

"We started using Facebook about 18 months ago and we've been really impressed with the reach and impact of our posts. We are a church in Pennington, with around 25 people at our main service, and it's really made a difference, as we are becoming known inside and outside our parish. We have over 300 followers on our Facebook page and are successfully meeting people through it who are then coming along to a service."

St Marks Pennington

One person comes to mind who we met through Facebook. He had become interested in faith whilst living elsewhere, but stumbled across one of our posts. He used social media and our website to find out about us, and became more interested in our community, eventually coming along on a Sunday. Only a few weeks ago we had the privilege of confirming him as a new Christian, and he is now a part of our church community.

This is just one story, but there are several people just like him who have come into the church as a result of a post they have seen on Facebook.

"We've recognised that if we can use social media to become more known in our community, we can have the opportunity of inviting more people in."

You've got a website, so how does Facebook fit in?

Our [website](#) is an important source of information for weddings, notices, or our Parish magazine. However, it's [Facebook](#) where we have the most impact, and have reached more people in and around our community. As a result, the two platforms - our website and our social media - work well together.

"Facebook is the place where we meet and catch people, and then we can direct them back to our website to find out more."

What do you post on Facebook?

We are trying to present ourselves online in the way that we want to be seen and I think people are staying to be a part of our church community because we've been consistent online and in person.

We post a variety of posts on Facebook. There is a place for serious content, but there is also a place for bite-sized, light-hearted or community-based content – and this generates a lot of interest.

We plan important posts ahead of time by using Facebook's free scheduling tool. This was especially helpful at Christmas when we had a variety of services and events to invite people along to, and meant we kept our community informed of what's coming up. Some of our regular posts include the collects from the Church of England, as well as videos from the Sunday sermons from Rachel, our vicar, Anne, our associate priest, and our LLM Philip.

We recognise it's not all about our church, so we look for things that our wider community might be interested in.

“Pennington is a small village, and we can see there is a Christian story to tell, but also a community story to tell. “

Rachel, the vicar here at St Marks, has experience with mental health issues, so we've used Facebook as a mechanism to talk about mental wellbeing. As a result, these posts get shared online, and people who do not go to our church have come across our page. We've become known in our community as a result.

We don't have to create every post ourselves. This has been a simple and effective way to keep our page fresh and new, with high quality and interesting posts. Being on the edge of the New Forest, and close to the coast, the community in Pennington have environmental concerns. We share things of interest from local schools and community groups to our page.

We are careful with our language online and have chosen a modern, common language. Sermons and blogs are helpful to unpack topics, but Facebook needs to be bite-size and accessible to help people understand it in the moment. We keep posts short, so they don't have to click 'more' to view the rest.

We recently redesigned our logo as we felt the previous one didn't really say much about who we were. We wanted to highlight and echo our environment so used our logo to reflect this, and it's had a great response.

What tools do you use?

- **Blender**: Open source video editing software.
- **Gimp**: Gimp is a free image manipulation programme which we use to create our logos, posters and flyers.
- **A Church Near You**: we keep our page up to date and have links to our Facebook page and website from here.
- Our website runs on **WordPress** which is free and easy to use.

We've learnt that we don't need expensive software to get great results.

“It has helped so much having Paul, one of our congregation, who is keen on photography and technical things, who has enjoyed sharing his skills to help us develop this way of engaging with our local community.” Rachel Noel, Priest in charge

Are you using other social media platforms?

We are thinking about using Instagram as we take so many pictures. All avenues are good; however, at present **Facebook** is working well for us.

Paul Young

PCC, Publicity and Marketing Team

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