

Precautions

Very often, churches are unsure about what can and can't be displayed on websites. Photographs, in particular, can be problematic. It's a good idea to draw up a set of guidelines from the start, and stick to them. You may wish to ensure the following:

- Photos of individual people or small groups should only be used with permission. If anyone in the photo is under 18, get written parental consent before using the photo, and explicitly mention that it's for the church website. Most parents are used to filling in consent forms for photos, so it is usually not a problem. For general photos (e.g. A church service) you don't need permission, but it is often polite to ask.
- Do not include names or other identifying information alongside children in photographs of them. This can include blurring out name badges if they are visible.
- Photos can be taken down if someone objects. Don't fill your website with bad or embarrassing photos of people. If people know that you don't put bad photos up, they're more likely to give you permission to photograph them!
- Only use photos you have permission to use. Don't take them from other sites unless you have permission first. If someone in the congregation is a keen photographer, get them to supply you with photos of events.
- Do not allow photos of people to be copied from your website for other sites, unless you have permission from the people in the photos (or parents/guardians for children).

As well as photographs, other web content which you may need to think through includes:

- Personal information such as phone numbers, email addresses, home addresses etc. It is best to include only the church office and email address.
- Times of children's activities – in particular, if there is an unusual or special event like a sleepover, for security reasons it may be best not to give details on the website.
- Deaths, marriages etc. - it is best not to put information like this on a website without permission from those concerned. Often, newly-married couples will be happy to have a wedding picture on your site, but always check first, and only use photos you have taken yourself or which are given to you.
- Adverts – sometimes you can get free web hosting from your broadband supplier, but in return, they will often insist on putting adverts on your page. You don't know what these adverts are going to be, and in some cases they will not be appropriate, so it's best to pay the extra to have an ad-free site.
- Audio files – a number of churches put weekly sermons online. However, this

can mean that you need to upgrade your web hosting package, and you will have to arrange for them to be edited and uploaded every week; in reality, the sermons are very rarely downloaded, so it could be extra expense and lots of extra hassle for very little benefit. Also bear in mind that it is illegal to make hymns and songs (or any other type of music) available for download, and this includes congregational singing, so an audio file of your service may well be illegal. If you want to have audio downloads, stick to the sermon.