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Digital Communication in the Service of the Spiritual Life Development and Pastoral Activity of Local Communities of the Church of England[1]

ABSTRAKT

Komunikacja cyfrowa w służbie rozwoju życia duchowego i duszpasterskiej aktywności wiernych Kościoła Anglii

Artykuł stanowi prezentację sposobów wykorzystywania mediów cyfrowych w duszpasterskiej działalności Church of England. Z racji na przeżywany – od kilkunastu już lat – przez tę chrześcijańską wspólnotę kryzys wiary podjęty został trud jej odnowy i reformy. Odpowiedzialni za przeprowadzenie tej reformy realizują ją, w znacznym stopniu, przez cyfrowe środki komunikacji. Autor niniejszej publikacji poszukuje odpowiedzi na istotne dla tego dzieła ewangelizacji pytania, w jakim stopniu należący do Kościoła Anglii korzystają z mediów społecznościowych, czy odpowiedzialni za tę wspólnotę edukują swoich wiernych w obszarze korzystania z nowych sposobów komunikowania, w jakim stopniu posiadanie tych umiejętności pomaga ludziom w rozwijaniu życia duchowego, dlaczego Church of England wyróżniony został złotą nagrodą za najlepsze wykorzystanie technologii cyfrowej. Opisana w tekście działalność i wydarzenia pozwalają dostrzec wszelkie istotne zmiany, jakie dokonały się w społeczności anglikańskiej poprzez wykorzystanie środków mediów społecznościowych. Głównym źródłem tego artykułu są materiały opisujące aktualne poczynania członków Kościoła Anglii. Autorami tego przekazu, głównie internetowego, są zarówno należący do tej wspólnoty wierni, jak i inni piszący o tej społeczności.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: media cyfrowe, Kościół Anglii, życie duchowe, duszpasterstwo.

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[1] The basis for this article is the interview which the Author conducted with Assistant Ministerof Church of England Rev. Ray Porter; the text is in Polish and has no references to sources (footnotes). See: *Media cyfrowe w procesie odnowy życia i działania Church of England. Wywiad z Rev. Ray Porter, MPhil – Director of World Mission Studies, Oak Hill College - London*, „Kultura i Historia", 2018, no. 33, p. 298-306.

For the Introduction: the Topic Raised, the Goals Set, the Method Adopted and Selected Sources

The influence of the new means of digital communication can be seen ever more clearly and frequently. The media possess exceptional power over people and have the ability to bring joy, but also a sense of unease. The media not only make it possible to have constant access to what is true and beautiful in our everyday lives, but also provide a source of temptation to partake in propagated lies, evil and ugliness. Christian Church communities are issuing guidance as for how to avail oneself properly of the new forms of communication more and more frequently. The Internet can and should be a means of helping the faithful on their path to union with God, by passing on the commandment to love our neighbour and assisting them in discovering their true selves and the true aim of their lives.

During the last two decades, many signs of a deepening crisis have been observed in the Church of England. It is enough to quote statistical data, published at the beginning of 2016 in „Mirror" and „Sunday Express", regarding the number of the Church of England faithful who take an active part in parish life. It is stated that the crisis has been indeed serious; for the first time, the number the attendees of the Church services on Sundays has fallen below one million. This fall in congregations in the last decade has reached 11 to 12 per cent, which represents an annual fall of 1 percent. A random head count of congregations on a Sunday one October confirms the above statistics. In 2005, there were 810,000 participants at services; in 2015, there were only 752,000. Currently, only about 2 per cent of British Anglicans attend church services on a regular basis. A significant fact relating to this snapshot of the Anglican active participation is that 25 percent of the British population have declared themselves to be non-believers[2]. „The Church of England is facing a catastrophic fall in the proportion of young adults who describe themselves as Anglican as data shows an acceleration towards a secular society. For the first time, more than half the population say they have no religion, and the generation gap on religious affiliation is widening, according to the British Social Attitudes survey. Only 3% of adults under 24 describe themselves as Anglican – fewer than the 5% who identify as Catholic. Almost three out of four 18- to 24-year-olds say they have no religion, a rise of nine percentage points since 2015"[3].

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[2] See: V. Murphy, *Church of England's Crisis of Faith as Attendance Falls below 1 Million for the First Time* (12.01.2016), https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/church-englands-crisis-faith-attendance-7167363, (15.08.2018); P. Owen, *Thinking Anglicans. Latest Church of England statistics* (9.11.2017), https://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/category/statistics, (15.08.2018).

[3] H. Sherwood, *More than half UK population has no religion, finds survey (4.09.2017)*, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/04/half-uk-population-has-no-religion-british-social-attitudes-survey (15.08.2018).

In response to the existing situation the hierarchy of the Anglican Church claim that the Christian community is now entering the road of renewal and reform, which is to result in the reversal of declining figures in church attendance. The action undertaken is meant to lead to an increase in the actual number of Anglicans, in every region and age group[4].

In this article, a presentation of the Church of England's use of media – as a tool of revival and action – is carried out in accordance with the principles of the synthetic method of presentation. The text will have a character of review and its sources will come from the digital opinions collected on the subject. Selected themes and events are not only described but also analysed to discern any changes achieved in the Anglican community by resorting to the use of means of social media. The main sources for this article are the Internet materials – placed by members of the Church of England themselves and by others – about the actions carried out by the Anglican community. The main sources for this article are the widely available online publications. There are supplied by the members of the Church of England themselves and by others writing about the Anglican community.

The aim of this study is to find answers to the following questions: How was the idea of using digital media by the Church of England born? Have the faithful of this community been educated on how to use the Internet message for their own and other people's religious formations? To what extent not only members of the Church of England but also those seeking to join this community benefit from information posted on Anglican websites? Does the content posted there also serve the development of the spiritual life of man? Can the digital media help achieve the goals of the Church of England? Has the use of digital media by Anglican communities in England been noticed by the local society?

Education of the Faithful of the Church of England through the Media

Social media are becoming more and more important not only in the life of the clergy but also that of the Anglican laity. The Church has come to the realisation that, through its presence on the Internet, it is able to become present in people's lives. If the parish communities exist on the Internet, then every Internet user – if he or she so wishes – can establish contact with these communities. Digital means of communication are now seen as a means of social interaction, and

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[4] *2015 Attendance Statistics published (27.10.2016),* https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/2015-attendance-statistics-published (15.08.2018): „William Nye, Secretary General of the Archbishops' Council, said: «The Church of England is setting out on a journey of Renewal & Reform, aiming to reverse our numerical decline in attendance so that we become a growing church in every region and for every generation»".

consequently as a means of interactive influence. The consequence of not exploiting this opportunity would be, to a greater or lesser degree, missing an invaluable chance to bring people together. It is an indisputable fact that everyone who feels a need to establish contact with the Church looks for God. In guidelines issued by the Anglican Church with regard to the use of social media, the following is of particular significance: „With 255 million people using Twitter, and over a billion people using Facebook, if your church is serious about reaching out to people you can't ignore social media"[5].

It is sufficient to look at:www.achurchnearyou.com to find examples of putting these directives into practice. Once you have entered the name of a location or a postcode, this search engine allows you to find the name and address of the nearest Anglican parish. This Internet database is regularly updated and improved by the Church administration, and includes over 16 thousand addresses of places of worship, granting everyone an access to accurate information about Church communities, their location and activities. The fact that this website has more than 13 million hits annually is proof that this has been an exceptionally successful and effective initiative. The highest number of hits occurs in December, just before Christmas when many people seek information about their local parish[6].

However, contrary to general belief, it is not always easy to use the latest forms of social communication. Facebook and Twitter are places where negative and aggressive reactions can be found. For this reason, the Church, as in the Diocese of York's publication entitled „Social Media Guidelines", reminds its faithful that they must take responsibility for the content of their writing. Hearsay and gossip should never be included, confidentiality should be respected, no texts or photographs exposing the author to an unfavourable response or attack on his beliefs and on Anglican communities should be published. It is not allowed to propagate articles contrary to the commandment to love one's neighbour, especially, if they propagate sexuality, racism or homophobia[7].

In the presented issue, one must not ignore the fact that Anglican communities are striving for a healthy and positive relationship with mass media, increasingly emphasising their relevance and importance in the individual's everyday life and

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[5] *Social Media for Churches, with DrBex Lewis*, http://dioceseofyork.org.uk/news-events/events/social-media-for-churches-with-dr-bex-lewis, (15.08.2018).

[6] See: *What is A Church Near You?*,https://www.achurchnearyou.com/ (15.08.2018): „A Church Near You is the Church of England's tool for people to find the nearest church to them with the features that they require. Looking for a church with a foodbank? We can help. After your local Alpha course? Look no further. Want a church with beautiful stain glass windows for your wedding? A Church Near You is your go to site"; *The new A Church Near You* (30.08.2017), https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/comment-and-features/new-church-near-you, (15.08.2018).

[7] See: *Diocese of York. Social Media Guidelines*, http://dioceseofyork.org.uk/uploads/attachment/2688/social-media-guidelines.pdf (15.08.2018); *Diocese of Oxford.Social Media Guidelines*, https://www.oxford.anglican.org/support-services/communications/social-media-guidelines/ (15.08.2018).

in the life of Christians (of Anglican communities). As an example of such an approach, one can cite the call made to the faithful to pray for the media on 12 May 2013 or 1 June 2014. This was instigated by the heads of the Anglican and Methodist Churches. Realising the importance of the role of the media, the bishops and chaplains whose role it is to oversee the activities of the media have pinpointed some of the unethical behaviour practised by some journalists, and have stressed that working in the media is an honourable profession and should be considered a vocation. In the light of the above, they have appealed to the faithful for prayers for those working in the media, as an expression of support for the service they provide. In their prayers, they also mentioned those involved in social communication working from individual parishes. All those involved in the media should behave with honesty and integrity which would serve as a visible sign of the Church's significant role in society. John Sentamu, the Anglican bishop for the Diocese of York, prayed as follows: „Lord Jesus Christ, you speak and bring all that is seen and unseen into being: we give you thanks for the gift of the media to reach the far-flung places of the earth with messages of hope and life. We give you thanks for those who risk their security and even their lives to expose injustice and to bring news of hope. May they strive to be the bearers of good news that all people may come to know the abundant life for which we have been created; and yet more wonderfully redeemed in Jesus Christ. We offer our prayer in your name, in the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of the Father. Amen"[8].

The Church of England's Internet website contains a lot of information regarding communication via the media. Much of it consists of helpful hints and advice both for those who disseminate the news as well as its recipients. The Church has appointed „Diocesan Communication Managers" who can always be consulted for assistance and advice on how best Anglican parishes can avail themselves of social media in an active manner for the good of the society. From the wide range of documents published to advise on how to create such message, two are worthy of particular note: firstly, „Policy for use of photographs and video recordings of children, Young people and vulnerable adults"; and, secondly, „The Anatomy of a Press Release: what it is and what to do with it". Occasionally, training courses are provided to enable the faithful to become ever bolder in their use of social media (during these, interesting communications are created and publicised). One example of such courses is „Social Media: Training from the Church of England's Digital Communications Team"[9].

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[8] P. Crumpler, *Christians and churches urged to pray for the media* (25.04.2013), http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2013/04/christians-and-churches-urged-to-pray-for-the-media.aspx (15.08.2018); see: A. Graystone, *Pray for the Media Day 1st June 2014*, https://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/401709/Home/News/Latest_news/Pray_for_the.aspx (15.08.2018).

[9] *Social Media: Training from the Church of England's Digital Communications Team,* http://dioceseofyork.org.uk/supporting-people/training/events/social-media-training-from-the-church-of-englands-digital-communications-team/ (15.08.2018).

The above-mentioned initiatives show that traditional forms of communication adopted by the Anglican communication, such as courses running and paper documentation publishing, are not ignored, but co-exist with the new media opportunities. All this shows, as in the example of the Diocese of York, that the Church is actively engaged in pursuing its goal of getting its message across.

It is worth adding that, in the last few years, the Church of England has been actively involved in assisting over 200 of its parishes to set up and run their own parish Internet sites. This help is not merely limited to how to convey communications, but it also includes useful information about how to use Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These types of courses are very popular and are a practical response to the needs of local parishes as well as propagating the aims of the Church to reform and renew the Church, as formulated by its hierarchy. The content of such courses corresponds to the actual needs of parishes and gives priority to the themes such as digital evangelisation, in-depth knowledge of how the internet works and how to use it. All these activities are the promotion of the common good.

Individual Internet sites of the dioceses of the Church of England also contain practical advice and examples on how to create and edit texts and press releases. In the editorial advice section, both elementary pointers and more advanced editorial considerations can be found. The first category includes the need to cover the most important elements of the information: „who”, „what”, „where”, „when” and „how”. The most important elements of the information must be included in opening paragraphs, with less important details in later paragraphs, and, if there are space restrictions, these details are removed moving from the end, upwards. Also, it is always necessary to provide contact details. The second category makes reference to such recommendations as clarity being more important than creativity; that the writing should be factual rather than subjective; that it should capture the reader's attention and be interesting and include a relevant quotation or image[10].

The Church of England Embarks on the Media Use to Stimulate Faith and to Bring Hope

Possessing ever greater skills in the use of mass media, including its „newest" manifestations, can lead to faith in God. There are two main aims in equipping the faithful with the skills to use the media effectively. The first of these is to encourage greater involvement among parishioners in their local Church life, and the second is to lead others onto the road which leads to God. In truth, the aim

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[10] See: *Social Media Guidelines*, https://www.gloucester.anglican.org/parish-resources/communications/social-media-guidelines/ (15.08.2018).

is one and the same, namely, to lead everyone to union with God.

According to statistical information published at the end of 2017, over one million people receive some form of Christian message via social media every month[11]. This happened within a year of the Church of England starting its three-year programme of using social media in its pastoral ministry. Two of its initiatives are particularly worthy of mention, both of which were conceived as tools of evangelisation: firstly, „#Joy To The World", at Christmas, and „#Live Lent" at Easter. The introduction of such short films, prayers and reflections has brought renewal into the Church of England, thus spreading the Gospel to each new generation and working towards increasing the number of the faithful everywhere. Approximately 1,5 million people responded to the Christian message at Christmas and around 2,5 million to the one at Easter, and, within the last twelve months, the number of people accessing Facebook and Instagram, seeking a Christian message trebled[12].

The implementation of this programme of activity in the cyberspace by the Anglican Church is both an expression and realisation of its renewal, and it is known as the „Church of England Renewal and Reform Programme". Its aim is to portray the Church of England as a growing and relevant organisation open to everyone, everywhere[13]. It is hoped that the fruit of teaching the faithful to be proficient in using social media will be the bringing of hope. The hierarchy of the Church of England explains that they want the 21st century to stand out as a century of hope in our world, a hope which is meaningful to the followers of Christ. The Church of England wishes to communicate and offer hope to contemporary man. This aim, as expressed in the documents issued by the leaders of the Church and those responsible for social communication, consists of taking heed of Christ's command to pray for the labourers, and asking the Lord for a plentiful harvest, and to send new labourers to gather the crops, as the harvest is rich, but the labourers are few (cf. Luke 10, 2)[14].

The renewal and reform programme undertaken by the Church of England at the General Synod in 2010 seeks to reach three goals: firstly, as the Established

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[11] See: *Church of England reaches more than a million on social media every month* (18.10.2017), https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/church-england-reaches-more-million-social-media-every-month (15.08.2018).

[12] See: *Bring #JoyToTheWorld With www.AChristmasNearYou.org*(2.11.2016), https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/bring-joytotheworld-wwwachristmasnearyouorg(15.08.2018);*Church of England reaches more than a million* …, op. cit.

[13] *Christmas 2018 plans*, https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/comment-and-features/how-churchs-digital-work-supporting-local-churches (18.09.2018): "#FollowTheStar is the theme of the Church's 2018 Christmas campaign. Our aim is to produce a range of resources that equip regular churchgoers to invite family and friends into church. We are also creating *A Journey Through the 12 Days of Christmas* reflections that will be made available in booklet, social media, and audio formats for those open to and exploring faith".

[14] See: *General Synod. A vision and narrative for Renewal and Reform* (06.2016), no. 2-3, https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/201711/gs_2038_-_a_vision_for_renewal_and_reform.pdf, (15.08.2018).

Church, to contribute to the common good; secondly, to enable the growth of the faithful both in numbers and in their spiritual development; thirdly, to rediscover the Church's role of service[15]. It is evident that social media can play a significant role in achieving these goals. Moreover, since the aforementioned goals are considered to be matters of some urgency, this heightens to need to employ the media to attain them. This urgency stems from the fact that when a Christian looks at contemporary families, places of works, towns and at the nation as a whole, he or she can see that many people do not know of Jesus Christ or of His love for mankind. This applies to older people as well as to youth, to rich and poor. It is, therefore, important and urgent that they come to know God their Father, precisely, because He knows and loves them.

Why is it so important for the Church of England to be visible in the social media in its mission of renewal? The answer lies in the fact that, among those who were invited to embark on training courses on the use of social media, some questioned their advisability. The people who create parish internet sites are often volunteers and, although they have internet accounts, they nevertheless wish to know why they should set up parish websites with information about parish life and how this information should be presented[16].

Readers of texts on the internet about the life of the Church are more likely to gain its clear picture this way. They do not have to rely on the news of those who do not belong to the organisation but can read accounts written by the faithful who are active participants in the Church community. These are not negative commentaries aimed at disclosing the failures within an organisation, but accounts of human activity at ground level. From these accounts, readers can learn about others who have had personal encounters with Christ and can share their real everyday problems. Thus, social media become the means to establish contact on an individual, personal basis. The faithful who participate in the life of the parish should take advantage of their presence in social media in order to enter into a dialogue with others and give testimony of what it means to lead a life of faith and of the salvific mission of the Church. Such interaction is both exciting and inspiring and should be more widely discussed.

The Directors of Communications for the Archbishops' Council who are responsible for disseminating information about the good works of the Church, of which there are many, speak of helping the poor, educating children and providing other forms of practical assistance. Given that the Church is present in so many different areas of everyday life, this has to be made known to a wider audience. In this manner, local communities expand and reach an audience

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[15] See: *More about Renewal & Reform*, https://www.churchofengland.org/about/renewal-and-reform/more-about-renewal-reform (15.08.2018).

[16] See: *Section G. Communications.G2. Social media guidelines*, https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=pl&sl=en&u=https://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/diocesan-compendium/communications/social-media-policy&prev=search (24.08.2018).

beyond their immediate area. Publishing information about the positive activities of a given local community underscores its reality[17].

In the Anglican programme of reform, the Church states that evangelisation is its main aim and this should be understood as building and deepening the relationship between God and mankind. If the Church is to pursue growth, which can be evidenced by the lives of the faithful, then it is necessary to reach out to people with the most important and beautiful Good News of what God has done for us through His only begotten Son. Social media present us with a unique opportunity, which should be made use of, to reach out to the world with the gift of the Gospel. The mass media and the growth of the Anglican communities are not at odds; just the opposite, the development of the parish often depends on its proper use of the media. The Church of England often underlines the fact that the coming of social media has transformed the one-way direction of communication (such as the press, radio and television) into a two-way dialogue (through Facebook, websites, hashtags and Instagram). Both Anglican clergy and the faithful should make use of these new forms of communication to strengthen communities and develop strategies of growth. One of the current calls to a Christian, which can be read on the Anglican internet sites, is the call to become a „digital evangelist"[18]. Digital communication makes this possible, as it allows the Church to spread the good news of salvation on the internet. In this manner, the Church wishes to establish the basis for apologetics by teaching about faith and explaining how we can apply the teachings of Christ in our everyday lives[19].

The Evangelization Effort - Awarded and Continued

The efforts made by the Church of England to impart the truths of faith out of concern for mankind's salvation has not gone unnoticed. The Church was even awarded the gold prize at the „Digital Impact Awards 2017" for its use of digital technology. Although achievements in the sphere of spiritual development, of making progress on the road to salvation and getting ever nearer to God cannot be judged or graded in human terms, recognition of the work carried out by the Church of England remains important[20].

The Anglican Communion's use of the digital means of communication has been deemed a success. The Church is seen as particularly active among the

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[17] See: *Digital Media Training for Churches (MDT)*, https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/event/digital-media-training-churches-mdt, (24.08.2018).
[18] *Church of England gathers digital creatives to develop new apps and social media campaigns*, http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2018/01/church-of-england-gathers-digital-creatives-to-develop-new-apps-and-social-media-campaigns.aspx, (24.08.2018).
[19] See: K. Kucharczyk, P. Łajca, *Zjawisko globalizacji w świecie współczesnym*, „Polonia Journal" 2017, no. 5-6, p. 123.
[20] *Past winners – Digital Impact Awards*, http://www.digitalimpactawards.com/past-winners/2017, (24.08.2018).

charitable and non-profitable organisations (in other words, these organisations which act for the common good and not to obtain profit). This explains the joy of the Church hierarchy when looking at the statistics which confirm that they have been proved right in their decision to communicate via the internet. Every month millions of people access information online. The Church House in Westminster has announced that 1,5 million people access Anglican Internet sites every month. Another 1,2 million use social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Around 4 million visitors accessed the above-mentioned evangelisation campaigns at Christmas („*#JoyToTheWorld*") and „*#LiveLent*" at Easter[21]. It can, therefore, be said that the new means of communication which world wide web offers have become a means to access information about faith and spiritual growth. People tend to „live" on the web and this fact has an impact on how they experience their everyday life. The challenge for the Church is to find a way to transfer the internet presence of Christians into their actual Church attendance, where Christ unites them and transforms them into His Mystical Body. The leaders of the Anglican Church are, therefore, justified in believing that ever more people in Great Britain are engaging with the Church's digital platforms and communities in order to deepen their faith and learn more about Christianity[22].

However, we also have to remain mindful of the dangers posed by digital communication in Christian ministry. The majority of Church communities want to spread their message through sound and picture. This is probably due to the fact that people today, both those who shun or long for peace, are constantly exposed to both visual and auditory messages. From this arises the danger that presentation becomes the chief aim and that people end up paying more attention to the form as opposed to the content of the message. This would constitute a serious error, explains Ian Paul, a theologian and an academic, if in our ministry, the special effects used in presentations were to obstruct the message. The message of the Gospel is alive and powerful and must not get lost among the embellishments of presentation[23].

Also, the Good News conveyed with the use of the Powerpoint program, for example, when giving a sermon, can lead to the trivialisation of the message by turning a homily into a lecture. If we do resort to all available forms of communication when spreading the teachings of Christ, we still need to remember that all our efforts must serve to bring about a never-ending

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[21] See: *Thinking Anglicans. Latest Church of England Statistic* (20.10.2017), http://archive.thinkinganglicans.org.uk /archives/cat_church_of_england.html, (24.08.2018).
[22] See: T. Wyatt, *Church of England reaching more people online than ever before*(20.10.2017), https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2017/20-october/news/uk/digital-strategy-boosts-website-visits, (24.08.2018); *Church of England reaches more than a million …*, op. cit.
[23] See: I. Paul, *What does a good sermon look like?* (4.12.2018), https://www.psephizo.com/preaching-2/what-does-a-good-sermon-look-like, (24.08.2018).

deepening of the relationship between man and our Loving God.

Reading Sunday homilies on the Anglican communities' websites does not absolve the faithful from coming to church and taking part in the prayers and liturgy. Hence, many of the sites begin with a short description of the community and an invitation to join it in order to experience the evangelical love of God and neighbour. One can find such descriptions on websites such as those for the parish of St. Andrew in Chorleywood (Hertfordshire) or St. Paul's in Knightsbridge (West End of London). These explain, who the Anglicans actually are, namely, the Children of God, who is in heaven. The transformation that can be seen in them is the direct result of God's outpouring His love for them, the acceptance of which leads them to follow in the steps of Christ. The faithful are full of enthusiasm when they see their lives and the life of the community transformed and healed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Their parishes are places of Christian formation, where the mission entrusted to us by the Saviour is fulfilled. Such descriptions end with an invitation to „Come", „Join us" and „We are waiting for you!"[24].

Therefore, it can be claimed that the media can be employed to promote spiritual values. They must speak and touch every human heart and help it to open up to the workings of the Holy Spirit. The Church of England constitutes a Christian presence in British society. It has a message for everyone: look at us to find out more about the work we do in our communities and in the whole of England and Europe.

Messages coming to us from digital communication have a strong impact on the heart of man. They can spur us to seek personal contact with God and to experience true faith, hope and love. Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of the worldwide Communion of the Anglican Church has his own Twitter account, which has over 116 thousand visitors. His entries explain the meaning of Christian life. In one of them, he shares a fascinating insight when speaking about the closeness of God to us: „In praying for someone to know the love of Jesus Christ, you can be part of their secret history"[25]. This should encourage people to join and be active in the Christian community, which, inspired by the ever-growing need for love, embraces everyone in its prayers. Every parish is such a community. These are God's plans for every human being to whom He offers His love. A careful reading of the Christian message may mark the beginning of an eternal friendship with God.

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[24] T. Horlock, *Welcome*, https://www.st-andrews.org.uk/Groups/74282/St_Andrews_Church.aspx (24.08.2018); *Welcome to St Paul's Church Knightsbridge*, https://www.stpaulsknightsbridge.org/ (24.08.2018).
[25] Archbishop of Canterbury.@Justin Welby, https://twitter.com/justinwelby/status/958021872855212032 (26.08.2018).

In Conclusion: Findings and Projections

The synthetic method of presenting the Internet message of the Church of England allows us to draw the following conclusions:

a) The idea of using digital media by Church of England arose from the perception of deepening crisis in this community (because of the decline in the number of faithful participating in the services). The Anglican hierarchy decided to implement *Church of England Renewal and Reform Programme* using the Internet message.

b) The implementation of this programme has ensured the basic education of the faithful in the area of new media. Evidence of the validity and reliability of the conducted training are developed and exposed through *Social Media Guidelines*, engaging the diocesan communication managers, conducting (for diocese or parishes) courses in the field of social media.

c) During a period of dozen months, over one million people (each month) benefited from the Christian message on social media. This result is a great success. This was noticed and rewarded.

d) Digital media - with the message about God posted in them - are the way to reach modern man with the content of the Gospel. This, in turn, contributes to the spiritual development of people seeking Christ's presence in their everyday life.

On the basis of these conclusions it is evident that there is substantial need to reach people with the message of faith, but in particular, to do it through the mass media. The goals set by the Church of England (multiplying the common good of the nation, increasing the number of the faithful and their spiritual development, realizing the servile role of the Church) can be realized (and should be) using social communication means. The omission of this possibility of social influence would be a rejection of the opportunity to provide people with particularly important and always current contents – presenting not only contemporary issues but also those leading to salvation and thus eternity.

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Digital Communication in the Service of the Spiritual Life Development and Pastoral Activity of Local Communities of the Church of England

Summary

In this article, a presentation of the Church of England's use of media – as a tool of revival and action – is carried out in accordance with the principles of the synthetic method of presentation. Selected themes and events are not only described but also analysed to discern any changes achieved in the Anglican community by resorting to the use of means of social media. The main sources for this article are the Internet materials – placed by members of the Church of England themselves and by others – about the actions carried out by the Anglican community. A main source for this article are the widely available online publications. These are supplied by the members of the Church of England themselves and by others writing about the Anglican community.

Keywords: digital media, Church of England, spiritual life, pastoral activity.