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Trinity, Mt. Pocono, walks into MySpace

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Welcome to the future. It's called online evangelism. Trinity Episcopal Church in Mount Pocono, through the efforts of its webmaster Erik Gregory, has launched its own page on MySpace.com. This is the first (of which we hope to be many) in the diocese of Bethlehem and one of a handful of churches to do so across the nation.

MySpace is a social networking website offering an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music, and videos. MySpace also features an internal search engine and an internal e-mail system. The service is free to all users and therefore free to the church.

According to Alexa Internet, it is currently the world's fourth most popular English-language website, the sixth most popular website in any language and the third most popular website in the United States, though it has topped the chart on various weeks. The service has gradually gained more popularity than similar websites to achieve nearly 80 percent of visits to online social networking websites. It has become an increasingly influential part of contemporary popular culture. With the 100 millionth account being created on August 9, 2006 and a news story claiming 106 million accounts on September 8, 2006, the site reportedly attracts new registrations at a rate of 230,000 per day.

The site contains a link to Trinity's website as well as information about the church, worship, and upcoming events. In its first two weeks, Trinity gained 70 new "friends" and its profile has been visited over 300 times. The friends that Trinity has attracted are mostly under the age of 30, an age group not often seen in churches. Through the use of MySpace, Trinity has been able to actively reach out to people who are seeking a closer relationship with God.

Members can be sought out and asked to be a "friend" by using search criteria such as geographical location, gender, age, orientation and other identifiers. The "User's Friends Space" contains a count of a user's friends, a "Top Friends" area, and a link to view all of the user's friends.

Some new friends have emailed Trinity inquiring about a new church home. One emailed asking for advice within the first week. A single mother was about to lose her home and didn't know where to turn. Trinity was able to assist her by referring her to local agencies that could provide temporary housing and possibly assist her financially to get back on her feet again! She as also assured her that she would be held in prayer.

With this pioneering approach, Trinity has been able to invite new members to church. More importantly, however, is that Trinity is going to the people who are seeking. There are over 3,000 MySpace users under the age of 35 within a 20 mile radius who Erik is

reaching out to individually. As Erik commented, "Jesus didn't wait for the people to come to Him, He went to the people."

Please visit us at www.myspace.com/trinitymountpocono.