

## A View from The Pew - September

Social media often gets a bad rap. Facebook and Twitter, for example, can encourage on-line abuse and stalking, all made easier because users can be incognito or feel relatively safe and the agencies themselves tend to ignore content in the interests of profit.

That said, social media can also be a godsend. For example, I have got to know my cousins, some of whom I had never met until a few years ago, others whom I had met when I was less than 10 years old. Family estrangement meant that they weren't part of my growing up and I first connected with their parents – my aunts and uncles – only after my mother had died in the 80s.

What began then as an emotional reunion with my mother's siblings, has flowered into a developing relationship with my lovely cousins. We have had dinners together, family reunions, spontaneous visits and now we use an Ap called Messenger to chat, exchange news etc. We are Facebook friends and share things on that too.

One of my cousins, Sandy Brodine, is a Uniting Church minister. She is doing a family history so all of us have posted photographs and memories that have enabled us to grow even closer. I feel as if I have been given a chance to know them and the broader family pretty well.

I feel sorry that I cannot share photos and such like with my friend Bernadette who is completely computer illiterate and doesn't even use a mobile phone. When we altered our kitchen it would have been so good to email photos of it to her. She is a Catholic who would enjoy Bp Jeffrey's sermon notes, so I post hard copies to her but emailing them would be so much easier.

She has simply decided to let new communications pass her by and our links are the poorer for it. Our friendship is conducted by landline and Australia Post.

In this time of pandemic, I keep in touch with my sister umpteen times a day and even play a version of scrabble with her using our iPads. She doesn't seem so far away from me.

It strikes me that this tool is so useful in keeping us connected during these times. It has already proven itself in the online Eucharist from the Sale cathedral, in the sermon notes and in the regular parish updates.

Using my phone, I can read the Bible online, send and receive emails, write this column and send it to Anne Tucker, read the Age and Guardian Australia, take and send photos, play games, read books, listen to music, look up phone numbers, consult, what in hard copy might be called an encyclopaedia, watch ABC iview, SBS on Demand, listen to the radio or a podcast program when I go walking ... all using a device that fits in the palm of my hand.

And if I'm feeling pugnacious or my liver is out of sorts, I can be nasty on Facebook to Trump supporters, anti-Vaxers and those who refuse to wear face masks.

Thanks for the technology, God, but while you are at it, could you save me from myself?

**Sue**