

Building a Church Website

These days, it seems like everyone has a website – and churches are no exception! But it can be hard to know where to start, or how to go about setting up your website. This guide aims to help churches to get themselves on the web!

Why Have A Website?

So, why should you have a website for your church? Isn't it just another thing to add to the to-do list? Or will it really be useful?

Obviously, 'everyone else does' it not a good enough reason for you to go to the trouble (and possibly the expense) of setting up a website for your church. But there are definite advantages in having some kind of presence on the internet:

- It shows that your church is active, and is a useful way of telling your community about your church and any organisations or activities they might be interested in.
- Many people, especially young people, turn to the internet before anything else when looking for a church. If you have a simple web page with a list of service times and a welcome message, people will be able to find you more easily.
- The website can provide a handy source of times and dates for people who are involved in church activities – if they forget what time an event is happening, they can easily look it up.



In other words, an effective website is a useful way to enhance communications among the congregation and with the community around you; it should not be thought of as an alternative to face-to-face contact, newsletters etc., but as an addition to them.

Where do we start?

So, you've decided that your church needs a website. Where do you start? Before we get technical, there are a few decisions to make:

- **What is the purpose of your website?** Will it be a simple site which provides straightforward information such as service times and contact details? Do you want to use it to tell people in the congregation what's happening in the church week by week? Are you aiming to attract the local community as well? For most churches, the answer will be a mixture of these things and more, but it is helpful to get a rough idea of what you're aiming for before you start.

Remember that it's always easier to start off small and build the site up. A huge website can quickly get out of date if no one is keeping an eye on it – it's better to have a smaller site with information which doesn't need to be changed.

- **Who's going to be in charge of the site?** It's best to have one point of contact for all things website-related. You may want to have a team of people, but even then it is good to select one person who has overall responsibility, particularly when it comes to deciding what can go on the website.

You may have someone who builds the site and then hands it over to someone else who will keep it updated.

- **What should the site look like?** You want your website to reflect your church – so, should it be 'funky', stylish, fun or something else? You may be able to leave this up to the designer, if you have one, but even then you will want to give them some guidance.

Domain Names

One of the first steps of getting a website is to register a domain name. This means the website address that people will type in, to access your website. So for instance, **www.irishmethodist.org** is the Methodist Church in Ireland's website domain name. You can register your domain name from a variety of providers but you need to check to see if it is available first. You can expect to pay around £6-£20 for this, depending on what extension you have (.org.uk .org etc.).

Some useful websites for registering domain names and checking if yours is available:

<http://www.domainmonster.com/>

<http://www.123-reg.co.uk/>

Website Hosting

Along with your domain name, you will also need to pay for 'Web space' from a website host to store all your web pages, images and other documents.

You can buy your domain name and web hosting from the same company, which can be very convenient. Again, there is a cost involved and it is anything from about £15 + per year. Companies that offer good web hosting and domain names:

<http://www.123-reg.co.uk/>

<http://www.justhost.com/>