

Lightcasting: A New and Innovative Ministry for Church and Sunday school.

It is 11:00 am in Montgomery, Alabama, everyone has just seated for Eastmont's Sunday service and Pastor Mike Northcutt stands and says, "Welcome". He is speaking to the members and the visitors in the sanctuary and all the church's home-bound members. There may even be someone in a hospital, nursing home or troop in Iraq listening. This church has no TV, radio, or Internet ministry. How is this happening live, in real-time? As Mike prays he mentions " Ms. Nora Smith we know you are at home with a broken hip and we all pray you get better very soon ". She is at home and now knows over 1000 attendees in the church are thinking about her, as well as nine other home-bound. Later that night there is a cantata and she listens in as she did with the service and her senior's Sunday school class. It is her choice to be apart of worship, fellowship, prayer, revivals, and other church events with this new ministry tool.

The scenario above can and does happen around the country each weekend. Over twelve months ago Pastor Mike's church decided this outreach was perfect for connecting their nine home-bound. For some churches this outreach has actually added new members hundreds of miles away. The service is called Lightcasting, from Lightcast Networks, and it is simple for the home-bound, affordable for the churches and effective in for many intentional purposes. It is a relevant and an authentic spiritual connection for both the home-bound and those with the passion to support it. With only a very small percentage of churches able to use or afford TV or radio, this service is an option to help connect to the over 8 million isolated chronic home-bound in the United States. What about all those religious shows on TV and radio? Well they definitely have their purpose, however, there is secure and joyous feeling about the presence of listening to your own church at the same time as all those friends and family in the sanctuary. This presence of local community can be much stronger and healing than any cassette tape or a recorded evangelist on TV 1200 miles away.

Flexible and affordable. Many churches cannot afford radio or TV broadcasts which are limited to 60 minutes and to small geographical areas, in most cases. Lightcasting allows a church to set up 90 minutes, 120 minutes or pretty much what your church needs. Lightcasting can be multiples less in cost compared to TV or radio. In addition, Lightcasting can allow special events to open up to home-bound with quick notice. Lightcasting can be one-way or two-way for classroom discussions. Now even assemblies, conferences and conventions are accessible. Listen from anywhere in the nation or internationally with only a phone line. Nursing homes, hospitals, kids away at school, military stations, and of course home-bound can have access, the church choose who and how many.

Simple. So how does this service install? As easy as dialing a phone number, actually easier. A home-bound can use their own telephone and just dial a number or the church can provide a special telephone device called a Lightcast Home Receiver Kit. This unit, specifically designed for dialing into this service, is a special telephone with a set of

speakers. The unit has an "ON/OFF" button and a pre-programmed button called "CHURCH" and one called "CLASS". At the sanctuary or classroom, the church is provided a few specialized equipment devices all called a "Lightcast Church Interface Kit". Simple to install, Lightcast will have personnel walk the mixer or sound person through an installation and testing of this kit.

So how does it work? The church and home-bounds then press "ON" and then their pre-program button to dial into Lightcast's telephone network over their existing local lines. Now they are Lightcasting. With sound of a radio, the home-bounds can turn their speakers up so a large room of people could hear the service. They can keep their old telephone working, which can be plugged into the back of this home-receiver device. The service actually can mute the callers, so there are no interruptions to other callers. No dogs barking or birds tweeting in the background. After the service is over they are all automatically disconnected and then they simply press "OFF" so they can receive inbound calls on their telephone line. It is even possible to pick up the handset and use this device as a telephone, however it is recommended to keep it separate for church purposes.

So what does it cost?

The current services cost could not be any simpler. The pricing is \$6.95 per reserved Sunday port per home-bound. This allows up to 90 minutes, you can add more minutes for additional costs, however this time frame allows a 5-10 minute buffer before a 60 minute Sunday service and 20-25 after. Classroom and "On-Time" church services are \$4.95 per reserved port for annual agreements. There is even a 30 minute "Sermon Only" service for \$2.95 per reserved port. The home equipment is priced at \$19.99 per Home Receiver Kit during promotions (if they choose this high quality option). According to your preference of one-way broadcasts or two-way (for missionaries to update congregations), the church sound system interface is anywhere from \$189.99 to \$289.99 with annual agreements. New equipment rentals agreements around \$3.00 per week are available. Classroom equipment has many options like wireless mics, so call for details. There is a couple hundred-dollar programming fee plus installation fee, both waived on annual agreements during promotional periods. In certain geographic areas Lightcast can send a technician to the church, generally, this is unnecessary. Many churches not able to budget this immediately are promoting "Class-Adopt-A-Homebound" Sunday school class campaigns to support the ministry. In many cases, this campaign may mean collecting what amounts to 4 to 8 cents a day per class member to support a home-bound's access. The service only takes a few weeks to install, generally the hold up is simply having a telephone line extension extended over to the church's sound system, many times this is split off a fax line or even a main line in a smaller church.
