



Outreach Ideas
English District
Evangelism Team
Newsletter

October 2023

The Importance of a Web Page

Part Two: Proclaiming the Gospel with the Tallest Antenna in the World

Having a church website is like having a tall antenna on the roof of your church from which you can broadcast the Gospel to the world. If you use analytical software with your congregation's website you will discover that your site receives visits from your local community, from cities across the nation, and from countries around the world. There is an incredible thirst for learning more about the Gospel and its proclamation by the Lutheran Church. Who can pass up such an incredible opportunity as this?

If you have a package plan with a website platform, such as one of those listed in last month's issue, chances are good that you may be using only a fraction of the available space that it provides. Now that you've created a site, with the basic information that's been discussed, have a look at all of the additional ways that you can put your site to work sharing the Good News of our salvation in Christ.

The Pew Research organization released the results of a study this past June in which they noted, "30% of U.S. adults say they go online to search for information about religion. 21% use apps or websites to help them read the Bible or other religious scriptures." Our congregations, with their excellent seminary-trained pastors, are among the best equipped to provide these answers.

The range of resources available for you to include on your website is remarkable. These resources include audio, video and print media and provide a range of depth. A short summary of the faith can be very handy for visitors to your site. You can even include a link to the entire online [Book of Concord](#) for those who wish to dig deeper and discover more of what we believe, teach and confess.

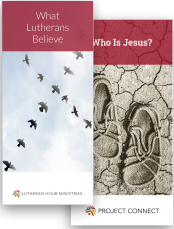


Of course, while it's certainly true that falsehoods need to be challenged, taking a polemical approach is not the best way to introduce the Gospel on your site. After all, who wants to visit a church that looks like it's interested only in picking a fight? While it's in our nature to deal with error when we see it, your website provides a unique opportunity to present a winsome and positive means to proclaim the joyful truth of what the Gospel is all about.

Imagine that you have someone who is interested in your church but, at this point, is still too timid to come inside. If you had an opportunity to invite them in, take them on a tour, and sit down with them to talk over a cup of coffee, what would you want to say to them? "In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15 ESV). Here's a great opportunity to do it.

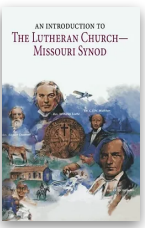


Sharing the Best News on your Church Website



What Lutherans Believe and Who Is Jesus? are two booklets available from Lutheran Hour Ministries in PDF. You can provide links to both of these, and many more booklets, at LHM's Project Connect Booklets page.

Would you like to share a copy of *The Lutheran Witness* with your members and guests? Include a picture of a recent edition and link to The Lutheran Witness page on the LCMS site.

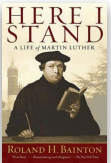


Chances are good that someone may want to know what the word "synod" means and would like to discover a little bit more about how we "walk together." You can provide a link to this handy Introduction to the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

You can give your visitors an online look at Luther's Small Catechism or help them download the free app to their phone.



"The Spirituality of the Cross," by Gene Veith, and "Being Lutheran," by Trevor Sutton, are available to those with Audible subscriptions.



"Here I Stand," by Roland Bainton, is available in its entirety for free reading at the Internet Archive. It can also be downloaded free to a visitor's computer, phone, tablet or Kindle.

Would you like to share videos of your Bible Studies or your Adult Membership class? You can do this using the camera on your smartphone to record it. Chances are good that your computer already has movie editing software, like Apple's iMovie. OpenShot is a free and open-source alternative to iMovie for Windows users. You can even add background music provided with the software itself, or record your own, to create an introduction.

Consider including a website banner to link your members to *The Lutheran Hour*. They are available in a variety of sizes.



If your church has a substantial audio system then chances are good you already have the resources you need to make an audio recording of the weekly service or sermon. However, with easy and affordable technology, even a storefront mission can now record its Sunday sermon and share it with the world. Small, digital mp3 players record with remarkable fidelity and can be placed in the pulpit or podium. They have a USB plug which allows them to be easily inserted into your computer for upload to your site after the service. The best part is that they cost under \$100.



You can create a page on your site for an online listening program with designated readings. Include a free link to an online audio Bible. You can even create an interactive reading calendar with links to each day's reading and an audio recording.

Consider having a list of the pericopes for your upcoming services so that members and guests can read ahead. Here is a sample. It's the Gospel reading for September 24 and a link to the audio recording of that text.



You can provide links to introduce your visitors to a number of excellent free apps for their phone and computer to assist them with their devotions.

Why not have a page with video links to some of the best video Bible Studies available from Lutheran Hour Ministries, including their GodConnects series? Many of these are available on the LHM's Vimeo page. Others are also available on YouTube. You don't need to embed these videos on your site. Videos are very large and take up a lot of your plan's storage and bandwidth. Include a video player and link them to your website for viewing.



You can include Concordia Publishing House's brief introductions to the liturgical seasons as they come up in the Church Year. Some of these are also available on Vimeo without ads. Check them out on the LCMS YouTube channel as well.

From The Field

Our Pastors and
Congregations



The Lutheran Church of the Messiah of Princeton, New Jersey, shares their service videos on their website's landing page. (Pastor Martin Erhardt's smile also lets visitors know that he's got Good News to share.)



Audio sermons from Redeemer Lutheran Church, in Fort Wayne, Indiana, can be heard by members nearby and by online visitors from around the world.

Check out the friendly welcome, and concise introduction to what Lutherans believe, at the website of Peace Lutheran Church in McMurray, Pennsylvania.



Pastor Rennie Kaufmann, of Risen Christ Lutheran Church in Plymouth, Michigan, has an "Ask The Pastor" page on the church website which includes a form. What a great idea!

Toolbox

Ideas, Suggestions and Handy Bits

(These are free resources to help your church website to run smoothly.)



Most website building services will include a section, and even tools, to help you with SEO – Search Engine Optimization. These are tips and instructions on what you can do to ensure that your website runs smoothly and loads quickly. Here's a basic video that does a pretty good job of explaining what SEO is all about with suggestions to consider. Google Analytics is a free diagnostic tool to assist with this task. Check out the free test at Nibbler for additional insights.

In recent years it has become important to have a website that has the ability to automatically create a mobile-friendly version of your site using the content from your desktop site. Why is this important? Search engines now use what is called, "mobile-first indexing." For example, "Google predominantly uses the mobile version of a site's content, crawled with the smartphone agent, for indexing and ranking." Most of the website building services today have a mobile page feature that comes with their package and will lay it out automatically. Here's a free and simple tool from Google that you can use to check to see if your congregation's website is "mobile friendly." Just enter your church website address to see how your page scores. (A number of sites in our District are not mobile friendly.)



How fast does your church's website load? The time it takes for your site to load, especially on mobile devices, has become one of the most important ranking features for search engines. Ranking refers to how high on the list your search will appear out of the many others out there. Here is a tool to let you know how your site is doing. Google's Page Speed Insights and GTmetrix are free.



Picture files can be quite large. Websites load faster, and run smoother, when the pictures are compressed to a smaller size. You can compress pictures, while retaining their quality, on free and easy-to-use online image optimizers as Optimizilla and TinyPNG.



Since security is a top priority for Google, they added HTTPS as a favored ranking factor back in 2014. If your site is older than this now is the time to update it for the security of both your site and its users. Some browsers will no longer open unsecured sites.

According to Forbes, "from 2018-2020 QR code usage grew by 96%." Consider using a free online QR Code maker, like QR Tiger or QRCode Monkey, to provide a link to your website. You can include it in your welcome brochures and even add it to your church sign. You can link it to your website or you can link it to a specific welcome video embedded in your site. A QR code provides an opportunity for people passing by to 'tour' your church. Here is a sample code for the English District. Give it a try. Open the camera app on your phone as if you were getting ready to take a picture. Point the camera at the QR code. Tap the banner that appears on your phone or tablet. Tap the notification link and follow the instructions on the screen to be taken to the site.



Our Synod and District Programs

Materials and Workshops Available For You
(Do you have a workshop scheduled? Let us know.)



Witnessing to People with Depression or Anxiety

Depression is a mental illness that goes beyond “feeling blue.” While most people are sad or feel down on occasion, depression is a prolonged period of intense sadness — including feeling helpless, hopeless or worthless — that can keep a person from functioning well in daily life. Likewise, anxiety is a natural and normal emotional response to stressful life situations that can become a disorder when it grows out of proportion to the situation or extends beyond the circumstances that triggered it. Discovering that a non-churched person in your life is struggling with depression or anxiety provides an opportunity to witness to that person. While most of us are not qualified to diagnose a person’s depression or anxiety, as Christ’s witnesses we can bring a message of comfort and hope to the people who suffer from these disorders. Using the LASSIE approach to witnessing, this module explains how to witness in a natural manner to our co-workers, neighbors, friends and family members who are dealing with depression or anxiety without the peace of Christ.

Click here to watch a [Preview](#)
of this module

Every One His Witness video modules and other resources are available at no cost to anyone who is interested. To get a free access code, please email support@everyonehiswitness.org. If you already have a subscription, you may continue using the program with your current credentials at no additional charge.

[Download the free Self-Study Guide](#)

This guide was created to help individuals make use of the *Every One His Witness* core module resources that were originally intended for use by groups. It is meant to increase the accessibility of the *Every One His Witness* resources for people who want to be more active, effective, and joyful witnesses of Jesus.

Articles, Books and Research Current Research and Writings



Hear Dr. Mark Wood discuss “A New Survey on Church Attendance Post-Pandemic.” It’s an *Issues, Etc.* podcast that was recorded last January. It’s less than 15 minutes and you can listen to it [here](#).



Concordia Technology Solutions provides a handy [free ebook](#) to learn the basics about optimizing your website.

Previous Topics

- [Outstanding In Your Field](#)
- [Fall Festivals, Street Fairs and Parades](#)
- [Outreach to Our Military](#)
- [The Importance of a Website \(Part 1\)](#)

Coming Topics

- Inviting Traveling Teams
- Podcasting, Easy and Cheap
- Lawn Displays, Activities and Signs
- ... and much more

Next Month

Your Local Newspaper

Do you engage your community through your local paper? Let us know what you are doing.

Please Contact

[Pastor David Tannahill](#)
of our Evangelism Team
with your ideas and input.