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UKRAINIAN PROTESTANT YOUTUBE LIVESTREAMS DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC: STATISTICS AND ANALYTICS

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Abstract

The article analyzes the statistics of Ukrainian Protestant digital activity. The key indicator of Ukrainian Protestant digital outreach is the increased number of livestreams in different styles and formats. I use “All-Ukrainian Sobor” NGO’s YouTube livestreams catalog as a working statistic model. In the course of study, two peaks in the overall number of views of all videos of a given YouTube channel were singled out. These peaks were (1) from 500K to 100K and (2) from 50K to 10K. Analysis of the views rating of a single YouTube channel proved to be somewhat random and non-indicative; nevertheless, views number enables a Church to draw attention to its activity online. Analysis of the recent history of Church YouTube channels showed two other peaks: in the years 2013-15 (Euromaidan, annexation of Crimea and armed conflict at Donbas) and the year 2020 (COVID-19 pandemic), proving that Ukrainian Protestants react at least to the main societal tendencies. For those believers, livestreams became a relatively appealing instrument, actively used since 2017-19. Though Baptists and Pentecostals outnumber Adventists, the latter accumulates existing staff, financial, and technological resources more successfully. This is noticeable in the work of TV Hope Channel UA, affiliated with Adventists. As a context for the study, a survey among Ukrainian Baptist ministers conducted during the current pandemic is cited. The survey showed that (1) middle-aged Protestant ministers have a stable demand for consuming information online, (2) they are present at social networks firstly as owners of personal accounts, whereas Church pages tend to fall behind, (3) almost two-thirds of surveyed congregations livestream their regular services, and (4) this practice needs stable activists and a strategic vision.

Keywords: livestreams, YouTube, Ukrainian Protestantism, Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, Charismatics.

Introduction

The most noticeable phenomenon pertaining to the Ukrainian religious sphere during the COVID-19 quarantine is the increased activity of churches and religious organizations online. Such activity manifested itself in the arrangement of livestreams of the main form of ecclesiastical life, namely church worship services. Being for the first time totally restricted from holding public services and enclosed in their homes, Ukrainian Protestants have found

an outlet in online outreach. The pandemic has problematized the topic of churches' (un)preparedness to transfer their activity to the online world. It has also actualized some old Ukrainian Protestant issues concerning the secularization of Ukrainian society, which goes against believers' expectations for a spiritual revival like that of the 1990s.

Thus, **the aim** of the study is to gather and analyze statistical data on the online activity of Ukrainian Protestants during the pandemic, namely YouTube livestreams.

All-Protestant YouTube Livestreams Catalog

The only interdenominational catalog of Ukrainian Protestant livestreams could be found on the website of “All-Ukrainian Sobor” NGO.¹ “All-Ukrainian Sobor”² is a public movement initiated on January 22, 2019, as a successor of wide public engagement by Ukrainian Protestant churches in commemorating the 500th anniversary of the European Reformation. This commemoration was held de-facto on the state level in 2017, and, to a lesser degree, in 2018.³ “All-Ukrainian Sobor” defines its goal as the “unification of religious and public organizations, as well as all concerned citizens, around the idea of building of Christian way of development of the Ukrainian country.”⁴ At the time of writing, this movement is being marginalized, as (a) its key political figures have lost their Parliament seats following the election of Volodymyr Zelenskyi as President of Ukraine on May 20, 2019, and (b) the conservative Protestant majority in Ukraine is distant from direct involvement in politics due to theological objections and lack of religious minorities' political successes on the post-Soviet terrain. Nowadays, “All-Ukrainian Sobor” is trying to form an all-Protestant public agenda and a common media space for these churches, the progress of which is further impeded by the pandemic.

¹ “Служіння онлайн.” Всеукраїнський Собор. Accessed March 2021. <https://sobor.com.ua/online>. [“Online service.” All-Ukrainian Council.]

² The word “sobor” in Slavic languages is derived from the verb “to gather” and can mean either “a cathedral” or “any type of overall public meeting – political, social, cultural, etc.”

³ M. Balaklytskyi, “The Reformation-500 as the Ukrainian Protestants' Mega Project: The Media Aspect,” *Вісник Харківського національного університету імені В. Н. Каразіна. Серія “Соціальні комунікації,”* no. 10 (2017): 75–80, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320407904_The_Reformation-500_as_the_Ukrainian_Protestants'_mega_project_the_media_aspect. [Bulletin of VN Karazin Kharkiv National University. Social Communications Series]; Г. Меренков, “Український протестантизм: від R-500 до ‘Всеукраїнського Собору’,” *Практична філософія*, no. 1(75) (2020): 167–73. [Merenkov, G. "Ukrainian Protestantism: from the R-500 to the 'All-Ukrainian Council'." Practical philosophy]; В. Любашенко, “Євангельський протестантизм в Україні: пошуки нової парадигми Церкви.” *Історія релігій в Україні: актуальні питання*, no. 30 (2020): 100–109, <http://religio.org.ua/index.php/religio-actual-issues/article/download/586/585>. [Lyubashchenko, V. "Evangelical Protestantism in Ukraine: Search for a New Paradigm of the Church." History of religions in Ukraine: current issues].

⁴ “Про Собор.” Всеукраїнський Собор, March 14, 2021. <https://sobor.com.ua/about>. [“About the Cathedral.” All-Ukrainian Council]

The above-mentioned catalog features YouTube channels, mostly with livestreams. As of March 3, 2021, it contains data on 111 channels of Protestant unions. The catalog could be organized according to (1) denomination, (2) oblast (one of 24 provinces of Ukraine), (3) settlement (city or town) and (4) weekly livestreams schedule.

It is not easy to identify to which denomination a given church union belongs. As far as I could define, two Baptist unions have 54 channels in the catalog, which stands for 47% of the overall amount; seven Pentecostal unions have 31 channels (28%), three Charismatic unions have 14 (13%), one Adventist union has 9, two Evangelical Christian unions have 2, and Messianic Jews have 1 channel.

The catalog might have a bias in favor of Baptist churches, as the ruling group of “All-Ukrainian Sobor” belongs to this denomination, including its leader Oleksandr Turchynov, who is the former Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine and former acting President of Ukraine.⁵ Such bias may be seen in the fact that, among the Baptist church channels, there are four that do not run livestreams, while the catalog is presented as one featuring *live* church services online. Those four “offline” channels might be included in the catalog by “All-Ukrainian Sobor” website administrators themselves. At the same time, the catalog contains disproportionately few Charismatic channels, especially as compared with the number of local congregations of those denominations.⁶ Either “All-Ukrainian Sobor” avoids them,⁷ or they are unwilling to cooperate with it.

Which faction of the overall number of Protestant livestreams do those enlisted in the catalog represent? I know 23 YouTube livestreams of Ukrainian Adventists,⁸ which is 2.5 times more than are featured in the “All-Ukrainian Sobor” catalog. If one would apply such

⁵ M. Cherenkov, “Mass Media, Religion, and Politics in Ukraine: The Story of the ‘Bloody Pastor’.” *Euxeinos*, no. 24 (2017): 10–22, https://www.academia.edu/35802803/Mass_Media_Religion_and_Politics_in_Ukraine_The_Story_of_the_Bloody_Pastor_Euxeinos_24_2017_Religion_and_Politics_in_Ukraine_after_the_Maidan_Protests.

⁶ The number of congregations: Baptists 2816, Pentecostals 2693, Charismatics 1496, overall “other Protestants” 1373, Adventists 1070, Evangelical Christians 371, Calvinists 129, Lutherans 83. Overall Protestants 10031. Source: “Релігійні організації в Україні (станом на 1 січня 2019 р.)” Релігійно-Інформаційна Служба України. Accessed March 12, 2021. https://risu.ua/religiyni-organizaciji-v-ukrajini-stanom-na-1-sichnya-2019-r_n97463. [“Religious organizations in Ukraine (as of January 1, 2019).” Religious Information Service of Ukraine]

⁷ Cf.: “ЗАЯВЛЕНИЕ старших служителей христианских евангельских церквей Украины по поводу деятельности Сандея Аделаджа, повлекшей за собой негативные последствия для христиан Украины.” Институт религиозной свободы, December 29, 2008. https://old.irs.in.ua/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=674%3A1&catid=50%3Azv&Itemid=78&lang=ru. [“STATEMENT of senior ministers of the Christian Evangelical Churches of Ukraine regarding the activities of Sunday Adelaj, which entailed negative consequences for Christians in Ukraine.” Institute for Religious Freedom]

⁸ “Каталог сайтов.” Интернет-газета “Путь.” Accessed March 14, 2021. <http://www.asd.in.ua/links>. [“Directory of sites.” Internet newspaper “Put.”]

proportions to the overall number of livestreams, then, probably, Ukrainian Protestants would utilize 277 YouTube channels (111 multiplied by 2.5). I also know 11 Instagram accounts with Adventist livestreams.⁹ There exist Adventist livestreams on Facebook as well, but without an already-composed list I do not wish to rely solely on my own observations.

Geography of Churches from the Catalog

The channels are distributed among the Oblasts (provinces) as follows: Kyiv—37 channels (33% of the overall amount), Odesa 13 (12%), Dnipropetrovsk 7, Lviv 7, Rivne 6, Zhytomyr 5, Chernivtsi 5, Vinnytsia 4, Donetsk 4, Ternopil 4, Khmelnytskyi 3, Cherkasy 3, Zaporizhia 3, Ivano-Frankivsk 2, Poltava 2, Sumy 2, Kharkiv 2, Zakarpattia (Transcarpathia) 1, and Mykolaiv 1.

Here are the statistics of churches owning YouTube channels from the catalog according to the ethno-cultural regions, excluding capital Kyiv city. **Western Ukraine**—28 churches (25% of overall amount of channels from the catalog): Lviv 7, Rivne 6, Chernivtsi 5, Ternopil 4, Khmelnytskyi 3, Ivano-Frankivsk 2, Zakarpattia 1. **Southern Ukraine**—24 (22%): Odesa 13, Dnipropetrovsk 7, Zaporizhia 3, Mykolaiv 1. Central Ukraine—9: Vinnytsia 4, Cherkasy 3, Poltava 2. Northern Ukraine—7: Zhytomyr 5, Sumy 2. Eastern Ukraine—6: Donetsk 4, Kharkiv 2.

Western Ukraine dominates here, because its inhabitants have the highest level of religiosity in the country.¹⁰ The second place belongs to Southern Ukraine. In the second part of the 19th century, on the territory of what is today Southern Ukraine, a religious revival took place, when Slavic peasants, after the abolition of serfdom in 1861, gained the freedom to express themselves religiously. This revival caused the dissemination of Evangelical groups of Orthodox origin.¹¹ After 1917, during the Soviet era, these groups formed the basis of the

⁹ “Каталог сайтів.” Інтернет-газета “Путь.” Accessed March 14, 2021. <http://www.asd.in.ua/links>. ["Directory of sites." Internet newspaper "Put."]

¹⁰ “Держава і церква в Україні-2019: підсумки року і перспективи розвитку відносин (інформаційні матеріали). Інформаційні матеріали підготовлені до чергового засідання постійно діючого Круглого столу “Релігія і влада в Україні: проблеми взаємовідносин” 14 листопада 2019р. за сприяння Представництва Фонду Конрада Аденауера в Україні. Київ: Центр Разумкова, 2019. https://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/article/2019_Religiya.pdf. [State and Church in Ukraine 2019: results of the year and prospects for the development of relations (information materials). Information materials were prepared for the regular meeting of the permanent Round Table "Religion and Power in Ukraine: Problems of Relations" on November 14, 2019. with the assistance of the Representation of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Ukraine.]

¹¹ S. Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation. Peasants, Millennialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830–1917*. (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004).

late Protestant churches of Ukraine.¹² Eastern Ukraine is the weakest in this ranking. Firstly, Protestants, as well as other religions and churches, except parishes of Ukrainian Orthodox Church (of Moscow Patriarchate), suffered serious losses on this territory during the armed conflict in Donbas, parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.¹³ Secondly, locals tend to distrust the central Ukrainian (Kyiv) government,¹⁴ and this distrust likely deters local churches from adding their channels to “All-Ukrainian Sobor” catalog.

The Number of Subscribers of All YouTube Channels of the Catalog

The overall number of subscribers shared among the channels is 618,000,000, though 3 channels of the catalog have the number of subscribers hidden. TV Hope Channel UA, affiliated with Adventists, has the largest number of subscribers, 110,000, 6% from the overall total. 13 channels—12% from the overall amount of channels in the catalog—have from 10,000 to 100,000 subscribers. 42 channels—38%—have from 1,000 to 10,000 subscribers. 52 channels—47%—have less than 1,000. Half of all channels have the number of subscribers that more or less corresponds with the number of members of their actual congregations, even accounting for non-baptized visitors of their offline services. The other half, however, obviously has among its subscribers a wider audience than just their coreligionists.

The average number of subscribers of a channel from the catalog is 5,720. Almost no Protestant parishes in Ukraine ever attract so many visitors offline. According to my calculations, an average Adventist parish gathers not more than 100 people.¹⁵ Baptist, Pentecostal, and Charismatic parishes may have bigger attendance, though not by much.

¹² Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted. Ukrainians and Global Evangelism*. vol. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

¹³ When God becomes the weapon. Persecution based on religious beliefs in the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine. April 2015. Report prepared by Center for Civil Liberties and International Partnership for Human Rights in the framework of the Civic Solidarity Platform. https://irs.in.ua/storage/files/publications/2015.04_Report_Religious_persecution_in_occupied_Donbas_eng.pdf ; “Religious Freedom at Gunpoint: Russian Terror in the Occupied Territories of Eastern Ukraine. Analytical Report on the Situation in Regard to Religious Freedom and Religiously Motivated Persecution in the Separate Territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions of Eastern Ukraine, Temporarily Occupied by the Russian Federation. The Report Was Prepared by the Institute for Religious Freedom with the Support of the Institute of Geopolitical Dimension and the Mission Eurasia. Institute for Religious Freedom.” Інститут релігійної свободи, 2018. <https://irf.in.ua/files/publications/2018.10.24-IRF-Report-ENG.pdf>.

¹⁴ Т. Купрієць. “Церква онлайн: прощавай олдскульний світ.” Інформаційне Агентство “Світогляд,” February 6, 2021. <https://svitogliad.com/articles/czerkva-onlajn-proshhavaj-oldskulnyj-svit/>. [Kupriets, T. “Church Online: Farewell to the Old School World.” Worldview News Agency,]

¹⁵ In March 2021 Ukrainian Adventists have 43396 church members, who form 772 parishes and 250 groups. Source: <https://info.adventist.ua/>, the main page. A group here unites up to 10 people. So I assume that 250 groups include up to 2500 people. 43396 minus 2500 is 40896. This figure I divide into 772 and get an average parish of 52 people.

Going by denominations, the average number of subscribers for a YouTube channel would be the following: Adventists have 14,600 (albeit without TV Hope Channel UA the figure would decrease to 2,669), Pentecostals 6,705, Charismatics 5,497, Baptists 3,580, and Evangelical Christians 1,160. Messianic Jews have a single channel in the catalog with 20,500 subscribers. The larger number of Pentecostals and Charismatics here can be explained by the fact that, compared to Baptists and Adventists, the former two pay more attention to emotions and showmanship during church services, to music and flashiness in particular. Thus their services better meet the requirements for filming and livestreaming.

Overall Number of Views of All Videos of a Single YouTube Channel

The overall view counts of these individual channels varies from 28,000,000 on TV Hope Channel UA, to 311 on a provincial parish channel without livestreams that was created in December 2020, with an average figure of 1.300,000. 4 channels in the catalog have more than 10,000,000 views; 14 channels—13% of the overall amount—have from 1,000,000 to 10,000,000 views; 12 channels—11%— have from 500,000 to 1,000,000 view; 26 channels—23%—have from 100,000 to 500,000 views; and 20 channels—18%—have from 50,000 to 100,000 views; 34 channels—30%— have from 10,000 to 50,000 views. It is clear that the most popular channels will constitute a minority in such a list. Yet there is no linear reduction of the amount according to the increase of viewers' activity. There are two peaks: (1) 26 channels—23%—from 100,000 to 500,000 and (2) 34 channels—30%—from 10,000 to 50,000. It seems that the first peak is comprised of the channels of parishes that have a systematic approach to the media ministry. Such an approach naturally generates a loyal community of viewers. One may assume that the second peak group is formed by parishes, where media work is being made irregularly, or the produced media content—sermons, songs—fails to find and form its target audience. This might happen if the content is perceived as clichéd or too traditional and outdated.

As for denominations, Adventists have on average 3.300,000 views per a YouTube channel (though, discounting TV Hope Channel UA, they have 207,000), Pentecostals have 2,300,000, Charismatics 1,000,000, Baptists 340,000, Evangelical Christians 156,000, and Messianic Jews have 492,000 on their only channel in the catalog.

The Number of Views of the Most Popular Video on a YouTube Channel

The viewership on each channel's most popular video varies from 5,000,000 for the "Emmanuel" Pentecostal parish in the town of Kamianske in the Dnipropetrovsk oblast, to

137, with an average measurement of 143,000. It is interesting that the most popular video belongs to a church in a small town, and not to one in the capital Kyiv or at least in an oblast center. It demonstrates the potential of the Internet as a space without strict geographical determination.

The average amount of views of the most popular video according to denominations is the following: Adventists have 269,000 (albeit without TV Hope Channel UA they have 15,000), Pentecostals have 252,000, the only Messianic Jewish channel has 220,000, Baptists have 89,000, Charismatics have 68,000, and Evangelical Christians have 7,700.

These channels were created across many years: in 2008—one channel, 2009—three, 2010—seven, 2011—nine, 2012—six, 2013—16, 2014—15, 2015—12, 2016—six, 2017—12, 2018—eight, 2019—eight, and 2020—eight. The first peak period here occurred in 2013-15. At that time, major events happened in Ukraine, notably Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea, and armed conflict at Donbas. It is possible that the sense of crisis and mass civilian migration, which included some of their coreligionists, urged Protestants to post alternative content and to share heartening news. The second peak was 2017, when Ukraine had commemorated the 500th anniversary of European Reformation, and Protestants tried to take advantage of this historical opportunity.

Correlation of duration and popularity of a YouTube channel

The year of creating a YouTube channel	The average number of subscribers	Overall number of views of all videos of a single YouTube channel	The average number of views of the most popular video
2008	12,100	5,668,060	5,000,000
2009	43,672	11,151,800	841,200
2010	12,825	3,306,597	197,816
2011	13,826	4,892,537	352,869
2012	8,252	2,684.697	92,750

2013	3,053	544,396	159,180
2014	2,784	499,136	26,153
2015	938	144,814	9,112
2016	1,686	223,865	15,497
2017	8,687	196,865	12,179
2018	660	59,551	2,947
2019	1,796	83,118	10,324
2020	290	24,978	1,127
The difference between the most figure in the column and the least one	The most figure is 43,672—2,009 year, and the least is 290—2020 year, the difference is 150 times	The most figure is 11,151,800—2009 year, and the least is 24,978—2020 year, the difference is 446 times	The most figure is 5,000,000—2008 year, and the least is 1,127—2020 year, the difference is 4,436 times

As the table shows, the age of a YouTube channel is quite significant. Moreover, it may be assumed that the most purpose-driven church media workers created their accounts at the dawn of the YouTube era. The table also makes apparent that, with the passage of time, the greatest challenge a channel has is to organize an engaged community of viewers; this is more difficult than other concerns, such as ensuring viewers' interest toward one's content, and creating hype with a single video. Viewers' demand is being distributed firstly among those media channels that are already present in the media sphere. Some media channels attract audiences solely on the basis of their familiarity. Owing to their primacy, consumers tend to consider the production style of such channels to be the norm and regard it as a criterion of quality, say, "it must be just the way they do it."

Livestreams also cropped up across many years: in 2012 they appeared on one YouTube channel, 2014—6, 2015—3, 2016—13, which is 12% from the overall amount of YouTube channels in the catalog, 2017—15, which is 14%, 2018—11, which is 10%, 2019—16, which is 14%, 2020—39, which is 35%, and 2021—3; 3 channels in the catalog do not run

livestreams. There was 1) a stirring in 2016-19 with a peak in 2017 and 2) a peak of 2020 because of the pandemic. As already mentioned, the peak of 2017 could be explained by the 500th anniversary of European Reformation, the preparation to which started in 2016, and the subsequent willingness of churches to communicate with society through online media. This aspiration was further supported by the deployment of 3G mobile telecommunications since 2015 and 4G since 2018. 66% of Ukrainians used smartphones in 2019,¹⁶ 74% of citizens between the ages of 12—70, and 85% of the latter used it daily.

The Ukrainian government announced lockdown on March 11, 2020, with respective restrictions to be triggered on March 12-17.¹⁷ Of the 39 channels from the catalog for which livestreams started in 2020, 1 channel started livestreams in February, 19 channels in March, which is 49% of this yearly amount, 8 channels in April, which is 20%, and 12 channels, which is 30%, in subsequent months up to February 20, 2021. 7 of the March channels started livestreaming on the 22nd, the closest Sunday after the lockdown announcement, and 3 April channels went live on the 19th, which is Easter.

Addition: Data on Ukrainian Adventist Online Activity

Illustrative here is that, in 2020, the team of TV Hope Channel UA organized 6 Bible presentations online. The one preached by Cami Oetman, Vice President for Advancement at Adventist World Radio, appeared to be the most successful. One of its episodes on the YouTube channel of TV Hope Channel UA has 330,000 views. Two inter-Protestant projects, “Ukraine for Family” and “Let Us Pray Together,” which were broadcasted on TV Hope Channel UA, got 2,600,000 views between them. Advertising campaigns of these projects drew 3,400,000 and 2,800,000 views respectively. TV Hope Channel UA has roughly 100,000 subscribers on YouTube, 100,000 on Facebook, and 100,000 on Instagram. Adventist pastors report that most recent converts to Adventism in Ukraine have been watching TV Hope Channel UA prior to baptism.¹⁸

¹⁶ “Ukraine. Mobile Ownership.” Media Landscapes. Accessed March 5, 2021. <https://medialandscapes.org/country/ukraine/telecommunications/mobile-ownership>.

¹⁷ “Постанова від 11 березня 2020 р. № 211. Київ. Про запобігання поширенню на території України коронавірусу COVID-19.” Кабінет Міністрів України., March 11, 2020. <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-zapobigannya-poshim-110320rennyu-na-teritoriyi-ukrayini-koronavirusu-covid-19>. [“Resolution of March 11, 2020 № 211. Kyiv. On prevention of spread of COVID-19 coronavirus on the territory of Ukraine.” Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.]

¹⁸ Балаклицкий, М. “Вирусное Евангелие: Бог привел Церковь в интернет.” Українська уніонна конференція Церкви адвентистів сьомого дня, January 26, 2021. <https://info.adventist.ua/virusnoe-evangelye-bog-pryvel-tserkov-v-ynternet/>. [Balaklytskyi, M. "The Viral Gospel: God Brought the Church to the Internet." Ukrainian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church]

Here are some cases of individual ministers' online activity. Vasyl Krestynych is a pastor of a small Adventist congregation in the village of Zakarpattia. In autumn of 2018, he created a Facebook page for his congregation. At the time of writing, the page has 100,000 subscribers. Krestynych reports that due to this fact almost everybody in that locality got acquainted with Adventists, and many non-Adventists at least sometimes watch the livestreams and musical videos made by the members of that congregation.¹⁹ Oleg Bokov is an Adventist pastor in Kyiv. His YouTube channel attracted 120,000 subscribers, most of them young or middle-aged. The most popular video on his channel, entitled "Coronavirus and Biblical Prophecy," has 1.6 million views. Bokov's motto is the following: "I wish I could inspire one million people for relations with God."²⁰

Survey of Ukrainian Baptist Ministers and Churches Activity Online

In summer 2020, a Baptist pastor had surveyed²¹ his colleagues and received 84 responses. The ages of the respondents were: 20-30 years—less than 10%, 30-40 years—37%, 40-50 years—43%, and 50 years and older—17%.

The survey featured the following questions. (1) Do you have a personal Facebook account? "Yes"—81% responses, "No"—19%. (2) Do you have a personal Instagram account? "Yes"—54.2% responses, "No"—45.8%. (3) Do you have a personal YouTube account? "Yes"—35% responses, "No"—65%. (4) Do you watch videos on YouTube? "Yes"—98.8% responses. (5) How much time per day do you spend on social networks? "Up to 1 hour"—68% responses, "1—2 hours"—26%. (6) Does your parish have a Facebook page? "Yes"—67.5% responses, "No"—32.5%. (7) Does your parish have an Instagram account? "Yes"—61.4% responses, "No"—38.6%. (8) Does your parish have a YouTube channel? "Yes"—72.6% responses, "No"—27.4%. (9) As a pastor, do you administer the social networks accounts of your parish? "Yes"—51.2% responses, "No"—48.8%. (10) How often are social networks accounts of your parish being updated? "Once a week"—25.3%

¹⁹ Проданюк, О. "Сільський пастор навчає колег, як правильно проповідувати Слово Боже через інтернет." Українська уніонна конференція Церкви адвентистів сьомого дня, February 23, 2021. <https://adventist.ua/news/interview/silskij-pastor-navchae-koleg-yak-pravilno-propoviduvati-slovo-bozhe-cherez-internet/>. [Prodaniuk, O. "The village pastor teaches colleagues how to properly preach the Word of God via the Internet." Ukrainian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church]

²⁰ Балаклицкий, М. "Вирусное Евангелие: Бог привел Церковь в интернет." Українська уніонна конференція Церкви адвентистів сьомого дня, January 26, 2021. <https://info.adventist.ua/virusnoe-evangelye-bog-pryvel-tserkov-v-ynternet/>. [Balaklytskyi, M. "The Viral Gospel: God Brought the Church to the Internet." Ukrainian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church]

²¹ Савич, А. "Як церкві розумно використовувати соцмережі." *YouTube*, July 30, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PA16sc62-wQ>. [Savych, A. "How is it wise for the church to use social networks."]

responses, “Several times a week”—50.6%, “I do not know”—12.7%, “Several times a month”—8.9%. (11) Does your parish livestream Sunday services? “Yes”—66.7% responses, “No”—33.3%. (12) Does your parish have a person responsible for social networks promotion? “Yes”—51.8% responses, “No”—48.2%. (13) Does your parish have a strategy and vision for social networks ministry? “Yes”—45.1% responses, “No”—54.9%.

Conclusions

I interpret the increase in livestreams as an indication of Ukrainian Protestant churches’ online outreach during the pandemic. The “All-Ukrainian Sobor” YouTube livestreams catalog is being taken as a work model for the study.

It may be assumed that the overall figure of such livestreams could be 2.5 times bigger. Comparing the statistics of the number of parishes per denomination, it seems likely that catalog system administrators favor Baptist churches and diminish Charismatic ones. Geographically the catalog is dominated by the churches of (a) capital Kyiv city, (b) Western Ukraine and (c) Southern Ukraine. Half of all YouTube channels in the catalog have an amount of subscribers which exceeds an average number of visitors of an ordinary Protestant worship service. This fact may signal the heightened influence of such a form of social communication. According to this indicator, Pentecostals and Charismatics take precedence somewhat, which can be explained by the comparatively larger presence of visual and emotional components in their worship style.

The overall number of views of all videos of a single YouTube channel highlights two peaks: (1) from 100,000 to 500,000 and (2) from 10,000 to 50,000. These peaks show the outreach potential of either strategic usage of church video content or of simply maintaining an online presence. Analysis of the ranking of views of the most popular video in a single channel proves that this indicator is more accidental than indicative. Still, it lets a church draw attention to itself and its programs.

The ranking of years of creating YouTube channels evidenced another two peaks: 2013-15 (Euromaidan, annexation of Crimea and armed conflict in Donbas) and 2020 (pandemic). This fact reveals that Protestant churches are sensitive at least to the most important societal tendencies.

The duration of social networks usage by the churches makes sense, for viewers need to get accustomed to “their very own” video producers. Such a habit would be an extra plus for church media workers. Livestreams are a felt advantage for viewer demand for a YouTube channel. Ukrainian Protestants started livestreaming on a relatively mass scale in 2017-19.

The case of Adventist-affiliated TV Hope Channel UA shows the benefits of a highly centralized and hierarchical denominational structure. Although Ukrainian Baptists and Pentecostals outnumber Adventists, the latter are more successful at accumulating staff, money, and technological resources.

It seems that the survey of Baptist pastors' social networks usage represents rather the condition of the most active and numerous group of Ukrainian Protestants. Probably, (1) middle-aged Protestant ministers have a stable demand for consuming information online, (2) these ministers are present in social networks more often as personal account users, while parish pages fall behind a bit, (3) almost two-thirds of parishes, whose pastors have been surveyed, livestream their services, and (4) such activity needs dynamic volunteers and a strategic vision.

Further studies should be focused on the issue of what churches appeared to be the best prepared for the pandemic, the most successful at forming, so to speak, "digital immunity." So far, church online activity seems to be rather similar to the overall sociology of Ukrainian Protestantism: more parishes mean more livestreams. It is worth analyzing how the smallest Protestant groups react to the pandemic—do they use social networks, or is using mobile phones and Zoom enough for them? Also worth considering are the manner in which churches, disloyal to the state, adapted during the coronavirus crisis, and whether open or secret violation of quarantine restrictions made them insensitive to the prospects of Internet usage.

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