

It can sometimes feel like it's hard to keep up with the latest digital trends and the platforms being used by young people.

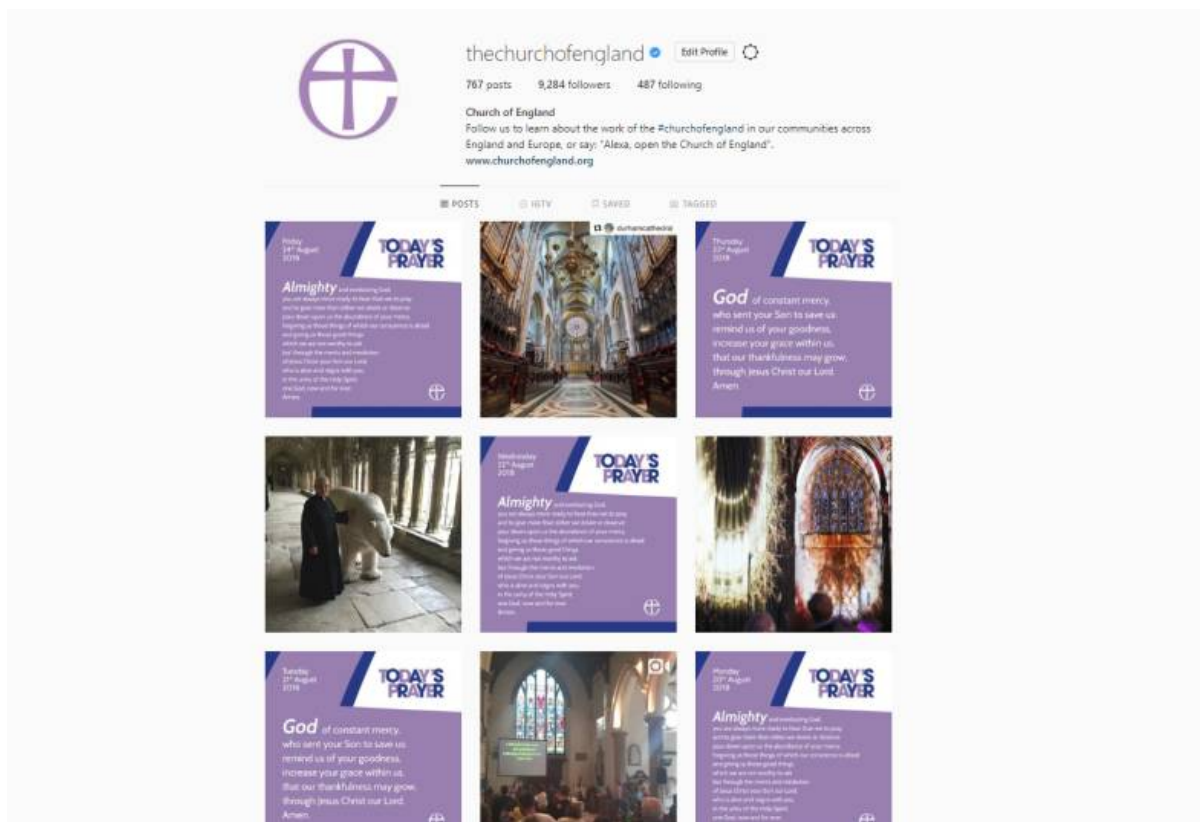
Many church's digital presence – websites and social media – are run entirely by volunteers who don't have time to do anymore than they already are. So it is really necessary to be on all the popular social channels? No!

The key to a strong digital presence is strategy and knowing your current audience – and who you might like to engage with in the future.

For the past year, the Church of England's digital team has been touring the country training 500 churches in how to use their website and social media for evangelism and discipleship – we'll have trained 1,000 parishes by Christmas. The key to this training day is not necessarily doing more – but doing what you're doing more strategically.

While we believe every church needs a Facebook page, if you decide to join another platform, the decision to use either Twitter or Instagram depends on your audience, and where they are more likely to be. It's worth creating a personal account on both of these platforms to get to know who uses it and how.

It's no longer true that Instagram is just for younger people. While 59% of those on Instagram are aged 18 – 29, 33% are 30 – 45 and 21% are over 50.



what kind of events and services you offer.

Top tips for growing your audience on Instagram:

- Remember it's quality over quantity. While you want to be posting regularly, you should only post your best pictures.
- Pictures can be taken on your smartphone, but check the quality of them. Avoid posting any blurry or pixilated photos.
- Take time to follow likeminded accounts, and then like their pictures when you're next scrolling through your timeline. If you like their picture, they're more likely to like yours!
- Think about your caption – describe what's happening in the photo and ask questions of your followers to encourage conversation.
- **Use hashtags** on your posts – have a look at the kind of hashtags other churches are using, and also ones used by your local community. It's a great way of making your account easy to find. Research suggests posts with 11 hashtags perform the best!
- Tag your photos – both with the people who are in them and the location – again, this makes them easier to find.
- Use **Canva** to design graphics to use on Instagram to promote upcoming events. If you have a colour scheme for your logo and your website, try to stick to this branding. **See our blog here** about using Canva.
- If you get a comment or question on your post, try to reply to show you value your followers.

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