

Websites and the Small Church – The Home Page and SEO

The home page is important. It's a snapshot of what your church is all about. People will make assumptions based on what they see on the home page. The home page (as well as the website) should reflect the church. The design of your website sends a message about what kind of church you are.



What is on the home page can vary from church to church. There are things that I've found that are helpful for any home page. You may read something that I've written and say, "Well, that wouldn't work for us." That's okay. I don't mean to step on any toes. Each church serves a different community, and what has worked for me, may not work for you. Put the most important information on your home page. These are the kinds of things that should be there: Name of Church, Mission Statement, Worship location (including street address and directions), Time and Day of Worship Service and Sunday School, and Contact Information (mailing address, phone number, email). The goal here is to help visitors to find your church easily.

As a side note, the home page is an appropriate place to put information in the case of something major happening at the church. If your church has a major event going on, like a special concert, you can put some information about it there. The church that I serve had a fire a few years ago, and the next day we put information about what was happening. It was helpful for the community as well as the press to know what was happening and how our church was doing. Make sure to take down the information in a timely manner. It wouldn't be good to have Christmas Eve announcements on the home page in March.

Pictures are important. If there are no pictures on the home page, people may wonder if you're hiding something. There are a few things to keep in mind when deciding what pictures should be on the home page. Pictures of people are great. Pictures of people's faces are even better. This helps visitors to connect easier. They don't need to be perfect pictures, but they should be in focus. A picture of the pastor on the front steps of the church may seem a little too planned. A picture of children singing with their parents during worship may seem a little more genuine to a visitor. It's okay to have a picture of the church building on the home page, but it shouldn't be the only one. Visitors are looking to connect with people, not a building. The pictures should also accurately represent your church. For example, if most of the people in the church are in their thirties and forties, have pictures of people in their thirties or forties. We want visitors to know what to expect, before they come visit.

As you try to get your church online, the goal is to make it easy for people to find the website. SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization. This is how you make your church easier to find on search engines. Weebly has a great article in their Help Center called: "How to Optimize Your Site for Search Engines (SEO)." I don't need to repeat the entire article, but it's a good idea to do what it tells you to do on Google. Many visitors will be looking your church up on Google. Search engines like it when you have links to your website in other places, such as Facebook. Also, changing content, like switching pictures especially on the home page helps. If there are many churches in your area, this is something that you want to work on. It's all about helping visitors to find you as easily as possible. Next time we'll be discussing the content for the website and how to organize it well.

This column will feature a new "tech topic" each month by Kathleen Blackey. Please feel free to email Kathleen directly with questions at ck.blackey@gmail.com

