

**Title: Church Websites 101: Easy. Not Simple**

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Summa ~~Paint. Click, Type, Click. Drag, Drop, Shrink~~ ~~Take a picture~~ at your website - it's easy, but it ain't simple! The number of easy-to-use site building and publishing tools has increased, but the task of building and maintaining a good website is not getting any simpler.

The concepts are easily learned and, with proper discipline, you can have a good website for your church.

I remember when 'point and click' referred to a new generation of camera. With these new cameras, everyone could easily take pictures and capture the moments we cherished. No need to focus, no need to adjust for exposure or depth of field, just click.

This new generation of cameras certainly did increase the number of pictures taken and printed. But, those Instamatic cameras didn't produce a new generation of photographers; everyone had the same visual aesthetic. ~~Ames and Douglas O'Keefe~~ ~~Edward Weithorn~~ ~~Henri Cartier Bresson~~

It's not the tools, however, that are the problem. It is our human tendency to read instructions until we get stuck, we don't ask for directions until we are almost helpless until we get help until we are almost helpless. It doesn't have to be that way! Here is a checklist for viewing your current website (or lack of a website - start here before you build a new one). Easy fixes

Most of the important things are simple. ~~5 W's~~ ~~things already in the tool~~ apply, but in a slightly different way - What do you have to say? Who do you want to hear you? Who do you want to listen? Where are they going to be? When will they be listening?

- Location and contact information on every page (top and bottom)
- Remove outdated content
- Add current information
- Pictures are worth 1,000 words, but are no substitute
- Get rid of jargon

Should be easy fixes, but...

These fall into a few categories - some are content related (authoring stuff) and some are tech related (tech stuff).

- Unique page titles for every page
- Unique and relevant page description for every page (meta description)
- Images need text alternatives
- Images should have meaningful names
- Links should look like links and nothing else should

'www' or not, your visitors should end up at the same place  
All content should be browsable - PDFs are for printing  
Faster page loads (especially important for mobile)

### Set goals

If you don't know where you're going, you'll never get lost. And, you'll see this coming up on the new year - a time when everyone (Almost everyone. Some people don't) makes resolutions, or goals, or a wish list. A typical resolution might be "This year, I'm going to lose 3 pounds." Really? Losing weight is an outcome, not a goal. A goal would be "This year, I will exercise for 20 minutes, 3 times a week." Or, "I will eat less carbohydrates and more fruits and vegetables." (substitute goals relevant to your online presence)

More website visits and visitors are not proper goals  
Every page should have a purpose (What Next?)  
What will you do?

What are the (possible) desired outcomes? More 1st time visits, more repeat visits, more frequency, longer time on site, more pages visited, more visits to a specific page (search, direct, referral), more 'Likes', more 'Shares' and Tweets, more conversions, faster page loads

### Identify strategy

Strategies uniquely position a person or an organization, and are more specific about identity than anything else. It is also about knowing what factors tend to have an impact on you and your church.

Mission, Tools, Content, Voice, Tribe, Commitment  
Variety, needs, access

### Choose your weapons

After you've chosen and developed a web strategy that fits with your community, you need to decide how you'll channel your message. The trouble is the Internet is like satellite television combined - there are more channels than you could ever watch. Website, a Facebook page and YouTube, if you have video. Know who you want to reach and where you'll reach them.

Content types: text, photos, videos, audio  
Social Media: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube  
Website: platform (content management system)

### Plan and Execute

Now the rubber hits the road. No website builds itself. No Facebook page gets 100s of fans without some effort. Your resources may not be readily available, but you've even brought this up until now. If you start with 'what do we have', you'll find out you didn't believe 5 loaves and 2 fish could feed 5,000+ people.

Resources: People, Time, Money  
Schedule - deadlines and frequency  
Benchmarks

## Lather, Rinse, Repeat

This is a process, not an event. Establish a schedule for reviewing these  
Evaluate what has worked and what hasn't. Refine your goals, stretch yo  
We'll be diving into each of these sections in upcoming articles, but if yo