

Reimagining the Use of Technology among Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria: the Case of Deeper Life Bible Church

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Abstract

The integration of technology among Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria received a warm reception in the 21st century compared to the early 1900s when Church doctrine restricted the integration of some technologies in worship services. At its origin, the church frowned at the use of technology due to the belief that technology is a 'devil's tool' for distracting believers. However, the transformation of the world has generally affected the church's adoption of technology such as the internet, mobile apps, visual and audiovisual equipment, social media pages, and digital platforms to improve their ministry, engage with congregants, and reach new audiences. Therefore, this paper reimagines the impetuses behind harnessing faith and technology among the 21st century Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, particularly the Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC). The study employs historical and participatory observation methods to further inform the value of technology in the face of religious practices. It has been discovered that the DLBC has transformed profoundly in its services and has received new colouration due to its use of technology to reach the reached and unreached individuals. Hence, the study recommends that DLBC should provide church leaders and members with training on how to use technology effectively for ministry-related tasks. Also, instead of banning the use of drum sets, Deeper Life Bible Church should consider their adoption.

Keywords

Deeper Life Bible Church, Nigeria, Pentecostal churches, reimagining, technology

1. Introduction

It is important to first state that the term 'technology' as used in this study refers to Information and Communication Technology. Generally, technology is an essential aspect of life that forms the nucleus of daily human interaction within the family and society. It has influenced how persons relate to others and their environment. It has also contributed to the paradigm shift in human day-to-day activities with fellow humans and the changing relationship between man and God. The church is not independent of the use of technology; instead, traces have been found that technology has now become the culture in church programmes and activities. Technology is the act of getting things done, whether through scientific or applied methods. It is expedient to state that technology should not be limited to scientific materials or equipment; information and communication processes are also part of technology. Harrison corroborates

that technology is not only limited to the scientific or material components but can also include its providence in Information and Communication Technology.¹

Pentecostalism is the fastest-growing brand of Christianity in the world, and particularly in Nigerian society. Gemade opined, 'Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon with a large following in North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and other parts of the world'.² She stated further that Pentecostalism has experienced tremendous growth, rise, and impact throughout Africa. Without fear of conflict, it has taken centre stage as one of the region's most prevalent forms of Christianity.³ Pentecostal experience can be traced to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit's account in Acts 2:1ff. Christian existence imitates Jesus of Nazareth's life in the Spirit's power.

Pentecostalism is a brand of Christianity that emphasises the work of the Holy Spirit and the believer's direct experience of God's presence.⁴ The experience of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, according to the Acts 2 account, showcases the emergence of *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues) as evidence of the Holy Spirit upon the congregation of 120 people and the creation of boldness upon the frightened apostles, thus, becoming a landmark to every believer who professed the baptism of the Holy Spirit.⁵ Oshitelu traces the origin of Nigerian Pentecostalism to the activities of Prophet Sokari Braide, a Kalabari man from the Niger Delta area of the country. He was converted to the Anglican brand of the Christian faith in 1906 and four years later was baptised. Braide claimed that the Lord had commissioned him to preach, and in 1912, he made his first public proclamation as someone with prophetic ability and the gift of visions.⁶

The explosion of Pentecostalism introduced a spirituality not fostered by the initial Western missionaries into Nigeria. Pentecostal spirituality was highly welcomed among the masses in the society, which is the majority, due to the aftermath of the war, and because Nigerians were poor economically.⁷ Ola-Akinniyi further affirmed that Pentecostal waves became apparent with the activities of some African Christian leaders in the western part of Nigeria who assembled to seek divine intervention through prayer against the 1918 worldwide influenza epidemic that claimed about 250,000 lives in Nigeria alone. He further affirmed that the praying society was led by a founding member of 'Our Saviour' Anglican Church, Ijebu-Ode, Joseph Shadare.⁸

The origin of the Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria depicted a period of low technological advancement and its application in human daily affairs. As technology began to gain more acceptance from society, it became inevitable for the church to adopt it into its services and programmes. Despite its emergence, some churches, such as Deeper Life Bible Church in the early 1980s, frowned at using technology-related components such as television. Elsewhere,

¹ Gerald Harrison, *Managing Technological Change: Strategies for University and College Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2006), 10.

² Comfort Gemade, 'Pentecostalism and Information Communication Technology in the Face of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Nigeria', *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 26, Vol. 6. No.10. 2020.

³ Ibid., 26.

⁴ BBC, 'Pentecostalism', 2009, accessed 5th November 2023, https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/subdivisions/pentecostal_1.shtml.

⁵ Abosede L. Akande and Tosin S. Abolaji, 'African Pentecostalism: Features and Impacts on the 21st Century Nigerian Churches', in *African Pentecostalism: Its History, Theology and Music*, A Festschrift in Honour of Professor C.O. Oshun, 2024, 80–81.

⁶ Gideon Oshitelu, *History of the Aladura Independent Churches 1918-1940: An Interpretation* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, Nigeria, 2007), 22.

⁷ Ola-Akinniyi Adelodun, 'Pentecostalism and Its Challenges to Mission', in Peter P.O. Oyedapo, *Essays in Honour of Dr. Samson Olusoji Bamgbose* (Ibadan: Penthouse Publication, 2019), 104.

⁸ Oludele Adeyoye, 'Pentecostalism and the Growth of Christianity in Nigeria', in Olalekan Afolorunso Dario, Margaret Ojo and Tokunbo Bankole, *African Pentecostalism Series 2*, (Abeokuta: Crowther Theological Publishers, 2019), 45.

other Pentecostal Churches, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God, were already adopting technology during their early years of establishment. Some churches in the African Independent movements, such as Christ Apostolic Church and Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Nigeria, were trying to have technology used in the church. All of these attitudes on the use of technology have been ameliorated among the 21st century Pentecostal Churches.

Therefore, to keep in mind the thrust of this study, it is expedient to state that the study aims to reimagine the use of technology among Pentecostal churches in Nigeria with a focus on Deeper Life Bible Church. By reimagining, it implies that the study examines new approaches and attitudes to adopting Information and Communication Technologies into church cultures, such as evangelism, worship service, and sermonising, among several others, thus forming a digital church experience in Nigerian Pentecostals. Similarly, while reimagining the use of technology (ICT) in the Nigerian Pentecostal church experience, it is profound to reimagine other technologies, such as the drum set, which has been discarded since the emergence of Deeper Life Bible Church. This reimagination aims to provide ‘what changes, why does it change, parallel with what does not change, and why does it remain’ in adopting technology in DLBC, a gap the study intends to cover.

The impetus behind the selection of Deeper Life Bible Church owes mainly to the fact that DLBC is one of the leading Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. The DLBC has planted 500 churches in Lagos and has 120,000 members every Sunday.⁹ Apart from the stated reason, DLBC is also a leading Pentecostal church in the use of ICT. However, despite being in the leading category in population and technologies, the church still strongly opposes using other technological tools such as drum sets. It can be recalled that this same attitude was displayed regarding television in the 1900s and has now been fully integrated into the church system. Considering all views, Pentecostal churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Christ Apostolic Church, and Living Faith Church, among others, do not have such a unique attitude towards using technology.

Therefore, the study poses what changed technology adoption in the Deeper Life Bible Church. Are technological components a ‘devil’s tool’ to bring down the church? How has the church made effective use of technology in its services? All of these questions have become necessary to establish the rationale and impact of using technology in the Church. The paper is divided into four sections, namely an overview of the use of technology among Nigerian Pentecostal Churches during the 1900s: the case of DLBC, the factors that necessitated church adoption of technology in DLBC, technological tools among the Deeper Life Bible Church, reimagining the use of technology among Pentecostals: Deeper Life Bible Church.

1.1 Research methods

The paper adopts the historical and participatory observation research methods. The historical data were derived from books, journals, and online materials, which were adequately engaged within the scope of the paper. The paper adequately references the areas obtained from the historical method mentioned earlier. To further engage the discussion, the authors were participatory observers in different services, such as Sunday, weekly, and marriage services at the Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC) in Nigeria. They discovered that there is a significant transformation in the use of technology in the DLBC.

⁹ See Deeper Christian Life Ministry, ‘Pastor W.F. Kumuyi’, accessed 22nd January 2025, <https://dclm.org/about/w-f-kumuyi/>.

2. An Overview of the Use of Technology among Nigerian Pentecostal Churches during the 1900s: the Case of DLBC

The church did not entirely welcome the integration of Information and Communication Technologies in the 1900s.¹⁰ This was not solely because of its unavailability but also due to the church's stance against its incorporation into the church's strict culture. The church and technology have been two inseparable entities interacting since the 1900s, especially during the emergence of the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have their roots in the Diamond Society, a praying society founded in 1918 at St Savior's Anglican Church that subsequently changed its name to the Christ Apostolic Church. According to Ayegboyin and Ishola, the raising of the dead child in Ilesha caused a power outburst and a resurgence of faith among those who had previously lost faith in God's ability to work miracles and had agreed to use orthodox medicine and demonic tools to strengthen their faith.¹¹

The development of technology has made human endeavours easier and allowed civilisation to grow through the appropriate use of various technological tools. However, when Pentecostal churches first started, church planters and Christians, in general, somewhat accepted the use of technology. Kanayo Nwadiolor and Peace Olomu confirmed that in the early days of Deeper Life Bible Church, the gadget 'Television' was tagged 'the devil box'. It was seen as taboo, and members of the church were strictly warned against it.¹² Furthermore, Nwadiolor and Olomu confirmed that the DLBC disciplined some members who refused to put theirs away since they were viewed as disobedient. Video cameras and other technological devices were not allowed. Several years ago, one of the leaders of a camp programme in the Delta State town of Sapele passed away, and his children desired a dignified funeral. The children were told not to use the video camera for any coverage during the funeral.¹³

The African Indigenous Churches (AICs) also show little or no concern about adopting technology from the beginning. The Christ Apostolic Church in the early 1900s propagated the gospel using the available traditional methods, such as physical meetings, which involved gathering the people together and teaching and sermonising the gospel to them. Other methods used are conventional gongs, bands, and bells. Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola preached the gospel in Odo-Owa. David Olayiwola cited Abraham Owoyemi, saying that Babalola also organised regular prayer meetings at the Church Missionary Society Odo-Owa, which many people attended because of the miracles God performed through him.¹⁴

David Olayiwola further cited *The Biography of Moses Orimolade Tunolase* by the Cherubim and Seraphim Special Committee, Ikare, which states that the Cherubim and Seraphim is another Pentecostal church under AICs. Orimolade launched evangelistic campaigns in towns such as Ilorin, Irun, Akoko-Edo, and Ikiran. He was known as a wandering preacher because he visited these places to propagate the gospel.¹⁵ This confirms that physical gathering was typical among Pentecostals in the 1900s. However, this does not imply that ingathering is still not in use. However, it can be stated that Pentecostal churches in 21st-century Nigerian society have made tremendous efforts to create a digital space/gathering like that of the physical gathering.

¹⁰ Olumuyiwa A. Ajetomobi, Timothy O. Yayi, and Tosin S. Abolaji, 'Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Promotion of Regional Peace and Security in Nigeria: The Role of the Church', *Caritas et Veritas*, vol. 14, Issue 1, 2024, 24, <https://doi.org/10.32725/cetv.2024.004>.

¹¹ Deji Ayegboyin and Ishola Ademola, *African Indigenous Churches*, (Plateau: African Christian Textbooks, 2013), 66.

¹² Kanayo Nwadiolor and Peace Olomu, 'Globalization and the Dynamism of Religious Practices in the Deeper Life Bible Church, Nigeria', *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2023, 4.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ David O. Olayiwola, 'Babalola Joseph Ayodele (1904-1959)', in *Makers of the Church in Nigeria*, ed. J.A., Omoyajowo, (Lagos, Nigeria: CSS Bookshops Ltd., 1995), 10.

¹⁵ Ibid., 11.

In the use of the ingathering approach by the church, it is pertinent to say that water was used daily by both the Christ Apostolic Church and the Cherubim and Seraphim. Ayegboyin and Ishola opined that ‘after the heavy throng of people to the revival ground at Ilesa, the River Oye, a few metres from the revival ground, was consecrated and used to cure the infirm and the sick.’¹⁶ Omoyajowo affirmed that Orimolade purified a pool at Ogidi village, which the natives have worshipped from time immemorial, to ensure that they remained harmonious with the evil power it was supposed to possess.¹⁷ Doing this reinforces the need to understand why ingathering was the appropriate evangelisation method. It gives agency to the preacher who demonstrated God’s power through healing and the attendees who come to receive healing to be active participants in their healing journeys. Hence, questions about the efficacy, agency, and experience of God’s power in the digital spaces become pertinent to the churches and the members who thought such divine experience could not be encountered in the virtual world.

Every generation has a certain degree of technology. Throughout the 1900s, gongs, drums, fire, printed materials, in-person meetings, and sending a representative or messenger were often used. It is important to note that the bell, drum, and gong, among other instruments, were technologically produced and demonstrate the extent of technological understanding and application in society, especially in the church. Nonetheless, the status of technology has improved over time, giving rise to the phrase ‘technological advancement’. Technological advancement finds expression in the emergence of television, telephone, sound systems, and musical instruments. Technology in the 20th and 21st centuries has received a new shape, which has helped to reposition society, particularly the DLBC.

2.1 Brief History of the Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria

The Pentecostal church Deeper Life Bible Church, also called Deeper Life Christian Ministry, was founded in Lagos State in 1973. The doctrines of England’s most outstanding preachers of the 18th century, John Wesley, Charles Finney, and Charles Spurgeon, served as the foundation for the Church. As a mathematics lecturer at the University of Lagos, the founder, W. F. Kumuyi, is called the defender of faith. His study of the Bible with the Students Christian Movement, Scripture Union, and The Christian Union served as the impetus for his movement. The Bible study group set up its initial retreat in 1975 at Akoka, Lagos metropolis, and ‘expectedly, the news of the outcome of the meeting went viral and people from Lagos and outside started trooping into the Bible study.’¹⁸

The life of Pastor Kumuyi is intertwined with the history of the Church. Thus, it is relevant to consider the history of the church as the history of the Pastor Kumuyi and vice versa. The ministry experienced rapid growth at an Easter retreat in 1976, with 2,500 attendees. Kumuyi, however, continued his independent ministry after departing the Apostolic Faith Church in 1977 over doctrinal disagreements. With a rapid growth in membership and church branches across Nigeria and beyond, the church officially changed its name to the Deeper Life Bible Church in 1982.¹⁹

According to Alan Isaacson, Kumuyi ‘preached Deeper Life into existence’.²⁰ He further describes Kumuyi’s riveting sermons in this expression, ‘I would classify him as one of the greatest living preachers, giving a straightforward Bible-based message, his sermons thorough,

¹⁶ Ayegboyin and Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches*, 67.

¹⁷ Joseph, A. Omoyajowo, ‘Moses Orimolade Tunolase (1879-1933)’, in *Makers of the Church in Nigeria*, ed. J.A., Omoyajowo (Lagos, Nigeria: CSS Bookshops Ltd., 1995), 117–135.

¹⁸ Nwadiolor and Olomu, ‘Globalization and the Dynamism’, 11–12.

¹⁹ Israel Olofinjana, ‘A Brief History of Deeper Life Bible Church’, 30th January 2019, <https://israelolofinjana.wordpress.com/2019/01/30/a-brief-history-of-deeper-life-bible-church/>.

²⁰ Deeper Life Bible Church, ‘About the Church’, accessed 22nd January 2025, <https://dlbcoakpark.org/our-church/>.

and always personally challenging'.²¹ To bolster, elucidate, and broaden his primary ideas, he consistently provided a variety of cross-references that were read in their context. He addressed the Nigerian situation with authority and clarity.²² Tiwatola Abidemi remarked on the miraculous act of Kumuyi and re-echoed Gaiya that:

Kumuyi, like other Pentecostal leaders in Nigeria, plays the role of the traditional medicine man, whom the Yoruba call Babalawo. He discerns the ailment in a person even before the person tells him. Kumuyi makes such revelations in his preaching; for example, he would say: 'There is a man here, thirty years old, who is still wetting the bed. Raise your hand, and I'll pray for you'. Sometimes, members who could not come to Kumuyi in person would send him their handkerchiefs to be prayed for, similar to the New Testament event in Acts 19:11, 12. Kumuyi, however, does not emphasise healing miracles in his ministry, making Deeper Life Bible Church less popular than the newer churches.²³

Due to the holiness and sanctification emphasis of Kumuyi's message, Deeper Life Bible Church is distinguished by this uniqueness in its message among the other several Pentecostal movements in Nigeria. This message resonated widely, leading to the establishment of over 5,000 branch churches across Nigeria and international reach, including about 65 church plants in the UK and additional branches in several European countries, as well as the United States and New Zealand.²⁴ Kumuyi is not just a local leader but a global icon. In the recent (January 2025) inauguration of President Donald Trump of the United States, Kumuyi was invited as one of the worldwide leaders who participated in ushering in the Trump administration with prayer.²⁵ This is to strengthen further the justification for the scope of the study of 'Deeper Life Bible Church' among other Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. However, the local-global influence of Pastor Kumuyi is an undeniable growth and development of the DLBC, thus putting it at the forefront of discussion in this study.

3. Factors that Necessitated Church Adoption of Technology

Technology has been the order of the day in a man's activities. It has gradually taken over many traditional ways that have permeated man's culture, and hence has been seen as a replacement for man's methodologies in society. However, as the world grew, the church was not isolated. Therefore, the growth of society is the possible growth of the church. Society grows in number, technology, science, and ideology, and these changes crept into the church, and it continues to wrestle with the adverse effects these innovations have brought upon believers. The following are the factors that prompted a change in attitudes and adoption of technology in the Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria.

3.1 Education and Evangelism

One of the pivotal moments in a person's life is education. It includes studying and gaining new knowledge that changes a person's perspective and behaviour. Early in the 20th century, the church knew very little about the advantages of technological utilisation. This mistaken belief caused the gap between the church and technology. Thus, technology was called different

²¹ Ibid.

²² Deeper Christian Life Ministry, 'Pastor W.F. Kumuyi', accessed 22nd January 2025, <https://dclm.org/about/w-f-kumuyi/>.

²³ Tiwatola Abidemi, The History, Founder, Beliefs and Practices of Deeper Life Bible Church, Nigeria, *Historical Research Letter* (Paper) ISSN 2225-0964 (Online) Vol. 26, (2015), 25.

²⁴ Olofinjana, 'A Brief History'.

²⁵ See Vanguard, 'Video: Pastor Kumuyi prays at Trump's inauguration event', accessed 22nd January 2025, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/01/video-pastor-kumuyi-prays-at-trumps-inauguration-event/#google_vignette.

names, such as ‘devil’s box’, ‘devil’s instrument’, and ‘worldly possession’. A sharp argument may be that Kumuyi was an educationist and, by profession, a Mathematics Lecturer at the University of Lagos. Yet, he has a different attitude towards the use of technology. However, due to increased knowledge, a receptive wave of acceptance was felt as the church began to adopt it. The church now believes that technology (ICT) could be regained for evangelistic purposes. Simon Mungai writes:

Contemporary Pentecostals, in particular, are guided by a dominion religious orientation in which the media are expected to be reclaimed for religion. Viewers and listeners are invited to visit websites where they can listen to or follow live services, download motivational messages, read church newsletters, request special prayers, or fulfil tithing obligations.²⁶

Deeper Life Bible Church now utilises technology to suit the purpose of the church in transforming and liberating the world from spiritual coverings. Nwadiakor and Olomu opined that ‘in recent times, the Church now has various printed materials such as Daily Manner, Sincere Milk, Devotional podcast, and youth higher every day, all in hard and soft copies to be used as daily devotionals for children, youth, and adults.’²⁷ Furthermore, the church’s recent adoption of an artificial intelligence chatbot, ‘askkumuyi.ai’, is a testament to the growth of technology within the church. The essence of technology makes it possible for the church to reach a wider audience outside of its immediate geographic boundaries. This change has increased the church’s influence by allowing it to disseminate its faith and community programs via various digital channels.²⁸

3.2 Accessibility through Social Media

As society expands, spreading the gospel becomes difficult for preachers, churches, and missionaries. During the early 1900s, preachers such as Orimolade, Babalola, and Oshitelu, amongst others, were wandering preachers. Moving from one place to another becomes problematic when society’s population increases rapidly. However, in 21st century Nigerian society, the population is over 230 million.²⁹ This makes it difficult for the church to operate as it did in the 1900s. The advancement of technology in communication, such as social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp), has paved the way for easy access for the Deeper Life Bible Church to reach the unreached society.

The essence of social media as a tool that accommodates and provides easy access to members and non-members is undeniable. Nwadiakor and Olomu affirmed that social media is user-generated content created in a cooperative setting where individuals exchange ideas, information, and knowledge. Blogs, social networking sites (like Facebook and Twitter), photo-sharing websites (like YouTube and Instagram), and podcasts are tools used to create social media content. Users of YouTube can upload, share, and watch videos on the social media platform. Facebook enables users to create groups with related interests, publish videos, interact with others, and share hobbies.³⁰ Today, Deeper Life Bible Church exists on different

²⁶ Simon Mungai, ‘Information and Communication Technology Uptake and Use in Religious Institutions in Kenya: A Study of Christ is the Answer Ministries’, a thesis submitted for the award of Master’s Degree in Communication Studies, University of Nairobi, 2018, 23.

²⁷ Nwadiakor and Olomu, ‘Globalization and the Dynamism’, 15.

²⁸ Deeper Christian Life Ministry, ‘Church Technology Support’, accessed 12th December 2021, <https://delm.org/asp-products/church-technology-support/>.

²⁹ See The World Factbook, accessed 8th November 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/>.

³⁰ Nwadiakor and Olomu, ‘Globalization and the Dynamism’, 16.

social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, among others, to reach and be reached by its more extensive audience.

3.3 *Pandemic Experience*

The use of technology in Information and Communication Technology received a low reception from the church before the Covid-19 pandemic. Akiti Alamu noted that during the pandemic, Christians were indoors throughout the period, as Law enforcement agencies were monitoring churches and other Christian gatherings.³¹ This period was characterised by social distancing from people due to the fear of the spread of the virus. It is rightly observed that the church setting would encourage this spread due to the population of worshippers and to uphold the precautionary social distancing policy. Felix Akintude opined that during the lockdown, the Redeemed Christian Church of God used social media platforms and Television stations (Dove & RTM) to transmit church services to sustain the fellowship of brethren.³² Deeper Life Bible Church, like other Pentecostal churches, intensified the use of technology during the pandemic and became the dominant culture of the church even after the pandemic.

3.4 *The Modernisation of Church Services*

One of the fantastic things about technology is how church services are redesigned to attract believers and inspire them to sing and dance. Deeper Life Bible Church services are given new colouration by sound systems and other musical instruments, encouraging the congregation to stay in touch with the church. For instance, contrary to the popular culture among Pentecostal Churches such as Christ Apostolic Church and Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Deeper Life Bible Church does not allow drum sets in its service. However, during a wedding programme in the Deeper Life Bible Church, it was observed that when the pastor led the congregation in singing, the pianists were playing and, with their styles, were making some beats. It was also noticed that the pastor was tapping the podium right in front of him. Generally, as the congregation was singing, there was a beat(ing) that members were making as they were dancing.³³

It cannot be denied that members of Deeper Life Bible Church listen to other Gospel music, such as Shola Allyson, Nathaniel Bassey, and Dunsin Oyekan, among several others who use drum sets in their songs, and members of this church dance to the songs. It is safe to say that drawing allusions from these references may indicate the possibility of adopting drum sets by the Deeper Life Bible Church during its services in the near future. However, Deeper Life Bible Church is one of the leading church movements that has successfully integrated more significant components of technological tools into its services.

4. **Technological tools in the Deeper Life Bible Church**

Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, particularly the Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC), have embraced various technological innovations. These technologies are frequently employed to improve church services, further enhancing the Pentecostal experience in Nigerian church communities in the twenty-first century. The table below shows the various technological tools used in the DLBC:

³¹ Akiti G. Alamu, *Religion and Public Affairs in Nigeria* (Ilorin: K-Success Prints Media, 2021), 311.

³² Felix B. Akintunde, 'Ecclesiastical Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Selected Churches in Oyo State, Nigeria', *Nigerian Journal of Christian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2022, 8.

³³ This was the wedding of a brother, which took place in July 2024 at DLBC, Ibadan. I was fascinated by the way the service was conducted without drum sets yet producing a kind of beat to every song so that people could dance to it. However, not only drum sets produce a beat. I would say that the church may reconsider the use of drum sets as technology continues to reshape the church activities and as members are drawn to dancing to the beat.

S/N	TECHNOLOGY	APPLICATIONS
1.	Sound systems and microphones	These are employed to produce audible speech. DLBC works hard to acquire high-quality microphones and sound systems to complement their sermons and worship songs.
2.	Social media	This is often used to connect to large people. DLBC uses Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms to propagate the gospel.
3.	Websites	Many web pages contain church information such as sermons, church names and addresses, and contact information for guidance.
4.	Musical instruments	Pentecostals use instruments like keyboards, guitars, and trumpets, amongst others, to make services livelier.
5.	Live streaming and recording	Pentecostals live stream and record services for recording purposes and accessibility by members who are not physically present at the service.

Table 1: Some common technological tools used in DLBC and their uses

The above table has identified only a few technological tools, such as sound systems and microphones, social media, websites, musical instruments, and live streaming and recording, along with a few areas of their applications. While it is essential to note that these technological tools are commonly used within the DLBC, this does not imply a monopoly on their usage. However, other Pentecostal churches, such as RCCG, CAC, and Living Faith Church, are making progress in their adoptions and usage to make the church more accessible to congregations and the community.

5. Reimagining the Use of Technology among Pentecostals: Deeper Life Bible Church

It is undeniable that society has become increasingly technologically advanced, and the church has integrated technology into all its events and programmes by enabling its members to view and listen to sermons remotely. Ajetomobi et al corroborate this view by stating that the adoption of ICT in the church is an ‘innovative approach’ that has led to holistic intervention in the church’s growth and development.³⁴ According to Lisa Allen-McLaurin, digital technology is commonly used during worship sessions. Churches have been playing CDs and MP3 recordings during worship for decades. They do this to supplement their music, dance, and drama ministries and to cover for absent artists.³⁵ Video clips and PowerPoint presentations are used to help ministers drive home the sermonic focus, especially for those who may be visual learners.³⁶

Therefore, this study argues for reimagining the use of technology in DLBC from two perspectives. The first is the church’s adoption of an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot named after the founder, Pastor Kumuyi, and the second is the common practice of the church services, which finds expression in online worship services and internet banking, among several others. From the first perspective, the church’s current technological integration trend into its practice is adopting an AI chatbot named ‘askkumuyi.ai’. It is expedient to state that this innovation marks the beginning of a new ‘Pentecosto-technological transformation era’ in the Nigerian Pentecostal church landscape. The ‘Pentecosto-technological transformation era’ shows an

³⁴ Ajetomobi et al. ‘Information and Communication Technology’, 24.

³⁵ Lisa, M. Allen-McLaurin, ‘Let Me Post This Praise on Facebook: Questioning the Use of Digital and Social Media in Worship,’ *Liturgy*, vol. 30, no. 2 (April 2015): 45.

³⁶ Ibid.

interesting connection between the church and the emerging technological realities and how these technological realities are reshaping the Pentecostal church experience in 21st century Nigerian society. The recent development of the askkumuyi.ai chatbot offers users valuable resources about DLBC doctrines, teachings, sermons, and information about programmes such as Easter and December retreats, and spiritual guidance.³⁷

Secondly, there are several other common ways in which the Pentecostal churches have adopted technological tools in their service and culture. These common ways can be expressed in what is generally known as digital platforms, websites, and other online spaces where church services are held. The following are ways of using technology in the Deeper Life Bible Church.

i. Online worship services

Since most Pentecostals provide their members with both in-person and virtual services, online worship services are no longer foreign. The in-gathering philosophy, which was primarily practised in the 1900s, has changed with the development of technology. Although it has taken on a new dimension regarding operation and nature, physical gathering is still used today. For example, the Redeemed Christian Church of God typically holds a general service on the first Sunday of each month, at which all the Redeemed Churches are connected to the Headquarters both directly and virtually. Pastor E.A. Adeboye preaches and prays for all the members and viewers as the new month begins. In the Deeper Life Bible Church, online worship sessions are embraced during weekly programmes such as Monday (Bible Study) and Thursday (Revival Hour). In the experience of one author of this paper: ‘In one of our engagements, I visited a family friend who is a Deeper Life Bible Church member on a Monday evening at his residence in Sabo-Oke, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, around 6:00 pm. Unbeknownst to me, it was Monday, and it was a Bible study. I was told to sit as I joined in sharing the word. At first, I thought that my friend would be the one to walk us through the session. But he began to set his phone down so we could all watch the session with the founder, Pastor Kumuyi.’³⁸

It is no longer strange that the DLBC uses online mechanics in its services. This is also seen as a prominent mode during the Easter and December retreats of the DLBC. During the Easter and the December retreats, members converge in campsites where they stay for fellowship during the Easter and December periods, respectively. They have different camping sites across Nigeria, such as DLBC campsite site Eyekorin, Ilorin, Kwara State,³⁹ and beyond, where members gather and listen to Pastor Kumuyi’s message on the projected screen connected to the Headquarters in Gbagada, Lagos State, Nigeria.⁴⁰

ii. Internet banking system

This is a trend among the Pentecostals in Nigeria. Churches now operate the collection of tithes, offerings, and other donations through the online banking mode. During services, church bank accounts are displayed on projectors. In some churches, like the Christ Apostolic Church, church account details are printed on banners and/or papers and pasted for easy access by the members. Eric Anozie writes:

³⁷ See Ask Dr. Kumuyi, ‘What do you want to Ask Dr. Kumuyi?’, accessed 22nd January 2025, <https://askkumuyi.ai>.

³⁸ This is the usual practice, as I have engaged with this family and many others who are members of the Deeper Life Bible Church.

³⁹ See Cybo, ‘Deeper Life Campground Eyekorin Ilorin’, accessed 22nd January 2025, https://www.cybo.com/NG-biz/deeper-life-campground-eyekorin-ilorin#google_vignette.

⁴⁰ See Adequate Travel, ‘Deeper Life Bible Church Headquarters In Nigeria: History, Facts, & Services’, accessed on 22nd January 2025, <https://www.adequatetravel.com/placeguide/Nigeria/deeper-life-bible-church-headquarters-in-nigeria-history-facts-services>.

Many churches today establish a Community Bank. For example, the Diocese of the Niger Anglican Communion established Aku Chukwu Micro Finance Bank at All Saints Cathedral, Onitsha, and other churches within their locality to encourage the saving of funds which would be invested in business ventures, to provide the needed capital for development, to promote trading activities, and to provide short-and long-term loans to individuals and firms.⁴¹

DLBC encourages members to use Internet banking to contribute, hence implementing open financial processes. This approach fosters accountability among church members while bolstering the self-sustaining nature of the organisation. Essential church functions, including maintenance, evangelism, and hall rentals, are directly funded by donations. Additionally, the church offers a safe atmosphere for financial transactions by enabling online donations, guaranteeing the security of contributors' data.⁴²

iii. The use of modern musical instruments in DLBC

It is common for Pentecostal churches to include a full musical orchestra or band that musically motivates the congregation to worship God with an emotional act.⁴³ The Pentecostal churches, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God and Christ Apostolic Church, use drum sets in their services. Drum sets as a musical instrument are intertwined into church services. These churches continue to expand, and by this, most of the new branches, which were partly or wholly completed, are empowered with at least a drum set and keyboard to enhance worship in the church further. Contrary to this popular culture of using drum sets and keyboards, DLBC only uses keyboards and places strict warnings on the use of drum sets. DLBC does not make use of drum sets. This is, however, one of the standing legacies of the church founder, Pastor Kumuyi. Thus, even though DLBC does not use drum sets, it remains an essential lens through which one can successfully reimagine the use of technology in Pentecostal churches in Nigeria.

iv. Virtually all activities in the church among the Pentecostals have been restructured to suit the online mode

These activities include sermons, prayer meetings, bible study, and online evangelism. Most Pentecostal churches now go on air (Radio broadcasts and TV stations) on particular days to pray, teach the gospel, and make announcements about church programmes. Danfulani asserted that churches possess active websites: they use text messages, podcasts, Wi-fi, Bluetooth, WhatsApp, Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, iCloud, FaceTime, and Safari.⁴⁴ Alamu opined that church leaders and their organisations still utilised these to reach out to their members and others.⁴⁵ The table below shows the churches' websites and TV channels.

⁴¹ Eric E. Anozie, 'Christian Church: A Catalyst for Economic Development in Nigeria', *An Interjoined in sharing the world interdisciplinary Journal*, Ethiopia Vol. 7 (4), Serial No. 31, September 2013, 283.

⁴² See Deeper Christian Life Ministry, 'Online Tithe and Offering', accessed 22nd January 2025, <https://dclm.org/asp-products/online-tithe-and-offering/>. There is also a tab titled 'Church Technology Support' that allows church members and a larger audience to donate online. Thus, the online platform serves a dual purpose, first for 'Tithe and Offering' and second for 'Technology Support'. This also indicates the church's commitment to fostering the use of technology in the church, placing it as a leading figure in the adoption of technology among Pentecostal churches.

⁴³ Ekaette Udok and Adeola Odunuga, 'Music and Pentecostalism: The Nigerian Experience', *Review of Arts and Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 1. June (2016), 53.

⁴⁴ Usman Danfulani, 'Religion as Commodity in a Congested Nigerian Market: Where Does the Holy Spirit fit within the Economy of Religion', in *African Pentecostalism: Probity and Accountability*, ed. J. K. Ayantayo, B. A. Adedibu, and B. O. Igboin (Akungba-Akoko: AAU Press, 2019), 38.

⁴⁵ Alamu, *Religion and Public Affairs in Nigeria*, 312.

S/N	Churches	Website	TV channel
1.	Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)	https://www.rccg.org/	Dove Television
2.	Christ Apostolic Church (CAC)	https://christapostolicchurch.org.ng/	CAC Tv
3.	Deeper Life Bible Church	https://dclm.org/	DLBC Tv
4.	Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S)	https://www.csmcayonio.org/	Seraphim Tv

Table 2: Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, their websites and TV channels⁴⁶

The above table, by Michael Olorunnimbe and Tosin Abolaji, portrays four churches with their websites and TV channels, including the Deeper Life Bible Church. The interesting point here is to show how the church has moved from a traditional approach, which is characterised by a technophobic attitude, to a transformational approach that embraces technological development, such as building church websites, TV channels, and the use of artificial intelligence for evangelism, educational, and inspirational purposes.

6. Conclusion

In the current and rapidly expanding technological era, the church and technology are inseparable, like conjoined twins. Compared to the early 1900s, when technical innovation was welcomed with mixed reactions from the church, technology in modern Pentecostal churches has gained a new level of great acceptability. The church was cautious about letting the world control it by using things from the outside wrapped in technological clothing. This worldview, however, changed to a new viewpoint in which technology is viewed as both a gift from God to humanity and a way for people to connect with God. Psalms mention musical instruments such as timbres, strings, pipes, and cymbals (Psalms 150:4-5) that are used to praise God. Similarly, the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria use instruments such as keyboard, drum set, guitar, and trumpet to glorify God.

It is fascinating that churches like Deeper Life Bible Church have a strict stance on using drum sets among the Pentecostal movements. The ban on using drum sets is strongly related to church doctrine, which emphasises a solemn and respectful environment during worship. It is believed that the usage of drums, which are frequently connected to upbeat and modern musical genres, is incompatible with the church's objectives of encouraging a contemplative and orderly worship experience. A general position within some denominations against rhythmic counterparts in worship landscape is further demonstrated by the use of a cappella or orchestral techniques during services in other churches with comparable prohibitions.⁴⁷

Several reasons have led to the inclusion of technological tools into the church structure, such as evangelistic purpose, accessibility through social media, pandemic experience, and the modernisation of church services. Some standard technological tools used in DLBC today include, but are not limited to, sound systems, microphones, musical instruments, social media, and websites, amongst others, which have reshaped the church to fit into the present society. It must be emphasised that the church innovation of askkumuyi.ai is a profound achievement in

⁴⁶ Michael Olorunnimbe, and Tosin Abolaji, 'Digitalisation and Evangelism: The Impact of Digital Evangelisms in the 21st Century Nigerian Church', *Religions Journal of Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions*, Vol. 33. No. 1st July 2023, 30.

⁴⁷ 'Deeper Life Bible Church And 3 Other Churches That Doesn't Use Drum Sets During - Religion -Nigeria', nairaland.com, 15th November 2024, <https://www.nairaland.com/6747969/deeper-life-bible-church-3>.

integrating technology into the church, hence ushering it into the ‘Pentecosto-technological transformation era’ where the world of technology is now the new world for the church to exist and engage with its audience.

6.1 Recommendations

The recommendations below are for the church leadership, congregants, and policy directions.

1. The members should not misplace the importance of using technology, such as being active on social media, chatting with friends, or watching videos during church services, in sharing the gospel.
2. Train church leaders and members to use technology effectively for ministry-related tasks. Workshops may concentrate on online discipleship strategies, digital content production, and social media interaction.
3. The church should not be too narrow in the use of technology. Still, it should also embrace and integrate ingathering, especially in areas where poor facilities, such as bad Internet services, lack of technological advancement, and lack of technological literacy among the people of such communities, are on the rise.
4. Deeper Life Bible Church should consider the adoption of drum sets in its worship services, accompanied by clearly defined guidelines on the types of beats permissible during worship. While this suggestion may pose theological and practical challenges, especially given the broader concern within Pentecostal churches in Nigeria about maintaining a boundary between godly worship and secular musical expressions, it remains a necessary conversation. The challenge of regulating drumbeats is not unique to DLBC but is part of a larger tension within Pentecostalism that grapples with preserving sanctity in the face of cultural relevance. Nonetheless, considering the growing appeal of music and rhythmic expression, especially among youth and Generation Z, integrating drum sets can enhance engagement without compromising doctrinal integrity. This recommendation does not signify a departure from the church’s holiness theology, but rather an inclusive approach that recognises the evolving worship needs of younger generations while still upholding the core values of reverence and sanctification.

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