

Using Modern Communication

Are you confident with using social media and modern communication on behalf of your church? We offer advice on getting your church noticed, dealing with the press, communication skills and websites, and social media hints and tips for young and old.

Intro

Getting your church noticed

This is a good place to start – but ask WHY first.

Why do you want your church to be noticed? By whom? And why would your church interest them?

Once you've answered those things, you can start to plan a strategy: the WHAT.

What's most important to highlight to your audiences, and how often will they need to know?

Next, WHO can help with this? Get a team together to develop some ideas.

Finally, look at HOW. That's what this session is about!

Three images, part 1

1. A tree
2. A café
3. Bait

More on these later.

FIRST BIG TIP: find someone who does something well, and learn from them.

'Get Your Church Noticed'

A colleague from the Diocese of Portsmouth has created a brilliant book and website, <http://getyourchurchnoticed.com>. Points include:

1. LOGO & FONT: Use a recognisable logo and font to express your church's identity. Keep these consistent on relevant signage, printed matter, emails, websites and social media. A non-text image is a good idea if you can manage it, and have a think about which colours would work best. [Read more](#)
2. WELCOME: Make sure your building comes across as welcoming: well kept, easy to get into for a service, well lit, people ready to welcome visitors, children's work available, and even a banner for a big event coming up. [Read more](#)
3. NOTICEBOARD: Make sure your noticeboard is up to date and looks stylish and informative, with logo and contact details, plus latest events and news if there's space. [Read more](#)
4. LEAFLETS: Weekly leaflets can be a 'must-read' if they are well designed and recommended by whoever is leading the service. Clear headings are good; concise, proof-read text is a must; and if you can print in colour, that's even better. [Read more](#)
5. POSTERS: Posters are an art form. Where possible, use a carefully-chosen photo and concise text giving a reason why the event is of interest, plus when and where, and who to contact. If you have the money, consider getting them professionally printed. [Read more](#)
6. MAGAZINES: Parish magazines can be a shop window for your church, to show what happens, to share stories, to inspire and encourage, and even to provoke thought or

- discussion. A well-designed publication can make a big difference. If it's yours, think about how it looks and how often it should come out; if it's not, think how you can contribute effectively to someone else's publication and encourage visitors to come. [Read more](#)
7. MEDIA: The media are always on the lookout for stories, especially if they are new, unusual or feature characterful people. Good photos really help to get content noticed. Don't be afraid to approach local media – usually, they are very fair in how they report stories. Focus on people if you can. [Read more](#)
 8. WEBSITES: Websites are another shop window. Think about what people are looking for – services, wedding venues, a contact person – and make sure your website is as welcoming as your church! Keep it up to date, with nice photos, and responsive to whatever people are looking at it with. Many people will find you by doing a web search on their phone. Try doing that with your site and see whether it works! If you're looking for web providers, we recommend [A Church Near You](#) or [ChurchEdit](#). [Read more](#)
 9. SOCIAL MEDIA: Why is social media so named? It's exactly that – social, using media such as text, images and videos. What matters is that you go where your audiences are, share what's appropriate – is it for a closed group or to be made public? – and engage winsomely. [Read more](#)

SECOND BIG TIP: your diocesan Comms Team is here for you if you need us. [Get in touch.](#)

Dealing with the press

If the media get in touch, inquiries may range from arguments about graveyards, to deaths, or issues around safeguarding. But there will also be good news stories and even the faintly ridiculous. Our favourite request was for a vicar to go on air to talk about what you should wear in the heat to church! Even that request led to a great interview.

Top tips:

- ~~OFF THE RECORD~~: There is no such thing as “Off the record”. Be polite and, if you need time to think about it, ask what the deadline is and get back to them.
- SORRY: Sometimes, you're too busy to give it proper time – and if so, thank them for their interest and explain why you can't give a quote or an interview. Add that you may be free on another occasion.
- HELP! Sometimes, there may be a controversy – in which case, give us a ring on 01722 438652 or 07799 900610.
- FACTS: Stick to the facts, and stick to the point. It's all on the record – don't speculate!
- ~~NO COMMENT~~: Don't say “no comment”. Either refer the journalist to us or, if it's an interview, say confidently “that's not something I can answer, but what I can say is...”
- RING COMMS: We're here if you need us. [Read more](#)

THIRD BIG TIP: take communicating seriously.

Communication skills

Text

- Using words appropriately takes skill. Read examples from social media or online articles to get an idea of length and structure

- Give your audience a reason to keep reading right at the start – you may only have a few seconds to grab their attention!
- Tell a story as you go, and use quotes in speech marks to break it up and add human interest
- [Here's our page](#) leading to all sorts of written content

Images and graphic design

- We live in a visual age where smartphones can have really good cameras
- Quality photography is essential. Either use your own...
- ...or get royalty-free pics from the likes of [Pexels](#), [Pixabay](#) or [Unsplash](#)
- Good design is everywhere these days. Keep your website, publicity and publications clean and uncluttered. Don't use more than two or three fonts at a time, in keeping with your church logo and font
- Consider using or creating shareable graphics, such as those from [Proverbs31](#), or themes such as [#SpeakLife](#)

Videos

- Ideally, find someone who knows how to shoot these, and has the gear for it...
- ...otherwise, you need to source a decent smartphone and/ or DSLR camera
- You might want to buy a radio mic for good sound [[we use this one](#)]...
- ...and maybe a lamp or lighting rig, to ensure good light
- If you are interviewing and the person is comfortable talking 'to camera', all well and good...
- ...or get them to talk to you 'across the shot', as Bishop Andrew does [here](#)
- Keep clips simple and short; usually 3 minutes is enough
- [Here's our YouTube channel](#), which uses multiple creators for content

FOURTH BIG TIP: try to see yourself/ your church with fresh eyes. How do you come across?

Websites

Consider your audience. There will be two main groups: existing members needing information and potential visitors/ future members. Make a list of (a) who is likely to visit you, (b) what they might be looking for, and (c) what you can offer them.

- People new to the area may be looking for a church to go to, and might be interested to know your denomination and style of worship, as well as getting an idea of church life. They may also want contact details for their local clergy
- Couples looking to get married may be seeking an attractive nearby church which gives them immediate online help with costs and tips, including music
- Parishioners may be looking for service times, for the latest news or for photos, especially if they know they are going to be online. Increasingly, they will expect audio visual material from services, including sermons

Top tips

- Choose a short, memorable name easy to reproduce on letters, publicity and noticeboards
- Register with Google. Browse for 'register my website with Google'
- Keep the front page simple and uncluttered, with minimal text
- Ensure you use a 'Search' box
- Quality photography is essential. Either use your own, or free pics from the likes of Pexels, Pixabay or Unsplash. NB: if you use copyrighted images, you may get fined!
- Environmental tip: publish your notices and pew sheets online and save paper

- Think about who will run the site week-to-week and keep it 'alive'. It's no good if, for instance, only one person knows how to update the site and then moves away
- Keep your website simple to navigate, easy to maintain, and above all up to date!

Parish examples include [Okeford Benefice](#) and [Tisbury](#); [more here](#)

If you're looking for web providers, we recommend [A Church Near You](#) or [ChurchEdit](#).

[Here's ChurchEdit's helpful checklist](#) for parish websites.

FIFTH BIG TIP: have a bit of fun. It's infectious.

Social media hints and tips for young and old

Nearly 4/5 of the UK is on Facebook and YouTube; nearly 1/2 is on Twitter; and over 2/5 is on Instagram. [\[Source\]](#)

Why? It's fun, stimulating, affirming and can be informative. [\[Source\]](#) [Sample: [Simon's Cat](#)]

Facebook tips

- Be yourself, and decide whether you want to be friends with people you know face to face, or are happy to go wider
- If you're a beginner, look before you leap – get someone you know to give you a demo
- Be visual and interesting – photos, albums and videos are all possible
- Facebook is pushing groups at the moment – these can be closed or public, depending on what's shared, and members need to be aware which type of group it is
- Facebook is also pushing stories at the moment – posts and videos that only last for 24 hours, same as for Instagram, which it owns
- You can tag a friend if it's a shared story or experience, or if you want them to see it
- Hashtags group posts together, and are searchable
- Functionality varies according to whether you use a phone or a computer
- You might think of Facebook as a digital noticeboard
- Does Facebook own your photos once you've posted them? No – this is a [hoax](#)
- NSPCC guidance on photos and films starts [here](#)
- There's been lots of negative press about Facebook, but not many have left yet
- Parish examples: [Avon River Team](#), [Chaplain John Rees](#)
- [Diocesan Facebook](#)
- [Beginner's guide from Lifewire](#)

YouTube tips

- Be visual and interesting
- If you're a beginner, look before you leap – get someone you know to give you a demo
- Use decent equipment, if you can afford it
- Keep clips short – 30 sec, 1 min, 3 min
- Respond to positive comments
- Use a computer, especially if you intend to edit clips, unless you have a very good phone!
- NSPCC guidance on photos and films starts [here](#)
- YouTube has very little negative press, and is usually cited or implied when people say '[video is the future](#)'
- Parish examples: [Conical Sphere Music](#), [Salisbury Cathedral](#)
- [Diocesan YouTube](#)
- [Beginner's guide from Lifewire](#)

Twitter tips

- Again, be yourself, and decide whether you want to be friends with people you know face to face, or are happy to go wider
- If you're a beginner, look before you leap – get someone you know to give you a demo
- Be visual and interesting – share engaging photos and videos
- Hashtags group posts together, and are searchable. Instagram is very tag-heavy!
- Use a phone
- NSPCC guidance on photos and films starts [here](#)
- There's been some negative press about Twitter, and a number of people have left
- Parish examples: [Jenny Nelson](#); [Jonathan Triffitt](#)
- [Diocesan Twitter](#); [Schools Twitter](#)
- [Beginner's guide from Lifewire](#)

Instagram tips

- Again, be yourself, and decide whether you want to be friends with people you know face to face, or are happy to go wider
- If you're a beginner, look before you leap – get someone you know to give you a demo
- Be visual and interesting – share engaging photos and videos
- Hashtags group posts together, and are searchable. Instagram is very tag-heavy!
- Use a phone
- NSPCC guidance on photos and films starts [here](#)
- Instagram is the up-and-coming one of the Big Four, with very little negative press
- Parish examples: [St Bartholomew's Church RWB](#), [Margaret Higham Photography](#)
- [Diocesan Instagram](#)
- [Beginner's guide from Lifewire](#)

We recommend Facebook and Instagram, followed by Twitter, and YouTube if you can.

Finally...

[Make sure you have strong passwords.](#)

Three images, part 2

1. A tree
2. A café
3. Bait

Our church can be a branch of the Tree of Life, with healing for all nations. Sometimes our tree gets noticed because of the leaves, sometimes because of the flowers, sometimes because of the fruit, and sometimes seeds are invisibly borne on the wind. Each of these has the life from the branch, and each leads back to the branch – your church. Be attractive as you seek to make disciples.

If you think of social media as a café, Facebook is groups of friends round tables, YouTube is the jukebox or TV screen, Twitter is the chatty one, and Instagram is the quieter but good-looking one. Thanks to [Dr Bex Lewis](#) for the original idea.

We are to be fishers of men and women, going out into the world and spreading the Word. Fishermen know which bait to use – whether bread, or worms, or artificial flies. Find out what bait works! Be attractive as you seek to make disciples.

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