Social Media

Social media enables Internet users to communicate with each other in creative, fun ways. Each platform has possibilities, strengths and weaknesses. Social media also opens up new ways to direct people to your website.

1. Do your homework. Social media is a developing area and you need to know who you're aiming at and what they're interested in. When choosing which media to use, be very clear why you're using it
2. Keep it frequently updated. Social media is fast-moving: users often check in daily
3. Social media can actually save time. You can set up a news feed from your website which automatically updates Facebook and Twitter, for instance
4. If your social media is open to the public, be aware of potential hazards. You may get people posting unhelpful comments or links. Monitoring needs to be built in
5. Social media creates a sense of community, but is not an end in itself. Ensure that it keeps people informed and interested rather than replacing face-to-face contact
6. Find an enthusiastic volunteer to run your social media for you, and keep in touch
7. Anything you post is in the public domain. There is no privacy once it's on the Internet

Blogs
Personal diaries, commentaries or websites. Authors post regularly or periodically, and comments are invited. Blogs can add personal colour, insight and interest to a website, including pictures and links to online applications such as Library Thing or Flickr.
Strengths: easy to set up and use
Weaknesses: there are lots of other blogs. You will have to work hard to get noticed and remain distinctive. You may have to monitor comments as you get better known.
Diocesan example: click here for Bishop Edward's blog

Twitter
Sometimes called 'micro-blogging'. Twitter users send out messages of 140 characters at a time, known as 'tweets'. Users can follow other users and share private messages. Tweets can present your personality, reach the wider world with the gospel, or direct followers to your blog or website. You can also forward others' tweets to your followers as 'retweets'. Actual people are more likely to be followed than organisations.
Strengths: easy to set up and use
Weaknesses: you need to monitor comments. Some follower profiles may contain undesirable details. Followers may be fickle and stop following after a while.
Diocesan example: click here for Bishop Karen's channel

Facebook
The most popular social networking site, with more hits than Google. Users can build up a detailed profile with links to photo albums, pages of interest and other users. Events and campaigns can be publicised, with one-click displays of posters, images and web addresses that are easy for others to pass onto their friends. You can set up public and private groups.
Strengths: highly versatile
Weaknesses: need to monitor comments. Privacy settings or overall layout may be updated at short notice
Diocesan example: our main Facebook page

YouTube and Vimeo
Video sharing websites. Videos are uploaded and tagged so they can be found by anyone searching for key words or phrases.

Strengths: very popular. Vimeo has the option to vary the ratio of your content: YouTube does not.
Weaknesses: depending on your settings, you may need to monitor comments or video responses. You also need to be very careful regarding copyright of video or music clips.
Diocesan example: our YouTube channel

Pinterest
Essentially, digital scrapbooking. Create themed albums and search within Pinterest for more ideas to 'pin' and keep.
Strengths: highly visual – a picture is worth 1,000 words!
Weaknesses: it may take over your life
Diocesan example: click here for our Vocations boards

Social media platforms
Updating the platform can automatically update several social media pre-selected by you. Thus, one message added to the platform can update Facebook, Twitter etc with the same message. Ensure that there is a web link back to a story or page on your website. Each platform has a 'dashboard' so that you can track responses and comments. You can also individually post and track on each account if you prefer.
Strengths: same message across all media
Weaknesses: takes a bit of getting used to. If auto-updating, it's the same 140-character message across all media if you're using Twitter
E.g. HootSuite or Tweetdeck

Legal status of text posted anywhere on the Internet
From the official Church of England Social Media Policy:
"Information on the web is deemed to be a published entity and so is open, for example, to libel action, for as long as it is accessible on the web and up to 12 months after it has been taken offline. Information can also be easily stored and retrieved from the web."
I.e., be careful what you say- it may be taken down and used in evidence against you!

Pastoral issues and Young People
Social media is, potentially, a minefield for vulnerable adults and young people. If in doubt, contact Heather Bland, our Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, via 07500 664800 or heather.bland@salisbury.anglican.org.

Further Reading
The Social Media Policy for Diocesan Staff is available from our Toolkit folder. We recommend that you read it before you start!

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