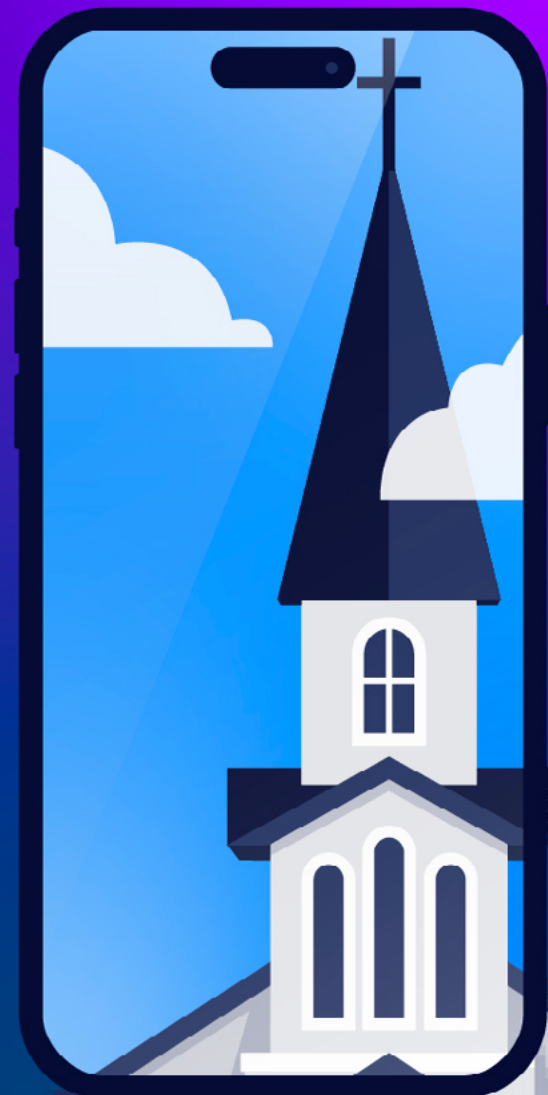Pushpay

STATE of CHURCH TECH 2024

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FOREWORD FROM CLAY SCROGGINS

Recently, an iPhone fell a staggering 16,000 feet from an Alaskan Airlines Boeing 737 and was found intact on the roadside, still functioning. This incident isn't just a testament to technological durability; it's a reminder of the rapidly advancing world we live in. Though said in jest, the robots are coming.

The rise of technology, particularly in the wake of 2020's global shutdowns, has forever altered the landscape of our churches and communities. Online church, digital small groups, virtual staff meetings, and AI-enhanced sermons aren't temporary bandaids; they represent a new, permanent fixture in our faith practices.

As we navigate this evolving intersection of church and technology, I offer two perspectives that were shaped by my own experiences:

Embrace the Unknown

The other day, my 12-year-old son told me he "sent a kid to the lobby" in a pick-up basketball game in recess.

I'm sorry, what?!? If parenting teaches us nothing else, it's a constant reminder that I'm old, outdated, and no longer the bee's knees.

And it struck me: the relentless march of time makes us all novices in some way, especially with technology. Accepting that we're perpetually catching up with the latest trends is vital. It's okay to feel out of your depth with the ever-changing digital world.

For instance, if you're quick to mix up the nomenclature of Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and TikTok videos, you're not alone. Struggling with the concept of using tools like ChatGPT for sermon preparation? You're in good company. And if the amalgamation of "social," "media," and "strategy" into a cohesive concept feels overwhelming, rest assured, many share your sentiment.

My son playfully calls me a "newb," and in many ways, he's right. We are all learning, and that's perfectly okay.

Learn, Don't Criticize

A few years back, I hired a 30-year-old marketing expert. Despite our age difference and contrasting experiences, he has proven to be much more than an asset—he's been a guiding light. His deep understanding and insights into the digital world have been more educational than I ever imagined.

This partnership has solidified my belief in the concept of reverse mentoring. It's a powerful tool, especially for those of us over forty. Inviting the younger generation to guide us through the ever-evolving digital landscape can lead to a unique blend of seasoned wisdom and fresh, innovative ideas.

If you don't have a reverse mentor, find one (or just hire one). But either way, refuse to simply criticize and dismiss new technology. I'm not suggesting you dive headfirst into the latest internet craze—no need to rush out and purchase a digital art NFT of a chimpanzee, for instance. But a basic understanding of emerging trends like Web 3.0 is becoming increasingly vital for effective leadership in modern ministry.

In conclusion, the future of church technology is not just about embracing new tools but also about changing our mindset. It's about accepting our limitations, learning from those around us, and viewing these advancements as opportunities rather than obstacles. As we adapt to this new digital era, let's remember that being a student of technology can be as spiritual as it is practical.

Clay Scroggins, a former pastor and the author of How to Lead When You're Not in Charge, brings a unique perspective to his work. Known for his dynamic approach to empowering individuals across all levels of an organization, Clay's experience in pastoral leadership infuses his teachings with richness and understanding. With a deep commitment to transformative leadership, he blends practical insights with inspiring storytelling to provide leaders with the necessary tools for effecting meaningful change.

Introduction

By their nature, church leaders are passionate about their vocations. Working in the community, ministering their congregation, engaging with and improving every aspect of the life of their church—you won't find a group of people more dedicated to the work they've been called to perform.

For most, however, the passion that led them to become servant leaders isn't rooted in technology. Keeping up with digital trends isn't what gets them out of bed in the morning. In fact, struggling to understand the shifting tides of church tech actually keeps them away from the important work they love.

That's the heart of our annual State of Church Technology report. The 2,200 survey responses we received this year are detailed in the pages ahead, and provide a clear picture of the current digital landscape.

Confusion in the tech space is completely understandable. New features, products, and platforms tailored to churches seemingly arrive daily. What's more, the priorities, concerns, and expectations of tech that drive leaders' visions for their ministries have evolved as well—though not always in parallel with the latest digital solutions. As you'll see, some of the most exciting ideas from last year are now an afterthought, while other emerging opportunities are held in high esteem.

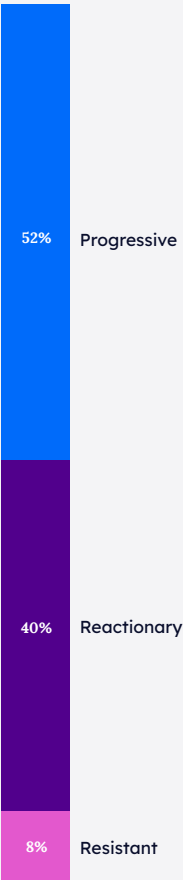What remains steady, however, is the Church's emphasis on technology (Figure 0.1). More and more churches are taking a progressive approach to digital solutions (Figure 0.2). There's a growing enthusiasm for the tried-and-true tech that leaders and congregations have come to rely on, but also significant changes in surprising places.

That's the reason we generate this annual report. The mission of the Church is inexorably entwined with technology, and that mission's too important to not be guided by data-driven insights. Leaders need a clear, concise picture of which digital solutions their peers are finding value in, so they can make informed tech decisions, then use that newly added value to amplify the work they're truly passionate about: fostering faith in their communities and building the Kingdom.

FIGURE 0.1
Importance of technology in achieving church's mission

- Extremely important — 58%
- Somewhat important — 37%
- Neutral — 5%

FIGURE 0.2
Church's approach to technology

- Progressive — 52%
- Reactionary — 40%
- Resistant — 8%

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The third annual State of Church Technology report is derived from an October 2023 survey. We engaged over twenty-two hundred church leaders from all across the United States.

Every respondent either described themselves as a "decision maker" or "influencer" regarding technology purchases within their church. These results reflect the views of the leaders who are choosing if, when, and what tech their ministries will adopt.

Since the inaugural survey was sent out in 2021, over six thousand church leaders have shared their experiences, opinions, and insights in the report. Notably, two out of three respondents in the 2024 report did not participate last year.

These leaders represent ministries of every size (Figure 0.3) across all branches of Christianity (Figure 0.4). Nearly two-thirds of the participating churches operate on an annual budget of less than $1 million (Figure 0.5), and they commit widely varying amounts of that budget to technology each year (Figure 0.6).
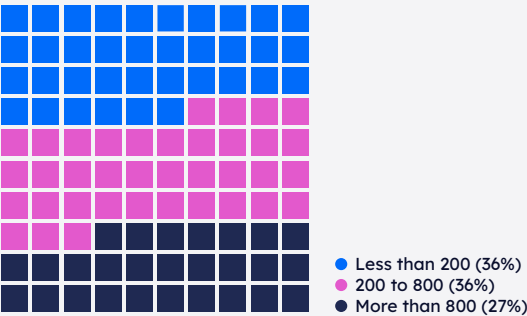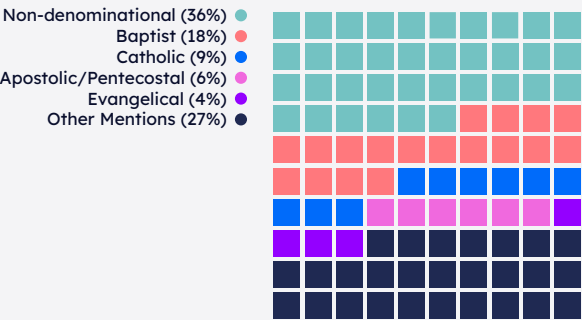
FIGURE 0.3
Weekly Attendance

- Less than 200 (36%)
- 200 to 800 (36%)
- More than 800 (27%)

FIGURE 0.4
Denomination

Non-denominational (36%)
Baptist (18%)
Catholic (9%)
Apostolic/Pentecostal (6%)
Evangelical (4%)
Other Mentions (27%)

FIGURE 0.5
Operating Budget

- Less than $500,000 (37%)
- $500,000 to $999,000 (25%)
- $1M to $5M (30%)
- Over $5M (7%)
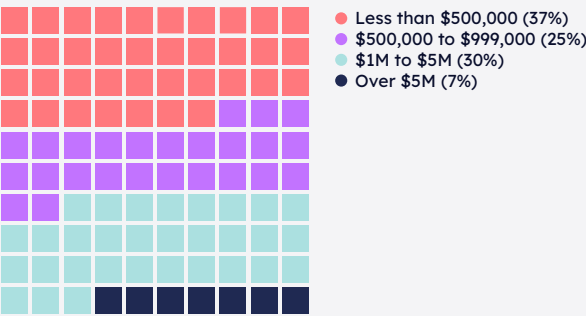
FIGURE 0.6
Percentage of Budget Allocated for Tech

Less than 10% (55%)
10% to 19% (31%)
20% to 29% (10%)
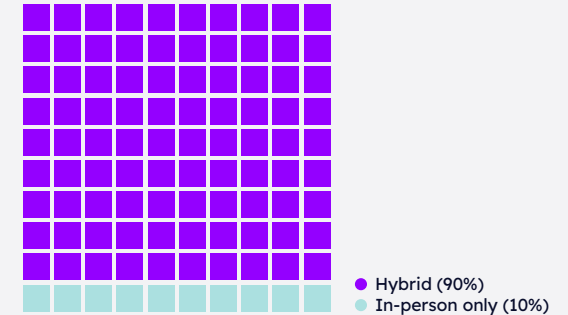30% to 39% (3%)
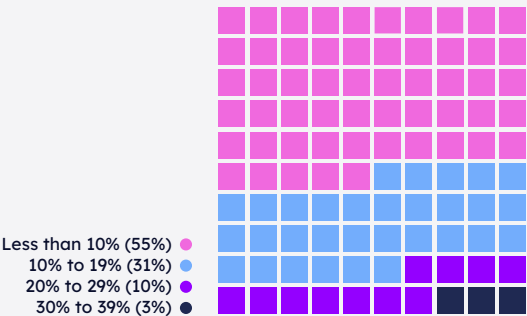
Leaders are **abandoning** the idea of **in-person-only** ministry

The post-pandemic desire to return to in-person-only ministry is waning, driving enthusiasm for proven church tech solutions to new heights.

FIGURE 1.1
"What type of worship services do you currently offer?"

● Hybrid (90%)
● In-person only (10%)

In 2024, 90% of churches report that they're currently offering a hybrid model of ministry, compared to just 10% sticking with in-person only (Figure 1.1); less than 1% function as online only.

More significant, however, is what services churches are considering offering twelve months from now. In last year's report, roughly three out of ten leaders said they might move to in-person only, signaling a possible shift away from hybrid. This year, however, that figure fell by 21% (Figure 1.2).

The dramatic change can likely be attributed to church leaders' initial desire to abandon some of the digital solutions they were forced to adopt during the COVID pandemic, in the hope of returning to the status quo after social distancing ended. However, as tech tools have proven undeniably valuable, many more churches now foresee sticking with the hybrid model long term.

FIGURE 1.2
Worship Services Planned to Offer a Year From Now

In-Person Only (YoY)

▼ **21%**

LIVESTREAMING

Consistent with the past two years, 91% of churches are livestreaming worship services (Figure 1.3). The breakdown of where they stream—social media, website embeds, through their church app—didn't change significantly.

The biggest shift in this year's data is in streaming's future strategic importance: fully 42% more respondents in 2024 believe livestreaming will play a key role for their church in the coming years (Figure 1.4). This trend can likely be tied to leaders reversing their plans to transition to in-person only.

Those churches that haven't yet taken to livestreaming tend to be smaller ministries and, perhaps not surprisingly, are those that claim technology isn't "extremely important" to their mission.
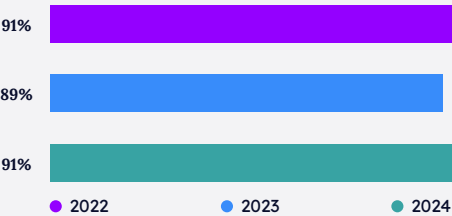
FIGURE 1.3
Churches Livestreaming
Mass/Worship Services

91%
89%
91%

● 2022   ● 2023   ● 2024

FIGURE 1.4
Strategic Importance of
Livestreaming in the Next 2-3 Years

47%
62%

● 2023   ● 2024
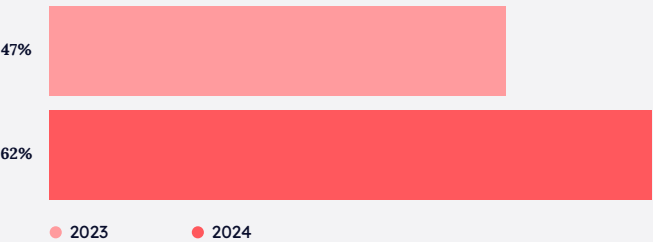
FIGURE 1.5
Importance of Online Giving

TOOL MOST SATISFIED WITH	
Online mobile giving	**1st**
Tool to conduct background checks	2nd
Mass/Service presentation software	3rd

MOST POPULAR APP USES	
Tithing/Financial giving	**1st**
Calendar	2nd
Content	3rd

MOST POPULAR TECH PRODUCTS	
Social media	1st
Online mobile giving	**2nd**
Church/Donor mgmt software	3rd

CHURCH-SPECIFIC TOOLS

As in previous years, online giving ranks number one in several key metrics across the report, including the tools churches find most satisfying, and the most commonly adopted feature for their mobile apps. The only technology solution more popular overall in 2024 is social media (Figure 1.5).

Mobile apps continue to be widely utilized by respondents and they rely on many of the same features as last year, such as content hosting and livestreaming. There were also notable increases this year in the number of churches leveraging their app's calendar, prayer request, and volunteer scheduling functionality (Figure 1.6). Those upticks can likely be attributed to churches better understanding how to leverage their apps, as well as their users' increased comfortability when engaging with interactive features.

The popularity of Church Management Software (ChMS) is on the rise (Figure 1.7). Over 4 out of 5 churches have adopted a ChMS in 2024, and there's a 30% jump in leaders' acknowledgement of ChMS's strategic importance for the future.
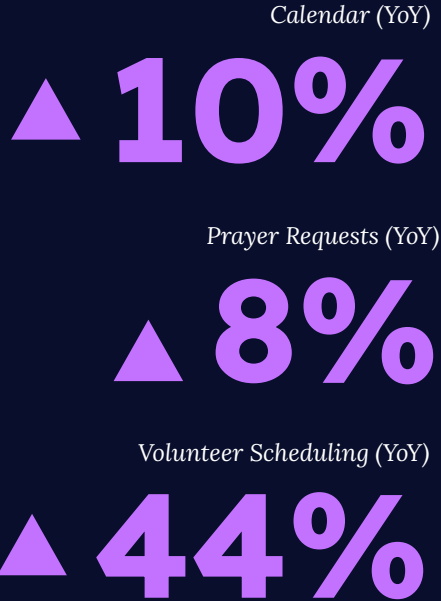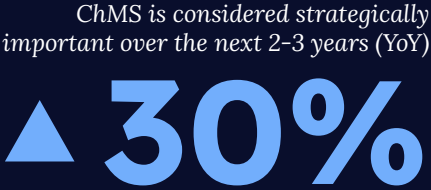
FIGURE 1.6
Mobile Church App Uses

Calendar (YoY)

▲ **10%**

Prayer Requests (YoY)

▲ **8%**

Volunteer Scheduling (YoY)

▲ **44%**

FIGURE 1.7
Value of ChMS

ChMS is considered strategically important over the next 2–3 years (YoY)

▲ **30%**

While the vast majority of churches had already committed to hybrid, even more leaders are now joining them, and they intend to rely on the staples of the church technology industry to set a solid digital foundation for the future of their ministries.

Churches can set themselves up for hybrid success with a mindful plan tailored to their unique needs. Tune up your approach with [5 Strategies For Running An Effective Hybrid Church](#).

Insecurity plagues the next generation of decision makers

Churches are undoubtedly committed to tech, but that enthusiasm might ramp up insecurity for those entrusted with their ministry's digital future.

SHOT CALLERS

As mentioned in the introduction, in order to participate in the State of Church Technology report, respondents must identify as either a "decision maker" or "influencer" regarding technology choices for their church. In 2024, the ratio between those two titles came out at a forty-sixty split (Figure 2.1).

And yet, when these self-described church tech authorities were asked about their confidence in making tech purchases, 40% described themselves as "anxious, but learning what I need to know," while 5% admitted to being "completely unprepared" (Figure 2.2). Additionally, nearly a third of this group chose "knowledge and understanding of what my church needs" as a top-three obstacle to adopting new technology.

Some of that insecurity might be rooted in the inexperience of the budding leaders entrusted with making these major decisions. As Clay Scroggins identified in the foreword of this report, leaning on and learning from tech-savvy younger generations is a powerful practice for progressive church leaders—but that doesn't necessarily mean this fresh generation of influencers and decision makers are completely confident in laying a digital foundation that supports their ministry's unique wants and needs.
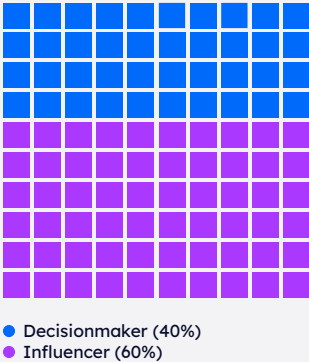
FIGURE 2.1
Role in Tech Purchases

● Decisionmaker (40%)
● Influencer (60%)

FIGURE 2.2
Confidence in Making Tech Purchases

● Confident (55%)
● Anxious (40%)
● Completely Unprepared (5%)

Factor	%
Easy to Use	72%
Price	66%
Good reputation	65%
Best software for the problem	64%
Integrates with existing products	59%
Meets latest digital data security standards	58%

EVOLVING CONCERNS

While ease of use remains the primary concern for churches by a margin, the constraint of price rose considerably for the second straight year (Figure 2.3). To reinforce the issue, when asked about their top three obstacles to adopting new tech, cost was the only major factor that significantly increased against last year. Church leaders' search for value in tech solutions continues to grow.

Other notable year-over-year upticks include a platform's reputation, being the best software to solve a problem, and the ability to integrate with other digital products (Figure 2.4). Those three shifts are likely driven by the mindset of this up-and-coming generation of l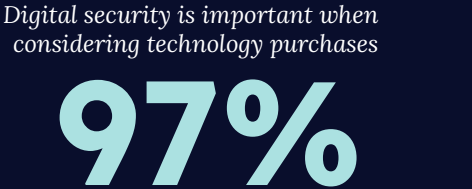eaders who understand the importance of quality in tech, even though they must remain conservative in their approach due to budget constraints.

Additionally, digital security is receiving increased emphasis. Fully 97% of churches now say digital security and data protection is important when considering new tech purchases. (Figure 2.5), and "meets latest digital data security standards" is now the 6th highest ranked factor when considering new tech (Figure 2.3).

FIGURE 2.4
Growth in "Extremely Important" Factors When Considering Purchasing New Technology

Good Reputation (YoY)

▲ 7%

Best Software (YoY)

▲ 7%

Integrates with Existing Software (YoY)

▲ 9%

FIGURE 2.5
Importance of Digital Security

Digital security is important when considering technology purchases

97%

Hybrid is certainly the future, but many church leaders remain uneasy with the tech space—a dynamic that's likely driven by inexperience and a lack of knowledge about this new arena they're asked to navigate, which feels only tangential to their passion for ministry.

See if your current church technology is optimized to support your missional goals with the Church Tech Check. This free seven-minute assessment will identify your strengths and deliver a comprehensive report of customized recommendations.

Churches are eager to **experiment with cutting-edge tech**

Hesitancy to commit to new digital solutions hasn't stopped leaders from experimenting—though not every highly anticipated technology becomes a hit.

**FIGURE 3.1** *Emerging Tech Adoption*

Cryptocurrency (YoY)

▲ **57%**

TESTING THE WATERS

Several tools and features that are relatively new to the church space are quickly gaining popularity. Cryptocurrency donation platforms skyrocketed in usage since last year's report (Figure 3.1) while tools available in multiple languages also jumped up. Additionally, three digital solutions newly added to this year's report—QR codes, analytics and data insights, and artificial intelligence—all show significant adoption (Figure 3.2).

This increased enthusiasm for emerging solutions is likely sparked by younger, tech-savvy influencers in churches, and further fueled by the growing proof that new technologies amplify connection and engagement within communities.

FIGURE 3.2 *Tools Currently Using*

QR codes	**79%**
Analytics	**46%**
Generative AI	**11%**
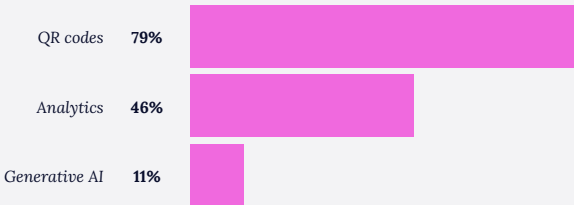
RISE AND FALL OF THE METAVERSE

Of course, not every exciting new tech becomes a ministry mainstay.

In last year's report, 8% of churches were offering worship services in the metaverse, though 25% claimed they could see their ministry utilizing the metaverse within the next twelve months.

This year's data—gathered exactly twelve months later—shows that just 5% of churches are still using the metaverse (Figure 3.3). What's more, the amount of leaders considering incorporating it within the next twelve months fell by 32% (Figure 3.4).

This avalanche in popularity is likely related to public perception. While metaverse and VR technology have existed for years, Facebook's rebrand to "Meta" and their new metaverse were heavily promoted in late 2021 and continued to make headlines through 2022. Today, the publicity and general public's enthusiasm for those phenomena has dropped off considerably.

Tangentially, the metaverse inherently has significant barriers to entry. Most VR headsets are expensive investments for individuals, and they require users to learn an entirely new technology platform. Combined with the fall in press coverage, metaverse and VR failed to reach a critical mass of adoption in the church community, and as such have lost much of their former luster.
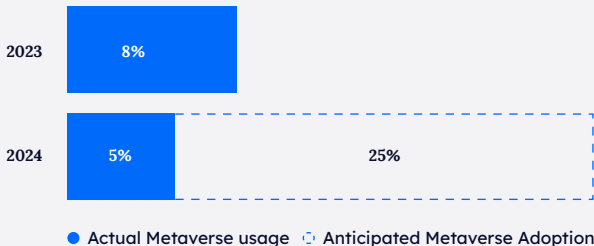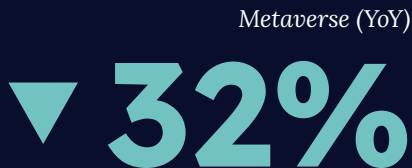
FIGURE 3.3 *Church in the Metaverse*

2023	8%
2024	5% 25%

● Actual Metaverse usage   ○ Anticipated Metaverse Adoption

FIGURE 3.4 *Anticipated Services Offered 1 Year From Now*

Metaverse (YoY)

▼ **32%**

DAWN OF AI

Currently 11% of churches report using artificial intelligence (AI) solutions, specifically "generative" tools to create text or images. What's more, 33% state that AI will be a strategically important tool in the next two to three years. (Figure 3.5)

Now compare Figures 3.3 (on the previous page) and 3.5—the similarities between this year's AI numbers and last year's metaverse figures are hard to ignore. And that's not to mention the parallels in the tremendous amount of headlines and public discourse surrounding AI during 2023. It will be interesting to track if churches, once the initial buzz for AI content fades, reign in their enthusiasm as they did with the metaverse.

Notably, of the churches who currently use generative AI, 64% do so to create social media content. No other use case—generating devotionals, sermons, or ideas for pastoral care—scored above 25% (Figure 3.6). This may be connected to the importance of authentic human connection in the Church: while AI is seemingly trusted to generate quick-bite social posts—likely pulled from Bible verses, devotionals, and sermon transcriptions—leaders may be shying away from the tool for shaping their ministry's core message and discipleship content.
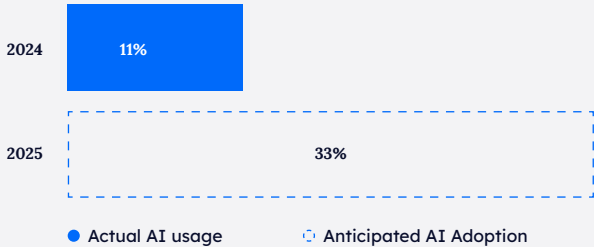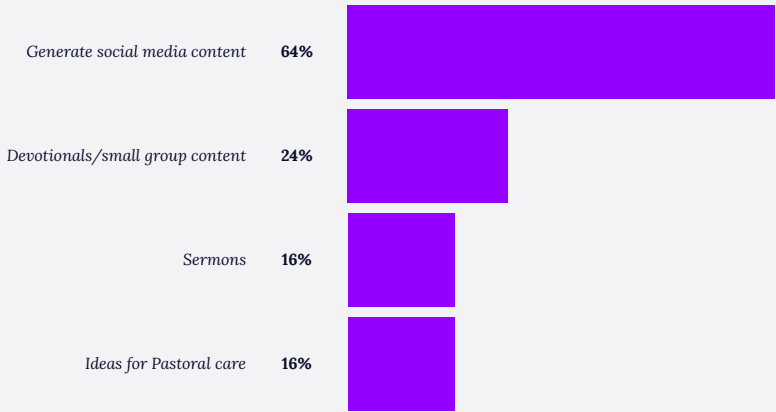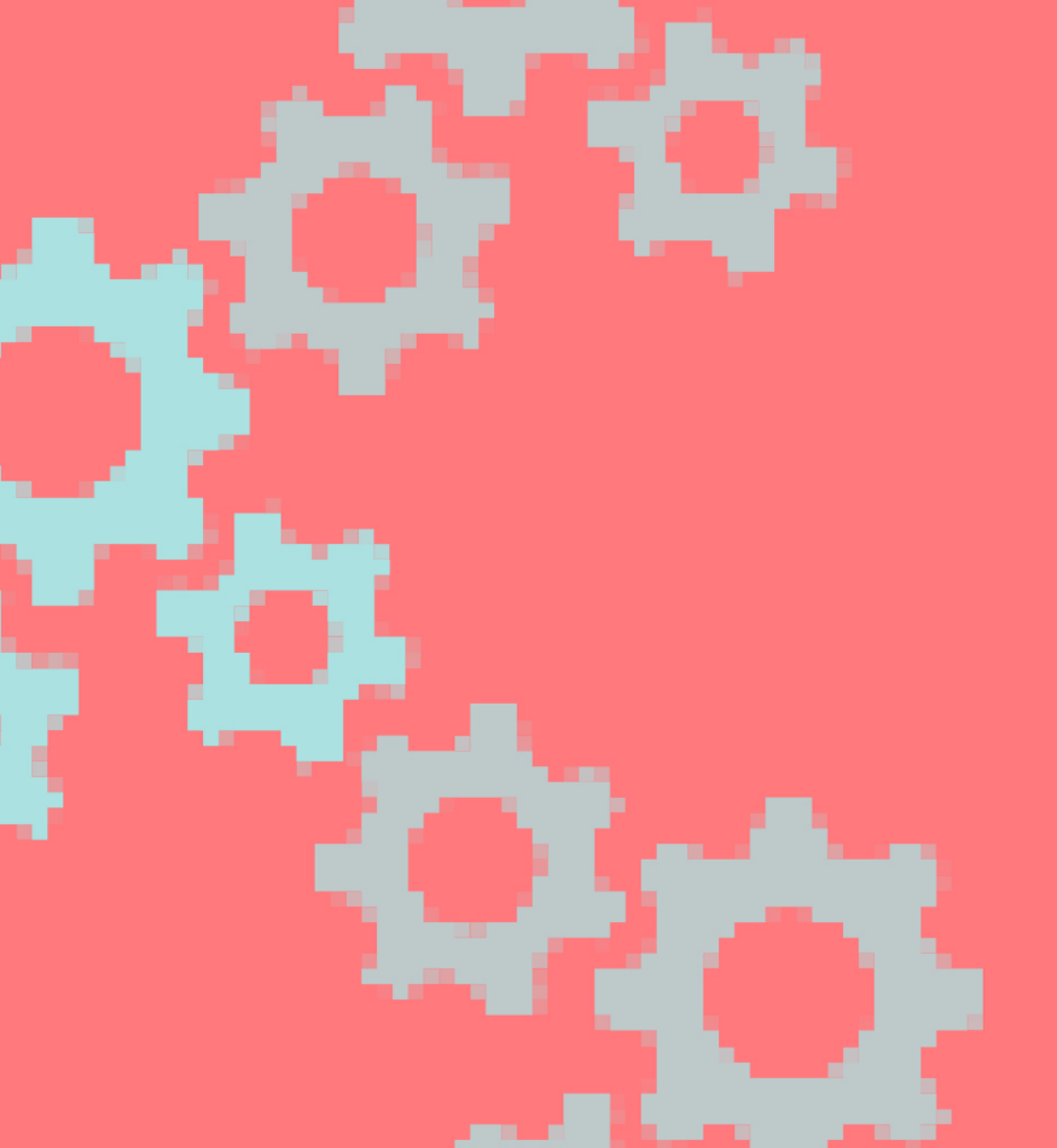
FIGURE 3.5 *Generative AI*

2024   11%

2025   33%

● Actual AI usage   ◌ Anticipated AI Adoption

FIGURE 3.6 *Uses of AI*

Generate social media content	**64%**
Devotionals/small group content	**24%**
Sermons	**16%**
Ideas for Pastoral care	**16%**

Leaders continue to be enthusiastic and adventurous as they explore cutting-edge tech, but it's virtually impossible to know how impactful a promising new digital solution may be in the early years of their adoption. This is especially true in the church space, where leaders' first priority is their mission and their flock, and not necessarily the latest tech.

[Pushpay CTO Aaron Senneff's prescient 2023 article about the metaverse](#) explains why our company's spirit of innovation demands we explore all the ways the Church might leverage buzzworthy emerging tech, regardless of whether it ever becomes a staple for ministries.

At the end of the day, the heart of the Church is and will always be people. More and more leaders are realizing that technology doesn't steal from that dynamic, but rather enhances it by providing new tools for fostering belonging and faith in their community. Yet as digital solutions become more widely accepted, newcomers to the ever-shifting church tech space are often unsure how best to guide their ministries' tech choices.

The digital futures of churches should be grounded in informed decision making—and that's simply not possible without a clear picture of the current tech landscape. By pooling the digital experiences and wisdom of leaders in the State of Church Technology report, our hope is that we can all confidently stride forward together to fuel our shared mission of building His Kingdom.

If you're currently re-evaluating your tech solutions to better serve your church community, Pushpay's self-guided product tours can walk you through the latest digital features that are already amplifying thousands of ministries across the country.

TAKE A TOUR