

Learning from the Amish

The Amish aren't a costume to put on — but they're a living answer to two questions the AI age will force on all of us: how do we decide what technology to let in, and how do we stay secure when the economy that pays us gets shaky? Here's what their example offers a church — without asking anyone to give up electricity.

The Amish question — choosing technology on purpose

The Amish don't reject technology out of fear; they adopt it *on purpose*. Before a tool comes in, they ask one thing: **does this draw us together or pull us apart?** A church or family can borrow that discipline for AI. For any new tool, ask together:

- Does it deepen real relationships, or quietly replace them?
- Does it form us toward love and attention, or toward distraction and comparison?
- Who does it serve — our community, or a company's bottom line?
- Could we set it down if it started to master us?

The goal isn't a 'yes or no on AI.' It's ending the *default* adoption of whatever arrives, and choosing on purpose.

Resilience through mutual aid — the deeper lesson

The Amish are relatively insulated from an economic shock not because of technology, but because of how they've arranged their common life:

- **Needs are met by people, not products.** Medical bills, a burned barn, a widow's provision, the care of the elderly — carried by the church and neighbors, not by insurance, a 401(k), or the state.
- **Low debt, modest living.** Fewer financial obligations means fewer ways to be ruined. Simplicity is a form of security.
- **Skills and a local economy.** Hands-on trades and food they grow themselves don't vanish when a market does.
- **They show up.** Mutual aid isn't a program; it's a reflex.

What a church could adapt — start small

- ☐ Build a real benevolence / mutual-aid fund — and a culture where using it isn't shameful.
- ☐ Know your people's material needs the way you know their prayer requests — job loss, medical bills, food, housing.
- ☐ Grow practical skills and reciprocity — repair, food, childcare, trades — shared across the body.

- ☐ Keep the elderly and vulnerable close, cared for within the community.
- ☐ Gently teach simplicity and low debt as spiritual resilience, not just financial advice.

A caution

Don't romanticize them. Most Amish work modern trades, and they felt 2008 too. The point isn't to imitate their dress or their rules — it's to recover their instinct: choose your tools on purpose, and build a community so woven together that when work grows scarce, no one falls through.