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Kentucky Annual Conference

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The Lexington District

And

The Louisville District

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Quinn Chapel AME Church, Lexington, KY, Host Church

Marriott Griffin Gate, Lexington, KY, Host Site

Rev. Kenneth J. Golphin & Mrs. Dianne Golphin, Host Pastor/1st Lady

Rev. James "Book" Smith, Host Presiding Elder

Bishop Jeffrey N. Leath, Presiding Prelate

Susan Leath, MD, Episcopal Supervisor of Missions WMS/YPD

Report of Social Action / Community Involvement

"Love your neighbor as yourself", Matthew 22:39 (NLT)

The Dark Side of Social Media / Cyber Bullying

As we begin to look at the changes in our society from the political parties, to education, to finances, and the undercurrent of the racial divide, we must take a closer look at how we communicate with each other and what we are communicating.

Social media has expanded from the traditional use of receiving and sharing information with others across the globe. Social media has increased the functions of the business world, as well as global education and how we communicate with each other in general. Social media is now used to allow everyone to see our daily activities, to know our every move, which of course can be positive and negative. We share our inner most thoughts whether good or bad, positive and or negative.

We have the ability to communicate from any point of the nation due to varies devices that are not stationary as the old IBM computers. Any hand held device can be used to get our message(s) across: Smartphone, iPhone, IPad, laptop, (which) no longer requires you to be plugged into an electrical outlet. All you need to have is the ability to have wireless Internet or access. (This allows) us to keep a constant eye on the functions of the world.

We have moved from Face book to texting to tweet, now it's snap chat, and Instagram for the teens and the millennials. Email probably remains the basic form of communication for businesses and some of the "mature generation."

As we continue to progress with major advancements, there is an increase in issues that are sometimes harmful even unto death, which is known as the dark side of social

media – cyber bullying. However, before we take a closer look at cyber bullying, we must also be aware of what our children, Tweens, and teens are posting and receiving, from verbal posts to pictures. An impact which can have an adverse affect on the future of our children, from educational, to employment.

According to NoBullying.com, “Bullying isn’t something new, but it has certainly changed over the years. One of the reasons you hear about it so much today is because it is happening in more places than ever before. In the past, children were often bullied at school or in their neighborhood. Today, with the increased use of the Internet, children are now being bullied in all locations and at all times. This has created an epidemic that must be stopped.”

As we continue to increase the usage of computers and other devices in our schools, and homes, with limited paternal monitoring and involvement on how our children are using social media, the issue of cyber bullying will increase.

You might ask the question what is cyber bullying? Bullying on social media is similar to what you would do in a real life face to face situation, with the impact of the problem being almost the same or greater. The impact is greater because it is read by numerous people at the same time.

Kentucky Center for School Safety defines cyber bullying in this manner: “it involves the use of information and technology such as email, instant messaging, and the publishing of defamatory personal web sites, online personal polling web sites that are used to support conscious, willful, deliberate repeated, and hostile behavior by one or more people with the intent to harm others.”

Forms of cyber bullying are: posting negative comments on pictures, posting abusive posts on a user wall, using pictures or videos to make fun of another user, using social media to stalk, hacking an account or fraudulently making posts as though another wrote those comments.

Ciaran Connolly, Pew Internet, Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance which conducted a nstionwide survey gives the following stats on cyber bullying:

90% of teens who have seen social media bullying say they have ignored it;

84% have seen others tell cyber bullies to stop;

only 1 in 10 victims will inform a parent or trusted adult of their abuse;

girls are about twice as likely as boys to be victims and perpetrators of cyber bullying;

about 58% of kids admit someone has said mean or hurtful things to them online;

more than 4 out 10 say it has happened more than once;

bullying victims are 2 to 9 times more likely to consider committing suicide;

about 75% of students admit they have visited a website bashing another student.

However, after viewing the national statistics, let’s take a closer look at the state of Kentucky. According to a report from Backgroundchecks.org, Kentucky students experience bullying more severely that students in 35 other states, ranking Kentucky 9th out of 44. Kentucky received a total bullying score of 35.6 which put it just behind Tennessee with a total score of 35.9. This report used metrics such as physical and cyber bullying rates, weapon injury rates, suicide planning/attempts, and others to

assign scores to states for bullying occurrence, school violence and bullying impact, respectively.

Across this nation, we hear of the consequences of bullying from the physical effects, to low self esteem, depression, self harm, and isolation. However, the most serious consequence is when one is pushed to the edge and commits suicide.

Kentucky is among many of the states that have enacted laws against bullying. Kentucky enacted House Bill 91, The Golden Rule Act, relating to the safety, learning and well being of students. This bill encompasses the Criminal Statute 525.080 (Harassing Communication), chapter 125.....making bullying in any form which cause physical harm or the fear of physical harm, punishable as a Class B misdemeanor.

The recommendations of the social action committee for parents, teachers, pastors, and others are:

- ^ we should become aware of the changes in our students as related to withdrawal from family and friends;
- ^losing interest in activities they were once passionate about;
- ^dramatic changes in sleeping habits, either more or less;
- ^dramatic change in appetite, either more or less;
- ^self harm;
- ^and any changes in ones normal behavior.

Also as parents, we need to become aware of what our children are watching and doing on social media;

- ^If we have a child who is being cyber bullied, have them unfriendly anyone who is placing negative harmful information about them or anyone;
- ^place a block on all who continue to send harmful messages;
- ^report the individual to the social media site;
- ^avoid responding to messages from a bully;
- ^let an adult know as soon as the bullying beginnings rather than later;
- ^keep records of the behavior for future proof if needed.

Further recommendations for the church are:

- ^teach more on the effects of bullying through speakers and workshops;
- ^provide counseling to the bully and the victim to find out what the issue(s) are;
- ^work with the parents and schools to develop a plan, a safe space that a student will feel free to talk with a teacher about the situation.

Humbly submitted by the social action committee,
Dr. Sheila E. Harris; Revs. Kenneth Golphin, Karen Carter, Wallace Gunn, Tony Gouch, Carl. C. Liggins, Sherry Greene, William Hardy. Lay- Chris Wilson, Eva Morton, Ruth Ann Bryant