

## Marcel the Shell with Shoes On

*God at the Movies 2023, Pt. 2*

### [Marcel Bumper 1:41]

Welcome to God at the Movies 2023. This is an annual tradition at SWFF in which we examine some of the last year's film offerings and see if we can discover spiritual truth in them. Now, we kicked things off last week with a big movie – in every way. A Marvel Universe blockbuster about arguably the most powerful superhero of them all, the god of legend, Thor. Today's film could not be more different.

*Marcel the Shell with Shoes On* was a very small film. Thor had a \$250 million dollar budget and made \$750 million worldwide. I could never find how much it cost to make Marcel – the closest was an industry article that called it “micro-budgeted” – but the little film made just under \$7 million dollars. Literally 100 times less than it's superhero counterpart. And yet, Marcel was nominated for an Oscar for Best Animated Film, which is *infinity* times more Academy Award nominations than Thor received!

This mockumentary film, directed by Dean Fleischer-Camp – who appears as himself in the story - and starring the voice of comedian Jenny Slate, is a dazzlingly clever blend of live action and stop-motion

animation. Interestingly, Camp and Slate were married when they created three small Marcel short videos on YouTube starting in 2010, but were *not* married by the time they made the movie. Which may explain why virtually every “real” person in the movie is going through a breakup.

Marcel is a tiny seashell with one eye, a mouth, a pair of feet, a sharp mind, and a very big heart. A filmmaker named Dean rents an Airbnb house, finds Marcel there, and decides to make a documentary about him. Marcel lives with his grandmother, Connie, both in a state of grief, after the disappearance of the many members of their extended family, and Dean helps him to look for them.

Along the way, Dean makes short videos that turn Marcel into an internet sensation with tens of millions of viewers—and with toxic fans. It was the sweetest movie I saw all year – brought tears to my eyes on more than one occasion. There are a lot of random, cute scenes that one might expect from something that began as a 3 minute social media treat. But it has a larger message as well – which is why I picked it for God at the Movies.

At it's heart, this is a movie about the quest for community and how internet technology can both help and harm that quest. In a fitting bit of irony, this is the first film I've ever chosen in the 20 year history of our series that was not released on DVD. I had to buy the BluRay directly from the studio – not even Amazon carried it. You might not realize this, but I have to have a DVD to capture clips for the sermon. At first I thought I might have to just act out the scenes myself with the puppet! I did come up with a low-rent work around, and we'll see how that goes. But this is the start of a trend. Warner Brothers has already announced they they will no longer release any of their movies in any disc format. This could ultimately limit our ability to even *do* God at the Movies in the future.

So technology is a double edged sword – enables some things and takes away other things. I wear a digital watch – a first generation Apple Watch that I was given as a gift in 2015 – but I have always kept it's face set to an old fashioned set of watch arms that count the hours, minutes and seconds. We live in a world that is like my watch – a hybrid of analog and digital capabilities. An attempt to perhaps have the best of both worlds.

But there is a tension, and we all feel it. Most of us have heard the trending stories about AI and what that means for the nature of “truth” and “real” going forward. But we've all experienced the tension in more direct ways. Most of us hadn't heard of Zoom before the pandemic, but it quickly became our lifeline for communication – with work, with family and friends, and with church. But I think we've all come to realize that - as convenient and economical as online meeting is, it cannot fully replace physical presence.

I'm into my second 7-year term as a member of the Texas State Board of Marriage and Family Therapists – we regulate all kinds of mental health issues for the state. We have public meetings four times a year – including last Friday. But what made Friday special was it was our first meeting *in person* since the pandemic. The meeting was up in Belton and we all met for lunch beforehand. I had not been in these people's presence for three years! And I can't describe the emotions as one-by-one, my colleagues arrived at the restaurant and we would all embrace. There were no non-huggers that day. It was emotional.

Some of the members had come onto the board during that time and I had never met them – all though we frequently worked together. In fact one counselor from Dallas serves on the Ethics Committee that I chair and we work closely together all throughout the year...on Zoom. But when I met him Friday, I actually poked him and said, “You’re real! You’re are not an AI simulation.” I had seen him and heard him many times, but now I was in his *presence*. And there’s just no substitute for presence.

In fact, in that same meeting I had a frightful reminder of how fragile the present of presence really is. Another board member, who teaches counseling students at university, said that they are seeing a disturbing trend. Because of the pandemic, this is the first groups of students who have only practiced their trade via telemedicine – ie. counseling a client through a digital screen of some kind.

And she said there are a number of these young students who are scared to death to begin to do the sessions in person. They are terribly uncomfortable being in the same room as the person they are treating. Can you imagine? I know we’ve had a generation that breaks off relationships with a text – that’s bad. But if we have a generation of doctors who are technically proficient, but don’t know how to be physically present for their patients...we are doomed.

Advances in technology are going to enable us to live longer lives...and sadly perhaps *lonelier* lives. I want to play you a clip from the film. Two years before our story, the couple that owned the house where Marcel lives went through a bitter separation. They would argue loudly, which would raise an alarm for all the frightened shells to take shelter...in the man’s sock drawer.

But after one significantly bad argument, he dumped the contents of his sock drawer – including all of Marcel’s family – into a suitcase and split. And so with Dean’s help, Marcel makes a plea via social media for help. Soon wanna be influencers start flooding to Marcel’s house to take selfies and generally cause a disturbance. And Marcel begins to understand the nature of this technology that had initially offered so much hope. Watch...[**Audience :49**]

It’s a crowd, it’s an audience...but it’s not a community. And then he sighs. I think our world is living in that collective sigh. How did we get here? If we are honest, technology has had a love/hate relationship with community for a long time. Historians will tell you that the invention of the printing press led to centuries of social upheaval. For the first time people outside the official circles of Pope or King could share their own new ideas, cheaply and broadly. Wars were fought.

Now, if you know me, I'm the last person that would suggest we get rid of books! Technology is a tool, and a tool is good for society or bad, depending on how you use it. Very early in the Bible, we come across a story that stands as a lasting metaphor to what happens to a society when human beings misuse technological advancement. In Genesis chapter 11 we are told the story of the Tower of Babel. At this point, the entire world has one language and a common speech. They decide to build a city with a tower that will reach up to the heavens, in order to establish their greatness. But God thwarts their plans, confuses their language and scatters them across the earth.

Taken verse-by-verse, this story takes on an especially sobering and prophetic tone in our digital age. Let's look at it briefly. **Genesis 11:1**, "*Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.*" The internet has brought us closer to this ancient reality than at any prior point in human history. Text messaging and video chat platforms allow us to instantaneously connect digitally with anyone around the world.

Our daughter, Anika, just spent three weeks traveling by train across 12 countries in Europe by herself. But we could pull up an app and literally see exactly where she was on the map at any given time. If Liam Neeson would have had Life 360, the *Taken* movie would have lasted 2 minutes – kicks in door, kills bad guys, takes daughter home.

When I was preaching in Sicily last month, an older minister approached me after the service and started rattling off some words of encouragement to me...completely in Italian! So I pulled up Google translate and had him repeat it into my phone...and I could completely understand what he wanted to say to me. We more and more live in what many call a singular global village.

**V.2**, "*As people moved eastward...*" The first eleven chapters of Genesis are unrolling one narrative arch, telling us the story of how humanity lost it's way following the expulsion from paradise and the introduction of sin into the world. The Garden of Eden was the place God had designed for human flourishing. Every step eastward revealed more hardships of toil, labor, pain and suffering - classic John Steinbeck novel, *East of Eden*? So eastward movement in this context implies movement *away* from God's perfect plan. God created order out of chaos, and now human kind are moving back toward the chaos.

We see this same trajectory in the digital age. What was intended for our good and our benefit is now leading us down a darker path. When it comes to the way we experience community, the very digital technologies that were meant to bring us together are now beginning to push us apart. There are all kinds of studies that point to the invention of the "like" button on Facebook as the beginning of the fall of society.

**V.3**, “*They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.*” This is an explicit technological reference and it’s including in the story for a reason. Stones are naturally shaped over time in a slow atmospheric process dependent on their particular geographic conditions. Bricks are technologies created by manipulating natural elements and shaping them for specified purposes. They are also much more efficient than stones for building towers that reach to the heavens.

Now of course, there’s nothing inherently wrong with bricks. Like all technologies, they can be used for good or for bad. I can build you a brick house to keep you warm. Or I can build a brick cell to imprison you. Or I can just beat you to death with a brick. It’s all about the heart of the person using it. Just remember, the doctrine of the Bible concerning sin is that after Genesis chapter 2, *everybody’s* heart is now flawed and toxic.

And so it’s the collective sinful heart that leads to the expression of **v.4**, “*Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”*”

Now of course a desire for heaven is not a bad thing, but they are wanting to speed up the process. “Let’s not wait on God to provide, let’s do it for ourselves.” And the Hebrew word for “name” here denotes fame, glory and reputation. They want to be influential. They want to be influencers. On a macro level, “making a name for ourselves” is the engine that drives every element of social media.

And do you see it’s being driven ultimately by fear? Fear of being scattered. Of being an outsider. Fear of *not* having a name. Or not having the *right* name...maybe the right *brand* name. But when you live out of fear, you most often get the very thing that you are afraid of.

I’ve read about three incidence in the news this week – one right over in Elgin – about innocent people being shot for ringing the wrong doorbell, turning into the wrong driveway or walking up to the wrong car in an HEB parking lot. We have a fearful populace, armed to the teeth, with the constant thought of “maybe *this* is the moment I need my gun.” And when you’re convinced – by a steady stream of fear driven news media – that such a moment is inevitable, you are bound to have destruction. The fear of harm leads to harm.

The inevitable result of our ancestor's fear comes to pass as we read in **v.8-9**, "*So the Lord **scattered them** from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord **scattered them** over the face of the whole earth.*"

So remember, these people created a technology to advance their selfish ambition so that they *wouldn't* be scattered, and it led to the exact thing that they had feared. Today, whether it's God directly intervening or it's the natural result of the digital age gone wrong – or probably some combination of both – the same cycle is clear. And it's a cycle that we can see over and over in human history: **Unity to Technology to Selfish Ambition to Scattering.**

While the internet has brought us together as never before, in other ways we are more scattered than ever before. This is the great paradox of the digital age. I know people who are now married to their high school sweetheart of 30 years ago...all thanks to Facebook. And I know people who don't talk to their parents anymore because of who they voted for in the last election...all thanks to Facebook. The dynamics of social media have played a huge part of allowing our very definition of community to devolve into a sort of collected and isolated individuals. Perhaps even in the same room, but certainly not present for one another.

We live in an impatient, shallow, isolated culture. And the digital age is at the ready, offering a host of easier, quicker, more individualistic options. Several years ago, Facebook released an ad on television and online. There's an extended family sitting around a traditional dinner table and an older woman begins talking about an experience she had at the supermarket that day. I'd like to play it for you...[**Facebook Family :59**]

What's the message? When real life gets boring I can just pull out my phone and lunge into more interesting things – we've all been there. But the residue is we begin to believe that the best sort of connections and communities are ones that we can customize and craft to our own personal likeness. It is affecting everyone, but none so drastically as the young people who have been thrust into this era at every developmental stage.

One of the things that has become crystal clear from my time on the State Boards is that we have a mental health crisis in America. The numbers are clear. But the crisis is much worse among young people. Especially our young girls. Here are some statistics – fresh off the grill.

A February report by the CDC's bi-annual "Youth Risk Behavior Survey" found that *most* teen girls - 57% - now say that they experience persistent sadness or hopelessness - up from 36% in 2011. And 30% of teen girls now say that they have seriously considered suicide - up from 19% in 2011. Teen boys are doing badly too, but their rates aren't as high and their increases aren't as dramatic. And these numbers are mirrored all over the globe by the way, this isn't only an American phenomena.

Of course everyone is trying to figure out what's causing this. And there are a number of suggestions – pretty controversial – but there is mounting evidence that social media is a substantial *cause*, not just a tiny correlation, of the depression and anxiety and subsequent harmful actions. After all, what would have happened around 2011, which was when these trends began to skyrocket?

Social media. Instagram was founded in 2010. The iPhone 4 was released then too - the first smartphone with a front-facing camera which allowed the "selfie" to become a cultural phenomenon. In 2012 Facebook bought Instagram, and that's the year that its user base exploded. By 2015, it was becoming normal for 12-year-old girls to spend hours each day taking selfies, editing selfies, and posting them for friends, enemies, and strangers to comment on, while also spending

hours each day scrolling through photos of other girls and fabulously wealthy female celebrities with (seemingly) vastly superior bodies and lives. The hours girls spent each day on Instagram were taken from sleep, exercise, and time with friends and family. What did we think would happen to them?

There's an NYU Moral Psychologist who I quite like, Jonathan Haidt - who has been sounding an early alarm on this. This science is deep, but here's his summary of the problem. "In brief, it's the transition from a **play-based childhood** involving a lot of risky unsupervised play, which is essential for overcoming fear and fragility, to a **phone-based childhood** which blocks normal human development by taking time away from sleep, play, and in-person socializing, as well as causing addiction and drowning kids in social comparisons they can't win." It's digital vs. analog community.

Now, parents, don't go home and yank your kids off social media cold turkey, because the studies show that if your kid is not online while all their friends *are*, that actually makes the depression and anxiety *worse*. This is not a problem that can be solved individually. It's going to take a societal answer – phone-free schools, or government regulated age restrictions.

My fear is that we no longer have the will as a society – or maybe we lack the communal glue – to overcome our rampant and poisonous individualism and do what’s right for the greater whole. Some of you are old enough to remember when tobacco industry financed scientists would try to cast doubt on whether cigarettes were really the cause of rising rates of cancer. Of course they were, but it was in some people’s best financial interest to deny the truth.

Well I have to tell you there are a whole lot more people making a whole lot more money by keeping kids – and all of us – enslaved to social media algorithms. So there are a lot of people who have a vested interest in keeping us from the truth that is right before our eyes – well, once we get the screens away from our eyes.

And of course, the church is the place where God has always raised up a voice to speak a truth that counters the larger society. But the saddest times in Biblical history, were those when God’s people were so caught up in the selfish ambition that they were really no different than the society. And why would society turn to God when the message is the same that they are already getting? Why go to church when you can basically get the same thing at the mall? Excuse me, malls are dying too...when you can get the same thing streamed on Netflix or delivered by Amazon?

Church attendance has been in rapid decline overall in America – blue areas feel it more strongly than red areas, which makes sense when you think of how much of the American church has chosen a side politically. But it’s everywhere and the pandemic just accelerated the crisis. We are still about 60 percent of our pre-COVID attendance here at SWFF, but the truth is we had a significant decline from 2016 directly tied to that year’s election.

And both of those things were heavily influenced by social media. Whether it was Trump vs. Clinton or Maskers vs. Anti-Vaxers, we’re getting our news – and thus our understanding of truth – from vastly different sources. And we’ve allowed it to invade the walls of the church – just like every other institution in the country.

And it’s because the church has become a **commodity** rather than a **community**. This is the great danger of online church – and I am talking to those of you watching at home, and probably a lot of you that aren’t watching anymore at all. The church is not an innocent victim in all this, we’ve bought into the ambition. Listen to one pastor’s endorsement of a streaming app that allows churches to put their services online – full disclosure, the one we used to use.



“We were looking for a way to get our product out there and this was the easiest to access for a wide variety of people and more user-friendly.” What key words did you catch? “Get our product out there”, “easy access”, “user friendly”. This is the language of commodity. There’s nothing user-friendly about Jesus’ call to “take up your cross and follow me” – which is why so many churches don’t mention it!

In 2017, Mark Zuckerberg gave a speech in Chicago in which he outlined his new “Meta” vision broadening his company’s ability to connect people together. In it he highlighted the recent religious declines and claimed that Facebook was becoming “the new church.”

Is he right? Well, if church is just a digital product to be consumed, then maybe he is. But if it’s an authentic analog community with real spaces where real people rub shoulders and share life together, probably not. The question is going to be which do we want? The audience or the community. I will warn you, community is messy. Which leads to the big difference between commodity and community; is it build around preference or presence?

Digital communities are based on our **preferences**. They are convenient and customizable. Relationships can be quickly chosen and unchosen. Don’t like something someone said on your Facebook feed? Unfriend them. Irritated by someone’s endless stream of foodie pics on your Instagram feed? Unfollow them. Vexed by the opinions of someone on Twitter? Blocked! All these are matters of preference that can be activated in a split second.

But analog communities are based on **presence**. You know what determined who makes up your community this morning? Whoever decided to show up! You don’t get to have a customized follower list at church – all though more and more in our consumer church culture we try. But that’s not what God designed the church to be. Let me read to you from a reply to Zuckerberg’s claim that ran in the London paper, *The Guardian*:

“At their best, churches offer a perspective on life fundamentally opposed to the culture Facebook encourages, and upon which it feeds...Churches, at their best, bring us into contact with people we would never think of as friends. There are cliques, of course. But we all come to the same table and drink from the same cup, and sing the same songs, and say the same prayers. The Lord’s Prayer, after all, is not in the singular, but the plural: ‘Give us today, our daily bread.’”

“It’s a breaking down of barriers, an awareness of mutual responsibility and dependence, a celebration of brokenness. It’s an unsanitized experience of humanity, and all the healthier for it...A good church is more than just a social network: it’s a place of transcendence, space, silence, peace, devotion, richness, and depth. No matter how grand Zuckerberg’s visions may be, they will never compete.” (Peter Ormerod, *The Guardian*, Jun 29, 2017)

Presence not preference. You’ve heard the saying, “You can pick your friends, but you can’t pick your family.” Well, the church is supposed to be a family. This is another area where the modern American evangelical church – in spite of good intentions – has wound up poisoning what the true church is supposed to be. Due in part to the decades long rise of individualism in society at large, many Christians today have been taught – both explicitly and implicitly - that salvation in Christ is an individual decision.

But the Bible begs to differ. Jesus and the New Testament writers make it clear that those who profess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are not saved simply as isolated individuals but – most importantly – they are saved *into* the community of God. And that means that if God is our Father...we have siblings. We have brothers and sisters.

We may have heard this nomenclature used in the church for so long that we forget it’s significance. Today, the foundational cultural bond is recognized in marriage. That is your strongest relational legal commitment once you turn 18. But this was not so during the time of Jesus. In the Patriarchal system of the day, it was the blood relationship between siblings who shared the same father that was the most significant legal and societal bond – over and above the contractual bond between spouses.

And so when the New Testament writers – over 100 times – address followers of Jesus, members of the church, as “brothers and sisters” it takes on that added significance. In Christ, we become children of our one Father God, siblings bound by the blood of Jesus himself.

Now, every family is different. Some are volatile and unpredictable. Some are boring and quiet. Some are naturally affectionate, some are German! Relationships vary, but kinship does not. They will forever be brother and sister – even if they decide to never speak to each other again. There’s no way to legally separate from a sibling. They did not choose the connection, the only choice they have now is how they will navigate the bonded reality of their kinship.

Look, that's not true of your job. That is a total consumer choice on your part – and on theirs. Your company should not refer to you as family. “We’re just one big family here at the International Bank of Crypto Synergy!” That’s toxic. You need to watch your back – they are manipulating you. Families don’t downsize when shareholder portfolios dip!

But it is appropriate when it comes to the church, because it is not supposed to be a consumer choice. We did not *choose* the church, we are *saved* into it. The only choice we have now is how we will care for and cultivate this kinship. Of course, there are local branches of the universal church and there is a choice to be made from time to time. If you get transferred to a new city, you will have to make a choice. And there are plenty of values that you should properly base your choice on.

But I want to warn you about a big one that can be quite damaging – maybe surprisingly so. And it’s one I hear rather a lot. And it’s very tied into the *preference* model of community instead of *presence*. Here it is, “I feel...*comfortable*...here.” Comfortable is not a proper matrix by which to measure a church community.

For over five years now, I have been part of a community that meets here in the church parking lot at 6am on Tuesdays and Thursdays – well they meet on Mondays as well but I’m a pastor so screw that! It’s a fitness group called Camp Gladiator. And we lift weights and we run around and we do “burpees”, which are so clearly demonic that I hesitate to allow them so near to the sanctuary.

And over the years, I have lost weight, built muscle, gained energy, increased flexibility. I have felt a great kinship with my fellow gladiators. I have been to their weddings and visited them in the hospital. I have felt exhilaration. I have felt pain. I have laughed. I have cried. I have legitimately thrown up a time or two! But one thing I have never felt in all these years is comfortable. If I ever did, our leader would be the first one to tell me to grab a heavier set of weights.

Digital community held at arms link might be more *comfortable* than the random presence of the analog, but what are we getting really? As Brett McCracken writes in his book, *Uncomfortable*, “There is a reverse correlation between the comfortability of Christianity and its vibrancy. When the Christian Church is comfortable and cultural, she tends to be weak. When she is uncomfortable and countercultural, she tends to be strong.”

This is not a new phenomenon. Since its earliest days, the church has been about unlikely people gathering as a family, in spite of their differences, living in uncomfortable presence with one another, learning together to become a transformative community. Not an audience, a community.

Well, let's not forget our movie. Eventually – through the help of Leslie Stahl and *60 Minutes* – Marcel gets his family back. Now, he sacrificed his peace and quite to do it – it's quite chaotic now with all kinds of little nieces and nephew vying for his attention - but it's a good trade. But every now and then he escapes down to the laundry room for some peace and quiet, but even in his isolation, he learns a valuable lesson about his place in this world. Let's watch the ending scene...[**Whole :53**]

Part of a whole. So Marcel found his authentic community – his family. How do *we*? What is the answer to our digital/analog scattering? I don't think we're going to put the internet genie back in its bottle. Nor would we want to. After all, there are many places in this world where it is very dangerous to become a Christian and online church is the only presentation of the gospel available to them. But do you know what those persecuted Christians want more than anything? To be in the *presence* of the brothers and sisters in physical worship.

So let's not take it for granted here. I thought of a number of application points we could end on. Be present at church. Use the online streaming *acutely* – when you're sick or have to be out of town or at work – not *chronically* – because it's more comfortable! Parents, your kids especially need to be in church. Need to be around all these uncool old people.

And join a Connect Group. What great timing. We're just about to start new ones. Even on Sunday you can only be present here so deep. Connect Groups are where *you* set the spiritual agenda. Last session our group skipped the DVD lesson a couple of times and just did life together. It's what was needed.

But it's not just practical ideas. There has to be a change of heart. A change of how we understand the very nature of community. And the one thing I do know is that involves being sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Let me close with this. We started by talking about The Tower of Babel. It is usually considered by theologians that the *reversal* of the curse of Babel took place on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. I've talked about that in detail before and I won't take time to spell it all out here.

But there was a lot of supernatural – fire from heaven, speaking in tongues, words of prophecy. But none of that could have happened without what Luke specifically notes in **Acts 2:1**, “*When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.*” And because the brother and sisters of Christ were physically gathered together in one place, the world got metaphorically un-scattered – everyone speaking a common heavenly tongue - a picture of what going to happen physically one day in eternity.

And what were they speaking with this common language? Not songs about building their *own* name. Not songs of selfish ambition. But (**Acts 2:11**) “...*we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!*”” And there is one wonder of God in particular that stands out above them all.

You see, there is a theology behind the idea of Analog Church, and it’s the incarnation. The Christmas story reminds us that there was a moment in history when God became one of us. He became Jewish, in the first century, in Judea and Galilee ruled by the Roman Empire. For some people Christianity is digital: God sent a message to us and we pick it up somehow – maybe through a tract at a bus stop, or even a late night TV preacher – either we believe it or not, and then we live according to it or not.

But God didn’t send a message. God sent His son, born of a real woman, married to a real man who had a real job. They - all of them – experienced real problems because very few of their neighbors bought their story of a virgin conception. But Jesus grew up and became a real man and found real humans with real bodies to follow him and extend his kingdom mission to the broken and wounded in his part of the world.

If Jesus is God incarnate, then God chose to reveal Himself in analog, not digital. You can communicate a message in words and distribute it on papyrus or paper or the World Wide Web, but you can’t see the revelation of God except in that one person – the person who lived, who died on a cross, who was raised from the dead, who ascended to the heavens, who rules, and who will come again one day in bodily presence to take us to be *with him*.

This is what the church points to – not just a message, but a messenger, a person. Our physical presence with one another is meant to be a living embodiment of the incarnation itself. As a church we can communicate conveniently and quickly in digital formats – I’m not going to pull the plug on the camera...*yet*.

But you can't "do church" digitally. The most important parts of the church are embodied...including your bodies. Knowing one another, loving one another, sitting and standing and praying with one another, singing with one another, listening to the sermon and watching the body language of those around us and sensing the energy – or sometimes *lack* of energy – in the room. These are the things that make a church a church. It should be more than an audience. It should be a community.

Let's pray...