

## Educational Technology for Expansive Ministry

The Church and Christian Education, by and large, was easing toward the new reality of teaching with technology but the pandemic accelerated our pace. Each congregation, pastor, and educator faced the challenges of forming faith in the midst of a radically and rapidly changing church and world with varying degrees of confidence and trepidation. No matter the changing landscape, this we know - Christian Educators have always been on the leading edge of creativity and innovation in teaching and learning. Those of a certain vintage remember when educators and pastors moved from filmstrips, flannel boards and overhead projectors to video tapes, CDs and dry-erase boards. We had to learn to thread the projector, or connect the speakers or, learn the hard way, not to use regular markers on the dry-erase board. The speed of technological developments guarantees that learning new ways of teaching in the church will eventually come to each of us. We are in that moment once again, educational technologies that support the teaching ministry are now essential for educators and teaching pastors as we lean-in to the emerging new normal for nurturing faith. It is now time to become as comfortable with educational technologies as we are with easels, flip charts, and markers. We do not have to know every new platform or application - or all at once - but we do need to take those first steps.

### **Beginning**

Many Sunday school teachers affirm that their knowledge of scripture broadened and deepened by teaching each week. Asking the question – *"What do I want students to understand from this lesson?"* Is the first step. Then the hands-on experience, anticipating questions and scenarios that may arise in the classroom, and preparing for those shaped the teacher's preparation. The approach to discovering and choosing educational technologies is quite similar. Begin with the question, *"What technology is available to support and enhance student learning in this lesson?"* Educational technology, in and of itself, is not the goal. Like any other teaching method, it is always in service to the goals of teaching. The prime directive of Christian Education is "form follows function." The purpose and content of the lesson determine the setting, the educational approaches, and the teaching methods for the lesson. The same is true when deciding which new educational technologies to use in a lesson. Randomly including technology in teaching is to center the tech rather than the content.

### **Exploring**

There are as many educational technology platforms as there are teaching methods and more debuting each day. Even after a list of possible programs, platforms, and apps have been narrowed down, a person can spend hours and hours exploring possibilities and tutorials only to determine they are not exactly right for what you want them to do in your lesson. This QuickSheet provides you a selection of a few favorites that have been field tested in congregations, in seminary classrooms, and in continuing education events. Each suggestion has a brief overview and ways it could be used. A link to an EduTech Wakelet to accompany this resource sheet is provided at the end. There you will find live links

to each technology as well as brief introductory and tutorial videos. Most selections have a free option. After you have spent time examining each platform, you can decide if you want to opt for the subscription level. Many have non-profit or education reduced plans.

### ***Wakelet***

Wakelet is an absolute favorite. Think of it as Pinterest for nerds meets educational blogging/digital storytelling. You can create individual collections (boards or notebooks) and then begin curating entries. You can type your own text, add YouTube or website links, integrate videos from Flip, Loom or Google Drive, post music, or store photos and pdfs. You can also group related individual collections into one space.

*For example:* a Confirmation Space could include individual collections for each week's session that includes key texts, quotes, movie clips, and/or encouragements from mentors between meetings. Each confirmand could be encouraged to keep a digital journal by creating an individual collection within the Confirmation Space. Collections and Spaces can be shared by a link, embedded code for your website or a QR code. You can determine who views, comments, and collaborates.

Wakelet, and all its features, is completely free and unlimited. <https://wakelet.com/>

### ***Padlet***

Padlet is an incredible resource. It is a digital bulletin board that can be embedded or linked in websites, Wakelet, blogs, or Learning Management Systems (or Slack). The leader/teacher creates the Padlet (board), customizes the look, adds instructions, and then invites participants. Anyone with a link or code can access it and leave a message, provide input, offer an idea, or post a link to a survey, video, or song. fantastic! Participants can do so in writing, with a built-in video, an audio recording, a picture, a meme, music, or pdf. Others can respond to another's post and continue the interaction. A Padlet can be organized in a random configuration or in columns with headings.

*For example:* This is a great platform for posting responses to sermons, listing the church school scripture with pondering questions and inviting those who cannot be present to join with those who are in engaging the text.

The free option allows up to three Padlets. <https://padlet.com/>

### ***Flip***

Flip is a very user-friendly technology that allows anyone with a computer, smartphone, or tablet with a camera and microphone to record themselves in a short video. It provides a platform for video-based discussions when we cannot be in the room together. The "teacher/leader" sets up a free account using their email account (Microsoft or Google), sets the perimeters of the project, provides the instructions and then sends the "students/participant" a link or invites them via email. All the "student/participant" has to do is click the red "record a response" button and start talking. Decorative frames, stickers and icons can be added to express individual personalities. Participants do not need accounts - just the specific code to join the discussion. Flip integrates seamlessly with Wakelet and Padlet. It can be shared and accessed with a link or embedded into a website with an embedded code.

*For example:* This is an excellent resource to build community among participants who are not physically together all the time. People can introduce themselves before the first bible study meeting so that everyone has a sense of who is in the room. A discussion prompt offered at the end of class provides opportunities for participants to record their thoughts during the week, so the conversation continues in between meetings.

Flip is completely free and unlimited. <https://info.flip.com/en-us.html>

### ***VoiceThread***

VoiceThread provides a platform to upload a PowerPoint or Keynote presentation, embed videos, links to content on the internet, add pictures, media and instructions. It then allows the creator to narrate the entire presentation through a built-in audio or video function. You can post a link or integrate it into your website or blog to begin the conversation. Then, anyone with a link or code can join the conversation by commenting on any slide or media on the VoiceThread by choosing video, audio or text annotation. This allows for conversation and comments about that idea to be gathered in the same place. It is a close to "synchronous" conversation in an "asynchronous" setting. Be gone, long cumbersome dialogue threads to wade through - see one another's faces, hear each other's voices and respond to comments all in the same place.

*For example:* It is great for creating a self-paced communal study in Advent or Lent with each week providing material families can engage with on their own schedules but also see and hear what other families are thinking and experiencing.

The free account will allow you to create up to five VoiceThreads. There is no cost to participate in a VoiceThread someone has created. There are several subscription options. <https://voicethread.com/>

### ***Loom***

Loom is another easy-to-use-with-little-skills video creating platform. This educational technology platform allows you to record what is on your computer screen and any audio you add. You can make an instructional video without having to go through the YouTube creation and uploading process. You can teach using a presentation platform such as PowerPoint, Prezi or Keynote and Loom will record your visual presentation on your screen and everything you have to say during it. It even gives you the ability to highlight something on the screen or draw a circle or arrow to draw attention to your point. You can choose to record just your voice as you advance through your PowerPoint or choose to appear in the corner of the screen while your presentation plays. (Just don't forget to put your PowerPoint in "presentation mode" and be in a quiet place to record or Loom will record your whole computer screen and any background noise.) Loom has built-in editing capabilities and allows you to choose how you share your video as an mp4 file with others.

*For example:* You can record the reading of a children's book while the illustrations take center stage, make an informational video for an upcoming mission trip, or create a tutorial on how to use multiple intelligences for teachers...all while sitting in front of your computer.

Loom has both free and subscription plans. <https://www.loom.com/>

### ***Canva***

Canva is an invaluable partner in ministry. It allows anyone with basic computer skills, even those who consider themselves creativity-challenged, to create professional looking materials. Canva provides templates, fonts, photos, and graphic design elements for anything from infographics to invitations to annual reports and brochures. All templates allow colors, fonts, and placements to change, and you can even upload your own pictures and logos. Canva stores all your designs and allows you to go back in and make as many changes as you want.

*For example:* Create professional looking promotional materials, handouts, social media posts, newsletters and presentations that are inviting and visually "put together."

There is a free account but also a subscription that provides access to so many more fonts, graphic elements and pictures. <https://www.canva.com/>

### ***PresenterMedia***

Tired of boring PowerPoint presentations? Then PresenterMedia may be just right for you. Texts, titles, fonts, characters, colors and so much more. Choose your template, download it to your computer, make changes and then save it with your presentation's name. The templates on this site have built in

animation and all animation will be saved and automatically play each time you use the customized presentation.

*For example:* Use some of these animations - a tree that grows as you add words or phrases to leaves and branches, a river that flows, water that ripples, game boards with moving pieces, progressing timelines - and plenty of ways to customize them.

There is no free account for this site, however, it is definitely worth the price if you use PowerPoints.

<https://www.presentermedia.com/>

### **Summary**

These seven suggestions provide a solid foundation for building your new educational technology toolkit. You can explore more information, tutorials and more resources in the Wakelet (<https://wakelet.com/wake/Pn5gCMzWPV1XHY7iVPbja>) that accompanies this QuickSheet. There is one very important tool that is essential for expansive ministry – the Meeting Owl 3. This amazing device will be discussed in the [Technology and Teaching QuickSheet](#) as a part of best practices and tips for teaching in this changed landscape. Approach these new educational tools with a sense of adventure and discover the possibilities that expand and enhance your ministry and deepen the experience of those with whom you teach and learn.

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