Have a Plan

Your church wants to impact lives, helping people know Christ and engaging them through Christian discipleship and outreach marketing. The way you can accomplish this is through your **Church Marketing Plan.** For information: http://tinyurl.com/church-plan

Find Out What You Need

Could your church communicate more effectively? Are you getting the most value for your communications dollars? No matter how well we think we're communicating, we may be able to do even better. How do we find out? We evaluate and we ask questions, evaluate again, and make changes as needed. That's the basis of a local church **Communications Audit**. For information: http://tinyurl.com/com-audit

Different Tools for Different Needs

- **Advertising**

  Church Advertising is an effective way to promote your congregation's identity with your community, and open hearts, open minds and open doors. UM Communications has resources http://umcom.org for campaigns including Rethink Church and Imagine No Malaria. Companies such as http://Outreach.com have materials developed specifically for churches from banners to direct mailing. 65% of adult millennials (born between 1985 and 2004) say they prefer to read something on paper. More than 64 percent of people surveyed say they value the (snail) mail they receive.

- **E-Newsletter**

  Many churches distribute at least one newsletter per month, and many still deliver them through U.S. postal mail. While this is fine, you might want to consider providing an E-newsletter, an electronic version of your newsletters, to display on your website for visitors to view. In addition, you may want to move toward electronic delivery of your e-newsletter to save time and money and to expedite delivery. This doesn't mean you do away with the print version for those who still prefer to receive the newsletter by regular mail, but it does mean you start using the power of electronic communication and the Internet to expand your reach in more cost-effective and efficient ways. In addition, the money you save on postage, paper, printing and personnel can be used to fuel a dynamic Web ministry or fund the start-up of a website for your church or organization. For information: http://tinyurl.com/electronic-news

- **Email Marketing**

  Almost everyone these days has at least one email account. Email has become the preferred method of communication for personal and professional use in the 21st century digital age. So why not harness the power of this easy and quick Internet tool to boost your church or organization's contact with members and visitors? For the church on a very limited budget, there are places you can go to get a free email account. The key to successful email communication is knowing your target audience and sending one clear, key message. For Information: http://tinyurl.com/e-mail-church

- **Polls and Surveys**

  In Web ministry, you want to receive regular feedback from members, visitors and seekers to your church or organization's Web presences, such as a website, blog or social network. One way to gain this feedback is through polls and surveys, which can be created and posted electronically and generate quantitative as well as qualitative data. Polls are usually limited to one question with a multiple choice option or range to

gauge a person's opinion or impression of a particular aspect of your Web ministry or Web presence. Online surveys, on the other hand, can have multiple questions in a variety of formats (yes/no, multiple choice, short answer, ranking, etc.). This type of feedback is best suited for a more comprehensive evaluation or response to an event (pre or post), ministry area or overall planning process. For information: http://tinyurl.com/church-poll-survey

- **Websites**
  Even though Web ministry is much more than having a Web presence or website, churches launch a website as a primary tool for staying connected with members and reaching out to seekers and visitors. Learn more about design, writing, safety precautions and more: http://tinyurl.com/website-church

- **Blogs**
  Would you like to reach 1.596 billion people every day with your church's ministry and mission absolutely free? Then you might be ready to start a blog ministry. With nearly 120,000 new blogs appearing in cyberspace each day, it is time for your church to harness this free online communications tool. A blog is a "Web log" originally developed as an electronic journal or diary for people to share personal experiences. How to start: http://tinyurl.com/church-blogs

- **Social Networking**
  Dale Carnegie said, "You can make more friends in two months by becoming really interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you." Although his comments preceded Internet-based social networking, Carnegie was on target. With the contagious nature of social networking in cyberspace and a few well-tested relational strategies, your church can grow its ministry and fulfill its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Here are a few of the most popular free choices: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, MySpace and Google+. For information: http://tinyurl.com/church-social-networking

- **Text Messaging**
  Text messaging or "texting" is a way to communicate short tidbits of information (originally 160 characters or fewer) with individuals or groups. With more people migrating from email and computers to text messaging and cell phones, especially youth and young adults, it is becoming an important way to keep in touch and communicate effectively. A Short Message Service (SMS) such as http://churchtextpro.com// can be used to send messages from mobile phones.

Additional Tips

Ideas for Improving Your Bulletin http://tinyurl.com/better-bulletin

Do you need art?
An abundance of stock photography and illustrations will work with just about any budget. For example, http://www.Dreamstime.com allows you to purchase prepaid shares to buy royalty-free images that start around a $0.20/image. There is also a section where photographers donate their images, so you can download them for free.

Tips for Direct Mailing http://tinyurl.com/direct-mailing

Blogging Best Practices

VIRGINIA
CONFERENCE
THE UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH
COMMUNICATIONS

What is a blog?

A weblog is a web-log, or a log (journal) on the web. In its various adaptations, it represents the thoughts of a group or individual. Unlike a website that has more "static" or informational purposes, the blog is about being in conversation, and creating community.

Why should I blog?

- You can reach everyone (potentially) on the internet. However, most blogs have a very small readership.
- People get to know you outside of the more formal way you normally communicate.
- Conversation carries past the doors of your ministry into the world.
- Blogging allows your members/constituents to share your thoughts with others thanks to social media
- Blogging allows people considering your ministry to see what you're all about before they ever show up.
- You can reach people who may never set foot inside the doors of your ministry.
- You can respond immediately to issues you read about, experience, or hear about.
- You can think about, edit, revise, and come back to thoughts you have over time that may change.

What should I blog about?

- What you know. Your writing should be "of you," honest, and transparent.
- What you want people you care about to read. If you don't want to see that thought or story in writing five years from now, don't put it out there.
- What you're passionate about. When you care, other people will care, too.
- The way you interact with a text, an experience, a situation, a work of art.
- How your story fits within the Story of God's work in the world.

What are some standards for blogging?

- Write something regularly, ideally every day, certainly no less often than once a week. Blogs that don't get updated don't get read or followed.
- Have someone else proofread your work.
- Share your blog posts through social media like Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Use simple, but "catchy", titles to drive readership.
- Read other blogs and comment on them, potentially driving up your own readership.
- Be careful how much you assume someone else knows about the subject.
- Consider whether your use of some other material is necessary or crossing over into plagiarism. When in doubt, give credit.
- Don't be afraid to use videos. Some people even blog in video form only.
- Determine the best comment policy for you. In some cases, you won't want to permit comments. In other cases, a "moderated" blog, where comments have to be approved before posting, works better. Be aware that sometimes even the most innocuous post can draw profane, racist, or other inappropriate comments.

- Respond to every comment you allow to show; your non-response indicates that you don't care (even if you do). Establish a standard for how quickly you respond to comments, whether it's 24 hours or immediately, and stick to it.

Where do I start?

- Pick a name for your blog that is unique and fits you.

- There are several spots on the web where you can create and host your blog. WordPress is one of the easiest and most popular. You will need to go to wordpress.org to create your user name and set up the blog. Using WordPress, choose a background theme (you can change it later). Note: Some WordPress themes are not free.

- As part of the setup, create an "About" page that will let you describe yourself and the purpose of the blog, and create a "Contact" page that gives people information about how to reach you. You will want to be careful about what information you want to share; consider creating an email account that is only used for the blog. You can route that email address to your main account.

- Write your first post. And potentially delete all of it and start over again. And keep writing!

- Your posts will "archive" so that if someone sees your latest post and appreciates it, they can go back and look at earlier posts.

- Readers who appreciate your posts will be able to "subscribe" to your blog and get updates when you post.

- Other free options include Tumblr and BlogSpot. Tumblr will automatically post to Facebook and Twitter, and allow you follow other Tumblr accounts, but you cannot export Tumblr posts.

Facebook now has more than 1.94 billion monthly users, and 1.28 billion people log onto Facebook daily making it the number one social networking site.

Using Facebook as a church offers a way to engage more deeply with those connected to your church. It also offers the opportunity to introduce your church to the larger community and to those seeking connection and a faith home. By keeping up a vibrant and current Facebook Page, a church has the opportunity to extend its reach in the community.

Facebook should be a part of your church's communication strategy. It is a way to get the word out about what is going on at your church, but should not *only* be a direct copy of your weekly bulletin announcements. A good rule of thumb is 80/20: 80 percent of your content can and should be about your church, but at least 20 percent of your content should be about others--community partners, local events, things outside of your walls.

Facebook Accounts

There are three primary account types:

- **Personal Profiles – for individuals**
  - o Personal Profiles are the standard account for Facebook users.
  - o Facebook policy requires each user to be at least 13 years old
  - o Facebook policy also states no person should have more than one Personal Profile

- **Page – for networking with the community at large**
  - o A Facebook **Page** is the primary way a church should be interacting on Facebook.
  - o Pages are public for all on Facebook. Any Facebook user can "Like" a Page and subscribe to all updates from the page.
  - o Use for contact information, church events and activities, regular reminders, closings due to weather, photos, sermon teasers, announcements, sharing of community partnerships, events, etc.
  - o A church should have a single page that functions for the entirety of the church, including all ministry areas. This keeps all of your traffic and "likes" in one place and doesn't split the audience.
  - o Be sure to have claimed your Church Facebook Page URL by setting the page username. Click on About in the left-hand column and set your username under General.

- **Group – for networking within the church, or within church groups**
  - o Public Group – searchable on Facebook. The information shared in Public Groups is viewable by all on Facebook, both members and non-members. Non-members must request to join the group. Entities such as Youth Ministry or other specific ministry areas may want to use a Group to manage conversation specific to that ministry instead of creating another conflicting Facebook Page.
  - o Closed Groups – searchable on Facebook. The information shared in the group is restricted to members approved by an administrator. Non-members can see who is in the group and who the administrator is, and they can request to join the group.
  - o Secret Groups – cannot be found by searching Facebook. A person can only join a Secret Group by personal invitation by someone else in the group.

Using Facebook

- A church should plan to update its Facebook Page at minimum **three times per week**. Posting more often is recommended, but setting a goal of three updates a week is a good starting place. Before you panic, remember that your church does a lot of preparation each and every week for Sunday worship. Setting up a regular post using the Scripture text that will be preached on or a follow up question from Sunday's sermon

is an EASY way to have ready content each week.

- Posts should be a mix of different types of content and should invite followers to engage in conversation. Posts can be published immediately or can be scheduled for a later date by using the small triangle arrow next to the Publish button.

  o **Posts:** Posts are the simplest way to interact using Facebook. These are similar to 'status updates' in personal accounts. Some examples: Post a question about Sunday's sermon, post the Scripture verse that will be used this week, post a quick announcement or notification about something happening, post a prayer focus for the day. If you follow United Methodist Communication pages, you often can find thoughtful articles to share.

  o **Photos:** Photo posts have greater return than posts with just words. You should plan to post at least one photo a week. Some examples: photos of ministry in action, a photo of the worship space as you prepare for worship, a photo of the staff doing the work of the church, photos teasing upcoming ministry opportunities. Remember that pictures with people in them are more appealing; try to avoid "posed" photographs. Capture people in action.

  o **Links:** Links can be shared via Facebook to point folks to your church website or to your church ministry partners.

  o **Events:** Facebook offers the opportunity to create events to promote ministry opportunities. Events typically don't see as much traffic as the post types mentioned above, but they can be useful--especially for church related events taking place off-site.

  o **Live:** Facebook Live Is a live video option that is done in real time. It can be used to broadcast a sermon, church event, do a Q&A and more. Viewers may comment and react to the event by hitting the like, love, angry, etc. icons. Once the video is complete, the video can be saved on Facebook for later viewing.

Facebook Advertising

Facebook offers the opportunity to advertise in multiple ways. Facebook Ads are a simple way to reach a large number of people on a small budget.

  o **Boost Posts:** You can pay to boost a post by using the 'boost post' button after posting. This can be useful if you have posted about an upcoming event or opportunity and want to get the word out.

  o **Boost Event:** You can use the 'boost event' button after creating an event to advertise it publicly (to those outside of your regular Facebook Reach)

  o **Advertise Business:** this feature allows you to create several different types of ads (such as those that will run in the right-hand column of Facebook Users feeds.)

  o **Targeting:** Once you have chosen what type of add you'd like to use, be sure to set the targeting. You can choose a location (ie: 10 mile radius around your church building) or you can choose to target those who like your page and their friends, or you can choose to target people in a certain area that like different topics. Be sure to pay attention to the 'reach' tracker as you define your target

Pricing for Facebook Advertising varies and is determined by you. You can choose your ad budget by day or by the lifetime of the ad run. A little bit of money goes a LONG way in Facebook Ads. Boosting a post for $5 for 3 days can yield great results.

An example: A church in Richmond spent a total of $159 during Lent and Holy Week in 2017. Those funds were split between five ads--three were boosted posts, one was an ad set (sidebar ads), and one was an event boost. The church targeted a 10-mile radius around their address. The combined ad reach of this $159 was **12,459** people resulting in 420 link clicks, 219 post engagements, and seven event responses.

Pinterest

Pinterest is a fast growing new segment of social media. It has quickly grown to the third most often used US social media platform, though, like Twitter, its audience tends to be smaller and highly specific. It is currently on the rise among church use and is being used in many different ways by different churches and ministries. Basically Pinterest is a virtual pin board. It is a place where a person or business can collect ideas marked by images that link back to their internet sources.

Time Commitment

25-30 minutes to initially set up a ministry account

20-30 minutes per board to set up and start pinning to a particular board

~1 hour/week to create new boards and/or add to existing boards as well as comment on and repin

Who uses Pinterest?

- 150 million monthly active Pinterest users
- 81% of users are female
- Millennials use Pinterest as much as Instagram
- There are over 75 billion ideas on Pinterest
- Average time spent on Pinterest per visit is 14.2 minutes.

Church-Related Pinterest Audiences

- People looking for additional resources after sermons or events
- Creative types–persons who are into crafts, decorating, cooking
- Those who like to collect resources and keep things orderly and organized
- Teachers/educators/leaders who need/like having quick places to grab ideas
- Volunteers looking for more information and resources about their ministry area

Churches can use Pinterest to share or compile

- Extra resources that go with a particular sermon, sermon series, or church study
- Inspirational quotes, thoughts, art (be careful here!)
- Resources for future events/studies (Create a 'board' for Advent studies so that others can explore resources and help decide which to use. Create a board with a collection of recommended books for reading)
- Wish Lists for church/ministry building/program improvements
- Sharing ideas and resources among leaders/teachers
- Craft projects for children's ministries
- Church supper recipes
- Games/events for youth/children's ministries
- Decoration ideas for church events and worship spaces (VBS! Liturgical seasons, special worship services)
- Compiling worship songs to learn and practice

Pinterest 'How To'

Step 1: Create a Pinterest business account at: http://business.pinterest.com/ by following the steps and filling out the form as directed. (Be sure to create a business account for your church or organization in order to have access to statistical data and be in legal compliance with terms of use. If you originally created a personal page as a church or organization, Pinterest gives you the option to convert to a business page here: https://pinterest.com/login/?next=/business/convert/))

Step 2: Title and create your board(s).

Step 3: Start pinning to those boards from sites around the Internet and/or repin pins from other churches or organizations.

Step 4: Visit your church website and use images from there on some of your pin boards to ensure that some of your Pinterest content is directly linking back to where people can find information about your church!

Step 5: Follow other churches, pinners, and organizations in order to share ideas and be sure that your pins are out in circulation to be seen and draw people back to your Pinterest account and ultimately to your church.

Ways to Pin

- Directly from pinterest.com when logged into your Pinterest account using the 'add pin' function.
- Using the 'Pin It' web browser extension. (Can be downloaded to your web browser from here: http://about.pinterest.com/goodies/)
- Using the Pinterest app for a smartphone or tablet.

Pinterest Vocabulary

Pin (noun): an image as stored on and seen from a Pinterest board that links back to another website.

Pin (verb): to select an image from a website and save it to a Pinterest board

Pinner: someone who pins.

Board: the virtual storage area for pins on Pinterest. Pinners create different pins based on different themes. (Generally one theme per board.) *i.e.: VBS ideas. Books on Prayer. Church Supper Recipes.*

Secret Board: a board that cannot be seen by the general public. Only those granted access to that board may see its content.

Repin: when one pinner selects a pin from another pinner's board and by clicking the 'pin it' button, repins it to his/her own pin board.

Follow: as with other social media sites, pinners can follow others. When you follow another pinner their pins will appear on your home page for you to view and repin as you wish.

Mention: When writing a description about a pin, pinners may 'mention' another pinner by using the @ symbol and that pinner's username.

Helpful links

http://churchjuice.com/blog/pinterest-for-churches-part-1-the-basics

http://churchjuice.com/blog/pinterest-for-churches-part-2-strategy/

http://blog.managingyourchurch.com/2012/06/8_ways_churches_are_using_pint_1.html

http://churchtechtoday.com/2012/03/14/5-ways-market-church-pinterest/

Contributor: *Kim Johnson, KimJohnson@vaumc.org*

Twitter is a Micro Blog: Limited to 140 characters including spaces per post. If you are replying to a "tweet" -- the basic form of Twitter -- the name of the person(s) you are replying to does not count against the character limit (in the past, it did). Twitter also says it is continuing to look at ways to expand the character count.

To Get Started

Go to twitter.com and follow instructions. Twitter is free, but you will have to provide a telephone number and email address. Use your mobile phone, not a landline (if you still have one). Download the Twitter app for your mobile device, if it wasn't installed by default.

Twitter Name

Your login name is the name you will be on Twitter.

Select a username that is less than or equal to 15 characters in length, with no spaces or special characters (underscores are the only exception). Make it something you and your followers can easily recall. You also will want a small image of yourself (or maybe your church), which becomes your Twitter icon.

To share your name with others use @ symbol or the full link (ex: @vaumc or https://twitter/vaumc)

Twitter Navigation (*note: This will appear different, depending on whether you are on mobile or laptop; it may also vary depending on whether you are on iPhone or Android*)

- o **Home:** Tweets from all those you follow (like the wall of Facebook)
- o **Moments:** Essentially a "front page" for Twitter, showing current popular topics. You also can create a "moment."
- o **Notifications:** A list of interactions from others (retweets, likes, comments)
- o **Messages:** A list of direct messages you have sent and received (think email)
- o **Your photo:** Allows you to see previous tweets, see your followers, see who you are following, get to your settings, edit your profile and more.

Ways to find Tweeters to follow

Look on the left hand side in the "Who to follow" and look for "Find Friends". Twitter will always recommend people to follow based on who you follow currently.

Attached to Tweets

- o **Expand:** Will let you see the full conversation if there is one.
- o **Link Shortcuts:** fb. (facebook) Bit.ly (social media shortcut) Eepurl (MailChimp) goo.gl (Google). These are designed to reduce the number of characters a link uses.
- o **pic.twitter:** a picture attached to Tweet. Can be just an image alone.

Hashtags

Allow you to be a part of a conversation. You can follow a hashtag so you can keep up with conversations; this is especially handy for following developments at conference, meeting, or event, even if you aren't there.

There are no spaces or punctuation in hashtags. Ex: #vaumc, #quotes, #ChSocM, #smshep

Capitalization is not important but makes it easier to read. Ex: #ChurchName or #churchname.

Common Abbreviations

MT = Modified Tweet (edited to make 140 characters) RT = ReTweet (no changes to original tweet) DM = Direct Message – private message between users 2 = to, too or two (I feel the eyes rolling) @ = used to link and mention another Twitter user	w or w/ = With FB = Facebook SM = Social Media SN = Social Network YT = YouTube SoMe = Social Media

Helpful sites

twittonary.com - Dictionary for Twitter

tweetdownload.net - Allows you to download your tweets into a spreadsheet

Helpful Apps

tagdict - defines various hashtags (Ex: #WCW = women crush wednesday)

urbandictionary - defines modern day slang and some abbreviations (ROFL = rolling on floor laughing)

Emojis

Emojis are little pictures inside of the text to replace words. Not all emojis are standard so some may appear at a square. Because of limited characters, emojis allow for more dialogue. (Ex: cat face instead of typing out cat or kitten, A house image instead of typing out home or residents)

In today's communication world, nearly every organization needs a website. Think of it as the front door to your digital presence. Most churches, districts, and conference organizations of the United Methodist Church will launch a website as a tool for staying connected with members, reaching out to seekers, and visitors. Three components of the website are the domain, web hosting and website design. Web ministry is much more than having a Web presence or website. Let's be honest here, there are some fairly technical topics to deal with. But building and maintaining your site might be the perfect opportunity to find someone in your congregation who has the expertise and the calling to make this his or her ministry. You want the site to look professional and to be visually appealing. You want it to be up-to-date, from a content perspective. And most sites will need some maintenance and upkeep so that they stay technically current, as well as secure.

What is a "domain name?"

A domain name is your identity on the Internet (for example, www.vaumc.org). To set up a website, you need a domain name. Give some thought to your domain name: Try to make it as short and as easy to remember as possible, but also make it distinctive. For example, firstmethodistchurch.org won't work very well (plus it probably already is taken). Most churches will want to use a name such as xxx.org (.org is intended for nonprofit organizations). Domains are not free, typically costing about $9.99 the first year and a bit more after that. Web hosting fees are separate in most cases; more about that later. If you can afford it, consider purchasing variations on your name (1stmethodist-church), as well as different extensions (.com, .net,). That prevents someone creating a site with a very similar name and using it in ways you might not like. You can buy your name separately, but it is easier the first time to purchase it at same time you buy your hosting package.

What is web hosting?

Just as computer files need to reside on your computer, a web page needs a place to call home, which is called web hosting. The difference between the two is that web pages are generally intended to be seen by the public. To do this, the computer where the files stored must be more robust than a personal computer, and must be connected to the Internet through a fast and reliable link. The computer where the web pages are stored is called a web server (because it serves pages to users on the Internet). All the web pages in the world comprise what we refer to as the World Wide Web (www).

Shameless plug: One of the best options to consider as a United Methodist congregation is the domain registration and web hosting service provided by UMC Communications (http://www.umcom.org/services-products/web-services). Several packages are available; the $5 a month package to $19.95 a month. The site also offers good support for beginners, including some web-based training.

What do web hosting companies do?

As well as providing web space, hosting companies also provide a number of other "value-added" services. The extent of these services varies from company to company but most provide the registration of domain names, email services, and tech support.

Are there different kinds of web hosting?

Yes, there are many different varieties of web hosting, designed to meet different needs. A two-page website set up by an individual will need far less services than a multinational high-traffic site.

Amount of web space is how much web space the web hosting company allows you to use for your website. Many hosting providers advertise unlimited space or have plans that allow you to grow your site as the com-

plexity of it grows. Read the fine print though because some allow unlimited space only during an introductory period, then afterwards the cost may increase.

Email addresses are another part of web hosting. All website owners should have email accounts with the same domain name as their website for a professional look (for example, pastor@domainame.org). Depending on which hosting package you buy, the method of setting up your email accounts will vary slightly. (Again, UMC Communications makes this extremely easy and the email can flow to an existing gmail account. The $5 a month package includes five email addresses.) The hosting company will be able to walk you through this process. Once the emails are set up, you will need to know how to access them. Most people use Outlook or Outlook Express. There are tutorials online for this process and some hosting companies even provide that information for you. Different hosting companies allow for different numbers of email addresses so be sure to read the small print to get the numbers of emails you need without extra fees.

Bandwidth refers to the amount of data your website can transmit to web users. For example, if a web page in your website is 10 kilobytes (roughly about 1000 words on the page), and one Internet user views it, you have used 10 kilobytes of bandwidth. If 10 users request that page, you have used 100 kilobytes of bandwidth. Bandwidth is normally measured monthly. Most small websites will typically require half a gigabyte (52,000 web pages) of bandwidth per month. Some companies offer you "unlimited bandwidth". What it really means is that there are no set limits, but if your website attracts too much traffic, they will either close it down or contact you for an upgrade. Another factor to consider is what happens if you go above your allotted bandwidth. This is known as bandwidth overage. Some companies will switch off your website if this happens. Others will tack on additional monthly charges. Check the small print for any hidden bandwidth charges. Often extra bandwidth is charged at a much higher rate than your normal allowance. **Again, if you plan to have a lot of video content, you need to be especially aware of your bandwith; nothing is worse than a slow-loading, jerky video.**

Features and components

Most websites are more than static web pages, and provide some degree of interactivity, including:

- forms for users to fill in, which email the data to the website owner
- databases which contain details of many products on offer
- ability for website users to send files to the website owner via the website

All web hosting accounts offer the ability to store static web pages. If you want the interactivity, you need to ensure that the host company offers the relevant components. Website scripting means you can tailor your web pages to behave in certain ways, using various scripts. Storing and retrieving data and sending emails are all done via special script which is embedded in your web page. Make sure your hosting package allows for several scripting languages, including PHP, Java, Perl, Active Server Pages (ASP) and .Net (ASP.NET).

What kind of web hosting do I need?

The hosting package you choose will depend on what kind of website you wish to set up, and how big you think it may get. For small congregations, a plan that allows 10 email addresses, 1GB of web space and 20GB of bandwidth is a great start. Most come with a dedicated control panel for easy email set up. If you expect your site to get a lot of traffic (say 1000+ hits per day) you may want to consider a hosting package that offers 2GB of web space and 100GB of bandwidth.

Once I have web hosting how do I get my website online?

Once you've decided on your web hosting package, you will need to design your website and get it online. This isn't as hard as it sounds. There are thousands of sites built by people who have no experience! If you don't have experience in creating a website or don't have the funds to hire a professional, use a template with content management capabilities such as WordPress, Drupal, or Joomla. Many hosting companies have their own templates as well. If you want to take it a step further, you can buy a software program, such as Microsoft Expression or Adobe Dreamweav-

er that will help you create and edit your web pages. Some hosting companies offer an editor as well.

If you aren't using WordPress, Joomla, etc., you should initially create your website on your computer. Once it's ready upload it to the web servers. Be sure to check it against different browsers (Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, etc.). Browsers tend to treat websites differently.

As part of the process of setting up web space, the hosting company will send you the username, password, and other details needed to access your web space on their servers. You may need to set up your web page editing software with these details. How to do this will vary between programs. There are tutorials online to help you with this process. Once the files are uploaded to the servers, people can access them via Internet!

Recommended Hosting services

iPage.com	Hostmonster.com	ShareFaith.com	JustHost.com	WebHostingHub.com
E-zekial.com	Web.com	Fatcow.com	HopOffaCloud.com	Hostgater.com
InmotionHosting.com	Dreamhost.com	Bluehost.com	Greengeeks.com	UMC Communications

Snapchat Best Practices

VIRGINIA
CONFERENCE
THE UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH
COMMUNICATIONS

Launched in 2011, Snapchat is a photo and video based social networking platform that continues to grow in popularity. Users share photos and videos (5 seconds) with captions via smartphone and tablet. Filters can be applied to alter and enhance the post.

Snapchat provides another way for churches to tell their stories visually in real-time without having to wait to write about them until after the event or moment has passed. It also offers members, visitors and strangers the opportunity to see what is going on in the church's ministry.

Snaps last for 24 hours. You can download your images/videos to share to other social media within those 24 hours. You can screenshot other people's images/videos. People have to "friend" you to see your content. Snapchat is a popular way to create videos that can be downloaded and used in other social media such as Facebook videos or YouTube. Once your username is set, it cannot be changed.

Who uses Snapchat?

- o Snapchat has 150 million users and growing
- o 10 billion photos and videos shared
- o 60 percent of all smartphone users are now on Snapchat
- o 60 percent of Snapchat's users are 13 to 24 years old
- o 63 percent of its audience are 18 to 34 year olds
- o Has a younger audience than Facebook and Twitter
- o

Churches can use Snapchat

- o Highlight volunteers and ministries
- o Give a behind-the-scenes look at ministry
- o Teasers for next week's worship service
- o Interviews of members, staff, volunteers, etc.
- o Encourage engagement and participation
- o Show what you are doing in ministry (as opposed to writing about it)
- o Create a "filter" for your church or event - www.snapchat.com/geofilters

How to sign up

- o Download and Install app on phone/tablet
- o On the Welcome screen, tap 'SIGN UP.'
- o Tap the field that says 'Email Address' and enter a valid email address. It's important to have a valid email address incase you forget your password, a password reset will be sent to it..
- o Tap the field that says 'Password' and enter a secure password (must be at least 8 characters).
- o Password Tip: Try to avoid using your name, Username, mobile number, birthday or any other personal information. It's best to include a mix of numbers, symbols, capital and lowercase letters in your password.
- o Choosing your Username. Your username is your identity on Snapchat. Make it something unique to you.Note, you cannot change your Username once you have set it. If you choose to delete your account, your Username will no longer be available.The username is one of the ways that people will

find you.

o   Optional: Verifying your mobile number. You can verify your mobile number at any time. However, if you verify your number and forget your password, they can send a password reset text!

o   Lastly, it's time to prove you're not a robot. Once completed, you're ready to get snapping!

Pro Tips!

o   Update your Privacy Settings to choose who can view your Stories.

o   If your preferred email address changes, you can update and re-verify the e-mail linked to your account in Settings.

o   If you verify your mobile number you can enable Login Verification to help make your account more secure.

o   Disable the Find Friends feature to have your Snapchat username or name appear on a friend's contact list. If you do not disable this, Snapchat friends who have your mobile number will see your name as it appears in their address book.

o   If you have a verified email or mobile number and ever need to reset your password, you can do so by hitting 'Forgot your Password?' on the Snapchat login page.

o   Also, please never give your Snapchat account details to an unofficial website, as it could compromise your account and information. If you need to manage your account settings, please do so through the official app.

o   If you sign in on one device and try to sign into a second device, the first device will be logged out. You can only sign into the app with one device at a time.

Finding and Adding Friends

o   Finding and adding friends can be done a few ways.

o   To add someone from your contacts: Tap the at the top of your Camera screen. Tap 'Add Friends' on your Profile screen. Then tap 'Add from Address Book' (If this is your first time adding friends from your contacts you will need to allow Snapchat to access your contacts in Settings!)

o   All of your phone contacts with Snapchat accounts will be displayed, along with friends who don't have Snapchat, who you can invite to use the app via SMS. Just tap the + next to their name to add a friend, or invite someone to Snapchat

To add a Snapchatter who has added you

o   When a Snapchatter adds you, the trophy icon the top of your screen will turn yellow

o   Tap the yellow which will bring you to your Profile screen

o   Click 'Added Me' on your Profile screen

o   Tap the + next to their name to add them back. It will turn to a ✔ to let you know they have been added

Helpful links and resources:

http://snapchat-blog.com

https://support.snapchat.com

https://churchm.ag/?s=snapchat

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Quick Tips to Improve (or Start) Your Email Marketing

1. **Sign up for a no-cost or low-cost email solution.** MailChimp (www.mailchimp.com) has a forever free account that lets you send email to as many as 2,000 subscribers. Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com) is affordably priced. Both offer list management features, templates for emails, and both help you manage spam.

2. **Have a purpose.** Make sure you are specific about what the list is about and follow through.

3. **Make sure there is a clear path to sign up.** Publicize in the bulletin, on the web, and once a year before summer vacations begin. Be sure to catch new members too.

4. **Make your subject line work for you.** Keep it short and sweet and be clear. Pique their curiosity. (Digital Impact found 80 percent of those tested opened their inbox, read the "from" line and then subject line and then hit delete).

5. **Add preview text.** This gives them enough of a glimpse that they will often open the email to read further.

6. **Send your email at the right time.** Experiment by sending email at different times, then check your statistics (providers such as MailChimp make this easy) to determine when your audience is most likely to open the email (called the "open rate." Once you've determined when the best time is for your audience, be consistent. (A recent study indicated open rates are best on Tuesday then Thursday. Click through rates are best on Friday then Tuesday).

7. **Review your stats.** Keep checking. What is your open rate? What are viewers clicking (and not clicking)?

8. **Make sure your emails are mobile friendly.** 65 percent of all email gets opened first on a mobile device.

9. **Do not overuse capitalization (or color).** This will actually cause people not to open the email. No one likes to be screamed at.

10. **Check your spelling, grammar, and all your facts.** This is best done by having someone else read your email before you send it.

11. **Don't waste people's time.** Be clear, concise, and timely. Long unwieldy emails kill your readers' interest. If you can eliminate a word without changing the meaning, do so.

12. **Be useful.** Don't just email because "the church/we" need something. Be helpful. Share interesting information. Focus on content that is high priority and important.

13. **Develop a natural voice.** Consider emails as a way to talk to your congregation. Keep it friendly and human.

14. **Don't be dull.** Write short, strong sentences. Long sentences are cumbersome and boring. Don't bore your readers with difficult words.

15. **Use the rule of one.** One concept. One idea. One call to action.

16. **Avoid the passive tense of verbs.** Rather than saying "a meal will follow the service" say "Please join us for lunch after service."

17. **Choose the right font.** Not too fancy. Not too small. Arial and Verdana are two good options.

18. **Be generous with white space.** Use bullet points when possible.