

Making your message sharable

by [Carol Howard Merritt](#)

September 23, 2014

Often we want our churches to grow, but we're not sure what sort of tools to use. We don't have any sort of action plan to get the word out about our congregations. Of course, word of mouth is still the best way to get people to church, but there are things we can do to make that message sharable. Here are a few steps we can take.

Clarify our message—Think about who your church is and what they aspire to be. Can you think of a story in your history that reflects who you are? Can you think of a metaphor or some sort of physical object to reflect that message? Can you boil the message down to three to five words?

Google Maps—Find your church on Google maps and fill out the details. Make sure the contact information is good. Put your website there. And there's even an opportunity to put your missions statement. (Although don't do it if the mission statement is too churchy or too wordy. You can just put a tagline there.) Ask members of a committee to review your church. Or, if you have an active Facebook page, ask the users to review it.

Website—It's no longer optional for a church to have a website. It's a necessity. It's your front door now. Usually, a good one costs about \$7,000. If you're a small church and there's no way you can do it, go with something like [Weebly.com](#). My friend, Rev. John Gage, used it to build his [church's site](#).

What's on a website? There are a lot of good resources when it comes to websites. Generally, I would use the rule of "less is more." But there are things that you need to have:

- High quality photos. No blurry cell phone pictures. No stock pictures. Instead, make sure you post a faithful, diverse reflection of your congregation.
- Contact information. Physical location, phone and email contact is good.
- Time(s) of service(s).

- Calendar. Please keep it updated!
- Maps. People need to know how to get there.
- Sermons. Podcast or manuscript.
- Mission. Let people know what you're doing.
- What to expect when you get there. You can write this page like you're talking with a friend who's attending for the first time. Tell them if they need to be quiet when they walk in or if they need to dump their coffee before entering the sanctuary. Think about what you would want to know if you were entering a worship service that you're not familiar with.

Yelp Reviews—Ask people to write Yelp reviews, highlighting what they like about the church.

MeetUp—If you have an interesting book study that meets in a coffeehouse, a theology group that meets in a pub, a trash pick-up day that meets in the park, imagine hosting it (rather than the church members being the sole participants and being the only people in charge) and advertising it on [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com). Like most sites, there is a particular culture there, so I encourage you to either get active in another group there or engage someone who is already involved.

Facebook Groups and Invites—I am part of a new worshipping community, and they set up FB groups, pages, and events for *everything*. This gives people the opportunity to invite those who aren't just in the church, but who are part of their circle of friends.

Press Releases—If your church is doing something interesting in the community, like building a Habitat House or supporting a local environmental movement, make sure the press knows about it. Write a press release and send it to local news stations and newspapers. Host a celebration or a fundraiser for a local mission, invite a local celebrity, and invite the press.

Podcasts—Make sure your sermons are recorded and distributed. This might be a bit difficult to set up, but it's easy to use once it's going. This allows people to stay connected to the congregation even if they can't be there every week. It's also makes sermons sharable.

There are so many other things that you can do—a thousand free ways to make your message accessible to more people. If you have more ideas, please feel free to add them to the comments.