



## Mission in the Digital Age: A Special Perspective for Church Ministers God's

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**Abstract.** *The development of digital technology has brought about significant changes in various aspects of life, including one's faith and how the church functions. In this article, we discuss the concept of Missio Dei (God's mission) in the context of the digital age. We also explore how this concept can be applied to the church's strategies and roles, particularly those of specialised ministers. This article identifies the challenges and opportunities facing the church as it proclaims the Gospel in the digital space, including the risks of digital fatigue, the spread of false teachings, and excessive reliance on media. Specialised ministers play a crucial role in maintaining theological integrity and ethical standards while bridging the Gospel message with digital culture. Conversely, digital media opens new doors for creative ministry, global evangelism, and the formation of bold faith communities. It is added that digital ethics are essential for maintaining the integrity of the Gospel and the dignity of the congregation. Overall, this research asserts that the technological era is not an obstacle to the church's purpose. Rather, it is a new field that requires faith, wisdom, and innovation to be utilised.*

**Keywords** *God's mission, digital age, church minister*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of the digital age has brought significant changes to many aspects of human life, including religious practices and church ministry. Rapid advances in information and communication technology have enabled individuals to connect without boundaries, resulting in fundamental transformations in the way people interact, learn, worship, and serve. In Indonesia, the increasing number of internet users and the use of digital devices increasingly demonstrate that digitalisation has become an integral part of society, including within Christian communities. In the context of faith, digitalisation is not merely a technical adjustment but also requires a shift in perspective in understanding, experiencing, and practising Christian faith within a society that is increasingly digitally connected. (David Boch, 1991. P. 72)

Religious activities that once focused on physical gatherings are now expanding into the virtual world through online worship, virtual prayer groups, digital Bible classes, and counselling services using instant messaging apps. In response to this phenomenon, it is crucial for the church to re-examine God's mission or Missio Dei in the context of the digital age. Missio Dei affirms that God is the Sender, and the church serves as the messenger called to carry out His mission in the world. The digital age presents new challenges and opportunities for the church to expand the reach of its ministry and connect with generations living in a digital culture. By leveraging social media, apps, podcasts, videos, and digital

platforms, Furthermore, churches are able to spread the gospel, build communities of faith, and meet the spiritual needs of modern society more effectively and contextually. (Uhon Stott, 1992. P. 45)

However, churches must be careful that the use of technology does not distract from spirituality and the core of the Gospel, which is the centre of ministry. The church is called to face the challenges of this age without neglecting the essence of the Gospel, which is its identity and calling. As the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16), the church needs to adapt to the progress of the times while remaining committed to the values of the Gospel. This adaptation includes changes in strategies, methods, and approaches to ministry so that the Gospel can be received and understood by the digital generation without losing its meaning. Additionally, the Church must prepare to address challenges such as low digital literacy among traditional ministers, the risk of digital burnout, and resistance to change from some church members. These challenges are not obstacles but opportunities to renew the church's vision and mission strategies to make them more dynamic and relevant. (Maria Sari, 2023. Pp. 120–121)

## **2. METHODS**

In writing this article, the author applied a mixed research approach, which is a strategy that combines two categories of methods, namely quantitative and qualitative methods. Within this mixed research framework, the researcher integrated quantitative and qualitative research to collect data, conduct analysis, and apply inference techniques with broader and more detailed objectives during the research process and writing of this article. Qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews with two primary sources from the GMIM Victory Minanga Indah Church, namely Pastor David Wenas S.Th (Pastor) and Elder Nancy Tontona S.E. (Youth Elder), Deacon Ansyé Tangkearung S.Th, and Elder Pierre Lontoh S.K.M (Youth Elder). This approach allows researchers to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the implementation of God's mission and evangelism in the digital age (Lskandar, et al., 2021).

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Understanding God's Mission**

Missio Dei, which literally means "God's mission," is a theological concept that emphasises that mission is not merely an activity or programme of the church, but is an initiative and work of God Himself in saving the world. The term mission comes from the Latin *mittere*, which means to send or to commission, so that mission is essentially a

commission that originates from the heart of God to His creation. In this context, God functions as the Sender, while the church as messengers sent to continue God's work in the world. Therefore, God's mission is His eternal plan to bring peace (shalom) to all creation for the glory of God's Kingdom.

Juwita argues that *Missio Dei* is the main foundation in missiology, stating that God is God for all people. All of God's actions are expressions of His mission to save everyone in the world. (Juwita, *ibid* p. 390). God's mission is not merely about evangelism, but also encompasses His entire eternal plan of governance, which aims to bring peace and prosperity to all of creation and to realise the glory of God's Kingdom on earth. Arie De Kuiper explains that mission is God's commission, originating from His heart for His creation, with the purpose of bringing peace and salvation to humanity and the universe. David Bosch, a renowned missiologist, asserts that *Missio Dei* reveals God's love for the world and His active participation in and with the world. God's mission involves all of creation and humanity, realised through the sending of Jesus Christ to save the world. Bosch also emphasises that God's mission is not only focused on evangelism, but also on efforts to overcome oppression, bring about social healing, and restore the cosmos, so that the church's mission must include broad social and ecological dimensions. This concept affirms that God's mission is the work of the Trinity, where God the Father sends the Son, and both the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to continue the work of salvation in the world.

According to Rev. David, one important aspect that is often overlooked in understanding *Missio Dei* is the incarnation of Christ, as quoted from Rev. Hengky Setiawan. "When the Word became flesh, as written in John 1:14, it was not merely part of the plan of salvation, but actually became the primary model for how we carry out our mission. God is directly present in human life, sharing in their suffering, hopes, and joys. Therefore, the church must also follow this example." He added that the church's mission should not merely convey a message from the outside but truly engage with the realities of people's lives. "God's mission is a mission that takes sides," he emphasised, "not a mission that comes to lecture, but a mission that is present and involved. Therefore, the church must dare to be present and live among the people, because through that presence, the Gospel becomes real and brings about change."

The biblical basis for *Missio Dei* can be found in several important verses. In John 20:21, it is stated, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you," which shows that the church's mission is a continuation of God's own mission. Matthew 28:19-20, known as the Great Commission, instructs the disciples to make disciples of all nations and baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, signifying involvement. The church is active

in God's mission. Acts 1:8 emphasises that the Holy Spirit will empower the disciples to be witnesses of Christ to the ends of the earth, signifying the universal and ongoing nature of God's mission. In addition to evangelism, God's mission also includes aspects of social justice, love, and the transformation of human life and society as a whole. The church, as God's messenger, must realise that its responsibility is to be a witness of God's active love and an agent of transformation in today's complex and pluralistic world. In the context of Indonesia and Asia, the core elements of mission that need to be considered include poverty, interfaith relations, and dialogue with local cultures so that the mission can be carried out in a contextual and relevant manner.

The concept of *Missio Dei* has also evolved since it first appeared indirectly at the International Missionary Council in Willingen, Germany, in 1952. Since then, this idea has had a significant impact on the development of missiology, where salvation is no longer seen as the exclusive domain of the church, but as God's universal right. J. Verkuyl describes missiology as an analysis of the salvific actions of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit throughout the world with the aim of bringing about the Kingdom of God. Edmund Woga adds that the foundation of the church's mission is God's own mission to call all nations to be saved by Him (1 Timothy 2:4). Thus, *Missio Dei* is an eternal call from God to bring salvation and transformation to all of creation. The church, as God's messenger, has the role of continuing this work through evangelism, advocating for social justice, demonstrating God's love through concrete actions, and bringing about positive change in society. Understanding the concept of *Missio Dei* comprehensively is of utmost importance for the church to effectively carry out its mission in an ever-changing era, including in the digital age today. (ibid., p. 51)

### **Mission Challenges in the Digital Age**

The challenges of mission in the digital world present significant complexities for churches and their ministries, especially for those who still cling to old ways. The main problem that arises is a lack of understanding of digital technology among traditional ministers. Many ministers are accustomed to using conventional methods in serving their congregations, so when they are faced with the demand to implement digital technology, they experience difficulties. This lack of understanding or low digital literacy is not merely a technical skill issue but also relates to how to grasp the essence and potential of technology to expand the church's mission. Without sufficient understanding, traditional ministers often feel alienated and lack confidence in using digital media, which ultimately hinders innovation and the effectiveness of ministry. Additionally,

Limited resources are a real obstacle that cannot be ignored. Many churches, especially

in areas with limited access to technology, face challenges in providing the necessary hardware and software, as well as adequate training for ministers and congregations. These limitations make efforts to digitise services less than optimal. Inadequate technology training not only makes it difficult for ministers and congregations to use the tools, but also leaves them lacking in understanding of how to utilise technology strategically to reach and serve their communities. This creates a gap between the potential of available technology and the effective implementation of ministry.

According to Pnt Pierre Lontoh (youth elder), one of the major challenges facing the GMIM Victory Minanga Indah congregation, as well as other congregations today in their digital mission, is "not just a matter of technical issues or social media skills, but more about how we as ministers and congregants behave in the digital space. Sometimes, without realising it, people spread hate speech, fake news, or even spiritual content whose authenticity is unclear. That becomes a problem." He continued, "The church does need to keep up with the times, but it also needs to cultivate a digital character that aligns with Christian values. So that what we share on social media continues to reflect love and truth, rather than causing confusion or division."

On the other hand, information that appears in the digital age also has a significant psychological impact, namely digital fatigue. Ministers and congregations are often trapped in a pile of information coming from various digital platforms, including social media, communication applications, and online worship content that keeps popping up. This situation can lead to distractions that reduce focus and concentration during worship services, even causing boredom that results in decreased active participation in church activities. (Adhi Kusumastuti & Ahmad Mustamil Khoirn, 2022. pp. 24–35) This digital challenge must be addressed to ensure that worship services remain of high quality and that congregants feel emotionally and spiritually engaged.

Equally important is the opposition to change that often arises from some ministers and churches that are strongly attached to old traditions. Concerns that technology will erode the values and core of church ministry make them reluctant to embrace digital innovation. This attitude is understandable, given that major changes often cause uncertainty and anxiety. However, if this resistance is left unaddressed without proper dialogue and understanding, the church will struggle to adapt to the times and miss out on the opportunity to reach the younger generation, who are heavily reliant on technology in their daily lives. Nevertheless, these challenges should not be seen as obstacles that block opportunities, but rather as chances to renew the church's vision and mission. The digital age actually presents a significant opportunity for churches to transform and expand the scope of their ministry.

(Dalensang & Molle, 2021. p. 255)

With the right approach, adequate education, and an open attitude towards technology, churches can harmoniously combine traditional and digital ministries. This allows churches not only to preserve their core values, but also to create new methods of reaching and serving their congregations. This renewal of vision and mission is crucial for the church to remain relevant and efficient in the face of changing times, and to address the needs and challenges faced by the congregation in the digital age. (Steven D. Bonner, 2016, p. 161) Thus, the challenges at hand present a strategic opportunity for innovation, strengthening ministry, and developing a more inclusive and dynamic church community.

## **The Impact of the Digital Age on God's Mission or the Mission of Evangelism**

### **A. Positive impacts**

#### 1. Wider and Faster Access to Information

Digital technology enables the Gospel to reach various segments of society in different parts of the world in a matter of seconds. Through social media, church websites, YouTube, podcasts, and digital Bible apps, the Word of God can be accessed by anyone, anywhere, anytime.

#### 2. Enabling Global Missions Without Geographical Boundaries

Whereas in the past, God's mission depended heavily on missionaries travelling to specific locations, today missions can be carried out online without the constraints of national borders, language, or culture. Live streaming of worship services, online seminars, and cross-border theological discussions expand the space for encounter and the global proclamation of the Gospel.

#### 3. Efficiency in Time, Energy, and Costs

Digital evangelism can reduce travel, printing, and accommodation costs. Ministry can be carried out through digital media at a relatively low cost but with a significant impact. Ministers can deliver sermons, seminars, or Bible classes without having to travel.

#### 4. Opening Evangelism Opportunities to the Digital Native Generation

The digital age enables churches and ministers to reach young people who are active in the virtual world. Through creative digital content such as spiritual motivational videos, short devotionals, Christian memes, and educational content on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, churches can remain relevant to young people. (E. Stanley Grandberg, Digital Mission. P. 77)

#### 5. Providing Space for Creative and Innovative Services

Digital technology provides opportunities to present evangelism in various new

formats such as spiritual short films, virtual dramas, spiritual podcasts, and digital graphic illustrations that enrich traditional evangelism methods.

#### 6. Reaching Remote and Isolated Areas

Some countries or regions that are politically and culturally closed to Christianity can be reached through digital media. Many people in closed countries can access digital Bibles, listen to spiritual podcasts, or attend online worship services anonymously.

#### 7. Supporting Online Counselling and Prayer Services

Many people experience heavy burdens in modern life. Digital media allows churches to offer prayer services, counselling, and pastoral care through chat, video calls, or other responsive and fast online platforms.

#### 8. Strengthening the Global Body of Christ Network

The digital age has enabled churches and Christian communities across denominations and countries to connect with one another, share ministry experiences, and collaborate on common missions. Online forums, virtual communities, and social media have strengthened relationships between global congregations.

#### 9. Raising Mission Awareness Among Local Congregations

Through digital content, local congregations can easily access various information about world missions, ministry news, and missionary testimonies, thereby motivating active involvement in prayer, financial support, and mission action. (ibid, p. 114) In an interview with Pastor David, he explained that there are positive impacts of the digital age on God's evangelistic mission, namely that through digital platforms such as social media, Bible apps, YouTube, and podcasts, the gospel of salvation in Christ can be preached to millions of people in various parts of the world. This allows everyone to access the Word of God anywhere and anytime without the constraints of distance, time, or geographical limitations.

Furthermore, the digital age makes it easier for the Gospel to reach groups that were previously difficult to reach, such as people living in remote areas, in countries that are closed to Christianity, or those who have never heard of Christ. Digital media also provides opportunities for churches and ministers to quickly convey messages of hope and salvation. Through digital features, anyone can read the Bible, listen to sermons, attend spiritual seminars, or share their faith testimony more widely, thereby furthering the mission. God's evangelism can be more effective amid technological developments of the times.

### **B. Negative impacts**

Although the digital age offers many conveniences, there are also several challenges and negative impacts that need to be considered, such as:

1. Risk of Spreading Heretical Teachings and Spiritual Hoaxes

Digital media makes it easy for anyone to spread teachings that are not in line with the Bible or to claim divine revelation without a sound theological basis. This has the potential to mislead people who do not yet have a strong understanding of faith.

2. Excessive Dependence on Digital Media

There is a tendency for congregations to prefer online worship, listening to sermons on YouTube, and consuming digital content rather than attending church or fellowshiping in person, which can weaken the life of the local church.

3. Distractions in Digital Services

The use of digital media can easily be disrupted by other content that is not constructive, advertisements, or entertainment media that actually distracts people from their original purpose of accessing spiritual services. (Samuel, Misi Allah in the modern world. P. 56)

In an interview with Rev. David, he also said that one of the The negative impact of the digital age on God's mission of evangelism is the tendency for people to prefer to worship online rather than attending church in person. Rev. David emphasised that if congregations worship online for too long, they could lose the value of fellowship, direct ministry, and opportunities to build healthy faith relationships. In addition, the church as the body of Christ could lose its function if congregations do not attend physically.

### **The Role of Khu Sus Servants in the Digital Age**

Special servants in the church are individuals who receive special assignments to carry out certain responsibilities in the body of Christ, whether as pastors, evangelists, elders, deacons, or other church servants. In the context of evangelism in the digital age, special servants act as mediators between the message of the Gospel and the digital world, which has unique characteristics. The digital world is no longer limited by space and time. Social media, video platforms, blogs, podcasts, apps, and various forms of digital communication have become new spaces where people interact, seek meaning, and build communities. Specialised ministers are called to be present in these spaces as God's messengers, bringing the good news to those who have not yet come to know Christ, as well as to those who searching for the meaning of life. (Johan Setiawan, Missionary Service in the Digital Age, p. 56)

The role of special servants in evangelism in the digital age encompasses several important dimensions. First, special ministers must be able to communicate the gospel message effectively through various digital media. This requires an understanding of digital

language, digital cultural trends, and how to present messages that are relevant without compromising the essence of the gospel truth. Special ministers not only speak from the church pulpit, but must also be able to present teachings, reflections, prayers, and testimonies through digital media that appeal to modern society.

Secondly, special ministers serve as guardians of theological and moral values in a digital world that tends to be free, permissive, and often loses its ethical direction. The digital world often becomes a space where misleading information, hoaxes, hate speech, and hedonistic culture spread rapidly. Special ministers must be present to bring the voice of truth, provide spiritual education, and serve as examples in using digital media wisely, respectfully, and responsibly. (ibid, p. 114)

Third, special ministers must be able to build a healthy, Christ-centred digital community. The presence of the church is not only in the form of a physical building, but also in the form of a virtual community that strengthens one another, prays for one another, studies the Word of God, and witnesses together. Special ministers can utilise social media groups, messaging apps, and video conferencing platforms to build fellowship, pastoral care, and spiritual guidance for a widespread congregation.

Fourth, special servants act as innovators in designing digital mission strategies that are appropriate to the ever-changing cultural context of society. The digital age demands creativity in conveying the message of the Gospel, whether through visual content, short videos, podcasts, inspirational blogs, or live broadcasts of worship services and spiritual seminars. Special servants must be sensitive to technological developments and able to adapt their methods of ministry so that they remain effective in reaching the digital community.

Fifth, special ministers act as facilitators of digital faith growth. In the digital age, many people experience struggles with faith, anxiety, and the search for meaning in life through the internet. Special ministers need to be present to provide spiritual guidance, faith counselling, and pastoral care online. This ministry is particularly important for those who cannot physically attend church, whether due to geographical factors, health conditions, or social circumstances. (Stephen & Roger, Constants in Context, p. 89)

In the interview, we asked Elder Nancy Tontonan how special servants can play a role in the digital age to convey God's mission or the mission of evangelism. That is, in the digital age, special servants have a strategic role in conveying God's mission, not only in churches but also through digital media. They can spread the gospel through social media, YouTube, and podcasts, guide congregations so they do not get caught up in heretical teachings on the internet, facilitate online fellowship, encourage congregations to witness digitally, and use digital content as a teaching tool. Specialised ministers must be actively present in the digital

space as Gospel proclaimers and spiritual guides, so that God's mission continues amidst technological advancements. Their role also includes equipping the congregation to become witnesses of Christ in the digital world. Special ministers must encourage and guide the congregation to use social media not only for personal gain, but also as a means of expressing God's love, spreading hope, and being a light and salt in the virtual world. Spiritual digital literacy education is one of the important tasks for special ministers, so that the congregation can be critical, wise, and responsible in accessing, producing, and sharing information in the digital world.

### **Ethics of Service in the Digital Age**

The development of digital technology has changed the way churches serve their congregations. Today, services are no longer limited to physical spaces but have expanded into digital spaces such as streaming platforms, social media, and communication apps. Church ministers in this context must have a strong moral foundation in addition to technological skills. Digital technology has evolved beyond being merely a tool; it has become a new living space where religious and social interactions take place. Therefore, church ministers must understand that digital ministry requires moral sensitivity, responsibility, and integrity. (Gultom 2019, p. 45)

Although the digital age offers many opportunities to reach more souls, it also presents morally unpleasant challenges. It is true that information can be disseminated quickly, but if it is not properly filtered, it can distort the original meaning of the Gospel. Ministries that pursue popularity, audience numbers, or visual appeal may neglect the truth. Therefore, church ministers must ensure that the Gospel message remains pure and avoid getting caught up in the culture of digital sensationalism. They must have the ability to distinguish genuine spiritual influence from false influence that relies on marketing tactics. (Rumambi, 2020, p. 16)

Honesty and responsibility in using media are important components of digital ministry ethics. Ministers must realise that all information posted on the internet reflects Christian values as a whole as well as themselves. Therefore, digital content must be created carefully and consider how it will impact readers or viewers. The use of images, videos, quotes, or even personal narratives must be honest and based on facts. Church ministers in the digital age must also protect the privacy of their congregations and fellow ministers. The lives of congregants should not be made public, especially without permission. Violations of privacy can damage spiritual relationships and harm the body of Christ. Respect and appreciation for the dignity of individual members of the congregation must be a top priority in digital ministry. Everyone who works in The church must realise that personal stories, such as

testimonies, confessions, or counselling, must be treated with respect and care. (Simanjuntak, 2022. p. 88)

Digital ministry ethics are not only focused on content; they are also focused on how church ministers build their own digital presence. The way a minister interacts on social media, handles criticism, gives opinions, and responds to comments should reflect the character of Christ. Digital presence is a place to share the truth of the Gospel rather than showcase individual achievements. Church ministry must demonstrate patience, love, and humility, just as Christ was present among His people in this regard. They must not merely be "active" in the digital world but also "reflective," aware that every action they take in the digital world is a testimony. (Sitorus, 2023. p. 23)

According to Dkn Ansye Tangkearung, digital service ethics is not just about personal behaviour on the internet, but also about how to build an online faith community. In the digital world, congregations are no longer limited to one place. Some come from outside the area, even from different churches, but they join in worship or spiritual discussions together. She added, "So we must have an open attitude, willing to dialogue, collaborate with other churches, and respect differences. If our digital ministry is exclusive or closed-off, it goes against the spirit of the Gospel. We can organise online seminars, inter-community worship services, and joint ministry programmes so that the unity of Christ's body is also evident in the virtual world. This is important so that our ministry is not only active but also inclusive."

Church ministers must also understand that digital ministry does not mean neglecting spirituality. It is not merely spiritual entertainment; the content published must still contain healthy teaching, build faith, and guide people to repentance. After getting caught up in the trend of virality, many ministers ended up neglecting the core content of the congregation. Therefore, to keep digital ministry relevant, digital creativity and spiritual depth must be balanced. (To bi, 2021. P. GBI Literature Online)

God must be present in the digital world in a comprehensive manner, spreading the Gospel in a fair, moral, and contextual way. Technological advances such as the use of AI, deepfakes, and algorithms that influence public perception pose ethical challenges. Digital world is becoming increasingly complex. The church and its members must be prepared to face these changes with wisdom and continue to seek guidance. Technology must be used in conjunction with clear ethical policies in the context of ministry so that it is not misused or manipulated. Therefore, servanthood ethics in the digital age encompasses more than just "what is permissible" and "what is not permissible." It includes how every digital action can demonstrate the love of Christ. A humble, wise, and responsible attitude will be evident in ethical service, whether in teaching, leading, or sharing the good news through technology. In

the digital world, the heart and character of the servant continue to determine the quality of service.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion above, it can be found that the importance of social justice is applied in every member of the church and society. So that in this study the author takes the theory of John Rawls which has explained very much and is very structured regarding justice applied in the social sphere. So that in this case pastoral care is also applied to all members of the congregation, especially in this writing referring to marginalized people. So that it can be suggested for the social sphere so that there is equal equality, there is no comparison, especially within the scope of the church. In order to reduce marginalized people and the importance of pastoral care to assist marginalized people who need assistance.

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