



INTRODUCTION

To continue to remain relevant to society we as the church need to periodically consider what the latest forms of communication are and then shape our offerings to utilise these new communication forms. This paper examines some of these new communication methods within the technological field.

STATISTICS ON ENGAGEMENT BY CHURCH AND WEB 2.0

So what is the rate of internet usage in New Zealand? 2006 figures:

15-24 years of age	85.5%
25-44 years of age	79.8%
45-64 years of age	66%
65-74 years of age	38.7%
75+ years of age	17.3% ¹

Research out of the US shows that most in the 12 – 28 age bracket expect interaction with Web 2.0.²

Given that this age bracket comprises a key demographic for the church the question has to be asked: “what percentage of churches utilize Web 2.0?” According to a survey completed in America by the Centre for Church Communication³, the percentage of churches making use of this new communication method is only 10%.

So what is Web 2.0?

WEB 2.0

From its beginnings the internet was principally about communicating information in a passive manner. Similar to television or the newspaper, users had little input into the content. In the last four or so years a major shift has occurred. Users are now actively involved in producing content. Many of the most successful websites are 100% user driven. This shift is known as Web 2.0; the second stage of internet development. The Pew Internet Project describes this as the ‘**surging wisdom of crowds**’ (<http://www.pewinternet.org/>). Sites that exemplify this ‘crowd wisdom’ include Facebook, You Tube and Wikipedia.

Facebook: Social Networking

One of the key functions of Web 2.0 is to create a platform by which people can meet new people, develop friendships and express themselves to a new crowd. This is known as social networking. One such networking site is facebook.com which describes itself as:

Facebook is a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them. People use Facebook to keep up with friends, upload an unlimited number of photos, share links and videos, and learn more about the people they meet.

¹ <http://www.newzealandatoz.com/index.php?pageid=598>

² http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Generations_Memo.pdf

³ <http://www.cfclabs.org/>

SO HOW CAN WE USE SOCIAL NETWORKING WITHIN THE CHURCH?

Fundamental to a successful church is community – making connections. Part of community is staying in touch, being involved in each other’s lives. Facebook.com and numerous other sites facilitate this and are freely available to those with computers and internet access. The technology is simple to use and provides the ability to share photos, stories, prayer requests etc... You can also link with those in your local community, so assisting in making connections to those outside the church community.

YOU TUBE

Youtube.com allows users to upload videos, watch other people’s videos and comment on those videos. Around 70 million videos are watched every day. Within the usual limits of decency, users are given complete freedom to create and comment on the contributions of others. This participation is a key characteristic of Web 2.0.

One participant known as “nielsft” states:

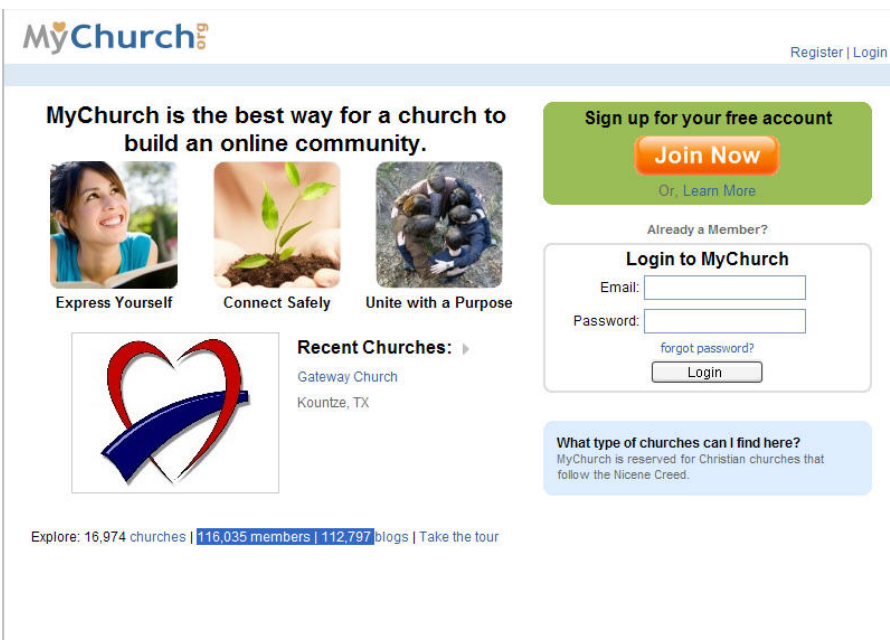
For me, the main criterion for a good 2.0 site is that it invites me to engage in a conversation. I don't want to be talked down to, told what to do. That doesn't work for me anymore. It is that culture of conversation that makes all the difference⁴.

People expect a voice, whether to respond or to express an opinion. The dictating of truth by authorities is mostly a thing of the past when it comes to the internet; people expect to participate, to be given a voice. Another excellent example of Web 2.0 is Wikipedia.com which is an online encyclopaedia which anyone can contribute to.

So if there is one statement that encapsulates Web 2.0 it is:

Being able to participate, being able to contribute.

SO HOW DOES THIS ASSIST THE CHURCH AND HOW CAN WE MAKE USE OF IT?



Every church and ministry should have a presence on the internet so as to connect with those in and around your community. This can be done for very little outlay.

There is an amazing website resource called **MyChurch** which can be found at www.mychurch.org

As at Feb 08 it had 16,974 churches making use of it, with some 116,035 members and 112,767 blogs.

MyChurch describes itself as:

“MyChurch.org is a free online tool for churches to outreach and build community by networking with their congregation. Amongst some of its features are a library for sermons and media, a social

network, a sharing board, a collaborative blog, a photo sharing application, and an event calendar for you and your church.”

So sermons can be shared in audio and text format; video of services or events can be offered, news and photos distributed, and a blog created.

⁴ <http://www.squidoo.com/org20>

THE BLOG

Another key form of Web 2.0 is the blog or weblog. This is an online journal usually authored by one person, but with the capacity for others to comment on the journal entry and on other people's comments. Back in January of 2007 I set up a blog called Brownblog that can be found at www.brownblog.info

I have found it has been an excellent way of discussing issues and challenges. The approach is to post a short piece and people are able to comment and interact, sometimes leading to a lively discussion. I have also found it an excellent way of getting information out there so as to assist in promoting a cause.



About Mark
Brown
Subscribe
Anglican Group
in Second Life

Hand up if you want to change society

February 19th, 2008

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it."

-Alan Kay*

It would be fair to say that most Christian ministries want to influence and perhaps even change the community or world around them. To do this requires that we are part of setting the societies agenda. Influencing the world around us won't happen if we are trailing behind the action desperately reacting.

Here are **four steps** from my experience that need to happen for a ministry or individual to be in a position to change society: [Continue reading »](#)

Popularity: 9% [?]

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Filed under Anglican, Second Life Church, Virtual Reality | | [Edit](#) | [Comment \(0\)](#)

Two images that shifted my worldview

February 17th, 2008

This year I have been taking Lent seriously, thinking about my Christian practice and undertaking a spiritual spring clean. Over the past couple of weeks I have preached on Lent (see : [What is the Point of Lent?](#)) And on sunday I preached on seeking simplicity (see below.. 8 minutes in length). The preparation and preaching of both these messages have deeply confronted my apathetic attitude. challenged

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RECENTLY WRITTEN

- Hand up if you want to

BrownBlog is the personal blog of the Rev. Mark Brown. Its aim is to think differently about Christian Ministry. Feel free to leave a comment and get involved in the conversation. Mark can be contacted at:

mbrownsky@hotmail.com
[facebook](#)



Name: Mark Brown

Status: If you want to change society see:...

Profile picture of a group of people standing together.

BIBLE VERSE FOR THE DAY

February 20 - [eBible.com](#)

Verse of the day

SO WHAT PRACTICAL USE DOES A BLOG HAVE TO MINISTRY?

Like most web resources, setting up a blog is free. Whether through MyChurch or some other site such as www.wordpress.com, setting up a blog is very easy. The challenge is working out what to write and then promoting it!

Blogging is about sharing information and encouraging participation and engagement with that information. At any point in the life of a church there is a range of topics that need to be shared and discussed. An example: a church is working on a new mission statement. Traditionally this might be shared via the pulpit, through extraordinary meetings etc... With the addition of a blog, an article on the mission statement could be posted and congregation members encouraged to comment and debate the merits. Or the pastor might publish his sermon on the blog for discussion.

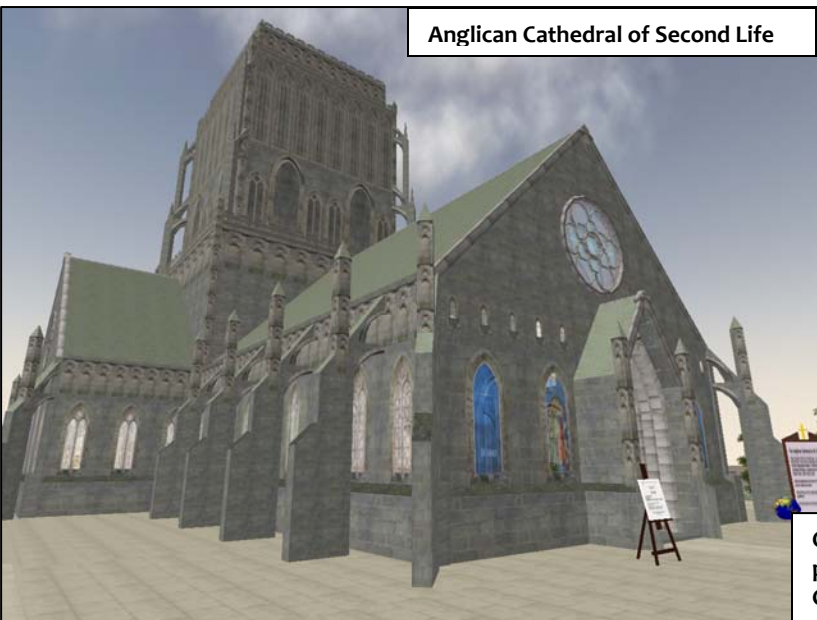
LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

VIRTUAL MINISTRY

Increasingly the internet is becoming a legitimate and effective communication tool. A number of information technology luminaries such as Bill Gates and IBM's CEO, Sam Palmisano, are predicting the next stage of the internet's development will be to a virtual form. Also quite significantly the most recent Harvard Business Review recommends organizations look to develop a virtual presence. In January 2007 I came across Second Life, a virtual world accessed via the internet. I immediately saw an opportunity, and over the past year I have planted an Anglican Church community. It now offers six services a week and a Bible Study and the community is growing, with nearly 400 from around the world by February 2008.

It is my belief that as the internet develops, the church needs to be right in the midst of this development, ready to tailor its offering to this new communication medium.

Anglican Cathedral of Second Life



One of the six services each week. Each character represents a real person. The service includes prayer, worship and a sermon. Communication is via text or voice.

WHAT IS SECOND LIFE?

Second Life⁵ founded by Linden Labs⁶ is a virtual world accessed via the internet. As of January 2008 there are more than 12 million members with 1.3 million of them participating in the past 60 days. Once you have downloaded the software you are able to walk around the virtual, three dimensional world represented by an 'avatar'. Your avatar can be created to look similar to you or if you prefer, a multitude of creative forms can be selected. The three dimensional world is created by the members. It is full of houses, shops parks and entertainment areas. A majority of the activity is social networking although there is a growing economy with virtual land regularly bought and sold and a range of businesses offering services from virtual clothing to products available in the 'real world'. Communication is either via text or voice.

The aim of the virtual church is to

Be church for people wherever they are, whatever their circumstance.

For more information on the Anglican Community check out: <http://slangcath.wordpress.com/>

CONCLUSION

The church needs to present its ancient message in modern ways; to remain relevant we need to step out of our comfort zones and discover new approaches to fulfil the Great Commission.

I invite you to come and check out my blog! I work hard to offer fresh thinking about Christian Ministry.

<http://brownblog.info/>

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February 2008
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⁵ www.secondlife.com

⁶ www.lindenlabs.com