Churches use different means for getting in touch with members and visitors. Getting news and information out about church events, programs, ministries, and emergency announcements has gotten both easier and more challenging over the years. While older style methods of sending postcards and newsletters in the mail can still be effective in some contexts, there has been a great rise in the desire for and ease of sending such correspondence electronically.

Emails

As churches move into sending more correspondence electronically (over email) they need to be sure to follow basic principles of email etiquette. Churches also need to be aware of the laws surrounding email spam and be sure to be in compliance with the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003[1].

A few important things to note:

- Use a reliable and recognizable email address to send email from or as the church.
- When sending email from/as the church, be sure that the church's physical address is within the signature of the email.
- When sending to groups of church members, be sure to use the BCC field for email addresses. While these individuals may have given YOU their email address, they did not give you permission to share it publicly with anyone else—sending an email using the 'to' field to multiple addresses shows all addresses to all recipients.
- Be mindful of attachment size and don't send attachments unless directly necessary. It is a better practice to send a link to your church website where individuals can choose to download the attachment.
- Include a way to opt-out of email correspondence. Whether this be an actual opt-out link (as provided when using an email service as described below) or a simple statement like: *If you no longer wish to receive email from this address, please reply with UNSUBSCRIBE as the subject.* Note: in order to remain in legal compliance, once someone requests to be removed from your list, you must be sure they do not receive email from you again.
- Don't overdo it. No one wants to receive too many emails from one entity. If you are sending regular emails, be sure to choose a day/time and stick to that schedule regularly. Also let your congregation know what that schedule is.

Email Services

There are many different programs and services that will help churches send better emails. These services offer design help for HTML and image-based emails as well as offering list management, unsubscribe links, and legal compliance. They also allow for statistical monitoring and tracking of email campaigns. For churches sending regular emails to their congregations, an email service is highly recommended. While these services typically charge for emailing, the costs are minimal and the features prove well worth it.

Different email services are available based on the size of list and price. Some examples are:
MailChimp: http://mailchimp.com
Constant Contact: http://constantcontact.com
Vertical Response: http://www.verticalresponse.com
iContact: http://www.icontact.com

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[1] http://www.business.ftc.gov/documents/bus61-can-spam-act-compliance-guide-business

Other helpful links:

http://www.sharefaith.com/blog/2010/01/church-email-tips/