, thereby impacting what is communicated and how it is communicated. These scholars understand that any technology from writing to HTML has a direct effect on the construction of texts and that changing the medium in which texts are constructed changes how the text communicates. Changing the medium is not merely translation from one form to another because each medium has its own properties, values, advantages and disadvantages that are directly and indirectly communicated when it is used.

Yet at Trinity the visual technology, like the written word that is often part of sermon presentations, is subordinated to the oral presentation. For Pastor Bob, the technology is not simply another mode of communication in the sermon, like body language or body position, but an add-on meant to supplement the message, rather than to deliver it. He is much more aligned with a position that privileges the spoken word over other forms of communication in the sermon. Despite composing a manuscript for his sermons, he says “So for me, the sermon is very much uhh uhh an oral exercise. As I’m developing my sermon, I’m very careful, I try to be very careful, to make sure that what I’m saying makes sense out loud.”

While Pastor Bob has a distinct idea about how the sermons he preaches function for the congregation, the respondents to my surveys have much more varied perceptions and opinions. The two most prevalent answers given by survey respondents about the purpose of the sermon were to connect them with God in some way and to teach them about the Bible. These answers were occasionally intertwined in comments such as:

To gain a clearer understanding of Biblical teachings
To guide the listeners in how to better serve the Lord

To apply the Word in today's culture

or “Help people grow in faith when the hard times come there is more of a foundation of belief.” Another prevalent theme, linked to the idea of being connected with God and learning about the Bible, was the desire for a connection with present culture and daily life. Nine of the thirteen respondents listed connection to daily life or application to daily life as a necessary component of a good sermon. However, none of these respondents made an explicit connection between the use of technology and relevance. Rather, relevance is still, for this group, connected to the spoken words of the pastor—the examples he chooses to use, and the ways he explains how they can live out Scripture in their daily lives. This group of congregants is looking for a pragmatic sermon that meets their spiritual needs by providing concrete steps or examples for living and growing their faith.

The choice and use of examples is pivotal for being a “good” preacher at this congregation. Several respondents said that stories made the sermon interesting or meaningful to them. Respondents were also looking for examples and information that challenged them and provided new ways to look at the Bible or at their lives or faith. Life and faith are inextricably tied, as one cannot be faithful without living a faithful life. The expectation is that the examples provided teach something about the Bible, so that the Bible can be applied in some concrete fashion to their everyday lives and current contexts. Here again, however, there is no explicit connection between the use of stories and the use of the visual technology—the oral presentation of the examples is still what people in the congregation connect to as helpful and meaningful.

While Pastor Bob meets this expectation for examples and application in many ways, the desire for pragmatism among the respondents is sometimes at odds with Pastor Bob’s approach
and style. For instance, he often uses an extended example to begin his sermons, rather than jumping right in to discussing the text that he is basing the sermon on or making the theme or point of his sermon obvious right at the beginning of the sermon. His style might be called more inductive, where he leads people to his point, than deductive, where the point is stated outright and then examined and proven. His choice to use this style aligns with the perspective of Allen et Al. (1997) who argue that deductive sermons are outdated because people in a post-modern culture don’t simply want to listen passively to what the preacher thinks, but want some degree of active participation in the sermon. Thus, post-modern audiences expect the preacher to establish his/her credibility by knowing their concerns as a community and addressing them with biblical teaching. However, despite his move to and support for inductive preaching, multiple respondents to the survey indicated that Pastor Bob’s extended examples could go on too long and the point of the sermon could get lost in the example. One respondent implied that this approach is “beating around the bush” rather than simply and clearly stating the point, and another explicitly said “I don’t like long rambling introductions.”

There is also some dissent over the use of humor in the sermon. Pastor Bob intentionally uses humor because he believes it is effective for connecting with his audience. And for some of the respondents, that is true. Two explicitly reported that the use of humor made the sermon interesting or attention-getting. Other respondents were put off by the use of humor and one mentioned that it can be, at times, “too silly (mimicking comedians!).” Another seemed to feel that humor was not appropriate content for the sermon, instead preferring “Intellectual and person content--NOT cute stories or attention getting gimmics.” Clearly, these respondents have specific expectations for the sermon genre which inform the evaluations of Pastor Bob’s sermons and preaching style.
Pastor Bob’s inductive approach is a site of disconnect for his congregation because they expect easily identifiable points and ways to connect the Bible to their lived lives is sometimes at odds with Pastor Bob’s conversational and inductive style. His inductive style is mediated somewhat by the use of PowerPoint slides at the later service, because his points are presented textually, as well as orally, and because he is forced to remain closer to his original manuscript so that the person operating the PowerPoint can change the slides appropriately. Yet, the next two sections reveal that even with the use of PowerPoint slides, people are attaching to and retaining very different elements of the sermon, and are leaving with very different understandings of his message and impressions of what is important.

**Sermon 1: “Your Spirit Guide”**

Pastor Bob preached this sermon on May 27, 2012, which was Pentecost Sunday this year. Pentecost is a major church festival and takes place 40 days after Easter and celebrates the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on Jesus’ disciples, and then on all his followers. Generally, this Sunday has a heavy focus on the Holy Spirit and his function for Christians. At Trinity, this particular Sunday, the service was themed around Pentecost, with most of the hymns and readings focused on the Holy Spirit. However, since May 28 was Memorial Day this year, one of the hymns and some of the prayers were focused on patriotic themes. The earlier, traditional service followed the usual pattern, with the exception of the addition of a time to recognize recent graduates. The second service deviated much more from its usual pattern because, in addition to recognizing the graduates, there was also a baptism, which has a lengthy liturgy that accompanies it. This addition to the regular service caused Pastor Bob to preach a dramatically shorter sermon at the second service, in order to stay within the approximately one hour timeframe the congregation expects for the service. This expectation about the length of the
sermon and the service is another indication of the power genre expectations have in shaping community practices.

Pastor Bob’s sermon for this week was titled “Your Spirit Guide.” Using the focus/function model that is typical to his approach, he described the focus of this sermon as “knowledge isn’t enough, we need inspiration” and the function of the sermon was “To teach the congregation that they need the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as much as they need knowledge and information about God and how to plug into the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.” To communicate his focus to the congregation, Pastor Bob preached a sermon with five major parts.

His opening example was a story about an article that appeared on the Big Ten website during football season, while games were still in progress on a Saturday. He read a portion of the article to the congregation and talked about how it appeared that some writer must have been working diligently for the game to have such a polished and updated article ready so quickly. He then revealed that the article was not written by a person, but by a computer program that can take facts and compose them into articles that have the appearance of being written by a human being. Using this illustration as a springboard, Pastor Bob explained in part two that as humans we are different than computers because we need more than knowledge. A computer can work with facts and knowledge, but that is not sufficient for people, especially Christians, because by definition, faith means accepting what may be uncertain or unknowable. Instead, people need knowledge and inspiration, which comes from the Holy Spirit. He also reminded the congregation that the Holy Spirit does not always work efficiently or in the ways people might expect. This idea served as the transition to part three: The Power of the Holy Spirit. This section connected directly to the scriptures of the day (John 15:26-27; 16:4-15). The purpose of this section was to explicitly connect the Biblical teaching with contemporary culture and people’s
daily life. Pastor Bob explained that Jesus had told people he would send the Holy Spirit, and the larger focus of the section was that the Holy Spirit is a “helper.” Giving this definition was intended to give people context for understanding the role Holy Spirit in their lives and how to interact with the Holy Spirit. This context was necessary as a transition to part four where Pastor Bob gave three tenets for “plugging in to the Power of the Holy Spirit:” (1) Don’t resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51); (2) Don’t quench the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19); and (3) We should be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18). His final section, “we are called to embody the truth” focused on Jesus as being the “truth incarnate” and that people are called to let the truth live in them and make it visible in their lives.

In its entirety, this sermon took about 25 minutes at the earlier service. At the later service, the same topics were covered in about half the time because of all the additions to the service and the expectation that the service be kept to approximately one hour. At the second service, slides were used to illustrate the main points. These slides all had the same background, with a technology theme that related to the opening illustration. The colors, mostly grays, highlighted by bright yellow and white text, also gave the presentation a high-tech aura. The only major differences in the slides were the textual component, which included key words and phrases from the sermon.

Five people returned the survey related to this sermon, three from the earlier service and two from the later service. The respondents were four women and one man. Three of them were from the 66-75 age group, and two were from the 46-55 age group. Several interesting findings emerged from their responses to the sermon including the disagreement between them about the theme of the sermon and how differently they interpreted the sermon from Pastor Bob’s carefully laid out intentions.
When asked about the general point of the sermon two respondents indicated that it was to “listen to the spirit for a better life.” Similarly another respondent saw the point of the sermon as “to seek and obey the Spirit” and another “another part of a service about where to look for God's will, guidance.” But another respondent heard “the Holy Spirit is always with us.” What is most notable is that none of the responses indicated anything about the role of knowledge or inspiration, which was Pastor Bob’s focus for this sermon. It seems that people retained mostly the final two parts of the sermon, where they were instructed how to interact with the Holy Spirit and why that interaction was important to them. This is further evidenced by responses to the questions “what stuck out to you most in the sermon?” and “what specific points do you remember?” Responses to these questions included: “We have a narrow view of guidance--i.e. the little shadow that sits on our shoulder and says ‘Don't do that’ We ought to realize it could also say ‘Do _____’--and listen for that;” “we should not resist the spirit,” and “If we let the spirit guide us we would do more for God.” The points the stick most with these respondents are the pragmatic ones, rather than the more spiritual ones Pastor Bob was aiming for.

In terms of illustrations, very few people mentioned the lengthy opening illustration or saw the connection between that illustration and the point of the sermon. Only one person made mention of “the rate at which technology advances” as something that connected with his life. The only other example that received specific mention was Pastor’s discussion of the conversation between Pontius Pilate and Jesus, recorded in John 18, in which Pilate famously asked Jesus “What is truth?” While this example was prominent for the one respondent, Pastor didn’t even mention it as a notable part of his sermon in his description or his list of illustrations. Further, no other respondent mentioned it, so this example was clearly unique to this particular respondent.
Neither of the respondents from the second service seemed to have a different experience of the sermon than those at the first service. The use of technology didn’t seem to have a major impact on their impressions of the sermon. They did not list any specific slides, words or images that made the sermon meaningful to them. When asked how the technology connected to the main or specific points of the sermon, I received only relatively generic responses like “The clips put up the main points of the sermon” but there was no connection between the images or text on the screen and the theme of the sermon.

Sermon 2: “Optimism and Your Brain”

This sermon was preached two weeks after the previous sermon on Sunday June 10, 2012 and was the last sermon Pastor Bob preached for this congregation before his transfer to another congregation. There were no particular church holidays or festivals this day or any secular holidays acknowledged during the church services. The only special occasion was the addition of new members to the church through a rite of membership. This rite was not as lengthy as the baptism rite and did not really impact the length of the service.

For this sermon, Pastor Bob’s focus was “To explain Paul’s esoteric descriptions of seen and unseen in terms of hope for the congregation to grasp how it relates to faith” with the functional goal of inspiring “the congregation to embrace hope and to see it as a strength rather than a weakness of faith, and how to integrate hope in a fallen world.” As with the previous sermon, this sermon has five parts, but there are fewer layers within each part in this sermon. This made the sermon easier to follow and the responses to the surveys showed more cohesiveness and uniformity than the previous sermon.

The illustration that begins this sermon is a report on a study by a university in the United Kingdom that claims that people who are optimists have a brain defect. According to the report
of the study, people who are optimists don’t effectively process negative information, thus they don’t tend to anticipate or expect negative results. It further claims that optimists are biologically shaped to ignore bad news and focus on good news. This introduction led to part two which connected to the scripture lesson for the day (2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1) where the writer, Paul, speaks about wasting away as a momentary affliction, and that people should focus instead on eternal things. This section transitions to a third section about the differences between hope and optimism. Pastor Bob made a point of demonstrating that the word “optimism” does not appear in any translation of the Bible, but that the word “hope” abounds. The key difference, which he reveals in this section, is that hope “comes from a very different place, not from within, but from God.” This links back to showing that hope is not a weakness but a strength, because it is backed by God’s strength. And because hope comes from God, “Hope does not ignore the problems of the world, but seeks to overcome them, which is the fourth main section of this sermon. Again, Pastor Bob is trying to demonstrate that hope is one of God’s ways of acting in the world to confront and deal with problems. Finally, in the last section, Pastor Bob highlights hope by expounding on the theme “God’s hope will prevail, always.” In this section, he presents three specific lines of reasoning or evidence to demonstrate the power of hope (1) “Even pessimistic theologians come down on the side of hope” (2) Scripture presupposes hope and promises hope” (3) “Many Christians who have gone through great trials placed their hope in Christ.” In this section, Pastor Bob provided many concrete examples of actual theologians, Biblical passages, and actual people who exemplify the hope he speaks about in the sermon.

In terms of the technology use in this sermon, the background of the slides looked remarkably similar to the one used the previous sermon. This one featured a similar color scheme and the image of a human head in profile position, to highlight the connection between optimism
and the brain. The background of the slides was consistent throughout and only the text changed from slide to slide. The text on the slides highlighted the main points of the sermon throughout.

Three congregation members responded to the follow-up survey for this sermon. All three were women, one in the 56-65 age group and two in the 66-75 age group. All three had participated in at least one of the other surveys. Two of the respondents attended the later service and one attended the early service.

Although I had only three responses, they varied greatly in what they saw as the main point of the sermon and none of their perceptions lined up completely with Pastor Bob’s intentions. Only two respondents mentioned hope as a main idea in the sermon and one focused much more on optimism saying “if you are optimistic you have a positive view of life.” The two that mentioned hope had slightly different approaches with one focusing on hope being found in Jesus’ death and resurrection and the other responding “Always hope--Life happens—but there is great hope in eternity.” The first response focuses much more on hope as a spiritual, but external, thing, whereas the second focuses on the function of hope for present life.

Since all three found different themes in the sermon, it is not surprising that they all identified different points as memorable and meaningful. However, each mentioned the opening example, so it must have resonated more than the computer-generated story example from the previous sermon. However, one respondent mentioned that the Pastor did not give enough information about the study and wanted to know:

what was measured--how large a population was involved etc. It seemed like kind of a weak leg to use to build what was an otherwise excellent sermon on. If the information was from an on-line source--how trustworthy was that source? (I
don't think—as the minister said—anyone in our congregation reads neurological journals (or follows up rebutals/affirmations in those journals).”

So although this example seems to have been more effective in sticking with those who heard the sermon and connecting to the theme, the way it was presented may have damaged the ethos of the pastor a little for at least one of the hearers.

As with the previous sermon, those who attended the late service did not have much to say about the specific use of technology. There were no mentions of particular words or images that really impacted the hearers or the ways they understood or perceived the sermon or the speaker. It seems the use of technology does not directly impact how well the sermons Pastor Bob preaches connect with his audience or how well he, as a speaker, forms a relationship with his congregation.

**Conclusion**

Although Trinity Church has been using digital technology for seven years and has seemingly smoothly integrated that technology into their worship space and worship practices, there is a disconnect between the use of that technology and the expectations of the congregation for the sermon as a genre. As Cargall (2007) points out “Preaching is one of the great bastions of oral culture. It is in its very essence an oral form of communication. Sermons—the content of what is preached—may either originate as written texts or subsequently be transcribed into written texts, but preaching itself in an oral event” (p. 1). For the congregation at Trinity, the sermon is still very much conceived of as an oral genre where the pastor speaks and the people listen. Even with Pastor Bob’s use of a more conversational style that asks questions of people in the pews and makes use of the first person plural, the expectation is that the pastor, as an authority on the Bible, will teach or explain a biblical teaching to the people listening and will
provide ways for those people to implement or express that teaching in their daily lives. As a result, the use of technology in the sermon is conceived as an extension of the pastor’s authority, rather than an inclusion of additional authoritative voices. The technology is simply another mode for expressing what the preacher is saying orally, not a means of communication in and of itself.

For the congregation at Trinity Church, the ethos of the preacher is intimately connected to their perceptions of the sermon as an oral genre. Thus, they expect a primarily oral performance from a “good” and believable preacher. Ethos is located, revealed, and developed much more in the oral presentation, rather than the visual presentation. Respondents to the surveys were looking for preparedness, passion, and an obvious care for the people to whom the preacher is speaking. For them, this is evidenced much more by what is said, rather than by what is presented on the screen. What seems to matter most is the choice of examples to explain points, and, more importantly, the ways those examples are presented. As evidenced by responses from congregation members, they are seeking connection to their lives, but they are also looking for that connection to be obvious and not lost in lengthy or abundant examples. For this congregation, it is necessary to articulate points clearly and concisely throughout the oral presentation, and to make explicit connections between the lessons being taught and the examples being used to teach them.

While the use of digital technologies has the potential to clarify the themes and help congregants draw connections between examples and those themes, from the responses to the surveys, it does not appear as that is actually what is taking place at Trinity Church. Although some respondents reported liking the use of technology in the sermon, none of them explicitly connected the use of technology to what made the sermon meaningful or interesting to them.
When asked specifically about the use of technology, most replied in generic terms like “keeps focus” or “makes main points visible.” This could be caused by their inability to their lack of language or terminology to explain their perceptions of the technology, but is more likely caused by their conception of the technology as a supplement of the pastor’s oral presentation, rather than a means of communicating in and of itself. But what is abundantly clear from those who responded to the surveys is that the use of technology did not significantly impact their views of the preacher in a positive way because they are still adhering to a conception of the sermon as an oral genre and thus primarily focus on and evaluate the preacher’s oral presentation. This conception explains why many respondents saw the lack of technology use as positive and were more likely to have a positive view of a preacher who did not use technology because they felt it interferes with and takes away from the orality of the sermon.

The way digital technology is currently employed in the sermon also contributes to how it is perceived. Although it does present the preacher’s points in another mode, the mode is still highly textual, rather than visual. The majority of Pastor Bob’s sermon slides are text-based, including a word or short phrase that highlights or emphasizes the point he is making. While such slides are an effective tool for presenting his main points in another mode, this approach fails to take full advantage of the available technology and perpetuates perceptions of the sermon as a text-based or word-based genre. Using technology in such a way extends the impression that it is a supplement to the sermon, rather than an integrated part, capable of communicating on its own. This practice aligns with Pastor Bob’s and the congregation’s view of the sermon as an oral genre, but begs the question, why then, use the technology?

I would argue that using technology in other ways besides text-based slides might change the responses to the sermons, but concede that such changes necessitate not only a change in the
use of the technology, but also a change in how the sermon is understood as a genre. For instance, Pastor Bob might be able to shorten his examples or reduce the number of examples he uses by using images, rather than simply words on the screen. This might help shorten his introductions, which respondents felt were long thus improving his *ethos* and also help in instances when he needs to shorten the sermon at the later service to accommodate other activities in the service. However, such a strategy can only be effective if Pastor Bob and the congregation members are willing to see the sermon as multimedia genre, rather than as the oral genre that it has traditionally been.

Without making such a change, the use of digital technologies will remain limited and have little impact on the dynamic of the service, the presentation of the sermon or the *ethos* of the preacher. At Trinity Church, the digital technology is simply replacing printed versions of the liturgy and hymn lyrics, which is a very limited use of the capabilities of digital technologies. Unlike the congregation in the following chapter, which has designed a service around the use of the technology to be an alternative to the traditionally conceived worship service, the goal at Trinity Church seems to be to lean toward using the technology for accommodation rather than transformation—to preserve tradition and maintain historic practices rather than amend or alter those practices for changing cultural contexts--which results from their understandings of the sermon and worship service as genres and a desire to maintain a traditional approach to both worship and preaching. Their adoption of the technologies indicates a desire to try new approaches, but the ways they have implemented the technologies indicates that despite the new technologies, their traditional practices and beliefs remain privileged. Campbell (2010) would describe this congregation as choosing to resist many of the affordances of digital technologies because they find them incompatible with their traditions, historic practices, and religious values.
As their approach privileges their historic practices, including the historic sermon genre, it increases accessibility, in terms of providing service materials in forms that are easier to use for those who have difficulty seeing or reading small print, but it also intentionally ignores or resists the ways technology could change the dynamics of the service, perhaps making it more accessible, on a philosophical level, to those unfamiliar with or uncomfortable in the church environment. Thus their use of technology is certainly geared more toward those who already attend and their expectations of worship and the sermon as a genre, rather than toward attracting those who don’t attend or accommodating those who are looking to challenge traditional conceptions of worship and preaching by including the use of technology and the more contemporary multimedia experiences it makes possible, as the congregation at Blink and You’ll Miss It Church does in the following chapter.
CHAPTER IV. BLINK AND YOU’LL MISS IT CHURCH: DOUBTS AND DISCONNECTS

Blink and You’ll Miss It Church has an established practice of incorporating digital technology into their worship services. The congregation has two distinct services, one much more traditional and minimal in its use of technology, the other more contemporary and integrated in its use of technology. The contemporary service, called “The Vine” has been intentionally designed to challenge traditional conceptions of worship by changing the location of the service from the sanctuary to the less formal Christian Life Center (CLC), by changing the music in the service, by changing the liturgy from the traditional hymnal liturgy, and by incorporating digital technology throughout the service. Technology literally plays a central role in the service, as the screen on which song lyrics, the liturgy, and the sermon presentation are projected, is mounted on the wall behind the stage at the front of the CLC. This case study examines how using technology so purposefully to provide an alternative to traditional worship styles and practices influences the preaching within these services.

In addition to the use of technology, the preaching at Blink Church is shaped by the two different pastors, an experienced female pastor and a newly ordained male pastor, that serve this congregation and share the preaching duties. So Blink Church offers the opportunity to see how technology functions in different service settings, and also for pastors of different levels of experiences and with different genders. Further, while the pastors share the responsibility for preaching, they are assisted by a team that constructs the PowerPoint presentations for both the service and the sermons. This collaborative relationship has a profound impact on how sermons are presented and received by the congregation because it separates the oral presentation from the visual presentation.
To explore how these many factors influence preaching and the *ethos* of preachers at this congregation, this chapter provides some detailed information about Blink Church’s building, specifically the two worship spaces and the digital equipment installed in those spaces; the congregation and the two pastors. I also examine the way each pastor understands and approaches sermons and contrast that information with the ways their congregation members perceive sermons. Building from this more general study, I detail the results of in-depth study of two sermons, one by each pastor, and the congregation members’ responses to those sermons. Finally, the chapter concludes with analysis of the impact technology use has on the preaching at Blink Church and the ways positioning digital technologies as peripheral to, rather than as an integral part of the sermon delivery, discourages the active engagement with those technologies by preachers necessary to challenge and transform the historical orality of the sermon genre and its accompanying expectations for *ethos*.

**Church Background**

Blink and You’ll Miss It Church is located in a busy commercial area. Surrounded by strip malls, medical buildings and restaurants, the church, which is in the traditional New England style with a white steeple and white columns, should be obvious to those passing by, but is actually quite easy to miss when driving past. The church, set back from a busy road, is overshadowed by the numerous flashing signs and buildings around it. For those who do pull into the church parking lot, the lot runs in a U-shape around a large, segmented building. The sanctuary space is easily identified from outside, with its sloping roof, steeple, and columns. The church also has a preschool area and an addition called the Christian Life Center (CLC), which is used for some worship services, as well as fellowship activities and functions.
The sanctuary is laid out in a traditional pattern, with white pews in rows facing the chancel area at the front. A large choir loft overhangs the back of the sanctuary, and people must pass under it to enter the sanctuary. The chancel area in the front follows the standard layout of pulpit on the left and lectern on the right. An altar sits against the wall in the middle of the chancel. The entire space is backed in white stone, and the pulpit and lectern are a white marble. Neither is solid, but has two legs that support the platform on which notes or manuscripts would be placed. There are also chairs in front for both pastors to sit during the service.

A moderately sized screen is mounted on the wall on the left side of the chancel. It is not used much in this service. When it is used, it most common uses are for displaying song lyrics when the songs are not printed in the hymnal or bulletin, or for presentations of information not typically included in the service, such as photos from Vacation Bible School or information about visiting groups. Instead of using the screens, worship in this space relies heavily on paper-based printed materials. The weekly bulletin contains the outline of the liturgy, as well as the names and numbers of the hymns for the week. Parishioners must use the hymnals located in the pews for the lyrics of the hymns during the service.

Outside the sanctuary space is the Atrium where people gather for donuts and coffee after the service. This space also serves as a common space for promoting church events, selling items for fundraising, and distributing information. I used this space to distribute and collect my surveys to congregants who worship in the sanctuary. However, this space is generally only used by people who attend the early, traditional service and not those who attend the later, contemporary service, which takes place in the CLC. So it is common practice for groups to move their booths, tables, and information to the CLC following the early service to distribute information to those who attend the late service.
A long hallway connects the Atrium to the Christian Life Center (CLC). This hallway contains the church and pastors’ offices, the choir practice room, and access to the preschool area. The church does not directly run the preschool, but in a co-op arrangement the church provides the space, while another entity provides the funds and staff. The gathering area outside the CLC is smaller than that outside the sanctuary and is more like a hallway than a place to gather. It also provides access to a large kitchen, which has a service window to the main space of the CLC. The main area of the CLC is large and open. It has one wall of large windows to let in natural light. The front end of the space has a large raised stage, on which musicians and their accompanying instruments are usually set up. A large, almost movie theater-sized, screen fills the wall behind the stage. At the back of the space is an enclosed booth from which the sound and projection equipment is run. This space was clearly designed for technology use, unlike the sanctuary, where the technology was a later addition.

When the CLC is set up for worship, rows of folding chairs are set up facing the stage. They are set up in four large sections with a central aisle that runs toward the stage and large aisle that runs parallel to the stage about halfway back, though which people enter and move throughout the space to seats. When the CLC is not set up for worship, it can function as a gymnasium, with basketball hoops that can be lowered into place. It was also used for a dinner and auction the week following one of my visits. So although it functions for worship on Sunday mornings, it is a multi-purpose space.

Blink Church is the largest church, both in building size and congregation size, in this study. Sunday attendance averages 200-300 per Sunday, split fairly evenly between the 9:00am traditional service and the 11:00am “Vine” service. The majority of attendees at either service are middle-aged or older. Of the 29 responses to the initial survey, 25 reported being 36 or older,
with the largest number of respondents (9) in the 66-75 age group. Based on my observations, the responses seem to be indicative of the makeup on the congregation. However, I also observed several families with children in attendance at both services who are not represented in the respondents. As with the respondents at Trinity Church in the previous chapter, the respondents at Blink Church were mostly female, with 20 of 29 identifying as female. Based on my observations, the balance between male and female congregants is more balanced than the responses to the survey indicate. The majority of the respondents are established members of the congregation with 24 reporting attending Blink Church for at least six years. Four respondents indicated they had attended for between one and five years, and one indicated she had attended less than one year. Most respondents (19) described their attendance as nearly every Sunday and eight described their attendance as three Sundays a month. The other two respondents indicated attendance of two Sundays a month or one Sunday a month. The size of the congregation produced a more varied population than at Trinity, but in terms of age, gender, and attendance the respondents at both congregations share similarities.

**Technology Use In and Out of Church**

When I interviewed Pastor Lake about the suitability of the congregation for the study, she indicated that many members of the congregation worked in academic or professional jobs and would thus, be interested in both the use of technology and this research. The responses to the initial survey demonstrated that congregants use a variety of technologies and technological devices. Twenty-eight of 29 responded that they owned a computer, cell phone, and television. Twenty-five reported owning a DVD or BlueRay player and 15 reported owning some type of gaming system. Of those who owned a computer, 26 reported use of at least an hour a day, with 15 indicating they used a computer on average two to four hours per day for personal reasons.
Their internet use followed a similar pattern with 17 indicating they use the internet an hour or less per day and nine indicating two to four hours of daily use.

As with Trinity Church, the age of the respondents led 17 of them to report that they were either retired or unemployed. Of the remaining 12 respondents, all reported using a computer at work for at least two hours per day. Ten reported using a device for internet access, and seven reported using a cell phone at work. Like Trinity Church, this congregation appears to be familiar with a variety of technologies and their uses in a variety of environments. This familiarity with technology contributed to the desire of the congregation to have a worship service that makes use of the technology and impacted the ways the use of digital technology was and is implemented at both services.

The majority of respondents (21) indicated that they liked “sermons that have elements of technology like PowerPoint slides, video clips, music clips, or pictures.” While I might expect this response from those who attend the later, technology-integrated service, nine of those who reported attending the traditional service where technology is not used indicated that they liked the use of such elements in sermons. However, some of these respondents indicated that while the use of technology has value, it was not necessary for a good sermon. Many of the other respondents who liked the use of technology indicated that they appreciated the presentation of information in multiple modalities saying things like “Provides another modality for memory/remembering the message” and “It helps reinforce the message to ‘see’ as well as ‘hear.’” Additionally, some respondents made direct references to their personal preferences for learning or their learning styles. One respondent said, “I'm a visual person...helps me to remember specific points in the sermon” and another “I am also a visual learner and I relate better when there are pictures/visual aides to go with the message.” These responses indicate that
people are aware that they interact with information in varied and multiple ways, that they are, to borrow a term from scholars like the New London Group (1996) and Stuart Selber (2004), multi-literate. Other respondents, while not articulating how the modality itself is being beneficial in communicating information, indicated, as Stephens (1998) does in *the rise of the image the fall of the word*, that the use of visual technology allowed for more examples, more emphasis of important points, and the addition of emotion to the sermon. Stephens asserts that images, because they can communicate more quickly that description allow for more efficient and increased communication of information and ideas. Further, he argues, citing Aquinas, that people are more likely to be emotionally aroused by what they see, rather than by what they hear. In addition to the benefits of communicating in multiple ways, the other dominant theme in the affirmative responses was the ability of the technology to keep respondents’ attention during the sermon. Six responses directly reference “attention,” “focus” or “interest.”

Although there was overwhelming support for the use of digital technologies in the service and sermon, there were five respondents who reported disliking the use of digital technologies and two that responded as both liking and disliking the use of digital technologies in a sermon. As with those who supported the use of technologies, this group is a mixture of those who attend the early and late services, but the majority of this group (5) attend the earlier traditional service. Of the seven, three situated the technology as a distraction with one saying, “I find that I will sometimes focus on the screen and not on the Pastor's message.” So there is some dissent about whether the technology improves or impairs focus, and as with Trinity Church, that dissent partly revolves around whether the sermon is conceived of as an oral or multimedia genre. Those who see it as an oral genre seem to find the use technology as incompatible with an oral presentation. Additionally, one respondent expressed that the use of technology “makes the
service impersonal. I feel father away from God rather than closer to him.” Richard Jensen (2005) makes a similar claim about the accessibility of images, noting that the use of printed or projected images can be alienating to the visually impaired because they cannot fully participate in the worship service and experience the worship as the rest of the parishioners do. Rather than seeing the technology as a source of connection and focus, this group sees it as a source of distraction and divergence. But the majority opinion at this congregation trends toward the use of technology as a positive means to augment the sermon and make it accessible by catering to multiple learning styles and keeping hearers focused on the content. The general positive attitude toward the use of technology in preaching is evident in the installation of screens and projectors not only in the CLC, where they shape the design of the service, but also in the sanctuary, where they are used on occasion, to augment the sermon and other parts of the service.

**Services**

Blink Church has two distinct services: a traditional service in the sanctuary and a more contemporary service in the CLC. The traditional service is the earlier service at 9:00am, and the later service, which is called the Vine, takes place in the CLC at 11:00am. The same pastor preaches at each service on Sunday, but may modify the sermon for the later service, where the use of projection technology is regular and expected.

The traditional service follows a set liturgical pattern from week to week. It uses traditional hymns and piano and organ for music. The choir sometimes performs at this service, as does a hand bell choir. The service is divided into three major parts in the bulletin: Gathering, Equipping, and Serving. The Gathering portion begins with a time of corporate confession in which the congregation confesses sin using a printed statement and the pastor then absolves the congregation. This is followed by a time of greeting where people move around and shake hands
with those around them, welcoming visitors and speaking with friends and acquaintances. The playing of the introduction to a hymn ends this time and people return to their seats to sing a hymn. The final part of this section is a prayer of the day, which relates to the theme of the day and which is prescribed by synodical resources.

The next section, Equipping, begins with three Bible readings: typically one from the Old Testament, one from the Epistles, and one from the Gospels. The sermon follows the reading of the Gospel. The pastor who is preaching the sermon does so from the pulpit on the left side of the chancel. This presentation is almost always entirely oral because it is the practice of this congregation not to use the screen or projector during worship at this service. The sermon typically lasts 15-25 minutes. The hymn of the day follows the sermon and concludes this portion of the service.

The final section of the service, Serving, is centered around specific prayer for congregational concerns. In fact, this section begins with the Pastor updating the congregation on people they have prayed for in previous weeks, and informing them of new concerns that have arisen in the past week. This is followed by the collection of the offering by the ushers. Once the offering has concluded, prayers are offered for all the concerns noted earlier, as well as additional concerns like favorable weather, protection during travel, guidance for those who govern, etc. These prayers are offered either by the pastor or an assigned member of the congregation who stands at the pulpit to pray. These prayers are responsive in the sense that the person praying concludes with a specific phrase which has a corresponding response for the congregation. The response is printed in the bulletin, but is also standard from week to week.

\[23\] The 21 books of the New Testament that follow the four Gospels and that were written as letters to various newly formed churches throughout the Roman Empire and Asia.
Following the more contextual prayers is the Lord’s Prayer, which the congregation prays together. The pastor then blesses the congregation and they sing a final hymn. Following the hymn, the pastor speaks the sending, which concludes the service.

The later Vine service has the same general basis as the traditional service, but with several major differences. It has a general pattern, but omits many of the liturgical parts of the traditional service and avoids the use of standardized language from week to week. It begins with several praise songs, led by the band from the stage at the front of the CLC worship space. The lyrics and instructions for the songs, such as “repeat the chorus” or “band will sing verse 1,” are projected on the screen, and no print copies of this service are available. Parishioners must follow along on the screen for the entire service. Following the songs, the pastor begins by reading one lesson, which is also projected on the screen behind him/her and serves as the primary text for the sermon. The other two lessons from the earlier service are omitted. The sermon immediately follows the reading of the lesson. Unlike in the traditional service, the pastor either stands in the center of the stage with a music stand for a pulpit or preaches from the floor level while holding notes. The sermon is similar in length and oral delivery to the previous service. However, during the Vine, images are projected on the screen behind the pastor to supplement the sermon. The offering and a time of prayer follow the sermon. After prayer, Holy Communion is offered, and the service concludes with a hymn. This service is much simpler, in terms of parts, than the traditional service, but also poses challenges because the language is not standard from week to week.

**Pastors**

Blink Church is served by two pastors: Pastor Lake and Pastor Sandburg. Each has unique responsibilities at the church, but both have preaching responsibilities on Sundays. Pastor
Lake has been at this congregation for 18 years and serves as head pastor. She is a middle-aged woman, with short reddish brown hair and a warm smile. She describes herself as a “child of God, wife, mom, ordained minister and black belt in Taekwon-Do” on her Twitter profile. Pastor Sandburg has been at the church almost three years and is Assistant Pastor for Youth and Young Adult Ministry and Outreach Ministry. He is young, for a pastor, somewhere in his mid-twenties to early thirties. He is tall, with dark hair. His wife is also a pastor, and serves at another church in the area. They also have a young daughter. Pastor Lake does the majority of the preaching, with Pastor Sandburg preaching about once a month.

In addition to preaching, Pastor Lake does pastoral care like counseling and visiting the sick and shut-in. She also has involvement in some groups beyond the congregation, including a Scripture study group with other pastors, a consulting organization called Church Doctors, and a faith-building ministry called Via di Christo, where she serves as pastor for the retreats organized by this ministry. She has been employed as a pastor is her full-time for 27 years.

She is unique to this study as she represents the only female preacher in the study. Pastor Lake found her position as a female preacher extremely difficult in her early years of preaching because she didn’t find much affirmation for her style of preaching during her seminary training. She resists what she calls the “three point sermon” in favor of “preaching in a circle around something,” which she sees as a more “feminine style” that did not fit with the more masculine model that her professors taught and seemed to prefer. As a result of these experiences in seminary, she says “There were very few of us that walked out of preaching class feeling affirmed. And it was similar on internship. Uhh, so, it was hard to find your own voice, in a lot of ways, and it really wasn’t until other, I, I got to hear other women for one thing, ahh and until people in the congregation, you know, said ‘that was a great sermon.’” Her experiences reflect
what many scholars of preaching note about gaining authority as a preacher in a post-modern culture—the quality and relevance of preaching is determined by congregation members themselves, rather than solely by the position of the pastor or by the training the pastor has received (Allen et Al., 1997; Fast, 2001; Moss, 2003; Wilson and Moore, 2008). Affirmations from her congregations and continued experience have given Pastor Lake confidence in her preaching style and she preaches on a regular basis at Blink Church.

While Pastor Lake is responsible for the bulk of the preaching at this congregation, Pastor Sandburg is responsible for the majority of the work with the youth and young adults of the congregation. He teaches catechism classes and is responsible for leading the youth groups. However, he also shares pastoral care and preaching responsibilities with Pastor Lake. In addition to his work with the youth and pastoral responsibilities, Pastor Sandburg is also involved with a Scripture study group for pastors, as well as working with a group to found a “living learning community” for young adults in the local area. Despite these additional interests and responsibilities, most of his energy is directed toward his work with the youth of the congregation.

Pastor Sandburg is the youngest pastor in this study, having completed his training about three years ago. He presents the opportunity to see how a preacher is refining his style and craft as he gains experience in actual preaching situations. He also has a style distinct from that of Pastor Lake, and by observing both, I had the opportunity to see whether people responded differently to each pastor and to each pastor’s sermons. Additionally, I had the opportunity to see if their training, done nearly 30 years apart, affects how they preach and how the use of technology is impacted by that training.
**Sermons**

When asked about the purpose of preaching, both pastors used the word “proclaim,” in the sense that they are taking as the basis for their sermons something that already exists and making it known in an oral presentation. Both pastors generally use the assigned Scriptures for the week as the basis for their sermons, so their sermons are heavily based on those texts. They agreed that sermons need to speak, in the literal sense, of God’s promises, specifically in the Gospel, and to help people translate that into their everyday contexts and lives.

But while they generally agree on the purpose of the sermon, they do have different perspectives about what makes a good sermon and what a good sermon should do. Pastor Sandburg relies heavily on illustrations, which he feels “are meant to catch people’s attention. Not just so that they listen, but so that now that they are listening and they have something in their mind, they’ll hear the message, the proclamation that comes.” For him, a good sermon has to “resonate” with the people who hear it. He says:

> You can have the most perfect sermon in the world with all sorts of wonderful theology, everything’s broken down perfectly, you have great stories, but if for whatever reason it doesn’t apply to the people to whom you are preaching it, it’s not a great sermon. It’s about, umm, the people who are hearing you umm and having it resonate with them, having it apply to them or connect with them in some way. And it really is again about, about preaching, about preaching law and gospel, and then so that it applies to their daily lives.

Clearly, Pastor Sandburg is audience-focused in terms of his approach to preaching. He is highly concerned that the audience hear and connect with what he is saying. He emphasized that to be effective, preachers need to know their audience members and make themselves known to their audience. According to him, effective preachers are effective by doing two main things (1)
speaking to what matters to a particular audience and (2) being approachable, “slightly self-deprecating” and challenging, so that people don’t become “so comfortable that they just sorta fall into a malaise.” Pastor Sandburg’s approach is centered on connecting with his audience through illustrations that relate to their everyday lives.

Pastor Lake, on the other hand, approaches the sermon with a more spiritual or theological approach, rather than an audience-centered one. While she definitely considers her audience when deciding on what to preach and how to preach, she describes her main concerns in terms of the spiritual needs of her hearers and the ways she tries to highlight and then meet those needs. Her goals for the sermon are more focused on “giving people hope.” She says a good sermon “should connect them with God, their need for God, and that God has a purpose for them.” So her approach is geared toward congregants’ spiritual lives first, and then translated over into everyday life application. That is not to say that Pastor Sandburg does not deal with theological or spiritual issues in his preaching, but when he describes it, he is focused more on giving people some sort of action or application, and Pastor Lake is more focused on deriving that action or application once people have seen the need for faith and for Christ.

Despite their slightly divergent approaches to preaching, Pastor Lake also uses illustrations in her preaching. However, she situates illustrations as vehicles for retention or extension beyond the sermon situation. She says, “what makes a really good sermon around here is when people, when, when I can share some sort of story or anecdote that people can connect with that they’re going to remember when they leave, or I am able to paint some kind of verbal picture that the image on the screen can illustrate.”

She also describes her approach to connecting with the audience as a speaker in slightly different terms. While Pastor Sandburg notes that the speaker reveals him/herself while
speaking—a manifestation of the orality of the sermon genre, Pastor Lake finds that preachers need to show that they care about people outside of the sermon situation. She says, “I think that I’ve established it [credibility] because people, people know me, I’ve cared for them, I’ve been there for them, uhh, And those who haven’t gotten to know me in that way yet probably know somebody who has.” So for her, connecting with the audience is more than something one does in the sermon; it’s more of a whole life practice, which may sometimes be revealed by the use of personal examples in the sermon. Her belief about ethos being a whole life practice aligns with much of the scholarship on the ethos of preachers. Hughes (2001) argues “Ethos, as I am defining it, is simply what you are—your character, you as a person, and therefore, you as a preacher handling God’s word before the flock of Christ” (p. 86). Agnew (2006) connects this practice of identifying with congregation members as a person who knows and cares for the community to John Wesley, the founder of the Wesleyan Church. He writes that “Wesley showed himself to be an individual whose desire to share his message was one part genuine concern for the community. It was first through this direct demonstration of his character, rather than through the immediate impact of his words, that Wesley generated the emotional fervor in his audiences for which he was well known” (p. 63). In a more technological vein, Lombarg and Ess (2012) in their study of pastors on Facebook reveal that pastors use Facebook, a typical practice for many parishioners, as a way to situate themselves as regular, private people who have friends, families, and interests beyond their work in the church. By locating themselves as private people on social media sites, pastors attempt to build relationships and trust with members of their congregations and open avenues for theological discussions. For these scholars of preaching and for Pastor Lake, ethos is constructed both immediately during the act of
preaching and continuously through the lived life of the pastor and the relationships he/she builds and maintains during that life.

While both pastors discuss the use of images and illustrations, neither directly mentions the use of technology and digital images as a strategy for effective preaching or making effective connections with an audience. This may be in part due to the way technology is incorporated into the services and sermons at Blink Church. Neither pastor directly constructs the PowerPoint that accompanies their sermons. Instead, they pass their manuscripts on to the PowerPoint team, who construct the PowerPoint presentations by finding images and inserting text onto the slides. The pastors may indicate what text they would like highlighted or what types of images they would like used, but they generally do not provide images directly or actively participate in the construction of the PowerPoint presentation. They actually do not see the PowerPoint component until Sunday morning when they use it, and sometimes have not seen it until it appears during the sermon. This collaborative setup has definite implications for ethos. Christie and Collier (2005) report that one of the most important factors of a successful PowerPoint presentation is that it appear well-researched and informative. Additionally, they claim that presentation viewers are impressed by well-designed and self-designed media and by being entertained during the presentation. To demonstrate these characteristics in a sermon would require direct involvement by the preacher who delivers the sermon, even if that involvement is part of a collaborative effort.

Despite not actively producing the digital images that accompany their sermons, both pastors feel that the use of technology is important to their preaching and that it improves the communicability of their messages. Pastor Lake says “I’ve always believed very strongly that anytime you can find more than one way to communicate something you’re being more
effective.” and Pastor Sandburg echoes that by saying that “it [digital technology] hits a variety of senses, more senses than just, you know if you’re not a an auditory learner, … or listening learner, um you you might get something more from it, uhh, that can really help apply it in different ways, so I think that’s a big benefit.” However, despite their enthusiasm about the benefits of using digital technology in preaching, both also cautioned that the use of the wrong images not only doesn’t help, but can make a point, or even a whole sermon, a total loss. So while they embrace some elements of technology in their preaching, their approach is somewhat moderated by access and by a desire to keep the spoken word as the central part of the sermon.

**Sermon 1: Pastor Sandburg**

Pastor Sandburg preached this sermon on July 8, 2012, which was the sixth Sunday after Pentecost. The Pentecost season follows Easter and Pentecost and focuses on the life and work of Jesus and on the Early Church. This season has virtually no feasts or festivals to cause deviation in the liturgy or pattern of worship. Additionally, because this season coincides with summer and summer vacation, there are relatively few special events taking place at the church that are not dictated by the Church Year\(^\text{24}\). As a result, worship this Sunday had no additions to the service and fit the typical worship pattern for this congregation at both services.

Pastor Sandburg was both the liturgist and preacher for this service, as Pastor Lake was on vacation this week. He does not typically title his sermons, so there was no sermon title for this week. He drew this theme from the text he chose for the sermon, Mark 6:1-13, the assigned

\(^{24}\) The Church Year is a series of seasons, populated with major feasts and festivals. It begins in December with Advent and Christmas and ends in late November, with All Saint’s Day as the last major festival.
Gospel lesson for the day. His approach to developing the theme for the sermon this week was to look “for some sort of ‘problem’ within it [the text] that corresponds with a similar problem people face today.” His sermon had six major parts: (1) introduction, (2) explanation of the Biblical text, (3) problem in the text, (4) a similar problem in our own time, (5) God’s grace in the text, and (6) God’s grace today. This means of theme development reflects his desire to have his sermon resonate with his hearers by applying Scripture to their daily lives and to present time. The problem he identified in the text that connects to present day was “In life, it is easy to jump to conclusions and refuse to be transformed by something new that God is doing.”

To introduce this theme, he began with an illustration, which, as noted above, is a common practice for Pastor Sandburg. His opening illustration began with a question: “Did you know that ice cream causes polio?” He went on to explain that before scientists and doctors really understood the cause and spread of polio, one suggestion was that since polio was more prevalent in the summer and ice cream consumption increased in the summer, ice cream consumption might cause polio. He used this illustration to introduce the idea that initial assumptions are not always correct and that people can make poor decisions based on those assumptions.

He then connected this idea to the assigned Gospel text for the day in his explication of the text. In this text, Jesus returned to his hometown of Nazareth. This text contains the famous text “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown.” Pastor Sandburg highlights that in the text, people refuse to believe that Jesus could be a religious teacher because of his background—the son of a carpenter. Not only is he the son of a carpenter, but a carpenter from

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25 The Lutheran Church has a tradition of assigning three readings for each Sunday: an Old Testament passage, an Epistle passage from the New Testament, and a Gospel passage from one of the first four books of the New Testament. These lessons are coordinated with the season of the Church Year.
Nazareth. Pastor Sandburg uses several illustrations to describe how insignificant Nazareth was in Jesus’ time by describing the physical characteristics of Nazareth as a town smaller than the property on which Blink Church currently sits. He also pointed out that Nazareth is not even mentioned in the entire Old Testament, which covers thousands of years of history. In the later service, this section was accompanied by photographic images of Nazareth that Pastor Sandburg referenced as he spoke about the city.

Pastor Sandburg moved on to the problem in the text by showing that making assumptions prevents God from doing his work. The text specifically said that Jesus “could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief” (Mark 6:5-6). Pastor Sandburg focused on the ways the assumptions people made about Jesus prevented him from doing any miracles or healing many people. This section was accompanied by various artistic images of Jesus healing or teaching people at the later service. True to his practice of connecting the problem in the text to problems people face today, Pastor Sandburg then spoke, in part four, about the ways assumptions Christians can make about people may cause them to jump to conclusions and to miss a transforming experience. Specifically, he talked about using appearances to form opinions about people before speaking to them and getting to know them. He used examples of teenagers in goth garb and people in dirty or unkempt clothes to demonstrate that people often jump to conclusions about things and people that are outside their comfort zones, rather than taking a closer or second look. His lesson for hearers was that by staying in their comfort zones, they were missing chances to be transformed and develop new comfort zones and to reap the benefits of transformation.
With this lesson established, Pastor Sandburg pointed to the grace in the text—the point where despite faults, God gives forgiveness and undeserved gifts. In the text from Mark, he pointed to the healing that Jesus was able to perform in his hometown. Then, as with the previous section, he pointed to the grace people receive today when they “shut down” and fail to take that second look, God does forgive them, through Jesus Christ. Finally, he reminded the congregation that, just as in the assigned text, people today, if they are seeking God’s transforming work, need to remember that God does not always work in obvious ways, and jumping to conclusions can get in the way of God’s work. His ultimate goal with this sermon was “for people to give something they think is worthless another shot: it might be worthless, but then again, it might transform them.”

Three people responded to the survey about this sermon. Two were female and one was male. Two reported being between the ages of 46-55 and one reported being 56-65. All three reported attending the later service where technology is used. Additionally, all three reported taking part in the first survey in this study. The three respondents were fairly consistent in their understanding of and reaction to the sermon, but their responses reveal some disconnects between Pastor Sandburg’s intentions and their reactions, as well as disconnects between the visual and oral presentations of the sermon.

Pastor Sandburg’s theme appears to have been clearly conveyed to his hearers, with two of the three mentioning the need for an “open mind.” One pointed to being “willing to change our minds about certain opinions we may have” and the other wrote “Though ideas may point to a conclusion, keep an open mind, because the conclusion may not be clear, nor correct.” The third respondent honed in on the idea of not being accepted, identifying the main theme as
“People closest to you don't always respect you or what you are trying to do.” These responses indicate that these parishioners gleaned the main thrust of Pastor Sandburg’s sermon.

Pastor Sandburg’s use of verbal illustrations also appears to have been effective. All three respondents mentioned the Nazareth examples multiple times in their responses and seemed to learn from these examples. The polio example had similar results, with all three respondents mentioning it at least once in their responses. One respondent also mentioned a personal story Pastor Sandburg shared about not wanting to watch Jane Austen movies with his wife—an example of closed-mindedness and unwillingness to leave a comfort zone.

His intentional construction of verbal illustrations appears to have a direct impact on the visual presentation of the sermon. Baetens (2003) argues that images can serve as illustrations in two ways: (1) “to underline with visual means what has to be understood at the verbal level of the text” or (2) “to exploit the level of the image as an (almost) independent feature of the whole (the image becomes then a ‘text’ per se: it develops a logic in itself)” (p. 187). In Pastor Sandburg’s sermon, the use of images was exclusively the first use, with the images serving not to communicate additional information, but to present or highlight the spoken information in a different way. Jensen (2005), in Envisioning the word: The Use of visual images in preaching, asserts that while using visuals as illustration can be effective in the immediate moment of the sermon, “once the images have served their purpose, they are dispensable” (p. 127). In other words, the images do not play essential role in the sermon, and thus tend to be peripheral, rather than central to making meaning in and from the sermon.

Although Pastor Sandburg’s examples were clearly memorable for these respondents, two of the three respondents claimed the sermon did not relate directly to their lives. When asked what part of the sermon related most to their lives, one responded with “NONE” and the other
with “It did not.” So although Pastor Sandburg peaked interest with his examples and even taught his members some biblical history, some audience members didn’t really connect how this history connected to their present lives. This lack of connection could arise from the overuse of examples or from limited verbal connection between the examples and the point of the sermon.

These disconnects continue in the visual presentation that accompanied the sermon. Figure one shows the initial image for the sermon, a girl with braces from contacting polio, which was connected to the point about ice cream as a possible cause of polio.

![Figure 1--Opening Image from Pastor Sandburg's Sermon](image)

Two of the three respondents mentioned the polio slide, with one noting “the beginning slides on polio stood out, because Pastor … pointed these out.” However, this slide seems to be an exception, rather than the rule. All three respondents indicated that they did not see much connection between the slides and the oral presentation by Pastor Sandburg. Their responses align with research done by Wiley (2003) in the use of images in non-fiction texts. Wiley found that images could “seduce” readers from paying attention to the content and themes of the larger text and from understanding and retaining ideas when not directly or overtly related to the
content. She also found that some information could not be conveyed as clearly visually as it was in textual form. The underlying issue in both Wiley’s research and Pastor Sandburg’s sermon the way images are understood. When images are understood as “decorative” as in Wiley’s research or “illustration,” they appear to do less for readers and hearers because those readers and hearers expect images to tell them something and to help them understand the larger text, whether that text is written or oral.

When asked about what they liked best about the use of technology in the sermon today, one respondent simply wrote “no impact” and another wrote “not much impact from the slides. Pastor presented from the floor and was hard to pay attention of overhead slides.” And perhaps the most telling response was the answer provided by one of the respondents to the question “How did the slides, video clips, audio clips or other technology connect to the general point of the sermon? She responded with “That is hard to do-slides are more specific--not "big picture’ tied to theme...” This response aligns with the research done by Buchko, Buchko and Meyer (2012) that revealed the use of PowerPoint in preaching did not increase retention or focus on the overall understanding of sermons. Further, their research reveals that the slides that were most effective contain only text and that the use of images, unaccompanied by text is the least effective in terms of increasing retention or focus. So while the congregation, based on the responses to the earlier survey, likes the idea of using technology in sermons, the way the technology is being deployed prevents the overt connection necessary to demonstrate how what is displayed on the screen and what Pastor Sandburg is saying are working together.

**Sermon 2: Pastor Lake**

Pastor Lake preached this sermon on July 22, 2012. As with the previous sermon, this one took place on a post-Pentecost Sunday, so the worship services followed their usual patterns.
The one deviation was the addition of a baptism, performed by Pastor Lake during the early service. However, this did not seem to impact the flow of the service or Pastor Lake’s approach to her sermon. She preached on the Gospel lesson from Mark 6 with the theme of “we were created by God to thrive with a balance of work and rest.”

Typical to her approach to preach more recursively than linearly she worked around her theme with three intertwined main ideas. Her first main idea was to put Mark 6 into context by giving the backstory to the story in Mark 6. In Mark 6, Jesus takes his disciples on a boat to get away from the work they have been doing, telling them they need to rest. Prior to this story Jesus had sent the disciples out to preach, teach, and heal in towns and villages. It is upon their return to Jesus that he commands them to go away with him and rest. So they have been working hard and travelling, leading up to this story. But the twist in this story is that when they arrive and dock their boat, people have followed them, traveling by land, to the place where they are going by boat, seeking healing. Once they arrive, Jesus helps them by teaching and healing them, but only after he and the disciples have had a rest on the boat.

Pastor Lake uses this second part of the story to highlight her second idea: God has designed a rhythm for life of working from rest. Her main contention in this section was that people don’t work so that they can rest, but that work is a natural outcome from rest. She then moved to what she terms a “diagnosis of our chronic busy-ness” where she discussed how our modern lifestyles encourage people to go, go, go. People find their value in doing things, and as a result they neglect rest in favor of taking on more work or more activities. To introduce her final idea, Pastor Lake reminded her audience that such a pattern of living is contrary to the routine of working from rest that God has designed and that people need to understand resting as doing something, rather than the absence of doing something. In actuality, “God’s gifts of peace
and purpose are imparted to us in rest and solitude” so rest is necessary, not only to keep physical lives in balance, but spiritual ones as well. She demonstrated this with the story of a pastor sitting under a tree, and a parishioner coming by and, assuming the pastor was not doing anything, asks him to go do something with him. The pastor replies that he is doing something by resting, and the parishioner, rather than continuing on his way, sees the wisdom of the pastor and joins him.

Ultimately, the sermon aimed to remind hearers “to be with God, and then do for God!” On a more concrete level, Pastor Lake wanted her hearers to make connections between their lives and the lives of the disciples. She wanted them to understand that God understands the importance and value of work, even with his own disciples, but he also values rest and provides many benefits in rest. Her secondary goal in this sermon was to communicate that point for people who are “restless” and “over-worked” that they might see resting and spending time with God as an antidote to their harried lives. Her final goal was to encourage hearers to not only understand the benefits of rest, but also to “claim spiritual practices of Sabbath, solitude, reflection” for themselves and “do” rest.

This sermon was approximately the same length at both services, although it included a multimedia presentation at the second service. That presentation involved several images on several slides that combined photographic and clip art images. Pastor Lake did not make any direct references to the slides during the sermon, nor make any direct requests for specific images for the slide presentation. The presentation was assembled by a member of the PowerPoint team, based on her manuscript.

Seven people responded to the survey related to this sermon. Four attended the earlier service and three the later contemporary service. Two respondents were male and five were
female. The ages of respondents varied, with three from the 66-75 age group, two from the 56-65 age group, and one each from the 46-55 age group and the 76-85 age group. There was fairly consistent response to Pastor Lake’s sermon, perhaps due to her style and to her extensive experience as a preacher. This is a relatively limited sample of the congregation, but the insights they offer into how preaching is received by some members of the congregation suggest that further study and re-evaluation of current practices would be beneficial to both the pastors and congregation members.

All seven respondents indicated that the theme of the sermon related to the need for rest. Four of the responses linked rest directly to God writing things like “Making time to rest & listen to God: and “Need to spend time "being" with God vs. "Do-ing” things.” This clearly connects with Pastor Lake’s goal that hearers take time to be with God in rest. The answers to questions about points that hearers remembered from the sermon or things they learned from the sermon speak even further to the clarity with which Pastor Lake articulated her goals in this sermon. Five of the respondents noted that Jesus instructed his disciples to rest from their work, and these same five also indicated that the same instruction ought to apply to them. One respondent said, “Only I can stop & take that time of rest.” Another responded “That I really should do just that for my own piece of mind and rejuvenation.” So the majority of respondents responded to two of Pastor Lake’s goals: (1) connecting to the disciples and (2) seeing the value of rest and God’s gift of rest. What seems to have been lost, however, is the “doing” part of the sermon. No one mentioned the role rest plays in doing work for God, something Pastor Lake described as a main part of the theme. It appears that the heavy emphasis on the need for rest and the benefits of rest obscured one of the reasons for taking the rest—to work from rest.
In terms of verbal illustrations, she relied heavily on description in this sermon, an approach Jensen (2005) calls “thinking in image.” According to Jensen, “a sermon moves to this category of ‘thinking in image’ when the image becomes the organizing center of the sermon” (p. 135). Although Pastor Lake did not use one image to organize the entire sermon, she did use vivid description to highlight the backstory of her chosen Scripture text, as well as to highlight her important points. She actively brought attention to physical characteristics of her illustrations, using elements of those illustrations to make her points. Thus, her use of verbal images moved somewhat beyond the illustrative use of Pastor Sandburg.

The dominant verbal illustration in the sermon was of a pastor resting under a tree. This illustration produced a variety of responses from participants. Only one directly noted this image as something that got her attention during the sermon. Another participant indicated that he “Could relate to the personal examples mentioned by Pastor” but did not directly reference this illustration. What seemed most notable about this image was a response that said “Doubted the story about colleague being from him. I've heard it before.” Pastor Lake had indicated that a pastor in her weekly study group had shared this story during their study of the text, and placed himself as the pastor under the tree. Situating the story as something from a colleague seems as if it should increase its validity or relevance because the story came from someone who shares similar experiences with members of this congregation. However, because this parishioner doesn’t believe the story to be true or an actual experience of this colleague, its use is, at least in this sermon situation, a detriment to Pastor Lake’s ethos. The appearance of this story toward the end of the sermon, and the fact that it was memorable to this parishioner may have caused other parts of the sermon to be lost. What this demonstrates is two-fold. First, people at this congregation do remember examples and illustrations, but tend to retain the examples presented
orally, rather than visually, even if the example is an oral mediation of a visual object or scene. Second, the choice of and use of examples can have a direct bearing on a preacher’s ethos, not only in the way they connect to the lives and interests of people who hear them, but also in how they are situated in delivery.

As with the other sermons in this study, the use of technology in the later service did not impact what hearers saw as the theme of the sermon or what they took away from the sermon as interesting or relevant. Of the three people who attended the later service where the technology is used no one mentioned anything specific about the images in the sermon. The only substantive response to questions about the technology in the sermon was the generic: “The pictures reinforced the message. The pictures helped me stay focused on the message.” There is no direct reference to any specific images or any overt connection to a point from the sermon and an image on the screen. None of the other responses made any indication that the technology made any difference to their experience of the sermon. I would argue, as note above about Pastor Sandburg’s sermon, that the relatively decontextualized use of images prevents them from having the desired impact of communicating in multiple forms and of creating lasting impressions and retention of sermon ideas and themes.

Overall, Pastor Lake’s sermon presents an interesting scenario for study. On the one hand, Pastor Lake is an effective preacher, successfully communicating her points, despite a more recursive than linear style. As a whole, responses to her sermon were consistent in terms of theme and ideas presented. On the other hand, the use of digital technologies doesn’t appear to impact the effectiveness of her delivery or the communication of her message. She makes no overt connections between the screen and her sermon. So although the sermon and the visual presentation are related, the sermon exists and succeeds without the visual presentation. As a
result of this lack of connection, the technology doesn’t appear to measurably augment her delivery in any way, which makes its impact on her ethos minimal at best.

**Conclusion**

Blink and You’ll Miss It Church has purposefully integrated digital technologies into its worship services and worship spaces. This congregation clearly views technology as a “social institution” as defined by Campbell (2012). Campbell asserts is that positioning technology this way requires the religious community to “critically reflect on how the nature of the media technology may impact their community” (p. 84). Blink Church must have done some of this reflection and negotiation because they clearly had the intention to use the technology, and some of its inherent properties, to change the dynamic of the worship service and the worship space. They purposely and purposefully designed a service that is different from traditional, liturgical worship in an effort to produce a different worship experience. They designed a space appropriate for the types of technology they wanted to use, so that it could be easily integrated into the service and become transparent, as if it had always been there. It appears they took all the necessary steps to use the technology effectively.

Yet, with all this careful planning and design, the use of the digital technologies is falling short in the sermon portion of the worship service. It is not making much of a difference in terms of how study participants received and perceived the sermon. While the use of the technologies is intended to augment the oral presentation of the sermon, having them created by separated authors is causing a disconnect between the sermon and accompanying visual presentation that renders the visual portion of the presentation inconsequential compared to the oral presentation. This practice inscribes an oral-visual binary that ignores the necessity of a communicative relationship between the oral and visual elements of the sermon. Situating the oral and visual as
individual, loosely connected elements rather than inextricably connected elements of a single communicative event causes disconnects between what is said in the sermon and what is presented visually on the screen, inhibiting the communicative potential of both the oral and visual elements because audience members don’t generally see the oral and visual presentations as a coherent, focused message. This collaborative arrangement does not allow the inherent qualities of the technology to change, or even to augment, the oral nature of the sermon. Further, these disconnected performances also have the potential to negatively impact the ethos of the pastors by making the sermons appear poorly planned, difficult to follow or difficult to connect to everyday life.

The apparent solution to this problem is increased collaboration between the PowerPoint team and the pastors so that what are now two distinct presentations become a single, intertwined whole. This collaboration could take many forms: the pastors and PowerPoint team meeting to create the presentations together, the pastors providing specific images they have selected to the PowerPoint team to insure that the images apply directly to their sermons, or the pastors completing their sermons earlier so that they could receive the PowerPoint presentations before they make final preparations to deliver their sermons so that they could see how their oral presentations are reflected in and connected to the visual presentation.

However, these changes are mostly logistical, and I argue that this problem requires more than a logistical solution. It requires a change in how sermons as a genre are understood, and consequently composed. Such a change also requires reconsidering how preachers position themselves in sermons as rhetors. Just as Ong (2002) argues that the introduction of text altered composing processes for oral poets, I argue that the introduction of digital visual technology necessitates changes in sermon composing processes and sermon delivery. As discussed in
Chapter 1, Wilson and Moore (2008) assert that “media is not simply an add-on to the existing means of communicating the gospel in worship, but an emerging, fundamentally new system of communication, equal to oral and written word.” (p. 7). If preachers are to integrate technology into their sermons, they must acknowledge both that the technology changes sermons and that it is present in the sermon. Although Blink Church sought to make the technology transparent, defined by Mary Hocks (2003) as “the ways in which online documents relate to established conventions like those of print, graphic design, film, and Web,” (p. 632) by attempting to integrate it seamlessly into the worship space and the sermon so that it didn’t disrupt established practices, they have made it so transparent both to the pastors and congregation members that is has ceased to be effective in communicating the pastors’ messages in alternate ways and in improving their ethos as speakers.

Allowing the PowerPoint team to construct the sermon PowerPoint presentations without direct involvement by the pastors and on such a tight timetable has created a situation in which the technology is mere periphery to the pastors. Although both pastors said knowing the sermon will be re-interpreted into a visual presentation impacts the construction of their sermons, and certainly, as Pastor Sandburg noted, dictates the timetable for composing sermons, neither is successfully incorporating that technology because they do not usually draw explicit connections between the images on the screen and the points of their sermon. They are missing the second element of transparency that Hock’s describes as “defamiliarizing the audience's experiences with reading and writing conventions by drawing explicit and sometimes playful attention to both the discontinuities and the continuities between older and newer forms of reading, writing, and viewing information” (p. 643). As I noted earlier, the most memorable visual illustration was the girl with polio because she was specifically referenced in the sermon, when attention was
drawn specifically to it and it was made visible. Without these explicit and specific connections, the technology cannot augment the delivery of the sermon and offers little to no advantage to the speaker in terms of developing *ethos*.

Additionally, without these connections, the technology becomes transparent to audience members, existing in the background, as one of the respondents noted during Pastor Sandburg’s sermon. He noted that because of Pastor Sandburg’s positioning on the floor, he couldn’t focus on both the speaker and the slides, and he chose to focus on the speaker. Thus, to successfully use digital technologies to their advantage, preachers need to bring it out from the background and from competition with their message and active engage them as part of the sermon content and delivery. For digital technologies to truly augment the presentation of the sermon and by extension the *ethos* of the speaker, the technology must be a present, actively engaged part of the sermon, just as any non-technological presentation using printed photos, art or props might be.

Making technology visible seems to contradict assumptions about how technology should be used. As detailed earlier, Blink Church made every effort to seamlessly incorporate technology, and while this is appropriate in terms of the hardware and its workings, as technology failure certainly can produce negative *ethos*, the technology must be notable when used in sermon delivery if it is to produce positive *ethos*. As Kress (2000) argues, communication is increasingly becoming multimodal, and to ignore the interplay of a variety of modalities including the visual, body language, and the aural prevents effective communication. Anne Wysocki (2001) also argues that the visual, including elements of layout, design, and typeface, makes assertions that shape the reader or hearer’s experience of a text, and thus, these visual elements deserve equal consideration in the composition of a text because they are doing the same work as words in the text. Design, in multimodal situations, is content that makes an
assertion. Wysocki’s argument could easily be applied to the multimodal sermon—the design of any visual elements must be integral to the purpose of the whole sermon for effective multimodal communication. This understanding of the visual requires active involvement by the preacher in the construction of any visual or technological presentation that is part of his/her sermon.

I am not arguing that collaboration is not possible. In fact, I believe collaboration can improve sermons by encouraging pastors to articulate and clarify their ideas to others, as well as by allowing potential hearers to respond to sermons before they are preached. What I am arguing is that for such collaboration to be successful, the preacher must be an active participant both by composing a sermon that works with the technology and by, in part, composing the visual components. If the sermon is to be an intertwined and inextricably connected audio-visual experience, and if a preacher is to take advantage of digital visual technology both to communicate and to improve his/her *ethos*, the sermon must be constructed not only with both components in mind but also as if one component could not exist without the other. This vision of a sermon requires a dramatic re-conception of the sermon genre that requires moving beyond traditional homiletics training and places additional demands on the preacher when composing the sermon.

Re-conceptualizing the sermon as a genre and changing corresponding preaching practices may not be easy at a congregation with established practices or for pastors who have spent many years honing their sermon preparation and delivery practices. But the lessons of Blink Church are worthwhile for congregations, like the Church on the Corner in the next chapter, who are considering and beginning to implement technology into their worship spaces and worship services. As this chapter demonstrates, effectively integrating technology into
worship and preaching requires more than simply installing of hardware and software. It also requires a new type of sermon that makes the technology an integral and visible part of the sermon; a change that challenges long held beliefs about the sermon as a genre that privileges the spoken word. I contend that preachers and congregations, like the Church on the Corner in the next chapter, considering the use digital technologies to improve ethos must be aware of the challenges and limitations of incorporating these technologies into the historic sermon genre in order to determine if and how they can integrate such technologies into their contexts.
CHAPTER V. CHURCH ON THE CORNER: SOME CONCLUSIONS ON NEW BEGINNINGS

The preceding two case studies at Trinity Church and Blink Church have illustrated the many and complex issues that can arise for preachers who integrate digital technology into their preaching. The case study at Trinity Church highlighted the ways genre expectations, as well as church traditions, shape both preachers’ approaches to sermons and congregation members’ responses to them. At Trinity, it became obvious that the congregation members who responded to the surveys expected the sermon to be an oral event where a preacher spoke and they listened. Further, they expected the sermon to take its basis from biblical text. For them, and the respondents from other two congregations in this study, the sermon is a text-based event, expressed in an oral form. Because genre expectations are central to how congregation members understand the sermon and the quality of the preacher, ethos for these preachers is located in meeting those expectations, particularly connecting with the needs and interests of the congregation orally and in “remediating” (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) the print-based biblical text to the congregation into an accessible oral presentation.

Blink Church attempts to challenge the conception of the sermon as a purely oral genre by incorporating visual elements in both its services and preaching. They intentionally placed visual technology as a central part of the worship experience and as a central part of the worship space in an effort to provide a different type of worship experience. However, despite Blink Church’s effort to challenge the forms and dynamics of traditional worship, the case study demonstrated that simply adding technology as a supplement to traditional practices and genres cannot overcome existing genre expectations. Further, that case study revealed that effectively employing technology in preaching so that it bolsters preachers’ ethos requires an investment of
resources—monetary, personnel, and time—and a reconceptualization of the sermon as a genre that challenges its nature as a fully text-based genre.

This final chapter elaborates on the lessons learned from these two case studies by connecting them to a final case study of the Church on the Corner, a small urban LCMS\textsuperscript{26} church that is in the process of integrating digital technology and multimedia elements into its worship services. Their visual technology set-up is basic—a screen and portable projector—and their use of that technology is also fairly simple. The Church on the Corner provides an interesting counterpart to the other two churches, who have long established use of technology, as well as increased access to funds and equipment. I chose the Church on the Corner for this study because they were influenced to begin using technology by the practices of churches similar to Blink and Trinity. So even though the Church on the Corner is not experienced in terms of technology use, they are looking for ways to improve their usage and for their pastor to integrate more technology into his preaching; they are looking to use technology to bring them in line, at least in terms of practice, with these larger, more technologically rich congregations.

This chapter discusses, in the context of the Church on the Corner, the major issues surrounding the sermon genre, technology use, and \textit{ethos} that arose during this study. It presents an overview of the congregation, including their worship space, the demographics of their congregation and their approach to technology use. Following this overview is a description of two sermons preached by Pastor Lidstrom, at the Church on the Corner, with minimal to no additional technology, and the congregational response to these sermons. These sermons highlight the conclusion that for preachers to effectively integrate technology in their preaching they must rethink the sermon as a genre. Rethinking the sermon also requires examining the

\textsuperscript{26} Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
training preachers receive and the resources they have available, both of which must be considered when preachers and congregations decide to invest in and incorporate digital technology. Both the genre expectations and resources are important components of developing preachers’ *ethos* when preachers use digital technology in their preaching. The final discussion is framed in terms of the complex negotiations that Pastor Lidstrom, the Church on the Corner congregation, and other preachers and congregations need to undertake when choosing to use technology in worship and preaching if they hope to use it to build *ethos* for the preacher and the congregation.

**Church Background: The Draw of Technology for Congregations Large and Small**

The Church on the Corner is, as its name implies, on a corner in a busy, urban area. It is situated near a major freeway, but is also backed by neighborhoods of older homes. And although its name implies that the church building would be clearly visible, the building is hidden behind some large bushes, and is only readily identifiable by the sign out front. The front doors of the church open onto a busy street and are not used on a regular basis; instead parishioners enter through a non-descript side door on a side street. This arrangement can be a challenge for those unfamiliar with the church as this door is on the opposite side of the building from the parking lot.

The primary entrance leads to a small hallway that allows access to the rest of the church building. Immediately to the right of the entrance are double doors that lead to the sanctuary. The sanctuary has a traditional layout, with two sections of pews, an aisle down the middle and aisles down the sides. There are also long rows of pews at the back of the church that are set theater style for additional seating. The décor is simple. The walls are white and the windows that line both sides of the sanctuary are frosted glass. The chancel area runs across the front of the church,
with a rail for communion. The altar is simple and wall-mounted to the front wall of the sanctuary. To the right of the altar is the lectern, from which Scripture lessons are read during the service. On the left is the slightly larger and more robust pulpit where the pastor stands to preach his sermons. Between the lectern and pulpit is a wooden table that is used for setting out the communion ware.

On each side of the chancel area is a small space for musical instruments. On the pulpit side is a piano and drum kit that are used for music during the service. The organ is on the opposite side, and at some services the organ and piano are used simultaneously. Above the organ is a small screen which has been recently installed for projecting text and images during the service. The computer and projector, which are on a media cart, are also positioned in this area on Sunday mornings, but kept in another location during the week. While the visual media equipment are relatively new, the choir loft contains extensive sound recording equipment for creating recordings of the services and sermons and burning them to CD. These CDs are available for those who cannot attend the services on Sundays, especially those who are ill or physically unable to travel. So technology in the sanctuary is not entirely new to this congregation.

At the exit to the sanctuary, a hallway leads to classrooms, meeting rooms, and the choir practice room, which is equipped with a piano. This hallway also provides access to the stairs, which lead to the lower level. The lower level is split into two large areas. One area, which is flanked by classrooms, is used for daycare during the week. The other large area is the fellowship hall where parishioners gather for Bible Study before church and for meals after church. This area is equipped with a large kitchen and filled with round tables for gathering.
Partly due to its location, the Church on the Corner is a small church, averaging around 50 parishioners on a Sunday. The majority of parishioners are African American, which is unusual for an LCMS congregation whose traditional population in the United States comes from a German or Scandinavian background. The members of Church on the Corner’s congregation range in age, with middle-aged members dominating attendance. However, there are also older attendees and families with children. Although this is a predominantly African American congregation, it is also a distinctly Lutheran congregation. The music and worship style of the congregation reflect African American traditions. Similar to the congregations in Moss’ study (2003) that highly valued skilled preaching, “verbal agility,” and the ability “to manipulate standard English,” and “being able to use features of Black English—to ‘sound black,’” the congregation at the Church on the Corner expect good preaching as one of the centerpieces of the sermon (p. 83). Yet while Edwards (2004) contends that in the twentieth century, African American preaching leaned toward civil rights and social justice, Pastor Lidstrom says of his congregation: “Some might get the impression, ok, it’s an urban church, all African American, you can pull out themes of say, umm, social justice, or umm, rallying the troops. That’s not what they want to hear. Don’t even try it. They have asked people to leave who won’t present a Biblically based sermon, so they’re not interested in less than historically grounded, confessionally, biblically based preaching, that’s what is expected.” This description reveals that, despite the variation in music and the focus on a style of delivery in preaching, the use of a standardized Lutheran liturgy and the expectations of the congregation in terms of preaching and worship content are in line with most other LCMS churches.

While in some ways the Church on the Corner is unique as a Lutheran church, in others it is quite typical of most churches in mainstream denominations. Central to the Christian mission,
dating back to the time of the Bible, is to grow the church by sharing the teachings of Jesus and Christianity, which encourage and grow faith. In most mainstream denominations, the primary means of making these teachings available to people is through the formalized meetings of Christians in worship. This means that to accomplish this mission of growing the church, people must be attracted to and encouraged to attend the church. In much of the present literature on church growth and on preaching, technology is situated as a way to make church appealing and relevant for a twenty-first century public (Troeger, 1996; Wilson & Moore, 2008; Yurs, 2009). Technology is supposed to help preachers and churches “remediate” the historic teachings and traditions of the Christian church for current cultural contexts.

As a congregation in the Lutheran tradition, the Church on the Corner places a high value on the Biblical text, as well as on the spoken word. However, they have begun to introduce visual technology into their worship service. The deaconesses are currently responsible for setting up the equipment and for running the projector during the service. Recently, the secretary at the church has also begun to do some of the work to prepare the visual presentations. This arrangement currently exists because Pastor Lidstrom works full-time at another job, and the deaconesses and secretary are employed by the church to facilitate the day-to-day tasks and a majority of the administrative work of the congregation. At this point, the technology has been introduced to direct the liturgy, the scripture readings, and on occasion, the hymns. The use is almost exclusively textual and slide-based. The liturgy is copied directly from the hymnal or

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27 “LCMS deaconesses are women who are full-time professional church-workers, trained to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ through a ministry of works of mercy, spiritual care, and teaching the Christian faith. ‘Deaconess,’ from the Greek word diakonos, means ‘servant.’ Phoebe, named in Rom. 16:1-2, was a helper to Paul and others. She often is considered the first deaconess.” (www.lcms.org)
bulletin and displayed on the screen. The readings follow a similar pattern, although the deaconess receives the slides from the reading from service that illustrates them with an image related to the reading or time of the church year. Pastor Lidstrom does not use any slides in his preaching at this point. A slide with his sermon title or text reference is displayed throughout the sermon. He has used technology in his preaching at other congregations and is not opposed to integrating more technology, if the congregation and context allow for it.

**Technology Use In and Out of Church**

The congregation as a whole also seems to embrace technology both in worship and in their lives outside worship. Of the ten people that responded to the initial survey, nine reported owning cell phones for personal use, with daily usage varying from an hour or less (4) to up to eight hours a day (2) for personal purposes. Nine respondents also reported owning televisions which they used from two to seven hours daily in a typical day. Seven respondents also reported owning computers and five reported a device for internet access. The majority of respondents (5) used these two types of technology for four hours a day or less.

In addition to personal use, members of the Church on the Corner also reported using technology at work. While the majority of respondents to this survey identified as retired/unemployed (6), three reported using a computer as the most common technology in their work, and two reported using the internet for their work. Further, these two types of technology were reported as being a substantial part of the work day, accounting for two to seven hours. Two respondents reported using a computer on average five to seven hours per day. Respondents who worked also reported using cell phones, television, and DVD/Blue ray players for work, but the use of these devices was more sporadic both in terms of the devices used and the time spent using them.
The use of technology in the workplace informs the Church on the Corner’s approach to technology in worship and in the church space. They are the only congregation in this study that is actively connecting the church to computer use in other venues. While I was observing this congregation they were in the process of enrolling members and community members in a computer training course that would allow attendees to earn certification in Microsoft Office. Members of the church had worked to write grants to procure equipment and to convert one of the classrooms at the church into a small lab suitable for teaching this course. The course was positioned as a community service to help people, including members, qualify for better jobs. The Church on the Corner saw this course as way to enact the mission of the church to help others in a loving way and to build relationships with community members.

Because the congregation situates technology as valuable in both sacred and secular contexts, their approach to technology prepared them to introduce technology into their worship space and their worship service. They have taken an experimental approach to technology in the worship service in an attempt to improve the worship experience for the congregation and are trying to determine how they will use the technology in ways that improve the worship experience while honoring the traditions of the church. They are in the process of what Campbell (2010) calls “negotiating” the complex relationships between technology, values, and tradition. According to Campbell this process involves investigating and determining the values of the religious community, investigating and determining how any proposed technology aligns with or is problematic to those values, and finally determining if and how any technology might be adopted as is, modified or designed to fit with the mission and values of the religious community. Central to this approach is the role of value and tradition in decisions about if, when, and how to use technology. As the study has demonstrated, the role of values and beliefs is
particularly strong in sermons and preaching, where expectations about the genre, based in tradition and past practice, have a significant impact on how preachers are perceived, as well as how both preachers and parishioners conceive of the role of digital technology in the sermon.

The negotiations that the Church on the Corner and Pastor Lidstrom are currently undertaking are the same that any congregation considering or re-evaluating the use of technology in their worship services, and particularly in preaching, must undertake if they wish to use that technology to their benefit. As the preceding case studies have shown, using technology can impact the ethos of the preacher, and by extension the congregation who is connected to and often identified by and represented by its preacher(s), both positively and negatively. The following sections describe the ways the Church on the Corner and Pastor Lidstrom approach integrating technology into the sermon and articulate more broadly the issues that arise as churches interrogate the use of technology in the worship service and the sermon.

**Sermons: Integrating Orality, Digital Technology, and Genre Expectations**

Pastor Lidstrom describes his primary goals in his sermons as “taking God’s word and putting it in to context, allowing the Holy Spirit to take that word and using it as God so intends for it to be used in the life of the person hearing it.” His sermons are strongly connected to the assigned Scriptures for the day, and he derives much of his content and direction directly from those texts, as is the Lutheran tradition to preach directly on the text, rather than topically. His congregation also has the expectation that his sermons derive from scripture. Eight of the ten respondents to the initial survey mentioned Bible, scripture, or God’s word as something they look for in a good sermon. Pastor Lidstrom also adheres strongly to the Lutheran understanding that sermons should contain both law and gospel. Essentially, sermons need to show people that they sin and that they need God’s forgiveness through Jesus, and then show how God has
provided forgiveness and reconciliation through faith in Jesus. Pastor Lidstrom looks for sermons that have “centered, the crucified and risen Christ.” He says, “If there’s no reference or it’s vague, I feel that the target has been missed.” Ultimately, sermons should convict and challenge people, but leave them with hope.

To achieve his goals of convicting and encouraging, Pastor Lidstrom looks to connect with his hearers through stories and examples. One of his main strategies is to use modern examples to connect the biblical text into a modern context. He uses many stories or extended illustrations in his preaching to bring the biblical ideas and stories into a more accessible and modern context. He also tries to provide specific outcomes for his hearers—to answer the question “What do you want me to do?” for them, so that they can take his message and enact it in some specific way. Here again, this strategy aligns with the expectations of his parishioners. Seven of the ten respondents to the initial survey directly referenced application or being able to relate as necessary to a good sermon or to making a sermon interesting or meaningful.

In terms of establishing himself as a speaker, he says that preachers need “to be authentic and, and an obvious passion for whatever they’re saying.” He advocates for making connections to people or relationships that people really care about in their daily lives and showing them how to see those in a new way. He also says that preachers cannot rely on guilt to get a response to their message because guilt only produces a temporary response. Rather, his preferred practice is to provide “a list of three or four things that can be considered and pursued that are realistic and doable” in response to the challenge he is making to his hearers. The following two sections reveal how Pastor Lidstrom’s enacts his approach in two different sermons and the ways his congregation members responded to those sermons.

Pastor Lidstrom preached this sermon on June 3, 2012—Trinity Sunday. Trinity Sunday is a festival Sunday that celebrates the triune nature of God, recognizing God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This Sunday, the assigned lessons all related to the Trinity and to the glory of God in heaven. Pastor Lidstrom’s sermon was based on the Old Testament reading from Isaiah in which Isaiah reports a vision of God sitting on his throne in heaven and his response to being in the holy presence of God. This text is highly descriptive and would lend itself well to visual illustration, especially to help give some concreteness to the unusual images it describes.

Taking this text from Isaiah as a starting point, Pastor Lidstrom described his sermon theme as “The Triune God is the only true and holy God yet in love and mercy claims us as His very own people.” While his theme is somewhat abstract, his efforts to make his message believable and accessible are clear in his rationale for choosing this theme. He says “Isaiah’s vision and the context of our modern world are “worlds” apart except for “eyes of faith” created by Him for us by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Pastor Lidstrom makes an effort to make the Biblical text relevant for a contemporary audience. His ultimate goal for the sermon was “a deepened conviction that the true God as revealed to the world through the Word and sacraments is the only true God who alone provides all that is necessary for life in this world and for life beyond the grave.”

As noted above Pastor Lidstrom works from a law and gospel perspective. In this sermon, he focuses on the inability of humans to be holy as a result of sin. He also notes that it’s difficult to understand holiness as Isaiah does because contemporary culture does not have the same conception of holiness being located only in one place—God. He argues that life becomes messy because humans are not holy and cannot become holy without help from God through faith in Jesus Christ, which comes about through the work of the Holy Spirit. The connection
between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reflects back on the other readings and the occasion of Trinity Sunday. Although the descriptive language of the assigned Isaiah text acted in a built-in illustration for Pastor Lidstrom, he also included some additional illustrations to connect this unusual biblical text to current contexts. He cited some quotes from the Dr. Laura radio show to show how concerns that faced Isaiah are still surfacing in people today.

Four members of the Church on the Corner, three female and one male, responded to the survey for this sermon. The responses to this sermon varied greatly among respondents and also from the aims of Pastor Lidstrom for this sermon. Only one respondent gave “We cannot do anything except through Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit which he gives to us” as the main point of the sermon. Other responses mentioned God being holy and the work of the devil to create doubt. The only image that any respondent mentioned as memorable was about paper airplanes, and how they needed to be tossed to work, similar to how the Holy Spirit provides assistance to Christians.

This minimal mention is noteworthy, since Pastor Lidstrom indicated that he was working from a text that contained many different and unusual images. He also indicated that “Sermon slides would be good to reinforce the verbal pictures of Isaiah’s vision.” Pastor Lidstrom has a vision for how he might have employed visual media for this sermon to illustrate the images he was speaking about. However, he also indicated that technical difficulties, “due to a limited technology team.” This is just one instance where available resources do not match with a preacher’s vision and prevent him from using technology to preach a multimedia sermon.

**Sermon 2: The Kingdom of God Is Here!**

Pastor Lidstrom preached this sermon on Sunday June 17, 2012, the third Sunday after Pentecost. This Sunday was also Father’s Day, but unlike Trinity Church, the Church on the
Corner did not alter its normal worship patterns as a result of the holiday. For this Sunday Pastor Lidstrom preached on the gospel lesson, which was the Parable of the Mustard Seed. This parable or story teaching of Jesus describes the kingdom of God and how people become members of the kingdom of God.

Pastor Lidstrom’s theme, based on this text, was “to see the Kingdom of God as a creation of God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ the risen and ascended Lord of all and respond with renewed commitment to serving in God’s kingdom now.” This sermon reflects Pastor Lidstrom’s commitment to giving hearers concrete responses to the ideas and concepts he discusses in his sermons. However, he is careful to articulate, in line with Lutheran teachings, that doing good works are not what earns heaven or salvation, but rather that good works are a response to receiving God’s gift of faith and salvation. As with his previous sermon, Pastor Lidstrom did not use technology for this sermon. However, in this case, it was an issue of effective design—he couldn’t find the images he was looking for to communicate his point—rather than of people resources that prevented him from incorporating technology.

The above examples of sermons demonstrate that preachers and churches seeking to incorporate digital technology into their preaching must negotiate the complex relationships between resources and the preacher’s vision rhetor. Pastor Lidstrom does not use much technology in his preaching at the Church on the Corner for a couple reasons. His primary reason is time. Because he works a full-time job in addition to his pastoral responsibilities, he does not have time to prepare the types of presentations he would like to make. Additionally, the church is still in the process of acquiring equipment and does not have the resources to pay for licenses for graphics services or design templates that are used by many churches, including Pastor Lidstrom’s former congregation. This lack of available resources is not unique to the Church on
the Corner. Six of the respondents to the initial survey of pastors also reported lack of access to equipment as a determining factor in their adoption of digital technology. Yet, all six of these respondents also noted a desire or plan to use technology if they were eventually able to acquire the necessary resources.

Similarly, despite his current minimal usage, Pastor Lidstrom is not opposed to the use of technology, but takes a measured approach to technology adoption. He sees the technology as a way to augment traditional worship practices.

And when I think about, uhh, screens no screens in the sanctuary, you know, that whole conversation, I was never one who said well, we’ve got to do this or else, you know, it’s always let’s try this, maybe this will be helping us to uhh do what we do on a Sunday morning even better, uhh, so we would try it on that basis. And for Bible classes, I would use that extensively, especially video, to run some video and then have conversation around it. So, those were coming from CPH and other sources, and it seemed to be connecting with folks and very effective, so why not take the teaching element and whatever was happening there and introduce it to worship?

He also believes that the church needs to make a connection between everyday life and church life, and to deny the use of technology in the church is a mistake because it says “‘that’s ok for your other life, but here in church we’re different and we don’t do that. We’re uhh extremists, you know, we don’t allow music or…”’ Thus Pastor Lidstrom sees the use of technology as important both to connecting the church to everyday life and to improving or

28 CPH is Concordia Publishing House, the synodical publishing house of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. All materials published by CPH are vetted by the Doctrinal Review committee, which insures that any material published by CPH aligns with the doctrines of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.
augmenting existing practices, without abandoning or denying the value of those historical practices.

**The Sermon as Multimodal Genre: Combining Technology and Orality**

Viewing technology as compatible with historical practices and traditions, but also capable of improving or changing existing practices is necessary to successfully integrating technology into preaching and consequently redefining the sermon genre. As this study has demonstrated, many congregation members and many preachers view the sermon as an oral genre that is either minimally compatible or entirely incompatible with visual or additional media. Timothy Cargall (2007) echoes those sentiments: “Preaching is one of the great bastions of oral culture. It is in its very essence an oral form of communication. Sermons—the content of what is preached—may either originate as written texts or subsequently be transcribed into written texts, but preaching itself in an oral event (and the best preaching bear this constantly in mind from the beginning of preparation through the performance, the preaching event itself). (p. 1). While both preachers and congregation members acknowledge the role of text in the sermon—the Bible as a basis and manuscripts, outlines, and verbal delivery—they are expecting a sermon constructed for oral delivery. This expectation is connected both to past experiences and to the value placed on the spoken word in Christianity. Thus, incorporating technology in a way that will build *ethos* for the preacher requires a sermon that combines the oral tradition of the genre with the visual and multimodal elements that using digital technology makes possible.

This hybrid sermon that embraces both its oral tradition and the use of technology requires an approach to preaching different than many preachers are accustomed to, and certainly different from the ways in which they are trained. Only two preachers who responded to the initial survey indicated that their preaching differed significantly when they used technology in
their deliveries, and some denied or minimized the impact of technology on their preaching, preferring to situate technology as a tool for preparation or an augment to their oral presentation. However, I argue that incorporating digital technology into preaching requires a different approach to preaching that renders the technology visible, or as Bolter and Grusin (2000) term it, “hypermediated,” in the sense that the sermon draws attention to the technology as it is directly referenced in the sermon and plays a necessary role in the sermon. Such an approach also necessitates understanding and acknowledging that the technology cannot and does not create ethos on its own, but creates ethos in how it is used by preachers during sermon delivery.

Most specifically, without a direct relationship between the various media elements of the sermon delivery, the oral-visual binary described at Blink Church in chapter four, or some other version that privileges the oral over other media, is likely to occur. Further evidence of this binary approach to technology use in preaching appeared in the large scale survey. Of the 33 preachers in the initial survey who responded that they use some form of technology in their preaching, 11 situated this technology as supplemental, using language such as “support,” “enhance” or “reinforce” to describe the ways they use technology. Two of these respondents were clear that the “sermon comes first” then the technology (33; 43). Another stated, “The support I am looking for [from technology] is to reinforce the point I am trying to make, not to make the point for me, or substitute the technology for a point I am trying to make.” (17).

The oral delivery generally takes prominence because of genre expectations, and often drowns out or obscures presentations in alternate modes, devaluing those alternate deliveries and making it almost impossible for them to positively impact ethos, as they often go unnoticed. Buchko, Buchko, and Meyer (2012) suggest from their study of PowerPoint in sermons visual media have no measureable impact on recall in preaching because people are so accustomed to
PowerPoint that they tune it out or because they are simply more likely to pay attention to the speaker and what is being said than what is projected on the screen. So preachers who choose to use technology in an attempt to bolster their *ethos* must carefully incorporate it, not simply as an add-on, but as a central part of their preaching that grabs and holds the attention of their parishioners. Doing so is not possible if the preacher conceives of the sermon as a strictly oral genre, and requires adjusting the sermon from a purely verbal/oral format to a format that is more multimodal. As Yancey (2004) articulates in her Chair’s Address to the Conference on College Composition and Communication, technology changes literate practices, and presently digital technologies are changing how people understand what it means to write and what people understand as writing. She further argues, beginning with a framework of assessment and moving to a discussion of technology, that by separating “an activity related to curriculum from it, faculty lose control over curriculum to the detriment of students and faculty alike” (p. 320).

What is at stake when incorporating new technologies is control over what technologies are adopted and used and how those same technologies are adopted and used. Yancey argues that if teachers continue to situate themselves and their students as mere users, who augment existing practices with technologies designed by others, rather than composers of new technologies and new forms and genres of writing, they give control to those designers and “they will complete someone else's software package; they will be the invention of that package” (p. 320).

Preachers face a similar situation as writing teachers as they confront the reality that digital technologies are changing genres like the sermon and its corresponding rhetorical practices that have historically remained relatively stable. By passively using digital technologies to augment existing preaching practices, preachers and their sermons are similarly being invented by the software. Such an approach to technology appears to contradict the strong ties
between preaching, religious beliefs and traditional practices that have shaped the sermon and preaching practices for thousands of years. Digital technologies necessitate a negotiation between their values and affordances and the values of preachers and congregations. If digital technologies are to positively impact the ethos of the preacher, sermons, like the writing Yancey discusses, must be constructed to take advantage of the technology by embracing the use of images, audio, and even video, while retaining its ties to the historical sermon genre. Such construction will necessitate a redefining of the sermon genre and the preacher as rhetor.

Such redefinition is likely to produce some resistance both from preachers and from congregation members. Fully integrating digital technology into preaching is a risk for preachers when they rely on the technology as an integral part of the sermon. Preachers may resist the technology because they fear what will happen if the technology fails during delivery. To embrace fully integrating technology into the sermon means giving away control over part of the delivery, a move which may make some preachers uncomfortable. They may anticipate that a failure of the technology can negatively impact their ethos by making them appear unprepared or incompetent.

Rather than risking such damage to their ethos, they would prefer to either keep their use minimal and peripheral or to avoid use altogether. However, there is a trade-off in this approach. As this study has shown, technology that is used peripherally or as an augment, rather than an active, transparent element of the sermon, has minimal effect on ethos and thus may not be worth the investment of time and resources. To account for the fallibility of technology, these altered practices would include a backup plan, as advocated by Sylvia Church and Elizabeth Powell (2007) in “When Things Go Wrong” to protect ethos in the event of technology failure.
Beyond the practical matters of integrating hardware and software into preaching, such a shift may be problematic on a more theological or ideological level. Luke (2000) asserts that forming new literate practices is not simply a matter of adopting new technologies, but also of modifying existing and inventing new practices that utilize those technologies in specific contexts. For denominations, like those in the study, who highly value the spoken word because of a deeply held belief that God works through spoken word, adding technology that alters or disrupts the oral presentation may seem like a challenge to the authority of the spoken word. Several respondents to the initial survey argued against the use of media on this basis with statements such as “I believe that the preached word is sufficient for the main sermon” (7) and “The Homily is spoken word, not a multimedia presentation.” (40). Further, the expectation of both preachers and many churched people is that it is the preacher’s role to be the dominant and, more notably, literal voice in the sermon. Thirty-two of the forty-eight preachers (66%) who responded to the initial survey used verbs, such as “proclaim,” “speak,” “announce,” and descriptions of audiences including “hearers,” or “listeners” when asked to describe the purpose of the sermon. Such language indicates a strong genre expectation, especially on the part of preachers, that the sermon is an oral event for an assembled audience of hearers. Because of the power invested both in the spoken word, and the preacher who proclaims that word on behalf of God, such congregations may have trouble incorporating visual media as central to sermons because it runs contrary to their beliefs about the power of the spoken word and to their understanding of the orality of the sermon as an extension of those beliefs.

At the Church on the Corner, these expectations were obvious in some of the responses to the initial survey. Three responses directly mentioned the necessity of good delivery to the effectiveness of the sermon, and all three implied that this delivery should be oral, rather than
oral and visual. One respondent pointedly indicated that “I don't like gimmicks. I like reacting to the word of God because of the preparation and delivery by the pastor.” However, digital technology, although usually employed in service to the visual, extends beyond the visual, and thus churches wishing to utilize digital technology might consider a gradual or staged approach to introducing technology into the sermon. Audio technology, which is more compatible with the sermon’s oral tradition, might be a possibility to introduce other media such as music, other sermons, or scripture readings into the sermon as a way to incorporate new technologies. Halbritter (2003) argues that music can serve as the thesis or statement of argument for a film or multimedia composition, and I argue that such a concept could not only be extended to a sermon, but would also be easily received, since music is traditionally central to Christian worship services. Using digital technology in this way might also serve as a starting point for introducing other forms of media to the sermon that would then later allow visual media to be added as comfort levels increase for both preachers and congregations.

**Pastor: Issues of Training and Resources**

This new type of hybrid sermon not only necessitates that preachers and parishioners reconceive of the sermon on the theoretical level, but also necessitates that preachers change their practices for composing and delivering sermons. However, such changes will prove difficult without simultaneous changes in homiletical training that directly address using digital technology in preaching. Wilson and Moore (2008) argue “the failure of the sermon to be a viable form in digital culture is just as much the fault of the church’s legacy of sermon preparation as it is due to the nature of the medium” (p. 24). A shift in homiletics training would need to take place to prepare preachers both practically and theoretically to preach the type of hybrid sermon that embraces construction and delivery in various media. At the very heart of this
shift would be the theoretical shift from the sermon as a purely oral delivery by the preacher to the sermon as a multimedia genre that might include audio, oral, and visual components.

Such revised training would need to acknowledge the historical nature of the sermon genre and preaching traditions, while simultaneously presenting the changes multimedia bring to the genre. Redefining the sermon as a multimedia genre would then necessitate the creation of and instruction in new practices for preparing and delivering sermons. Included in this shift would be some direct instruction and practice in the use of various digital technologies. Direct knowledge of various technologies is key to both understanding how particular technologies might be employed in a sermon, as well as the benefits, drawbacks and limitations of technology as a whole and of particular technologies. Gee and Hayes (2011), though not speaking specifically of homiletics training, assert “No technology—books, television, computers, video games, or the Internet—by itself makes people good or bad, smart or stupid. Such technologies have effects only in terms of how, when where, and why they are put to use. They have different effects in different contexts of use. They can be forces for good or ill…The real issue, then, is social, that is, who has and who does not have mentoring, not technology alone” (p. 5). However, such training is generally not available to preachers because most seminaries lack the personnel or equipment resources to provide such training. None of the four preachers in the case studies indicated receiving any training in the use of media, with instruction focused much more on oral delivery and constructing sermons from the biblical text. Therefore, at this time, preachers wanting to preach with technology, and to use it effectively to improve their ethos are and will be primarily self-taught, which requires a personal investment of time, educational resources, content licenses, and technological equipment such as hardware and software.
This question of personal investment is particularly pertinent for preachers like Pastor Lidstrom who are considering including technology in their preaching but have not yet really begun to do so. Pastor Lidstrom has been serving the Church on the Corner for one year. He has been a pastor for 32 years, and served other congregations prior to taking his administrative position with a social services organization, and then his position at the Church on the Corner. He completed his seminary training in 1980, but also continued his education and earned a D. Min or Doctor of Ministry. His multiple positions make him unique to this study, as he is the only pastor to hold multiple jobs.

As the only pastor at the Church on the Corner, he is responsible for all the preaching and pastoral care at this congregation. He does have assistance from two deaconesses, who teach Bible study, Sunday school, Catechism classes, as well as doing additional care for the congregation. One of the deaconesses is also responsible for setting up the projection equipment, which is run through her laptop, on Sunday mornings. Pastor Lidstrom’s other job requires about 50-55 hours a week, mostly during normal business hours, and he does most of his pastoral work at church, about 20-25 hours a week, in the evenings. This arrangement is the result of the financial situation of the congregation, and its inability to afford and sustain a full-time pastor. Small congregations in the LCMS often must share pastors or have pastors who work additional jobs in order to continue to exist in locations that have declining populations or populations with lower incomes.

The demands on Pastor Lidstrom’s time also highlight one of challenges of preaching with digital technology. As noted in chapter 4, preachers who want to use technology to build ethos must have time to devote to designing the multi-media portion of the sermon, even in collaboration, and also time to constructing sermons that dynamically interact with that media.
This investment of time is necessary to create the visible relationship between the technology and the preacher that will be revealed in the delivery of the sermon. In the current technology arrangement at Church on the Corner, as at Blink Church, someone other than the pastor is in charge of creating and deploying the visual presentations. At Church on the Corner, it is one of the deaconesses who serves the congregation. She also relies on a service from the Ohio District of the LCMS that provides churches with the thematic slides that contain the weekly scripture lessons. This arrangement exists both because Pastor Lidstrom is not entirely comfortable with the technology, but also because he does not have the time to devote to finding images and arranging slides.

The Church on the Corner is still developing its collaboration and could take some valuable lessons from the other two churches in this study as they move forward. Collaboration in preaching exists in many formats. At Trinity, Pastor Bob uses resources developed for preachers as a basis of his visual presentations. At Blink Church, Pastor Lake meets with colleagues to discuss sermon ideas and sermon texts and a team of parishioners work with both pastors’ sermon manuscripts to create the visual elements of the sermon. Other preachers indicated, in the large scale survey, that they meet with colleagues, virtually or face to face to discuss their sermons. Collaboration offers one possibility for maximizing whatever people, equipment, and monetary resources are available to a congregation.

However, whatever form the collaboration takes must acknowledge that the genre of the sermon still dictates how it will be received by the congregation members and that they expect the preacher to deliver presentation that is cohesive in content, form, and modes. The preacher cannot rely on the collaborators to fully create and design the technological elements of the sermon without any involvement because he/she will need familiarity with these elements to
actively include them in the delivery of the sermon. Thus, collaboration needs to be discursive and dialogic, with the collaborators continually working together to create the final presentation. An approach to collaboration that divides the parts of a sermon and brings them back together piecemeal without a vision for the sermon as a whole does not embrace the hybrid type of sermon that suits the digital technology, and as the sermons at Blink Church showed, has minimal impact of the *ethos* of the speaker. As previously stated, this does not mean that collaboration is not possible, but that collaboration must somehow acknowledge the necessary relationship between the multiple modes of presentation that a preacher will use in the sermon. As Reed and Forno (2004) indicate while describing a failed attempt at electronic collaboration, members of the collaboration need to have not only personal and professional relationships with each other, but also with the digital technologies used in the collaboration. Any collaborative arrangement must create overt connections between the planned oral delivery of the preacher and the various media that he/she will use in that delivery, which requires substantial investment of time and resources by all members of the collaborative team, including the preacher.

More specifically, the issue here is how a preacher/rhetor interacts with digital media in the preparation and delivery of his/her sermon. Most preachers acknowledge their active role in constructing the oral portion of the sermon, through research, drafting, and even practice delivery. They consider this work part of their pastoral role or job duties. Using the internet, computer, and other digital devices as part of this process is now a common practice. van der Laan (2009) reports that there are numerous, easily-accessible sermon resources available to preachers who do a cursory internet search. Further, he reports that preachers can subscribe to any number of services that will provide sermons, sermon ideas, and sermon illustrations for a fee. Pastor Bob at Trinity Church, as well as eight of the preachers who responded to the initial
survey reported using the internet to prepare sermons. While some preachers find that the internet and other digital tools have improved their ability to prepare sermons by making it easier to access information, citations, examples and sample sermons, all the preachers in these case studies indicated that lack of time is a significant factor in the ways technology is currently deployed or in deciding not to use technology in the delivery of their sermons.

This study has demonstrated that preachers who do not have or take the necessary time to design and employ technology visibly and skillfully in the deliveries of their sermons gain little benefit from that technology use, especially in terms of ethos. Rather, they must actively engage the technology during delivery, demonstrating that they both understand its value and are confident and competent users. In order for the technology to serve as a source of positive ethos, preachers need to demonstrate that they use technology in ways that their hearers do. Pastor Lidstrom acknowledges that minimal or no technology use is better than a poorly conceived and produced presentation. The results of this study, as well as the work of other scholars (Yurs, 2009), confirm his assertions. When preachers flub the technology, attention is drawn to the technology and away from the sermon, rather than bringing them together. Flubbing can also make the preacher appear unprepared or the sermon poorly developed, which may give the impression that the preacher does not take his/her work seriously.

As one preacher stated in the initial survey, “We are pretty ‘low-tech,’ partly because the time, effort, and expense involved in becoming ‘hi tech’ seems not worth the effort. I would need to be convinced that greater use of technology would enhance the hearing of the Word.” (41). This preacher recognizes that using technology to build ethos is an investment and that he must exchange some of his time resources to gain that benefit. As the previous two case studies have revealed, simply using the technology is not sufficient to improve ethos—the aura of the
technology does not transfer to the preacher and position him/her as modern or techie. And in some cases, especially in a churched population like those in this study, being modern or techie is not a necessary component of ethos for preachers. Rather, it is more important that the preacher connect with his/her audience, regardless of whether or not he/she uses technology. This finding is an instance of what Campbell (2010) calls “rejections” where values and tradition are deemed more important by the local religious communities than the adoption and use of technology.

As this section has demonstrated, redefining the sermon genre by adding technology involves negotiating the complex relationships between training, resources and genre expectations. Because preachers are undertaking a task that they probably have not been trained for and because they are re-inventing the genre of the sermon from a purely oral genre to a multimedia and multi-voiced genre, they must invest time, personnel and material resources to make this transition so that it benefits their ethos. Without the investment of resources, the use of technology in sermon delivery has great potential to negatively affect the preacher’s ethos by making him/her appear unprepared, or technologically out of touch. Based on the case studies presented here, I argue that if preachers do not make overt, competent, and confident use of the technology in their preaching, they are not only making poor use of resources, but also risking damage to their ethos.

**Realistic Expectations about Technology & Preaching**

Digital technology has been touted by preaching scholars as one of the most effective way to bring preaching, an oral genre, into the current multimodal culture. The technology is viewed as a way to make a historic genre, and its historic biblical content, relevant to members of the current culture. The predominant means of utilizing this technology is to use visual
components—images, text-based outlines, perhaps video, projected onto large screens in the worship space. Baetens (2003) asserts “Images ‘connote’ modernity, and their absence may be received as a sign on boredom, old-fashionedness, and refusal of the contemporary world and the habits of today’s readership (the absence or rarity of images no longer fits the image of ‘seriousness’ as it has long done” (p. 185). While his work clearly focuses on printed texts, the underlying premise that images are connected to modernity can be extended to sermons as well. Many scholars of preaching (Wilson & Moore, 2008; Cargall, 2005; Salter, 2008; Vergel 2010) indicate in their work that the use of images, video and audio is a positive step to reaching a contemporary audience because such audiences are accustomed to receiving information in multiple forms, and in highly visual forms.

Although such assertions do have merit, as this study has demonstrated, simply incorporating technology into the sermon, as it exists now, does not necessarily improve a preacher’s ethos. Buchko, Buchko, and Meyers (2012) conclude “PowerPoint, for all of its prevalence and use, is clearly not a panacea for increasing the effectiveness of communication of religious messages” (p. 695). Further, Yurs (2009), speaking broadly of using technology in preaching, asserts that no technology can make a bad sermon good. However, Yurs also writes from a perspective that the sermon, as an oral and textual event precedes any technology, so his expectations for a “good” sermon are grounded in the sermon as an oral event with technology as an augment of that oral delivery. Such a perspective reinforces the oral-technology binary described above and prevents uses of technology that might actually improve the ethos of preachers. Without changing the genre of the sermon and its accompanying expectations for speakers, adding technology does not, by itself, make a preacher appear more credible or the sermon as a genre appear more relevant. Further, reimagining the sermon genre as multimodal
requires many resources including time, personnel, hardware, software, and monetary resources that may be beyond those available to most congregations.

**Entering the Future, Carrying the Past: Blending Technology & Tradition**

Although many works on preaching and technology have positioned using technology as a means to make preaching and sermons relevant in the twenty-first century, this study has revealed that introducing digital technology into preaching requires balancing the historic genre of the sermon with the capabilities of the ever-increasing multitude of technologies available to create and convey messages. This study has highlighted that, for churched people in mainstream Protestant denominations, the above assumptions about technology are not entirely accurate. Rather, their expectations of the sermon as an oral and text-based event constrain, at this time, what is possible when including digital technology. Further, as a result of the expectations of congregation members and the training and expectations of preachers in these denominations, preachers are not prepared to preach sermons that take advantage of the capabilities of digital technology. In the churches in this study, simply introducing new technologies to the sermon genre without considering the genre itself, and more specifically the role of the preacher/rhetor in that genre, most often results in a use of technology that is ineffectual, both in communicating with parishioners and in building or bolstering *ethos* for the preacher among churched populations.

As the study has demonstrated, genre expectation is closely connected to how parishioners perceive preachers. Campbell (2010) argues traditions, especially those around text, are central to how religious groups understand themselves, their practices, and their relationships to the world. All of the participants in this study were attending churches that are traditionally “word” churches, placing a high value on Scripture as authoritative and on the sermon as an oral
exposition of that word of God. The oral nature of preaching is representative of and more importantly, gains power from its connection to the word of God. Further, genre expectation is also heavily informed by experience. All of the participants in this study were churched\textsuperscript{29} and their responses to the surveys are reflective of that position. Forty-seven of the 52 participants that responded to the initial surveys at the case study congregations reported attending that particular church for at least six years. Thirteen, the largest number, reported attending the same church for 40 years or more. Only one participant indicated attending for less than one year. These participants have had their expectations formed by the sermons they have heard, the services they have attended and the teachings of their churches about preaching, text, the spoken and written word, and the authority of preachers.

While such a population provides insight, especially for preachers currently preaching to congregations, further study of un-churched and de-churched populations might yield different results. People who are de-churched or un-churched have different expectations of church, preachers, and sermons. Because their experiences are different than those of a churched population, they might be more receptive to a sermon that is not entirely oral. As multimedia is now common in many contexts, including school and workplaces, a sermon that appears in some ways similar to these contexts may increase ethos by making people new to a church feel comfortable in the environment. Additionally, because genre expectations have such a strong role in ethos, people who are de-churched or un-churched might apply expectations from other current public speaking genres, and thus expect the use of digital media as a sign of a “good” presentation and a “good” speaker. Further research with these two populations would be necessary to fully substantiate these suppositions and would be necessary for preachers who

\textsuperscript{29} For a full discussion of this term, see Chapter 2.
serve congregations that are dominantly composed of these two populations and would like to introduce or already use technology in their preaching.

**Service: Using Digital Technology to build Congregational Ethos through Accessibility**

The previous sections have detailed the limitations to using technology to bolster *ethos* for preachers in current contexts. I offer in this section one positive and unexpected finding that arose from the three case studies and the larger-scale survey. At all three congregations, both pastors and parishioners who responded to the surveys noted a connection between using technology and accessibility. They articulated that technology helped them be visitor-friendly by making it easier for people who were unfamiliar with the church service to find their places, follow along and participate. Participants also conceived of the technology as a means to reach alternate audiences. One respondent at the Church on the Corner indicated that “A sermon that includes the elements of technology speaks to younger audience.” A pastor from the initial survey indicated “collegions are greatly influenced by social media; including the way of processing information” (23).

Others mentioned that the technology offered avenues for those who struggle to see because of age or disability. One respondent at the Church on the Corner reported “The large print on the screen helps church members see the printed text better.” Similar references appeared in the survey of pastors, with four pastors referencing the ability of digital technologies to assist those who have difficulty hearing. Specifically, one pastor noted that visual technology was of great benefit to his congregation because it serves a large population of deaf people (35).

These affordances of digital technology to make worship services accessible and meaningful to a variety of populations are noteworthy for congregations, like the Church on the Corner, seeking to build *ethos* through the use of digital technology. Presently the Church on the
Corner uses digital technology at its one service Sunday mornings at 10:30 am. Local culture is for the service to start around 10:30, with the actual start time being 10 to 15 minutes later than 10:30. People continue to arrive for the service after it has started and continue to arrive until about the time of the sermon, so the atmosphere is generally relaxed and casual. They have just begun to use the screen and projector for this service, but its use has already been integrated throughout. The liturgy and Scripture lessons are projected throughout the service. However, the lyrics to songs are not, and parishioners use hymnals in the pews for singing. With the local culture being to arrive at various times during the service, projecting the particular part of the service on the screen could certainly help those arriving to find their place in the liturgy and participate without having to search the printed bulletin or hymnal.

Being able to participate more fully in worship was a consistent theme in both the large initial survey and in responses to the congregational surveys at all three case study churches. At the Church on the Corner, hymns and chanting are central to the liturgy of the service. One member of the congregation at the Church on the Corner indicate that having the words to hymns projected on the screen improved singing by helping people raise their heads, rather than looking down at the hymnals. Additionally, at this congregation, the liturgy is responsive, with the pastor or deacon leading and the congregation responding throughout the service.

The order of service is standard from week to week, but is thematized around the assigned readings from the lectionary\textsuperscript{30}. It begins a hymn that is followed by an invocation that identifies the theme for the service. Corporate confession of sins and absolution, which are spoken responsively, follows the invocation. The prayer of the day, which is standardized by the

\textsuperscript{30} The LCMS has 3 lectionaries that congregations may select from. All three follow the same general trajectory throughout the year and are distinguished by the length of time it takes to complete the series: one year or three years.
synod and connects with the theme of the day, comes next. As the prayer varies from week to week, making it available on the screen can help those who are hard of hearing to follow along. The three assigned Scripture lessons follow. These are read by a lay person from the lectern at the right side of the chancel. The lessons are also projected on the screen with a thematic background. A psalm is interjected between the first and second lessons, and the choir sings between the second lesson and the Gospel lesson, which is always the final lesson. As with the prayer of the day, these lessons vary every week and having them in textual format as well as orally makes them more accessible.

Using digital technology has the ability to impact ethos for a congregation or a pastor from the accessibility point of view. It can improve access to information, help visitors follow the service, improve singing, etc. One respondent at Trinity Church, who was opposed to incorporating media into preaching, noted that “To be fair-- it is nice to see things on a screen and not have to juggle hymnals, Bibles, bulletins, etc.” Similarly, one respondent to the initial survey indicated he was opposed to technology in the worship service, but “prior to the service I would be fine with displaying announcements for upcoming services or parish events” (39). These responses are evidence of the negotiation process congregations and individuals undertake when adopting technology. In this case, the respondents can accept technology for accessibility and conveying information as commensurate with church traditions and values, but cannot accept adding technology to the sermon because doing so devalues the spoken word, which this respondent feels is more important.

Digital technology also might allow congregations to redistribute resources more effectively by reducing the need to print the readings or parts of the liturgy that change from week to week for every member. Using the technology in this fashion might also save time and
people resources as it can be easier to update and manipulate digital media than print-based resources. However, despite these affordances, congregations must carefully consider the benefits and limitations of technology when deciding how to employ it in their worship services. Digital technology can also alienate those for whom it prevents full access, so to build positive *ethos* it must be used as ONE of multiple modes of communication and engagement (Jensen, 2005).

**Final Thoughts**

This study has explored the complex relationships between the sermon as a genre, preaching as a rhetorical practice, and digital technology. It has demonstrated that the genre expectations of the sermon, which are embedded with theology and tradition, are a determining factor in the choices of preachers to adopt and utilize digital technology in the sermon. Further, genre expectations influence the ways that parishioners evaluate the quality and credibility of the speaker. What has become evident in this study is many pastors and many churched parishioners identify the sermon as a primarily to exclusively oral event. Further, the expectation is for a preacher-centered delivery, regardless of whether or not the preacher incorporates technology. These expectations of orality, which are intimately connected to beliefs about the power of the spoken word, Biblical text, and the role of the preacher, cause preachers and parishioners to view technology as an augment to the spoken word, rather than an integral part of the sermon. This positioning is a direct result of these congregations situating the constancy of their traditions and beliefs as more important than fully adopting new technologies into their worship and preaching practices.

The result of making this decision is that it prevents the technology from having much impact on the preacher’s *ethos* by obscuring or downplaying the role of that technology. Rather
than hypermediating the technology in preaching and showing themselves to be users and producers like their parishioners, preachers are remediating the technology to such a degree that it either goes unnoticed, or it becomes understood as secondary, and thus less valuable, than the content delivered orally. Therefore, preachers are not bolstering their *ethos* through their use of technology because in many current congregational contexts, technology is not situated as equal to fulfilling traditional genre expectations and appealing to traditional sites of authority.

For preachers to situate themselves as relevant in the current multimedia culture requires not simply adding technology to their delivery, but a complete re-defining of the sermon genre that acknowledges the oral tradition of the sermon, but allows for, values, and respects delivery in other modes. While it is easy to suggest such a shift on paper or in a theoretical context, this study, as well as the work of Heidi Campbell (2010), has shown that negotiating between the values of a particular religious community and those of new technology is a complex process that involves examining the traditions, beliefs, and practices of that particular community, and determining how new technologies might fit in to or alter those practices.

Technology must necessarily alter preaching practices for sermons to be re-defined from an oral to multimedia genre, which will allow preachers to use technology to build *ethos*. As a result, I argue that, in the current context, preachers who wish to use technology to improve their *ethos* must do so in ways that make the technology a visible, skillfully, and intentionally deployed part of their sermons. This study indicates that preachers rarely use technology in such a way because of genre expectations, their training, and the resources they have available. It also suggests the without a re-definition of the sermon genre and an alteration of preaching practices, preachers cannot deploy technology to their fullest advantage and risk damaging their own *ethos*.
and the *ethos* of their congregation, rather than building their own *ethos* by using digital technology in their preaching.

Most importantly, this study demonstrates that preaching is an active and evolving rhetorical practice and that preachers are in the process of negotiating the roles digital technologies might play in sermon preparation and delivery. Just as the introduction of written language and then print changed the ways oral presentations like sermons were composed and delivered (Ong 2002), digital technologies is altering preaching practices during preparation, composition, and delivery. Preachers who choose to use digital technology are making rhetorical choices that potentially influence both how parishioners understand and experience the sermon and how they are perceived and received by those same parishioners. As technology continues to become part of sermon composition and delivery, the sermon, as a genre, will likely change, just as sermons changed when they could be widely distributed in print (Edwards, 2004; Shields, 2000). What remains to be seen is how this incorporation of technology will ultimately reshape the sermon and how congregations will embrace or reject the reshaping of the sermon and sermon delivery caused by the inclusion of digital technologies. While the results of this study indicate that, presently, these negotiations more often fall on the side of tradition than innovation, they also indicate that further and continued study of preaching as a multimodal rhetorical act is necessary to gain a fuller picture of the rhetorical practices of preachers in an increasingly digital culture.
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APPENDIX A. PREACHING AND TECHNOLOGY: A SURVEY OF ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

Preaching & Technology: A Survey of Attitudes and Practices

Church & Pastoral Demographics

1.) Would you characterize your church as:
- Urban?
- Suburban?
- Rural?

2.) Would you characterize your church as:
- Small (100 or less on a Sunday)
- Medium (200 or less on a Sunday)
- Large (More than 200 on a Sunday)

3.) How old is your congregation?
- Less than 10 years
- 10-25 years
- 25-50 years
- 50-100 years
- 100+ years

4.) How long have you been a pastor?

5.) How long have you been at this particular church?
Church Technology Use

6.) Does your church use any technology (audio or video) during the worship service?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

7.) If yes, which technologies? (Check all that apply)
   If you answered no to question 6, please skip to question 8.
   □ Audio--Speakers
   □ Audio--CD Player
   □ Audio--Microphones
   □ Visual--Projector and Screens
   □ Visual--PowerPoint or similar software for song lyrics
   □ Visual--PowerPoint or similar software for the order of service
   □ Visual--PowerPoint or similar software for the sermon
   □ Visual--Photographs
   □ Visual--Clip Art or Graphics
   □ Visual--Video Clips from Television
   □ Visual--Video Clips from Movies
   □ Visual--Video Clips from Non-professional or personal video
   □ Other: ________________________
Pastoral Technology Use

10.) Do you use technology in your preaching?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

11.) If yes, which technologies? (Check all that apply)
    If you answered no to question 10, please skip to question 12.
    □ Audio--Speakers
    □ Audio--CD Player
    □ Audio--Microphones
    □ Visual--Projector and Screens
    □ Visual--PowerPoint or similar software for Scripture quotes or references
    □ Visual--PowerPoint or similar software for Quotes from other sources
    □ Visual--PowerPoint or similar software for a Sermon outline or the main points of the sermon
    □ Visual--Photographs
    □ Visual--Clip Art or Graphics
    □ Visual--Video Clips from Television
    □ Visual--Video Clips from Movies
    □ Visual--Video Clips from Non-professional or personal video
    □ Other: ____________________
12.) If you use technology in your preaching, what factors influence your decision to use technology? If you don’t use technology, what factors influence your decision?
Please be aware as you respond that this answer may be quoted directly.

13.) Does technology influence how you think about, prepare or preach your sermons?
Please be aware as you respond that this answer may be quoted directly.
Participation in Further Research

14.) Would you and your congregation be interested in participating in a more in-depth study of the role of technology in preaching?

The next stage of the study will examine technology use in preaching in specific congregations. The goal of this stage is to supply data to determine the role of technology in preaching for both pastors and congregation members. For the pastor, this study will involve a series of in-person interviews at the church. The initial interview will introduce the researcher to the pastor and congregation and to the pastor's attitudes about technology and preaching. The follow up interviews will focus on specific sermons, the pastoral's intentions in these sermons, and how he/she tried to get his/her points across with words, music, videos, or pictures. For the congregation members, this study will involve a series of short surveys. The initial survey is designed to discover general attitudes about technology and about preaching. The follow up surveys, like those for the pastor, will focus on particular sermons and how members responded to the technology use in the sermon. These surveys will be anonymous to protect the relationship between pastor and members. The final results will be revealed to the pastor, members, and in the research write-up only in the form of anonymous comments or statistical data. Selecting yes does not mean you will automatically be chosen for further participation. Participants for the next phase of the study will be selected based on demographics and technology practices that fit my study of technology use in preaching, as well as a screening interview. Pastors selected for a screening interview will be contacted within a month of completing the survey.

- Yes
- No

15.) If you answered yes to question 14, please provide your name, congregation name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and congregational website (if applicable).
APPENDIX B. SCREENING INTERVIEW

Name: 
Congregation Name: 
Denominational Affiliation: 

1. What interested you about participating in this project? 
2. How do you think the congregation will respond to this research project? 
   a. Have they ever participated in research before? 
   b. How many do you think will be interested in participating? 
3. How do you use technology in your preaching? 
4. What is your preaching schedule? Every week? Alternating weeks? How many times do you preach on Sunday? 
5. What is your typical pattern for preparing a sermon? 
   a. When do you start your prep work? The week of? The week before? Further in advance? 
   b. When do you have a deliverable version of the sermon ready? By deliverable I mean text and theme chosen, a strong idea about how you will approach organization and delivery, and at least the beginning of your technological components? 
   c. Do you have any assistance in preparing the technological components of your sermons? Does anyone help you find pictures, videos, music etc. or help you make slides? 
      i. If yes, what is their typical work schedule? When do you expect their contributions? 
   d. How would you describe the regularity of your prep schedule? 
      i. Consistent week to week; I do the same things on the same days almost every week 
      ii. Variable; I follow a general pattern of work on certain days, but my prep work is re-scheduled around meetings, Bible studies, pastoral care visits, etc. 
      iii. Irregular; I prep when I have time during the week, or when I feel inspired 
6. Will you be available for an interview late in the week (after Wednesday) before you preach? 
7. Does your church videotape or audio tape services or parts of the service? 
   a. If yes, would I be able to have a copy of the services I attend? 
8. Do you have any questions for me about who I am, what I expect from you or your members, about how I will collect data, or about what I will do with the data I collect?
APPENDIX C. INITIAL PASTORAL INTERVIEW

Initial Pastoral Interview

History & Background

1. What is your current title?
2. What are your current responsibilities:
   a. Preaching?
   b. Teaching?
      i. Bible Study
      ii. Sunday School
      iii. Parochial School
      iv. Religious Education like Catechism for young adults
      v. Other, please explain
   c. Administration?
      i. Creating and printing bulletins
      ii. Creating and printing newsletter
      iii. Maintaining blog, Facebook page or website
      iv. Serving on boards or committees
      v. Other, please explain
   d. Pastoral Care?
      i. Visiting sick
      ii. Visiting nursing homes & shut-ins
      iii. Counseling
      iv. Other, please explain
   e. Non-Congregational?
      i. Local circuit or diocese
      ii. National denomination
      iii. Community roles
      iv. Additional job
      v. Other
3. How long have you been at this congregation?
4. How long have you been a pastor?
   a. Is this your first career or did you do other work previously?
   b. If other work, what did you do?
5. What is your current level of education?
   a. PhD
   b. Master’s Degree
   c. Bachelor’s Degree
   d. Other
6. Did you attend seminary?
   a. If yes:
      i. Where?
      ii. When?
      iii. Did you graduate?
      iv. What level of degree did you receive?
7. Do you participate in any continuing education? Seminars, classes, conferences?

**Preaching Practices**
8. How often do you preach? Weekly, Bi-weekly, etc.?
9. How many times do you preach in a weekend?
10. How do you prepare your sermon?
    a. Do you use write notes, an outline, or a manuscript?
    b. Do you prepare a multi-media presentation?
11. What types of resources do you use?
    a. Original language (Hebrew & Greek) texts?
    b. Lexicons and language helps
    c. Commentaries
    d. Pastoral Sermon resources/helps
       i. In print
       ii. Online
    e. Previous sermons
    f. Sermon illustration collections
12. How do you prepare to preach?
   a. Practice entire sermon out loud
   b. Silent reading
   c. No practice
   d. Other
13. Where do you preach?
   a. Pulpit
   b. Standing in the aisle
   c. Standing in the center of the nave
   d. Standing on the stage
   e. In the nave, but walking around
   f. On the stage but walking around
   g. A mixture of some of the above, explain
   h. Other

Preaching Attitudes
14. What are you doing when you are preaching?
15. What are your goals when you preach?
16. What makes a good sermon?
17. What should a good sermon look and sound like?
18. What should a good sermon do?
19. What makes a sermon bad?
20. How does a preacher establish him/herself as worth listening to?
21. How do preachers convince listeners to respond to their message?
22. What strategies can a preacher use to make his/her case to listeners?
23. What did you learn sermons and homiletics in your training?
   a. History?
   b. Forms?
   c. Preaching Practices like preparation and delivery?
   d. How to write sermons?
24. Have sermons changed  
   a. Since you were in seminary?  
   b. In the last 10 years?  
   c. In the 20th century?  

25. Has your approach to preaching changed  
   a. Since you were in seminary  
   b. In the last 10 years?  

26. How important is tradition to the sermon?  

**Technology Attitudes & Practices**  

27. What types of media do you include in your preaching?  
   a. Projector & Screens  
   b. Music  
   c. Audio clips other than music
28. Non-digital media (framed art; church architecture demonstrations, etc.) If you use digital media like video, music, images, or websites, what types do you use

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<th>Audio, non music</th>
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29. How long have you been using these media?

30. How frequently do you use them?
31. Approximately how much time do you spend on the media portion of each sermon?
   a. Do you have help with the media portion?
      i. If yes, who?
      ii. How does the collaboration work?
         1. Do you give specific instructions or general guidelines?
         2. Do you review the work before you use it and make changes?
      iii. Why do you collaborate? (Time, skills?)
32. Why do you use media and technology in your preaching?
33. What forces encouraged you to use technology in your preaching?
   a. Congregational tradition or expectation
   b. Congregational request
   c. Seminary Education and Training
   d. Post-seminary Education and Training
   e. Mentor
   f. Personal belief that it’s what members want
   g. Personal preference
   h. Outreach to the un-churched
   i. Other
34. What do you see as the benefits for using technology in preaching?
35. Do you think using technology:
   a. Increases interest?
   b. Increases focus?
   c. Increases retention?
36. Why or why not?
37. What, if any, are the drawbacks to preaching with technology?
38. Do you think technology changes what the sermon does or needs to do?
   a. If yes, how and why?
   b. If no, why not?
39. Do you think using technology has changed the way you preach?
   a. If yes, how so?
   b. If no, why not?
40. What would you say is the biggest impact of technology on your preaching?
APPENDIX D. INITIAL CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY

Initial Congregational Survey

Instructions

Please answer the questions below to the best of your knowledge. You may skip questions you do not wish to answer.

Once you have completed the survey, please place it in the envelope and seal the envelope. Please return the envelope to the collection box at the church no later than 2 weeks from today.

Demographics

1. □ Male or □ Female

2. Age
   □ 18-25
   □ 26-35
   □ 36-45
   □ 46-55
   □ 56-65
   □ 66-75
   □ 76-85
   □ 85+
3. Check all that apply. Do you own:

- [ ] A computer?
- [ ] A device for internet access? (Modem, SmartPhone, Tablet)
- [ ] A cell phone?
- [ ] An iPod?
- [ ] A DVD or BlueRay player?
- [ ] A video game system (Wii; Xbox; PlayStation, etc.)
- [ ] A television?

4. Check the boxes that best answer the question. How frequently do you use each item in an average week for personal purposes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 hour or less/day</th>
<th>2-4 hours/day</th>
<th>5-7 hours/day</th>
<th>8+ hours/day</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
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<td>Internet</td>
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<td>iPod</td>
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<tr>
<td>DVD/Blueray Player</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Check all that apply. Do you use any of the following at work?

- [ ] A computer?
- [ ] A device for internet access? (Modem, SmartPhone, Tablet)
- [ ] A cell phone?
- [ ] An iPod?
- [ ] A DVD or BlueRay player?
- [ ] A video game system (Wii; Xbox; PlayStation, etc.)
- [ ] A television?

6. Check the boxes that best answer the question. How frequently do you use each item in an average week for work purposes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1 hour or less/day</th>
<th>2-4 hours/day</th>
<th>5-7 hours/day</th>
<th>8+hours/day</th>
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<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Religious Background

7. How long have you attended this church?
   - □ Less than 1 year
   - □ 1-5 years
   - □ 6-10 years
   - □ 11-15 years
   - □ 16-20 years
   - □ 21-30 years
   - □ 31-40 years
   - □ 40+ years

8. How would you describe your attendance?
   - □ Nearly every Sunday
   - □ At least 3 Sundays a month
   - □ About 2 Sundays a month
   - □ About 1 Sunday a month
   - □ Less than 1 Sunday a month
9. Check all that apply. What attracted you to this church?

☐ Family members attend
☐ Friends attend
☐ Denomination
☐ Times and Days of Services
☐ Types of services (contemporary, liturgical)
☐ Use of projection screens for pictures and videos in the services
☐ Music in the services
☐ Pastor or Pastors
☐ Preaching
☐ Location
☐ Bible Studies
☐ Friendly Atmosphere
☐ Children’s programs (Sunday School, Youth Group, etc.)
☐ Day School (Preschool, K-12 school)
☐ Adult programs (Support groups, choirs, social or activity groups)

**Preaching**

10. What is the purpose of the sermon in the service?
11. What do you look for in a good sermon?

12. What makes a sermon interesting to you?

13. What gets your attention in a sermon?

14. What makes a sermon meaningful to you?
15. Do you like sermons that have elements of technology like PowerPoint slides, video clips, music clips, or pictures?

☐ Yes  Why?

☐ No  Why not?

Thank you for your participation in this research project.
APPENDIX E. SECOND AND THIRD PASTORAL INTERVIEWS

Pastoral Follow-Up Interview #1

1. What is your sermon title for this week?
2. What is your theme for the sermon this week?
3. How did you decide on the theme?
4. What is the general outline of your sermon?
   a. What are your major parts?
   b. How are the parts related to each other?
5. What are your goals in the sermon this week? What do you want your hearers to get from the sermon?
6. How are you planning to accomplish your goals?
   a. How will you reveal your theme/goals to hearers?
      i. Will you just say it directly?
      ii. Will you work toward it and reveal it at the end?
      iii. Will you let hearers figure it out for themselves?
   b. Are you using verbal illustrations?
      i. What are they?
      ii. Why did you choose them?
      iii. Where are they placed in the sermon?
      iv. Why?
c. What technology are you using
   
i. Slides?
      1. If yes:
         a. Why are you using this particular technology?
         b. Where are they placed in the sermon?
         c. Why?

   ii. Video?
      1. If yes:
         a. Why are you using this particular technology?
         b. Where are they placed in the sermon?
         c. Why?

   iii. Audio-talking?
      1. If yes:
         a. Why are you using this particular technology?
         b. Where are they placed in the sermon?
         c. Why?

   iv. Audio-music?
      1. If yes:
         a. Why are you using this particular technology?
         b. Where are they placed in the sermon?
         c. Why?
v. Other?

1. If yes:
   a. Why are you using this particular technology?
   b. Where are they placed in the sermon?
   c. Why?

7. Is there anything you wanted to do in the sermon with technology that you didn’t?

8. If yes, why didn’t you?
Pastoral Follow-Up Interview 2

1. What is your sermon title for this week?

2. What is your theme for the sermon this week?

3. How did you decide on the theme?

4. What is the general outline of your sermon?
   a. What are your major parts?
   b. How are the parts related to each other?

5. What are your goals in the sermon this week? What do you want your hearers to get from the sermon?

6. How are you planning to accomplish your goals?
   a. How will you reveal your theme/goals to hearers?
      i. Will you just say it directly?
      ii. Will you work toward it and reveal it at the end?
   b. Will you let hearers figure it out for themselves?
   c. Are you using verbal illustrations?
      i. What are they?
      ii. Why did you choose them?
      iii. Where are they placed in the sermon?
      iv. Why?
   d. What technology are you using
      i. Slides?
         1. If yes:
            a. Why are you using this particular technology?
            b. Where are they placed in the sermon?
            c. Why?
ii. Video?

1. If yes:
   a. Why are you using this particular technology?
   b. Where are they placed in the sermon?
   c. Why?

iii. Audio-talking?

1. If yes:
   a. Why are you using this particular technology?
   b. Where are they placed in the sermon?
   c. Why?

iv. Audio-music?

1. If yes:
   a. Why are you using this particular technology?
   b. Where are they placed in the sermon?
   c. Why?

v. Other?

1. If yes:
   a. Why are you using this particular technology?
   b. Where are they placed in the sermon?
   c. Why?

7. Is there anything you wanted to do in the sermon with technology that you didn’t?

8. If yes, why didn’t you?

9. Have you made any changes to your preaching since the previous sermon we discussed?
APPENDIX F. SECOND AND THIRD CONGREGATIONAL SURVEYS

Congregational Follow-Up Survey #1

Demographics

1. □ Male or □ Female

2. Age
   □ 18-25
   □ 26-35
   □ 36-45
   □ 46-55
   □ 56-65
   □ 66-75
   □ 76-85
   □ 85+

3. Did you turn in the first survey?
   □ Yes    □ No
Today’s Sermon

4. What was the title of today’s sermon?

What do you think the general point of today’s sermon was?

5. What were some of the specific points you remember?

6. What did you learn from today’s sermon?

7. What stuck out to you the most from the sermon?
8. What got your attention during the sermon?

9. What part of the sermon connected or related most to your life?

10. Did you hear anything that was difficult to understand or that didn’t seem to connect to your life? If yes, what?

11. What technology did pastor use in his/her sermon today? (Check all that apply.)

   - Slides with:
     - Words
     - Pictures
     - Words and Pictures
   - Video clips
     - From television
     - From movies
     - From the internet
   - Audio clips
     - A person/People talking
     - Music
     - Sound effects
   - Other, please explain:
12. What did you like best about the technology in today’s sermon?

13. How did the slides, video clips, audio clips or other technology connect to the general point of the sermon?

14. How did the slides, video clips, audio clips or other technology connect to the specific points you mentioned in Question #6?

Thank you for your participation in this research project.
Demographics

1. □ Male or □ Female

2. Age
   □ 18-25
   □ 26-35
   □ 36-45
   □ 46-55
   □ 56-65
   □ 66-75
   □ 76-85
   □ 85+

3. Did you turn in the first or second survey?
   □ Yes    □ No
Today’s Sermon

4. What was the title of today’s sermon?

5. What do you think the general point of today’s sermon was?

6. What were some of the specific points you remember?

7. What did you learn from today’s sermon?
8. What stuck out to you the most from the sermon?

9. What got your attention during the sermon?

10. What part of the sermon connected or related most to your life?

11. Did you hear anything that was difficult to understand or that didn’t seem to connect to your life? If yes, what?
12. What technology did pastor use in his sermon today? (Check all that apply.)

☐ Slides with:
  ☐ Words
  ☐ Pictures
  ☐ Words and Pictures

☐ Video clips
  ☐ From television
  ☐ From movies
  ☐ From the internet

☐ Audio clips
  ☐ A person/People talking
  ☐ Music
  ☐ Sound effects

☐ Other, please explain:

13. What did you like best about the technology in today’s sermon?
14. How did the slides, video clips, audio clips or other technology connect to the general point of the sermon?

15. How did the slides, video clips, audio clips or other technology connect to the specific points you mentioned in Question #6?

Thank you for your participation in this research project.
APPENDIX G. FINAL PASTORAL INTERVIEW

Final Pastoral Interview

1. What were your initial reactions to the results of the study?

2. Did the results meet your expectations?

3. Were there any surprises in the results?
   a. If yes, what were they?

4. What did the results tell you about how congregation members respond to your technology use in your sermons?

5. Will you make changes to the way you preach based on the results?
   a. If yes, what changes will you make?
   b. If no, why not?

6. After doing the study and seeing the results, have your answers to any of these questions changed?
   a. What are you doing when you are preaching?
      i. If yes, how?
   b. What are your goals when you preach?
      i. If yes, how?
c. What makes a good sermon?
   i. If yes, how?

d. What should a good sermon look and sound like?
   i. If yes, how?

e. What should a good sermon do?
   i. If yes, how?

f. What makes a sermon bad?
   i. If yes, how?

g. How does a preacher establish him/herself as worth listening to?
   i. If yes, how?

h. How do preachers convince listeners to respond to their message?
   i. If yes, how?

   i. What strategies can a preacher use to make his/her case to listeners?
   i. If yes, how?

7. Is there anything you else you want me to know about the research results or the research process?
APPENDIX H. HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH BOARD APPROVAL

DATE: February 2, 2012

TO: Alison Witte
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: February 2, 2012
EXPIRATION DATE: October 25, 2012
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure. You have been approved to enroll 454 participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on October 25, 2012. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.
DATE: September 6, 2012

TO: Alison Witte
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [284278-5] Preaching and Technology: A Study of Attitudes and Practices
SUBMISSION TYPE: Continuing Review/Progress Report

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: September 6, 2012
EXPIRATION DATE: September 5, 2013
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Continuing Review/Progress Report materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

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All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on September 5, 2013. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.