

## Connecting the Local Church: Social Media Quick Tips

Advice compiled by Lindsey Solomon of United Methodist Communications

If your church has not yet embraced social media as a communications tool, now may be the time. Church members should see their place of worship as a place of both spiritual and social connection. Through social media, your organization can provide a small mirror of that environment online for members and seekers alike. This set of tips is not all inclusive. However, this collection of ideas may help you begin to think more strategically about your current social media use.

### Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)):

- Ask for comments and “Likes” from your constituents. The more social traffic, the more likely posts will show on fan News Feeds.
  - o Ask those in your congregations and on your board to start conversations by posting, liking and commenting on what others say. It is not cheating to move social currency from your home base outward. Good content is good content.
- Limit status updates – one or two a day should suffice, released at different times of the day.
  - o Facebook is not Twitter. Content rotation in Twitter is fast and frequent. Facebook posts are more static. Sending too many updates may result in the loss of fans, or people may hide you from their News Feed.
- Keep your tabs and pages updated.
  - o Facebook’s multi-level pages allow many places for outdated information to slip through the cracks. Did you create an event page? Add results of the day after the fact. Did you change service times or add a new blog address? Reflect these in all appropriate places.

### Twitter ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)):

- Start by planning three tweets a day, as Twitter’s format allows for more flexibility with multiple posts than Facebook’s does.
  - o If you do not know where to begin and need help getting started, try tweeting in three categories daily<sup>1</sup>.
    - **One personal tweet:** about you/your organization/what you’re doing
    - **One partner tweet:** about a partner church/sponsoring organization/about someone else in your organization (not too personal, though)
    - **One industry tweet:** about something going on in your industry/a link to an church blog or news article/something showing that you are aware and involved with the world around you
- Use hashtags (place the # sign in front of any word or space-less phrase).
  - o Using hashtags everyone uses provides more exposure in searches.
  - o Use multiples – employ common ones and develop a specific hashtag for your event.
    - Example: I’m so excited to participate in #Hands4NY with #HopeUMC this weekend! #umc #rethinkchurch

---

<sup>1</sup> Kyle Lacy, “Evolve or Die!” (presentation, social media workshop at United Methodist Communications, Nashville, TN, April 15, 2011).

### General Tips:

- Employing the use of an aggregator can streamline your social media efforts. An aggregator can collect information from different websites (including Twitter and Facebook), allowing the user to access them all in one place. One can schedule tweets or posts in the morning to appear throughout the day. Take a look at HootSuite.com as an example.
- Asking questions via post or tweet can help drive retweets and shares. Inspirational quotations may do the same, though too much scripture may polarize seekers interested in your feeds.
- Use social media before, during and after an event.
  - o If your church plans a big event, include social media in your promotion strategy. Post on Facebook. Plan for and utilize hashtags on Twitter. Give followers and friends updates about event specifics and personal information about the planning journey.
  - o The day of the event, get participants tweeting and posting live from the event and encourage them to group themselves (using appropriate hashtags on Twitter). Ask them to post pictures and video (with appropriate permissions granted) as well.
  - o Social media communication should not stop after the event is over. Share results!
- Keep your brand/logo consistent.
  - o Make sure your church or organizational logo is visible within social media profile pictures/avatars. Even if you rotate the main image, include the logo on or in it.
  - o Keep profile pictures/avatars the same on all social media sites – consistency can help build recognition.
- Connect your social media pages to your church's main website.
- Have realistic expectations.
  - o Unless you belong to a very large church (and maybe even though), your number of fans and followers will not grow into the hundreds overnight.
  - o Social media is another tool in your church's communication bucket. For a younger generation – many in the 18-34 age range – mobile connectivity is important. These sites might give you an avenue to connect with them through a medium they prefer.
  - o You will not reach everyone this way, but reaching even a few more people could make a difference.
- Think before you tweet or post. The delete button comes in handy, but remembering the very public nature of the social media world before posting something polarizing can aide against digital unrest.
- Social media is not a science.
  - o If you still feel unsure, create a personal profile and practice! Hands on learning can be a wonderful way to get to know Facebook and Twitter.

We hope that these simple tips can help you lose your anxiety and have fun reaching a new community through social media. If you want to know more about social media, United Methodist Communications offers several avenues for learning.

- Visit [www.umcom.org/socialmedia](http://www.umcom.org/socialmedia) for great resources, how-to videos and more!
- Sign up to receive the MyCom newsletter (or just check out the site), which offers a wide selection of communications tips and tools at [www.umcom.org/mycom](http://www.umcom.org/mycom).
- Ask Lindsey Solomon for the rest of this guide (including Frequently Asked Questions), by contacting her at [lsolomon@umcom.org](mailto:lsolomon@umcom.org).