

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

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Don't just interact with your screens...

In the High Street this morning someone called out "What's the point of having a phone if you never switch it on?"

My son leaves that same message on my phone - it's hard for him to understand my stance. My mobile is used as and when it's needed. Do I want to be a slave to a device that makes me available wherever I am, or to carry on a conversation in public? No!

Since the massive rise in smartphone use, family occasions and meals out with friends have become group phone-ins and texting frenzies. Conversation is hampered by this addition and I resent the intrusion.

A friend was entertaining the whole family last Christmas. As guests arrived, she asked them to put their phones (switched off) into a box until after the party. It worked. No teenagers look furtively under the table to text or receive texts. No conversations were interrupted by pings from text messages or e-mails announcing their arrival. Best of all, everyone said what a good idea it was - result!

We cannot revert to a pre-digital age. Smartphones and computers can be used to abuse, intimidate and defraud but the benefits of the technology outweigh these misuses. Our digital devices are invaluable tools but if we only ever interact with a screen; if our only "friends" are on facebook, we are in danger of losing empathy with the real people right there with us.

What message does that send? Real people deserve our undivided and uninterrupted attention.