

Reimagining Evangelism

Digital Engagement

In churches across the UK, there is a growing awareness that the mission field is no longer simply geographical, it is digital too. Just as community choirs have become spaces of belonging and spiritual encounter, so online spaces are places where people explore identity, ask spiritual questions and form relationships. Digital evangelism is not simply about broadcasting church, but about meeting people where they are with authenticity.

This article brings together insights from Hannah Mudge (Church of England Digital Team), Elliot Crispin (Methodist Digital Pioneer) and Zoe McDermott (The Way UK) and offers simple starting points to more developed approaches, helping churches of any size to begin or deepen their digital engagement.



Start simple: creating a welcoming digital presence

For many churches, the first step into digital evangelism is not a complex strategy, but offering connection. People who are new to faith often carry quiet questions: What happens at church? What should I wear? Will anyone speak to me? Digital content can gently remove these barriers before someone comes to church.

Simple, effective approaches include **explainer content** – short posts or videos that demystify church life (e.g. ‘What happens in a Sunday service?’ or ‘What is Lent?’), **seasonal storytelling** – focusing on key moments like Advent, Christmas or Easter, when spiritual curiosity is naturally higher; **short video invitations** – clergy or lay leaders personally inviting people to attend in a warm and informal tone; and **positive stories** – sharing testimonies of how local churches are changing lives in their communities.

Video is particularly powerful. It allows tone, warmth and personality to come across in ways text alone cannot, and it no longer requires expensive equipment. A smartphone and simple editing tools (such as Canva™, which is free for charities) are enough to begin. The key at this stage is consistency and clarity. Churches do not need to be on every social media platform. They just need to be purposeful where they are.

Know your audience: a common starting point

A common mistake is trying to replicate church structures online. Elliot Crispin suggests something different, a more personal, relational approach: start with people, not programmes. Rather than translating Sunday worship into digital formats, effective digital evangelism uses language people already understand, engages with culture people already enjoy, and builds

relationships before invitations are offered. This might look like conversations sparked through films, books or popular culture; creative content rooted in personal interests (art, storytelling, parenting, wellbeing); or informal discussion spaces such as WhatsApp™ groups or online communities.

The guiding questions are simple: Where do you already spend time online? What are you naturally passionate about? Who are you trying to reach?

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Authenticity matters more than polish. People engage with real voices, not institutional language or heavy branding. For many, a thoughtful post or honest reflection is more impactful than a highly produced video.

Build connection

At its heart, evangelism, digital or otherwise, is relational. Sharing examples of authentic Christian life gives a spiritually curious person a window into areas such as how a Christian prays, suffers, understands or experiences our shared world. The space to interact in online conversation can be a meaningful step on a journey toward faith. Online engagement often leads to what might be called ‘small steps of openness’ rather than immediate conversion: ‘I’m not religious, but this is beautiful.’ ‘This makes me think differently.’ ‘I wouldn’t usually engage with church, but...’ These responses matter. They reflect shifting perceptions and growing trust. Stories are especially powerful here: personal testimonies, everyday accounts of faith in action, community impact stories. These reveal that Church is not just a service, but a lived experience of belonging, care and transformation.

Churches can support this by encouraging members to share their own stories, highlighting diverse voices and experiences and celebrating what God is already doing locally.

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Experiment with creativity

AAs confidence grows, churches can experiment more intentionally with what they share online. This might include: regular short-form video content (reflections, prayers, testimonies); series-based posts exploring questions about faith; interactive content (polls, Q&A, comment engagement); or hybrid pathways linking online engagement to in-person invitations.

At this stage, it is important to remember you do not need to do everything at once. You can grow gradually. Learning comes through trying, not waiting until it is perfect. Free training, webinars and shared resources (such as those offered by denominational digital teams) can support this.

Rethinking evangelism for digital culture

More established digital practitioners are increasingly recognising that digital evangelism is not just about content. It is about presence and community.

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This includes building **online-first communities** (e.g. messaging groups, interest-based gatherings); **creating ongoing conversational spaces**, not just broadcast channels; engaging in **spiritual dialogue embedded in everyday life topics**; and developing **long-term relational pathways** rather than one-off campaigns.

However, there are challenges: algorithms often favour loud, controversial content over thoughtful engagement; digital spaces are increasingly crowded, commercialised and fast-moving; and reaching people with nuanced or gentle messages requires persistence and creativity.

This means churches must continually adapt – not changing the message but reimagining the methods.

A note on tone: grace in a complex environment

One reality of digital engagement is that not all responses will be positive. Larger platforms especially can attract criticism or hostility. For most local churches, this is less of a daily concern – but it reinforces the importance of maintaining a gracious tone, responding (or choosing not to respond) wisely and focusing on those who are open, rather than those who provoke.

Digital evangelism is not about winning arguments but about bearing witness with kindness and clarity.



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Engaging younger audiences

For those working with younger audiences, the digital space is not an optional extra; it is a primary place of connection. Zoe McDermott, from The Way UK, encourages creating content that opens up conversation rather than closing it down. Short-form videos can explore big spiritual questions in a way that feels relatable and non-threatening. Alongside this, longer-form content such as podcasts creates space for depth. By unpacking Bible passages and engaging a range of voices and perspectives, these platforms allow those who are curious – or already on a journey of faith – to explore more deeply, at their own pace and in their own time.

A key emphasis is encouragement: ordinary Christians can take part in this. The invitation is not to become a content expert, but to be present and willing. Even when it feels uncomfortable, sharing faith online is an act of courage and significance. In a digital environment that can often feel noisy or negative, authentic voices that carry hope, truth and openness are noticed.

Start small, stay faithful

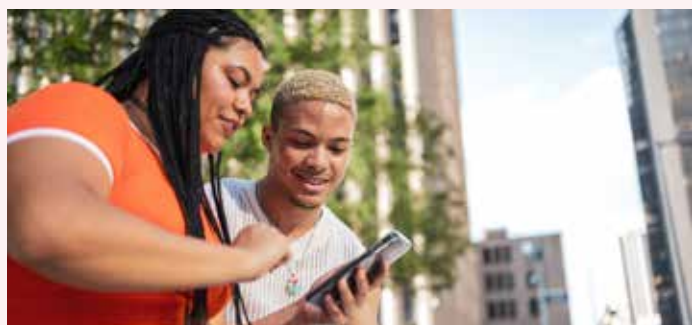
As with all evangelism, fruit is often seen in small, quiet ways. Messages from viewers who feel strengthened, encouraged or newly curious point to the subtle but real impact of consistent, faithful presence. These are glimpses of lives being gently shaped and faith being awakened.

There are, of course, challenges. Digital platforms are unpredictable and the reach of content is not always clear or controllable and responses can vary widely. Yet this uncertainty mirrors the wider call of evangelism: to sow faithfully without always seeing the full picture.

The encouragement then, is simple. Keep showing up. Digital evangelism does not require expertise to begin – only willingness. Start with one platform, one clear audience, one simple kind of content. Then build from there. Digital spaces are places where people ask questions, experience connection and take steps towards faith. Faithful presence in these spaces is all that is required.

Find out more

🎧 Listen to Melanie Cave interview Hannah, Elliot and Zoe on the Roots' podcast. www.rootsforchurches.podbean.com



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