Liz Lennox: WPA Coordinator of Social Media and Visual Communications

- **Main goal of social media:** tell your story - what the church is about
- **Social media** will be first point of contact for most people; people will seek out as much information about the church as possible before actually engaging
- **Be strategic about running a social media page**
  - Make a content planning calendar - what key events & dates are coming up?
  - Choose a set schedule (ex: post every Tues/Thurs/Sun)
  - Use publishing tools to create content all at once, schedule it to appear at various times
- **Decide who runs/maintains the page**
  - Administrative staff
  - Communications team - allows multiple eyes/voices to monitor, but clear guidelines are needed so all are on the same page
- **Determine what social media outlets to use**
  - Facebook: Most people that our churches will reach will be on Facebook
  - Instagram: helpful for youth programming
  - Choose strategically - don’t try to overreach. One or two social media outlets is best. Too many takes too much effort and time.
  - Twitter: rapid-fire platform. Content may get lost if not constantly updating. May not be best when available time is limited.
- **What content to post?**
  - Tell the church’s story!
  - Balance announcements with photos of events, local news stories, denominational information, blog posts, etc.
  - Use Engagement questions to encourage participation (ex: what’s your favorite Christmas Carol?). Seek responses to interact with people.
  - You don’t have to reinvent the wheel. Share what you see from partner entities (denominational sources, community organizations, etc)
  - Algorithms make photos and graphic content more visible - so add one to every post, even if just making a simple announcement.
  - Canva and Adobe Spark are graphic design tools that can be used
- **Liz is available for consultation about social media presence:** Contact her at liz.lennox@wpaumc.org

**Rev. Raphael Koikoi, Pastor at Warren UMC, Pittsburgh, PA** (small, older congregation)

- **Social media** as a tool for relationship-building
  - Especially helpful for building community with young adults
  - Invite young adults to shape your social media presence - and get to know them/build relationship with them as you work together on that project
- **Incorporate the vision & ministries that the church is already involved in into the church’s social media story.** It isn’t a separate story
- **Come up with a concept & theme** (“Welcome to Warren”)
- **Develop a rhythm:** Your Week with Warren
  - Sunday: Worship - live, 10:55am
  - Monday: Wrestling with Racism
• Tuesday: Meditations
• Wednesday: Stop, Drop & Pray
• Thursday: Get Active!
• Friday: Fun Fridays
• Saturday: Sabbath Reflections (reminders to rest)

- Create graphic for each day/item - so they are ready to use for upcoming posts

See PowerPoint w/examples from Welcome to Warren

- Lessons Learned in developing a social media presence
  - Slow down and be strategic. Plan ahead.
  - Communicate when you pause your social media presence and when you’ll be back - so people know they haven’t missed something. Okay to take a break if you need to regroup.
  - Use asset mapping: be quiet enough to listen and learn about your congregation; who they are and what they need

Rev. J. Patrick Lenox, Kane District Superintendent and Dean of the Cabinet

- Reflections on Coordinating Cabinet Social Media Guidelines (https://www.wpaumc.org/communications)

- Keep Jesus Christ at the center of our story! And the center of our identity, which shapes how we act on social media.

- Pause and make sure you are ready to respond well to social media posts. The interwebs have a very long memory.

- Boundaries: prayer concerns & personal information requires permission to post.

- Be gracious and compassionate in your posts; practice personal integrity

- Not all conversations should be held on Facebook. Some things need to be voice-to-voice conversation.

- Social media is a public witness.

- Use Facebook groups for discipleship - you can get to know people more personally in private groups.

Question & Answer Time with Participants

- How do you connect with people during and after Facebook Live?
  - If you have someone to monitor the session, ask them to acknowledge each person who comments and/or joins.
  - Pastor can acknowledge the virtual audience during the session
  - More conversational style of worship can help promote engagement
  - Challenge: music can be muted if the proper copyright license is not used
  - Prepare people in advance of Facebook Live worship: notify in advance what the message is about; send out a “teaser” question to get people thinking
  - Following the Facebook Live worship, post a question on your page to inspire interaction: “What did you take away from the message?”
  - Make sure you present worship well

- Live-streaming vs. Facebook Live?
  - Facebook Live is least reliable on Sunday morning (volume of people using for worship)
  - Better way is to stream to an outside service: Vimeo or YouTube
  - Can pre-record worship services and premiere them on Facebook Live at a designated time
If possible, have a team assigned to run the tech so problems can be handled

- Make sure you have the internet capacity to stream; don’t use WiFi if possible; wired connection is better.

- How should you prioritize various social media platforms when you have a limited amount of time to invest in their upkeep?
  - Develop a Plan first
    - Take a step back: talk to people and decide what priorities are in a social media presence
    - Church Web Page: make sure the Homepage is current; post links to social media platforms there; updating the social media platform(s) will automatically update the Web Page
    - Post relevant things on Social Media: don’t waste time posting trivial or irrelevant things
    - Use the Facebook Analytics Tool: can show you what content the audience most engages with; helps to determine future posts
    - People no longer browse the internet; they head to specific sites now
      - Random people will not connect through your church website, but will connect through your social media presence
      - Focus on social media for daily and important content

- How can discipleship be done through social media?
  - Look through comments and respond directly to people who commented; engage in faith conversation with people
  - Facebook provides opportunities to build community through the Groups feature
    - Place to have conversations, hold Bible Study, have prayer time
    - Participants will drive content by what they post and respond to
    - You can design a Group to reach target audiences: provide questions to filter participants

- Public Pages or Private Pages? Permission to post personal information?
  - Facebook pages are public: everything you put on them can be seen by everyone
  - Groups can be private
  - Safe Sanctuaries guidelines must be followed on social media
    - Provide waiver/permission forms for parents to sign before photos of children are posted on Facebook
    - Be careful about privacy of all people
  - Don’t post publically information about peoples’ health, problems, personal matters
  - If someone says “no” to posting photos or information, honor that request
  - Maintain boundaries!
  - Caution: Don’t allow people to share prayer concerns publicly when livestreaming
    - Have them send concerns to pastor so they can be screened or generalized to protect privacy

- Does Instagram provide a publishing tool? No.
  - There is an app called Later which can be used to schedule posts on Instagram

- How has the Warren UMC team worked together to have a social media presence?
- Sync calendars to schedule planning sessions
- Intentional about stating what content is needed on social media: don’t be vague or broad, but specific and targeted
- Be open and vulnerable: know what you know and what you don’t know!
- Schedule when various content is needed: everyone knows their assigned task

- What is the best way to promote events? To gain followers?
  - When posting an event on Facebook, make the page shareable and invite others to share your post. This increases your reach
  - There is an Event feature on Facebook. It shows all of the events in your area, so more people can see what is happening
    - There is also a pay feature to promote Events on Facebook: not recommended
  - When someone “likes” your post but does not currently follow the page, on the right hand side of the screen, you will find an “invite” button; you can extend an invitation for the person to follow the page, therefore engaging them more
  - Be sure to include the church’s social media information in all church publications: worship bulletin, newsletter, etc.

- Olmsted Manor is holding a Ministry Technology Training Retreat, September 13-15, 2020
  - Presenters include Bill Jacka, Liz Lennox, Alan Morrison and Sean Lewis
  - Topics will include utilizing virtual spaces for all of church life, software, equipment, social media, legality, and best practices.
  - For more information and to register go to: https://www.olmstedmanor.org/ministry-technology-training.html

- Information and Ideas shared by Participants in the Chat Thread
  - CCLI License that includes streaming permission includes live music (if covered under the license)
  - When using Facebook Live, reset equipment from energy sleep mode to none so that the equipment will continue to operate and not shut down
    - Be cautious about streaming from a phone for an extended period: can burn out the phone
  - For more traditional churches, pdhymns.com will provide a list of hymns in the public domain
  - A local church started a Facebook Live prayer time in mid-March on the church Group page; laity led; has met every evening at 7 PM (except Maundy Thursday and Good Friday)
  - Posting a foster child’s name/photo online can be a violation of a court order and could lead to serious problems

Other Suggested Resources

UMC Resources:

https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/social-media-and-spirituality-the-new-reality-for-churches

https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/seven-deadly-sins-of-church-social-media

https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-how-can-we-livestream-worship- legally


Low-Speed Access info:

Other resources:

Examples from specific platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc)
https://www.qgiv.com/blog/five-steps-to-build-a-successful-social-media-strategy-for-your-church/