

WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



Let's not press 'delete' on chances to grow our churches

I'm the last generation to go to school without computers.

Well, that's not strictly true ... in my last couple of years at secondary school (Boclair Academy in Bearsden, near Glasgow) there WAS a computer. Just one.

It was in the maths classroom and it was a strange otherworldly device that was off-limits to most of us.

Only the super-geeky and best maths students were allowed to approach the hallowed portals of the 'computer room'; an alcove on one side of the main classroom.

As equations were always an alien language to me, I never once got the chance to press its keys, let alone type any early computer code into it.

It felt like computers were not for me. Devices that would remain distant forever. How wrong was I?

By the early 90s (after several years of using paper, pencil and typewriters as a journalist on a newspaper group based in Glasgow) I was working on my first 'Apple Macintosh' computer; designing magazines and newspapers in the PR Department of Strathclyde Regional Council.

Since then every job I've had has involved computers and now many of us have multiple devices – from PCs to tablets – in our homes. Computers are mainstream and familiar. The majority of us are comfortable in their presence.

When I was growing up people in the UK were more comfortable with going to church than they are now; and more comfortable with hearing and interpreting quotes from the Bible for themselves. Now, in an increasingly secular society if you don't know Jesus you may never visit a church; not even for funerals, as increasing numbers are opting to not have a service and go straight to the crematorium instead.

That's why so many churches nowadays are putting great efforts into 'getting the welcome right' for visitors. Some just do this organically, while others may need a reboot to get things moving!

This is because many approach the door of a church these days with the same sense of trepidation and uncertainty that I approached that computer alcove many years ago. In the same way as I was made to feel computers were not for me, people often feel like God is 'not for them'. But He is.

So, unlike my teachers at school who made me feel the computer 'wasn't for me', we need to ensure people who are unfamiliar with what happens in church feel comfortable. Take some time to chat with them and explain things.

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

If we get the welcome right first time, every time, we can increase the chance people will return, continue to ask questions and perhaps even make a commitment.

So, as we continue to profess our faith in this modern world, let's ensure we don't press 'delete' on any opportunities to introduce people to Jesus!

Ronnie Semley
Communications Manager