

IN TOUCH
THE UP SIDE AND THE DOWN SIDE OF
LIVE CHURCH SERVICE ON THE WEB

(Live-Streaming)

Dear Friend:

I was in Thailand last Sunday and in a sense, I was “at” Franklin Church too. Huh? Yes, I was 9,000 or so miles from 7171 Central College Rd but thanks to the technology of live streaming I could sit in my hotel room in Thailand and “go to church”. By the way...if you missed Kirk’s message on the Parable of the Sower, you missed a good one! Live-streaming made watching the service live possible but like all technology live-streaming has its’ up side and its’ down side. One of the down sides is that some people think that just because they have watched the service (most people, on average, watch less than half the service) they have “gone to church”. I’ve actually heard people say: “Yeah, I went to church last Sunday, I watched the live stream”. The Bible says they have not gone to church. One cannot sit at home and fellowship with others, encourage others, share life experiences with others, break bread together, etc. All these things and more are what makes church a church. How did we get into our live stream world?

COVID got us to our live stream world. Before COVID hit, only 20% of the churches in America were live streaming, within 6 months 80% of the churches were live streaming (Barna Research Poll). Just a couple months before COVID hit, Franklin began recording Sunday service then posting it on our website, we weren’t yet live streaming. Shortly after we started back to church someone(s) said we should “go live” via our Facebook page. A few people pulled it together and got us up and running! We were live, we could be seen from anywhere in the world.

Now, the up and down side of live streaming. First, the upside...live streaming is comfortable (watch in your PJ’s), convenient, far reaching, and accessible. Also, live streaming is a blessing for the shut-ins and those temporarily unable to attend due to physical reasons. The downside: every pastor I talk to tells me some have stopped attending, never to return because they can stay home and watch church (this includes Franklin). What started out as something temporary has become permanent. Studies show that those watching via live stream rarely, rarely “stay” for the whole service. Think about it, what family of 3 kids can keep their full attention for one hour without having to manage their kids! We pastors knew live streaming would create church drop-outs. I remember some of my colleagues raving about live streaming, I also remember telling them “this is good for now, but it will have consequences”. They looked at me like I was a dinosaur. Another downside: some who have turned to live stream instead in person attendance believe that because they see people on the computer screen (or other device) they are connected to the congregation....not so in the true sense of the word. The biggest down side: it is spiritually disobedient to substitute live stream viewing for in-person presence if we are physically able to be at the church building where the congregation worships. One cannot use their spiritual gifts if they never attend church in person. Also, read Hebrews 10:24-25 and Acts 2:42-46.

This In Touch is getting long so I have to wrap-it up. **MAKE NO MISTAKE I AM IN FAVOR OF LIVE STREAMING!** I believe we need it, it is a great idea and a necessity for our shut-ins or those who are on vacation, or who has a family situation that may limit their ability to attend weekly. However, live streaming is just not the same as being there in person. Just ask those physically unable to attend!

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Mike

Prayer: Anna Louise Beaver, Margaret Jewett (on reaching her 95th birthday), A Person You Know Who Doesn't Know Jesus

Events: This Sunday October 30th church potluck lunch! Stay, stay, stay and fellowship all day! (Or, at least an hour or so)