

Metropolitan Washington DC Synod Website Report for Congregations

Sunday morning visitors almost always look at your congregation's website before making a decision about attending. In an effort to help every congregation think about how it is being perceived online, the Director for Evangelical Mission initiated a survey of the websites for every congregation in the Metro DC Synod (including yours). The work was done in the winter/spring of 2014 by a young adult who is a life-long Lutheran and recently moved to the Washington area looking for a Lutheran Church to call home. What follows are some **general observations and then some specifics** related to what was found on your website. We hope that every congregation will benefit from this look at your online presence.

Does this website make us look phat*?

*In this case, hopefully. Phat means cool but, yes, phat is still outdated...don't use it on your website. ☺



General Observations and Recommendations for Church Websites in the Metro DC Synod:

- Churches should think about their website name...put the church name in the title if at all possible.
- Everyone needs to look at the Google search results and the blurb that appears. The blurb should have the address and a brief description. It should pop up first or second. *See below
- Even if you have all the information recommended here, the look of your site needs to be modern. Many churches had unprofessional looking sites or sites reminiscent of the 80s, which does not attract young visitors.
- The church's name at the top of the site should also be a link back to the homepage. This is pretty standard and makes navigation easier.
- Writing about who the Church is isn't inherently welcoming. Instead, write about how a visitor can fit into the Church and have it reviewed by a non-church person.

Check out these examples for:

Ease of use/Clarity

<http://christlutheran-dc.org/>

<http://www.blclife.org/>

Overall layout

<http://www.abidingpresence.net/>

<http://www.bethelmanassas.org/>

Welcoming

<http://www.adventlc.us/>

<http://www.myplc.org/>

RESOURCES

These ideas are from [The Technology Tools Every Church Needs](#) by Jack Hayhow and Brian McMurray. The book includes information on websites, Facebook, surveys and ways to connect members. It can be downloaded for free at <http://www.technologytooleverychurchneeds.com>

1. Church websites are not for Church members.

They are the church's front door to prospective guests and members. Church members need other tools to connect with people and events in the congregation (which may include a separate website for them).

2. What first time guest want to know:

- What would it be like to visit this Church?
- Would I be welcome and comfortable?
- Are their beliefs in line with mine?
- Where is it and what does it look like?

3. The Front Page is most important:

- Photo of the Church Building and front door
- Regular Sunday Schedule
- Address
- A short note of welcome.

4. Also include pages for:

- Beliefs,
- Pastor/leadership w/picture and bio,
- Contact Information
- What to expect

5. Do NOT include the following:

- Membership Information
- Prayer Requests
- Sermons (in most cases)
- Stock Photos
- Congregational meeting minutes, newsletter information

*Here are 3 helpful sites we found that discuss how to help Google create an **excellent blurb** for you.

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/35624?hl=en>

<http://www.google.com/webmasters/>

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/2722261?hl=en>

Here are two sites that can **host your church's website!**

www.Squarespace.com (inexpensive way for you to create and host a church website)

www.Cloversites.com (Church websites built and hosted for you, easy to use, constantly upgrade