

VESTRY PAPERS

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CHURCH FOUNDATION
empowering congregations

To inspire, affirm and inform Episcopal leaders in their work

Tweet if you love Jesus

By Kirk Smith

Does your church have a *Facebook* page? Does your rector “tweet”? If not, you are missing an effective, free opportunity for evangelism and church growth, not to mention a vibrant new tool for strengthening your church community.

We live in a rapidly changing world in which means of communication are evolving exponentially. We have the most important message in the world and some of us are sending it by pony express!

Social networking, or “Web 2.0” as it is sometimes called, now accounts for the largest share of Internet usage. Unlike older forms of web communication such as websites, blogs, and email, social networking exists to connect large groups of friends in virtual communities. Friends share their lives, express their opinions, and perhaps most importantly for the church, make recommendations to one another. The church has always grown by word of mouth as one member invites another into fellowship. We might say that social networking is “word of mouth” on steroids! Through it,

members of a congregation can go far beyond simply sharing pictures of grandchildren. They can use it as a non-threatening way to share their faith journeys and invite friends to join them.

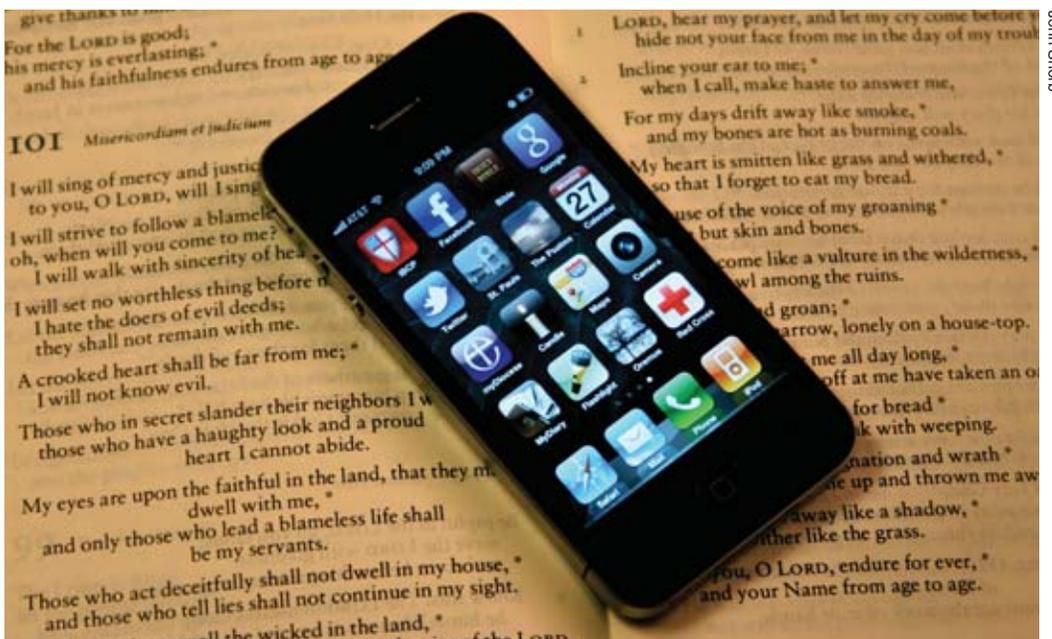
The statistics are astonishing. *Facebook* now has 350 million members. If it were a country, it would be the third largest in the world, larger than the United States! There are over 50 million messages sent via *Twitter* every day (or more than 600 per second). Imagine the potential audience that could be reached!

During the Reformation of the sixteenth century the church was quick to seize upon the opportunities presented by the newly invented printing press, but since then it has lagged behind the curve of technology. Christianity was slow to realize the potential of 20th century mass media, particularly radio and television. This may change with the spread of web-technology. On the web, information is no longer directed in top-down

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*This Issue:
Technology and Evangelism*

In this issue, explore how several individuals have incorporated technology into their parish life to reach beyond traditional audiences and welcome people from a variety of contexts, capture first person stories, expand our understanding of worship, and communicate in different ways.



John Shoar

*Inside: Media, art
and community*



Tweet if you love Jesus

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manner. Everyone has a voice, and everyone can be an evangelist.

Here are some practical suggestions for taking that quantum leap into new communication technologies:

1) If you do not already have a basic website for your church, create one. It is inexpensive and it is the place where new people in the community will seek you out. (Save the church some money and forget ads in the paper or in the Yellow Pages). Make sure your site is more than just a bulletin board for parish events, but tells prospective members something about you and your mission. The more pictures the better!

2) Set up a Fan Page on Facebook. This is free and you can use it daily to link to other parish information and to articles which might be of interest to your members. The more information you push on your page, the wider your network will become. (If all this sounds beyond you technologically, ask any teenager to help!).

3) Make sure your clergyperson has a Facebook page and comments on it every day or so. If a page isn't renewed on a very regular basis, people whom you have worked so hard to attract will stop visiting. A presence there will mean that he or she is a part of parishioners' lives not just once a

week but daily. It's all about relationship. And clergy, don't worry about saying something clever online everyday, instead take time to comment on your parishioners' postings. It will affirm them far more than shaking their hand on the way out of church.

4) Use Twitter to quickly get in touch with your staff, vestry, and leadership. One bishop I know posts a prayer each morning on Twitter. He claims this has done more to overcome the "we/they" divide between diocese and congregations *than anything else he has done.*

The dean of one of our cathedrals has a loyal group from around the world that reads his blog postings. He gets 5000 hits (that is, visits) on his website every week—in other words, over 100 times the number of people who hear him preach on Sunday! God has provided us with a simple, free, and highly effective tool for reaching countless people right from our own homes. What a gift! What an opportunity!

The Rt. Rev. Kirk Smith is bishop of the Diocese of Arizona. Bishop Smith invites you to join him in his ministry through his blog, his Facebook page and on Twitter at @azbishop.

Only 28% of churches post a blog by their pastor while 68% of local church members would like to connect with their leaders through blogging or other social media, according to the study, How Churches and Their Members Use Social Media ©2010. Google this title and download the pdf report from buzzplant.com

A letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

I am honored to be joining the Episcopal Church Foundation as the new editor of ECF Vital Practices, the new online home of *Vestry Papers*. As I share the news of my transition from Episcopal Divinity School with friends and colleagues throughout the Church, I hear story after story of the value *Vestry Papers* has brought to subscribers these past fifteen years.

This issue of *Vestry Papers* marks both the end of its life as a print publication and its beginning as an interactive resource dedicated to sharing vital practices for leading congregations. Through ECF *Vital Practices*, www.ecfvp.org, the Episcopal Church Foundation invites all of us to share our successes and our challenges; to come together as a virtual community to share ideas, experiences, and best practices.

I would like to extend a personal invitation to each of you to follow *Vestry Papers* to www.ecfvp.org. By choosing to read this issue on the website, you can easily watch the YouTube videos mentioned in the article by Eric Law, subscribe to the Bishop of Arizona's tweets, and listen to the stories Barbara Dundon describes at St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

I also invite you to consider contributing to ECF *Vital Practices*, www.ecfvp.org. Tell us about your experience introducing electronic media into your congregational life. How has it, or hasn't it, served as a tool for evangelism? Which resources have you found helpful and why?

As I begin my new ministry as editor of ECF *Vital Practices*, I look forward to working in partnership with all of you to make this new incarnation of *Vestry Papers* as valuable a resource as its predecessor. I welcome hearing from you either through the website or by email, editor@EpiscopalFoundation.org.

Faithfully,
Nancy Davidge



Media, art, and community

by Eric H. F. Law

As members of the community entered the worship space, they saw the image of an eye (16 ft tall and 20 ft wide) projected on the wall and heard a voice say, "I see." Then they saw an image of an ear, and heard, "I hear." Then they saw a hand patting his chest and heard, "I feel." This pattern of images and sound was repeated with at least ten community members' eyes, ears, and hands. At the conclusion of the video, a voice said, "I love the divine in you." Then the video began again. Community members were invited to enter into prayers and meditation. Some stood in front of the projection while others sat in chairs or the floor, immersed in

over 500 years. The church was at the heart of this power-shifting revolution; one of the first books printed was the Bible, making it accessible to the masses. The Anglican Church, with our beloved Book of Common Prayer, was a direct result of this revolution.

Today, we are experiencing another power-shifting revolution precipitated by the advance of computer technologies. In the last 15 years, we have moved from a centrally controlled media world to a decentralized environment in which the power to create and broadcast audio-visual media is distributed to anyone who has



"In the last 15 years, we have moved from a centrally controlled media world to a decentralized environment in which the power to create and broadcast audio-visual media is distributed to anyone who has access to these technologies."

Eric Law

We declare to you what was from the beginning,
what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes,
what we have looked at and touched with our hands,
concerning the word of life — this life was revealed,...

We declare to you what we have seen and heard so
that you also may have fellowship with us;

We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

(1 John 1:1-4)

this space of light and sound, praying for the acceptance and healing of self and others in this community.

The worship description might seem foreign to many, but for the younger generation, they might describe it as awesome and real.

In communication, media is defined as the storage and transmission tools used to store and deliver information or data. The Church has always used media in its ministry. The early church leaders wrote down the stories of Jesus so that later generations can "see and hear" the "word of life" so that we may have fellowship. Later the church engaged artists to use media such as sculpture, painting, stained glass and music to create sacred spaces for worship and to communicate the faith. Except we did not call these forms media, we called them Art.

The invention of the printing press made the print medium the most influential form of communication in the western church for

access to these technologies. While the Church was quick to embrace the print revolution, the Church is slow to engage the electronic media revolution.

Meanwhile, the emerging generation, who grew up with these media as part of the fabric of their lives, has few places to go for the needed ethical and theological reflection on the impact of these powerful media in their lives and ministries.

The conversation on the Emergent/ Emerging Church or Fresh Expression movements has often pointed to the use of technologies – from the use of social media to projections in worship. However, there are few resources in assisting local church communities to reflect theologically on the relationship between media, faith, and community and how to use them for the work of justice and empowerment.

In 2007, the Kaleidoscope Institute created

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Beyond online Bible study: For those who desire theological study at a deeper level, Education for Ministry (EfM) provides study and reflection rooted in the Scriptures and traditions of the Church for lay persons. EfM Online is designed for people who cannot attend a weekly in-person group. Virtual seminars are conducted via live chat and discussion board. (www.sewanee.edu/EFM/EFMonline.htm)

Media, art, and community

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a five-day workshop called “Media and Faith” to fill this void.

A key member of the faculty was an artist who challenged us to use electronic media as forms of art. Just as we use paintings, sculptures, and architectural forms to create sacred spaces, we can use electronic media to do the same. The “illuminated space” called “I See I Hear I Feel” described at the beginning of this article was created by students during the same course in 2010.

In this piece, we maximized the gift of video projection to create an intimate space engaging the senses. The same treating-media-as-art principle can be used to create videos to put into cyberspace.

Many church related videos on YouTube tend to use this tool to record what we do in church – the sermon, the choir singing, etc. as opposed to using it as an art form with its own unique logic, forms, and patterns. No wonder church videos on YouTube get so few viewers. (*Go to the channel:*

GraceInCyberSpace on Youtube.com to see examples of “artful” PrayerVideos and DialogueVideos.)

I would like to leave readers with a few questions to reflect on:

How can we bring together the gifts of all persons for Christ’s ministry using electronic media? How can we encourage engagement between people skilled in using electronic media and those whose comfort level lies with more traditional media? How can we re-vision our fellowship to include reaching into cyberspace where the younger generation forms communities? How can we connect cyberspace with physical sacred space where people of all generations can move from hi-tech virtual community to hi-touch fellowship of Christ?

*The Rev. Eric H. F. Law is executive director and founder of the Kaleidoscope Institute for Leadership in a Diverse Changing World (www.kscopeinstitute.org). He has been a consultant and trainer for building inclusive community for over 20 years. He is author of six books, composer of church music, photographer, and playwright. His latest project, *Grace in Cyberspace*, encourages viewers to form prayerful inclusive communities through dialogue.*



Cathy Carpenter

Valuing shared humanity through storytelling

By Barbara Dundon

As we stepped outside the StoryBooth that chilly Saturday in March, my husband and I knew we had experienced something sacramental.

We had just spent 45 minutes in the sanctuary of a soundproof trailer, as a sound engineer documented our memories of my 93 year-old mother. Mum had died less than a year before and we were honoring her memory by recording stories about her life and death. It felt like sacred space had been carved out of our lives to do so.

My experience that Saturday with StoryCorps (www.storycorps.org), a national oral histo-

emergency room informing her that her son had suffered a broken neck. In another, a public defender recalls her efforts to save a young heroin addict. The third is a story our rector told about a mountain climbing experience in the Adirondacks.

Parishioner Michael Prell recalls, "I still remember the jaw-drop moment I had when you played the first one for us."

Seemed like we were onto something.

If I had visions of this new ministry sending parishioners rushing to St. Martin's web site to hear the latest interview, I was soon disappointed. As one parishioner pointed out, "It's



ries project, challenged me to set aside my technophobia and embrace digital media as a way to communicate the good news of congregational life at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, the church that has nurtured my faith life for 24 years. I was motivated by the desire to use storytelling as a way to capture moments in parishioners' lives that had informed their faith journeys.

Working in conjunction with a task force formed by the rector, I introduced the concept to the staff and vestry in January 2008 by inviting them to listen to three demonstration vignettes I had produced. (I learned about sound recording and editing from StoryCorp's user-friendly web site).

I chose the theme "epiphany" to tie the stories together. In one a mother describes receiving a phone call from the hospital

not as though the stories are about pressing, current issues." So there isn't a drive for people to visit the site. Others see the value of the collection as a "repository," which, over time, will create a portrait of the community and its members.

Recently I joined a team on a field visit to meet with a candidate for rector of St. Martin's. The candidate made reference to a ministry not fully described in our parish profile. When we asked how he knew about it, he said, "I heard one of your parishioners describe it on your web site."

Maybe we're making progress after all.

Barbara Dundon is a lay member of the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Field in Philadelphia and producer of The Cloak, a collection of audio vignettes that celebrate parishioners' faith journeys.



*Throughout the ages
God has given us the gift
of being able to reach
people where they are,
and when they are ready
to receive God's message.
Today our toolbox
includes a variety of
media with which to
spread the Good News:
face to face, print,
sound, video, and
through the Internet.*



The Email Creation Story

By Amy Simons

In the beginning when the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, a wind from the Internet swept over the land and the Internet said, "Let us communicate using words that are recorded and delivered to one another electronically." The Internet also said, "I will call this Electronic Mail and it is good." Then the Internet said, "Now, let these messages be addressed to swarms of living creatures; include pictures, maps, and links." The Internet called this HTML Email Marketing and it was good. The Internet blessed HTML Email saying, "Be fruitful and multiply." And it did. "I will create a church volunteer, and let him/her have dominion over all the Email of the earth." But the volunteer needed a plan.

If you've never launched an email marketing campaign it can feel as if you are standing over a formless void. It will take planning and practice to hone your skills as you take charge of this new communication vehicle, but it's worth the trouble. Hopefully the thoughts shared in this article will help you develop confidence in using this tool.

Email Marketing Works

According to Pew Internet and American Life Project data from April, 2009, 90% of Internet users in the U.S. have gone online and used email. The same source suggests that 57% do this as part of a typical day. What does this mean? Potentially, over 50% of the people you want to reach use email as a communications tool. If you're not using email with your congregation then you're making communications harder for yourself and your community.

Email saves money. In my experience, the average cost of an email marketing service is about \$15.00 a month for 500 recipients and unlimited emails. Compare that to a first class stamp or even a friendly bulk mail rate and the numbers look

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Habakkuk 2:14

3 CARE, SHARE, WORSHIP, CELEBRATE, AND LOVE
ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
 123 N. MICHIGAN AVE. SAGINAW, MI 48602
 PHONE: 989-793-9573

Blue Jean Sunday...

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2 Blue Jean Sunday is a day where everyone is encouraged to put on his old jeans for church. 1 following the 10:30 service we'll have a light lunch (cooked grill) and clean up the grounds around St. John's. Weeding, thinning, raking, trimming things we do to make our own homes look well cared for, we will also do here at

Some things to bring:

- Hats
- Sun block
- Gardening tools

As part of our accessibility project we may need a few willing volunteers to temporarily foster home for some of our larger plants during the construction project. In September we will use our Blue Jean Sunday to re-group and winterize our grounds post construction.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Accessibility Project Breaks Ground - August 18th.
 In addition to fulfilling your pledge to the accessibility campaign you can still be a momentous day by... [more](#).

Loons Baseball Outing - August 22nd.
 It's time again for the 3 annual St. John's Loons Baseball Game outing! If you have been to an minor league event you are in for a treat. Loons baseball offers all the and give-a-ways like the Pros with a "fight to the finish" 4 e... [more](#).

5 www.stjohns-saginaw.org | [map](#) | info@stjohns-saginaw.org

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While the media may have changed, the importance of telling THE story in ways that engage and invite remains the same.

pretty good. It also allows you to speak directly to your target audience. The people involved in your email marketing should request it by signing up on your website, responding to a feedback card, or by your own solicitation. Remember they want to hear what you have to say. Email communications is a streamlined approach that can lead to direct participation in services and events. Most importantly, it offers meaningful feedback. Many email marketing services, such as Constant Contact, measure the open rate of both your emails and the links included in your emails. This means you can easily see how many people have viewed your email and which messages are most engaging for them.

Recommendations for Successful Email Content

Knowing the specifics about how people use your email means you can adapt over time and make each mailing more effective than the one before. To get good feedback, people need to use it and they will use what is relevant and easy. Here are some guidelines that our parish has found effective in our own email marketing:

1. Highlight important points with **bold** or *italicized* words (most of us skim emails instead of reading them).
2. Write simply. (Brevity is a virtue.)
3. Brand your emails with consistent color schemes and letterheads (professional email should look like it's coming from an institution, not your nephew).
4. Link lengthy articles and announcements to your website which should also be branded to match your emails.
5. Provide a resource to other information via links (such as to your diocese, the Episcopal Church Center's website, maps, etc.).
6. Include photos (real church photos if you can - clip art isn't as meaningful).

(For examples, refer to the corresponding numbers on the graphic.)

Recommendations for Successful Email Lists

7. If you are not using an email marketing service that manages your lists for you, address emails to yourself and then BCC the rest of the recipients to avoid making personal information available to everyone on your list.

8. Collect people, not just their email addresses; get their postal addresses and first and last names. This makes follow up communications and announcements easier and more personal.

9. Make unsubscribe requests effective immediately. If someone opts out of your service, respect their decision.

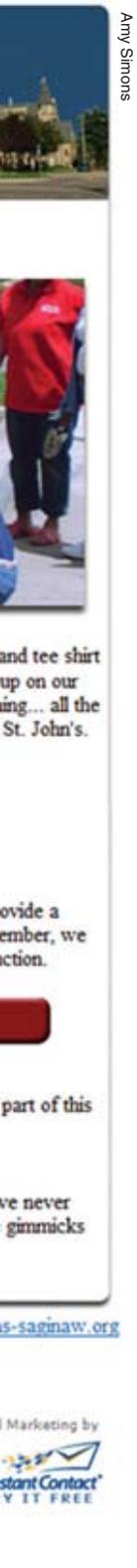
10. Keep email relevant to the recipient by targeting messages to lists sorted by interests, for example, special services, musical events, the "everything" list, etc.

11. Never add people to your list who did not request the service. Take the time to build relationships on trust and respect and only add names when permission is granted by the recipient.

Using email as an arm of professional communication in our churches is critical to staying relevant to the fellowship we foster and our communities at large. Yes, it's unavoidable that many congregations will need to use *both* traditional and electronic communication while that last 43% of us start walking the path to obsessive email-checking. The point is that you're doing it and your skills will grow as the need grows.

And the Internet said, "A volunteer shall leave his/her pencil and his/her paper and cling to a new community of other volunteers learning to market their emails. And it will be good."

Amy Simons is Communications Coordinator at St. John's Episcopal Church in Saginaw, Michigan. St. John's received a 2009 All Star Award from Constant Contact, Inc., a leading provider of email marketing for small business and non-profits. This award was based on frequency of campaigns, open rates, bounce rates, and click through rates. Learn more about communications at St. John's by visiting their website at www.stjohns-saginaw.org.





ECF's Mission

To strengthen the leadership and financial capabilities of Episcopal congregations, dioceses and related organizations to pursue their mission and ministry.



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Born Again?

Vestry Papers has been reborn as a website dedicated to vital practices for leading congregations: www.ecfvp.org.



Visit ECF Vital Practices (www.ecfvp.org) today and join the conversation. You'll find active links to all of the resources mentioned in this issue including video clips illustrating Eric Law's work with the Kaleidoscope Institute, audio clips from St. Martin-in-the-Field's storytelling project, the Pew Internet and American

Life data referenced in Amy Simon's article on email marketing, the Bishop of Arizona's Facebook page, and more.

Interested in being a contributor? Contact Nancy Davidge, ECF Vital Practices editor at editor@EpiscopalFoundation.org.

See you online!

Free to all!
Visit today!



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for leading congregations