Guidelines for RMC Churches Designing or Redesigning Their Website
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Designing your website can seem daunting, especially if you're a small church with limited resources. However, websites have become 100% accessible for churches of any size, and it's now surprisingly simple to build and maintain your church's online presence.

Whether you're building a new site from the ground up or redesigning your current one, here are some guidelines that will make it easier for you!

The three components of your website

You need three things to be able to share your website with the world: a **URL** (web address, i.e. www.website.org), **CMS** (the platform used to design your website), and **Hosting** (the server where all the files and directories for your site are stored). We offer a bit more detail on each of these components below!

Our Pro Tip: We recommend using a CMS (such as Wix and WordPress) that offers all three of these things in one stop, often at a discount when purchased together!

- **Content Management System (CMS)**. This is the platform or program you use to design and edit your site. They are inexpensive and often free to use, and can be as simple or as nuanced as you'd like. Popular examples include Wix, WordPress, Weebly, SquareSpace, but there are SO many others.
- **Hosting Service**. After you build your website, you need somewhere to store all the data and files; think of the website as a home, and the hosting service as the plot of land where it sits. DreamHost and BlueHost are solid standalone services, although many CMS platforms offer hosting as well for a reasonable fee.
- **URL (your web address!)**. This is what people type in to get to your site :) To continue the house (website) and land (hosting) analogy, the URL is the street address that points your car (web browser) to where you wanna go. You can purchase URLs from standalone services like GoDaddy and HostGator, but keep in mind that CMS platforms almost always allow you to purchase URLs through them as well.

Pages & content to include:

As with any creative endeavor, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that more is better. In the case of websites, less is more. KEEP. IT. SIMPLE.

Your website's job is to give your visitors exactly what they need as quickly as possible and inspire them to take action (visit, subscribe, reach out, etc.). Don't confuse or overwhelm them! Make it E A S Y :)

Pages you ought to include on your website are:
- HOME—this is where you'll put everything someone would need to know to feel prepared and excited about visiting.
- ABOUT US / STAFF / CONTACT—this is where visitors can put a face to a name, learn about your pastor/staff, and connect with you with questions.
- MISSION / IMPACT / MINISTRY—This is where you showcase the good things you do.
- NEWS / EVENTS / CALENDAR / NEWSLETTER SIGN-UP FORM—This is where you tell people what happened, what's happening, and what will happen at your church, and, where you invite people to subscribe to your newsletter/email list to stay in the loop! Ideally, this subscription form is also on the HOME page (and maybe every page).
- GIVE—Make it simple and secure for people to give to your church! This can be an individual page with a donation form, or, it could be a button linking out to a third-party donation service.

Other optional pages:

If at all possible, we encourage you to keep the number of pages small, and to keep the copy on those pages short. However, we realize that many churches have specialized ministries and programs which absolutely warrant (or require!) their own page. These might include:
- Preschool / Daycare
- Youth & Family Ministry
- Worship + What To Expect on Sundays
- Specialized Ministries (Homelessness, Affordable Housing, Accessibility, Social Justice, Racial Justice, etc.)

Your homepage:

Listen, you can't fold a homepage in half like a newspaper. It's impossible; believe me, I've tried. But if you COULD, you would want all of the vital information about your church ABOVE that fold. This is the Prime A+ 100% Primo Top-Choice A-One area of your website. EVERYONE who visits your website will see this section, so you have to make it count!

This means knowing your audience. As a church, your audience falls into one of two categories:
1. Those who already attend your church;
2. Those who *might* attend your church, IF they feel excited and at ease about it after viewing your website.

Focus on the second group. Not to disparage current members, but they'll find what they need. Conversely, you want to hold new visitors' hands, giving them everything they need right up front. Remove any excuse they might have for not visiting!

The things new visitors want from you are:

- **Worship time(s)—**Along with your church's location, this is by far the most important thing you will include on your website. Your site might be stunning, but unless people know when and where to show up, it's all for naught.
- **Church location / parking info**—Imagine you're choosing between two downtown restaurants you've never been to. One's website has clear instructions on how to get there and where to park; the other has an address, but no map or any indication that parking is plentiful. Sure, you could Google it, but why do that when the choice has already been made for you? This is exactly the kind of thing that will make a difference in whether someone visits or says "I'll go next week" (and then never actually does).
- **Pastor/church info and (brief) invitation to worship/connect—**Above all else, new website visitors are trying to learn what it's like to attend your church. They want to feel welcomed and affirmed, and they do NOT want to feel excluded or uncomfortable. Make them feel personally invited! Include a photo of the pastor, a warm invitation to attend and/or contact the pastor/staff, and a simple overview that hints at the church's theology and tone: "We believe that everyone is a child of God; no conditions or qualifications. No matter your gender, sexual orientation, race, age, ability, or beliefs, you are welcome here, just as you are!" Or whatever :)
- **Pictures of your members doing church stuff in the church—**Seeing photographic evidence that your congregation is friendly and welcoming can do wonders to assuage any hesitations. Photos of worship, fellowship, outreach, etc. are all good options!

Overall, these things are good:
- Colorful photos of your people
- As few pages as possible
- Pages that are concise in copy
- White space (to prevent clutter, which is stressful on the eye)
- Sans Serif fonts (for the same reason)
- Limited colors (2-3 brand colors is a good place to start)
- Big invitation on the homepage with all the pertinent details!