

Technology links ministers to church members

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MARSHALL—Technological innovations leave ministers without excuse for keeping church members informed, said Brian Pearce, minister of youth and recreation at [First Baptist Church in Marshall](#).

Two years ago, Pearce attended a youth ministry conclave where he learned the impact e-mail can have on ministry and its potential for keeping parents and students informed.

“I got back to Marshall and began using my e-mail more than ever before,” Pearce said. “It created an opportunity for information to get out and parents to ask questions via e-mail that I can answer anytime. We no longer have to spend many phone calls missing each other and playing phone tag.”

Not only can e-mail be sent any time of day, but it also allows one to communicate the same message to multiple people at the same time, “meaning we have more time to minister and (spend) less time folding and stuffing envelopes and calling everyone on the Sunday school roll,” Pearce said.

Since many students check their e-mail at school, it also creates the opportunity for students involved in the youth ministry to talk with their school friends about upcoming activities at the church, he added.

But the possibilities do not end there.

Another outlet Pearce uses to reach his youth is through instant messaging. Pearce explained many students spend a lot of time online and often are available and willing to talk.

“Students will ask many questions, have casual conversation and seek counseling through instant messaging,” Pearce said. “Although it is not the best counseling environment, I have found that students will open up and share more with you through a computer than face-to-face.”

In addition to instant messaging, text messaging also has proven useful. With the proliferation of cell phones, text messaging often serves as an effective way to keep in touch with students and parents no matter where they are, as long as they have their cell phone with them, Pearce noted.

“You can also send the same message to many people at one time,” he said. “Students love it.”

Parents, too, have responded positively to text messaging, even though some who are not familiar with the technology have to get their teenager to show them how to see their messages, Pearce added.

“We can send reminders of important meetings or deposit due dates, and they get them quickly,” he said.

The only negative aspect of text messaging is users have to pay for the service. To overcome this problem, Pearce sent an e-mail to parents asking if they wanted to participate, and if so, to send their cell phone number.

With new technology developing every day, Pearce plans to extend his

outreach.

“In the future we hope to get into pod casting announcements over iPods and possibly doing daily devotions via iPod or CD,” he said.

“The use of technology is a mighty tool that I would encourage any minister to take advantage of in reaching their congregation.”

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