LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

COMMUNICATIONS
MINISTRY SUPPORT

WEBSITES GUIDE

FOR LCA AGENCIES AND CONGREGATIONS

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LCA Communications
197 Archer Street, North Adelaide SA 5006
lca.comms@lca.org.au
08 8267 7300 (ask for Communications)

INTRODUCTION

This guide has been prepared to assist LCA/NZ congregations and agencies in the planning and development of websites to support their mission and ministry. It also provides information about the services of LCA Communications (lca.comms@lca.org.au), which employs the principles in this guide in our own extensive website-building program.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

When somebody wants to check out your congregation, it's likely they'll 'google you'.

- What will they think about you if you don't even have a website?
- What will they think about you if your website is hopelessly out of date?
- Or if it's as tired and worn out as a pair of old boots?

In this day and age, it's important to have a website. It's the way searchers will gather information about you. If you look okay, they might come to visit you in person.

A website also indicates that you are in touch with the modern world and are embracing change—and that's a positive message. Nevertheless, it's better to have no website at all than one that's out of date, unloved and abandoned. A website like that tells the visitor loads about you – what if you treat your members and visitors the way you treat your website?

First impressions are critical – so give your website as much care and attention as you would to your church building and grounds. Make sure you periodically assess it. Compare it with some of the new websites around the place, and think about how yours could be improved. Ask yourself what message your website is giving to those who come for a sneak peek at your congregation. If you're not sure, ask some people from your work or social groups, preferably people who aren't regular church-goers. Their feedback will be much more helpful than that of insiders.

So, if you think it's time for a website renovation or rebuild, here are some points to consider.

CAPACITY

You've seen many congregation websites go to rack and ruin. Perhaps yours is one of them. It all starts out so well. Somebody in the congregation is a web whiz and sets up your sparkling new website, but then they leave or lose interest and you are left with something you don't know how to drive. But unlike an old car gathering dust in a garage, your old website is in full view, telling the whole world that you're rusty and unreliable. You don't want that.

So, before you launch into this exciting website-building project, assess your congregation's capacity to maintain your new machine.

- Is there somebody who is committed to updating your website regularly?—and are you sure they have the requisite skills?
- Is there a backup plan if that person leaves?
- Is there someone who can oversee the quality of the writing?
- Who will provide your high-quality photos, and who make them suitable for the web?
- If you have no capacity or limited capacity within your congregation, how much could you afford to pay per month/per year for LCA Communications to provide these services for you? *
- Have you found out how much it will cost your congregation per year for domain renewal, security and software updates, and repair costs when something breaks? Who will provide these services for you? **

** To find out more about our LCA website content services, contact LCA Communications lca.comms@lca.org.au*

*** To find out more about LCA website maintenance services, contact LCA Information Technology IT@lca.org.au*

See page 15 for more information about LCA service contracts.

PREREQUISITES

To set up your own website, you will need:

- a team to determine purpose, message, cost effectiveness, audience, design and content
- budget allocation for the development and building of the website—probably by a third party, unless there is expertise within the congregation. (To find out about our LCA website building service, contact LCA Communications lca.comms@lca.org.au)
- a website policy (see Appendix A at www.lca.org.au/websites)
- hardware: computer, modem
- an Internet Service Provider (ISP) to host your website (This service can be provided by LCA Information Technology IT@lca.org.au)
- a website address (domain name or URL) (This service can be provided by LCA Information Technology IT@lca.org.au)
- software for building the site (LCA Communications recommends WordPress)
- software for uploading to the ISP's server
- high-quality graphics or photos in web format
- a person/people with the skills to regularly update, maintain and refresh the website (text and photos)
- understanding of copyright legislation relating to websites
- commitment and funding to keep the website fresh and up to date.

After thinking all this through, you might decide that your website needs are already met through your congregation's presence on the LCA website, which draws your congregation's details from LAMP. (Find out more about your 'one-page website' on page 12.) But if you're still keen to build your own website, read on.

TECHNICAL THINGS

You have the following options for the location and the address (URL) of your website. Contact LCA Information Technology for more information about these services: IT@lca.org.au

1. Website Hosting

The LCA IT Department will host your website, provided it meets certain criteria (see Appendix B at www.lca.org.au/websites)

2. Internet Domain Names

The LCA IT Department maintains a registry of domain names (eg lca.org.au), and domain name system (DNS) records, which translate domain names to the numerical IP addresses of the resource (eg website) for congregations, parishes and agencies of the LCA.

The LCA is a registered domain name reseller offering competitive pricing for setting up and maintaining domain names and their associated DNS Zone records.

The domain name registry and domain name reselling has been set up to prevent

- registration information being lost when people who have registered domain names move on, lose interest, or lose logon and password details
- unscrupulous Internet Service Providers setting up and managing domain names.

Congregations, parishes and agencies of the LCA/NZ are urged to use the registry. People with the required skills in your congregation, parish or agency will still be able to manage all aspects of their domain name.

Setting up a new domain name

The LCA owns the domain name lca.org.au. The LCA IT staff are able to set up, at minimal initial and ongoing cost, subdomains of this domain name (e.g. <www.stjohnsunley.lca.org.au>for St John's Unley, and <www.slc.lca.org.au> for Salisbury Lutheran Church).

Where a different domain name (e.g. …org.au, ….com etc.) is required, LCA IT staff can arrange to register and manage the domain name. The cost of the service is passed on to the congregation, parish or agency.

Maintenance of a domain name which has already been registered

Where a congregation, parish or agency has already registered an internet domain name, the domain name and DNS can be transferred to the LCA Registry of Internet Central Domain Names.

HOMEPAGE LAYOUT

LCA/NZ congregations and parishes are encouraged to engage LCA Communications (details on page 2) to build their website. LCA Communications has built more than 50 websites, using custom-made modules and templates for LCA congregations, parishes, agencies, districts and departments. Congregations and parishes that choose not to use LCA Communications to provide this service are invited to follow the layouts and branding principles on this page.

The following paragraph numbers relate to the numbers in the red circles.

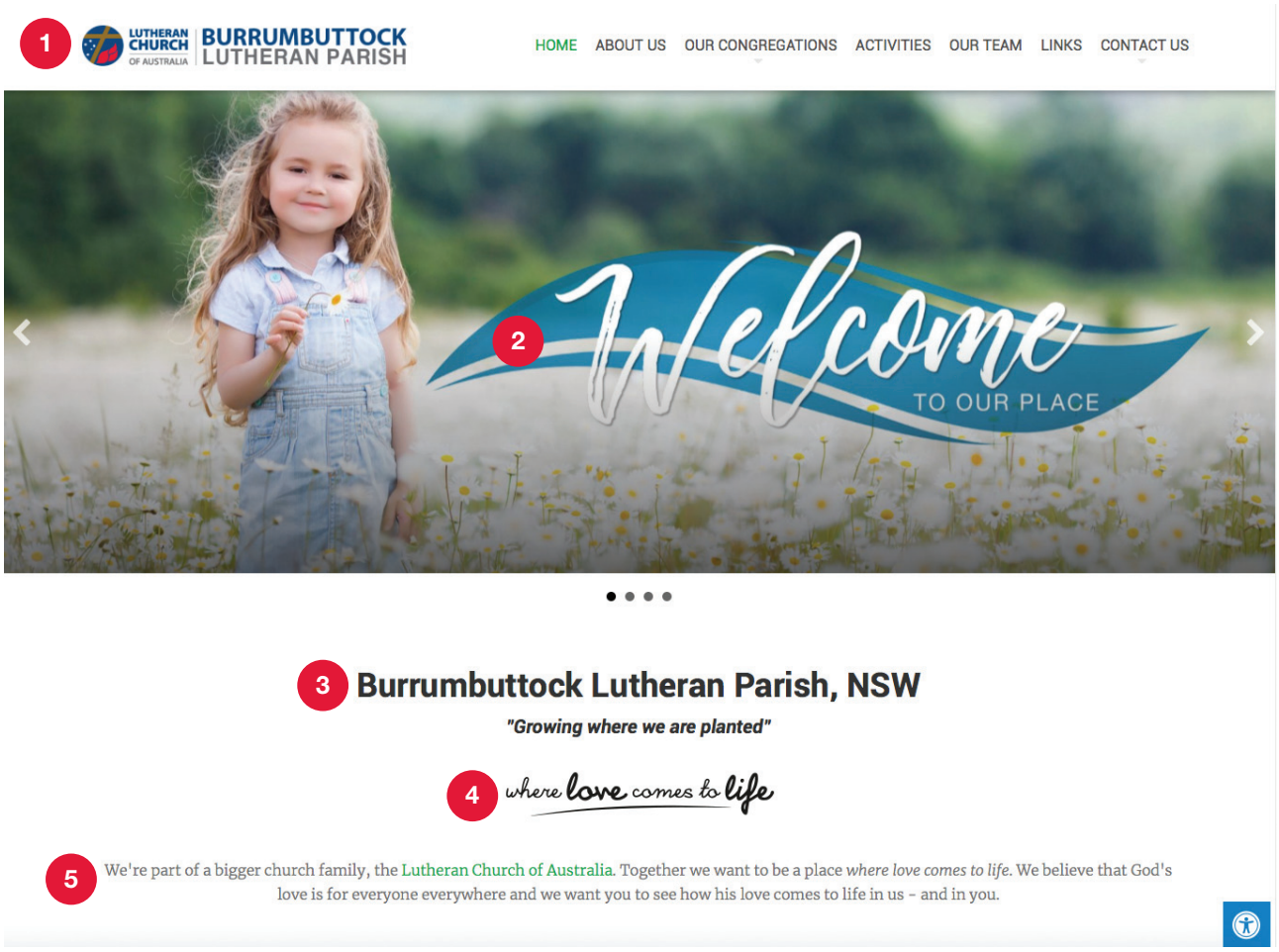
1 The logo should be developed in this style. LCA Communications can create the design.

2 For consistency with other LCA congregation and parish websites, this 'welcome' message is recommended. LCA Communications can create the design.

3 The name of the congregation or parish should appear prominently on the homepage.

4 Either the full LCA logo or only the LCA tagline, *'where love comes to life'* and the following text (#5) should appear as closely as practical under the name of the congregation or parish. (Please create a hyperlink on the logo to www.lca.org.au)

5 The addition of this text is recommended: 'We're part of a bigger family, the Lutheran Church of Australia. Together we want to be a place where loves comes to life. We believe that God's love is for everyone, everywhere, and we want to see how his love comes to life in us – and in you.' (Please create a hyperlink on 'Lutheran Church of Australia' to www.lca.org.au)

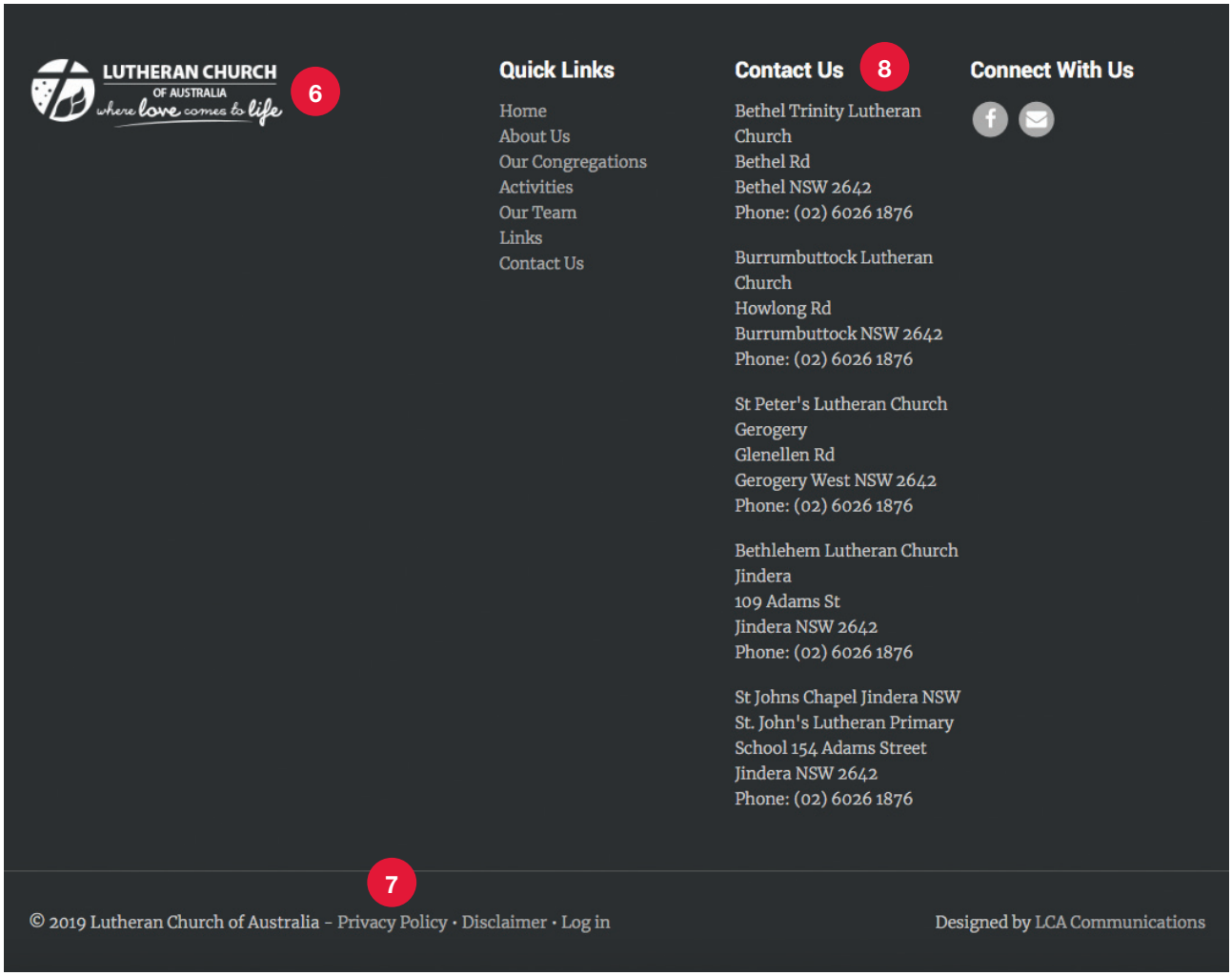


FOOTER LAYOUT

6 The footer should include the LCA logo and tagline, with a link to the LCA website (www.lca.org.au)

7 The footer should contain a link to the LCA's privacy statement.

8 The footer should include the congregation's or parish's contact details.



MESSAGE

You might have already updated your church signage to include the LCA/NZ tagline, *where love comes to life.* Your website should carry the same message, for consistency.

Now you need to ask yourself: how is our congregation a place where God's love comes to life?

- In what ways do our members experience God's love coming to life among us?
- In what ways does our community see God's love coming to life in us?
- In what ways would a visitor to our church see and feel God's love coming to life?

That's an important conversation your congregation needs to have, even if you're not planning a website. But building your website is an excellent opportunity to have the conversation; it will focus your attention on the ways you are sharing God's love with each other and with your visitors and community. And if you're not doing that and aren't planning to do that, well, better you get that sorted out before you consider building a website!

One thing is sure; for all its benefits, a website will never replace God's love coming to life among and through his people. All a website can do is point to that love; it can't make it happen.

FOCUS

Many (most) congregation websites focus on 'us'—what we're doing, and how well we're doing it—which can come across as a sell job. It's better, much better, to focus on your visitors—their concerns, their needs, their questions, their cautiousness. Therefore, when creating your web content, keep your imaginary visitor in your mind and write to him or her. Be real. Don't pretend to be perfect—but, by all means, point to our God who is perfect.

CONTENT

So far you have clarified your message (where love comes to life) and your focus (your website visitor). After this, there is no prescriptive list of what should be included on your website. In writing your content, you'll be guided by your location, your mission and ministry objectives, and on the people likely to be visiting your website. (See also 'Writing for the Web' at www.lca.org.au/websites)

MINIMUM STANDARDS

Having said that, there are some things that all LCA/NZ congregation websites should include (and in fact, these items are must-haves if you want to register your domain with LCA IT or want them to host your website):

- LCA logo and tagline (you can download from www.lca.org.au/logo, or contact LCA Communications lca.comms@lca.org.au)
- Congregation's or parish's name, identified as Lutheran
- Worship dates, times and locations for up to four weeks ahead (preferred), or a statement indicating the rhythm, eg 1st Sunday at 9.30 am at [location]; it is critical that this information is always up to date, particularly for church festivals like Christmas and Easter)
- Contact details, including phone number for a pastor or other pastoral carer, and address of the church
- The LCA logo and tagline in the footer, with a link to the LCA website www.lca.org.au
- A link in the footer to the LCA Privacy Policy
- A disclaimer in the footer (you can find an example in Appendix A at www.lca.org.au/websites).

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

- Google map and your address (with directions from north, south, east, west, and for car, bus, train, as appropriate)
- Ways you can serve your visitor (the person checking out your website), eg a coffee, a chat, help to find accommodation, English-language lessons, an invitation to your monthly BBQ, baby-sitting, lawn-mowing, a baptism, a wedding, a funeral, a lift to church, prayer …
- Regular activities, eg Bible discussion groups, activities for children, youth, community etc. (Important: don't use the word 'fellowship' or any other churchy language in naming your activities; describe them in ways visitors will understand and feel that they are welcome to attend)
- Photos (mainly of your people; perhaps one picture of your church building so that people coming to visit you will recognise it). You will need the permission of parents or guardians if you use photos of children, and don't put their names on the website.
- Local links, eg to any school, childcare or aged-care facility you're associated with, to your District website or any LCA agencies that your visitors or members might access frequently
- Something about Lutherans and what Lutherans believe (you can link to the About Us section of the LCA website)

MAYBE

- As well as the pastor's contact details, you could include a phone number of a congregation member who will pick up your visitors if they can't get to your church under their own steam. It's important that people feel they can get in touch for any need they might have. Be inviting, be welcoming, be caring.
- Perhaps something about the congregation's history, especially if you have some interesting local stories to tell, and if they might make a connection point with your visitors
- Perhaps add your mission statement, but only if it's short and the rest of your website refers to it often and clearly demonstrates how you are living it out. Since there is already a tagline on your website, *where love comes to life*, on your website, it might confuse your audience with another 'motto'; better to keep it simple. As a general rule, mission statements are more likely to inspire/motivate your existing membership than searchers or visitors.
- Information for your members, events/meetings and rosters, accessed via a member login. It's no accident this item is last on this list. If you're building a website mainly for your members, you shouldn't be building a website. Email, text messages and closed social media accounts are more effective and cost-effective ways to provide routine information for your web-savvy members.

FAQ

Does our website need to be sighted and authorised by the LCA?

If your website has the LCA logo on it (and it should; see page 9), yes, it will need to be checked by the LCA Communications lca.comms@lca.org.au before you make it live. This is standard practice wherever the LCA logo is used.

Can the LCA help us to develop, design and build our website?

Absolutely! This is one of most requested services. So far we've built more than 30 congregation websites, as well as websites for districts, departments and agencies of the LCA/NZ. We have created an online Website Selection Centre, where you can select various modules (all designed by us specifically for congregation needs) to suit your budget.

What if we don't have anybody to update and maintain our website?

LCA Communications can help you with that, too! There's more information about this on the next page.

Does the LCA host and support websites for congregations?

Yes. Contact LCA IT Services IT@lca.org.au

What do we need to know about copyright?

Quite a lot! Copyright legislation is extremely complicated and complex, but essentially it boils down to: don't use anything you haven't written, photographed, drawn or composed yourself, unless you have written permission from the creator. This means you cannot use images, video clips, music or artwork you find on the web unless there is express permission given (in which case, you need to keep a copy of that permission).

On the other side of the copyright coin, if you have original material on your website that you don't want to share, you should indicate the copyright conditions, eg '© Black Stump Lutheran Church, 2019. Kindly request permission to use or reproduce content on this website.'

LCA Communications has released copyright guidelines for general congregational use, which you can access at www.lca.org.au/copyright

WEBSITE BUILD COSTS

STANDARD FEATURES

All websites built by LCA Communications use WordPress and include:

- Google analytics
- page caching for optimal page-loading performance
- responsive website design for mobiles and tablets
- Google webmaster tools installation, including site-map generation for submission to the Google search index
- w3c code validation (industry coding practice to enable websites to operate on a broad range of mainstream browsers, excluding Internet Explorer Versions 6, 7 and 8).

All websites are LCA branded and include: hero image/s, service times, church location/s and contact information, as well as LCA story feeds to keep your website fresh and to supplement your own local content.

'ONE-PAGE WEBSITE'

Every congregation in Australia has a 'one-page website' already. (Sorry, we can't offer this service to New Zealand congregations as we do not own the domain name.) The content for your one-page website is generated from your data in LAMP.' If you have a stand-alone website listed in LAMP, your one-page website will direct visitors to that website.

To find your one-page website, type this format into your browser's search bar: www.yoursuburbortown.lutheran.org.au; eg www.cairns.lutheran.org.au If there is more than one congregation in your town or suburb, you'll need to also add your congregation name, eg www.bethlehem-adelaide.lutheran.org.au Contact us if you can't find your website: lca.comms@lca.org.au

If you want more than your one-page website, we offer two website packages: (a) Starter and (b) Stand-Alone.

STARTER WEBSITE PACKAGE

We can add up to two more pages to your existing one-page website for $400 per page. For three or more additional pages, it is more cost-effective to build a stand-alone website.

This package is ideal for small congregations and for those who want to build their website bit by bit as their budget allows. For example, you can build your first additional page in the first year and the next page another year.

There are some limitations in the Starter Package, however.

- Websites do not have a navigation bar.
- You cannot change the homepage content or images.
- You can only add static pages, ie text and pictures, not any of the modules available with the Stand-Alone Package.

STAND-ALONE WEBSITE PACKAGE

We can also build for you a stand-alone website with all the bells and whistles.

We have developed a range of add-on modules specifically designed to meet the needs of congregations. You can make your selections from our online selection centre, in line with your budget, to fully customise your website.

These add-on modules are available for Options 1 and 2 (see below). Option 3 includes all seven modules (or as many as you want).

Pre-defined styles

Your congregation may choose from three pre-defined styles designed to meet a variety of different contexts. The LCA Communications design team will suggest a suitable colour palette to complement the chosen style, photos and congregational context.

OPTIONS

Option 1 – $1000

- 1–5 pages
- No modules included (but modules may be included for additional fees; see Modules Section below)

Option 2 – $2000

- 6–10 pages
- 3 modules of your choice (more modules may be included for additional fees; see Modules section below)

Option 3 – $3000

- 11–15 pages
- All modules included (or as many as you want)

ADDITIONAL PAGES

Additional pages can be added to your chosen option for $100 extra per page.

What constitutes a page?

A page is 600 words of text and includes up to five images. Stock images may need to be purchased at an additional cost. You may also provide your own photos (but they must meet the requisite standard) or engage a photographer to shoot suitable photos.

MODULES

Each add-on module is $400.

Modules can be added to Options 1 and 2. Option 3 includes all modules (or as many as you want).

Congregation/Parish News

This module is used to share the latest congregation and parish news.

Events

Congregations can add events, including event title, description, location map, start time and end time. The event module is created in a way that allows it to be used on any page.

Sermons and Podcasts

This module allows congregations to upload audio files to the website media library, with the ability to add titles, descriptions of sermons and full sermon text. Sermon archives based on date and topic are automatically generated. A sermon podcast can be automatically created for iTunes. The sermon module can be used on any page. It can also be used to share and store sermon scripts.

Gallery

Use this module to create galleries; add images and videos for your members to enjoy and to share with their friends and community.

Social Media Feed

Use this module to display the latest content posted to your congregation's social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

Members/Our People

Use this module to introduce your community members to your people; including photos and testimonials.

Member Portal

This module allows members to access documents and areas within the site. The nominated website admin will upload documents to the website in the secure location that can only be accessed by church members with the relevant login access. Items you may like to include in this area could be Church Council minutes, rosters, pew bulletins and members directory.

MAINTAINING YOUR WEBSITE

Taking possession of your website is much like driving your new car into your driveway. While it's exciting, it's also a responsibility. You know it won't stay that bright and shiny forever. It will need regular care and maintenance, and there will be ongoing costs.

When LCA Communications hands you the 'keys' to your new website, we'll also offer you the following care and maintenance packages, which you are welcome to accept, or not.

Hosting and Domain

LCA Information Technology can assist you with hosting, domain name and associated services (see page 5 for more information; or contact IT@lca.org.au).

Website Content Contract

This contract takes care of the 'public face' of your website: pages, text and photos. At website handover, LCA Communications provides training for one administrator to update your congregation's website through basic text and photo editing. However, if you don't have anyone who can or is willing to do that, we can provide this service for you, either by:

(a) per hour rate

(b) annual contract.

Contact LCA Communications lca.comms@lca.org.au for more information.

Website Maintenance Contract

This contract takes care of the 'behind the scenes' maintenance of your website, eg security and software updates, as well as fixing anything that breaks.

LCA IT can provide this service for you, either by:

(a) per hour rate

(b) annual contract.

Contact LCA Information Technology IT@lca.org.au for more information.

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