

## Here is the prompt entered into Claude.ai:

Create a digital ministry strategy for St. John's African Methodist Episcopal Church in Montgomery, Alabama. The church's mission statement is: "Equipping Believers to Advance the Kingdom of God". St. John's is a Bible-believing/teaching church with approximately 500 members. There are members in every age category, but the majority of the adults are 50 years of age and up. St. John's has a strong Facebook presence, and the pastor does a daily devotional on Facebook live. The church has many ministries and Bible Studies that effectively reach all who attend. The church is also very active in the surrounding neighborhoods and community, and St. John's Outreach Ministries feed and clothe the community twice weekly. Considering the location of the church, and its longstanding reputation of outreach, give me a digital ministry strategy designed to grow the church. Give me a 2 year strategy with reasonable benchmarks.

# ST. JOHN'S AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*Montgomery, Alabama*

## Two-Year Digital Ministry Strategy

*"Equipping Believers to Advance the Kingdom of God"*

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### Executive Summary

St. John's AME Church enters this digital strategy from an unusually strong position: roughly 500 members across every age category, a genuinely engaged Facebook following anchored by the Pastor's daily devotional, deep ministry and Bible study infrastructure, and a community reputation built on decades of real, tangible outreach — twice-weekly feeding and clothing through St. John's Outreach Ministries. Few congregations have this combination of digital habit and street-level credibility already in place.

The opportunity is not to reinvent St. John's digital presence but to extend it: turn the daily devotional audience into a discipleship pipeline, turn the outreach ministry's reputation into a recruiting and giving engine, and add one or two new digital "doors" that reach members and neighbors who don't yet use Facebook the way the church's core does.

This plan is built around a simple discipline: never abandon what already works for the 50+ majority, and add exactly one new capability per quarter so the Digital Ministry Team can build sustainably rather than launch and burn out.

### Guiding Principles

- Mission first, platform second. Every channel and post should visibly equip believers, build identity in Christ, or advance the Kingdom — not just fill a content calendar.
- Meet the whole congregation where they are. Facebook remains the anchor for the 50+ majority; short-form video and texting extend reach to younger members, working adults, and newcomers.
- Digital amplifies discipleship, it doesn't replace it. Online content should routinely funnel people into a Bible study, ministry, or Sunday service — never function as a substitute for the gathered church.
- Outreach is the differentiator. St. John's already feeds and clothes its community twice a week. Digital ministry's job is to make that visible, recruit volunteers to sustain it, and invite giving toward it.
- Build the team, not just the content. One person (even a gifted one) cannot sustain this long-term. Every phase includes training and delegating to volunteers.

### Current State: Strengths to Build On

- Strong, habitual Facebook audience via the Pastor's daily devotional — a built-in, trusted daily touchpoint most churches would envy.
- Deep ministry and Bible study infrastructure already reaching members across age groups in person.

- A 60-year-plus reputation for tangible, consistent community outreach — the kind of credibility that can't be manufactured digitally, only documented and shared.
- A congregation spanning every generation, which means the strategy must serve grandparents and grandchildren in the same household.

## Strategic Pillars

### 1. Digital Discipleship — “Equipping Believers”

Extend the reach of Bible studies, sermons, and teaching beyond the building and beyond Sunday. Build a searchable sermon and teaching archive so members can revisit and share what they're learning.

### 2. Digital Outreach — “Advance the Kingdom”

Make St. John's Outreach Ministries visible online: volunteer recruitment, donation drives, and storytelling that shows the church living out its mission twice a week in the neighborhood.

### 3. Digital Hospitality — Turning Followers into Family

Every first-time digital visitor — someone who comments, messages, or fills out a form — gets a warm, timely, human response and a clear next step toward in-person connection.

### 4. Digital Infrastructure — Built to Last

A church website, giving platform, and communication system that the whole staff and volunteer team can maintain, not just one person.

## Platform Roles

- Facebook (core, keep strong): daily devotional, Sunday livestream, ministry groups — the anchor for the 50+ majority.
- Website: the central hub — sermon archive, event calendar, online giving, outreach information, prayer requests.
- YouTube: a permanent, searchable home for sermons and teaching series; increasingly used by older adults as well as younger ones.
- Text messaging (SMS): the highest-reach, lowest-barrier channel for prayer requests, outreach mobilization, and reminders — works for every age group.
- Instagram / short-form video (Reels/Shorts): the channel most likely to reach younger members, their friends, and first-time visitors researching the church.
- Podcast (Year 2): sermon audio for commuters and multitaskers.
- Church app or mobile giving/check-in platform (Year 2): consolidates giving, groups, and communication into one place as adoption grows.

## Year 1: Foundation & Consistency

Quarter	Focus	Key Actions	Benchmarks
Q1 (Months 1-3)	Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form a 5-8 person Digital Ministry Team (video, social, writing, tech/livestream)</li> <li>Audit all current channels and analytics baselines</li> <li>Launch a rebuilt church website: sermon archive, event calendar, online giving, outreach page, prayer request form</li> <li>Create a simple content calendar and branding guide</li> </ul>	Website live and mobile-friendly. Digital Ministry Team seated. Baseline metrics documented for all channels.
Q2 (Months 4-6)	Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch a YouTube channel; backfill 6-12 months of sermons</li> <li>Begin repurposing the daily Facebook Live devotional into short clips</li> <li>Launch church-wide text messaging (prayer requests, outreach alerts, event reminders)</li> </ul>	YouTube: 250+ subscribers. Text list: 150+ opted-in numbers. Facebook engagement up 15% over Q1 baseline.
Q3 (Months 7-9)	Voice & Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch Instagram with testimonies and outreach storytelling</li> <li>Post 2 short vertical videos (Reels/Shorts) weekly recapping Sunday's message</li> <li>Train 5 ministry leaders to contribute content from their own ministries</li> </ul>	Instagram: 300+ followers. 5 trained ministry content contributors. Consistent 2x/week short-video cadence.
Q4 (Months 10-12)	Assimilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch one hybrid/online Bible study for homebound members, distant family, and seekers</li> <li>Build an automated welcome sequence (text + email) for first-time digital visitors</li> <li>Publish a Year 1 digital ministry report to the congregation</li> </ul>	1 online Bible study cohort running (15-20 people). Online giving reaches 20% of total giving. First Year 1 report delivered.

## Year 2: Expansion & Multiplication

Quarter	Focus	Key Actions	Benchmarks
Q5 (Months 13-15)	Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch a podcast of sermons/teaching for Apple Podcasts and Spotify</li> <li>• Digitally document the twice-weekly feeding/clothing outreach to recruit volunteers and donors</li> <li>• Explore digital partnerships with Huntsville/Montgomery-area media and community organizations</li> </ul>	Podcast live with 8+ episodes. Outreach-specific digital campaign yields 20+ new volunteer signups.
Q6 (Months 16-18)	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt a church app or mobile-friendly giving/check-in platform</li> <li>• Publish an online ministry directory so members can find and join a group digitally</li> <li>• Upgrade livestream production quality for Sunday worship</li> </ul>	150+ households using the app/portal. Online giving reaches 30-35% of total giving.
Q7 (Months 19-21)	Multiplication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission a second wave of volunteers (young adults/students) to lead short-form video content</li> <li>• Stand up a digital hospitality team to answer comments and messages within 24 hours</li> <li>• Begin tracking the full digital discipleship pathway: follower → website visitor → group member → in-person attender</li> </ul>	90%+ of comments/messages answered within 24 hours. 3+ documented online-to-in-person stories per quarter.
Q8 (Months 22-24)	Sustain & Celebrate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a full Year 2 digital ministry report to the congregation and leadership</li> <li>• Evaluate results and set the Year 3 content calendar</li> <li>• Assess whether a livestream/satellite digital congregation is warranted by the data</li> </ul>	Total digital reach roughly doubled vs. Year 1 baseline. Online giving stable at 30%+. 25+ new members/regular attenders trace first contact to a digital touchpoint.

## Key Metrics to Track Quarterly

- Facebook: page followers, average post/Live engagement, daily devotional average viewers
- YouTube: subscribers, watch time, top sermons
- Instagram/short-form: followers, Reels/Shorts views and shares
- Text list size and opt-in rate
- Website: monthly visitors, prayer request submissions, event page visits
- Online giving as a percentage of total giving
- Volunteer signups sourced from digital channels (especially for Outreach Ministries)
- First-time digital visitors who take an in-person next step (service attendance, Bible study, membership)

## Team & Roles

- Digital Ministry Coordinator — owns the content calendar and this strategy; a natural extension of the church's existing creative leadership
- Content Creator/Videographer — records and edits sermon clips, testimonies, and outreach footage
- Social Media Coordinator (ideally a younger member) — owns Instagram and short-form video
- Livestream/Tech Volunteer(s) — owns Sunday production quality
- Digital Hospitality Team — responds to comments, messages, and online prayer requests within 24 hours
- Outreach Storyteller — documents the twice-weekly feeding and clothing ministry for recruitment and giving appeals

## **Budget Considerations**

This plan is designed to be resourced modestly and grown as it proves out:

- Text messaging platform subscription (e.g., a church-focused SMS/communication tool)
- Website hosting and, if needed, a simple content management system
- Modest camera/audio upgrade for livestream and short-form video quality
- Podcast hosting (Year 2)
- Possible stipend for a part-time media coordinator as the ministry grows

## **Sustainability & Guardrails**

- Protect volunteers from burnout — one new capability per quarter, not everything at once.
- Reassure the 50+ core that new channels are additions, not replacements, for Facebook and in-person fellowship.
- Establish simple privacy guardrails for prayer requests and outreach photos shared publicly (get consent before featuring individuals, especially those served by Outreach Ministries).
- Revisit and adjust this plan every quarter based on the metrics above — treat it as a living strategy, not a fixed document.

**Here is the prompt entered into Claude.ai:**

Draft a one-page leadership summary suitable to present to the Official Board separately from the full document.

## ST. JOHN'S AME CHURCH — DIGITAL MINISTRY STRATEGY

### *Leadership Board Summary*

*“Equipping Believers to Advance the Kingdom of God”*

### Why This Matters Now

St. John's already has what most churches are trying to build: a loyal daily Facebook audience, deep Bible study reach, and an outreach reputation of feeding and clothing the community twice weekly. This plan extends those strengths onto more digital channels — it does not replace what already works.

### Two-Year Roadmap at a Glance

Phase	Focus	What Happens	Benchmark
Y1 Q1-Q2	Foundation	Digital team formed. New website (giving, sermons, events). YouTube + church-wide texting launched.	Website live. 250+ YouTube subs. 150+ texting opt-ins.
Y1 Q3-Q4	Consistency	Instagram + short-form video launched. First online Bible study. Automated visitor follow-up.	300+ IG followers. Online giving = 20% of total.
Y2 Q5-Q6	Expansion	Podcast launched. Outreach ministry documented digitally to recruit volunteers/donors. Church app adopted.	20+ new outreach volunteers. Online giving = 30-35%.
Y2 Q7-Q8	Multiplication	New volunteer wave trained. 24-hr digital hospitality response standard. Year 2 report to congregation.	Digital reach ~2x Y1 baseline. 25+ new attendees trace to a digital first touch.

### Guardrails the Board Should Know

- Facebook stays the anchor for our 50+ majority. Every new channel is an addition, never a replacement.
- One new capability is added per quarter — paced to protect volunteers from burnout.
- St. John's Outreach Ministries gets dedicated digital focus in Year 2 to recruit volunteers and donors.
- Every online touchpoint is designed to move people toward a Bible study, ministry, or Sunday service — not just engagement for its own sake.

### What We're Asking of the Board

- Approve formation of a 5-8 person volunteer Digital Ministry Team.
- Approve modest budget for website hosting, a text-messaging platform, and basic video/audio equipment.
- Endorse quarterly reporting of the benchmarks above at board meetings.