

Social Networks are Your Friend

Social networking sites are creating a new level of connection between church and community.

Websites like www.Twitter.com, www.Facebook.com and www.UnitySocial.com are designed to be user-friendly, even for those with minimal technological understanding. You can set up a page on each of these sites and be up and running in just a matter of minutes. If you've been considering utilizing on-line social networking to expand the reach of your ministry, you'll want to choose a site that fits the needs of the ministry and the ability/interest of the congregation. A few things to consider:

- **Twitter**—a text-based site that allows users to send and receive messages known as “tweets” via the Twitter website or a mobile device such as a cell phone. Each tweet can be up to 140 characters and will only be seen by your “followers.” You can also follow other individuals and organizations, making networking as simple as typing. While using the Twitter website is always free and accessible from any computer, some phone mobile providers may charge air or text time.
- **Facebook**—a social networking site where users add friends, send them messages, update their profiles, post pictures, videos and links to favorite websites. There are three types of pages:
 - **Profile Page**—can be used for both individuals and organizations. The profile page allows users to upload an unlimited number of photos, share links and videos, and stay connected with friends and families. You can have up to 5000 friends on a profile page.
 - **Group Page**—very good for hosting quick, active discussions and can draw quick attention to a topic. You can host discussions, message to all group members, and share videos and photos publicly. The group page does not offer event creation and invitation, visitor statistics or the ability to add other applications. There is no limit to the number members a group may have.
 - **Fan Page**—good for more long-term connections with fans, other communities, and your congregation. The fan page offers the same features as the group page, but also the ability to create events with invitations, to add other applications and provides statistics on visitors to your page. There is no limit to the number of fans a page may have.
- **Unity Social**—the new social networking site, created by Bruce Wagner and Edward Gel, designed specifically for Unity people all over the world to stay connected. You can join various groups, upload photos, videos, music, audiobooks and podcasts. When you sign up you automatically get your own Blog.

In January 2009 the website, Compete.com, conducted a study and ranked Facebook as the most used social network by worldwide monthly active users, followed by MySpace and Twitter, according to "[Social Networks: Facebook Takes Over Top Spot, Twitter Climbs](#)". Social Networks are here to stay and they can be a great resource of connection and outreach for your ministry. Check them out and also see the Unity People's convention, now on Facebook. This issue was contributed by Lynn O'Dell.