DIGITAL MINISTRY TOOLKIT

Five must-have tools for engaging your congregation and growing your church.

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About the authors

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Handcrafted in Boone, NC

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Who is this guide for?

This guide is for pastors and church communicators who are looking for innovative ways to serve their congregations and fulfill the Great Commission. You'll find tools and advice on 17 of the most common digital ministry tools used by churches today.

In this guide

1. Online Giving
2. Church Management Systems
3. Communication
4. Live Streaming
5. Church Websites

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1 online GIVING

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ONLINE GIVING

The Problem

"How can we increase giving?" Every church staff will, at some point, ask that question. In addition to cultivating a biblical view of money and generosity, churches that rely on voluntary contributions need to find ways to encourage giving and streamline reporting.

The Solution

Research shows that offering online giving as an option for your church to make their tithes and offerings increases overall giving by 10% to 30% or more. Online giving solutions add recurring giving, text to give features, and let your members give even when they're out of town.

FAITHSTREET

faithstreet.com

Top Features

Email Receipts
Mobile Giving
Recurring Giving
Giving Management

Pricing

Starting at $30/month

What we like

Faithstreet keeps a strong focus on metrics. Their partner churches see a 10% to 30% increase in overall giving. Faithstreet gives churches a giving coach to help them be successful with their platform.

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EASYTITHE

easytithe.com

Top Features

Mobile Giving
Giving Management
Facebook giving option
Recurring Giving

Pricing

Starting at $0/month (plus processing fees)

What we like

easyTithe offers giving kiosks for sale, including floor model, countertop, and wall mount iPad-based kiosks.

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church
MANAGEMENT
systems

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Movement

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CHURCH MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

The Problem

As churches grow, keeping track of people and needs in the church grows more difficult. How can church staff communicate with members, track attendance, manage groups, and enable communication between members of the congregation?
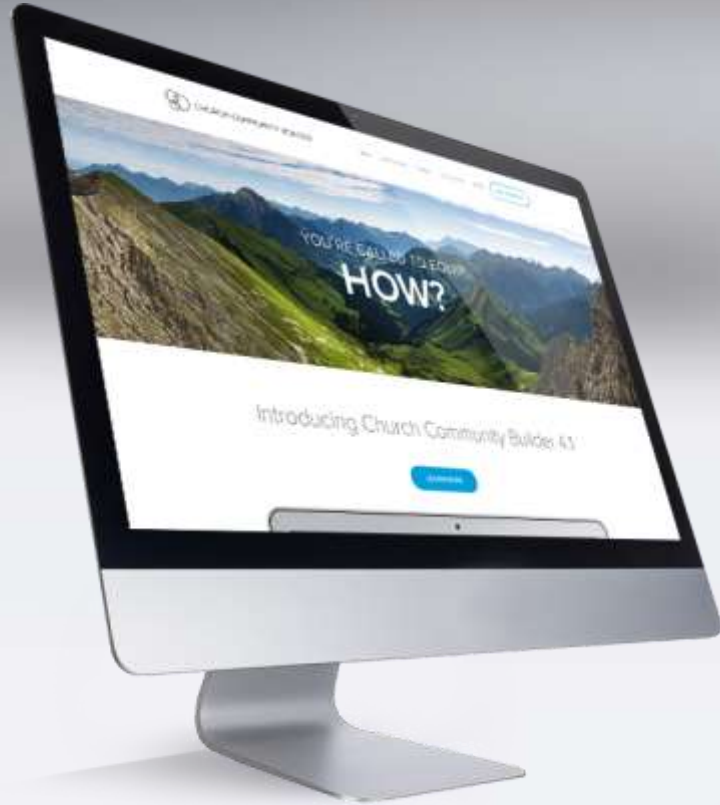
The Solution

Church Management Systems (ChMS) help church staff track attendance, manage ministry areas and groups, and facilitate communication between staff and the congregation as well as enabling member-to-member communication.

CHURCH COMMUNITY BUILDER

churchcommunitybuilder.com

Top Features

Online giving
Child check in
Volunteer Management
Groups

Pricing

Visit website for pricing

What we like

Church Community Builder (CCB) puts a strong emphasis on process, onboarding, and training, and they partner with their clients for their success. CCB is web-based and has a great feature set.

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ACS

acstechnologies.com

Top Features

Member management
Pastoral care
Event management
Groups & check in

Pricing

Visit website for pricing

What we like

ACS is one of the most comprehensive church management systems available today. Ideal for larger congregations, ACS offers a suite of tools for every ministry need.

REALM (ACS)

onrealm.org

Top Features

Track giving
Member directory
Groups & attendance
Group messaging

Pricing

Starting at $29/month

What we like

Rob uses Realm to manage a small congregation of 60 people. Realm handles simple tasks like contribution management, member directories, and groups well.

Koinonia staff pick (Rob)

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THE CITY (ACS) *onthecity.org*

Top Features

Groups
Event calendar
Social sharing
Messaging

Pricing

Starting at $21/month

What we like

The City's emphasis is on social networking and engagement. The City enables staff-to-staff, staff-to-member, and member-to-member interaction and engagement.

Koinonia staff pick (William)

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3 church
COMMUNICATION
tools

EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

The Problem

How do you keep up with email addresses for your entire congregation? Copying and pasting email addresses from a spreadsheet might work for a while, but as your church grows, it becomes harder to keep track of contact information.

The Solution

Email newsletter software like Mailchimp and iContact let you build and manage your contact database, create eye-catching newsletters, and create sign up forms for your site, all with excellent deliverability.

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MAILCHIMP _mailchimp.com_

Top Features

Email newsletters
RSS-driven campaigns
Site integration
API access

Pricing

Free for up to 2,000
subscribers

Free trial available

What we like

Mailchimp is our go-to email
newsletter software for all of
our clients. Free for up to
2,000 subscribers, you can get
up and running with an email
list in minutes and stop
copying and pasting those
emails into a CC field.

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iCONTACT *icontact.com*

Top Features

Email newsletters
Autoresponders
Social sharing tool
List management

Pricing

Starting at $14/month

Free trial available

What we like

We sometimes use iContact for churches who need advanced features that aren't included in Mailchimp's free plan (autoresponders and A/B testing). *At the end of the day, we recommend Mailchimp by a wide margin for this category.*

SMS AND PHONE TREE

The Problem

What happens when you have to cancel service due to inclement weather, or postpone an important event? In our church, that meant our elders and small group leaders would need to get on the phone and call each and every person in our congregation one at a time, and there was no guarantee everyone would get the memo.

The Solution

Churches can avoid this issue with mass communication tools like text messaging (SMS) broadcast services and phone trees. Just upload your contact database and broadcast your message to your entire congregation.

CALLFIRE

callfire.com

Top Features

Phone tree
Dedicated number
SMS alerts
SMS keywords

Pricing

5¢ per minute or text
or starting at $49/month

Free trial available

What we like

CallFire's pay-as-you-go plan is great for low volume needs. With a small call list, we can get urgent updates out to our congregation for only a few dollars without the hassle of calling everyone in our church manually.

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SIMPLETEXTING

simpletexting.com

Top Features

Polling/voting
Scheduled texts
Text to sign up
Group text from phone

Pricing

Starting at $45/month
with free keywords

Free trial available

What we like

Simple Texting includes information and resources to help churches make the most of their texting plans. With features like polling, Simple Text makes it easy to engage your congregation and get feedback when you need it most.

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LIVE STREAMING

The Problem

How do you engage church members who cannot leave home or who travel frequently? What happens when someone who attends your church misses an important sermon in your series?

The Solution

Churches can reach shut ins and business travelers with sermon live streaming. Live streaming services support both audio and video, and give access to archived sermons.

SERMONCAST

Top Features

Live streaming
Sermon archives
Online campus
Live chat option

Pricing

Free up to 2 GB/month
Plans start at $15/month

What we like

SermonCast's free plan gives churches of all sizes the opportunity to test drive live streaming, including an audio-only streaming option for churches without video equipment.

Free trial available

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TRUTHCASTING

truthcasting.com

Top Features

Live streaming
Embedded player
Sermon archives
Mobile friendly

Pricing
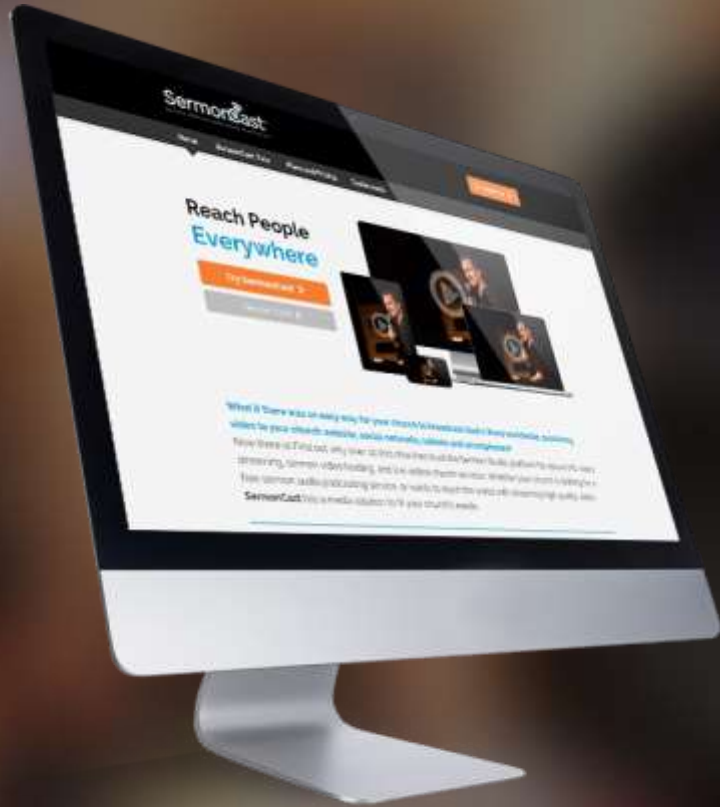
Starting at $25/month

Free trial available

What we like

TruthCasting's flat rate pricing is based on church size, not bandwidth, so you don't need to worry about overage charges.

STREAMINGCHURCH

streamingchurch.tv

Top Features

Church app included
Map sermon viewers
Live chat available
Social integration

Pricing

Starting at $47/month

Free trial available

What we like

StreamingChurch.tv provides a free DVR and Roku streaming device for its premium plans. StreamingChurch.tv is more expensive than other services in this category, but may be a good match for churches who need the hardware without the up front cost.

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CHURCH WEBSITES

The Problem

What is the communication hub of your church? How do first time guests connect with your church? Many guests will visit your church website before they ever set foot in your door, even if they've been invited by a member of your congregation. Making a good impression is key to attracting new members.

The Solution

Your church website is the most critical element of your digital ministry strategy. A church website needs to be beautiful, functional, and easy to use, and must be designed and built with your target audience in mind.

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WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS FOR A CHURCH WEBSITE?

Self Hosted Website

Self hosted websites are designed and built by a developer or freelancer.

- Costs vary wildly for custom sites versus template sites
- You pay for hosting
- You're responsible for maintaining your website
- Developer may not understand how churches work

Examples

Wordpress, Drupal, Joomla, custom website development

Online Website Builder

Online website builders let you create a website at a very low cost.

- Hosting is included with your plan
- Limited to a few low-quality templates and basic ministry features
- Limited support with building and executing a plan to use your new website

Examples

Wix, Weebly (general website builders)
Sharefaith, Trupath, E-Zekiel (church website solutions)

Church CMS Platforms

Church Content Management Systems (CMS) are built specifically for ministry.

- Hosting *and* maintenance is included with your plan.
- Websites are designed and built with churches in mind.
- Work with a dedicated account manager to design and implement your digital ministry strategy.

Examples

Koinonia, Ekklesia360, Church Plant Media.

KOINONIA

koinonia.co

Top Features

Open source CMS
Sermons & podcasting
Event management
Multi-campus ready

Pricing

$500 onboarding
Starting at $49/month

What we like

We may be biased, but Koinonia provides more than a church website; the Koinonia team partners with your church and your staff to design a digital ministry strategy that helps you better serve your congregation and reach your community.

Koinonia staff pick

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EKKLESIA360   *ekklesia360.com*

Top Features

Closed CMS
Sermons
Events
Template designs

Pricing

$500 onboarding
Starting at $64/month

What we like

Ekklesia360 shares Koinonia's vision for people-centered, strategy-focused church website design. The Ekklesia360 CMS is built for churches and handles many ministry related tasks well.

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CHURCH PLANT MEDIA

churchplantmedia.com

Top Features

Email newsletters
RSS-driven campaigns
Site integration
API access

Pricing

$1000 to $2500 setup
$50/month

What we like

Church Plant Media has good looking templates with the option to customize colors to match your church logo and branding for an additional $1000.

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E-ZEKIEL *e-zekiel.com*

Top Features

Sermons
Calendar
Stock image library
Content management

Pricing

$500 setup
$75/month

What we like

E-zekiel is a low cost solution for churches who don't need features like sermon uploads or basic CMS tools. We wouldn't recommend anything less than their $75 *Thrive* plan.

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KOINONIA FEATURES

Koinonia is a powerful content management system designed exclusively to help churches better serve their congregations and their communities.

SERMON BROWSER

ITUNES PODCAST

MEDIA MANAGER

DESIGN CUSTOMIZER

BUILT IN SUPPORT

POWERFUL CMS

PRE BUILT LAYOUTS

EVENT CALENDAR

STAFF DIRECTORY

MULTI SITE READY

MORE THAN A WEBSITE

Koinonia goes beyond the website to help you design, build, and execute a digital ministry strategy that is right for your church.

STRATEGY

Our process starts with a discovery session to learn about your unique ministry situation. In the first weeks of your project, you'll receive:

- Design brief
- Content audit
- Digital ministry strategy
- Communications guide

TECHNOLOGY

Your customized ministry strategy is supported by our custom ministry-focused website platform, built on technology used by millions of websites worldwide.

- Built on Wordpress, an open-source content management system
- Hosted on our dedicated servers
- Maintained by our development team

TRAINING & SUPPORT

We don't deliver a site and leave you hanging. You'll have access to a dedicated account executive as long as you remain a client.

- Website launch kit
- Onboarding and training videos
- Dedicated account executive

READY TO LEARN MORE?

Schedule a demo today to learn how Koinonia can help you design and build a digital ministry strategy that is right for *your* church.

ROB LAUGHTER

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(336) 624-0187 – personal cell

SCHEDULE A DEMO

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