

***“Church on my couch”: Predicting the future impact of online ministry based on impact during covid-19.***

*50-word abstract suitable for printing in the final program*

With “everything from home”, as the new norm, “how does the use of digital platforms impact Adventist education, community engagement, and spiritual outreach?” Using a quantitative approach, we draw insights from online ministry during Covid-19 and use the insights to statistically predict the future impact of online ministry.

*Summary of the presentation*

The past three years (2020 – 2022) redefined the meaning of church. With a global pandemic and social distancing, it became apparent that the congregation's education, spiritual edification, and social outreach had to be done online. Online ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist church in Zimbabwe had not grown to the level of reaching out to those in need of spiritual edification. Some church members and leaders did not accept the use of online platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Zoom and WhatsApp as tools for ministry. They felt as if they lacked the sanctity that was on face-to-face worship. However, the incursion of the pandemic created the need and altered the approach to doing ministry. Post-covid the world hasn't changed much with most people preferring having their needs met from the comfort of their homes. Using Zimbabwe as a case study, as a church, did the church effectively meet people's needs online? Based on that experience can we predict the future of online ministering? What can be done to improve engagement with the target population? With “everything from home” as the new norm, how does the use of digital platforms impact Adventist education, community engagement, and spiritual outreach? The researchers assume that online ministry will continue to be a need for church members since the larger percentage of the church consists of young people who are constantly on social media. The study assumes a quantitative approach where the key research instrument is a questionnaire with both structured and unstructured questions. Using the data collected, the researchers employ statistical predictions to the future of online ministry and sentiment analysis (opinion mining) to provide further insights on social sentiment of online ministry to facilitate improvement on approaches thereof.

*Key Words:* Adventism, Online Ministry, Spirituality, Covid-19, Post Covid-19

*Name and contact information*

Name: Samukeliso Mabarani

Email: [skmabarani@gmail.com](mailto:skmabarani@gmail.com)

Phone: +61 435673390

Name: Sikhumbuzo Dube

Email: [dubes@aua.ac.ke](mailto:dubes@aua.ac.ke)

Phone: +263 774086070

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