

*Social Media Quick Guide*

---

# Facebook



## About ChurchTechToday

ChurchTechToday was born out of the need to find a place to discuss how technology can truly impact the Church in positive ways, whether it be reducing administration with a church office, allowing para church organizations to connect with their members online, or simply to share the Gospel message through non-traditional channels.

## About Lauren Hunter

Lauren Hunter is a church technology PR consultant (<http://lhpr.net>) and founder of ChurchTechToday, the #1 Church technology blog for pastors, church communicators, and leaders.

## Rights and Liability

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission of ChurchTechToday. For more information on getting permission, visit <http://www.churchtechtoday.com>.

The information in this book is distributed on an “As is” basis, without warranty. While every precaution has been taken in the preparation of this book, neither the author nor ChurchTechToday shall have any liability to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by the instructions contained within this document.

Facebook was definitely not the start of social media nor was it the first successful one but right now, it is the most heavily used network with the most registered users, widest diversity in users, and powerful enough to shape the near future of social media.

In some regards, this network is the general defacto for churches to begin to engage with congregation members and potential future visitors. Youth groups thrive by engaging with teenagers online, small group volunteers coordinate all future activities via groups and pages, and the church's presence can be as diverse and powerful with videos, photos, events, and links to blog articles from your church's website.

### **The Network's Persona**

Facebook has become known as the place where everyone is at online. For teenagers, you can find your friends and family. Adults have coworkers, spouses, children, and old high school friends they have not talked to in twenty years. It is a hub for online content where we share our real lives in the digital world.

If social media were a town, you could equate Facebook as the residential district. You know everyone in your feed, even if you had met them just once and everything is personal. The general mentality is that you meet people somewhere else (face-to-face, on your blog, and at conferences or work) and then personally connect with them on this social network.

This also means that your personal life is on display for all who connect with you. If you do not have privacy settings set up, everyone will be able to see photos of your children, what you did in college, and how you interact with people online.

*The average Facebook user spends  
405 minutes a week on the social  
media site.*

*80% of social media users prefer to  
connect with brands through  
Facebook.*

*70% of Facebook users are on via  
their phone and 61% of them use it  
every day.*

## The Network's Lingo

- **Status** – the question “*What is on your mind?*” is where you post your thoughts and feelings that you want your friends to read
- **Groups** – close circles of people that share and keep in touch
- **Pages** – profiles for businesses and brands to connect with people
- **Share** – posting someone else's status or content to your followers
- **Like** – a way to give positive feedback and connect with things you care about
- **Mention** – tagging your friends in text which links to their profile and notifies them
- **Timeline** – your collection of the photos, stories and experiences that tell your story
- **Lists** – a way to organize your friends' news feed.
- **Messages** – private message to someone
- **Graph Search** – a new way of finding people, pages, and common interests with real language questions.

## The Network's Downside

The down side to Facebook for churches comes within how they treat organizations. Having gone public this year, Facebook's new ultimate goal is to keep their stocks up and therefore make money. Their first action was to make all of the businesses pay for a complete service.

Currently, posting a status update or sharing a link on your Facebook Page will only get it into 15-25% of your fan's news feeds, due to an algorithm developed by Facebook called EdgeRank. To be able to reach all 100% of your fans and more, you will have to pay for every post you wanted promoted. The cost will be between \$5 and \$20 depending upon how many fans you currently have. Even worse you have no way of privately communicating with fans. This makes for a terrible way to keep in touch.

An alternative is to create a Facebook Group. You can message your members directly, members of the group can see all of your posts all of the time, and you even have the options of it being private or closed so only certain people can join. Yet, there are numerous other problems including, no username URLs, what is said in the group comes up in their news feed but is not viewable on one's timeline and so nothing can go viral (think, zero referrals which is bad), there is nearly no customization options, no analytics, and you have a limit on how many people can be a part of your group (currently 5,000).

## **Facebook Is Not Your Website**

Many churches know that more than 75% of their congregation is on Facebook and with limited staff time, reducing budgets, and fear of how to use a website well, many ministries have succumbed to simply using Facebook as their only presence on Facebook. It is our belief that this is in fact an incorrect use of social media in general and can be a very debilitating thing in the future.

First, we must understand that with a website, you own the property that you are on, can make any changes that you want, and have the final say in whatever happens. It does cost money to buy a website URL and hosting for your webpages whereas Facebook is free, but the consistent changes that happen from Facebook in redesign, policies, and their need to make money should be a warning. If Facebook were to decide to limit what you were allowed to do on Pages or users began to flock away from the network, where would your volunteers and congregation be able to find you?

At the same time, Facebook already is a bit limited in what you can do. If you wanted to have a church blog, upload a church form, or e-payments for camp, you need to have your own website. Imagine having a link written in the bulletin to sign up and pay for camp and it fill up completely before the Sunday service was over. You cannot do that on Facebook.

## How To Use The Network Effectively

A combined approach for churches should be used here. In a general, public approach for the whole church's presence, you can use a Facebook Page. This will be seen as the central hub of the whole church's Facebook presence. Brand well, customize the tabs, link to your church's websites, and offer a general set of status updates, photos, videos, and links. But do not mistake this for your primary way to communicate to people.

For the different parts of your ministry, use Facebook Groups. Your youth group, worship team, children's ministry, Bible studies, small groups, outreach ministries, and mission's trips can all have a group to communicate with the different members. This can become very troublesome if you have numerous ministries and may need to have several different people in charge of running your church's Facebook presence.

Smaller churches may want to consider doing a Facebook Page that is great for simple communications to both your congregation and those that may not be attending your church yet and then a second option with a Group so that you can directly communicate with your congregation.

*23% of Facebook's users check their account 5 or more times daily.*

*77% of companies acquired customers from Facebook.*

*There were 680 million monthly active users who used Facebook mobile products in 2012.*



## Five Facebook Ideas for Churches

We want to set you up for success on Facebook, so we have come up with some great Facebook ideas for your church to use it well. Note that some of these ideas are perfect for large churches and others setup for small ones.

### 1. Use Custom Page Applications

Facebook allows you to use applications with your Facebook page and there are many different applications that can not only enhance your page but improve your brand too. One such application is [ShortStack](#) that can give you a Facebook app that lets you customize the HTML, CSS, display tweets, embed YouTube, setup giveaways, and custom polls. The best part about this application is the “fan-only” ability that you can hide sections of the custom page from viewers until they like the page. A success story with this was a church offered a free eBook on parenting to anyone that went to the page and downloaded it for only their fans. They put an insert in their bulletin and encouraged people to engage with the eBook after reading it and sharing it with friends and family that may need to read it too.

### 2. Maximize Your Timeline Cover Photos

Facebook’s new Timeline design offer users and pages a rather large cover photo for the user to do with as they please. Some churches have posted pictures of their building, others a photo of some of their congregation members, and still others use some stock photo of Jesus or the cross to ensure people knew they were on a religious page. Whatever you want to display on the photo, recognize that this is a premium opportunity for your ministry to advertise one event that is happening, church times, or upcoming sermon topics. By no means should you sacrifice the whole cover photo to marketing because people really do want to see faces. But in the lower right-hand corner you could post a short two lines about service times and a street address, a phone number, or a website address.

### 3. Youth Ministry Games with Facebook

I do not mean to sign up for Farmville to interact with others, but take Josh Griffin's "[Instagram Hack](#)" or a similar idea to incorporate your Facebook page into your face-to-face ministry events. One successful idea recently was to find a teenager at a youth group, tell them that they can win \$100 towards summer camp in a game show (this one was trivia). The down side was for every missed question, the game show host (a volunteer) was allowed to post anything they wanted on their Facebook profile. It would start with "I love youth group" and harmless to ending a relationship status with a girlfriend, Poking their mom, or unfriending some random person on their news feed and they had to commit to leaving it for a week. The youth group videotaped the whole thing, posted it on their page, and tagged the right people. It was a huge success.

### 4. Facebook Photos for More Reach

One of the biggest aspects of Facebook that may be highly under utilized are photos on Facebook. Many times working with different ministries that want to setup a Facebook page and get to one or two hundred Likes right away, I recommend that they post photos on their page and take the time to tag every single picture. If you can constantly post great photos (clear pictures of happy faces, serving actions, children in Sunday school, people worshipping together) and tag the people, a page that is just starting out has the capacity to reach 10,000 users even if they only have 100 people Like their page. That can translate later into more people subscribing to your page and interacting with you. Even better, people are 8x more likely to interact with a photo (like it, comment, share) than links, status updates, or videos. So if you want to reach a big portion of people, then get a volunteer dedicated to photographing ministry events.

### 5. **Do Your Own Version of a Viral Video**

There was a recent viral video called the Harlem Shake that went viral, seeing millions of hits and was fairly ridiculous. Many ministries took advantage of this idea by making their own, utilizing their staff or congregation and then posting it on Facebook for all to view. People loved the idea because it was so easy, people thought it was great fun, and many people were engaged.