

# HOW TO DEVELOP GLOBAL OUTREACH PAGES ON YOUR CHURCH'S WEBSITE



## The Process

Gather a small "missions web team" to brainstorm concepts and outline the content and layout for your global outreach web pages. In addition to those who bring missions expertise to your task, you will want to include on your team: (1) at least one or two people who are not familiar with your church's missions program and who therefore can provide an objective viewpoint on copy and approach, (2) if possible, at least one person with background/expertise in public relations, advertising and/or journalism, and (3) at least one person who uses the Internet extensively. Make sure that your team includes at least one person under the age of 25 and one person between the ages of 25 and 35. These are the age groups that typically use the Internet most frequently.



### #1 Define Your Overall Purpose

**\*Identifying a clear purpose will help your team stay focused throughout the project. Here are examples of several broad-scope purposes:**

- Inform church attendees and outsiders about God's global purpose and what is happening in world missions today.
- Inform church attendees about the global priorities of your church.
- Envision and recruit participants for your global outreach activities.
- Facilitate involvement in your missions programs.

**\*Work with your team to clearly articulate your purpose(s). If you identify more than one, indicate the priority of each. The purpose(s) of your missions web pages is/are to:**

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**\*As you develop your web pages, make sure they align with these overarching purpose(s).**

### #2 Identify Your Audience

The most effective websites are organized from the audience perspective rather than structured from a "missions insider" mindset.

**\*Profile the people you think will visit your global outreach web pages most often. From "1" - most frequent to "8" - least frequent, number the boxes on the following page in order of the number of visitors you anticipate coming to your missions pages for each purpose:**

- Those looking for a church.
- Current church attendees looking for missionary prayer information.
- Church attendees seeking information about global outreach events in your church.
- Church attendees looking for specific service opportunities.
- Church attendees who want to download forms, register online or submit other types of information online.
- Church attendees who desire to learn more about global needs and general ministry opportunities.
- Missions leaders from other congregations looking for an overview of your global outreach program.

Those from agencies and organizations seeking

\_\_\_\_\_

Other:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**\*Which of the above types of visitors are the most important to attract to your pages? Why? It is very difficult to target more than three audiences, and focusing on one or two initially will probably be most effective.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Spend time brainstorming about contemporary audiences in general:**

- Discuss what you think is most attractive to today's Internet audience.
- Identify several informative, eye-catching web sites you have visited on the Internet. What attracted you to them?
- View and discuss the approach and terminology used to communicate missions to today's audiences on the sites published by Newsong Church at [www.newsong.net](http://www.newsong.net) and North Point Community Church at [www.northpoint.org](http://www.northpoint.org).
- Interview a cross-section of church attendees. Ask them which of the purposes listed above (and others you may want to add) would draw them to your web pages. Find out what makes a website attractive and useful to them.

**\*Review a number of missions pages on other churches' websites. You may want to begin with some of those provided on DualReach's Great Ideas list which you can download at: <http://www.dualreach.org/missions/bm~doc/GI-web.doc>.**

**Discuss what makes a site most useful and most attractive. Do certain characteristics appeal to audiences you particularly want to attract?**

## #3 Create Achievable Goals

Once you have defined your purpose and audience, move on to identifying specific, measurable goals. At this point in the web page development process, your team may be tempted to begin listing elements of your missions program, but remember that you are serving the needs of your audience, not presenting a summary of your global outreach program.

**\*Brainstorm: List specific goals that you would like to accomplish through your missions website.**

**For example:**

- Help people understand and embrace your church's strategic global priorities.
- Provide detailed information on your global initiatives so that individuals can begin to identify ways to get personally involved globally and/or locally.
- Provide up-to-date prayer requests and missionary needs to facilitate powerful intercession.
- Recruit participants for short-term trips.
- Facilitate involvement in various trips and programs by providing online application/ registration forms.
- Introduce your missions leadership team and provide a means to communicate with them.
- Introduce your missionary family and provide specific information about them and how to contact them.
- Offer resources for teachers and leaders looking to integrate missions into their programs for children, youth, small groups, Bible studies, etc.
- Challenge your people to think more globally by introducing them to the biblical priority of reaching the nations and the role of the church and individuals in world evangelization (provided through postings and related links).
- Educate site visitors about cultures, countries, geography and/or international events in a fun, stimulating way.
- Other:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How do the goals you have listed align with your site visitors' interests identified earlier? To be effective, you

must meet their felt needs first, but you may be able to do so in a way that challenges them to see a bigger picture or respond to a greater degree than they initially anticipated. Or you may be able to recast your purposes in a way that aligns with their goals and needs.

## #4 Create a Web "Tree"

Develop a chart that logically connects the information site visitors will need to achieve the goals you have adopted. A web tree is a useful tool that allows you to keep your audience in mind while brainstorming and organizing your content and connections among pages.

**\*Examine the web tree examples on the following pages, then use these steps to guide your team through the process of creating your own tree:**

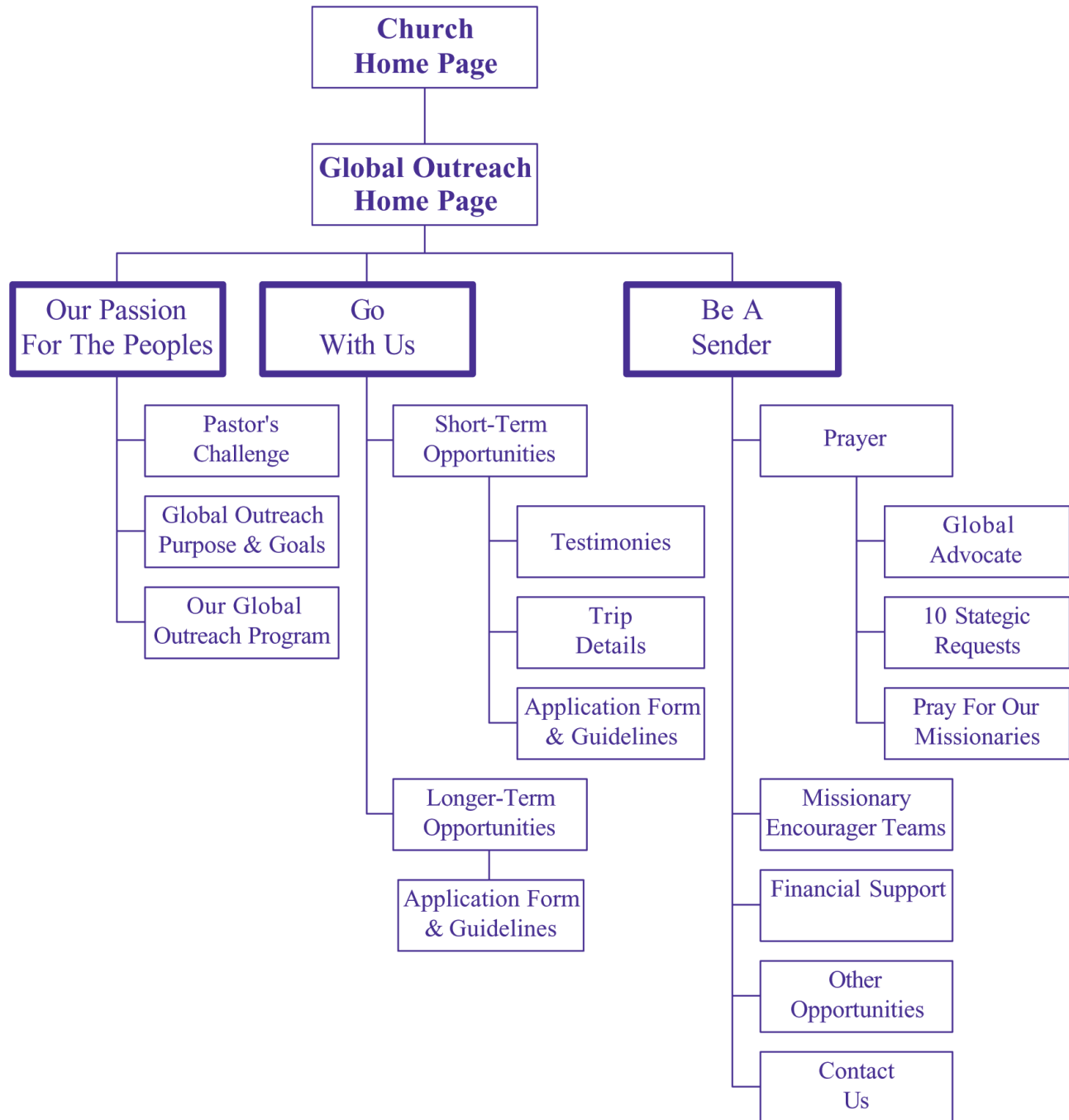
- Bring to your meeting a collection of Post-It-Notes® tablets in different colors. Assign one color to each type of website visitor you want to serve. For example: Blue could represent site visitors who are interested in short-term trips. Pink could represent those who want access to current information about a member of your missionary family for prayer.
- Divide your web development team into small groups and assign one or more of your "visitor audiences" to each. Ask them to jot on their Post-It-Notes® a brief description of the information that their web visitor would want to access, assuming each Post-It-Note® represents one screen of web information.
- When they have finished, send each group to one section of a large white board or area of

the wall and have them arrange their Post-It-Notes® in a logical sequence from top to bottom. If several information choices are valid options for the next step, those Post-It-Notes® may be placed horizontally.

- Encourage your team not to be afraid to "dream big" at this stage. You will select the most important content at a later point. For now, freely brainstorm about what your various web audiences want to find when accessing your envisioned missions pages.
- When each group has assembled its "branch" of web information, review the entire "tree." Doubtless similar information will appear on Post-It-Notes® on various branches of your tree. One advantage of web-based information is that you can create internal links to lead people to the same information from various web pages.

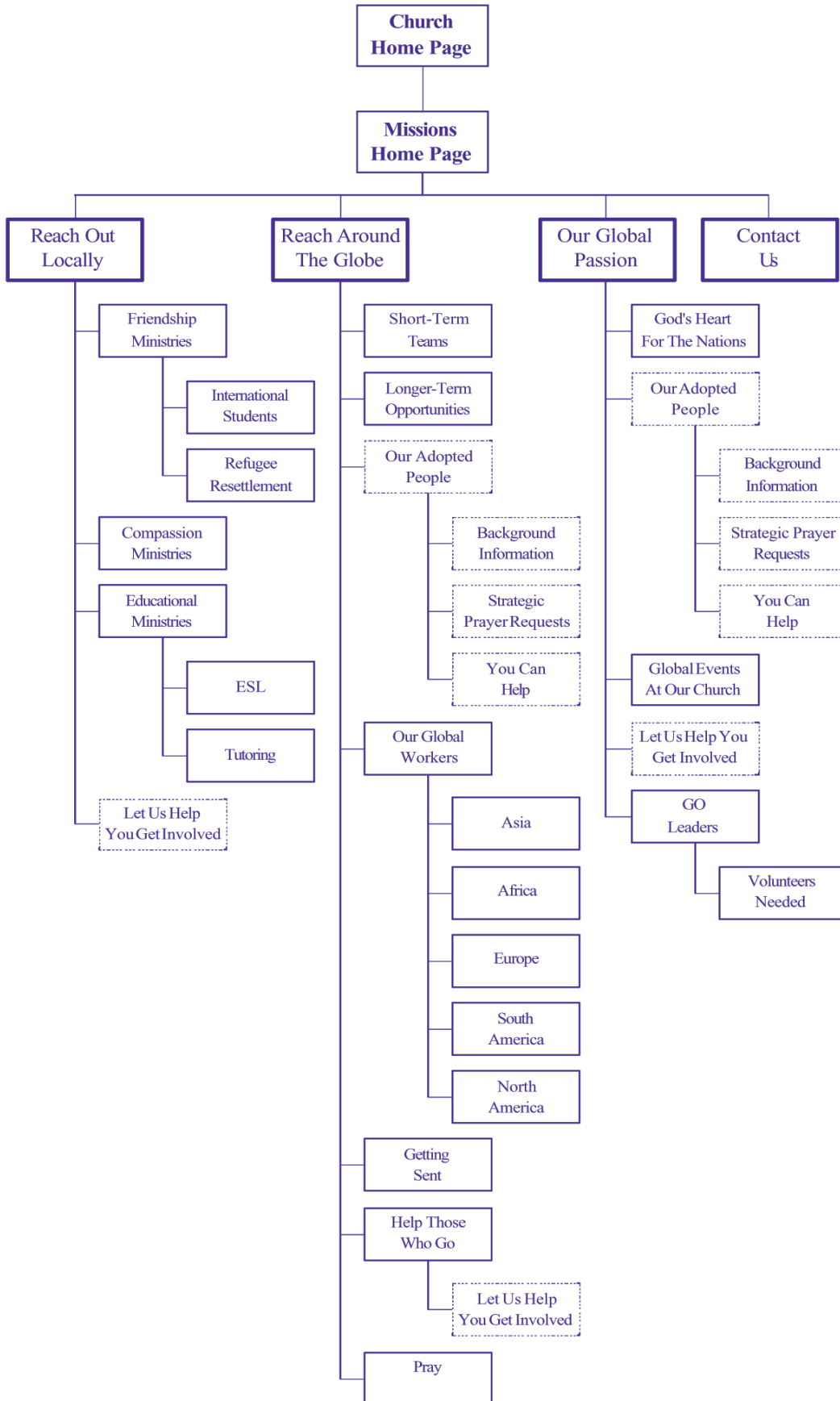


# Web Tree Illustration 1



# Web Tree Illustration 2

(dashed lines indicate a page linked at multiple places)



## #5 Structure Your Website Layout

It is important to use your web tree to structure the layout of your pages. If you succumb to the temptation to categorize the elements based on the administrative structure of your missions program, you may confuse or frustrate your audience.

- \*Review how your main audiences will approach your missions home page. Keep asking yourselves, "What will visitors be looking for?"
- \*Create simple and direct entry points through which each group can quickly identify where it should go to access the information needed. For example, if a large number of visitors will search for information on short-term trips, consider locating this link on your missions homepage.
- \*Don't overwhelm your visitor with copy, but provide necessary detail where it is desired. Pages at the top of the tree should be briefer, offering links to pages with additional detail on specific topics. The advantage of electronic communication is that audiences can quickly pick and choose, going directly to exactly the information they want. Facilitate that process by allowing your visitors to elect or bypass the expanded information.
- \*Don't introduce too many links on your missions homepage. Offering a long list runs the risk of making your site cumbersome, confusing or difficult to navigate. If you feel it is necessary to offer

more than five options, choose three or four main headings that will capture the eye and orient the visitor. Under these headings, you can group topical links that will take visitors directly to the information they want.

- \*Talk to your webmaster to find out if there are overall guidelines to follow when creating your pages in order to integrate with the flow and appearance of the rest of your church's site.

## #6 Prioritize Page Development

- \*What is the timeframe in which you want to have your missions web pages posted?
- \*Do you want to tackle the project in phases? If so, identify the scope and timeframe of at least phase 1 and phase 2.
- \*Realistically assess your ability to develop and maintain material on the web. Out-of-date information serves no one.
- \*Choose a reasonable level of complexity for your site. The following chart identifies three arbitrary levels of complexity among church missions sites and samples of each. Determine how ambitious this phase of your website development project should be. It is better to start small and build than overwhelm your team and fail to launch anything or post material that is never updated.

SIMPLE	AVERAGE	COMPLEX
<p>Gives a broad scope of important, well-organized information</p> <hr/> <p>Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church www.frazerumc.org</p> <hr/> <p>Village Church www.vcbweb.org</p>	<p>Clearly highlights many aspects of the global outreach program in an attractive way</p> <hr/> <p>Santa Cruz Bible Church www.santacruzibible.org</p> <hr/> <p>Nairobi Chapel www.nairobichapel.org</p>	<p>Organizes a lot of useful information including many unique features</p> <hr/> <p>Christian Life Assembly www.christianlifeassembly.com</p> <hr/> <p>North Point Community Church www.northpoint.org</p>

**\*Now you are ready to determine the exact scope of your project using these questions.**

- Which elements are "must haves"?
- Which elements should be eliminated because they are too difficult to create and/or maintain at this time?
- Do any of these pages involve security concerns that need to be examined more closely before proceeding further? (See "Security Issues" below.)
- Do any of these pages divert you from your priority purpose?
- Which pages should be completed first?

**\*Go back to your website tree and eliminate all sections except those you have agreed to include in phase 1 (or perhaps phases 1 and 2) of your project.**

**\*Set target dates of completion for each phase you have identified.**

Note: Don't discard the web page ideas you eliminated from this phase of your site development! Keep them for future reference—you may want to add these elements at a later time.

## **#7 Choose Key Terms Carefully**

Your team will want to give some thought to ensuring that your site is understandable to your various audiences and that your terminology is consistent throughout your pages.

**\*Examine the language you are currently using to communicate the various aspects of your global outreach program. For example, perhaps this is a good time to evaluate whether to replace "missions" with "global outreach" or "international ministry" in your church's nomenclature. But avoid introducing too much change at once, or you will confuse your audience.**

**\*Once you have decided on your terminology, communicate it to all parties who will be involved in the creation, editing and upkeep of your website in**

**the future. You may want to create a simple style guide. Consistency is important.**

**\* After you have developed your web copy, ask several people who are not familiar with missions "lingo" to read the content of your pages and highlight confusing concepts and/or language.**



## **#8 Distribute Duties**

A larger church with an extensive website probably will want to recruit a number of people to write the content and to structure the various pages of the website. A smaller church tackling fewer pages may decide to assign that role to one primary person who relies on others for assistance with specific elements. (Note: It is always a good idea to have at least two people familiar with the construction and elements of the site.)

**\*Big picture: Assign one person to be the project's "visionary." This person refines and organizes the main components of the website that were chosen in Step #5.**

**\*Copy writing: Make writing assignments based on expertise. If some of your most knowledgeable people are not expert writers, you may want to team a resource person with a skilled wordsmith. Make sure your copy is clear, coherent and to the point.**

## **#9 Designate a "Gatekeeper"**

Recruiting one person to oversee all content will bring consistency to the whole project because all elements will go through this person's hands before being passed to the webmaster. The gatekeeper does not need to be "web savvy" or heavily involved in the intricacies of your church's global outreach program. However, it is important that this individual has the time and commitment

necessary to keep things moving, or he/she will become a bottleneck. The gatekeeper's responsibilities include:

- Examine each page and make any needed corrections before passing it to the webmaster.
- Make sure that the content and approach of all pages flow smoothly and that no important information is missing.
- Communicate with the writers and/or webmaster when major adjustments need to be made.

## #10 Test before Going Live

\*Take some trial runs! When all of your pages have been developed, you may want to post them on a restricted site (your webmaster can help you with this) and then sit down with five or six church attendees, one at a time, and let them explore your pages while you "watch over their shoulder" and get their feedback. Don't give them any specific instructions, just encourage them to browse the site and talk out loud while they do so, telling you everything they are thinking:

- Why are you coming to this site?
- How does the navigation work?
- What do you expect to find when you click on a particular link?
- Does the page meet your expectations?
- Are you able to find what you are looking for?

- Are there elements that are frustrating or confusing?
- Is the design distracting or helpful?
- Does it appear attractively on your computer (web information sometimes downloads differently on different computers)?
- What is missing that you would like to see?

\*Be prepared to make some changes. No matter how well you have planned and developed your pages, there are bound to be some areas of the design, navigation or text that confuse your visitors. Don't get discouraged or defensive. Fight the urge to "talk them through" the stumbling block, rather watch to see if other testers have a similar problem. If so, accept that it's not working and you need to revise your site.

## #11 Establish a Review and Updating System

\*Assign one or two people to review your missions web pages on a regular schedule (monthly is usually sufficient) to make sure that all material is current.

\*Develop a system to get feedback from site visitors and potential visitors to monitor that the web pages are appealing, accessible, useful and understandable. You may want to randomly interview church members by having them peruse the website and then give feedback. Remember: Just because a person from your missions team understands and enjoys the website doesn't necessarily mean your target audiences do.

## Selecting Links to Other Internal and External Pages

### Internal Links

\*Select and name the primary options that will appear on your missions homepage. Each of these buttons or links will take visitors to pages providing more details on that topic. Choose names that are meaningful to the average visitor, avoiding confusing insider terminology and abbreviations.

\*When examining your original web tree, take note of the boxes that have similar information that your visitors will want to be able to access from multiple pages. This information can be created just once and then buttons can link to it from other pages.

\*Use graphics that are easy for all audiences to recognize.

## External Links

- \*Choose links that are fun to browse! It is often this element that draws people to visit and revisit your website.
- \*Don't clutter your website with too many links.
- \*Be selective when choosing websites. Thoroughly peruse the outside sites you choose as links, and make sure the information and perspective reflected on those sites does not conflict with your congregation's views. (Remember that what you put on your

website represents your church's viewpoint, not just your personal opinion.) If necessary, include a disclaimer such as, "The inclusion of website links on this page does not imply this church's endorsement of every opinion presented on these sites." But it is best to eliminate the link if you have any doubts about the content of the site.

- \*Here are examples of types of links you might include. Visit the church website examples to see how these congregations used links to serve their site's visitors.

Types of Links	Church Site Featuring Links of This Type
Organizations and missions agencies pertinent to your church	Shades Mountain Baptist <a href="http://www.shades.org">www.shades.org</a> First Covenant <a href="http://www.firstcovenantchurch.org">www.firstcovenantchurch.org</a>
Information on countries around the world	First Covenant <a href="http://www.firstcovenantchurch.org">www.firstcovenantchurch.org</a>
Opportunities for missions involvement in the local area	Calvary Church <a href="http://www.calvarychurch.com">www.calvarychurch.com</a> Young Nak Presbyterian <a href="http://www.ynem.org">www.ynem.org</a>
Web locations offering articles and other resources on missions	Xenos Christian Fellowship <a href="http://www.xenos.org">www.xenos.org</a>

## Addressing Security Issues

**\*It is important to ensure that your missionaries are protected so they can continue to minister in highly sensitive areas of the world. For more info, go to <http://mnn.gospelcom.net/article/6013>.**

**\*Prevent the dissemination of sensitive missionary information by one or more of the following:**

- Don't put any information about individual missionaries on your site.
- Don't list any missionaries who work in closed countries on your site.
- Place only general missionary information on your site, and direct visitors to call or email for more specifics.
- Query your missionaries for their personal preferences:
  - Offer the option not to be included on your site.
  - Briefly summarize possible concerns about having certain types of information posted.
  - Describe how posting appropriate information will serve them.

## *Important Don'ts*

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\*Don't develop a website so extensive that you do not have the personnel to keep it current. Design the website within your time limitations for maintenance.

\*Don't make visitors manually close windows for each page of your site they have opened.

\*Don't use "insider terminology" that is confusing to the uninitiated.

\*Don't clutter your website with too many pictures or graphics.

\*Don't succumb to the temptation to post large amounts of text simply because you are not constrained by the limitations of the size of a printed brochure. It is just as important to have tight, succinct copy on the web as in print.

## *Celebrate!*

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When you launch your site, throw a party for your hard-working missions web team. Thank them publicly, too. This will also provide you with a great opportunity to

invite your whole church to visit your missions web pages. You may want to run an ad for several weeks in your church bulletin pointing people to your site.