



Communication & Social Media Webinar Notes

Why do we need to embrace social media in youth ministry?

- Asking “why social media” is like asking why are we communicating with youth outside the youth room.
- Reach youth beyond Sunday morning. By reaching out beyond the few hours a week they are present at church, we can more effectively minister and care for our young people.
- Be where people are. This is just effective ministry, to be where people are.

Social Media 101

- Facebook
 - One common use: Facebook groups. Facebook pages are outward facing, facebook groups are for internal communications.
 - Great for planning and discussion topics.
 - Think about creating a group for every year or an alumni group, so that young adults can maintain connections with their peers without creating unhealthy dynamics.
 - One uncommon use: Identifying pastoral care needs, messaging to check in.
- Twitter
 - Common use: Announcements. More effective use is to treat Twitter as a conversation.
 - “Join us at...”
 - Making connections through sharing hashtags and such. Tim’s youth thought he was a more real person after they found him on Twitter.
 - Uncommon use: Prompts and questions. You can ask questions, give prompts, or use quotes as a way to promote themes or topics.
- Instagram
 - Common use: Beautiful inspirational photos. You take a photo, slap a quote on it and send it out.
 - Beware of standards of etiquette like its frowned upon to post more than one photo a day.
 - Uncommon use: Ask youth to post a picture during the week based on a theme. Use hashtags to denote the theme. Check out #uulent for inspiration.
- Snapchat
 - Common use: Stories. Really should be the only way you are using snapchat as an institution. Pictures and videos stay live for 24 hours. Great way to tell the narrative of an event
 - Uncommon use: Sharing behind the scenes. Your youth group cooking dinner for the congregation? Use snapchat to share the fun and talent behind the scenes. A snippet of choir rehearsal. Or a pre-worship staff team prayer.
- Tumblr
 - Common use: Images, short blogs posts. Building an internal sense of community and broadcast out.



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- Groupme and Remind101
 - Common use: Direct communication with youth and parents. Remind101 was designed for teachers and sends texts directly to youth but youth cannot respond. You can see who has read or hasn't read your message as well. Groupme is more like a chatroom, but only for your youth.
- YouTube
 - Common use: Video storing website. Good place to post videos like a youth group video about why they like their youth group. It's more of a supplemental resource.
- Slack
 - Common use: Great for planning events, you can create channels and threads. Lots of apps integrated. Probably the next big platform.

Safety

- Texting
 - Rule of 3
 - Based off of safer communications policies that state one adult should never be alone with a youth.
 - Always include a 3rd person in the conversation, recommended that person is the religious educator or minister.
 - Make sure to clearly explain to the youth why this policy exists and what the 3rd person will be doing with the messages.
 - Screenshotting when youth text you individually and upload to a folder on either the church's network or a leaders computer.
- Facebook
 - Groups
 - Allows everyone to be involved. Group should be closed.
 - Going to want to establish group norms and have a conversation about how the covenant extends to this space.
 - How you use the group will determine who is in the group or the format of the group. If its mostly announcements, parents might be involved. If it's more of a small group ministry, parents probably won't be in the group.
 - You'll want to make sure that as folk bridge out, they are removed. You could add them to an alumni group, which is a great way for folks to keep in touch, or you might have groups based on school years and create a new group every year.
 - Messenger
 - Rule of three.
 - A general practice might be to ask youth to email you.
 - Screenshot and save. Don't delete conversations with youth. You can also use the archive function.
 - Other alternatives like Google Messenger which autologs the entire conversation.



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- Snapchat
 - Stories
 - Never friend back, because both parties have to be friends for direct messaging.
 - Remember this is an outward facing tool.
 - Using one account for the entire team or ways to check in with other members of your staff team.
 - You can only have one phone logged in at a time. The Youth and Young Adult Ministries office uses two passwords, one internal and one for volunteers. We also schedule volunteers and download the entire story at the end of each day, so if there is something questionable or inappropriate we can have a conversation with that person.
- GroupMe, Remind101, Slack
 - Discourage youth-only Groupme or Slack channels
 - Remind101 is probably one of the best ways to communicate, not super engaging though.
 - Slack gives you the ability to save and archive.

Getting Started

- What Platform?
 - Decide this first.
 - Survey your youth. Every group is different.
- Why?
 - Announcements? Groupme, Remind101, texting.
 - Reinforce messages and learnings from youth group?
 - Pastoral Care?
- Messaging and Moving toward Ministry
 - Make Messages Memorable
 - From *Think Orange*
 - Say Less
 - Say What Matters
 - Say it Clearer
 - Don't Say it
 - Say it Louder
 - Tag lines, Hooks, and Relevance