



The Church of Scotland

2



UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION

This is the second of three resources designed to help churches, groups or individuals who are thinking about what it might mean to do digital ministry in their context.

The first resource - *Introducing Digital Ministry* - set out why digital ministry matters and what it can look like. This resource focuses on the first steps you need to take to get started.

In this resource you'll find practical advice on developing a digital ministry strategy as well as some case studies demonstrating some examples of good practice from across Scotland. This resource is designed to prompt questions and discussions amongst your team and help you to discern how you want to approach this work.

Once you have your strategy in place, you can head to our third resource *Developing Digital Ministry* for more!



THE THREE “P”s

It is tempting to just jump straight into making content, but the steps in this resource will help you ensure that your content reaches its intended audience! There are some simple building blocks you can use to get started here, which we will refer to as THE THREE P’s: Purpose, People and Plan. Working through the Three Ps will help give you a strong foundation from which to build your digital ministry.

There is one “P” that underpins the other three:

PRAYER

Prayer is a vital part of any ministry and that includes your digital ministry. At every stage in the process, you should prioritise praying over the work you are doing. This is crucial to your planning, creating, and posting. It should be part of the rhythm of your work. As well as assembling a digital ministry team (see the PEOPLE section for more info), you may find it useful to identify a wider group within the church who are willing to pray specifically for your digital ministry work.



PRAYERFUL PURPOSE

The first step in establishing your purpose is to decide whether you want your content to be communication or ministry. Need help with that? Head to the “Why Digital Ministry?” resource for more information.

If you’re looking to create ministry content, you’ll want to think about the purpose of what you are doing. Do you want to reach those not connected with church? Do you want to encourage and disciple your congregation? Be as specific as you can.

Identifying your purpose will make the rest of the decisions you make easier because from your purpose, you can identify your target audience and the best platform to reach out to that audience.

Let’s take a look at an example:

CASE STUDY: THE GOOD NEWS PROJECT

The Good News Project was designed for a specific purpose: to talk about what the good news of Jesus means to us on a personal level. We’re not talking about Church, an abstract concept, or even the whole Gospel. But how the good news impacts our lives in a specific way. The goal was to reach an audience who might not yet know Jesus or attend church. The content was timed to launch at the start of the academic year to reach students and young adults.



Once this specific purpose was identified, a team of volunteers gathered from across the Church. This group covered a wide variety of ages, roles in the church and geographical areas.

Each volunteer was then tasked with filming a short (45 second) video about their 'good news'. These were then posted on the Church of Scotland instagram and Youtube pages. [Click here](#) to see Ruth's 'good news'.

By clearly identifying a purpose for this work at the outset, it was easier to identify appropriate PEOPLE and PLANS, ensuring that it effectively reached the correct groups and spoke into their specific circumstances.

If you are struggling with where to start in terms of identifying a purpose, it might help to focus your work around a series like The Good News Project or specific times of year like Advent or Easter. This will help narrow down your options a little. From there, you will be able to broaden your work and cover other topics but a series might be a good place to start.

PRAYERFUL PEOPLE

The next thing to think about is **WHO** you are trying to reach with this content. Digital Ministry is about more than social media - we'll come back to that on page 10 - but for now, let's focus on social media specifically. The nine most popular platforms in the UK are:



WHATSAPP

Whatsapp is primarily a messaging and calling app, with the ability to easily create group chats and broadcasts. Users can also post status updates and photos that disappear after 24 hours.



FACEBOOK

Facebook users can post statuses, share videos and photos, join groups and 'like' pages related to their interests. Facebook posts can be either public or shared with a smaller group of Facebook 'friends' or followers.



INSTAGRAM

Instagram supports both photo and short form video content. Users can post to their permanent profile or post stories which can be viewed for 24 hours.



TIKTOK

TikTok is a platform for short form video content. Users can edit content using filters, music and visual effects within the app.



X (formerly TWITTER)

X is designed for users to share short text, image and video updates. Users can reply to, 'like' and repost others' updates.



LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is an online networking space for professionals. Users can post updates about their work, share photos and videos and use the site's online job search feature for recruitment.



PINTEREST

Pinterest is a visual platform that allows users to create 'boards' that act as a kind of online scrapbook. It is often used to find recipes, home decor and fashion inspiration.



SNAPCHAT

Snapchat is mostly used by teenagers and young adults. It is a messaging app that allows users to send photos and videos to friends that delete after 24 hours.

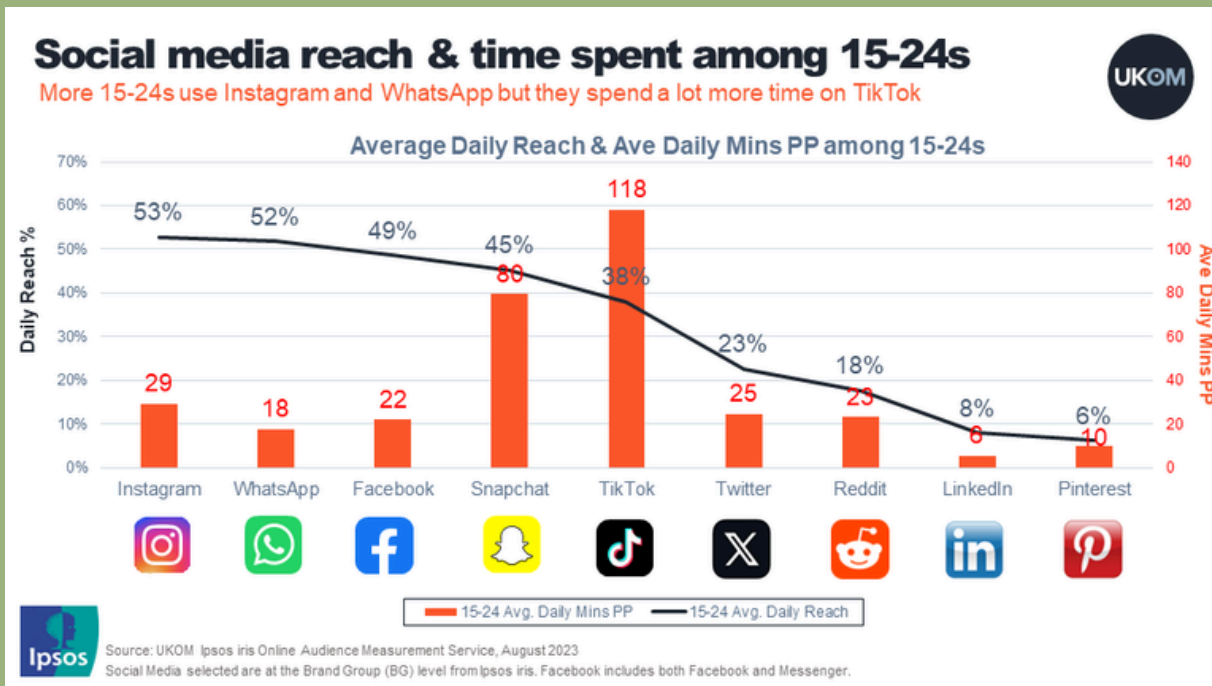


REDDIT

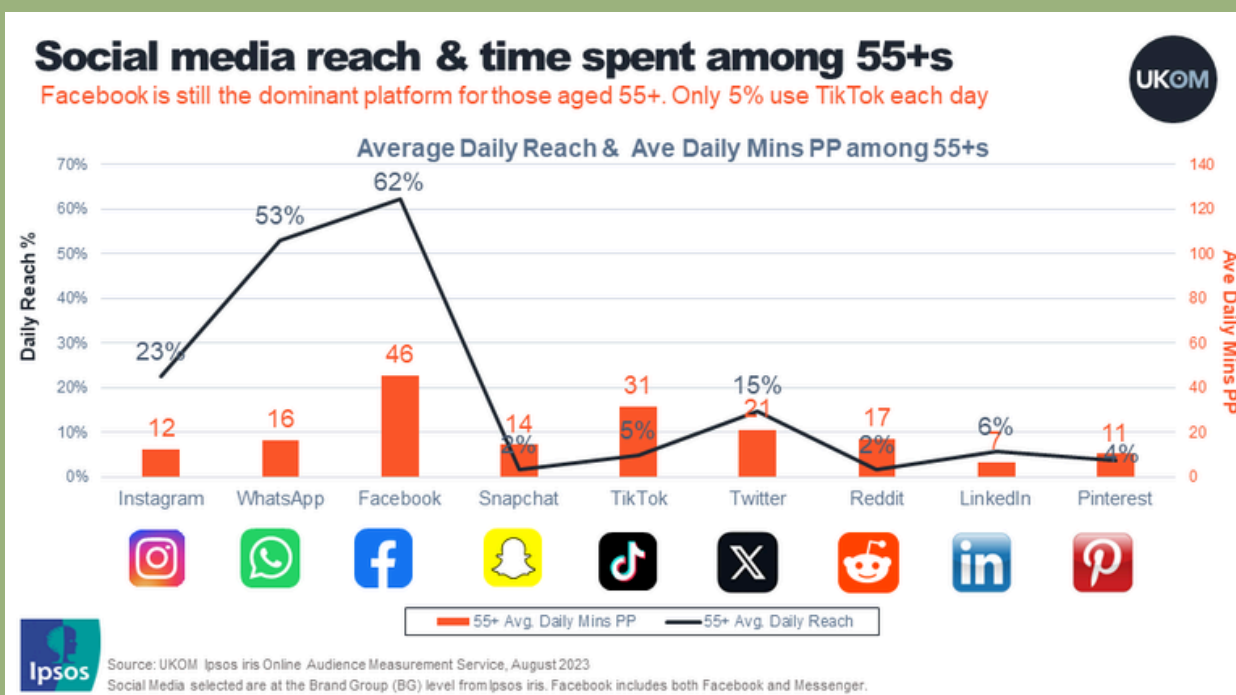
Reddit is a collection of forums. Users join 'subreddits' based on their interests and can post text, images and videos in these subreddits.

Choosing the right platform is important to make sure your content reaches its audience. Social media platforms are designed around algorithms that push content to relevant users. If you post a video to LinkedIn, for example, it will reach a very different audience from those on Instagram.

Different groups use different platforms. In particular, there is significant variation in how age groups use social media.



As this chart shows, Instagram and Whatsapp are the most popular platforms amongst 18-24 year olds, and they spend the most time on TikTok. Instagram is also the most popular platform for those aged 25-34². This varies significantly from those over 55, who mostly use Facebook:



It is good for us to be aware of who will be viewing and engaging in different places. Otherwise, we can be entirely irrelevant. For example, placing an article on how to tend garden plants in a mountain biking magazine. It might be better than nothing but by tailoring what we create, to where it is going, we will have a far greater and effective reach.

The people you are trying to reach will not only impact the platform you choose but may also shape the language and style of content. Our Instamission videos, for example, are aimed at people who might never have attended church. Consequently, we are careful about the language we use and avoid terms that might be unfamiliar to this audience. If we were creating content aimed at, for example, ministers our style and vocabulary would be quite different.

YOUR PEOPLE

As well as identifying the people you want to reach, it is also essential to identify the people that can help you in planning, creating and sharing content. Doing digital ministry alone can be lonely, unsafe and quickly lead to burnout. When a team creates content and has sight of the messages and posts, this offers support, and accountability.

The size of your team may vary depending on the size of your church, but we would suggest that a group of three is a good starting point.

A group of three allows you to have enough people to cover sickness or holidays without anyone being left to work alone and it gives you the help you might need. This team can be supported by a wider group involved in making content, but the team would take responsibility for the strategy and planning.

In terms of choosing who to include in the group, look for the evangelists in your congregation. It may be tempting to focus only on those already experienced with digital technology, but moving beyond this will make space for other gifts to be utilised in your work. Digital ministry teams can also be a great opportunity for intergenerational work in your church. Intergenerational work is excellent in many ways not least because - as the graphs above demonstrate - different age groups access different content. Having a spread of ages involved in your work allows you to cater to a wider audience.

If you are part of a linked charge or union, you should also aim to have individuals from the different congregations of the church(es) involved. You can also group together with churches in your local area. For example, churches who sit within the same school catchment area might work together to create digital content for young people.

PASTORAL CARE

It is important that pastoral care is in place throughout your digital ministry. This takes lots of different forms, and shouldn't fall to one member of your team:

YOUR TEAM

For the most part, Digital Ministry is fun and exciting! Having a team to share in the joy and the 'wins' is so important, but your team will also face challenges. It's important that appropriate support is in place for you. If your minister is not part of your team, it may be useful to place them in an advisory role so they can give support, oversee content and deal with any significant issues that arise.

YOUR CONGREGATION(S)

As we'll discuss in *Developing Digital Ministry*, content works best when it's local and features people from your church community. With that, it's important that you take care of the people involved! Make sure that everyone featured in any type of content (photos, videos, livestreams, audio content etc) is aware that it's happening and understands where and how it will be used.

It should always be clear that people can always opt out. You might find it useful to put up signs like this one on days you are shooting content.

If you are working with under 18s or vulnerable adults, you **MUST** comply with Church of Scotland safeguarding guidelines. [\[LINK TO FIND\]](#) Your first point of contact about this should be your church Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

**Smile!
You're on
camera!**

We're taking photos and videos for our social media today!

We would love to have as many of our church family included as possible, but we know photos aren't everyone's favourite thing!

Don't want to be included? Speak to the Welcome Team or anyone with a camera!



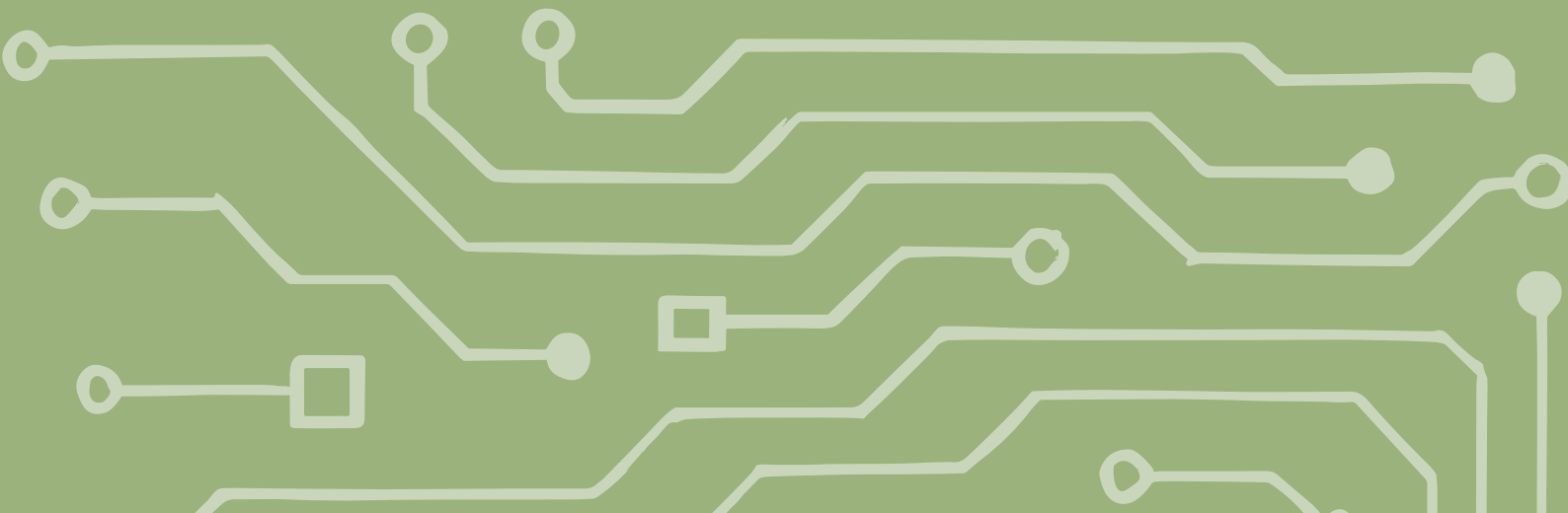
PEOPLE ENGAGING WITH YOUR CONTENT

You will also need to think about how you care for the people viewing and engaging with your content. Sensitive content should be handled carefully and you may wish to label it as such. If you are allowing comments on the content you post on social media, you need to ensure these are monitored and any inappropriate or harmful comments deleted.

PRAYERFUL PLAN

Once you have your team together, you can prayerfully plan your content. Here are some things to think about:

- **What platform are you using?** As we've discussed, choosing the right platform is key to reaching your intended audience.
- **When do you want to post?** Many platforms have the ability to schedule your posts in advance, so you may find it easier to schedule multiple posts at a time.
- **Who is going to post?** If you have a team, have a clear plan of who is posting when.

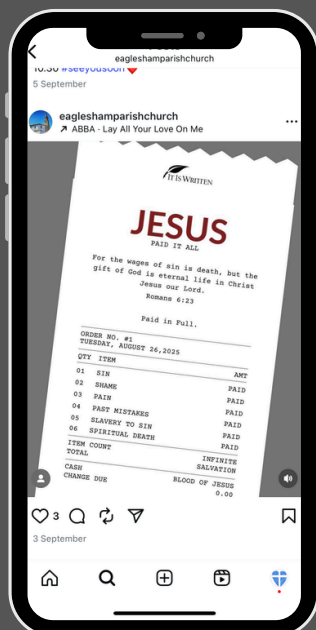


THE THREE P's

CASE STUDY: EAGLESHAM PARISH CHURCH

Eaglesham Parish Church were looking to establish an online presence and used the 3 P's to build clear aims for this work. They decided on the following:

- Their **PURPOSE** was to bring discipleship through digital ministry.
- The **PEOPLE** were young people on the fringes of Church. They created a team of three; one young person and two older people.
- Their **PLAN** was to create an image or reel with a message linked to the Sunday sermon and post on Instagram on Tuesdays or Wednesdays.



From these building blocks, the team established a consistent presence on Instagram. They feature graphics - some they create and some they share from other sources. They have also branched out into creating video content to advertise their Sunday services.

BEYOND SOCIAL MEDIA

As you've hopefully seen in *Introducing Digital Ministry*, there is so much more to this work than just social media. Social media can be a good starting point but look beyond this to what else might be possible. In particular, if you have people in your congregation with talents or interests, think about how you might embrace these in your digital ministry.

One of the areas of digital ministry that has been developing in recent years is gaming. This is being pioneered by members of the church who have an authentic interest in this. Not only do you need people, purpose and plan - a passion for what you are doing is also vital to the success of any area within ministry, including digital work.

CASE STUDY: GAMING (with SU)

SU Scotland have a well established gaming ministry, which includes: in-person gaming at SU holidays; regular community meet ups; Discord; and weekly online gaming nights. Recently, the Church of Scotland have partnered with SU to run two pilot gaming projects.

ReSpawn: Lenzie Union Parish Church



Kim Halliday, youth worker at Lenzie Union Parish Church, has developed a six week programme called ReSpawn. ReSpawn nights bring young people into the church for gaming and food. This is accompanied by a short faith talk that links to the games.

- **Week 1: ReSpawn – New Life in Christ**
- **Game Concept: Respawn after defeat**

- **Week 2: Level Up – Growing in Faith**
- **Game Concept: Gaining XP and levelling up**

- **Week 3: Side Quests – God in the Small Things**
- **Game Concept: Optional side missions**

- **Week 4: Boss Fights – Facing Spiritual Battles**
- **Game Concept: Battling bosses and overcoming challenges**

- **Week 5: Co-Op Mode – We're Better Together**
- **Game Concept: Teamwork in multiplayer**

- **Week 6: Game Over? – Eternal Life & Hope**
- **Game Concept: Endgame, but not the end**

These weekly meetings also form a gaming tournament with prizes and rewards to be won! These sessions are aimed at S1-S6.

Next Level Gaming: Kelvin West Parish Church

Fiona Halliday, youth worker at Kelvin West took a different approach. Her gaming work focused on one big gaming night bringing together secondary school pupils from across Glasgow. The evening - Next Level - featured food and a

talk about Jesus' teaching on kindness but also included competitive gaming on a variety of platforms (Mario Kart World, FC25, and games of Just Dance 2025 etc). They also offered a £20 voucher prize for the top player.



NOTES

1. Statista, “Most popular social media platforms in the United Kingdom (UK) as of the third quarter 2024, by usage reach”, 2025,

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/284506/united-kingdom-social-network-penetration/>

2. OFCOM, “Adults’ Media Use and Attitudes Report, 2024”,
<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/adults/adults-media-use-and-attitudes-2024/adults-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2024.pdf?v=321395>