

Building a Website

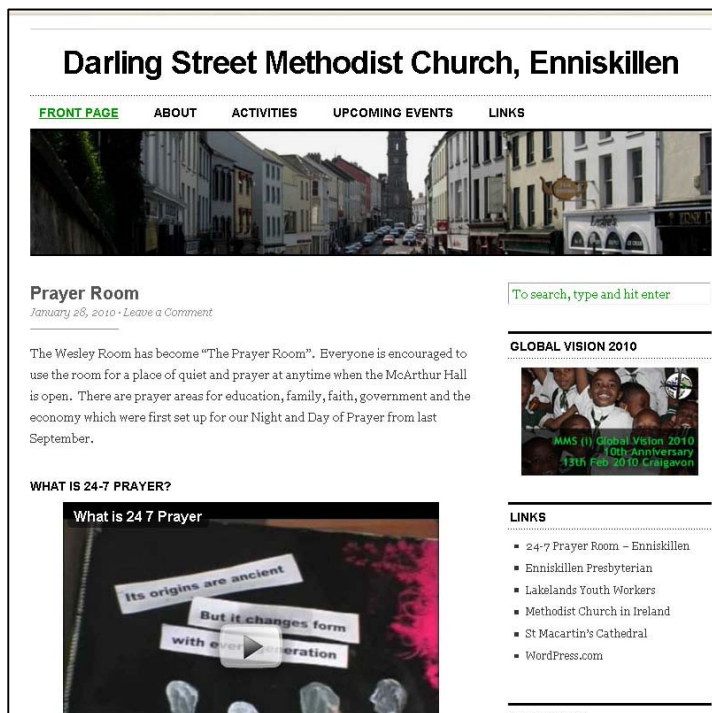
There are several ways of building a website, and which you choose will depend on how big the site is going to be, and the available technical expertise. The three main ways of building a site are:

1. Use a blog

You can use software like Wordpress to build a small site relatively quickly. You'll need a bit of expertise, but it's not too difficult. A number of churches use this method and find that it works well.

It works like this:

- Go to wordpress.com (or whichever site you are using) and sign up
- Choose a name for your site (probably xxx Methodist Church), and pick a template you like
- You will be given a home page, which you can update straight away, so add whatever information you want there
- You can generally add extra pages, images and so on



Advantages of blogging software:

- It's quick – if you know what you're doing, you can set a site up in 15 minutes
- It's usually free
- It's fairly easy to update once you know how

Disadvantages of blogging software:

- You need a certain amount of technical expertise to set it up, especially if you want extra pages
- You have very little control over the site appearance – you choose between a number of pre-set templates. Your site may end up looking like a lot of others out there
- It's hard for someone with no technical skills to change anything on the site
- It doesn't work very well for large sites

Cost: usually free

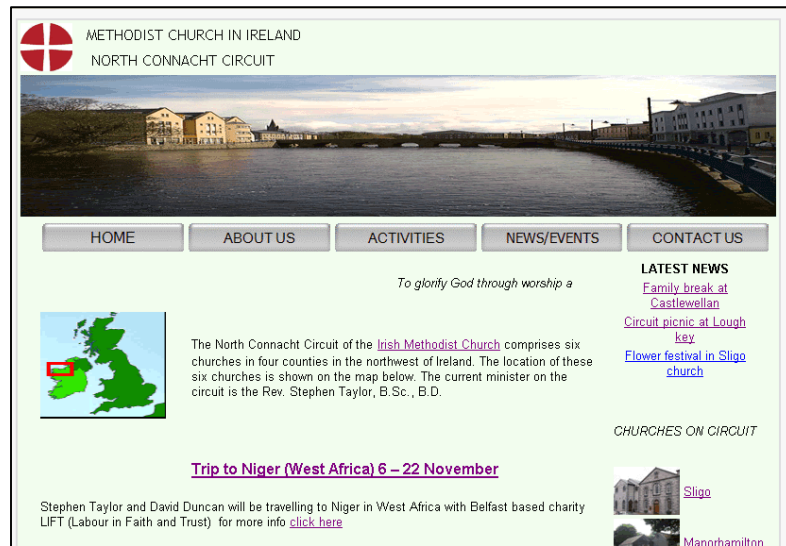
Time needed: half an hour will get you a basic site

Flexibility: not great – the site can end up looking generic; you may not be able to customise it much if it doesn't fit your needs

Skill needed: some technical skill is needed, both for setting it up and updating information

2. Build the site yourself

Another option is to build the website yourself (or get someone in the congregation to build it for you). If you have someone who has the necessary skills, then this is often the best thing to do. You'll need to give them a good brief explaining what you want, and then they should be able to get on with it.



Advantages of building the site yourself:

- You get exactly what you want – you can build the site to look how you want it, and you can add as much information as you want

Disadvantages of building the site yourself:

- You need to have someone who really knows what they're doing
- You may have to pay for hosting, unless someone offers to host the site for free – the person who builds it will be able to advise on this
- It is easy to end up with a site which can only be updated by the person who set it up. You need to make sure that someone else can do it if that person goes on holiday, gets sick or just gets too busy to handle the site. This should be discussed beforehand – is the person building the site willing to update it, or can they build it so that other people have access? Are they responsible for deciding what goes on it?

Cost: hopefully free, although you may need to pay for hosting (about £100 a year)

Time needed: generally a few weeks

Flexibility: excellent - you can have the site exactly how you want it

Skill needed: you need someone who really knows what they're doing

3. Get a web design company to build it for you

There are plenty of web design companies around, and they will build (and host) the site for you. They will also be able to advise you on site content and on the appearance of your site. They can build in a Content Management System so that a number of people can have access to the site and can update it easily.

A number of web design agencies specialise in church-related sites, and will be happy to talk to you about your needs.

Advantages of using a web design company

- You don't need any technical expertise – just tell them what you want, and they will do it
- The company can advise you on what to put on the site
- A Content Management System provides an easy way to update the site, even for people who do not have technical expertise. This usually allows you to add as many pages as you want



Disadvantages of using a web design company

- You'll have to pay for the site design and a yearly hosting fee

Cost: generally a few hundred pounds for a static site, or up to £1000 for a large site with a Content Management System. You will also have to pay about £100 per year for hosting.

Time needed: most agencies will build the site in about a month

Flexibility: Good – you can specify exactly what the site should look like

Skill needed: none