

## **Find-A Church Best Practices** Building Your Church's Profile

### What is Find-a-Church?

Find-a-Church ("FAC") is a database administered by United Methodist Communications ("UMCom") that provides a free templated profile for every local church in the Connection.

### How Your Profile Impacts Your Church

Your FAC profile works for you in two important roles. Through the power of its collaboration with UMC.org, it is probably your strongest online invitation to all "seekers" and, by extension, it is also excellent free Internet advertising.

### Getting Started with Find-a-Church

#### **Preparing**

If you have never worked in your FAC profile before, you should first familiarize yourself with its layout and information fields so you can gather data in preparation for a productive session. Research from United Methodist Communications reveals eighteen attributes about The United Methodist Church which resonate well with seekers. Among the top attributes, seekers are attracted by:

1. How we help those who are hurting
2. How we embrace everyone (diversity)
3. How we support all generations
4. How we care deeply about each other

Take some time to think about how these attributes open opportunities for your church to demonstrate its ministries in your FAC narratives. (Although your FAC profile is free Internet advertising, content should be contextual (relational), not promotional.)

Most of your FAC information can be edited from your profile, such as:

1. primary photograph
2. preferred church name
3. physical address
4. email address(es)
5. office hours and worship times

Some content, however, is automatically populated by databases. This includes:

1. pastor and conference
2. your mailing address (denominational/GCFA database)
3. "Who We Are" attendance and languages (denominational/GCFA database)
4. driving instructions (provided through Google)

As address data originating from the GCFA database cannot be changed directly from your Find-a-Church profile, if anything is inaccurate send corrections by email to [FAC@umcom.org](mailto:FAC@umcom.org) (be sure to include your GCFA number). Or, if you prefer, you can call InfoServ at 800-251-8140.

## Starting Your Session

- Start here:  
<http://archives.umc.org/Directory/ChurchDirectory.asp?ptid=1&mid=222>. This link gives you a view of both how users access profiles by zip code ("front end"), and how you access your profile for editing ("back end").
- **To access your FAC information, you need your church identification number from the General Commission on Finance and Administration (GCFA).** This number may be found on your Interpreter enrollment form from United Methodist Communications, by calling your district office or by emailing [FAC@umcom.org](mailto:FAC@umcom.org).
- Following these simple suggestions will help you write narratives from the seeker's perspective:
  1. Write for a reader who has no church background. Avoid insider terms, church abbreviations, denominational acronyms, and overly theological language.
  2. Write about impacts/successes, relationships, and making a difference.
  3. Be authentic about the lifestyle of your church and invitational.
  4. Use details and specifics whenever possible. Church words like 'contemporary' or 'traditional' don't mean the same thing to everybody.
  5. Write in complete sentences.
- You can compose your narratives in a word processing program, with spelling and grammar checks, then cut and paste into the FAC data field.

## Helpful Notes

- Use HTML codes for basic formatting. Formatting such as bullet points, bold, underline and italics will be stripped away in the Find-a-Church fields. Here are two HTML examples you may want to incorporate in your text:
  - Insert `<br>` at the end of a sentence for a hard return or blank line between sentences.
  - `<b>your words</b>` BOLD
- FAC driving directions uses Google Maps to provide directions and a printable map to your church building. Personalize directions with references to local landmarks (e.g., ‘From the beach...’ or ‘From Town Center’ or ‘located at the corner of ...’).
- Email address : It is recommend that your email be associated with your church rather than an individual (i.e., [info@yourchurch.org](mailto:info@yourchurch.org) ), not [pastortim@yourchurch.org](mailto:pastortim@yourchurch.org).
- Web Site URL : Use the format, [www.hillcrestumc.org](http://www.hillcrestumc.org) (don’t include the ‘http://’). Anyone visiting your Find-a-Church page will be a click away from your Web site.
- Primary Photograph (157x467px; JPG or GIF, under 100kb) : This should be an original photograph (not an artist’s rendering) with no copyright restrictions. If your primary photo includes persons under the age of thirteen, [print out this release form](#), obtain appropriate parental permission and keep on file.
- Add new worship time : If you have more than one worship service during the week, you will be able to click *Add New* as many times as needed.
- Click *Insert* to submit your addition. An update note will appear on your Find-a-Church form displaying the information you have just added. If you need to make a change to this information click *Reset* at the bottom of the page and reenter the date and time information. If you have additional worship services during the week, include those dates and times in the section “What we offer” or “what to expect.”

## Four Narrative Sections

- Who We Are (150 words max)
- What To Expect When You Visit (150 words max)
- What We Offer (150 words max)
- How We Share Our Gifts (150 words max)

### “Who We Are”

Here is your “welcome” opportunity. Write a message of welcome from the congregation - testimonies from several representative new members would resonate well with other seekers. Describe what draws people to your church.

### “What to Expect When You Visit”

This is an opportunity to describe your church lifestyle, worship style(s), a typical service (parking, music, offering, communion), typical dress, nursery care, role of ushers/greeters, and after-service fellowship. You can even embed links to PDFs on your site such as floor plans, brochures, etc.

### “What We Offer”

This is an opportunity to describe the lifestyle of your church beyond Sundays. Share weekly supper gathering, choirs and music program, small group studies, larger ministries, and other church programs.

### “How We Share Our Gifts”

This is an opportunity to describe the talents and gifts of individual members and how these gifts are shared outward with the world as a way of showing how the body of Christ works through us. Describe ongoing or upcoming community ministries such as:

- Disaster relief teams
- Habitat for Humanity involvement
- Day care and afterschool care
- Twelve-step recovery meetings held in the church
- Ministries to the homeless
- Youth and adult mission trips, including VIM trips.

What other churches did:

1. First United Methodist Church of Santa Monica  
(<http://archives.umc.org/Directory/ChurchDetails.asp?mid=222&FAC=75110>)
2. Hillcrest United Methodist Church - Nashville, TN  
(<http://archives.umc.org/Directory/ChurchDetails.asp?mid=222&FAC=43058>)
3. Briarcliff United Methodist Church - Atlanta, GA  
(<http://archives.umc.org/Directory/ChurchDetails.asp?mid=222&FAC=25622>)

Once you've submitted your changes, they will be reviewed by United Methodist Communications and made public in seven to ten business days. As with most database submissions, there is an approval process before changes will be displayed. If we have questions about your entries, we'll contact you/the church. Remember, you can come back to update your Find-a-Church page any time using your GCFA number. If you have questions or comments about FindChurch, contact us at [FAC@umcom.org](mailto:FAC@umcom.org), or call 18002518140.

