

Social Media as Ministry (not just marketing)

Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dail | March 2023

Who is your audience?

ASK: *what makes your church distinctive from all the other options nearby?*

**Focus on who you ARE even if you
have boundaries on what you're not.**

Example: Jubilee is a place rooted in Joy

Jubilee is a community rooted in God's
JOY, celebrating all Her children, esp.
LGBTQIA+ babes

Which means we are NOT:

A stodgy church of mean, exacting Episcopalians

Nor are we dowdy liberals policing everyone's tone

Nor are we ever going to debate the humanity of LGBTQIA+ people theologically

Jubilee is high church, but not condescending – we empower Christians to be enfolded in God's mystery with ancient but accessible liturgy

Which means we are NOT:

- *Chasing children away from the altar*
- *Assuming everyone knows what happens in the liturgy*
- *Assuming everyone comes from a sacramental church ... about 50% of our people are former Baptists or Evangelicals*
- *Preaching easy, digestible answers to life's problems*

What does social media have to do with this?

Clarity on Audience =
Clarity on PUBLIC
FACING marketing
content for *your* church
to bring in NEW
Christians

What does social media have to do with this?

Tell the story of who you are (even if this is who you WANT to be or are STRIVING to be)

What does social media have to do with this?

100% of the reported GUESTS* to Jubilee are from my personal social media**

February 2023: **24 first-time guests**

Instagram - 16k followers

TikTok - 60k followers

No marketing other than social media right now

*Guests > Visitors

**I would say more accurately this is like 90-95% but not everyone fills out the QR code form

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**Not everyone
needs to be on
social media in
the same way...**

... but I think everyone would
benefit from knowing how to
use social media to reach your
target audience

AND

to know where young people
get most of their info from

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People like to know YOU

Yes, they do want to see the
muffin you had for breakfast

...And how you put on your
vestments and what they are
called

...And that you prep for Holy
Week by buying lots of frozen
pizzas for your family

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**Think of social
media like Oprah or
Graham Norton or
Jimmy Fallon are
interviewing you**

What's an interesting story
from church?

Why did you answer the call to
be a priest?

Funny behind the scenes
moment?

What moves you about this
week's lectionary?

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Audience determines platform focus

Millennials & up: Facebook

Gen Z - Millennials: Instagram

Gen Alpha - Millennials: TikTok

You would be surprised who is on social media

**Social platform focus:
Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok**

**DISCLAIMER: social media isn't
always a social good**

**There is no digital replacement for the
Incarnation.**

Things to be aware of

(and to have safeguarding practices around)

1. **People are the product** on free platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, etc.
2. **Misinformation** – especially on Facebook
3. **Negative mental health** affects, especially for young folks
4. **The Internet = A slot machine** that will eat away at God's commandment we rest
5. **Dangers** of being doxxed, stalked, data collection

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But being a den of thieves never stopped Jesus from showing up, and we are Jesus' Body here on earth!

Be not afraid; into the lion's den we go!

Let's get into it

What is the purpose of
social media?

Take 30 seconds to think of a post you have seen recently (last 48 hours) that resonated with you personally and/or you immediately remember.

What was it? (share briefly in the chat)

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**I doubt it was a cute graphic inviting us to a
church event...**

**So let's use social media as
people, not newsletters**

(and along the way, tell the good news!)

The 4 General Categories of Effective, Memorable, and Impactful Social Media Posts

1. Something thought-provoking
2. Something beautiful
3. Something useful
4. Something socially relevant to me directly

#1: Something thought-provoking

Secular world:
Think pieces / Articles
Instagram education
carousels

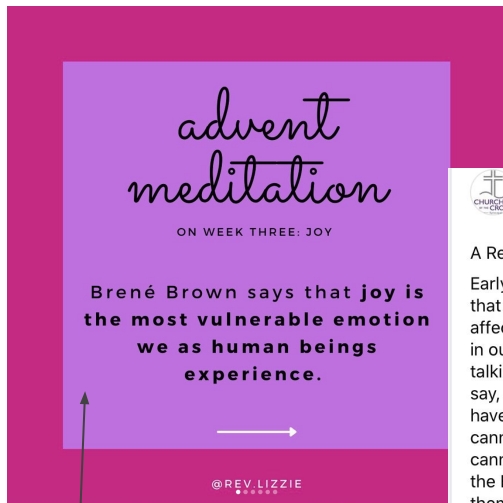
Church examples:

- Sermons (video or text)
- Newsletter articles reflecting on the life of the community, call of the church, or reflection on life of faith (text)
- Teachings on the Bible, church history, or liturgy (videos, text, graphics/carousels)

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(these are pieces of content you or other staff folks have often already produced and now just need to be translated to a social media form!)

Some examples from my ministry ...



Instagram Carousel =
Advent meditation



Meditation shared on
Church Facebook Page

Sermon (taken from livestream recording) reposted to personal instagram



3 min TikTok
with
off-the-cuff
reflections on
Eucharist

Generally, thought-provoking content generates a higher per capita level of engagement but a lower level of overall engagement.

I think of this like Sunday School classes on a Sunday, comparing ASA to attendance; we may have 50 people in church but 5 people in Sunday School. Still worth it!

#2: Something Beautiful

Secular world:
Selfies, Vacation reels or
photos, Pinterest boards,
Family portraits

Church examples:

- Photos from worship
- Photos of your space
bedecked for various feast
days
- Selfies of you/your staff!
- Christian art

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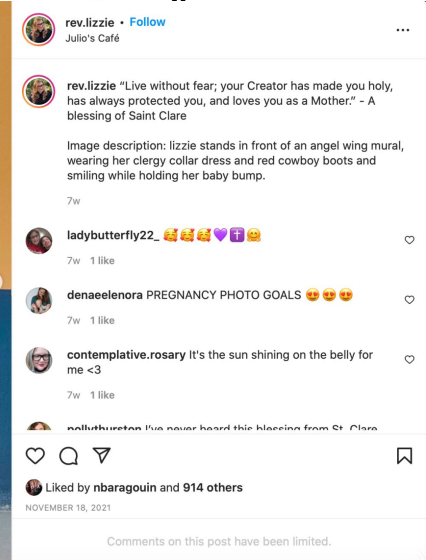
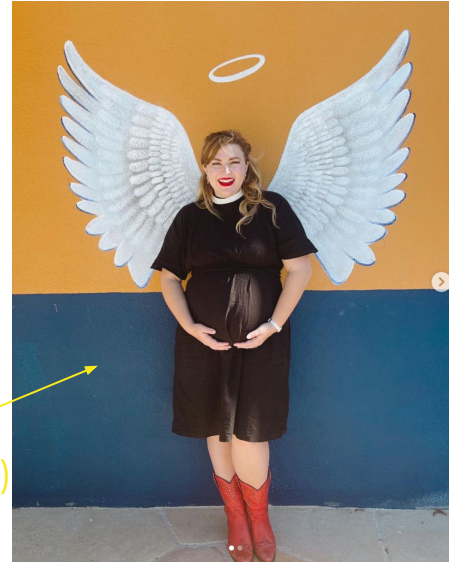
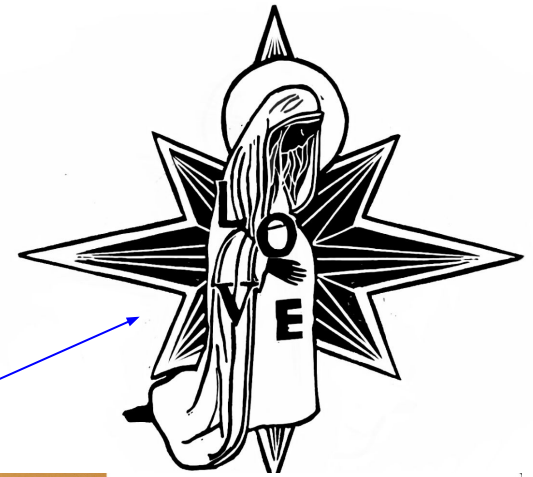
Some examples from my ministry...



Professional Photos from
Bishop's Visit (HIGHLY recommend
1-2x year paying a professional to
capture a special Sunday - use those
photos for promo!) Photo by Kim Ortiz

Selfies! (Yes, of you!)

Icon by Rev.
Sarah West -
used in our
bulletins and on
Instagram for
Advent
reflections



Generally, beautiful content generates a lower per capita level of engagement but a higher level of overall engagement.

Think of this like a banner by the road or flyers in the neighborhood - something to catch the eye!

#3: Something Useful

Secular world:

How-to reels
Articles
Parenting tips
Cleaning Tok
Instagram Carousels

Church examples:

1. Instructed prayer time
2. Take-home devotionals in Lent/Advent
3. Classes!
4. Workshops!
5. OCCASIONALLY:
announcements

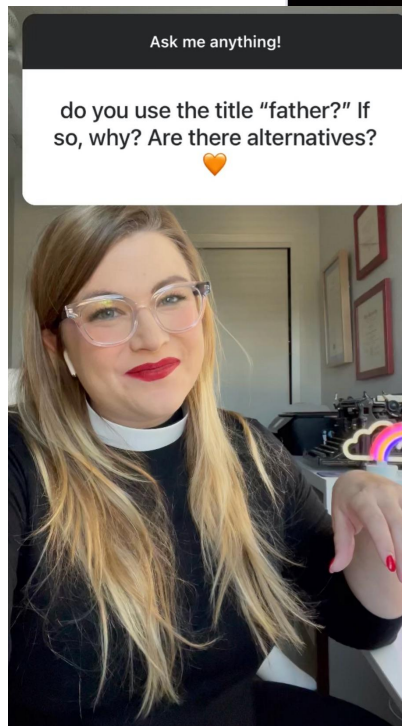
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Some examples from my ministry...

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Q&As on Instagram
& TikTok

Instagram & TikTok
Lives with special
guests & experts
when the
questions are not
your expertise

Announcements
cross-posted on
social media in
social media savvy
ways



Generally, useful content generates a higher per capita level of engagement and a medium level of overall engagement.

Once again, this is going “deep” with a portion of your congregation even if it isn’t everyone.

#4: Something Socially Relevant

Secular world: photos from an event I was a part of OR wish I was a part of OR am just glad to see happening!

Weddings, Baptisms,
Ordinations, Babies, etc

Church examples:

- Again: Photos from worship
- Photos of baptisms or other big events
- Videos of fall festival/Trunk or Treat/or similar
- Behind-the-scenes! Setting up the greens for Christmas or writing a sermon or stuffing Easter eggs

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Some examples from my ministry...



Hired photographer (me) photos of baptism (bonus: keeps the family present to the moment instead of taking pictures with phones)

Right: photobooth from church event, people can share (branded) church content on their personal page!

Below: parishioner photo and caption reflecting on church formation offering



Church of the Cross, Episcopal
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As I looked at the **#AdventWord** list of words, the word **#PATH** immediately resonated with me. A couple of weeks ago, during Children's Chapel, we took a Thankfulness Walk on the paths around Star Hill Ranch. As we walked, the children shared their joy and thankfulness for: moms, dads, pigs, goats, sand, love, dolphins, brothers, sisters, family, birds, friends, parks, sky, rocks, cars, air, swings, and Jesus!

As we journeyed and I watched and listened to the children, I was r... [See more](#)

Edit



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1 Comment



These social event focused photos are awesome for mobilizing your community to be evangelists through re-sharing, tagging, and comments!

Generally, socially relevant content is the gold mine of *both* high per capita level of engagement *and* a high level of overall engagement.

This may not offer deep theological reflection, but it shows the formation of disciples in your congregation in real time, in real ways - and that matters!

Good general practices

1. **Keep up with the trends:** a little self-aware scrolling can be a lot of education!
2. **Accessibility:** captions, image descriptions, and more (Check out @LavantConsulting on Instagram)
3. **Boundaries:** take days off, share the load, know you won't capture everything!

