

Discipleship and Online Life: questions for reflection

Worship / Spirituality

- Technologies can enhance living, in practical and artistic ways. Technologies can assist our creating and cultivating. In what ways is this true in your experience?
- Which online resources or groups have helped you pray regularly? Have any expanded your prayer language or ways of praying? Do any give you a sense of praying with others, even if you are alone?
- How has the internet expanded your participation in corporate worship?
- How do you select helpful resources?
- Where are how do you have the kinds of intimate, open and trusting conversations about the life of faith sometimes described in Wesleyan ways as 'in band'? Is it possible to have this kind of conversation online?
- Can spiritual practices take seriously the impact of digital exhaustion, overstimulation and distraction – practices such as a 'dopamine fast' or (offline) forest worship?
- Are stillness, silence and contemplation actually possible when online? If yes, how are they experienced? If not, how does this matter?
- Is our online presence true? How does it speak of integrity? Or virtues such as humility?
- How has the internet expanded your sense of the God of Jesus Christ?
- worship online is (or needs to be) unlike worship offline. Good connections can lead to good collaboration as ideas, experience and resources are shared. How do we stay focused on God and assist one another's worship of God, whilst making the most of available resources and connections?

Learning and caring

- Have you found online sources which encourage and support regular Bible reading and study?
- Are you using online sources of information about Christian faith? Do you participate in informative online conversations about Christian faith? How do you discern which are reliable and fruitful sources, consistent with your Methodist heritage?
- Do we address one another online any differently than we would address one another face to face? Do we care for the stranger who may read what we write?
- In what ways can we engage with pastoral and health issues directly related to online activity: issues of esteem, trust, depression, control, deception and so on?
- In shared or 'church' online spaces, do we have good safeguarding habits as we would in physical shared church spaces?

- Are internet-led relationships consistent with our understanding of good interpersonal relationships?
- Communication technologies can connect us with experiences of people (and other creatures) we would never meet and may not otherwise know about. In relation to these connections, how is our sense of wonder and relatedness enhanced? How might this wonder and relatedness modify our ways of behaving?
- Have differences in internet and device access separated people from one another, or heightened differences between privileged and disenfranchised people? Can we respond to inequalities with practical and effective care?
- With a technology designed to connect us with like-minded people who share our lifestyle, how do we counteract 'echo chambers' and pay attention to people unlike ourselves? How, in practice, do we value diversity? Are we extending or diminishing our capacity to relate as fully human beings?
- Could this meeting or resource be more accessible to people with learning difficulties, or sensory limitations? If not, what alternative interactions do we maintain?
- How much can we learn about one another and our circumstances online? Do we need to supplement that learning with other ways of being together?

Service

- Humans adapted to using other technologies without losing a full-bodied sense of our place in the world, so how do online communications relate to other (offline) ways in which we perform aspects of our identity and relating? How does it matter that we cannot touch at a distance? What does it mean to be 'in touch'?
- 'Our devices can connect us to others, but they can blind us to the person sitting next to us.' (Detweiler, p.212). Am I loving my neighbour?
- How are we building meaningful, healthy, mutual relationships online?
- Have we been persuaded that newer, faster, smaller means better? If so, what is the impact on our capacity or willingness to conserve that which is life-giving?
- Regarding the created world, have we lost wilderness, and its restorative effect? How can our connectness counter this?
- Digital networks are not passive, but often persuasive and pervasive. Do we recognise cultural and social trends which seem contrary to the kingdom of God or what it is to be the Body of Christ?

Evangelism

- What are the online impressions we create, and do they speak of God's love in Christ?
- Is our evangelising relational and personal, or directed towards an unknown 'public'?

- How is 'recordability' enhancing or stultifying our communicating?
- Are experiences of forgiveness and redemption, sanctification and change, challenged by the fact that things I wrote in the past remain accessible?
- How are 'good news' and 'new creation' and so on described and understood in a technologically-saturated culture?
- If fear of dying is about oblivion and being forgotten, are people comforted by creating a digital legacy? How, then, do we speak of 'eternal life', particularly at funerals?
- Is technology driving our culture and values? In what ways?
- How are we evangelising people whose devices are 'always on and always on them'?
- How are we engaging people in Christian thinking if they have learned to depend on devices and internet for inquiry and opinion?
- Is it easy for people to find trustworthy sources for accessing and learning about the Bible and Christian belief and practice?