

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY SCRIPTS

GETTING THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Technology? Wouldn't be without it. And that's a minister talking. How else would I know so much about what's going on in the lives of my congregation? (Why would I want to? I hear you quip!) But seriously, on Facebook, on Twitter, on Instagram, they are putting information out there. Why? Because they want people to know things. Think of the impact when the minister takes note!

It's where I get openers for sermons...It has quite an effect when, as everyone settles down to sleep through the sermon, suddenly I say "It's been quite a week for disasters for folk in the church. On Friday John Burns broke a front tooth eating a toffee apple and Jayne Redford tripped and spilt a jug of milk over the dog which the cat was excited to lick straight from the dog's fur - and here is the picture to prove it." And up comes the scene on our two large screens at the front. As for Jayne, she pretends to be embarrassed, but she loves it really. And why not?! It's community in action. Precious localised information that makes the (GESTURES INVERTED COMMAS) "victims" feel special and everyone else entertained. But that's not the end of the story - or even the sermon. God is constantly at work in our disasters and it's hugely important that the congregation understands that. But we can come at it from the everyday events of life. And that's the stuff of Facebook and - my sermons.

And talking of sermons... what a treasure trove the internet is for learning what other folk have experienced and said about the subject of the day. Wouldn't be without it. It can even make you seem intelligent! Technology has changed the meaning of the word 'sermon' for me. No more standing there reading five handwritten sheets of paper! Powerpoint, video, film clips, links to websites are all part of the new modern fabric of contemporary sermons: rooted in technology, real life, as well as Biblical principles.

And then there's YouTube. It's the nearest most of us will get to being on the telly. See, if you ask folk 'out there' what they think of the church, most of them will say 'out of date, not 'with-it', hasn't kept up.'" It's harder to say that about a church that puts its weekly services on YouTube.

Of course that's not the main reason we do it. The real reason is that folk who can't be in the pew at 11 o'clock on Sunday morning can be part of the service when it suits them - and via the technology they so love to use.

Technology in our church community has just expanded bit by bit to where it's now the way we keep in touch with one another 24/7 if we want. Where do you find the service times, the crèche rota, the thought for the day - sent in by email, of course - the Care Team rota, the weekly prayer points, and the suggestions board? You've guessed it: the church website. Sometimes I think my initials should be www! If you don't get the joke, you've a lot of catching up to do!

END (533 WORDS)

OUT OF DARKNESS

Technology! Truth? I hate it! That's what I have decided. Call me old fashioned if you like. No problem. It's not that I'm against it. Technology has its good side. See this switch around my neck? If I fall or take unwell (DEMONSTRATES), bingo! A nurse is here in no time. So you can't criticise it altogether. But, as for the rest of it... (GRIMACES)

Take my TV. The old one blew up a fortnight ago. 'That's simple,' says my nephew. 'I'll get you one online.' Well that was easy enough - as long as I don't have to do it. And, to be fair, it was here the next day. (LOWERS VOICE) Actually, my nephew wasn't too pleased. I really couldn't make head nor tail of what he was on about. There he was getting excited about the TV being Start, or Smart, or something. And me getting a free tablet with it. Well any TV that supplies your tablets is great - except I found out that's not what it means. This tablet isn't something you get from the chemist; it's just another pain in the neck. He tried to show me how it works and, to be frank, what that tablet can do is amazing. He did this thing called 'going online' to ASDA. We sat there. I told him the groceries I needed and he fiddled about with this tablet and a man turned up with my shopping at 5 o'clock. Brilliant! But there's no way I could ever remember how to make it work. I tried. O I tried ok. But there's no way somebody used to a typewriter can just do it by putting their finger-marks on a bit of glass. It's weird! So I just let him keep it. I did get a voucher from ASDA though. "£20 off my next online shop. That's a laugh.

But I need to let off steam about this online business: Online this, online that.

Last week was my sister's birthday down in Manchester so I had this idea of turning up and giving her a surprise. So I needed a train ticket. Usually I ask my nephew but - just my luck - he's away with his work. But I'll have a go at anything so out comes my book with all the phone numbers I've kept for years. I wasn't an executive secretary for nothing! So, I look up train hotline and make the call. Nothing! Just "The number you have dialled is no longer recognised." So I check my phone directory. Same number as in my book. I always kept it up to date. So what do I do? Snookered. Well I was determined. So I took the bus to the station and actually spoke to a real person. Sold me the ticket over the counter. And then he says "Do you not know it's a lot cheaper if you buy online?" Will I *never* escape this online thing! I don't know what I'm going to do. I get these letters from the gas board - well that's what I've always called it. Can I give them my meter reading online? Well the answer is I can't because I don't know what to do. And as for you... (TO CAMERA) If you want to get in touch, I need to give you my landline. I'm not on email and I've no mobile phone! Not easy!

END (570 WORDS)

JOURNEYING INTO SEPARATION

Technology? It'll never catch on! Well I can always hope. (ANIMATEDLY) Technology's like a drug! Maybe OK for outside the church. But on a Sunday, phones switched off at the door: rule number 1!

I was on the train the other day. Everybody had their heads in their smart phones, in their own zones, oblivious to the world around. There was I, apparently the only human being in the carriage. Thank goodness the church helps us to escape such slavery.

Take my congregation. I reckon they appreciate good traditional approaches to church life, including the sermons. Sure I've heard of places where they put Facebook on the screen and, for all I know, vote on the sermon using their smartphones. You know what I think could be next? 'Rate your minister' webpage. How utterly humiliating. Mind you I might do alright on that.

But this technology stuff in church is really just pandering to people. It's trying to be trendy - not that I'm much accused of that.

There is something beautiful, especially to older folks, about the timelessness - some might say changelessness - of church tradition. The format needn't vary; a formula that has stood the test of time. Services that follow the age-old pattern. Everybody knows what to expect! What an island of stability in a technologically tortured world. No blasts of feedback from the overloaded PA speakers, noise - masquerading as music - blaring from the flat-screen TVs or the vulgarity of multiple flashing images pretending to be the church notices. No substitute for the printed church bulletin I would say.

Now don't get me wrong. I'm no technophobe! Maybe you wouldn't expect me to know that word! It's not that I couldn't be techsavvy. More that I wouldn't. I'm not having computers know my every detail, including my inside leg measurement, what I want for Christmas or whether I like my breakfast rolls soft or crispy. I will stay in control, thank you!

But back to Church. It should be a place of calm; an oasis; a place set apart from the mad world of the everyday. We go to have our spirits lifted up, to taste the blessings of another world - not to be drowned in noise, and the uncontrolled babble of mass communication. True, the young folk are drifting away. They say we're too fuddy-duddy. But they would probably go anyway no matter what we did. Changing would not suit the older folk and we daren't lose them. In some places they're all we've got.

And what we've got and what we've always done will see me to retirement and then somebody else can make the decisions. Aye, moving with the times sounds great but it can be dangerous and it's certainly not for me! No point in pretending to be what you're not. Better to be honest.

So you know what you can do with your technology!

END (485 WORDS)

SLEEPWALKING INTO SUBMISSION

So you're interested in new technology and social media? You have come to the right guy! They think I'm obsessed by it... A prisoner, they say. Well, maybe. But, if so, I'm a prisoner of the volunteer kind. Nobody controls me unless I say so.

So, where do I start? Fifteen years ago, I was a very different person. Shy; isolated; Johnny Nae-Pals, you might say. And then I discovered social media. Unbelievable change. I have four hundred mates on Facebook all sharing everything with one another. You've no idea how much people are interested in what you're up to – even what you're eating, what you're thinking, what you're wearing. The hard bit is keeping up with it all. When I'm out, I put it on Facebook. When I'm in, I update my Facebook friends. I use it to express my views – about everything.

But this stuff is not just about words. I love Instagram. You can edit and use filters on your photos; make a visual record of your life and put it on a platform like Facebook or Flickr or Tumblr.

Another of my favourite platforms is Twitter. You can have short conversations all day. A bit harder when you're at work in the office but still possible if you know how to work the system!

And what's going to be next? Much more of the same. Much more!

Have you heard of Wanelo? It's made up of 3 words: Want; Need; Love. Wa...for want; Ne...for need; and Lo...for love. All about shopping - which you can do with the App. You can look at millions of different products and major brands. It's quite like Etsy. Have you heard of Etsy? It's an online marketplace where you can buy and sell things that are handmade. It's called "the king of handmade crafts".

Wanelo is similar except you create wishlists, share it with your friends, find out what they're wishing for. Together, you create your ideal world, full of what you want.

And then there's the new one: Shots. It's all about selfies. I love taking selfies. On Shots you create your selfies and share them with other people and they share them with other people. Brilliant. It's like showing people a film of your life.

I'm also getting interested in Ello. That helps you make new connections. See, the thing about having four hundred Facebook friends is the more you have, the more you want. Ello helps you expand your family. That reminds me. My real family doesn't use this stuff. But that's ok. I'm part of a bigger family and I still try to see my folks at the weekend, though it can be a bit tense with them always complaining about me using my smartphone. Well, you have to. People have expectations about hearing from me and I need to know what they're up to, too.

But if you're interested in Ello, I have to tell you it's against advertising and I don't think that's great. Nothing better to make you feel good than advertisers chasing you for their business. It means I'm worth something. Of course, advertisers are so smart now. My smartphone listens into my conversations, picks up key words, transfers them to advertisers and – BINGO – an email arrives in my inbox. Brilliant. Just wait, I'll likely get an ad in the next twenty minutes for online Bingo. It happens all the time. So you see, I'm connected. Connected to the world. Not bad for a wee boy that was scared to say 'hello'.

These days, I spend more time at home. And that's a good thing. I mean why go out? I've got all my friends at my fingertips; all the shops I could ever want at the touch of my screen.

I shop online, think online and live online. And that's how I'm talking to you. Much more difficult if I can see you looking at me. I'm really quite nervous in public. My public is the online community in my own virtual world.
I'm a product of the digital age.

My advice to you? Get on board. Go digital. Or be left behind.
For a report on this conversation with you, visit my Facebook page where I'll be updating my friends in the next few minutes.

You know what? I'm missing them already!

END (722 WORDS)