

Communicating Faith in a Web 2.0 World **Presented by Adam B. Walker Cleaveland (pomomusings.com)**

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What are the ups and downs of communicating faith in a Web 2.0 world? Where do ethics fit in, and how might this affect our communications and the future of the church? We will learn some of these answers from Adam who blogs regularly at [Pomomusings](http://Pomomusings.com).

Introduction:

- Brief bio (College, youth pastor – blogger, seminarian, web/graphic designer, presbytergent, Apple Store employee, Minister for Youth & Young Adults)
- These are the waters I swim in – I’m a blogger, Facebooker, Twitterer, designer – online for a good portion of every day doing design work, responding to emails and connecting online with folks
- The thoughts I’ll share are both mine and the thoughts of some of my own blog readers who had things they thought would be important to mention in a conversation like this

Opening Video: A Vision of Students (4:44)

- What values seem to be important to these students?
 - To be known – by name
 - Relevance – they want things to actually matter to their lives
 - Connection – connection - connection
- What do we know about this generation based on how they spend their time?
 - They want to be connected with one another (amount of time spent on Facebook, cell phones, email, blogs, etc.)
 - Creative – making content (time spent online, listening to music, etc.)
- Where does the church fit into all of this? As the church looks forward – and as the church realizes these are the current and future leaders of the church – how can/should/must the church respond?

This is our world

- This isn’t just something that youth and young people are involved with – while this is the world they are growing up in and are most proficient with – this is more a worldview than a generational thing.
- Don’t think the church needs to form itself according to culture – but culture will raise questions that the church needs to be addressing. Just as with any new technological change in society (think what the printing press did for religion...) – the church should be ready to address the possible ways in which it will be affected and be prepared to respond to
- Obviously, this new world we live in brings its challenges:
 - **Not to exclude:** A desire to use web technology well – but not to exclude those who simply don’t use those technologies. Brings into question the idea of whether this use of technology can tend to be a little bit classist?

Connecting in Multi-Spheres / Flesh-and-Blood Connections

- People are connecting with one another & experiencing community in all-new ways in today's world – communities online.
- But, faith in a Web 2.0 world does not mean we lose the actual, real, face-to-face interactions.
- We don't JUST connect online – we must harness that space to connect, but we must also continue to connect over the phone, through printed mailings and...in person! Again – a desire to make sure we don't get rid of flesh-and-blood connections.
- These are simply *tools* that can be used to both enhance already existing relational networks and to find additional ways to connect (e.g. Twitter)

Ethics

- One comment re: ethics in a virtual world. Even though we're interacting through computers, screens, phones, etc – there are still real people, humans created in the image of God, operating the devices.
 - Firing off emails (Carrie Newcomer's song, "Don't push send"), writing blog comments, Facebook statuses.

What is Web 1.0?

- Sure we're all familiar with this – but just a quick overview of Web 2.0
- My first website: 1996 – it was only a place for me to put up info about myself, some links, and a few photos.
(<http://web.archive.org/web/19970504010636/www.localaccess.com/adamc/main.htm>)
- That's Web 1.0 – it's about putting information on the web – just getting it out there – but there is nothing to DO with it once it's there

What is Web 2.0?

- **Wikipedia's definition:**
 - **Web 2.0** is a term which describes the trend in the use of **World Wide Web** technology and **web design** that aims to enhance **creativity**, information sharing, and, most notably, collaboration among users.
- Web 2.0 goes beyond that – it almost requires something from the user – information is not to be simply downloaded, but it's to be taken in, interacted with, downloaded, edited, changed, re-uploaded, shared and used by others

Video to Explain Web 2.0: The Machine is Us/ing Us (4:33)

Small groups: What does this mean for the church?

- The end of the film: “We’ll need to rethink a few things...”
- Questions for discussion:
 - What are some of the things we need to rethink in the church?
 - What can we do to communicate in a Web 2.0 world beyond just having a webpage?
 - What implications does Web 2.0 have for the church’s worship and theology?
- How true is that? What is it in the church we’ll need to rethink?
 - This means that we must pay attention to what we are communicating – not just through the emails or newsletters we send out – but through the content that we have on our websites or Facebook group (do you HAVE a web presence?)
 - People pick churches based on websites – doesn’t mean you have to pay thousands of dollars for a site
 - It does mean it needs to be clean (yes you have to take off your animated gifs of the angel or cloud or scrolling text), the information needs to be easy to find, you have to have directions, a Google map
 - It needs to communicate who you are – photos (no iStockPhoto images, real photos from real people in the church)
 - Communicating with church members (monthly, paper, church newsletters – best resource of time/energy/money? Phone prayer chains? Communicating with the community what the church is about)
 - How we’re communicating faith through preaching, worship – are we doing it in a Web 1.0 way – which is simply about getting information across - or are we allowing our congregants to experience a Web 2.0 faith – one that is interactive, active, open to dialogue, etc.
 - How we choose to think about our relationship with God. Faith and our spiritual lives need to fit into a Web 2.0 model – it’s helpful to think about our role with God of being participants in the creation. It is interactive – it’s a two-way road. Must be dynamic/pliable/organic. This type of openness toward technology is moving towards a theology of participation – a theology of interactivity with God – of becoming partners with God in bringing about the kingdom of God.