

SOCIAL MEDIA: A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR CHURCHES



Have you noticed other churches getting involved in the world of social media? Perhaps you've seen the benefits and think you might want to give it a go, but you've got no clue how to even set it up, let alone manage it?

We've developed a simple guide to help get you started.

It's well known that children, youth and young adults are firmly entrenched in digital culture, and therefore, the future generations of our churches are likely to be on social media. What you might not realise is that over-55s are the fastest growing age category of social media users. This means that a social media presence for your church can reach all ages.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

A Facebook page provides a new way for potential visitors to see what goes on in the life of your church, receive updates about service times and events, and message your church for more information. You can post photographs so that everyone can see what's going on in your community. You can advertise events and invite people to them. You can even use social media to share some encouragement via bible verses or bite-sized devotions, or spread some laughter through the odd church-themed joke. In many cases, it isn't unusual for a Facebook page to appear in a Google search before your website does, so it's a great way for people to find out about your church.

IS IT WORTH IT FOR OUR CHURCH?

Only you and your church can decide this. It certainly shouldn't be an afterthought or a decision made on a whim. Properly maintaining a social media account can require time and effort, but the payoff might be rewarding for your church. Keep in mind that many people will positively view a well-maintained social media account as a sign of a modern, connected church. Rather than traditional communication methods - such as a phone call - many people will now only message companies through social media accounts to gather details. Therefore, a social media account may present ministry opportunities that would not otherwise be there.

You may find that starting a social media account, then monitoring and growing it for 6-12 months, is the best way to gauge whether your church has the resources to maintain it properly, and whether it enlivens and enriches the communication between your church, its members and visitors.

The most important resource is someone to run the page. Maintaining a social media account does require *at least* regular checking and moderating. Here are the main reasons why:

- If someone messages your page, you want to make sure you are responding as soon as possible, not just to answer their question, but to make sure you ideally maintain a quick response rating.
- If someone posts an inflammatory comment underneath one of your posts, you want to be able to hide or delete that comment as soon as possible before it causes any harm.

WHAT RESOURCES DO I NEED?

Facebook is a free social media platform (as are platforms such as Instagram and Twitter). However, there are also paid options to 'boost' or promote your posts on Facebook. If you choose to boost your content on Facebook, you will need the financial resources to pay for these promotions.

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Below you will find a step by step guide to setting up a Facebook page. This is the most common social media platform churches begin using.

HOW DO I MAKE A PROFILE?

You will need a computer, smartphone or tablet to create, log into and navigate your account. To set up a profile, you will need an email address - it's best to use your church's email address or create one for the purpose of social media rather than using a personal one. This way, if you hand over social media duties to someone else, they aren't using your personal email address and password. Choose a strong password with changing cases, symbols, letters and numbers. Don't choose something easy to guess (e.g. stjohns1234 is a *bad* password), but make sure you know what the password is so you can log back in.

You will need a good quality image of your church logo or building to use as a profile picture. You can also include a cover photo if you wish; for this, choose a photograph of your church building or from a recent church event - people love to see photos of other people!

STEP BY STEP: FACEBOOK



1. Choose a page admin. This is the person(s) who has access to and control over the page - and it should be the person setting up the account (e.g. Anna Smith) as they will need to log in from or create their own account to set up the church's page. Please note that page admin rights can be added and transferred to different people where necessary in the future.
 2. In the top right hand corner, choose the button 'Create' (found next to 'Home').
 3. Choose 'Page.'
 4. Choose 'Community or Public Figure,' then 'Get Started.'
 5. Set your church name as the page name e.g. 'St Pauls Lutheran Church, McLaren Vale.' Ensure you include your suburb within the page name, as this will distinguish you from other churches with similar names and guide people searching for churches in your area.
 6. Select 'Church' or 'Religious Organisation' as the category.
 7. Upload a profile picture and optional cover photograph (see above section for tips).
 8. Select 'About' in the left-hand menu to include information such as your contact phone number, website, email address, and a short bio describing your church and what you are about (e.g. ministry initiatives, groups).
 9. Add a button e.g. 'Contact Us' or 'Learn more about our business.'
 10. Invite people to like your page! Encourage your congregation members to like and share your new page amongst their friends. This is how your page 'likes' will grow.
- And don't forget to like and follow the Lutheran Church of Australia - SA & NT Facebook Page, and invite us to like your page as well!

WHERE CAN I FIND EXAMPLE GUIDELINES?

Social Media Guidelines are of strong importance. You must make sure that anyone who has access to your social media accounts is aware of your guidelines. Guidelines are put in place to ensure that no derogatory or offensive content is posted to your account which could reflect badly on your church or the LCA. They are also there to ensure people do not plagiarise content, and know how to correctly gather permission from others before posting a photograph of them to the internet.

LCA Communications have created a sample social media policy for congregations within their LCA Social Media Guidelines, which can be found here: www.lca.org.au/departments/ministry-support/communications/social-media/