

GENERAL SYNOD

Digital Evangelism 2018 update

Summary

The Digital Communications team at Church House was established in October 2016 with three years of funding to harness the considerable opportunities that digital and social media bring. Our aims are to encourage numerical growth, spiritual growth and the promotion of the common good – alongside support for the Renewal & Reform workstreams. Ultimately, the work seeks to bring people into relationship with God and the Church.

The Digital Communications team has four focus areas: (1) evangelism, (2) discipleship, (3) the common good and (4) transforming the national websites.

This session will update General Synod members on the progress in the first full twelve months of the funding; communicate the plans for 2018 in more detail and allow the opportunity for questions on the work of the Digital Communications team.

Evangelism

1. In 2016, our #JoyToTheWorld Advent and Christmas campaign reached 1.5 million people. In 2017, #GodWithUs reached over 6.8 million people (some may have seen the advertising more than once) by bringing together print and digital resources to better equip local churches. The key resources were:
 - a) Three films and three short clips that invited people to watch a Christian message from the national Church. These short films were viewed over 2 million times. We also encouraged the public to experience the joy of Advent and Christmas by searching for a local service on *A Church Near You*.
 - b) #GodWithUs *Your Christmas Journey* reflections course, which achieved a reach of 844,000 on social media and over 10,000 people signed up to receive this content by SMS and email. The course did particularly well with those between aged 18-34. 18,000 copies of the accompanying Church House Publishing booklet were sent to parishes in October as part of the campaign, and a further 80,000 copies were purchased and distributed by churches as part of their outreach.
2. To equip local churches, we initiated social media and writing for the web training courses. In the first six months the team trained over 300 lay and ordained parish leaders in 12 dioceses across the country. The courses have been very well received and we are on target to train over 500 parishes by July 2018.
3. The *Faith in action* section of the new Church of England website brings to life the missional work of churches across the country with 20 new videos. More will be recorded in 2018.

Discipleship

4. The 2017 #LiveLent course reached 2.5 million people on social media. The focus of the 2018 #LiveLent is *Let your light shine*, a six-week discipleship journey through the Gospel of John, exploring what it means to be a witness of Christ. Introduced by both Archbishops and produced in partnership with Thy Kingdom Come, the aim is to enable the light of Jesus to shine through our everyday lives. #LiveLent is available in print from Church House Publishing, through a free iOS or Android app, on social media and by email and text. During key liturgical moments in the year such as this, our plans are

to grow the size of our email and text database to enable us to help existing Christians to grow in their faith and to bring new people to faith.

5. A transformed *Our faith* section on the new Church of England website explains Christianity in a simple and engaging way. Built in collaboration with Church House Publishing, new videos form a key part of this project, as does content adapted from Pilgrim, including the new resource for catechesis, 'The Pilgrim Way: A Guide to the Christian Faith'.

The Common Good

6. The Church reacted to the London Bridge and Manchester terrorist attacks by offering prayers and short videos to enable people to reflect on both atrocities. More than one million were reached over the weekend of the London Bridge attack. These resources were also shared extensively from local church and diocesan social media accounts.
7. The work of the team has been recognised in four national industry awards, mostly entered by FTSE 100 and other large companies. We have won gold at four ceremonies for the 2016 Christmas campaign and the Church's new, strategic approach to digital and social media. The Church won against organisations such as the Royal College of Nursing, Oxfam, Adidas, Gatwick Airport and Virgin Active.

Transforming our National Websites

8. Following extensive research with nearly 2,000 Christians and non-Christians across the country in January 2017 - including focus groups, interviews, online surveys and diocesan visits - the new **Church of England** website (www.churchofengland.org) launched in November 2017. The clear conclusion from the research phase was the need for a website that better supported people in leadership positions in church alongside regular attendees, whilst at the same time, pivoting to ensure the website would engage and inform occasional visitors to our churches and those across the country who are exploring the Christian faith.
9. The mobile-first **A Church Near You** (www.achurchnearyou.com) launched in November 2017. The Archbishops' Council assumed ownership in February 2017. A research exercise took place with 1,800 existing editors and diocesan lay and clergy focus groups to understand their frustrations and identify opportunities. Since launching, the site has played a key role in our 2017 #GodWithUs Christmas campaign, with over 56,000 Christmas services listed (an increase of 22,000 on 2016). In total, ACNY received 1.5 million page views in December 2017, up from 925,000 page views in December 2016. 69% of people who accessed this website were first time visitors and there were 300,000 unique users to the site in December 2017.
10. Working closely with Lambeth Palace and Bishopthorpe, new websites for the Archbishops of Canterbury and York websites will go live in the first quarter of 2018.

Adrian Harris
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