

## **Digital Religion and Hybrid Worship in a Protestant Minority Congregation**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study examines how digital media are integrated into the religious life of GKP Cirebon, a Protestant minority congregation in Indonesia. **Methods:** This study employs a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through field observation, digital observation of church platforms, documentation of online worship and congregational activities, and interviews with pastors, church administrators, and congregants. The data were analyzed thematically by classifying forms of religious activities, patterns of digital media integration, and categories of congregational response. **Findings:** The findings show that digital media at GKP Cirebon are used across three main domains of religious life: worship, religious education, and pastoral-social ministry. Digital integration operates through three modalities: livestreaming, interactive online participation, and digital communication. Congregational and pastoral responses are heterogeneous, consisting of positive acceptance, adaptive or ambivalent acceptance, and critical reservation. Digital platforms expand access to worship, religious education, pastoral care, and congregational communication, especially for members limited by mobility, time, health, or distance. However, physical worship remains central because it provides embodied fellowship, direct interaction, shared liturgical atmosphere, and communal intimacy. **Implications:** This study suggests that digital ministry should be developed not merely as a technical service but as a pastoral and communicative strategy. For local churches, digital media can extend access and sustain participation, but they need to be managed in ways that preserve physical fellowship, communal worship, and active congregational involvement. **Originality/Value:** This study contributes to digital religion and media studies by offering an empirical analysis of a Protestant minority congregation in Indonesia. Its originality lies in showing that digital media function as an extension of religious access rather than a replacement for physical worship, and in identifying the negotiation between digital accessibility and physical communality as a key dynamic in contemporary congregational life.

Keywords: Digital accessibility; digital religion; embodied communality; hybrid worship; Protestant minority congregation.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, digital media have become increasingly embedded in religious practice across different faith communities. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this process by forcing religious institutions to use livestreaming, social media, Zoom, and other online communication platforms to maintain worship, religious education, pastoral care, and community communication when physical gatherings were restricted (Baker, Marti, Braunstein, Whitehead, & Yukich, 2020). Studies on religious practice during the pandemic show that online worship, virtual prayer meetings, and digitally mediated rituals became important ways for communities to sustain spiritual life under conditions of social distancing (Addo, 2021; Amores, 2024). However, the significance of digital media did not disappear after physical restrictions were lifted. Instead, many religious communities continued to use digital platforms as part of hybrid religious practice, combining onsite worship with online access, digital documentation, and virtual communication (H.A. Campbell & Cheong, 2022; Cheong & Campbell, 2022; Santos & Franca, 2025). This post-pandemic situation indicates that digital media are no longer merely temporary emergency tools, but are increasingly becoming part of everyday religious life. At the same time, the relationship between digital mediation and physical worship remains an important question, especially

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because online access may expand participation while physical gatherings continue to provide embodied interaction, communal atmosphere, and shared religious experience.

In Indonesia's plural religious landscape, the question of digital religious practice is particularly relevant for minority religious communities that need to maintain worship, faith education, pastoral care, and public visibility within complex social settings. Minority communities often negotiate their religious presence through local regulations, social relations, and access to communal spaces, especially in contexts where the establishment or public expression of religious life may require careful negotiation with surrounding communities (Nasir, 2020; Suryawati & Syaputri, 2022). For local Protestant congregations, digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, websites, and messaging applications can provide additional channels for sustaining worship, circulating religious education materials, coordinating pastoral care, documenting congregational events, and making community activities publicly visible. However, digital media should not be understood as solving the spatial or social challenges faced by minority religious communities. Rather, they expand the ways in which such communities remain present, communicate internally, and document their religious activities in a relatively accessible and non-confrontational form. In this sense, digital media provide an important context for examining how minority congregations negotiate religious access, community connection, and public visibility in contemporary Indonesia.

Research on digital media and religious practice has been widely discussed in recent scholarship, particularly in relation to how religious communities adapt to digital platforms in worship, communication, education, and community formation. Based on the author's review, previous studies can be grouped into three main categories: studies on digital religion and mediatization, studies on churches and hybrid worship, and studies on congregational responses to digitally mediated religious practice. The first category focuses on digital religion and the mediatization of religion. Scholars of digital religion have shown that digital media are not merely external tools for transmitting religious messages, but environments in which religious practices, identities, communities, and forms of authority are reorganized (Heidi A. Campbell & Evolvi, 2020; Heidi A Campbell, 2012). Similarly, the mediatization of religion explains how media gradually become embedded in the everyday organization and experience of religious life, shaping how religion is accessed, practiced, communicated, and publicly represented (S Hjarvard, 2013; Stig Hjarvard, 2011a). Recent literature reviews also indicate that new media have reshaped religious communication by creating new forms of online participation, religious authority, and community interaction (Hajdini & Iaia, 2024). These studies provide an important theoretical foundation for understanding why digital platforms increasingly matter in worship, pastoral communication, and community formation; however, they do not yet sufficiently explain how these processes unfold in local Protestant minority congregations in Indonesia.

The second category consists of studies that focus more specifically on churches, hybrid worship, digital ecclesiology, and congregational responses to digitally mediated religious practice. Recent research shows that many churches used livestreaming, online meetings, social media, and other digital communication platforms to maintain worship, pastoral care, and community engagement during periods of physical restriction (Baker, Marti, et al., 2020; O'Lynn, 2022). Campbell (2023) further shows that the pandemic exposed digital divides within church communities, including technological inaccessibility, hesitation, and digital reluctance among some congregants. Studies on hybrid worship also indicate that digital media can expand religious access and sustain community participation, but they also raise challenges related to digital literacy, technical disruption, reduced spiritual focus, digital fatigue, and the weakening of embodied fellowship (Hall & Kołodziejaska, 2021; Muller & Friemel, 2024). In the Indonesian

context, Pakpahan et al. (2024) show that congregational responses to worship and fellowship in digital spaces are not uniform, while Lontoh and Wibowo (2025) demonstrate that digital media can transform worship and virtual community in Indonesian Pentecostalism. These studies are important because they show that churches do not simply adopt digital media in a neutral way; rather, digital worship is received, negotiated, and evaluated differently by congregants according to access, technical experience, theological expectations, and the need for physical fellowship.

The third category focuses on congregational responses to digitally mediated religious practice. Studies in this category show that congregants do not respond to digital worship in a single or uniform way. Some members value digital platforms because they provide access, flexibility, and continuity of worship, especially for those who are geographically distant, physically limited, or unable to attend onsite services (McKenna, 2024; Santos & Franca, 2025). Other studies show that digital worship can support new forms of community building, online prayer, and virtual fellowship, as seen in Pentecostal and other Christian communities that use digital media to sustain worship and engagement across distance (F. O. L. Lontoh & Wibowo, 2025; Tsara & Mwapfaa, 2025). However, congregational responses also include hesitation and criticism, particularly regarding the authenticity of online liturgy, the weakening of embodied presence, the loss of face-to-face fellowship, and technological barriers that affect participation (Irlenborn, 2023; Pakpahan et al., 2024). These studies indicate that digitally mediated religious practice is not simply accepted or rejected, but negotiated by congregants according to their spiritual expectations, technical capacity, generational background, and need for communal intimacy. Nevertheless, this body of literature still leaves room for further empirical analysis of how such responses appear within local Protestant minority congregations in Indonesia, especially when digital media are used not only for worship but also for religious education, pastoral care, and congregational communication.

This study aims to examine the integration of digital media in the religious life of GKP Cirebon through three objectives. First, it identifies the forms of religious activities mediated by digital media, including worship, religious education, and pastoral-social ministry. Second, it analyzes the modalities through which digital platforms are integrated into congregational practice, particularly livestreaming, interactive online participation, and digital communication. Third, it evaluates congregational and pastoral responses to digitally mediated religious practice. This article argues that digital media at GKP Cirebon function as an extension of religious access rather than a complete replacement for physical worship. Digital platforms expand access to worship, religious education, pastoral care, and congregational communication, but their use remains negotiated with the continuing importance of physical communality, embodied fellowship, and active participation in church life. By focusing on a Protestant minority congregation in Indonesia, this study contributes to digital religion scholarship by showing how digital accessibility and physical worship are negotiated in everyday congregational practice.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The unit of analysis in this study is the religious life of GKP Cirebon as mediated through digital media. More specifically, the study focuses on how digital platforms are used in congregational practices, including worship, religious education, pastoral care, and church communication. GKP Cirebon was selected as the case because it represents a Protestant minority congregation in Indonesia that continues to maintain physical worship while also incorporating digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Zoom Meeting, and online communication channels into its religious activities. Therefore, the main focus of analysis is not only individual congregants, but also the congregation as a religious institution and its digitally mediated practices.

This study employs a qualitative case study design. This approach was chosen because the research aims to understand in depth how digital media are integrated into everyday congregational life and how church leaders and congregants interpret this process. A qualitative case study is appropriate for examining religious practice in a specific social and institutional context, especially when the research seeks to capture meanings, experiences, responses, and negotiations rather than measure numerical relationships. Through this design, the study is able to explore the relationship between digital accessibility and physical communality within the concrete context of GKP Cirebon.

The data used in this study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from field observation, digital observation, and interviews with church actors, including Pastor Yayan Heryanto, Asep Darajat, Suharya, Daniela Utomo, and Dwi Nataliyanti. These informants were selected because they represent different positions and experiences within the congregation, including pastoral leadership, church administration, and congregational participation. Secondary data were obtained from church documentation, YouTube worship archives, Instagram posts, digital announcements, livestream materials, and other online records related to worship, religious education, pastoral services, and congregational communication.

Data collection was conducted through observation, digital observation, interviews, and documentation. Field observation was used to examine onsite worship and congregational activities at GKP Cirebon, while digital observation was conducted by examining the church's online platforms, including YouTube, Instagram, Zoom Meeting documentation, and other digital traces. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected informants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and evaluations of digitally mediated religious practice. Documentation was used to complement the interview and observation data by examining worship schedules, online worship archives, visual documentation, and social media posts related to church activities.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis began by organizing the data from observation, interviews, digital platforms, and documentation according to the research objectives. The data were then coded into several themes, including forms of digitally mediated religious activities, modalities of digital platform integration, and congregational and pastoral responses. These themes were further interpreted to identify the broader pattern of negotiation between digital accessibility and physical communality. To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the study compared data from different sources, including field observation, digital documentation, and interviews. This triangulation helped ensure that the interpretation of digital religious practice at GKP Cirebon was grounded in multiple forms of empirical evidence.

## **RESULTS**

Gereja Kristen Pasundan (GKP) Cirebon is a historic Protestant congregation in Cirebon, West Java. The congregation traces its early formation to the ministry of A. Dijkstra, a missionary affiliated with the *Nederlandsche Zendingsvereniging* (NZV), who began his work in Cirebon in 1864. Since its early development, GKP Cirebon has been shaped by a heterogeneous congregational composition and has maintained its religious presence through changing social and institutional circumstances. The church building, located on Jl. Yos Sudarso No. 10, also represents the congregation's long historical presence in the city, as it has been recognized as a cultural heritage building by the local government.

Institutionally, GKP Cirebon organizes its congregational life through a synodal structure and several service divisions, including worship ministry, children's ministry, diaconal service, women's

ministry, household worship, catechization, pastoral visitation, and youth activities. In recent years, these religious activities have not been limited to onsite gatherings but have increasingly incorporated digital media. Weekly worship, for example, is conducted in a hybrid format through onsite service and livestreaming via YouTube, Instagram, and Zoom Meeting, while other activities such as household worship, religious education, and pastoral communication also use digital platforms to sustain congregational participation and expand access to religious life.

### **Forms of Religious Activities Mediated by Digital Media**

The first finding shows that digital media are used in various religious activities at GKP Cirebon. Based on observation, interviews, and documentation, these activities are not limited to the livestreaming of Sunday worship but also extend to religious education and pastoral-social ministry. The forms of digitally mediated religious activity can therefore be grouped into three main domains: worship, which includes weekly services and major liturgical celebrations; religious education, which includes Sunday School, catechization, and youth formation; and pastoral-social ministry, which includes household worship, women's ministry, pastoral visitation, and congregational communication.

Weekly worship constitutes the most visible and regular form of digitally mediated religious activity at GKP Cirebon. Based on direct observation, the Sunday service is held every week from 07.30 to 08.30 WIB and is conducted in a hybrid format, combining onsite worship in the church building with livestreaming through digital platforms. As shown in Figure 1, the onsite worship setting includes the pulpit area, worship leader, congregants, projection screen, and multimedia equipment that support the hybrid worship format. Congregants who are unable to attend physically can follow the same service through YouTube, Instagram, and Zoom Meeting.



**Figure 1. Onsite Sunday worship at GKP Cirebon observed during fieldwork**

Digital observation of the church's online platforms also shows that the livestreamed service transmits the main elements of Sunday worship, including the opening, hymns, Bible reading, sermon, prayer, and closing. As shown in Figure 2, the online worship documentation displays the livestream interface through which remote congregants can access the service, follow the liturgical sequence, and remain connected to the worship event from outside the church building. The online format enables

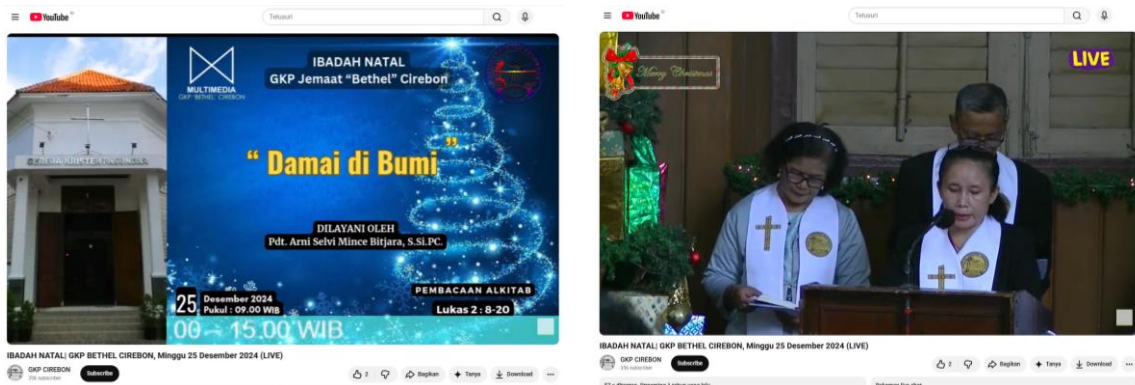
remote congregants to follow the same liturgical structure as those present onsite, although their mode of participation is mediated through a screen. This indicates that livestreaming functions primarily as an extension of access to worship, rather than as a separate or independent religious activity.



**Figure 2. Digital documentation of Sunday worship livestream accessed through GKP Cirebon's online platform**

The observation further indicates that weekly worship is the strongest empirical example of digital integration at GKP Cirebon because it combines regularity, ritual completeness, and platform-based accessibility. Unlike other church activities that use digital media mainly for communication or coordination, Sunday worship shows a clearer hybrid pattern: the same religious event can be followed by onsite congregants and online participants through the church's digital platforms. Therefore, weekly worship can be treated as the primary evidence for identifying how digital media mediate religious activity in the congregation.

Digital mediation is also evident in major liturgical celebrations at GKP Cirebon. In addition to weekly Sunday worship, the church uses digital platforms to support access to festive and commemorative services, particularly Christmas, Easter, and the Ascension of Jesus Christ. Digital observation of the church's YouTube channel shows that these services are archived and made accessible to congregants beyond the time and space of onsite worship. As shown in Figure 3, one example is the Christmas service archive titled "IBADAH NATAL | GKP BETHEL CIREBON, Minggu 25 Desember 2024 (LIVE)," referring to the live Christmas worship service of GKP Bethel Cirebon held on 25 December 2024. The archive presents the theme "Damai di Bumi" or "Peace on Earth," records the service time as 09.00 WIB, and visually documents both the digital announcement slide and the livestreamed worship service (GKP Cirebon, 2024a). This documentation indicates that digital media are used not only for routine Sunday worship but also for important moments in the church's liturgical calendar.



**Figure 3. Digital documentation of Christmas worship at GKP Jemaat 'Bethel' Cirebon through YouTube**

The digital archives also show that Easter-related services are mediated through online platforms. As shown in Figure 4, one YouTube archive is titled "KEBAKTIAN Minggu Paskah VI | GKP 'Bethel' CIREBON, Minggu 10 Mei 2026 (LIVE)," referring to the live Sixth Sunday of Easter worship service at GKP "Bethel" Cirebon held on 10 May 2026. The archive displays the onsite worship setting, praise offering by "Independent Voice," church officers, projection screen, and livestream interface, indicating that the Easter service was made accessible beyond the physical worship space (GKP Cirebon, 2026a). In addition, Instagram documentation from the account of GKP Bethel Cirebon records Easter celebrations through visual posts, captions, and hashtags such as #paskah, #paskah2023, #gkpcirebon, and #gkpbethelcirebon. These digital traces show that the church's liturgical activities are represented not only through livestreaming but also through social media documentation that extends the visibility of worship beyond the physical church space.

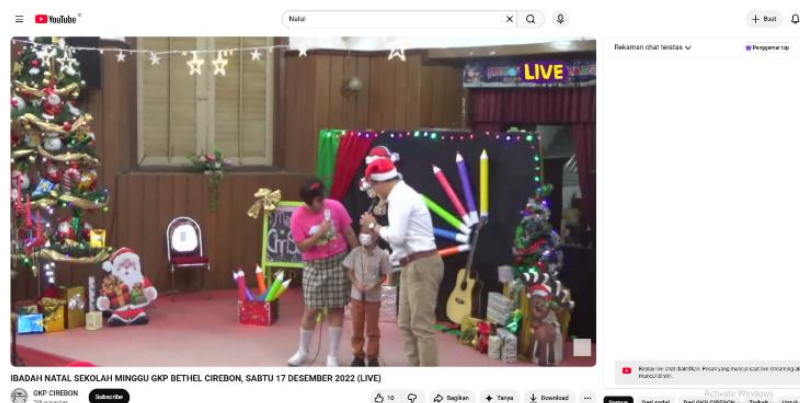


**Figure 4. YouTube documentation of Easter worship at GKP 'Bethel' Cirebon.**

Another digital observation shows documentation of the Ascension of Jesus Christ service. The YouTube archive is titled "Ibadah Kenaikan Yesus Kristus GKP Jemaat 'Bethel' Cirebon," referring to the

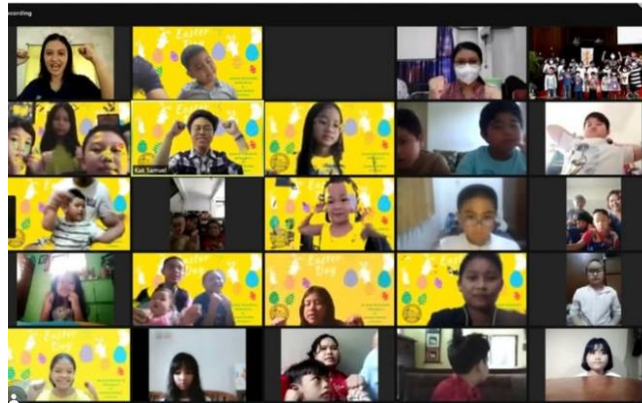
Ascension worship service of GKP “Bethel” Cirebon. The archive presents the theme “Tuhan Menjadikan Mata Hatimu Terang,” or “May the Lord Enlighten the Eyes of Your Heart,” and records the service date as 14 May 2026, the service time as 09.00 WIB, and the Bible reading from Ephesians 1:15–23 (GKP Cirebon, 2026b). Together with the Christmas and Easter worship archives, this evidence strengthens the finding that digital media are used to support congregational access to selected major liturgical celebrations. Thus, digitalization at GKP Cirebon is not limited to routine Sunday worship, but also extends to important moments in the church’s liturgical calendar.

Religious education activities at GKP Cirebon also show the use of digital media, although not always in the same form as Sunday worship livestreaming. In this domain, digital media function mainly as supporting tools for teaching, communication, coordination, and access to learning activities. Sunday School is the clearest example because it is designed as Christian religious education for children and is held as part of the congregation’s regular formation program. As shown in Figure 5, digital documentation from the church’s YouTube channel includes an archived live program titled “Ibadah Natal Sekolah Minggu GKP Bethel Cirebon, Sabtu 17 Desember 2022 (LIVE),” referring to the Sunday School Christmas worship service of GKP Bethel Cirebon held on 17 December 2022. The archive visually documents children’s participation in a Christmas-themed worship and learning activity within the church setting (GKP Cirebon, 2022). This indicates that children’s religious education is not only conducted onsite but can also be documented, broadcast, and accessed through digital media.



**Figure 5. YouTube documentation of Sunday School Christmas worship at GKP Bethel Cirebon**

Another visual documentation, presented in **Figure 6**, shows children participating through an online meeting interface, indicating that digital platforms can also support interactive forms of religious learning. In this format, children and teachers appear in separate video windows, suggesting that learning and worship activities can be conducted across distance while maintaining visual interaction. This evidence indicates that digital media function as supporting infrastructure for children’s religious education by enabling access, interaction, and participation, especially when physical attendance is limited or when broader involvement is needed.



**Figure 6. Digital meeting documentation of children’s religious education activity at GKP Bethel Cirebon**

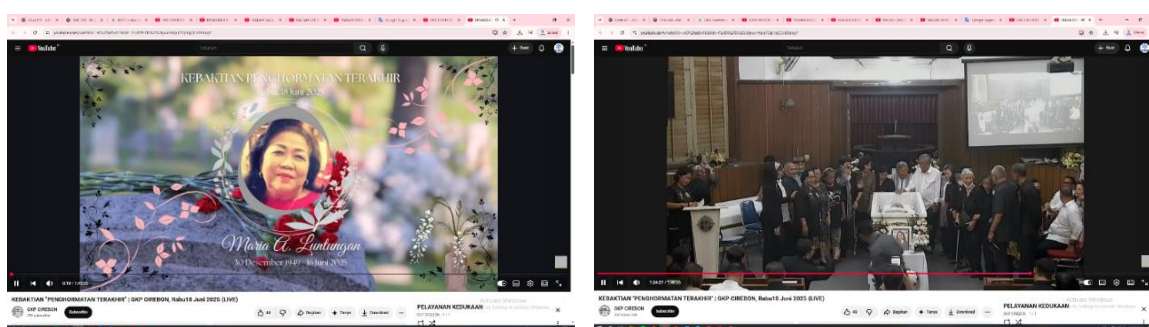
In addition to Sunday School, GKP Cirebon also conducts catechization and youth activities as part of religious education and faith formation. Catechization functions as a process of teaching the Christian faith to younger members or prospective full members of the congregation, while youth activities include youth worship, prayer groups, fellowship, and arts or cultural activities. In these activities, digital media are used primarily to support communication, distribute materials, coordinate meetings, and facilitate access to learning activities. Therefore, the findings indicate that digital media in religious education at GKP Cirebon are used not only to broadcast events but also to support the broader process of Christian formation among children and youth.

astoral and social ministry activities at GKP Cirebon also involve digital media, particularly in household worship, pastoral care, and congregational life-cycle services. These findings show that pastoral ministry is not limited to formal Sunday worship, but also includes visitation to elderly widows, sick congregants, household worship, women’s fellowship, and other forms of congregational care. As shown in Figure 7, digital observation of the church’s YouTube channel identifies an archived service titled “Kebaktian Rumah Tangga Online | 22 April 2020” [Online Household Worship | 22 April 2020], in which a church representative leads worship from a domestic setting while reading Scripture (GKP Cirebon, 2020). This documentation indicates that household worship can be mediated digitally to sustain prayer, reflection, and spiritual connection when congregants are unable to gather physically in one home.



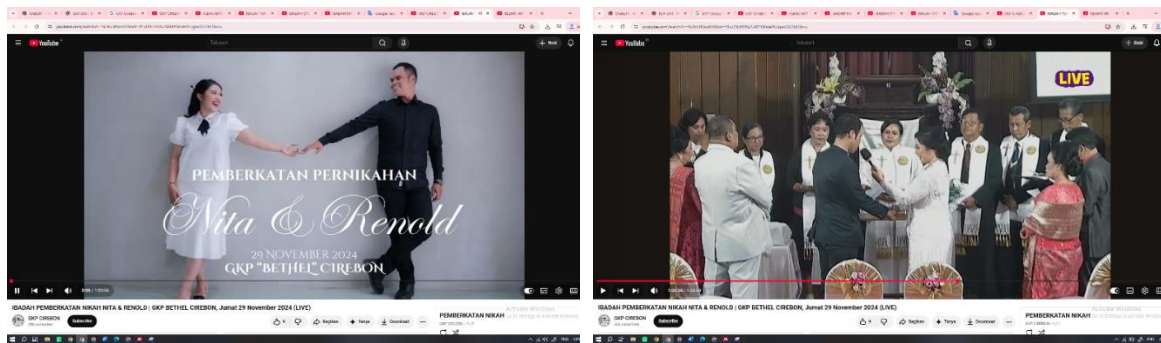
**Figure 7. Digital documentation of online household worship at GKP Cirebon**

The use of digital media is also visible in pastoral services related to grief, remembrance, and congregational support. As shown in Figure 8, digital observation of the church's YouTube channel identifies an archived service titled "Kebaktian Penghormatan Terakhir" ["Final Tribute Service"], which documents a memorial service conducted in the church and made accessible through livestreaming. The archive displays a memorial visual, the onsite church setting, congregants, and the livestream interface, indicating that the service could be followed not only by those physically present in the church building but also by relatives, congregants, and community members who were unable to attend onsite (GKP Cirebon, 2025). This evidence suggests that digital media extend pastoral presence beyond the physical worship space. In this case, livestreaming functions not merely as broadcast technology, but as a means of maintaining communal solidarity during moments of loss, remembrance, and pastoral care.



**Figure 8. Digital documentation of a memorial/pastoral service at GKP Cirebon**

Digital documentation further shows that pastoral and social ministry at GKP Cirebon also extends to family and life-cycle rituals, such as marriage blessing services. As shown in Figure 9, the church's YouTube archive includes a service titled "IBADAH PEMBERKATAN NIKAH NITA & RENOLD | GKP BETHEL CIREBON, Jumat 29 November 2024 (LIVE)," referring to the live marriage blessing service of Nita and Renold held at GKP Bethel Cirebon on 29 November 2024. The archive displays both the introductory digital slide and the onsite blessing ritual conducted in the church, indicating that this family ritual was documented and made accessible through digital media (GKP Cirebon, 2024b). This evidence shows that digital media support not only regular worship and religious education, but also pastoral services connected to family formation, grief, and congregational accompaniment. Taken together, these findings indicate that digital media at GKP Cirebon function as supporting infrastructure for sustaining pastoral relationships, social solidarity, and congregational participation across different moments of religious life.



**Figure 9. Digital archive of a marriage blessing service at GKP Cirebon**

The data above reveal four empirical patterns in the use of digital media at GKP Cirebon. First, weekly worship is the most regular and clearly institutionalized digitally mediated activity because it is conducted every Sunday in a hybrid format that combines onsite participation and livestreaming. Second, digital media are not limited to worship services but also support religious education, pastoral care, and social ministry, including Sunday School, household worship, memorial services, and marriage blessing services. Third, the intensity of digital media use differs across activities: some activities, such as Sunday worship and household worship, are directly mediated through livestreaming or online meetings, while others use digital media mainly for documentation, communication, and coordination. Fourth, digital media primarily function to expand congregational access, maintain communication among members, and sustain participation in church life when physical attendance is limited or not possible.

Table 1 summarizes the forms of religious activities at GKP Cirebon that involve digital media. The table is organized according to the activity, domain of religious practice, digital platform or media used, format of participation, and primary evidence supporting each finding. By presenting the data in this way, the table clarifies that digital media are used across different areas of congregational life, ranging from weekly worship and liturgical celebrations to religious education, household worship, pastoral care, and social ministry.

**Table 1. Religious Activities and Digital Media Use at GKP Cirebon**

No.	Religious Activity	Domain	Digital Platform	Format
1	Weekly worship	Worship	YouTube, Instagram, Zoom Meeting	Hybrid
2	Christmas, Easter, and Ascension service	Worship	YouTube/Instagram or documented digital access	Livestreaming/hybrid
3	Sunday School	Religious education	Digital communication/supporting media	Assisted/hybrid
4	Catechization	Religious education	Digital communication/supporting media	Assisted/hybrid
5	Youth activities	Education/social formation	Digital communication	Assisted/hybrid
6	Household worship	Worship/pastoral care	Zoom/online meeting	Online/hybrid

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No.	Religious Activity	Domain	Digital Platform	Format
7	Women's ministry/ibadah ibu-ibu	Pastoral-social ministry	Digital communication/supporting media	Assisted/hybrid
8	Pastoral visitation	Pastoral care	Digital communication support	Assisted/online communication

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Table 1 indicates that digital media use at GKP Cirebon varies across activities and domains. Worship, religious education, and pastoral-social ministry all involve digital media, but the degree of integration is not uniform. Weekly worship and household worship show stronger forms of digital integration because they are directly mediated through livestreaming or online meetings, allowing congregants to participate remotely in real time. By contrast, Sunday School, catechization, youth activities, women's ministry, and pastoral visitation tend to use digital media more as supporting tools for communication, documentation, access, and coordination. This pattern shows that digital media at GKP Cirebon function both as a space for religious participation and as an infrastructure for sustaining congregational life.

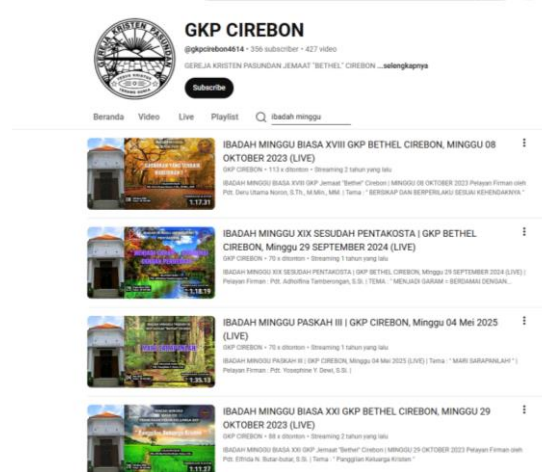
These findings answer the first research objective by showing that digitally mediated religious activities at GKP Cirebon cover three main domains: worship, religious education, and pastoral-social ministry. In the worship domain, digital media are used to support weekly services and major liturgical celebrations; in religious education, they assist Sunday School, catechization, and youth formation; and in pastoral-social ministry, they help sustain household worship, pastoral care, and congregational communication. Thus, digital media function not only as channels for broadcasting worship but also as instruments for maintaining religious learning, pastoral connection, and congregational participation within the church community.

### **Modalities of Digital Platform Integration in Religious Practice**

The second finding concerns the modalities through which digital platforms are integrated into religious practice at GKP Cirebon. Unlike the previous section, which identified the types of religious activities mediated by digital media, this section focuses on how digital media are used within congregational life. The data show three main modalities of integration: livestreaming, interactive online participation, and digital communication. Each modality has a different function and pattern of participation: livestreaming extends access to worship in real time, interactive online participation enables congregants to take part in prayer, discussion, and religious learning across distance, while digital communication supports information sharing, pastoral coordination, and the maintenance of congregational connection outside formal worship events.

The first modality is livestreaming, which appears most clearly in weekly Sunday worship and selected major liturgical celebrations at GKP Cirebon. Based on direct observation of the hybrid Sunday service, onsite worship is broadcast in real time so that congregants who are unable to attend physically can still follow the liturgical sequence from a distance. The livestreamed service includes the main elements of worship, such as the opening, hymns, Bible reading, sermon, prayer, and closing. As shown in Figure 10, digital documentation on the YouTube channel @gkpcirebon4614 shows a series of archived Sunday worship livestreams, indicating that livestreaming is used regularly as part of the church's worship practice. The Instagram account @gkpbethel\_cirebon further supports digital communication and documentation of church activities, including selected major liturgical celebrations such as Christmas, Easter, and the Ascension of Jesus Christ. In this modality, digital media function primarily as channels for

extending access to worship, enabling online congregants to participate in the same worship event simultaneously with those present onsite, although their participation is mediated through YouTube, Instagram, or Zoom Meeting.



**Figure 10. Livestreaming modality in Sunday worship at GKP Cirebon**

Observation of the livestreaming process shows that digital integration at GKP Cirebon requires technical coordination between the onsite worship space and online congregational access. The livestream is supported by visible digital equipment, including a camera directed toward the liturgical area, microphones connected to the worship sound system, and a projected or digital display that helps organize the flow of worship. The camera position generally captures the altar or pulpit area, worship leaders, and the main space of liturgical activity, while the audio system enables online congregants to hear hymns, Bible readings, sermons, and prayers. This observation is supported by the statement of Asep Darajat, a church administrator, who explained:

“In each livestreamed service, the multimedia team prepares the camera, sound system, and projection display before the worship begins. The camera is directed toward the pulpit and worship area so that online congregants can follow the service, while the sound from the microphone is connected to the livestream so that the sermon, hymns, and prayers can be heard clearly” (Asep Darajat, personal communication, December 15, 2023).

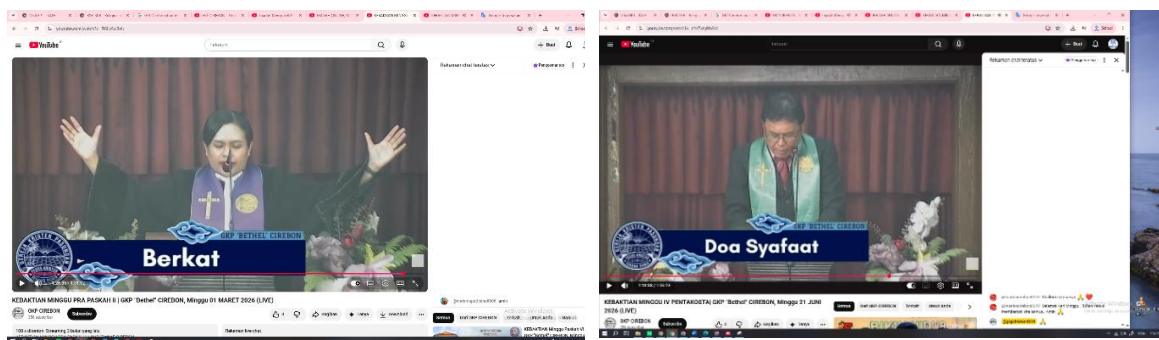
He further noted that online congregants generally follow the service as viewers through YouTube or Instagram, while interaction is more possible when Zoom Meeting is used:

“For YouTube and Instagram, the congregation usually follows through the livestream and sometimes uses the comment or chat feature. For Zoom, interaction can be more direct because participants can respond, greet one another, or join the prayer session” (Asep Darajat, personal communication, December 15, 2023).

These findings indicate that livestreaming at GKP Cirebon is not merely a matter of placing worship content online, but involves the coordination of visual framing, audio transmission, platform access, and limited forms of online interaction.

In the livestreaming modality, online participation is primarily oriented toward following the worship sequence from a distance rather than engaging in continuous two-way interaction. Digital observation of GKP Cirebon’s YouTube livestream archives shows that online congregants follow the service by watching the liturgical sequence, listening to sermons, joining prayers, and responding

spiritually from their respective locations. As shown in Figure 11, the livestream interface includes a live chat feature that allows online congregants to give short responses during the worship service. During prayer and blessing segments, for example, congregants responded through brief expressions such as “Amin” [Amen], while other comments included greetings and liturgical responses such as “Shalom semuanya” [Peace to everyone] and “Selamat Hari Minggu” [Happy Sunday]. These responses indicate that online congregants are not entirely passive viewers, although their participation remains mediated and limited by the platform interface. Therefore, livestreaming expands access to worship and allows symbolic participation through chat responses, but it does not fully create the same level of direct interpersonal interaction found in onsite worship.



**Figure 11. Online congregational responses through YouTube live chat during livestreamed worship at GKP Cirebon**

The second modality is interactive online participation. This modality is most visible in household worship and small-group religious activities, where digital platforms enable congregants not only to watch religious content but also to take part in prayer, Bible reading, responses, and shared reflection. Unlike livestreaming, which primarily positions online congregants as remote followers of an onsite service, interactive online participation creates a more dialogical space because participants can respond to one another and join the worship process from their respective homes. This pattern is supported by the interview with Pastor Yayan Heryanto, who explained:

“Household worship is usually held in the evening after congregants have finished their daily activities so that more members can participate. To make it more effective, many household worship services are now conducted online. The worship usually begins with hymns, followed by Bible reading, a short reflection, prayer, and a closing hymn” (Yayan Heryanto, personal communication, December 15, 2023).

The YouTube archive of “Kebaktian Rumah Tangga Online | 22 April 2020” further illustrates this modality by showing how household-based worship can be mediated through digital media while still preserving core elements of congregational devotion. Therefore, interactive online participation at GKP Cirebon functions as a bridge between domestic spirituality and congregational life, allowing members to remain connected in prayer and reflection despite physical distance.

The interactive modality has a pastoral function because it enables congregants to maintain prayer, reflection, and fellowship even when physical meetings are difficult due to distance, work, health conditions, or family circumstances. In household worship, digital media allow families and church members to remain connected to the rhythm of congregational spirituality through shared hymns, Bible

reading, short reflection, prayer, and closing worship. Pastor Yayan Heryanto emphasized that online household worship helps broaden participation because it can be held after congregants complete their daily activities and can be followed from their respective homes:

“Online household worship makes it easier for congregants to participate because they do not always have to gather physically in one place. They can still sing, read the Bible, listen to reflection, and pray together from home” (Yayan Heryanto, personal communication, December 15, 2023).

This pastoral function is also reflected in Asep Darajat’s experience, who stated that online worship enabled him to remain involved in prayer and fellowship without neglecting his work responsibilities (Asep Darajat, personal communication, December 15, 2023). These interview data indicate that interactive online participation does not merely transfer worship into a digital format, but helps sustain pastoral care, domestic spirituality, and congregational connectedness in everyday life.

The third modality is digital communication. In this modality, digital media are used not only to broadcast worship but also to circulate announcements, document church activities, coordinate ministry programs, and maintain communication between church leaders and congregants outside formal worship time. Digital communication is relevant to several areas of congregational life, including women’s ministry, youth activities, Sunday School, catechization, pastoral visitation, household worship, and major liturgical celebrations. Documentation from the church’s online platforms, such as Instagram posts, YouTube archives, and digital announcements, indicates that religious activities are extended into digital space through visual documentation, captions, schedules, and online records. This modality allows the church to maintain connection with congregants beyond the moment of worship by providing information, reminding members of upcoming activities, and preserving digital traces of congregational life. Therefore, digital communication functions as a supporting infrastructure that links worship, education, pastoral care, and social ministry into a continuous flow of congregational communication.

Asep Darajat, one of the church administrators, explained that digital platforms are used not only for livestreaming worship but also for maintaining communication and coordination among congregants. He stated:

“We use digital media to share information about worship schedules, church activities, and other congregational announcements. Through platforms such as social media and online communication groups, it becomes easier for the church administrators to coordinate services, inform congregants, and document church activities. These platforms help us stay connected with the congregation outside Sunday worship, especially with members who cannot always come to church physically” (Asep Darajat, personal communication, December 15, 2023).

These three modalities show different but complementary levels of digital integration at GKP Cirebon. Livestreaming primarily extends access to worship by enabling congregants to follow Sunday services and major liturgical celebrations in real time from a distance. Interactive online participation creates a more dialogical form of involvement because congregants can take part in prayer, Bible reading, discussion, and responses, especially in household worship or small-group activities. Meanwhile, digital communication functions as a supporting channel for information sharing, activity documentation, pastoral coordination, and the maintenance of congregational connection outside formal worship events. These patterns indicate that digital media are used flexibly according to the needs of each religious activity: as a broadcasting channel for worship, as an interactive space for fellowship and learning, and as a communication infrastructure for sustaining church life.

Table 2 summarizes the modalities of digital media integration in the religious practices of GKP Cirebon. The table presents each modality, the platforms used, the religious activities associated with it,

the form of participation enabled by the platform, the primary evidence supporting the finding, and the empirical pattern identified from observation, interviews, and digital documentation. This summary helps clarify that digital media are not integrated in a single uniform way, but operate through different modes depending on whether the activity requires real-time worship access, interactive participation, or communication and coordination outside formal worship.

**Table 2. Modalities of Digital Media Integration at GKP Cirebon**

<b>Modality</b>	<b>Platform</b>	<b>Religious Activity</b>	<b>Form of Participation</b>	<b>Primary Evidence</b>	<b>Empirical Pattern</b>
Livestreaming	YouTube, Instagram, Zoom Meeting	Weekly worship and festive worship	Real-time remote participation	Sunday worship observation; YouTube/Instagram documentation	Extends access to worship
Interactive online participation	Zoom/online meeting platform; YouTube archive of household worship	Household worship, prayer group, catechization support	Prayer, Bible reading, discussion, response	Interview with pastor; documentation of household worship online	Enables shared participation across distance
Digital communication	Website, social media, messaging app, YouTube/Instagram archive	Announcements, pastoral coordination, youth activities, women's ministry, religious education	Information sharing, documentation, and coordination	Digital documentation; interview with administrator	Maintains connection outside worship time

Table 2 shows that digital integration at GKP Cirebon is not uniform across all activities. Livestreaming and online household worship represent stronger forms of digital mediation because they allow congregants to participate in religious activities remotely and, in some cases, in real time. Livestreaming extends access to Sunday worship and major liturgical celebrations, while online household worship enables more interactive participation through prayer, Bible reading, reflection, and response. Meanwhile, digital communication functions more as supporting infrastructure for coordination, documentation, announcements, and pastoral connection. This pattern indicates that digital media are used flexibly according to the character of each religious activity.

These findings answer the second research objective by showing that digital platforms are integrated into GKP Cirebon's religious practice through three main modalities: livestreaming, interactive online participation, and digital communication. Livestreaming enables remote access to worship, interactive online participation supports dialogical involvement in household-based and small-group activities, and digital communication maintains coordination and connection beyond formal worship events. The findings indicate that digital media have become a recurring part of religious practice at GKP Cirebon, particularly in worship and household-based religious activities, while also supporting religious education, pastoral coordination, and congregational communication.

### **Congregational and Pastoral Responses to Digitally Mediated Religious Practice**

The third finding concerns congregational and pastoral responses to digitally mediated religious practice at GKP Cirebon. Data for this section are drawn from interviews with Pastor Yayan Heryanto, Asep Darajat, Suharya, Daniela Utomo, and Dwi Nataliyanti conducted on 15–17 December 2023. The interview data show that responses to digital religious practice are heterogeneous and can be grouped into three

main tendencies: positive acceptance, adaptive or ambivalent acceptance, and critical reservation. Positive responses emphasize accessibility, flexibility, and spiritual support; adaptive or ambivalent responses show acceptance that develops through adjustment and familiarity; while critical responses point to technical limitations, reduced spiritual focus, and the inability of digital worship to fully replace physical togetherness in church life.

Pastor Yayan Heryanto expressed a positive response toward online worship by emphasizing its role in maintaining spiritual access for congregants who face physical or mobility limitations. From a pastoral perspective, online worship is not viewed merely as a technical substitute for onsite worship, but as a meaningful support for congregants who cannot attend church physically. He stated,

“Online worship has become a gift for congregants who have limited mobility. Through online worship, congregants can meditate on God’s Word, pray, and feel His presence in their lives” (Yayan Heryanto, personal communication, December 15, 2023).

This statement shows that digital worship is perceived as an extension of spiritual access, allowing congregants to remain connected to the Word, prayer, and pastoral care even when physical presence is not possible. However, the statement also implies that online worship functions primarily as an expansion of access rather than a complete replacement for the embodied experience of worship in the church.

A similar positive response was expressed by Asep Darajat, a church administrator, who viewed online worship as a practical solution for congregants with demanding work schedules. For him, one of the main benefits of digitally mediated worship is its flexibility, as it allows congregants to remain involved in religious activities even when work responsibilities make physical attendance difficult. He stated, “*Online worship helps me continue to reflect on God’s Word, pray, and remain in fellowship with the church community without having to sacrifice my working time*” (Asep Darajat, personal communication, December 15, 2023). This statement shows that digital media reduce temporal barriers to religious participation. In this sense, online worship is positively perceived because it enables congregants to maintain spiritual discipline and congregational connection amid the pressures of urban work routines.

The adaptive or ambivalent response is represented by Suharya, who initially felt reluctant toward online worship but gradually found spiritual value in the experience. His response shows that acceptance of digitally mediated worship does not always emerge immediately, but can develop through a process of adjustment and repeated participation. Suharya stated,

“At first, I was hesitant to join online worship because I felt it would not be the same as worshipping in church. However, over time I began to realize that I could still listen to God’s Word, pray, and experience spiritual meaning through online worship” (Suharya, personal communication, December 15, 2023).

This response indicates that adaptation plays an important role in shaping congregants’ perception of digital worship. In this case, online worship is not accepted without reservation, but gradually becomes meaningful as congregants become more familiar with its format.

Daniela Utomo expressed a critical response by emphasizing that the quality of online worship is not always comparable to physical worship in church. Her criticism focuses not on a complete rejection of digital worship, but on the experiential limitations that emerge when worship is mediated through technology. She stated,

“The quality of online worship is not always as good as physical worship in church. Sometimes there are technical glitches, or I find it difficult to really focus and connect spiritually through online services” (Daniela Utomo, personal communication, December 16, 2023).

This statement shows that the effectiveness of digital worship depends strongly on technical stability, the worship environment, and the ability of congregants to maintain spiritual concentration from home. Thus, digital worship may expand access, but it also creates new challenges related to focus, atmosphere, and the quality of spiritual experience.

Dwi Nataliyanti offered a stronger critical response by arguing that digital worship cannot replace physical presence in church. Her concern is not limited to technical disruption, but relates more deeply to the meaning of direct interaction, togetherness, and active involvement in congregational life. She stated,

“The digital worship experience cannot replace physical presence in the church. I miss the direct interaction with fellow congregants and the experience of togetherness that happens in worship at church” (Dwi Nataliyanti, personal communication, December 17, 2023).

She also expressed concern that excessive reliance on online worship may reduce congregants’ sense of responsibility and active participation in church life. This response indicates that physical communality remains central to how some congregants understand worship, fellowship, and belonging within the church.

These interview data show that congregational responses are not simply divided between acceptance and rejection. Rather, they reveal a more complex pattern in which digital worship is valued for accessibility and flexibility, accepted by some congregants through a process of adaptation, and criticized by others because of technical limitations and the weakening of embodied communal experience. Positive responses are mainly associated with the ability of digital media to maintain access to worship for congregants with mobility or time constraints. Adaptive responses show that acceptance may grow through familiarity, while critical responses emphasize that digital worship cannot fully reproduce spiritual focus, direct interaction, and physical togetherness. The central empirical tension, therefore, lies between the accessibility offered by digital media and the communal intimacy associated with physical worship.

Table 3 summarizes the main categories of congregational and pastoral responses to digitally mediated religious practice at GKP Cirebon. It presents the response category, informant, role, main concern, illustrative interview evidence, and empirical interpretation derived from the interview data. By organizing the interview findings in this way, the table clarifies how different informants perceive digital worship according to their pastoral role, work situation, experience of adaptation, technical concerns, and expectations of communal worship.

**Table 3. Congregational Responses to Digital Religious Practice**

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Informant</b>	<b>Position/Role</b>	<b>Main Concern</b>	<b>Illustrative Interview Evidence</b>	<b>Empirical Interpretation</b>
Positive	Pastor Yayan Heryanto	Pastoral leader	Accessibility and spiritual support	Online worship helps maintain prayer, reflection, and spiritual participation for those with mobility limitations	Digital media expand religious access
Positive	Asep Darajat	Church administrator	Flexibility for busy congregants	Online worship supports participation amid work responsibilities	Digital media reduce time barriers

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Informant</b>	<b>Position/Role</b>	<b>Main Concern</b>	<b>Illustrative Interview Evidence</b>	<b>Empirical Interpretation</b>
Adaptive/ Ambivalent	Suharya	Church member/administrator	Initial hesitation and gradual acceptance	Online worship becomes spiritually meaningful over time	Acceptance grows through adaptation
Critical	Daniela Utomo	Congregant	Technical disruption and weak focus	Online worship is not always equal to physical worship because of technical problems and difficulty focusing	Digital worship has experiential limits
Critical	Dwi Nataliyanti	Congregant	Loss of physical togetherness	Digital worship cannot replace direct interaction and congregational togetherness	Physical communality remains important

The table indicates that responses to digital worship at GKP Cirebon vary according to congregants' roles, needs, experiences, and expectations of worship. Positive responses emphasize the benefits of accessibility and flexibility, especially for congregants who face mobility limitations or demanding work schedules. The adaptive response shows that acceptance of online worship may develop gradually through familiarity and repeated participation. Meanwhile, critical responses point to the experiential limits of digital worship, particularly technical disruption, difficulty maintaining spiritual focus, and the absence of direct interaction and physical togetherness. These patterns show that digital worship is valued as a means of access, but it is not understood by all informants as an equivalent substitute for embodied congregational worship.

The main empirical tension in these responses lies between accessibility and physical communality. Digital worship is valued because it allows congregants to remain connected to religious activities when physical attendance is limited by mobility, work schedules, distance, health conditions, or family responsibilities. However, the interviews also show that physical worship remains important because it provides direct interaction, a shared worship atmosphere, embodied participation, and a stronger sense of togetherness among congregants. Thus, digital worship is perceived as useful and supportive, but not as a complete substitute for onsite worship. The findings indicate that congregants negotiate digital religious practice by appreciating its practical benefits while continuing to regard physical presence as central to fellowship, spiritual intimacy, and active involvement in church life.

These findings answer the third research objective by showing that congregational and pastoral responses to digitally mediated religious practice at GKP Cirebon fall into three main categories: positive, adaptive or ambivalent, and critical. Positive responses emphasize accessibility, flexibility, and spiritual support; adaptive or ambivalent responses show that acceptance of online worship may develop gradually through adjustment and familiarity; while critical responses highlight technical disruption, reduced spiritual focus, and the limitations of digital worship in replacing physical togetherness. Digital platforms help congregants remain connected to worship, education, and pastoral care, but the interviews also reveal that physical presence remains central to the congregation's understanding of fellowship, spiritual intimacy, and active participation in church life. Therefore, digital media at GKP Cirebon function as an extension of religious access rather than a complete replacement for physical worship.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that digital media at GKP Cirebon function as an extension of religious access rather than a complete replacement for physical worship. The first finding indicates that digital religious practices appear across three main domains of congregational life: worship, religious education, and pastoral-social ministry. The second finding shows that digital media are integrated through three modalities, namely livestreaming, interactive online participation, and digital communication. The third finding reveals that congregational and pastoral responses to digitally mediated religious practice are heterogeneous, consisting of positive, adaptive or ambivalent, and critical responses. Taken together, these findings suggest that GKP Cirebon is not simply adopting digital media as a technical tool, but is negotiating the accessibility offered by digital platforms with the continuing importance of physical communality in church life.

The variety of digital activities at GKP Cirebon indicates that digital media are not used only for broadcasting Sunday worship, but have gradually become part of the broader ecology of congregational practice. Sunday worship remains the most stable and visible form of digital integration because it is regularly mediated through livestreaming and online documentation. However, the use of digital media also extends to religious education, household worship, pastoral communication, and the documentation of congregational events. This pattern shows that digitalization within GKP Cirebon is uneven: worship appears more institutionalized, while educational and pastoral uses remain more contextual, flexible, and activity-based. From the perspective of the Social Construction of Technology, this uneven pattern suggests that technology does not determine religious practice in a uniform way; rather, the church community interprets and adapts digital tools according to its pastoral needs, organizational routines, and congregational expectations (Bijker, 2001; Van Baalen, Van Fenema, & Loebbecke, 2016). Similar studies on religious communities and emerging technologies also show that digital tools are shaped by religious values, ethical considerations, and community-specific norms rather than adopted as neutral instruments (Dushakova, 2020; Wang, 2025). Thus, the first finding demonstrates that digital media at GKP Cirebon are socially adapted into different domains of church life, with varying degrees of intensity and institutionalization.

This pattern can be interpreted through the lens of the mediatization of religion, which emphasizes how media gradually become embedded in the organization and experience of religious life. In the case of GKP Cirebon, the continued use of YouTube, Instagram, Zoom, and online communication channels for worship, religious education, and pastoral-social activities suggests that digital media are increasingly normalized as part of congregational practice rather than functioning only as an emergency response. This interpretation is also consistent with digital religion scholarship, which views digital media not merely as external tools for transmitting religion, but as environments through which religious practices are organized, accessed, and experienced (Heidi A Campbell, 2012; S Hjarvard, 2013; Stig Hjarvard, 2011b, 2011a). At the same time, this finding should be read cautiously: the data indicate an emerging normalization of digital media in church life, but they do not yet justify a claim of permanent structural transformation. Recent studies on churches and digital media similarly show that digital integration is shaped by cultural context, theological orientation, institutional capacity, and practical challenges such as digital literacy and technological access (Heidi A Campbell, 2023; Kołodziejaska, Mandes, & Rabiej-Sienicka, 2024).

The second finding further shows that digital integration at GKP Cirebon does not operate through a single or uniform pattern. Livestreaming functions primarily as a real-time extension of worship, allowing congregants who cannot attend onsite to follow Sunday services and major liturgical celebrations

as they take place. Interactive online participation, especially in household worship and small-group activities, provides a more dialogical space in which congregants can pray, read Scripture, respond, and discuss religious reflections together. Digital communication, by contrast, plays a coordinative and connective role by circulating announcements, documenting church events, and maintaining contact between church leaders and congregants outside formal worship. These differentiated functions suggest that digital media are integrated flexibly according to the needs of each religious activity. Rather than replacing one another, the three modalities form a complementary media ecology: livestreaming supports access, interactive participation supports involvement, and digital communication supports the continuity of congregational life. This finding resonates with recent studies showing that religious communities use digital platforms not only to maintain worship access, but also to sustain community engagement, religious communication, and institutional visibility in digitally mediated environments (Hajdini & Iaia, 2024; Tabti, 2022; Tangirerung & Bulan, 2025; Tsara & Mwapfaa, 2025).

Using Campbell's distinction between religion online and online religion, GKP Cirebon appears to occupy an intermediate position in its digital religious practice. Livestreaming Sunday worship is closer to religion online because it mainly broadcasts an existing onsite liturgical format to congregants who participate remotely. In this modality, the structure of worship remains largely based on the physical service, while digital media function as channels for extending access. By contrast, online household worship shows a more participatory pattern and therefore moves closer to online religion, because congregants are not only viewers but can also pray, respond, read Scripture, and engage in shared reflection within a mediated space. This indicates a partial movement toward more interactive digital religious practice, although GKP Cirebon's digital activities remain closely connected to onsite worship, pastoral routines, and existing congregational structures. Therefore, the case should not be read as a total shift from physical church to online religion, but as a negotiated form of digital integration in which broadcasting and interactive participation coexist (Heidi A. Campbell & Evolvi, 2020; Heidi A Campbell, 2012).

The case of GKP Cirebon is better understood as a form of hybrid religious practice or complementary media use rather than a shift toward online-only religion. The findings show that digital platforms do not replace physical worship, but operate alongside it by extending access and maintaining connection for congregants who cannot always be present onsite. Online worship enables remote participation, while onsite worship continues to provide embodied participation, direct interaction, shared liturgical atmosphere, and a stronger sense of communal belonging. This complementary pattern explains why digital media are accepted as useful and pastorally supportive, but are not treated as a complete substitute for physical worship. In this sense, GKP Cirebon's digital practice should be interpreted not as a permanent digital transformation that displaces the church's physical life, but as a hybrid arrangement in which online and onsite practices perform different yet mutually supportive functions within congregational life (Baker, Martí, Braunstein, Whitehead, & Yukich, 2020; Müller & Friemel, 2024).

The heterogeneity of congregational responses shows that digital worship at GKP Cirebon is not evaluated merely in terms of technological acceptance or rejection. Positive responses are shaped by practical and pastoral needs, especially accessibility for congregants with mobility limitations and flexibility for those with demanding work schedules. Adaptive or ambivalent responses indicate that acceptance of digital worship may develop gradually through familiarity, repeated participation, and the discovery of spiritual meaning within online formats. Critical responses, however, reveal that digital worship also produces experiential limits, particularly when technical disruptions, weak concentration, and the absence of direct interaction reduce the sense of spiritual focus and communal intimacy. These

findings suggest that congregants negotiate digital religious practice according to their social conditions, worship habits, technical experiences, and expectations of church fellowship. This pattern is consistent with recent studies showing that congregational responses to digital worship are shaped by accessibility, digital literacy, cultural-theological expectations, and concerns about the loss of embodied communal experience (Kołodziejska et al., 2024; F. Lontoh & Wibowo, 2025; O'Lynn, 2022; Pakpahan et al., 2024). Thus, the responses at GKP Cirebon should be understood as a process of negotiation between the practical usefulness of digital media and the continuing importance of embodied worship.

The positive responses of Pastor Yayan Heryanto and Asep Darajat indicate that accessibility is one of the strongest reasons for accepting digital worship at GKP Cirebon. Online worship enables congregants with mobility limitations to remain spiritually connected to the church through prayer, reflection on God's Word, and participation in worship from home. It also helps congregants with demanding work schedules to maintain religious involvement without being fully constrained by time and physical distance. In this sense, digital platforms reduce spatial and temporal barriers to worship and pastoral care. This finding is consistent with the Uses and Gratifications perspective, which explains that media are adopted when they satisfy users' practical, informational, and ritual needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). In the context of religious media use, this also resonates with studies showing that digital platforms can support spiritual reflection, religious information seeking, and continued connection with faith communities (Brubaker & Haigh, 2017).

The adaptive response represented by Suharya suggests that acceptance of digital worship does not always emerge automatically. Initial hesitation toward online worship may reflect unfamiliarity with the format, concern about the loss of church atmosphere, or uncertainty about whether spiritual meaning can be experienced through digital mediation. However, Suharya's experience shows that reluctance does not necessarily lead to rejection. Through repeated participation, congregants may gradually become familiar with the technical format of online worship while also learning to locate spiritual meaning within it. This finding indicates that the adoption of digital religious practice involves both technical and spiritual adaptation: congregants need to become accustomed not only to the platform, but also to new ways of praying, listening, responding, and feeling connected to the church community. Therefore, digital worship should be understood as a practice that requires habituation, while recognizing that this process may vary among congregants and cannot be generalized to all members of the church.

The critical responses demonstrate that the limits of digital worship are both technical and communal. Daniela Utomo's response points to the technical and experiential limitations of online worship, especially when unstable connections, audio-visual problems, or the domestic environment weaken concentration and make it difficult for congregants to feel spiritually connected. Meanwhile, Dwi Nataliyanti's response highlights a deeper communal concern: digital worship cannot fully replace direct interaction, shared presence, and the sense of togetherness experienced in onsite worship. These two criticisms show that the problem of digital worship is not only a matter of technological quality, but also concerns the embodied and communal dimensions of religious practice. While online worship can support access and continuity, physical worship remains important because it enables face-to-face fellowship, collective participation, and a shared liturgical atmosphere. This finding is consistent with discussions on embodiment, *koinonia*, and physical presence in digital Christianity, which emphasize that digitally mediated worship may extend participation but cannot fully reproduce the relational and embodied experience of congregational life (Jung, 2023; Zaluchu, 2023).

The contribution of this study lies in identifying the tension between accessibility and physical communality as the main issue in GKP Cirebon's digital religious practice. The findings do not show a

simple opposition between a “digital church” and a “physical church,” nor do they indicate a clear division between pro-technology and anti-technology congregants. Instead, the data show that digital media are accepted because they respond to concrete pastoral needs: they enable participation across distance, mobility limitations, work constraints, and other barriers to physical attendance. At the same time, the interviews also show that physical worship remains important because it provides embodied interaction, direct fellowship, shared liturgical atmosphere, and communal intimacy. Thus, digital media function as an extension of religious access, not as a replacement for onsite worship. The issue is not whether the church should choose digital or physical worship, but how digital access can be integrated without weakening the communal foundations of congregational life.

This finding contributes to digital religion scholarship by showing that accessibility and physical communality do not necessarily stand in a zero-sum relationship. In the case of GKP Cirebon, digital platforms help sustain religious participation when physical presence is difficult, while onsite worship remains the primary space for embodied fellowship and communal formation. This supports recent discussions that digital media in religious contexts often operate as hybrid or complementary spaces rather than complete substitutes for physical worship. Studies on digital religion, religious mobility, and online faith communities have shown that digital platforms can create new forms of proximity, continuity, and belonging, especially for dispersed or constrained congregants, but they also raise concerns about the weakening of embodied communal experience (Gomes, Kong, & Woods, 2025; Kołodziejska et al., 2024; Kopytowska, 2022). In this sense, the GKP Cirebon case demonstrates that the pastoral value of digital media lies in their capacity to extend access while still requiring careful attention to the physical, relational, and communal dimensions of worship.

In the context of a Protestant minority congregation in a Muslim-majority urban environment, digital platforms also provide GKP Cirebon with a form of public visibility. YouTube archives, Instagram posts, and online documentation allow the church to make its worship services, religious education, and congregational events publicly accessible through digital traces that can be viewed beyond the physical boundaries of the church building. This digital presence is relatively non-confrontational because it appears through livestreams, activity documentation, schedules, captions, and archives rather than through direct contestation over physical public space. In this sense, digital media do not resolve the spatial and social limitations that may be experienced by minority religious communities, but they expand the ways in which religious identity and communal activities can be documented, circulated, and accessed. This contextual implication resonates with studies of Indonesian digital religion showing that online platforms can broaden religious visibility and participation, while also requiring careful attention to the social and cultural setting in which religious communities communicate publicly (Arianto, 2021; Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2020).

The originality of this study lies in its empirical focus on a Protestant minority congregation in Indonesia and in its analytical mapping of digital religious practice into three interconnected dimensions. First, the study identifies three domains of digital religious activity at GKP Cirebon: worship, religious education, and pastoral-social ministry. Second, it shows that digital integration operates through three complementary modalities: livestreaming, interactive online participation, and digital communication. Third, it demonstrates that congregational and pastoral responses are not uniform, but can be understood through positive, adaptive or ambivalent, and critical categories. Through this mapping, the study contributes to digital religion scholarship by showing that digital media in a local Protestant minority congregation are best understood as an extension of religious access rather than a replacement for physical worship. Its main analytical contribution is the identification of accessibility–physical

communality negotiation as a key dynamic in understanding how digital media are adopted, evaluated, and limited within everyday church life.

The findings also suggest the possibility of what may be cautiously described as communal gratification: the need to feel connected to a worshipping community even when participation occurs through digital media. Unlike ordinary social gratification, which usually refers to interpersonal interaction or personal connection, communal gratification points to a broader sense of belonging to a faith community, sharing in collective worship, and remaining part of congregational life despite physical distance. This insight emerges from the finding that some congregants value digital worship not only because it provides access to religious content, but also because it helps them remain connected to the church community. However, this concept should be treated as a tentative analytical insight rather than a fully established theoretical category. Further comparative and mixed-methods research is needed to examine whether communal gratification can be identified across different religious traditions, denominational contexts, and digital worship practices (Brubaker & Haigh, 2017; Katz et al., 1974).

Practically, the findings suggest that GKP Cirebon and similar local churches need to develop digital ministry not merely as a technical service, but as a pastoral strategy. Since digital worship is valued for accessibility but also criticized for technical disruption and limited communal intimacy, the church needs a simple digital ministry policy that clarifies how online worship, livestreaming, digital communication, and pastoral care should be managed. This includes improving livestream quality, training multimedia teams, supporting congregants with limited digital literacy, and giving special attention to elderly congregants, busy workers, and members with mobility limitations. At the same time, digital ministry should be designed to complement rather than replace onsite worship. Physical worship should remain the center of communal formation, while digital media function as supporting channels that extend access, sustain communication, and maintain pastoral connection beyond formal worship events.

At the denominational level, the findings suggest the need for flexible digital ministry guidelines that can help GKP congregations manage online worship, digital communication, and pastoral care in ways that are both theologically grounded and contextually adaptable. Such guidelines do not need to standardize all congregations into one uniform digital model, because each local church has different resources, congregational profiles, and pastoral needs. Instead, the synod could provide general principles covering the theology of digital worship, technical platform management, pastoral accompaniment for online participants, digital literacy support, and ethical considerations in documenting and publishing congregational activities. By offering flexible guidance rather than rigid prescriptions, the denomination can support local churches in developing digital practices that expand access while preserving the importance of physical fellowship, communal worship, and local ecclesial identity.

The discussion shows that digital media at GKP Cirebon are best understood as a recurring and complementary extension of religious practice. Digital platforms expand access to worship, religious education, pastoral care, and congregational communication, especially for congregants who face limitations of mobility, time, or physical presence. However, the findings also indicate that physical worship remains central to fellowship, spiritual intimacy, embodied participation, and active involvement in church life. Digital integration at GKP Cirebon is therefore not a movement toward replacing the physical church, but a flexible negotiation between digital accessibility and physical communality. This case enriches digital religion studies in Indonesia by showing how a Protestant minority congregation adopts digital media as a pastoral and communicative resource while continuing to preserve the communal foundations of worship.

## CONCLUSION

This study finds that digital media at GKP Cirebon function as an extension of religious access rather than a replacement for physical worship. Digital platforms are used across three main domains of congregational life: worship, religious education, and pastoral-social ministry. Their integration operates through livestreaming, interactive online participation, and digital communication, enabling congregants to access worship, join prayer and reflection, receive information, and remain connected to church activities beyond physical gatherings. Congregational and pastoral responses are heterogeneous: some members value digital media for accessibility, flexibility, and spiritual support, while others accept them gradually or criticize their limitations, such as technical disruption, reduced spiritual focus, and the absence of embodied fellowship. These findings reveal a central tension between digital accessibility and physical communality, showing that digital media support congregational participation while physical worship remains essential for shared liturgical atmosphere, direct interaction, and communal intimacy.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in its empirical analysis of a Protestant minority congregation in Indonesia and its conceptual mapping of digital religious practice into three interconnected dimensions: domains of digital religious activity, modalities of digital integration, and categories of congregational response. By focusing on GKP Cirebon, this study enriches digital religion and media studies by showing how a local minority congregation negotiates digital accessibility and physical communality in everyday religious life. The study demonstrates that digital media do not necessarily produce a shift toward online-only religion, but can function as complementary infrastructure that expands access while preserving the importance of onsite worship and embodied community.

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses on a single local congregation, so the findings cannot be statistically generalized to all Protestant churches or minority religious communities in Indonesia. Second, the number of informants is limited and does not fully represent all demographic groups within the congregation, including youth, elderly congregants, and members with different levels of digital literacy. Third, the data were collected within a relatively short period, making this study cross-sectional rather than longitudinal; therefore, it cannot fully capture long-term changes in digital religious practice. Fourth, the study does not include quantitative platform analytics, such as viewership, watch time, engagement rates, or congregational satisfaction surveys, which could provide additional evidence about the scale and intensity of digital participation. These limitations do not invalidate the findings, but they indicate that the conclusions should be understood as context-specific and analytically transferable rather than statistically representative.

Future research could expand this study through comparative analysis across Christian denominations and regional contexts in Indonesia. Comparative studies would help explain how theological tradition, congregational size, institutional capacity, and local minority conditions shape different patterns of digital media integration. Longitudinal research is also needed to examine whether hybrid worship and digital communication remain sustainable over time or change as congregational habits develop after the pandemic. In addition, mixed-methods research that combines interviews, platform analytics, and congregational surveys could provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital participation, spiritual experience, and congregational satisfaction. Further studies may also focus on specific demographic groups, such as youth, elderly congregants, busy workers, or members with limited mobility, to understand how digital religious practice is experienced differently within the same congregation.

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