

Social Media Quick Guide

Twitter



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.

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Twitter's unique 140-character and marketing possibilities have made it a great place to network with others. Whether you're a professional blogger wanting to connect with other bloggers, a youth worker wanting to share ideas and learn from others, or a marketer looking to discover new content and what people are doing and using, you can do so easily here.

While businesses have learned to harness the power of Twitter, churches and ministries are just beginning to figure out its power. From a small scale, it is the perfect place to connect with other pastors and people that may help you better serve the ministry. In a large scale, you have the power to better understand your communities culture, influence it, and engage with a generation of people like never before.

The Network's Persona

Twitter is the place to consume information, whether it is the first breaking news of a terrible natural disaster, the release of Apple's latest gadget, or what you had for dinner. In just a short sentence, we need to be able to communicate exactly what we need to say. The art of communication is at work here: clarity, precision, and influence are all called on here.

If Facebook is seen as the residential part of a social media town, Twitter would be the media center, the newspaper, radio, and television stations that are broadcasting news. "Extra! Extra! This tweet has the 5 o'clock news!" People stay informed that can benefit both businesses and people personally.

In the same sense, it is a great tool for professionals to network with each other. After any short amount of time, users begin dialogues with others for many reasons. Pastors may find themselves connecting with other ministry leaders for personal and professional encouragement and empowering.

*32% of all Internet users are using
Twitter.*

Only 23% of tweets get a reply.

*26% of retweets are incited by a
request to retweet.*

The Network's Lingo

- **Tweet** – The public post that is 140 characters or less
- **Following** – the basic networking action where you choose to follow tweets from a specific user
- **Followers** – those who choose to follow your tweets
- **Retweet** – sharing another user's single tweet to your followers
- **@Mention** – (styled with the @ symbol) citing a specific user in a tweet that automatically links to their account
- **#Hashtag** – (styled with the # symbol) used to mark a phrase that will allow for marketing or searching
- **Lists** – A custom group of people's tweets that you select to read separate from your general feed of all of your followers
- **Direct Message** – private message to only someone that follows you

The Network's Downside

The problem with Twitter and the Church is that so many voices are speaking into this medium that many times it can be difficult to sift through all of the noise. That first impression and all future tweets can define how people see you. If you are looking to draw people into your church's doors, simply announcing your church times will not work. You will need to invest a lot of time in building relationships to gain credibility.

At the same time, can you truly communicate everything you want to say in so few of words? In many regards, we are spitting out little bits of information, quotes, and thoughts but it is impossible to say the whole mission of a church, the entire message of a sermon, or everything about the Christian faith in ten tweets, let alone one, single tweet. Our words are limited, but that does not mean our message has to be. But it does mean that every tweet has to be intentional.

Twitter Is Great For Pastors And Churches

These social media quick guides are designed to help a church do better work on social networks, but Twitter is unique from the rest in terms of usability for the individual. Now, every social network can be used effectively for individual and corporate use, but Twitter is structured in a way for the individual to network with others too. In this section, we will identify how an individual pastor may want to use Twitter too.

Pastors networking with other pastors have always been something sought after. In many areas, church staff can find youth ministry networks or Saturday morning pastor breakfasts where the local clergy come together for a variety of purposes. Some groups have formed as a sort of soul care meeting where pastors seek friendship with other like-minded people in the same career path while others look for great resources online. Twitter for individuals has become a similar idea without the restrictions of distant. Many senior and youth pastors, worship and technology church leaders can find their niche on social media. One prime example: go onto Twitter and search for the hashtag #kidmin and you will find thousands of posts from the last 30 days of blog posts, prayer requests, and simple tweets from people who work in Children's Ministry.

If you find a group of people, connect with them regularly, engaging in great conversations, and treat it almost like a meet up of sorts by coming on at the same time, praying for each other, and empowering each other with encouragement and ideas. Youthmin.org is a collection of youth pastors that did this amazingly by meeting one Tuesday a month for a "tweetchat" where they asked five to eight questions on a previously decided question, let everyone share responses, and even gave away some freebies, all with the hashtag #youthmin. To encourage more discussions and reading their tweets, put together a custom list and include the tweetchat members.

How To Use The Network Effectively

Twitter's vast nature of consuming data makes it a perfect place to constantly tweet. Share photos of your church's building, how they are serving, or a community of people in worshipping God together. Have everyone tweet about your church with a specific hashtag. Maybe they will send out the main Bible verse of the sermon or a great quote from the pastor with #1stBaptistInChicago. This is the perfect place for a group of Twitter users to come together and evangelize and disciple as one.

While tweet Bible verses or quotes is good, it is easy and typical. Think outside of the box. Missionaries can use Twitter to update their status for the home congregation, tweet the live streaming podcast as the service gets started, or send out specific prayer requests that the church would like the world to join in to present before God.

At the same time, find other like-minded people to bounce ideas off of. Youth workers can find hundreds of others that are looking for a great sermon series, teenage game, or simply just encouragement. Worship leaders can find great presentation tips like motion backgrounds or ways to make the service more interactive. As much as you want to gain from this network, consider simply learning and growing from the people in it too.

60-80% of your tweets should have a link to achieve maximum retweetability.

Saturday and Sunday tweets have a 17% greater engagement rate compared to weekdays.

56% of customer tweets to companies are being ignored.

Five Twitter Ideas for Churches

We want to set you up for success on Twitter, so we have come up with some great Twitter 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. **Make Your Own Church Hashtags**

Hashtags are designed to network people together, so why not come up with your own hashtag for your church and maybe even a special one for an upcoming event. Some ideas for this could start with #1stPresChicago or #UMCNYC and include service times and a sermon video promotional or maybe a link to your church's blog post about the upcoming sermon. If you are doing a special event, use the previous hashtag you came up with for your church along with a special event hashtag like #AfricaMissions or #ChristmasService. Be creative with what you come up with but know that a hashtag has to be crystal clear on what you are communicating yet super short because you are so limited on characters for the message that goes with the hashtag. When you come up with one, be consistent and frequent about how you use it.

2. **Live Tweet Verses and Quotes**

Sermons were meant for both worship and evangelism and Twitter offers an instantaneous opportunity for congregation members to tweet out verses and sermons while preaching is going on. You may want to encourage them from time to time to sign on to their accounts, use the hashtags listed above, type in a quote from the sermon or Bible verse, and send out a tweet to the world. This simple act may get a few people in your service to begin to have conversations with friends and family about their faith and even an invite into your church doors. It certainly is not difficult and in just a few seconds, a couple hundred tweets could be floating out there about the Word of God.

3. **Tweet Vine Video Teasers**

Vine was just recently acquired by Twitter and allows users to make a quick six-second video for you to then post on Twitter. This may be the perfect time to use your iPhone or iPad and take a quick video of a promotional or web series you are doing for the church. If you are doing reconstruction on part of the church give them a six-second view of the place. Maybe you want to give a six-second invite to the next Sunday or Wednesday night services. Whatever it is, make it count.

4. **Tweets In A Bulletin**

We have shared a large selection of topics to tweet about which is great for engaging with people already connected. To make this even more broad reaching and connecting with people in your community more, encourage your congregation members to send out tweets too, whether it is posting an already written tweet on a powerpoint slide during your Sunday sermon and having people live tweet it from the pews or putting it in the bulletin with the hashtags. The idea is a boilerplate where you simply write out a 140-character tweet and have everyone else send it for you. This encourages people who have an account to get the message out there without worrying what they would have to write.

5. **Live Tweet Pollings**

There are several great applications out there that allow you to collect tweets from various specified accounts or hashtags and run a loop of them on presentation software. Before a Sunday service or youth group begins while congregation members and visitors are coming in and sitting in their pews, take unofficial polls on different things for your church. Some days they can be funny and goofy trivia games about random stuff, other times you can actually survey the crowd about which charity should receive tithing money next month or what web seminar they would like to have done at your church next quarter. The results will automatically be updated on the screen as tweets come in for people to see on the projection screen.