

AS YOU JOIN –

- Let us know your name, congregation, and your involvement with your church's communications ministry in the chat box!
- Tomorrow, I will email a copy of these slides and the recording of this meeting to all registrants. The recording will also be available on the diocesan websites.
- Please post any questions as we go along to the chat box. As time allows, I may answer some as I go along, some at the end, and some may require separate follow up after this workshop.
- For further conversation or consultation, email me at kforsyth@eastmich.org or kforsyth@edwm.org.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS

Leadership Series - March 2022

Introduce self and background

“Will you proclaim by word and example the
Good News of God in Christ?”

The Baptismal Covenant

TODAY'S "BUILDING BLOCKS" OF CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS

- WEBSITES
- SOCIAL MEDIA (FACEBOOK)
- NEWSLETTERS
- OTHER: SIGNAGE, PRESS, ETC.

CHURCH WEBSITES

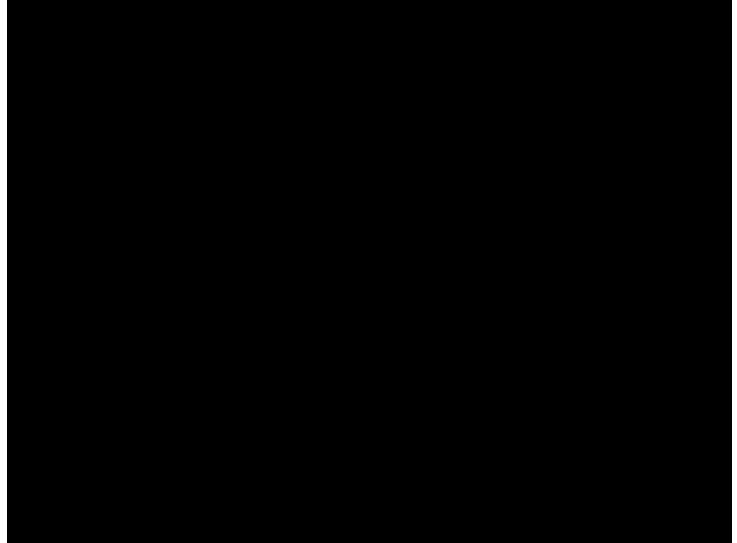
BUILDING BLOCK #1 – CHURCH WEBSITES

EXAMPLE:
ststephensrva.org

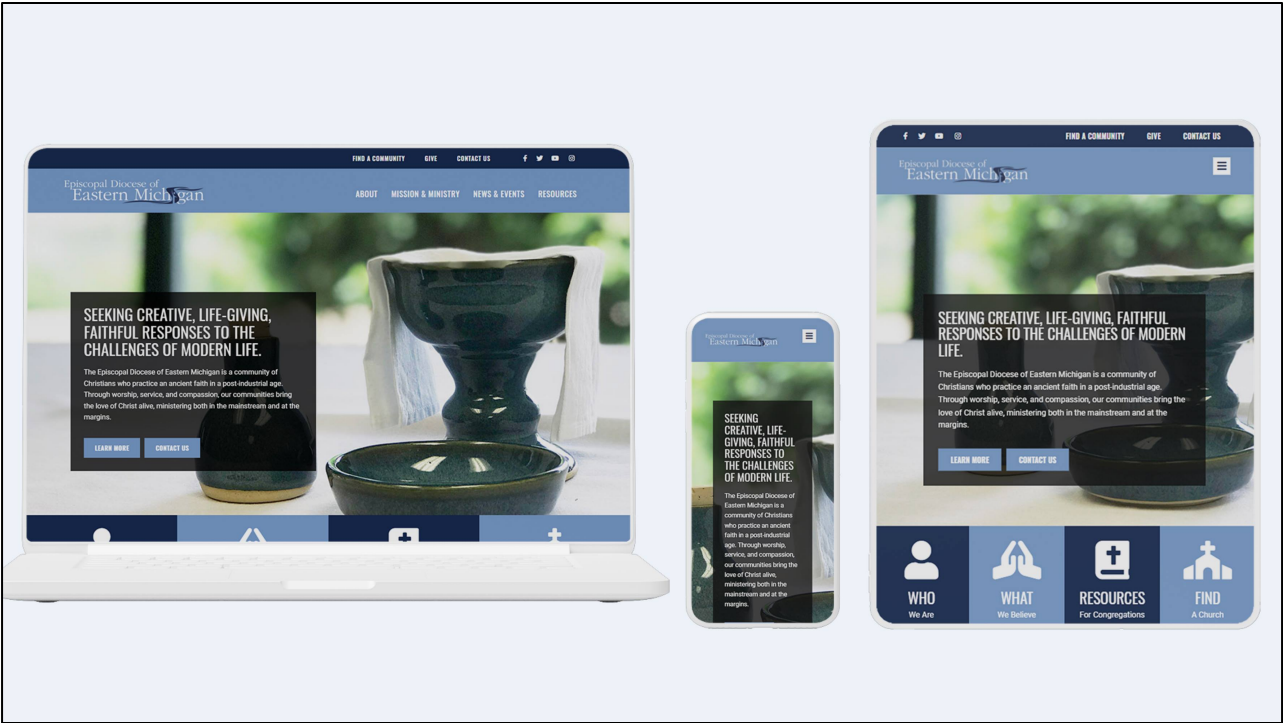


Your online “brochure”

- Understand your audiences and what they'll use your website for.
- Understand your core messages - be consistent and intentional when choosing your language and design. Keep it invitational.
- Photos > Text
- Any modern website **MUST** be mobile responsive.



Don't use the website as a landing page for just anything – keep boundaries. Keep it intentional.



BB #1 – CHURCH WEBSITES, CONT.

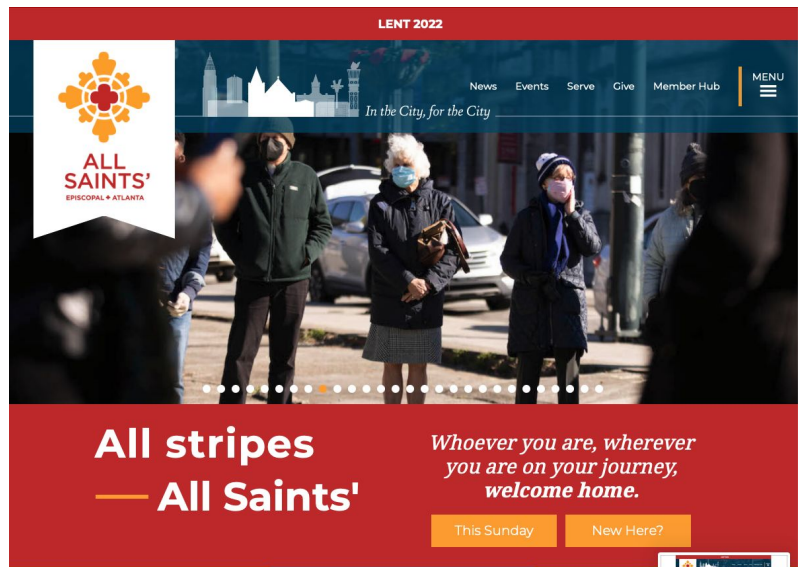
EXAMPLE:
allsaintsatlanta.org



Who is my “audience” for our congregation’s website?

1. Church seekers
2. Current members
3. Community stakeholders
4. Neighbors in need

Who else?



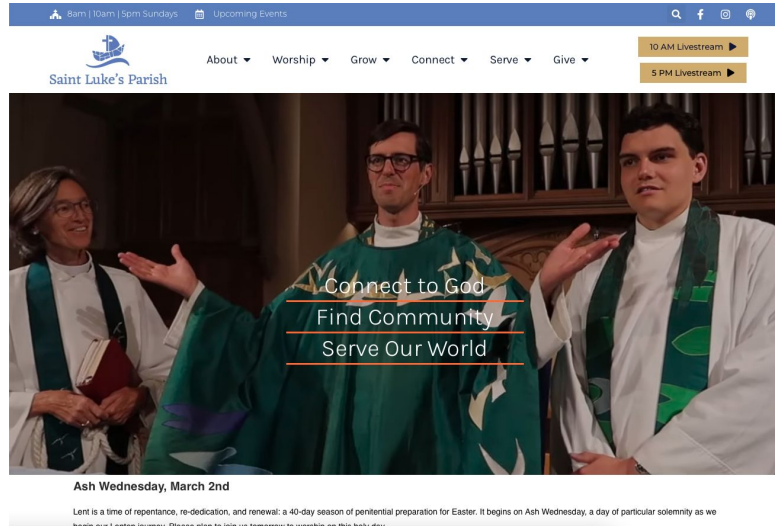
BB #1 – CHURCH WEBSITES, CONT.

EXAMPLE:
saintlukesdarien.org



Organizing basics:

- About your organization
 - Mission statement, brief history, core message
- Main action points
 - *Worship* with us, *enroll* in a program, *donate* to the church, *subscribe* to our newsletter, *learn* about a topic
- Connect for more
 - Contact page (address, phone, email)
 - Connect with social media
 - Invitation to talk with a priest/pastoral leader



Note that St. Luke's menu items are action prompts

BB #1 – CHURCH WEBSITES, CONT.

EXAMPLE:
standrewsgreenville.org



Popular platforms -

- Wordpress
 - Free/low-cost “themes”
 - Or hire a web developer
- The “Drag-and-Drops”
 - Wix
 - Weebly
 - Squarespace

Avoid platforms marketed to you as being “designed for churches”!

ST. ANDREW'S
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH

HOME WORSHIP WITNESS WELCOME DONATE



Google is your friend. I don't say this to be condescending, but there really are so many answers to be found on Google. When your platform is too niche, getting your questions answered becomes more difficult. I would recommend gravitating toward platforms that are used in all industries because you know that whatever issue you may be having, someone has had before and posted on the internet for you to know about it too!

BB #1 – CHURCH WEBSITES, CONT.

EXAMPLE:
stjohns-saginaw.org



Other tips for your website -

- Include worship times ON THE HOMEPAGE in addition to any other separate “worship” page.
- Avoid posting email addresses. This is how churches get targeted for email phishing. Use a contact form (with a captcha) instead.
- Accept online donations, especially monthly automated donations.

The screenshot shows the website for St. John's Episcopal Church. The header includes the church's name and tagline, followed by a navigation menu with links like 'About Us', 'Ministry', 'News', 'Calendar', 'Connect', and 'Contribute'. Below the header is a large banner with the word 'Give' and a paragraph about financial stewardship. Underneath the banner is an 'Online Pledge Card' form with fields for 'Name' and 'Email Address'. To the right of the form is a blue button labeled 'Online Giving...' with the text 'Streamline your giving and don't sweat remembering the' below it.

We are eliminating barriers to accessing information from the church.

Phishing is not hacking – it's a scam.

Online donations – many platforms will have built in donation things you can use. I would recommend researching and finding what would work best for your website administrators and your bookkeeper.

BB #1 – CHURCH WEBSITES, CONT.

EXAMPLE:
twochurches.org



Other tips for your website, cont.

- Avoid stock photos.
- Provide a way for people to sign up to receive your newsletter.
- Include photos of people dressed as they dress for normal church functions.
- If your congregation is intentionally LGBT affirming, include rainbow and trans flag icons to signal safety.



SOCIAL MEDIA

In this next section, I'm planning to review multiple social media platforms though we will spend most of our time on Facebook. When we talk about the basics of church communications, I do think Facebook is as essential as a website or even the sign outside of your building. If you have interest and capacity, other platforms may also be appropriate and I'm going to provide some background and examples of those.

You're going to get a lot of my personal perspective on these platforms, so please feel free to push back if you have a different experience or view. I'm going to try to give you some examples of these spaces being used effectively by churches and church leaders as we go along.

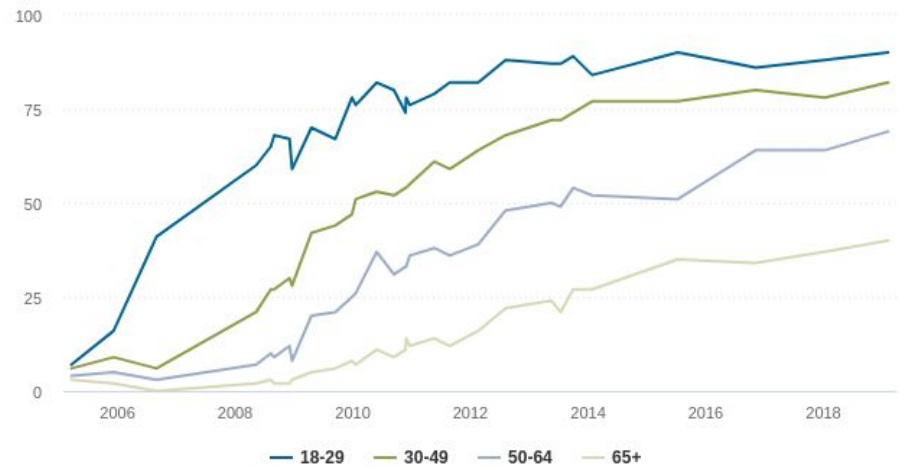
One more thing to keep in mind -- as you consider what tools make the most sense for your time, energy, and resources, remember that many of these can crosspost to another. Very few things are completely siloed. Some things don't play well together because of algorithms (youtube and Fb)

THE STATS

About 82% of US Adults between use at least one social media site (Pew Research Center).

Social media use by age

% of U.S. adults who use at least one social media site, by age



Source: Surveys conducted 2005-2019.

Social media use by community type

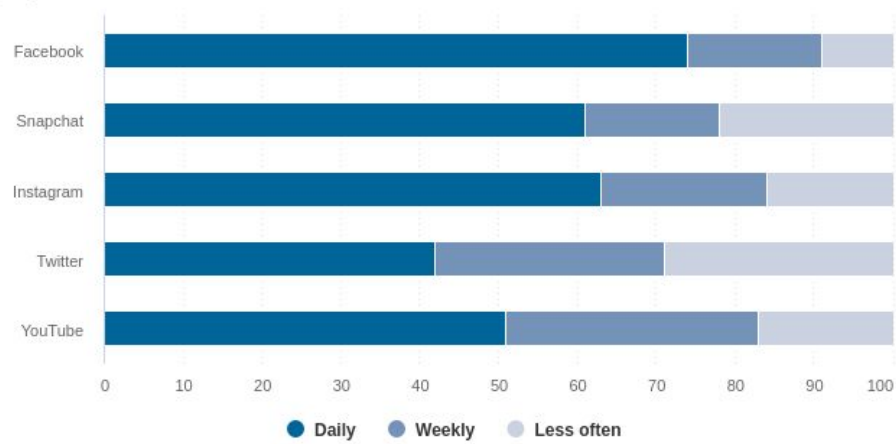
% of U.S. adults who use at least one social media site, by community type



Source: Surveys conducted 2005-2019.

How often Americans are using social media

Among the users of each social media site, the % who use that site with the following frequencies

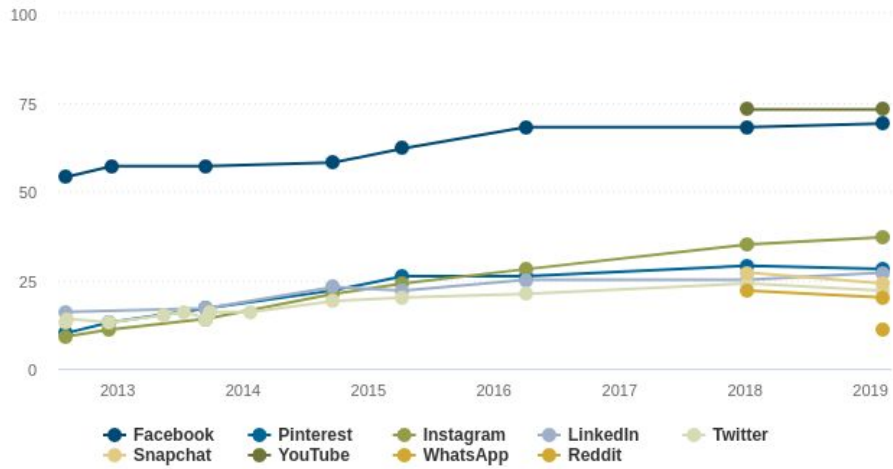


Note: Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 8 to Feb. 7, 2019.

Which social media platforms are most popular

% of U.S. adults who use ...



THE LINGO

Platform - the particular application/software site (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, etc.

Posting - creating new content for others to engage with.

Liking, sharing, commenting - ways of interacting with a post and its creator.

Follow - Indicating to the platform and a particular account that you want and give permission to seeing content from that account. Unlike “friending” there is no expectation of mutuality – I can follow you without you following me back.

Hashtag - indicating to the platform and its users that your post contributes to a larger discussion from multiple creators. There are event hashtags (#emwmcon21), topic hashtags (#episcopal), and ironic hashtags (#blessed).

Meme - a funny image, video, joke structure that is often copied with slight variations and is spread rapidly by internet users.



BUILDING BLOCK #2 - FACEBOOK

The largest social media site in the world.

Perhaps the most broad social media platform in terms of post type - text, photo, video, live video, "marketplace" sales listings, job postings, more.

Can be used both personally (Profile), as an organization (Page), and as a place for conversation (Group).

Facebook "Pages" are linked to personal "Profiles" as "Administrators"

Where your website may be considered your "brochure", Facebook is more experiential. Volume > Quality.

Easy to schedule posts (set a whole week of posts in one sitting)

Despite ongoing controversies, Facebook is still the largest social platform among users and organizations.

While the largest age group present on Facebook is 25-34, this is skewing older as time goes on. Younger generations are using other platforms. I would strategize Facebook for reaching Gen X, Boomer generations.

Social media scheduling – can happen right within Facebook, we use Buffer, there are others.



BB#2 - FACEBOOK

Setting up your Business Page:

- **About Section**
 - In a sentence or two, what is the mission of this congregation? What times do you worship? What is the invitation you offer to church seekers?
 - Provide a link to your website.
- **Profile Photo**
 - This is a small circular graphic. It shows up both on your Page itself as well as on your followers' timelines with any posts you make.
 - Because it is so small, avoid using any photos or graphics with too much detail – it will be lost when scaled down.
 - My recommendation: your logo or some other basic graphic/icon (cross, dove, etc.)
- **Cover Photo**
 - Large photo across the top of your page; wide, not tall!
 - My recommendations: Building exterior, People engaged in ministry, Sanctuary interior, if there are people in it (don't post photos of a completely empty church)
- **Call to Action Button**
 - Can link to your website, a donations page, others



There is a membership network in the Episcopal Church called “Episcopal Communicators.” Each year, there’s an annual awards program recognizing work in church communications. This page, All Saints, Atlanta, won in 2020 for best use of social media, including their Facebook and Instagram page.

As I scrolled through their recent posts, I saw individual posts for livestreamed worship, invitation to a justice event, a video of their choir singing a hymn, an individual sermon, invitation to a labyrinth event, information about climate initiatives... and all posted within the last week.

Emphasize they are playing at a gold star league and that this involves paid staff.



BB#2 - FACEBOOK

Your Church's Business Page -

- The church is the people, not just the cleric. Sign any first-person messages with their name. (-Katie)
- Post more than once per week and as much as daily. Don't get overwhelmed – start small.
- Aim for a diversity of posts - event invites, live services, reflections, action prompts, shared posts from the diocese, etc.
- Posts are shared with the people who have "liked" you and can easily and cheaply be "boosted" to be seen by those who don't. A little \$ goes a long way here.
- Facebook LOVES native video content. It LIKES photo content. It puts up with text-only content. Play the algorithm. DO NOT POST YOUTUBE LINKS TO FACEBOOK.
- ALWAYS HAVE MORE THAN ONE ADMINISTRATOR, EVEN IF ONE PERSON IS THE DESIGNATED "POSTER" FOR THE CONGREGATION!

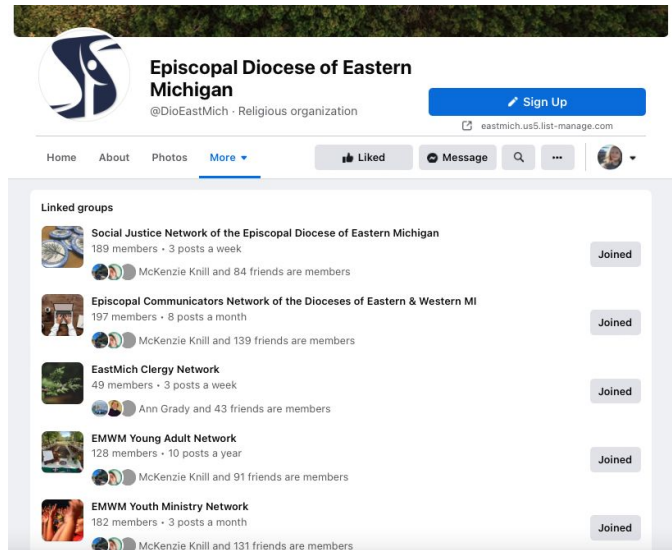
Define native video content.



BB#2 - FACEBOOK

Linked groups as a method of increasing person-to-person communication within your community while still preserving your appropriate and external-facing “Business” Page.

Security settings can make these groups totally public or private.



Define native video content.

EVANGELISM ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Start where you're comfortable.

Share posts, especially events, from church/faith accounts.

Check in when you're at a service or event.

Let your friends see your perspective and values.

Engage and build relationships.

Use it as a jumping off point for deeper exploration and conversation.

This can also provide first-person content for your church's business page.



Tanna is a Delicate Ecopouf
@MamaBearTanna



Good morning! God loves you, even if you feel overwhelmed by the grief of the world.

7:53 AM · Mar 23, 2021 · Twitter for Android

3 Likes



Tanna is a Delicate Ecopouf @MamaBearTanna · Mar 22



The thing that brought me back to the Church as a teenager wasn't a praise band or a pastor with tattoos. It was the Holy Spirit tugging me to visit a church on the day they happened to have a preacher preaching the radical & political message that God's love is for everyone.

1



3



Tanna is a Delicate Ecopouf @MamaBearTanna · Mar 22



I just happened to hear a message I was hungry for that was antithetical to every message I'd gotten about what it meant to be Christian, whether directly or indirectly: That our job as Christians is to Love. Period. How often do we lose that thread in the Church?



2



If engaging on digital platforms, know that there's an element of mutuality to it like in any other setting. Pay attention to what people are talking about. What does the church have to say about that? How are you responding to that thing as a person of faith? The church is relevant and the digital space requires relevancy.



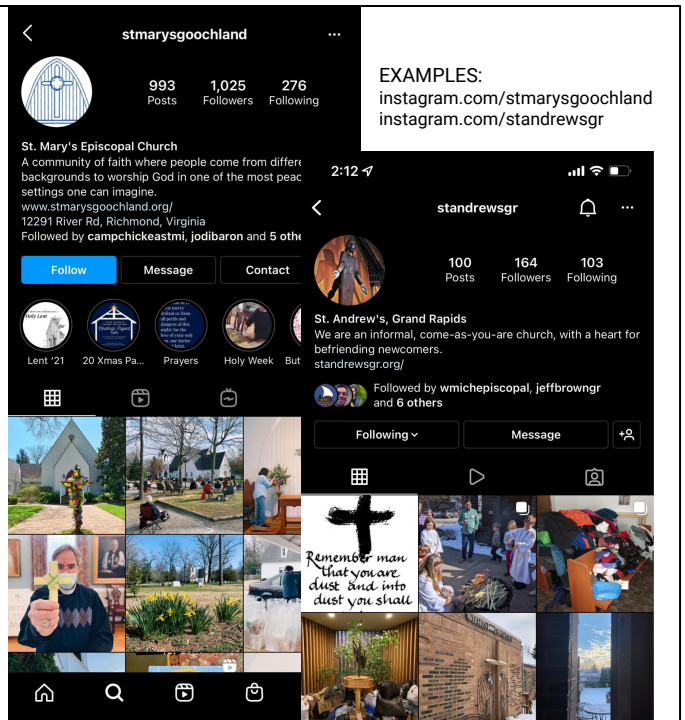
OTHER - INSTAGRAM

A visual social media app
(photos, videos, and more).

People > Buildings

Plays very well with Facebook -
easy to crosspost between
platforms without losing quality.

Audience skews younger than
Facebook and slightly older than
TikTok.



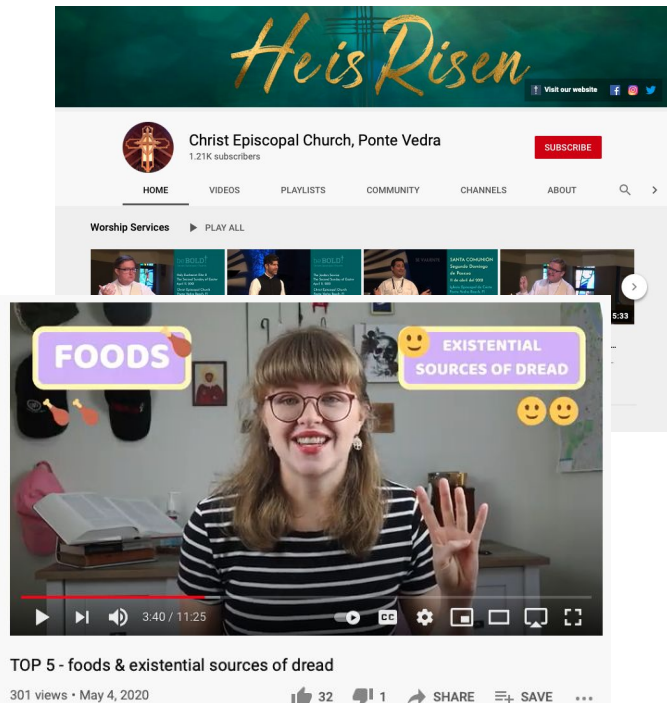


OTHER - YOUTUBE

A video sharing platform for consuming and engaging with videos, or posting videos to your own account for “subscribers.”

Easy to link and/or embed in e-newsletters. Doesn't play well with other social sites.

Vimeo is another video sharing platform, but much smaller and with less engagement.





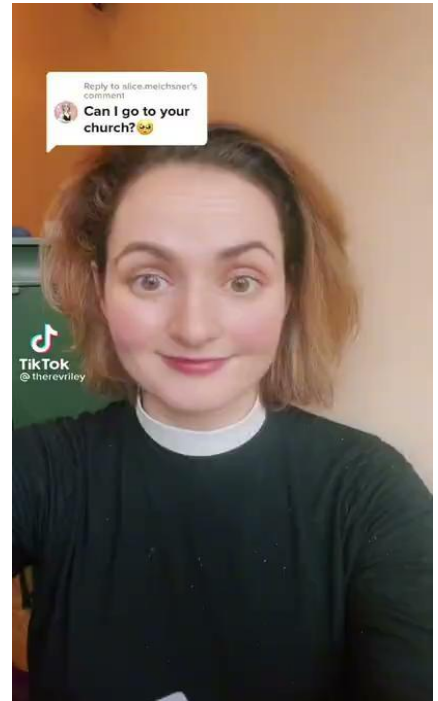
OTHER - TIKTOK

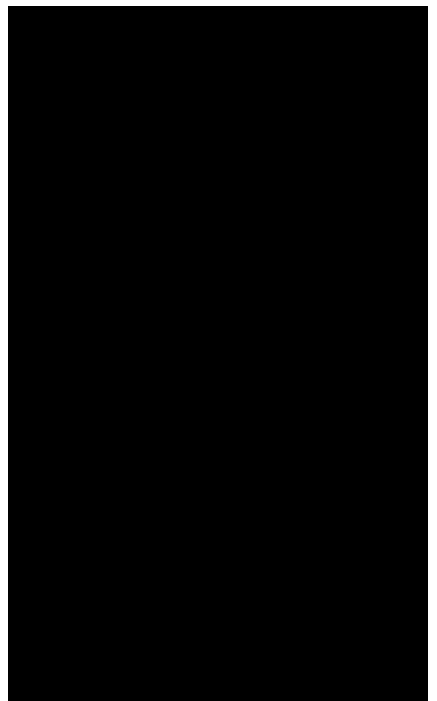
A fast-growing video-based social media app.

TikTok is creator focused – if posting from an institutional account, identify a “main character” to be the face of the organization.

The audience skews very young (Gen Z) - this is a population that may have very limited access or interest in seeking out traditional church.

Because of geography and how this algorithm works, I see this platform as a formation opportunity, more than an invitation opportunity. However, with livestreaming this may be less of a barrier than before.





NEWSLETTERS

BUILDING BLOCK #3 - NEWSLETTERS

The audience is internal. Newsletters reach those that you already have on your mailing list.

Potential content include upcoming events; reports on events that have taken place; features on particular people or initiatives, resources for learning, community resources, growing spiritually, getting connected to advocacy; more...

USE PHOTOS!

How can you balance these areas: celebrating what's been done, getting people engaged with what's to come, forming members in their lives as Christians?

EXAMPLE:
Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis

with the exception of a small changing area/children's restroom.

This plan is contingent on a continued decline in COVID-19 cases and positivity rate in Marion County. Watch this space for more information!

Easter CoffeeTalk

SUNDAYS, APRIL 11 AND APRIL 25 AT 11:15AM

We had such a great time in our Lenten CoffeeTalk, we've decided to continue it two Sundays into Easter. Just us for a brief conversation with the Sunday preacher and an encounter with the Holy Scripture. What did you hear in the Scriptures? What did the sermon say to you? Where is God calling you into action?

► JOIN US FOR EASTER COFFEETALK!



BB#3 - NEWSLETTERS

EXAMPLE:
Christ Church, Charlevoix

Types and Modes of Newsletters:

- Printed and mailed
- Printed and mailed and emailed
- Digital, emailed and printed/mailed
- Digital, email only

Platforms and tools:

- *Digital* - MailChimp (FREE!), Constant Contact, Emma
- *Print* - Microsoft Publisher, Word, Adobe InDesign



Knowing that many people (even most people) open their email on a mobile device (a cell phone or tablet), printed and emailed newsletters are less readable.

Digital e-newsletters are more accessible for newcomers. Easy website sign ups.

Move away from printing and mailing if you can – it's a better stewardship of finances and creation, is more accessible for church seekers.

This is also an accessibility question. For folks using e-readers with visual issues, etc., digital e-newsletters are more accessible.

Digital also allows you to post it more easily to social media.

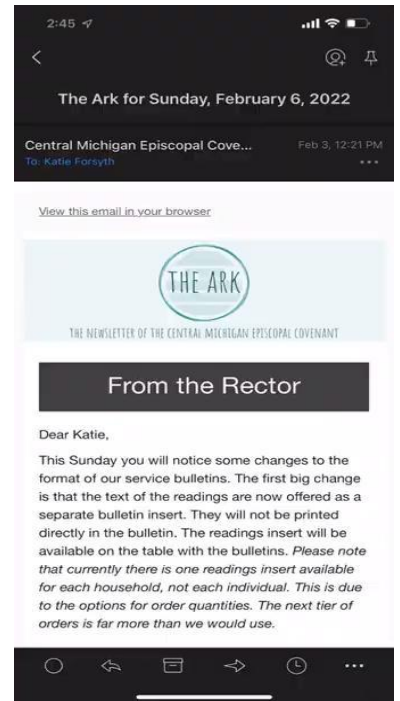
If emailing PDFs or other, please BCC email addresses instead of openly listing them all for anyone to grab.

BB#3 - NEWSLETTERS

EXAMPLE:
Central Michigan Episcopal Covenant

Your newsletter's content is dependent on the context in which you serve. These are some sections that I think work well:

- **An intro note** from a human being, whether the priest, warden, or member.
- **News/Reporting** – how can we celebrate things that have recently happened, whether reporting on an event, honoring a particular person's accomplishment, or other?
- **Upcoming events** - what is coming up in the life of this church or in the wider community that requires an invitation?
- **Resources/formation** - whether offered internally or externally, what are some learning opportunities for the reader? This could be a longer scriptural reflection from a priest/lay leader, an interesting article, workshop, class, etc.
- **Worship/Livestream info** - The newsletter is a great place to remind people about service times, link to bulletins, etc.



Intro note does not need to be complicated or some kind of theological treatise – the purpose of this note can just be to bring a human element to your news.

I've also seen things like humor, recipes, etc.

BB#3 - NEWSLETTERS


Tips for planning your newsletter -

- Set and communicate a firm deadline by which people need to deliver content to the editor.
- Deliver any emailed print newsletters as a PDF. This makes sure your formatting won't change when your reader opens the file (this is a risk with Word files, Google Docs).

EXAMPLE:
St. Paul's, Winston-Salem

[Subscribe](#) [Past Issues](#) [Translate](#)


Highlights



Faith & Justice: The Misery of Meritocracy
Thu, Feb 24 at 12 pm, via Zoom

Featuring Dr. Jonathan Lee Walton, Dean of Wake Forest University School of Divinity and Presidential Chair of Religion and Society. What might the Gospels teach us about meritocracy? What might the inverted social ethic of Jesus reveal about our need to win? Please register in advance for the Zoom Meeting.



[Register >](#)



Winter/Spring Lunches @ the Winston-Salem Street School
Feb 15, Mar 8 and 29, Apr 26 and May 10

We will once again be providing lunch for students at the Winston-Salem Street School this fall. The Winston Salem Street School is a non profit high school for alternative students, and is our neighbor just down the street on 6th St. We will bring the food and stay and serve the students.

[Sign Up >](#)



Our diocesan newsletter goes out Thursdays at 4pm. I usually ask for content by Wednesday morning unless I know I'll have time on Thursday to receive and respond. This is actually closer to the deadline than I'd really recommend.

OTHER

BUILDING BLOCK #4 - OTHER ESSENTIAL TOOLS

- **Physical, Permanent Signage** - If a newcomer were to visit, would they know how to get around without being directed or having to follow someone? Consider this question at every step of your campus from parking to exiting.
- **Physical, Temporary Signage** - Especially for congregations with a lot of walk-by or drive-by traffic, temporary yard signs or large vinyl reusable signs can be effective (think Christmas, Lent, festivals, etc.)
- **Press Releases** - While I think newspaper advertising is likely a thing of the past, having press coverage isn't especially if your local papers have an online component. Write basic press releases for events, special seasons, etc. You'd be surprised how much gets picked up, especially in smaller and mid-sized markets.
- **Business cards, brochures** - Physical print marketing is especially effective for congregations that are quite present in their communities. Hosting a booth at a festival? Provide some kind of informational take-away. In a resort community? Put a brochure in the visitors bureau targeting vacationers. Have a particularly chatty cleric or leader? Give them small cards to give away when they strike up a conversation with their cashier. Get creative!

RECOMMENDED TOOLS/COMPANIES:

- **MailChimp** - e-newsletters, free until a certain threshold. Unlikely the majority of our congregations would reach that level.
- **Buffer** - Social media scheduling for multiple platforms.
- **Canva** - Graphic design tool for non-designers.
- **StickerMule** - Ordering buttons, stickers, other swag. Coupons are often available.
- **VistaPrint** - low-cost printing (business cards, etc.). Coupons are often available.
- **Unsplash** - high-quality royalty free stock photos
- **Remind** - Mass “texting” originally built for teachers/schools. Free level available.

DIVE IN DEEPER:

- Book: [Speaking Faithfully](#) by Jim Naughton and Rebecca Wilson
- Resource: [Invite, Welcome, Connect](#)
- Resource: [Caffeinated Church](#)
- Networks: [Diocesan Communicators Resource Group](#)
- Networks: [Churchwide Episcopal Communicators Resource Group](#) on Facebook (free)
- Networks: [Churchwide Episcopal Communicators Network](#) (member fees)
- Connect with me for consultation: kforsyth@eastmich.org and kforsyth@edwm.org