

tabernacle : penarth

purpose: to reflect God's love in our church,
community and world.

social media @ tabs

#tweetuntothersasyouwouldhavethemtweetuntoyou

Introduction

In recent years there has been a rapid increase in the use of social media, particularly with regard to social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), personal blogs and file/photo sharing websites (e.g. Instagram). Each day there are now roughly 3.2 billion interactions on Facebook, half a billion tweets, and two million blog publications.

The attention span of a web user is down to three seconds, and people are increasingly eager to consume information in real-time, in bite size nuggets. With so many people across the world using social media in their daily lives this presents significant opportunities to interact, communicate and share ideas and beliefs with others. If done well this can be extremely effective - the Dalai Lama has over six and half million twitter followers!

Tab's is growing its own profile through social media and can be found on both Facebook & twitter:

Twitter - @ tabs_penarth

Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/#!/TabsPenarth>

Members are encouraged to 'like', 're-tweet', and generally use these pages to keep up to date, be encouraged, and express a positive witness of the life of the church to friends, followers, and the world in general.

At the same time we should remember that communication via social media is inherently imperfect. When interacting remotely important aspects of communication such as body language, tone, expression etc, are lost and meanings can frequently get muddled or misunderstood, potentially causing hurt and offence.

Furthermore information and images posted on social media sites is in the public domain and can rapidly get out of our personal control, and be misinterpreted by those both inside and outside the Church. It is important that we exercise sound judgment in the ways in which we communicate and express ourselves online. Tab's provides the following guidance to its members, based on our church mission statement.

Reflecting God's love in our church...

As disciples of Christ we are called to love one another, with the same sacrificial love with which Christ loved us. With this in mind, remember:

... Comments made on social networking sites should be considered in the same way as if they were made at a public place (e.g. in a church gathering). Ask yourself, 'would I say this to the person's face?' If not, don't say it on social media.

... Simply removing the name of someone does not make them anonymous. Family members or friends of that person will probably be able to determine who you are talking about based on the context.

... Information, opinion and photos which you post in the public domain (or even privately if in an electronic format) can be transmitted onwards, and are likely to come to the attention of people outside your immediate circle of friends. Think about whether you would be happy for others in the congregation to see the pictures or text in question, because the likelihood is that they can, and will.

... Offensive posts about specific events, sermons or people are disrespectful and inappropriate. These comments are likely to cause distress, and will be dealt with as a matter of church discipline.

... How easy it is for communication to be misconstrued online. This is particularly relevant given our responsibilities with respect to child protection. Ask yourself, 'Is it appropriate for me to 'poke' this person?'

...community...

As disciples of Christ we are called to be a witness to our communities and those around us. In our post-Christian culture it is often said that 'your life is the only Bible someone will ever read'. It is important that we are mindful of the impression those outside Tabs will get of us and by association our faith, through the ways we interact online. Remember:

... To consider the amount of potential church goers among your online friends, followers, friends of friends, and friends of friends' followers, etc. When making reference to your church or Christian friends online ask yourself, 'Will they know I'm a Christian by my love?'

... No perfect people allowed! One of the features of modern life is that cameras are everywhere. Most phones now have a camera. It is easy to be caught in an embarrassing or compromising situation and you know the embarrassing photos can be on Facebook. This means that believers need to

be extra cautious in how they behave and ensure that their lifestyle is exemplary at all times. Are you living the Jesus way? Just think what a bad witness it will be if a compromising picture of you turns up on Facebook with a tag giving your name and details. In an increasingly secular society it is vital that Christians are living as good witnesses.

... As a general rule, any publicly posted pictures or text must take into account the rights of the people to whom they relate. If you are responsible for placing pictures or stories about others into the public domain without their permission, not only can it cause a great deal of distress and embarrassment, but you might also unwittingly put people at risk or be liable to prosecution under privacy or libel laws.

...and world.

As disciples of Christ we are called to be his witnesses to the entire world. Social media provides unique opportunities to communicate God's love to the world. It also presents stumbling blocks which we need to be aware of. Remember:

... To consider your personal privacy and be aware of the security and privacy options available to you. Keep in mind that these are not impervious, but will provide at least a measure of control over who is able to see your personal information.

... The distinction between restricted access and the public domain. If no password is needed to access information which you publish, then assume that anyone on the internet will be able to see it. That's a few billion people!

... Use of social media sites can have legal ramifications. Statements made under your profile are attributable to you and are treated as if you verbally made that statement in a public place.

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