



Protecting and Sustaining the Digital Future of the Seventh-day Adventist[®] Church

Protecting the Work while Proclaiming the Word

“In a world where technology increasingly shapes our ability to fulfill our mission, we must be vigilant stewards of the resources entrusted to us. Our digital landscape is not merely a vehicle for communication; it is a sacred space where the gospel is shared, our faith-communities are enriched, and Seekers are engaged. **As we navigate the complexities of data sovereignty, vendor lock-in, and the economic realities of cloud computing, we must ensure that our Digital Strategy for Mission aligns with our biblical values and eschatological convictions.** This document outlines a path forward that honors our commitment to mission while safeguarding our independence and integrity in an increasingly hostile world.”



Elder Paul H. Douglas
Chief Financial Officer

General Conference - Seventh-day Adventist Church

“Synergnomics”

The prudent practice of everyone paying a little and getting a lot,
rather than everyone paying a lot and getting a little.

Introduction: A Dual-Track Strategy for a Prophetic Mission

In an era where technology shapes both opportunity and challenge, the Seventh-day Adventist Church stands at a crossroads, called to steward its resources with wisdom while simultaneously proclaim the Three Angels' Messages with boldness.

Our digital landscape is a sacred trust—a space where the Gospel is shared, local church communities are strengthened, and seekers are invited to Christ. To fulfill this prophetic commission, the General Conference proposes a dual-track strategy that ***balances digital sovereignty with technological innovation***, ensuring our mission endures in an increasingly hostile world. "Guarding the Sanctuary: Securing Our Digital Foundation" outlines our commitment to owning our data, datacenters, and platforms, protecting critical back-office functions like finance, membership management, and governance through a private and hybrid cloud approach rooted in sovereignty and resilience.

In contrast, "Casting Wide the Net: Unleashing Digital Evangelism" embraces emerging and innovative technologies—such as AI, gaming, and social media—to amplify our Gospel outreach, leveraging every digital tool to reach ***“every nation, kindred, tongue, and people”*** (Revelation 14:6). Together, these strategies reflect our unwavering dedication to stewardship and mission, empowering the Church to navigate the complexities of the digital age while, through the power of the Holy Spirit, preparing the world for Jesus very soon return.

Guarding the Sanctuary: Securing Our Digital Foundation

Section 01

Ensuring Organizational Control of Technological Innovation

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, as a global movement whose very existence is rooted in the proclamation of the Three Angels Messages, is prophetically commissioned with sustaining its voice “of one crying in the wilderness” until Jesus returns. The present digital age, and the technological resources available to the Church today, offers unprecedented opportunities to reach every corner of the globe, and “every language and nation and tongue and people”.

But these digital tools also present significant challenges to critical areas of the Church’s operations, such as payroll, accounting, online giving, donor records, membership management, and other ecclesiastical information. As stewards, we are responsible for diligently managing the assets entrusted to us. And protecting and securing the Church’s data is a paramount responsibility. We must proactively address challenges with data sovereignty and vendor lock-in even as we seek to utilize every resource in advancing mission. If we do not, then we could allow these digital resources to threaten our ability to control our digital landscape.

This first section articulates a strategic vision rooted in three foundational tenets: owning our data, owning our datacenters, and owning our platforms. It integrates our eschatological understanding, addresses broader issues like cancel-culture and the economics of public cloud computing, and proposes a private and hybrid cloud approach to balance control with innovation.

The Imperative of Ownership: Data, Datacenters, and Platforms

On July 8, 2024, Elder Paul H. Douglas introduced these three strategic imperatives at the Adventist Church’s inaugural Digital Strategy for Mission Convention in Chiang Mai, Thailand. This digital strategy hinges on three foundational principles: owning our data, our datacenters, and our platforms. These tenets are not merely technical choices but reflections of our commitment to stewardship, autonomy, and mission integrity in an increasingly uncertain and hostile world. But more to the point, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we can sustain our “voice”, our ability to communicate the message of the Three Angels in an increasingly hostile “wilderness”.

1. Own the Data

Our data—encompassing membership records, financial details, ecclesiastical policy and procedure, but especially our digital proclamation of the Gospel—is a sacred and prophetic trust. Owning this organizational data means more than safeguarding privacy and security; it grants us full control over how it is used, analyzed, and shared, ensuring it serves the church’s mission without compromise. But most importantly, we can help ensure the continued availability of this strategic resource.

This ownership empowers us to steward the data in alignment with our values, free from external pressures or commercial interests that might seek to restrict or exploit its use. In a world where data is often commodified, owning our data ensures it remains a tool for ministry, not a liability subject to third-party agendas. Furthermore, it enables us to harness data-driven insights to better support our members’ spiritual discipleship and fosters community engagement, reinforcing our role as faithful stewards even in the digital age.



2. Own the Datacenter

Physical ownership of our infrastructure is a declaration of autonomy and resilience. By controlling our datacenters, we help shield ourselves from big tech, who are increasingly hostile to our societally unpopular stance on social issues such as LGBT and gay marriage, just to name a few. Big tech today unilaterally act as judge, jury, and executioner, having absolute autonomy over who they serve, and who uses their products.

Our vision, and its self-reliance, reflects our values of preparedness and stewardship, ensuring that our digital presence remains available and accessible, even in times of crisis or persecution. Moreover, owning the datacenter allows us to optimize performance and security to our exact specifications, creating a tailored environment that supports our mission without compromise. It also reduces long-term operational costs and dependencies, enabling us to allocate resources more effectively toward fulfilling our prophetic calling.

3. Own the Platform

Owning our platform is the key to preserving our digital voice today. It allows us to operate independently of third-party ecosystems, which may impose specific terms, limit customization, or differ from our principles. With ownership, we can innovate and adapt our digital presence to meet the unique needs of the world church, ensuring that our message is shared authentically and sustainably. This control also positions us to respond swiftly to emerging technologies or ministry opportunities, unhindered by external roadmaps or profit motives. In owning the platform, we affirm our commitment to facilitating mission and ministry through these digital resources that is more operationally agile while remaining faithful to our unchanging message. Additionally, it allows us to build a digital ecosystem that reflects our eschatological hope, fostering a space where our members can connect, learn, and prepare for Christ’s return.

These three principles—owning the data, the datacenter, and the platform—are interdependent pillars of our Digital Strategy for Mission. Together, they form a robust foundation that ensures our digital landscape remains a true reflection of our mission, resilient in the face of external pressures, and adaptable to the evolving needs of our world church family.

Eschatological Concerns: Preparing for the End Times

Our understanding of last day events must shape our technology strategy, otherwise we risk practicing what we do not preach! The Bible warns of times when religious liberty will be restricted (Revelation 13:16-17). We believe that solely relying on external service providers and third-party platforms will inevitably jeopardize our ability to share the gospel, especially as providers are increasingly censoring content and even denying service due to our biblical stance on certain social issues. Owning our digital assets ensures we maintain access to our resources, even amidst crisis or persecution, fulfilling our mission until Christ's return.

In the last days, as the Seventh-day Adventist Church remains steadfast in its biblical beliefs—such as its observance of the Sabbath—it will face increasing marginalization and alienation from society. Ellen G. White, in her book *Great Controversy*, foresaw this reality and warned of the challenges the church would encounter. She writes, *"As the movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided, the law will be invoked against commandment keepers. They will be threatened with fines and imprisonment, and some will be offered positions of influence, and other rewards and advantages, as inducements to renounce their faith"* (*Great Controversy*, p. 607). It would be irresponsible of us not to include technology within this context. It is clear that the Church's adherence to the Sabbath, and other social flashpoints of the day, will lead to legal and political repercussions, seeking to isolate the work of the Church from mainstream society.

Furthermore, Ellen White emphasizes the alienation the church will experience, stating, *"The world will hate them because they are not of the world. They will be despised and rejected."* (*Great Controversy*, p. 615). This highlights the reality of our church, and our church's message: increasingly marginalized and alienated by society because of our beliefs. These eschatological concerns reinforce the urgency of our Digital Strategy for Mission. By owning our data, datacenter, and platform, we work to ensure that the church can continue to proclaim the message, to preach the Gospel, even in the face of societal alienation and marginalization. Our digital sovereignty is an additional safeguard against the predicted challenges ahead, allowing us to remain a beacon of truth in a world that is increasingly hostile to our identify as God's end time movement.

This mounting hostility toward the church's distinctive beliefs will intensify as the end approaches, according to Ellen White. She writes, *"The religious organizations of the day have refused to listen to unpopular truths plainly brought to view in the Scriptures, and in combating them they have adopted interpretations and taken positions which have sown broadcast the seeds of skepticism."* (*Great Controversy*, p. 595). This passage illustrates how the church's refusal to conform to prevailing religious trends—particularly its unwavering commitment to the biblical Sabbath—will position it as an outlier, increasingly alienated from a technological society that embraces the counterfeit.

Broader Concerns: Cancel-Culture, Vendor Lock-In, and Public Cloud Economics

Several external factors reinforce the need for a hybrid approach as the basis for our Digital Strategy for Mission:

- **Cancel-Culture:** The risk of de-platforming is real, as seen in cases where organizations faced censorship for their views. For a Church upholding biblical values, owning our platform is a lasting defense against such threats.

- **Vendor Lock-In:** Dependency on a single cloud provider limits flexibility and increases costs over time. Switching providers can be complex and cost-prohibitive, locking us into unfavorable terms. A hybrid model reduces this risk and preserves the Church's ability to choose technology providers and vendors.
- **Economics of "Renting" Computers:** David Heinemeier Hansson (@DHH on X/Twitter), considered a founding father of the modern internet, critiques public cloud computing as an expensive rental model (world.hey.com/dhh). For predictable workloads, owning infrastructure can be far more cost-effective over time than public cloud fees, aligning with our stewardship principles.

Cancel-Culture and the Threat of De-Platforming

The phenomenon of cancel-culture has become a significant concern in the digital age, where organizations and individuals can be swiftly marginalized or silenced for holding unpopular or controversial views. For the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which upholds traditional biblical values, the risk of being de-platformed by external service providers is not merely theoretical. It is already happening today by major providers. Even within the broader industry, there have been numerous instances where “big tech” have censored or removed content that does not align with their view of “acceptable speech”. For example, in 2020, Big Tech deplatformed multiple companies for ideological reasons (including Parlor and Gab), citing content moderation. Since then, other organizations have been similarly deplatformed. In 2025, the United States government threatened to deplatform the European Union over trade disputes. These incidents underscore the fragility, the vulnerability of relying exclusively on public cloud providers who may not share our values or who could succumb to political pressures to censor or restrict access to our data.

For the Church, the implications are profound. Our mission to proclaim (publicly communicate) the gospel and uphold biblical truths could be severely hampered if our digital presence is at the mercy of popular service providers or hostile governments. By owning our platform, we create a digital sanctuary where our message can be shared without fear of unilateral censorship. This autonomy is crucial in an era where the line between acceptable and unacceptable speech is increasingly blurred, and where the Church's teachings on topics such as marriage, human sexuality, and the Roman Catholic church may be deemed controversial.

Moreover, the unpredictability of cancel-culture adds an additional layer of urgency. Policies enforced by tech giants can shift rapidly in response to public opinion or political pressure, leaving dependent organizations scrambling to adapt. We see demonstrated firsthand by the violent swing by tech companies following the 2024 presidential elections in the United States. The Church cannot afford such disruptions, especially when our ability to proclaim the Gospel is increasingly dependent on digital media. Today, mobile apps, websites, streaming services, and social media platforms play a vital, even transformational, role in connecting with members and sharing our faith with Seekers. Owning our infrastructure ensures continuity and stability, safeguarding our ability to fulfill our mission regardless of external whims.

Vendor Lock-In: The Hidden Costs of Dependency

Vendor lock-in is another critical concern. When an organization becomes deeply integrated with a single cloud provider, it often finds itself trapped in a cycle of dependency. The costs of migrating to another provider or bringing services in-house can be prohibitively high, involving not just financial outlays but also significant disruption and technical challenges. This lock-in can lead to a loss of negotiating power, as providers may increase prices or alter terms with little recourse for the church as a single customer.

For the Church, this dependency poses a strategic risk. Our ability to adapt to changing circumstances—whether technological, financial, or regulatory—could be severely constrained. A hybrid model mitigates this risk by distributing our digital assets across owned infrastructure and selected cloud services.

This approach allows us to leverage the benefits of cloud computing for specific use cases while maintaining the flexibility to pivot or scale as needed. It also ensures that we are not beholden to a single provider's ecosystem, preserving our ability to make decisions that best serve our mission.

Beyond flexibility, vendor lock-in can erode our long-term autonomy. Once entrenched in a provider's ecosystem, we might face compatibility issues with alternative solutions, forcing us to adopt additional services from the same vendor—further deepening the dependency. Over time, this will compromise our ability to innovate or even respond to emerging technologies that better align with our ministry needs. A hybrid strategy, by contrast, empowers us to research new tools and platforms without being tethered to a single provider's roadmap, ensuring that our digital presence evolves in step with our mission rather than a third party's agenda.

The Economics of Cloud Computing: Renting vs. Owning

The financial implications of cloud computing are another area of concern. While cloud services offer scalability and convenience, they often come at a premium. David Heinemeier Hansson (@DHH), the creator of the programming language Ruby on Rails, has been a vocal critic of the public cloud model, arguing that for many organizations, the long-term costs of renting compute resources far exceed the costs of owning and operating their own infrastructure. In his blog post on world.hey.com, DHH writes, "The [public] cloud is a trap. It's a trap of convenience, of short-term thinking, of outsourcing your core competencies. And it's a trap that can be incredibly expensive."

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which operates on principles of stewardship and fiscal responsibility, this perspective resonates deeply. Our workloads are often predictable and stable—such as hosting websites, managing member databases, or streaming Sabbath services—making the case for owned infrastructure even stronger. By investing in our own datacenters, distributed across the world field, we can achieve significant cost savings over time, redirecting those resources to further our front-line mission. Moreover, owning our infrastructure aligns with our eschatological concerns, providing a level of control and resilience that rented public cloud services cannot match.

Additionally, the economics of exclusively using public cloud computing reveal hidden costs that can accumulate unnoticed. Subscription fees, data transfer charges, data retention fees, data archival fees, and premium support tiers can inflate expenses beyond initial projections, particularly as our digital footprint continues to grow unabated. In contrast, capitalized investments in hardware, paired with manageable maintenance costs, offers a predictable budget that aligns with our commitment to wise resource management. This approach not only reduces financial strain but also frees up funds for initiatives like global evangelism or community outreach, amplifying our impact in tangible ways.

Strategic Independence: A Path Forward

Considering these concerns, strategic independence becomes not just a desirable goal but a necessity. By owning our data, datacenter, and platform, and through the wisdom given by the Holy Spirit, we work to help insulate ourselves from the whims of external providers and the volatility of national politics impacting the digital marketplace. This independence ensures that our Digital Strategy for Mission is driven by our mission and values, not by the policies or profit motives of third-party providers.

However, this does not mean complete isolation from public cloud technologies. A hybrid approach allows us to selectively utilize public cloud services where they offer clear advantages, such as in enhancing last-mile performance for global outreach. For instance, taking advantage of front-end UX/UI hosted environments while our critical organizational data remains securely housed in our own datacenter. ***It means being intentional about where our data is hosted, and ensuring that no single provider can be judge, jury, and executioner of our ability to proclaim. It means using a multi-cloud and private cloud strategy that diversifies our risk while maximizing our reach.***

This balanced strategy positions the Church to navigate the complexities of the digital age with wisdom and prophetic insight, ensuring that our digital voice remains strong, independent, and aligned with our sacred mission. It reflects a proactive stance—anticipating risks, optimizing resources, and preserving our ability to proclaim the gospel in an increasingly uncertain world.

By blending ownership with selective public cloud use, we build a resilient foundation that honors our values and empowers our outreach for as long as the Lord allows.

A Hybrid Approach: Balancing Control and Innovation

We propose a hybrid cloud architecture based on data classification:

- **Private Cloud** (distributed denominational datacenters) for Confidential and Sensitive Data: Critical data, such as membership and financial records, will reside in our owned datacenters, replicated cross regions and territories, helping ensure our church's digital sovereignty, security, and control.
- **Public Cloud** for Last-Mile Performance, Scale, and Reach: Non-sensitive functions will thoughtfully leverage distributed multi-provider public cloud technologies to enhance reach, availability, and accessibility.

Addressing Common Objections

While a hybrid infrastructure approach offers significant advantages, it's natural to face objections related to cost, complexity, scalability, and security. Thoughtful individuals have also asked *"Can the Adventist Church really pull this off?!"* Below, we address these concerns with real-world examples, showing how organizations have successfully overcome similar challenges. These cases ground our discussion in reality, demonstrating that this strategy is not just theoretical but proven in practice, and commonly accepted in industry.

Cost: Long-Term Savings Through Ownership

While a hybrid infrastructure approach offers significant advantages, it's natural to face objections related to cost, complexity, scalability, and security. Thoughtful individuals have also asked *"Can the Adventist Church really pull this off?!"* Below, we address these concerns with real-world examples, showing how organizations have successfully overcome similar challenges. These cases ground our discussion in reality, demonstrating that this strategy is not just theoretical but proven in practice, and commonly accepted in industry.

Objection: Building and maintaining a private cloud environment requires significant upfront and ongoing expenses, which is less appealing than the flexible, pay-as-you-go model of public cloud services.

Response: Although there is an initial investment, operating private cloud infrastructure can yield substantial long-term savings, particularly for organizations with predictable workloads. Organizations small and large maintain private cloud environments while capitalizing on public cloud resources (i.e. the hybrid model). Here are two examples:

- **File Storage and Collaboration:** A major file-storage and collaboration provider moved away from a leading public cloud platform to its own private cloud infrastructure, driven by cost considerations. They saved nearly \$75 million over two years by bringing storage in-house, optimizing their setup for their specific needs and avoiding ongoing cloud data use fees.
- **Mobile Gaming:** A high-traffic mobile-gaming company cut its cloud spending by 50% by shifting from a public cloud platform to its own datacenters. This transition gave them better control over costs for their consistent, high-traffic workloads.

These examples highlight that once entities reach a certain size, owning infrastructure can be far more economical over time, turning an upfront cost into a strategic investment.

Complexity: Managing a Hybrid Model Effectively

Objection: A hybrid model is more complex to manage than relying on a single cloud provider, demanding extra expertise and resources.

Response: While complexity may increase, many organizations have mastered hybrid setups with proper planning and intentional architecture. Consider these cases:

- **Government and Defense:** A large government/defense organization employs a hybrid cloud strategy, integrating private cloud (on-premise) datacenters with multiple cloud providers. This allows them to secure sensitive governmental, political, and strategic data while using the cloud for less critical tasks, proving that complexity can be managed with the right approach.
- **Streaming Media:** A global streaming-media company runs a hybrid model with certain services on public cloud while maintaining a private cloud (on-premise) datacenters for tasks like content encoding and authentication. Automation helps them handle the complexity seamlessly.

These successes show that while a hybrid model requires effort, it's manageable with training and tools. The benefits of control and flexibility outweigh the challenges when executed well.

Scalability: Balancing Flexibility with Control

Objection: Cloud providers are unmatched in scalability, and a private cloud hybrid environment will surely struggle to keep up.

Response: A hybrid model can scale effectively by combining on-premise and cloud resources. Here's how others have done it:

- **Online Marketplace:** A global online-marketplace platform uses multiple public cloud providers for certain infrastructure (a multi-cloud approach) but supplements it with private cloud (on-premise datacenters) for tasks like data analytics. This hybrid approach has supported rapid scaling during peak seasons while keeping critical data in-house.
- **Financial Services:** A major financial-services firm blends private cloud (on-premise) datacenters for sensitive data with cloud services for customer-facing apps. They scale digital banking offerings while meeting strict compliance needs.

These examples prove a hybrid model offers scalability and control, making it ideal for balancing dynamic growth with stable, critical operations.

Security: Tailored Protection for Sensitive Data

Objection: Cloud providers deliver strong security, and owning infrastructure might not improve protection.

Response: Owning infrastructure allows for customized security tailored to specific needs, often surpassing generic cloud offerings. See these examples:

- **Integrated Healthcare:** A large integrated healthcare system built its own private cloud datacenters to safeguard patient data. With strict access controls and monitoring designed for healthcare compliance, they achieve a security level tailored to their needs.

- **Investment Banking:** A global investment bank invested in its own datacenters to protect sensitive financial data, implementing proprietary security measures to match their unique risk profile.

For organizations handling sensitive information, owning infrastructure offers the ability to craft bespoke security, reducing reliance on shared public cloud environments and enhancing protection.

Attainability: Can the Adventist Church really pull this off?

Objection: The Adventist Church has historically faced challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled technology professionals, raising doubts about its capacity to implement and sustain a complex hybrid infrastructure.

Response: While the church has faced hurdles in building robust technology teams, these attempts have been fragmented and siloed. We believe that by working together, and by the Lord's blessing, we can succeed where in the past we have failed. A noteworthy recent success of working together demonstrates our Church's growing capability to execute sophisticated IT initiatives.

A prime example is Hope Channel International (HCI), which is the coordinating entity for the Seventh-day Adventist Church's global visual media brand. HCI transitioned its Hope.Cloud platform from public cloud hosting to a private cloud, on-premise globally distributed datacenters creating its own custom Content Delivery Network (CDN) in late 2024.

Through collaboration with the General Conference and local Church entities worldwide, HCI deployed a distributed compute environment across Adventist-owned properties, including Hope Media Europe in Germany, Hope Channel Canada, the Adventist Church in Singapore, the Adventist Church in South Africa, and in other denominational locations. HCI has created a resilient, fully church-owned Adventist Private Cloud. HCI's project, led by senior director of technology Justin Woods, showcases the church's ability to leverage internal expertise and global collaboration to achieve technical excellence. By partnering with Adventist institutions and employing automation tools like Ansible playbooks and a Wireguard-based private overlay network, HCI overcame staffing and skill challenges, simplifying deployment for local IT teams.

This achievement, described by Richard Stephenson as a "watershed moment" for the Adventist Church, proves that with strategic planning, partnerships, and investment in training, the church can build and maintain advanced infrastructure, making a hybrid model not only attainable but a reality.



If Christians were to **act in concert**, moving forward as one, under the direction of **one Power**, for the accomplishment of **one purpose**, they would move the world.

- *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 9, p. 221*

Casting Wide the Net:

Unleashing Digital Evangelism

Section 02

Leveraging Emerging Technologies for Public Evangelism

While the hybrid cloud strategy outlined above prioritizes control and sovereignty for critical back-office functions—such as payroll, accounting, remittances, online giving, membership records, and church governance—the Seventh-day Adventist Church must adopt a different approach for public evangelism. Our prophetic commission to proclaim the Three Angels' Messages to “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6) demands that we harness emerging technologies to amplify our outreach. Unlike back-office operations, where data sensitivity necessitates responsible restraint, front-line evangelism requires boldness, innovation, and the strategic use of a broad spectrum of digital tools to engage seekers and share our message in a digital world.

The Imperative of Public Evangelism in the Digital Age

The digital landscape is a modern mission field, offering unprecedented opportunities to connect with individuals across national, geographic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. Digital and emerging technologies—such as gaming, social media, artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), mobile-first applications—enable the Church to create immersive, personalized, and accessible experiences that resonate with diverse audiences. These tools are not merely conveniences; they are instruments through which the Holy Spirit can work to draw hearts to Christ. As Ellen G. White wrote, “*We must take every justifiable means to bring the light before the people. Let the press be utilized, and let every advertising agency be employed that will call attention to the work*” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 36). Today, this counsel extends to the digital realm, urging us to leverage every technological avenue to proclaim the Gospel. These are our marching orders, we must be about our Father’s business!

Public evangelism, unlike the business operations of the Church, is inherently outward-facing and less constrained by the same data sovereignty concerns. While membership records or financial data require stringent protection within our private cloud infrastructure, evangelistic content—such as sermons, Bible studies, and digital-first media campaigns—is designed for public consumption. This distinction allows the Church to adopt a more expansive approach, utilizing public cloud services, third-party platforms, and cutting-edge technologies to maximize reach and impact. For example, streaming services like YouTube, social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok, and agentic, AI-driven content personalization can deliver the Gospel to millions in real time, engaging seekers in ways that traditional methods cannot.

Classifying Data and Purpose for Strategic Technology Use

To balance our commitment to stewardship with our evangelistic mandate, we must classify data and its intended purpose clearly:

- **Confidential and Sensitive Data (Back-Office Operations):** Data related to payroll, accounting, membership, ecclesiastical governance, and other internal functions is classified as sensitive and must remain within our private cloud/hybrid cloud infrastructure. This ensures compliance with data protection regulations, mitigates risks of vendor lock-in, and safeguards against external pressures such as cancel-culture or de-platforming. The hybrid cloud model, with its emphasis on Adventist-owned datacenters, is ideally suited for these operations, providing security, control, and resilience.
- **Public Evangelistic Content (Front-Line Mission):** Content created for public evangelism—such as digital media, sermons, evangelistic campaigns, mobile apps, or VR-based Bible studies—is classified as non-sensitive and intended for widespread distribution. This content must leverage a diverse array of public cloud services, third-party platforms, and emerging technologies to achieve maximum reach and engagement. For instance, hosting evangelistic videos on multiple public platforms ensures low-latency

access for seekers worldwide, while AI algorithms can tailor content to individual interests, enhancing its effectiveness.

This classification enables the Church to maintain a dual-track strategy: a controlled, hybrid approach for back-office functions and an agile, innovative approach for public evangelism. By distinguishing between these purposes, we ensure that our technological choices align with both our stewardship responsibilities and our evangelistic mission.

Embracing Emerging Technologies for Gospel Proclamation

To fulfill our prophetic calling, the Church must proactively adopt emerging technologies that enhance our ability to share the Gospel. Below are key areas where these technologies can transform our evangelistic efforts:

- 1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Personalization:** AI can analyze user behavior and preferences to deliver tailored evangelistic content, such as Bible study recommendations or devotional materials. Chatbots powered by AI can provide real-time answers to spiritual questions, guiding seekers toward a deeper understanding of the Gospel. For example, an AI-driven app could offer multilingual Bible studies, adapting content to the user's cultural context and learning style.
- 2. Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR):** AR and VR technologies can create immersive experiences that bring biblical narratives to life. Virtual church services, 3D recreations of biblical events, or VR-based mission trips can engage younger generations and provide meaningful spiritual experiences. These tools can also make the Gospel accessible to individuals in remote or restricted regions, where physical outreach is challenging.
- 3. Social Media and Streaming Platforms:** Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram are powerful tools for reaching global audiences. Short-form videos, live-streamed worship services, and interactive Q&A sessions can connect with seekers in real time. By leveraging these platforms' algorithms and advertising tools, the Church can target specific demographics, ensuring that our message reaches those most open to the Gospel.
- 4. Mobile Applications:** Mobile apps can deliver evangelistic content directly to users' devices, offering features like daily devotionals, prayer requests, or live event notifications. Apps like the Adventist Church's existing Sabbath School app demonstrate the potential for mobile technology to foster spiritual growth and community engagement.
- 5. Mission-Oriented Gaming Platforms:** Mission-oriented or public cloud-based CDNs and edge computing can enhance the performance of evangelistic content, ensuring fast load times and seamless streaming for users worldwide. This is critical for maintaining engagement, particularly in regions with limited internet infrastructure.
- 6. Gaming for Spiritual Engagement:** Interactive gaming offers a dynamic way to engage younger audiences and share biblical truths in an accessible, engaging format. A leading example is *Heroes: The Bible Trivia Game*, developed by the Adventist Church. This free mobile app, which surpassed 1 million downloads in October 2023, uses engaging gameplay and challenging trivia to deepen players' understanding of the Bible and the Three Angels' Messages. *Heroes* is a powerful tool for combating Bible illiteracy and connecting with gamers worldwide. Other examples include *The Ten*, a VR game released by the Adventist Church in April 2025, that leads gamers through the Ten Commandments in an engaging story-led experience.

By integrating these technologies, the Church can create a dynamic, global evangelistic ecosystem that adapts to the needs of diverse audiences while remaining faithful to our message. This approach aligns with our eschatological urgency, ensuring that we utilize every available resource to prepare the world for Christ's return.

Mitigating Risks in Public Evangelism

While the use of public providers and third-party platforms offers significant advantages for evangelism, it is not without risks. The threat of cancel-culture, as discussed earlier, remains an ever-present concern, as does the potential for platform policies to restrict evangelistic content or to classify our content as “hate-speech”. To mitigate these risks, the Church must:

- **Diversify Platform Use:** Avoid over-reliance on a single platform by distributing evangelistic content across multiple channels in multiple countries and territories (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, and owned platforms). This reduces the impact of de-platforming or censorship on any single provider.
- **Maintain Owned Platforms as a Fallback:** Continue developing and promoting church-owned platforms, such as Hope Channel’s Hope.Cloud, as a primary hub for evangelistic content. These platforms serve as a digital sanctuary, ensuring continuity of outreach even if third-party services are disrupted.
- **Monitor and Adapt to Policy Changes:** Establish a media and marketing team to monitor platform policies and emerging trends, enabling the Church to adapt quickly to changes in content moderation or service terms while still safeguarding our brand.
- **Prioritize Open-Source and Decentralized Technologies:** Explore open-source tools and decentralized platforms (e.g., Mastodon or blockchain-based content distribution) to reduce dependence on proprietary ecosystems and enhance resilience.

These strategies ensure that our evangelistic efforts remain robust and adaptable, even in the face of external challenges. By combining the reach of public platforms with the security of owned infrastructure, we create a resilient framework for Gospel proclamation.

A Call to Action: Innovate for the Mission

The Seventh-day Adventist Church stands at a pivotal moment in its history. The digital age offers unprecedented opportunities using tools that our church founders could scarcely have imagined, yet it also demands wisdom and discernment to navigate its complexities. As we steward our back-office operations with a hybrid cloud strategy, we must simultaneously embrace the full spectrum of emerging technologies for public evangelism. This dual approach reflects our commitment to both faithfulness, stewardship, and innovation, ensuring that we honor our sacred trust while seizing every opportunity to share the Gospel.

As Elder Paul H. Douglas emphasized at the 2024 Digital Strategy for Mission Convention, “Our digital landscape is a sacred space where the Gospel is shared.” By leveraging AI, AR/VR, social media, mobile apps, gaming, and other technologies, we can transform this space into a vibrant mission field, reaching seekers with the message of hope and salvation. Let us move forward with boldness, guided by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the Three Angels’ Messages until Christ returns.



We serve a **Big God** who does **Big Things**. Let us therefore do **Big Things** with our **Big God**!

Conclusion:

A Strategy for an Uncertain Future

Section 03

Concerns about cost, complexity, scalability, and security are valid but surely not prohibitive. Organizations across file storage, online marketplaces, integrated healthcare, and even the Adventist Church's Hope Channel International have shown that a hybrid model can deliver cost savings, manageable complexity, effective scaling, and enhanced security. These real-world successes confirm that this approach is not only feasible but operationally (and missionally) advantageous, offering a practical strategy that balances control, flexibility, and efficiency.

"In a world that grows more antagonistic to our beliefs by the day, we must be proactive in securing and prolonging our digital presence. **This strategy is not about fear; it is about faithfulness.** By taking control of our digital landscape, we are positioning the Church to continue its mission unhindered, ensuring that the gospel reaches every remote corner of the earth until the day of Christ's return. **This hybrid strategy, rooted in stewardship and faith, ensures our digital voice endures in a hostile world, fulfilling our sacred mission.**"



Richard T. Stephenson

Associate Treasurer for Digital Strategy

General Conference - Seventh-day Adventist Church

This is a New Day!