"Social Media in the CCCS Youth Ministry"

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by

Student: Tautofi Tuivasa

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ABSTRACT

Social Media has gained wider acceptability and usability in today's world. It is becoming probably the most affordable communication tool that easily connect members of any community, for example, is the church community. Social Media can be used to communicate church activities and events (such as youth programs) among church members. However, the use of Social Media in church is not a smooth operation. It has a perceived effect on the church considered as the pro(s) and con(s) of Social Media on the Church. This paper aims to discuss the positive effects of Social Media on the church as a way of communication that can benefit the youth ministry and the Christian congregational church Samoa in general. In doing so, the study begins with an explanation of the factors that affect the use of Social Media within the youth ministry, and its benefits to the youth ministry. It is followed by suggestions that encourage the use of Social Media in creating Social Networks that could help develop youth participation in church through sharing with other youths in the CCCS church. Part of this network is giving advice on the negative impacts of Social Media. This will impact positively on the growth of the youth and the CCCS ministry. Unfortunately, it is important to understand the base of understanding of Social Media at the moment in the church. It is from here we can then make improvements on where the church needs to go from here.

DECLARATION

I, _____

hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Malua Theological College or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in this thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Malua Theological College or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

DEDICATION

This writing is first and foremost a dedication to our heavenly Father above, for without his guidance and strength, this paper would not be possible. It is with high hopes that this paper helps the youth and the CCCS ministry in any way possible.

This paper is also dedicated to my church, the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. It is a great honour to be a part of this society of believers. I hope this papers serves your ministry, especially its ministry to the youth

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To my beloved family. To my grandmother Taue'etia and my mother Lesa Tuivasa, it is of great pleasure to be called your son and growing up to know a God-fearing mother whose life is dedicated to God's work. Also to my other parents, Rev Filemoni and Alpha Tuigamala, I thank you for constant motivation and words of wisdom. To my siblings Filifiliga, Tafia and Josephine, Fiatele, Joseph and Angeline, Livingston and Josephine, Aleluia and Osana. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you. Your prayers and constant motivation is why I am the person I am today.

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better half. You bring out the great in me and will always have my back no matter what. Thank you with all my heart. To my son Amani Malua Lene Tuivasa, this is for you.

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INTRODUCTION

Social Media is a communication tool that has taken over the traditional ways of communication. It is the way we now communicate and is a big part of our lives not only for the secular world, but also the Christian Church environment. The easy accessibility to Social Media and its reliable service is one of the reasons why we use it today. Also, not to forget the many functions that Social Media holds that the user can benefit from are endless. Social Media has a lot of benefits that can bring about the attention of the youth society at an instance, so the question is how can the CCCS church also use this communication tool to its benefits and why? In other words, the youth today are using these tools of communication to express and share their ideas. So why can we not create a Social Network for our youth to share and express themselves in a CCCS friendly basis? It is a big part of our lives today so we must use it to benefit the youth's ministry of not only here in Samoa but also abroad to the many youth's overseas.

I have chosen to write about this topic because in my view Social Media has great significance to the youth of the CCCS youth. In other words, Social Media has the power to connect the youths of the CCCS all around the world. It possesses the ability to bring together the ideas and thoughts of our generation from the comfort of the home. Communication is the key for the future of our CCCS church and Social Media has made communication easier for our benefit.

In this thesis, it explains the significance of Social Media and its definition on what Social Media is. Also to it will provide relevance to the youth ministry in terms of education, spiritual development and different perspectives of its use.

Furthermore, it will provide the relevant use of Social Media in regards to its effects on the youth from both positive and negative perspectives, including behavioural effects of the physical, psychological and theological dimensions. Ultimately, it will take a look at possible resolutions and methods the CCCS can undertake to cater for the youth and conclude with an application suitable for the CCCS context.

1. CHAPTER ONE: "HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA".

1.1 Historical Background

The advent of the internet in the 1990s led to major developments in the world of communication since the introduction of Social Networking sites.[1] The coming into being of these sites revolutionized the worlds of communication and today we use its improvements ranging from education to entertainment.[2]

i) The Origin of Social Media.

Social Media is believed to be older than everyone thinks. Social Media has been around since 1970 but not many people know about the internet since the mid-1990s when it became affordable to the middle-class or working people. In 1979, two men by the names of Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis created the world's first ever User-Net system, which allowed people to post messages to various categories known as news groups.[3] This system was put into place for businesses to communicate with various branches for order placement and shipping orders on a quicker scale. Not many businesses were aware of this new system, making the history of Social Media an arguable subject. However, according to the internet, this is the earliest mention of Social Media making Jim Ellis and Tom Truscott the 'Godfathers of Social Media'.

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[1] John N. Fotis, "The Use of Social Media and Its Impacts on Social Behaviour: The Context of Holiday Travel " (Bournemouth University, 2015), 4.
[2] Ibid., 15.
[3] Allison N. Lewis, "Who Invented Social Media?," http://productplacepricepromotion.blogspot.com/2011/02/who-invented-social-media.html.

If we were to seek the history of what Social Media is as we know it today, Six Degrees was the first recognized site in the world and was created in 1997. It enabled users to upload a profile and make friends with other users. In 1999, the first Blogging sites became popular, creating a Social Media sensation that's still popular today. After the invention of blogging, Social Media began to explode in popularity. Sites like "Myspace" and "LinkedIn" gained prominence in the early 2000s, and sites like "Photobucket" and "Flickr" facilitated online photo sharing. "YouTube" came out in 2005, creating an entirely new way for people to communicate and share with each other across great distances. By 2006, "Facebook" and "Twitter" both became available to users throughout the world. These sites remain some of the most popular Social Networks on the Internet. Other sites like 'Tumblr', 'Spotify', 'Foursquare' and 'Pinterest' began popping up to fill specific Social Networking niches.

Today, there is a tremendous variety of Social Networking sites, and many of them can be linked to allow cross-posting. This creates an environment where users can reach the maximum number of people without sacrificing the intimacy of person-to-person communication. The evolution of the internet has led to its usage as the best medium of communication whereby two-third (2/3) of the Internet world's population visit Social Networking sites therefore serving as communication and connection tools.[4] These networking sites are referred to as Social Media.

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[4]Pew Research Centre, "Teens, Social Media and Privacy,"
http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/05/21/teens-social-media-and-privacy-3/.

ii)   The Purpose of Social Media

Social Media is all about facilitating people to express and share ideas, thoughts and opinion with others. It is also about enabling people to connect with others, like they have been doing for the past few centuries. During recent years, Social Media platforms are enjoying a phenomenal success: 'Facebook', a Social Networking website, claims that its active users reached 1.3 billion worldwide, more than 50% of which log in every day;[5] 'Twitter', a Micro-Blogging website hosts 225 million users who post on average 500 million tweets per day;[6] More than 1 billion unique users visit 'YouTube' each month, watching more than 6 billion hours of video and at the same time it is estimated that there are over 181 million blogs worldwide.[7] In saying this, Social Media has served the sole purpose of catering for peoples connection or communication needs through-out the years.

However, Social Media is changing in terms of its purpose. The dynamics of its use is slowly progressing to a wide range of valuable uses. Therefore, capitalising on these purposes for the CCCS ministry is beneficial for not only our youth but the CCCS community, not just for communication but other means also.

In addition, here in Samoa, accessing Social Media is not free, and will cost in order to use. However, in my opinion, it is much cheaper to use Social Media rather than the traditional phone call or text, which makes Social Media in Samoa a great possibility when it comes to the CCCS youth ministry.

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[5]Ibid.
[6]Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, "How Young People Use the Internet for Health Information," https://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2001/11/3202-genrx-report.pdf.
[7]Ibid.

2. CHAPTER TWO: EDUCATIONAL, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL APPROPRIATENESS TO WHOLENESS OF LIFE.

2.1 Relevance of Social Media to the youth ministry.

i) Education.

According to some parents and also Lecturers in Malua, Social Media platforms are seen as distractions to work, and is seen as a negative influence in regards to learning and education. However, there have been cases of which Social Media was used to enhance student learning and better the communication between student and teacher/lecturer. Sharuna Segaren states various examples of benefits Social Media has on education especially with the university students. Her studies show that lecturers who have used Social Media to their advantages in the classroom arena. David Altounian, Marketing Professor in Digital Media Management at St Edward's University, devised a way to teach his students how to combine traditional marketing techniques with digital components. David's efforts to use Social Media for his lectures has proven successfully in response to his students.[1]

It also makes sense that marketing and communications professors can use Social Media to their advantage, since it's related to their profession and can be easily integrated into the curriculum. In the same way, Social Media has also been used

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[1]Sharuna Segaren, "The Important Role of Social Media in Higher Education," https://www.studyinternational.com/news/the-important-role-of-social-media-in-higher-education/.

in other curriculum disciplines such as mathematics. Richard Ng and Latifah Abdol Latif outlined their experience in a research paper on how their University, Open University Malaysia (OUM), uses Social Media to improve the teaching of mathematics in a distance learning course. There were problems in the isolation of students due to their lack of knowledge of programming and structures of software they were using which they then resulted in using Facebook as an alternative to extend discussion and, was conducted through a specially-created Facebook group. At the same time, this increased their engagement and encouraged interaction, reducing feelings of isolation which is one of the major challenges of Distance learning courses.[2]

Braydon Fox adds that the "biggest part of people using Social Media is the students for different purposes," He also has come up with different ways for education to benefit from Social Media for better academic result. Parents' involvement in a student's learning has never been so easier with the help of Social Media. He adds that:

Sometimes it is impossible to connect with parents because of some reasons and use of the networks can save the situation. Parent involvement is crucial to a student's success in the classroom because the parents are inevitably always in contact with their child meaning, their constant interaction with the lecturers or teachers will help boost the student learning capabilities from the parent's end. Also that it is a great initiative to "keep on track" with the student's progress and areas of concern regarding the student's progress."[3]

In addition to Fox's view, the connection of students over the Social Media platform also increases awareness of students to their writings and reading. According to Fox, Social Media is for everyone and anyone to see, so students pay

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[2]Ibid.

[3]Brayden Fox, "Social Media and Education: Using Social Media for Better Academic Results," https://medium.com/@braydenfox/social-media-and-education-using-social-media-for-better-academic-results.

a lot of attention to their witting that may go public, "They do not wish to look poor in the eyes of their friends," meaning in regards to the language use and grammatical usage. This is a positive benefit not only for parents of the students but also the education system. Students always trying to improve on their decrease of punctuation and spelling errors not only is a reflection of their schooling and parenting but also beneficial to education.[4]

Although there are negative aspects of Social Media to the education dimensions, if used to its maximum purpose, Social Media has a lot to offer in educating the students of all ages. Social Media has been frowned upon because of its negative aspects but only rarely is it used to its full potential.

Overall, Social Media poses a beneficial factor to education and go forth of the students learning. It creates new and exciting dimensions of learning, and breaks down a lot of barriers that may seem as an obstacle in the classroom environment. Through my research, Social Media brings all the important people together needed in a student's learning environment. Not only for the teacher and student but parents can also be involved more in the process of their children's learning. Nonetheless, my sights on the downfall of this useful aspect is that Social Media is also a platform to express one's social life and teachers should be careful with what they are going to share on Social Media because the students may be watching. Furthermore, we mostly consider that education takes place in accustomed for our classrooms and is ruled by a teacher, but the reality is completely different. With the enormous influence of technology, education has

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[4]Ibid.

gained various new features and is still changing. It creates a completely new and unknown to many of us world of knowledge that can be used by every learner and teacher for the utmost effectiveness and productivity as well as encouragement and motivation.

ii)   Spiritual Development

One of the most prominent psychological theories is that of James Fowler who has widened a succession of faith stages.[5] This model uses developmental and psychodynamic psychology to focus upon the cognitive development of the individual. Also, Harold Darling has devised a four-stage paradigm of spiritual development based upon the stages of emotional and physical development.[6] Just as individuals develop through birth, childhood, youth or adolescents and adulthood, likewise these stipulations may be used to explain spiritual development.

Pavita Singh has an article of five ways Social Media has helped her develop spiritually, but focuses on the childhood to adulthood period as the area of her attention according to Harold Darling. We cannot deny the fact that the world changes every-day and as a result technology is handed down to younger generations or the childhood group, meaning Social Media is also available for use.[7] Being a witness first hand of someone who received technology and Social Media at a young age, Pavita has reaped the benefits of Social Media through-out her life in terms of spiritual development.

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[5]James W Fowler, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press0, 1987).
[6]Harold Darling M, *Man in Triumph* (MI: Grand Rapids, 1989).
[7]Pavita Singh, "5 Ways Social Media Has Helped Me Grow Spiritually,"
https://www.elephantjournal.com/2016/04/5-ways-social-media-has-helped-me-grow-spiritually.

Helping her deal with the many issues that come at the youth stage, Pavita received inspirational quotes that were shared by friends and family and constant imagery of events in the Bible which helped her get through whatever situation she was in.

The most interesting steps of Pavita's five ways that benefited her spiritual growth was the third and fourth step *"Making mindful offline decisions"* and *"mobilizing around social change"*. The third step initialises the importance of what it means to post something on Social Media. In this regard, Pavita elaborates that:

> "*If we don't want something posted online, then we should either modify the circumstances that make us uncomfortable posting it, or we should not do or say whatever we don't want posted at all. Given the fact that anything we say or do can be captured and posted, we must reflect on whether we are okay with this, and make decisions—on and offline— accordingly*"[8]

The forth step is mobilizing around social change. Being a member of non-profitable organisations found on Social Media, Social Media has made mobilizing around organisations a breeze. Some Social Media sites only need a hashtag and the main word to connect with others thinking or are on the same idea which is called a 'crisis text line.' This relies on Social Media's potency to notify volunteers when there is a high demand. Within minutes, sometimes even seconds, of a Facebook message being posted, dozens of volunteers will jump on the platform to assist those in need. In this way, Social Media opens doors for members to actively make our communities better.

Sometimes distance plays a big factor in spiritual development especially in the youth, being away in foreign countries for studies or even at the local universities

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[8] ibid

during evening devotions with family. Sarah Baker urges in her article to make use of the resources available to contact friends and family. After all, this is the gap Social Media tends to, from where ever and when-ever, connecting to family is available through Social Media. In other words, no longer is there anyone of the family that has to miss out on evening devotion or any other instance because of what Social Media provides for Sarah states that it is important to "Remember, the future of our spiritual growth relies heavily on how we adapt to the changes of our world without letting these distractions keep us away from what matters."[9]

iii)   Personal Benefits

Besides the obvious personal benefits that can be gained by Social Media like communication and connecting with others, Lauren Friedman has five (5) ways of attaining personal benefit from Social Media.[10]

1. Build relationships

2. Share your expertise

3. Increase your visibility

4. Educate yourself

5 Connect anytime

Friedmans business background in Marketing makes these five ways valid into being a marketing tool, using Social Media to reflect self-benefits. Friedmans believes that in order to mirror personal-benefits from Social Media, first must put your person out there. Through my research, this also has relevance to the youth

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[9]Sarah Baker, "Faith in Our Future: What Social Media Can Do for Our Spiritual Growth," http://www.deliberatemagazine.com/faith-future-social-media-can-spiritual-growth.
[10] Lauren Friedman, "5 Benefits of Using Social Media," https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140422162738-44670464-5-benefits-of-using-social-media.

ministry because being able to get somewhere in the youth ministry, it is important to participate and share.

 The second point of sharing expertise can be also applied to the youth ministry and the usage of Social Media. A Social Network consisting of all the youth of the CCCS constantly sharing their expertise, also reflecting and critiquing the sermon from Sunday would be a personal benefit for all youths around the globe. A Social Network for the youth ministry to share their expertise may seem farfetched but it is not impossible.

The other three steps to Friedmans personal benefits all relate to personal benefits in Social Media for the youth in their own way. In making one known in the Social Media platforms increases the opportunity to share the message. In terms of youth ministry, sharing quality content on Social Media not only one gets recognised by their peers, but also spreads the message to other fellow youths.

Educating oneself is crucial in relation to personal benefits. It is if not the most important step of Friedmans article because not only is it about spreading 'content' but also about taking in some of that content. In the midst of all the noise on the Internet, Social Media allows one to hone in on what you really care about and what you really want to read. The youth can create lists that curate content from their favourite people, thought leaders in the space, or media outlets. They can easily learn about current events and things taking place near themselves giving them the power to read and learn from whatever area they choose.

Finally, Social Media creates connection at any time. This may seem like a negative to most parents and people who do not recommend Social Media, however the accessibility made easy all the time is a personal benefit in terms of youth ministry. For example, maybe a youth is going through problems that they cannot talk to anyone about; Social Media can tend and mend to these problems within the society. In other words, youth understand what other youth are going through. It is of great importance that such a truth should be shown about this matter, because these are some of the issues that can be resolved with the help from another youth, or even Social workers who are a part of the youth ministry.

In terms of availability of Social Media; its significance can be great towards the youth if used to its full potential especially with catering for the youth and their ministry. In other words, much can be achieved in decreasing some of the growing issues in the youth. For example, in suicide cases a Social Network for the youth ministry helps peers deal with these issues they are going through because they know what is happening and understand each other. However, if there is a case in which the peers cannot help with, Social Media can also cater for their needs with professional help by other organisations that are well equipped for the case.

All in all, Social Media does bring about personal benefit for the user and the advantage of the youth ministry. Obviously, it varies also on the user and how they use Social Media, because Social Media does have negative effects as well, especially with these five ways provided by Friedman. Ultimately, Social Media

is the new dimension of which church leaders should consider seriously, in order to not only benefit the youth ministry but also ones-self .[11]

2.2 Different Perspectives of its Use.

i) Traditional Ways of Communicating

Before the rise of technology in the 21st century, communication was also 'somewhat' easy. The earliest ever known form of communicating from one person to another was dated in 490 BCE, and involved another person. According to Candaze Copsy, in the primitive era, the Greek and Romans had runners that delivered messages of laws or military orders. Message carrying was so important to them that they had a god for it named Hermes. An example of a famous runner of this era was a man named Pheiddippides in which he ran over 25 miles from Marthon to Athens and then died from exhaustion after delivering the report.[12]

Some parts of the Zulu tribes of Africa used drums to communicate. For example, special drums were played to sound warning of danger or to inform the community of the time when the chief has died. Similar technique from the American Indians with their method of smoke signals.[13]

Candaze states another four examples of communication right down to the history of the first radio invented. I found this interesting because these methods paved the way for Social Media.

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[11]Ibid.
[12]Candaze Copsy, "The Arts of Communicartion," https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-old-ways-of-communication.
[13]Ibid.

Traditional methods of communication are still important to a lot of people who prefer these methods. Callum Sharp expresses his concern with losing these form of communication. He critically states that letter writing not only improves grammar, style and structure but also improves confidence. Since communication is based on relationships, letter writing lets one be authentic or in other words 'real.' Having the confidence to write a letter to someone takes courage because in the letter it will consist of emotions that are from whatever depth their relationship is. Knowing that the reader will know how long it took to write the letter depending on the language and emotion the writer is going through whilst writing the letter.

However, the question stands. why can we not write with the same emotion and language using Social Media? Sharp explains that letter writing to its finest consists of three P's, Process, Patience and Persistence, something that cannot be found in the Social Media world. According to Sharp, he says *"We're in a distracted world, and relationships are taken for granted. Letter writing helps us prioritise what actually matters in life: Who we spend it with"***[14]**

In view of Sharp's comment, it is possible to see where Sharp's concern lies and his un-denying devotion to letter writing has to matter because he himself is still in his youth. In this regard, it seems that Sharp ignores Social Media as having no emotion or style, or any thought of Social Media having the ability to create confidence.

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[14]Callum Sharp, "Why Letters Is Still Important," https://writingcooperative.com/why-writing-letters-is-still-important.

In fact, Social Media is the platform for not only youth's benefits but it is for everyone to share their emotions or feelings twenty-four hours a day. On some sites such as 'Facebook', it is possible to show emotions towards a certain comment or person using visual aids called 'emoji's'. In terms of confidence, Social Media fully reinforces confidence found in others with similar views. Darwin confirms that without Social Media she would not have connected with others around the world dealing with similar or not the same issues she is going through. Social Media lets her gain confidence in herself knowing that she is not alone nor should she feel 'left out' in society because it is people like her that make society what it is today.[15]

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[15]Liza Darwin, "How Can Soical Media Boost Your Confidence,"
https://advice.shinetext.com/articles/how-social-media-can-boost-your-confidence.

3. CHAPTER THREE: "CONTEMPORARY USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN YOUTH MINISTRY."

3.1 Ways the Youth of the CCCS Can Benefit from Social Media

Many youth groups around the world use Social Media in order to connect and share with each other. To say the least, many CCCS youth groups also have pages on Social Media for this sole purpose. But the question is: Are the youths making the most of Social Media in order to gain benefit in ministry?

i) People Over Product

Ministry Architect have come up with three keys Social Media can benefit the youth.[1] They stress the first key to be the most important, 'people over product'. This key is where most youth pages fall short from. Instead putting the emphasis on the youth, most youth pages create their Social Media accounts to promote events and programmes. Product does not have to be an item for buying and selling but could also come in the form of promoting an event. The article compares 'products' to be 'withdraws' and 'spiritual nourishment of the soul' to 'deposits'. With every withdraw shall consist of ten deposits meaning youth Social Media pages is all about giving rather than the taking.

ii) Consistency

The rise in fame of some of the well-known characters on Social Media came about with determination and consistency. Some Video Bloggers post nothing

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[1]Ministry Architects, "3 Keys to Reaching Students with Social Media,"
https://ministryarchitects.com/3-keys-to-reaching-students-with-social-media.

special just their day to day routine, and as a result, kids tend to watch 'YouTube' all the time is because of this reason. However, for the benefit of the youth, Social Media should be an avenue not for fame, but for the Glory of God. For a youth leader to do so, youth leaders maintaining the page should be consistent in making their Social Media relevant and vibrant for its members. The impact of this is crucial for the youth's attention. Yet, inconsistency leads to youth losing interest and eventually leaving the group discussion or Social Media page.

iii)   Relevance Over Right

It is common for youths or anyone in this matter to use Social Media as an arena to show right over relevancy, for example, the constant battle to see who attends the right church. However, this should not be the case. Social Media should not be a venue to preach to others or to "yell to the public" as David Eric says. But instead a place for sharing matters about God that bring out the essence of a Christian community. The youth of the CCCS would benefit a lot in this realm. Taking into consideration the numbers of youth using Social Media to fellowship in the name of the true God instead of the true church, would be highly beneficial. Social Media has the ability to bring the best out of the youth, if exposed in a positive spiritual way.

3.2 Ways the Congregational Christian church of Samoa can benefit from Social Media

It is of significant value to form ways of where the CCCS as a whole can benefit from this new platform of Social Media through its positive use, encouragement and recommendations for the church. Certainly, there are churches that have made the initiative to start using Social Media, therefore it is important to be aware of how to use the platform in its fullest potential

i) Positive Use

The positive benefits using Social Media in a social realm for communication or just to share are endless. As mentioned before, Social Media is the game changer in our society nowadays. So why not use it to build or further strengthen the church? Social Media is widely used in our church among its members and their children yet we are not using its full benefits for our own use in congregations.

The examples of the use of Social Media in the church nowadays in the youth spectrum, includes many youth groups continuing to create youth pages to remind and motivate fellow youth members of the congregation of certain events up and coming through-out the week. I have also witnessed many of parish leaders and their wives taking to Social Media the positive message of the gospel by doing a day to day devotion of the Bible reading together with the theme of the day. The meaning of all this is that we are already using Social Media and it is here to stay. If anything Social Media is only going to develop from here on in. Conversely, we must take the time to consider the positive actions or precautions that need to

be done, in order for our congregations to use Social Media to further develop our youth ministry and congregation as a whole.

I believe that these are the new signs of the times, and we shall embrace it or we will be left behind. The downfall of this is that if we do not capitalise on these new technologies, then it is also possible that we will see our youth members declining. Why? As we all know, time waits for no-one. In saying this, youth are always attracted to the new 'thing' or 'craze'. Social Media has made a lot of people rich and has brought fame. Yet the actions taken to become famous using Social Media is sometimes not appropriate for the youth of the CCCS. For instance, nudity in public, disrespectful actions to an unknown stranger in order to get people to laugh and many more despicable things are usually seen on the internet. A well-known act that made a man famous for all the wrong reasons was the Christchurch massacre. The using of Social Media to let the world know of this man's intentions on the Muslim community shocked the world. As he shot many innocent people whilst going 'live' on 'Facebook' was traumatising to say the least. This display of heartless acts showed the world how dangerous Social Media can be, because it made millions of people witness first-hand what a massacre looks like. In supposition, these are only a few of the many negative aspects and impact of Social Media to our lives today. If not well guided, Social Media can be a dangerous place for our youth ministry and congregation all together. So, we must ensure the safety of our youth whilst using Social Media by further educating ourselves and the way it can benefit our youth. All in all, Social Media does have negative effects to us human beings, however, if we address it

positively in the beginning, then inevitably it could be a positive outcome for our church, especially our youth ministry.

a   Encouragement

In terms of the scale of the CCCS church, reaching everyone would be rather difficult, however not impossible. Abby Kahler the author of the article "Successful Ministries" looks at some churches which claim to own Social Media. In other words, made Social Media work in the congregation. Kahler's article explains of the changes her church made in including Social Media and how to make it successful. In her article she strongly argues of churches who use Social Media and make it work accordingly to their church foundation. For example, 'Fresh Life', a multi-site church in America and through-out Europe, focusses on bringing the Gospel to the current generation. Fresh life's Social Media presence has no surprises, it's just consistent and well-timed post that lead to direct interaction with church members.

> On Facebook, Fresh Life makes sure to either post short clips or photos and quotes from their Sunday sermons. Further encouragement reminds the congregation of the lauga or sermon from Sunday, keeping them motivated and sound through-out the week. According to the feedback, from members of the congregation, it's an idea which has brought their communities together and have made the 'vibe' around church grounds more rich. Not to forget that these

feedbacks is not from one church alone but from the whole congregation as one.[2]

If the CCCS were to address these beneficial factors and make it our own, we could be looking at resolving some of the issues the church is facing due to the high maintenance of Social Media with people around the world. Different perspectives of the Sunday sermon are being shared for a richer understanding of the people of the church especially the CCCS youth. These small changes boost the morale of the congregation because they get to express themselves on a forum that can be seen around the world by people that are like minded.

Ultimately, the encouragement message that the CCCS people receive will also be conveyed in other means, resulting in high participation of the people especially the youth in church matters. The results that happened in Kahler's ministry, can also happen to us, if we fully realise the idea and make it our own. For example, the Fonotele 2019 was a stepping stone for the future of the CCCS youth. Being able to hold a General Assembly for the *Autalavou* is definitely a move in the right direction. Now instead of just stopping there, why not keep connected in terms of Social Media to talk further about issues regarding the church? That way a more well-structured meeting would be held by the next Fonotele? These are the aspects that have to be considered if the church leaders are serious with the future of the CCCS and its youth ministry.

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[2]Abby Kahler, "7 Examples of Churches That Own Social Media," *Looking at successful ministries* (2016).

b   Communications

Another issue concerning the church is the issue of overseas parishes having to pay expensive airfare in order to travel to Samoa for the General Assembly, and other matters concerning the church as a congregation. Social Media can also bridge this gap if we were to be open to the idea. As a matter of fact, this would save everyone thousands and thousands of dollars in airfares. Why travel when Social Media connects everyone on one social platform? Social Media is not as we know it as a form of verbal communication, but we can also physically see each other's facial features as we communicate in Video calling or Face-time (as the youth know it). In that way, it breaks down the barrier of physical communication in a sense that we can now see who we are communicating with.

In my view, the only downfall to this aspect is that sometimes Samoa's satellite connection is not as reliable as other countries, making connection or communication in that matter a bit more difficult if it is three or more recipients, causing internet breakage and loss of signal, therefore making this change trickier. However, faith in relation to the continuing change in Samoa, in terms of technology, is no doubt on the way.

3.3   Recommendation

In my research, it is obvious that Social Media cannot be avoided, nor can we deny the usage of Social Media within our youth and its ministry. Therefore, the challenge is making it important to address this in a way where the CCCS youth and its people as a whole can benefit from. Consequently, making it important to

act upon for our youth ministry which can blossom into something bigger. In doing so, there will need to be an appointed committee of trusted and trained youth of the CCCS to take charge. Having set our new Executive members for the Youth Committee, I recommend a member of their Committee to be a leader in this initiative. The purpose of this, is to update the youth around the world of pertinent issues or important events the Committee plan on catering targeting specifically the youth. Also, I propose that a member of this initiative is an *A'oa'o* or *Faifeau* that can give Theological encouragement to the youth or even a short meditation every day for the youth's overall well-being. Other members should consist of those who are well trained in Social Media technological skills and also professional counsellors to deal with issues the youth are facing.

In doing all this, there ought to be rules to govern all this. Rules that will control the content being displayed, but most importantly, the good name of our church. Also procedures to go through before uploading content must be considered, in order to further protect the dear name of our Church.

As long as this initiative sticks to the reason why it was created, then in my view, there is a great chance that it will succeed for the purpose of the youth ministry and the CCCS in general.

3.4   Current Status of CCCS Use of Social Media

Many churches in the CCCS community already use Social Media. Especially the CCCS churches in New Zealand and Australia. However, in Samoa it is a new prospect of which only a few youth groups use. The youth groups in New Zealand

capitalise on Social Media to an extent. For example, many youth groups use Social youth pages to inform each other of up and coming events. However, as mentioned before in my study, there is more to Social Media than this aspect. Having broaden the thought of Social Media as a platform for one source for all youth is yet to be considered. But it remains an encouraging factor to consider for the future youth ministry and also the ministry of CCCS as a whole. This doesn't mean that the ministry is to be done through Social Media, but it can be a moving aspect for our ministry to better itself in the modern day technological world. Being aware of the dangers Social Media hold, the youth can make beneficial changes to the ministry and possibly widen the focus to other countries the CCCS church has not yet reached. This can be done by the scope Social Media can cover, meaning, it becomes worldwide, even if a few people in the world are able to witness the beauty of CCCS youth ministry as we know it, is that not what we are here to do? We as Samoan people are moved by the messages we see on Social Media by youth groups of other countries, through speech, dance and positive uplifting sermons, and it is common to imitate these dances etc, so why not spread our message and our culture the CCCS way and extend it to the world to see. In saying so, it is seen already in the youth ministry the different types of spiritual dances and messages we do in different languages, what this paper is proposing is that I am of firm belief that, we too are capable of doing the same effect to the world with the help of Social Media as a tool to provide coverage to the world. Te Atatu EFKS are an example of showing the world a taste of the CCCS flavour, with the help of Social Media, Te Atatu have spread their message through song for the world to sing along to. Their latest CD release was also nominated as the best Pacific Gospel choir with their modern take of our own

traditional hymns and praises. Their exposure through Social Media, let the world see the talent and the message they have to offer. In addition, Social Media has done this effect to other Samoan churches such as the well-known gospel choir Peace Chapel. Through the help of Social Media, Peace Chapel have made their music global by reaching Samoans all around the world with their message through song. This can be done especially with the talent Samoa has to offer. Not only through song and praise but a daily devotion according to our *Tusi Faitau Aso* (lectionary).

Currently, the CCCS Head office also post daily sermons according to the theme of the day, completed by the fellow brethren working hard there. However, are we using Social Media to its fullest? Because not all of the youth of the CCCS are aware of this agenda put out by the CCCS head office. By the looks of it, many are still unaware that the Head office has this platform on Social Media. In saying this, capitalising on Social Media can help the youth and their ministry theologically and spiritually, with exposure to the spiritual wealth the CCCS Main Office has to offer.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

The overall focus of this thesis as previously mentioned is to identify relevant use of Social Media to enhance youth ministry within the CCCS. It was important to see the past and how Social Media began. With the invention of the Internet, Social Media was born from the progression of time and technology. Social Media has developed and has made communication an easy task. Moving with the latest developments of technology, Social Media has connected the world at a touch of the finger tips and has changed the world. The development of Social Media through-out the years has also formed and shaped society to what it is today. Therefore, it is crucial for the CCCS to be aware of the changes of time in relation to society and technology. Being aware of both positive and negative aspects of Social Media, it enables us to act appropriately to its use and how it can benefit our youth ministry.

The significance of Social Media is not only for our youth ministry, but also important in other aspects of life. For example, education can be accelerated with the use of Social Media, as it bridges the distance between teachers and students. Social Media improves teaching and learning when it is used effectively. On a personal level, Social Media brings together children and parents, ensuring parents are informed of their children's classroom achievements. Therefore, Social Media enables parents to be fully involved in their children's learning. In this regard, Social Media sets an essential partnership between youth and parents providing real time results. The spiritual development of a youth is important to

the CCCS ministry as a whole. Therefore, the development of youths' spiritual being today has a strong bearing on Social Media.

If it is a negative situation, Social Media has the capability to bond people together. It is also possible to develop ones' faith without being in the same room using Social Media. The benefits of Social Media are endless.

Furthermore, Social Media can be considered as a tool to advertise, market, and promote your church, community activities and personal interests. Small youth groups who are committed with resources can use Social Media as an avenue to be heard. Self-proclaimed users tend to claim glory using Social Media, but if Social Media is used for the glory of God, then it is considered an advanced option to spread the Gospel.

Lastly, Social Media can improve youth commitment to ministry, whether it is to communicate, converse or to share once they are online. As leaders of the CCCS for tomorrow we must capitalise on Social Media in order to stay relevant to the modern times, and to spread the message of the gospel to the world. Having Social Media as a platform for all youths and its ministry, is definitely a positive factor for the CCCS. Being aware of its negative aspects is also important for safety and well-being of youth while using Social Media. Social Media is critical for the spiritual development of youth. Therefore, Social Media in its positive sense is beneficial for the growth of youth ministry.

If Social Media is used to its fullest, then it is possible to see changes in the growth of members of the church. There is a possibility to see new parishes being established in parts of the world due to the effective use of Social Media.

The fact is Social Media becomes a vital tool to the world today, however, not to its fullest potential. As we see from the beginning of Social Media and its history, Social Media is growing continuously in different methods as seen in the progression of Social Media in the past.

Overall, it is important to view Social Media as a relevant component in youth ministry. Social Media must be taken seriously as an essential tool to develop youth's commitment to the CCCS mission. Yet, Social Media continues to provide youth with meaningful insights to enhance their spiritual development if it is used appropriately.

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