



**ST ALBANS DIOCESAN SYNOD**

**13 OCTOBER 2018**

**“FELLOWSHIP IN THE DIGITAL WORLD”**

**\*\*Please use the Twitter hashtag #digitalban to contribute stories, feedback and responses after the buzz groups.\*\***

An overview of some types of social media and their use for digital fellowship:

**Facebook** - used mainly by older (30+) users and is a good medium for longer stories and garnering reaction.

**Twitter** - good for disseminating shorter comments or linking to blogs, articles etc. Used by all ages, notorious for the worst trolling, though.

**Instagram** and **Snapchat** - Picture-based social media used by many younger people, especially teenagers.

**Second Life** – a virtual online world created on the web in the early 2000 which offered people a virtual community in which they could participate. It included a cathedral (see below). It grew astronomically to begin with, but has since declined significantly.

- Anglican Cathedral of Second Life - a cathedral tour can be watched here: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Al98HIGHzX4&feature=youtu.be>) and you can read about the ministry of the cathedral here (<https://slangcath.wordpress.com/>)
- Banks are now closed in Second Life but some nations - the Maldives and Sweden - have embassies in Second Life - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhR43Yt9Pcs>
- General information can be read here - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second\\_Life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Life)

**ICChurch** – a virtual church community started by the diocese of Oxford

- Explore it here - <https://www.i-church.org/gatehouse/>
- The Church of England's own apps are here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/download-church-england-apps>
- One of the earliest experiments to reach out to the spiritual seeker was the Holy Space website designed and curated by Bruce Stanley. It no longer exists but some of it can be accessed via the web archive here <https://web.archive.org/web/20020811141756/http://www.holyspace.org:80/background/index.html>

- Other superb spirituality and prayer sites include: <https://www.pray-as-you-go.org/home> and <https://www.sacredspace.ie/> or <https://www.wordlive.org/Sessiontable>
- Table Talk is another good resource to open life's big questions - <http://www.table-talk.org/index.html>
- The Church of England also have as part of the funerals website the opportunity to 'light and candle' on your smart phone here: <https://churchofenglandfunerals.org/light-a-candle-smartphone/>

### **Three Social Media stories**

Social media can be used in by churches to great effect:

- 1) A Vicar, in the final throes of planning for Easter Eve baptisms, puts a message out on Twitter and Facebook saying that there are to be a number of baptisms in his church that evening and if anyone themselves would like to join their number, they should message him by 5pm to allow time for basic preparation before the service at 6pm. On more than one occasion, people have responded to this call and been baptised, attending further 'preparation' after the event and some joining the regular fellowship of the church.

- 2) A church had been the victim of a break-in, damaging a stained glass window, and theft of valuable sound equipment.

The Vicar posted an item about it on the community facebook account, explaining that the loss of the stolen sound equipment meant that concerts would have to be cancelled. Members of the community were so outraged by the damage to the church and the theft that they organised a fundraising concert to repair the damaged stained glass window and many members of the community expressed great concern for and solidarity with the church.

- 3) A curate posted information online about remembering persecuted Christians around the world, for whom a bell would be rung, once for each of fifty countries where persecution took place. The posting was of a recording of the church bell and a slide show which changed on every 'dong'. The posting drew a significant number of responses from people who were not church members, but who were shocked to learn about persecution in countries which they had visited on holiday and where the church seemed to be an accepted part of life.

**All of these uses of social media demonstrate the capacity to start or build relationships with people who are beyond the current reach of the church.**