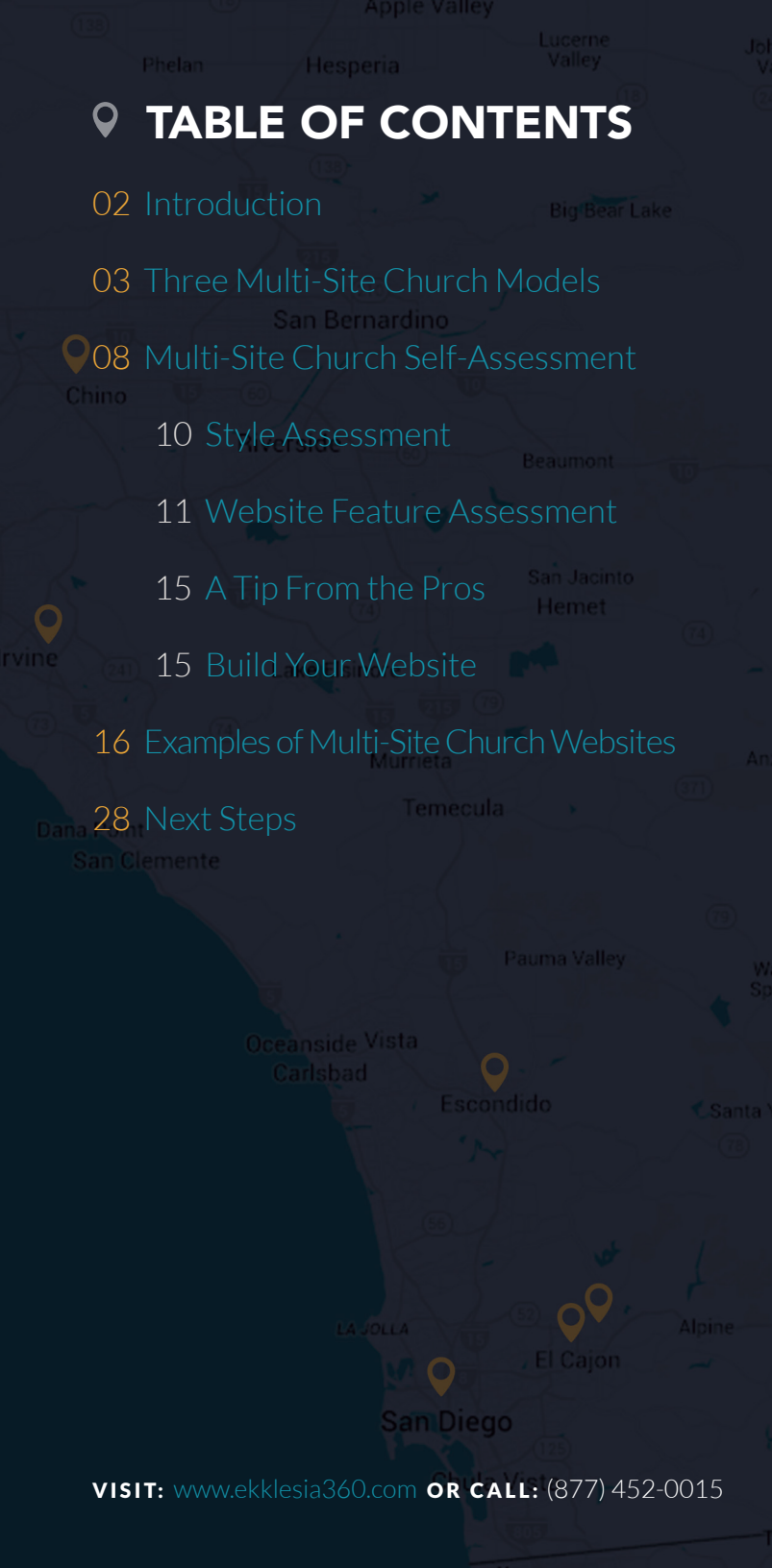


MULTI-SITE CHURCH WEBSITES

An Organizational Manual for Websites

 eBook

MONKDEV™ builders of  eklesia360

A dark-themed map of Southern California serves as a background for the table of contents. It features several yellow location pins placed across the state, from the Central Valley down to San Diego. The map is semi-transparent, allowing the text to be clearly visible.

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INTRODUCTION

To match the great work you're already doing in your multi-site church, you need a website that can keep up with and fully express who you are as a church community. At Monk Development, builders of Ekklesia 360, we're passionate about helping churches use their websites to provide value to their congregation and accomplish ministry goals.

Speaking from firsthand experience, organizing a multi-site church website is easier said than done. Every church is different and unique. But there are some established best practices. Your website doesn't have to be so cumbersome that it confuses your congregation and totally bewilders new visitors. That's why we created this eBook -- not all multi-site lessons have to be learned the hard way.



THREE MULTI-SITE CHURCH MODELS

There are three primary models for the actual structure of a multi-site church. And the best website organization flows from a very self-aware church organization. Which one best fits your church?

Chances are your church will fit one of the following models:

- A. One Church, Many Locations
- B. Plant-and-Release
- C. Independent Multi-Site



A. ONE CHURCH, MANY LOCATIONS

Across your multiple campuses you've got a highly consistent tone and feel. Theologically, all of the locations are in agreement and the emphasis is pretty similar from one location to the next. The

locations are not in competition with each other, just in different areas. This type of multi-site church will likely have a similar demographic across all locations.



Eagle Brook Church

Eagle Brook has 6 of locations throughout the Minnesota area.



The Village Church

The Village has 4 campuses around Dallas, TX



Cottonwood Creek Baptist

Cottonwood Creek has 3 campuses in Texas.



B. PLANT-AND-RELEASE

This is just what it sounds like. Your “new” church is closely tied to the “main campus” for only a few years. As each new congregation is set up for success, the new campuses grow and even

more new ones are added. As the new churches mature, they are “released” to grow and thrive on their own. Over the years, a network is developed.



Capitol Hill Baptist

Capitol Hill doesn't keep a list of links to switch campuses because it sees those churches as plants and they have their own websites.



The Village Denton

The Village Denton shares a logo and a history with The Village Church. But they have a different feel online.



C. INDEPENDENT MULTI-SITE

This is a more loosely linked group of churches. Their agreement on theological issues is the foundation. Similar thinking about the Bible is their unifying theme. This kind of affiliation is geared toward giving each campus the freedom to make their own decisions while served and supported by the main campus financially.

The expression and emphasis of each campus is very dependent on the demographics of the particular locations. If you have a church campus that meets in rented space near a college, the congregation will likely develop differently than those who are drawn to your 100-year-old sanctuary.



CALVARY SAN DIEGO
SIMPLY JESUS

Calvary Chapel San Diego

Calvary has a location “in town” and another nearer to the beach. They share a website and some events, but largely the two function independently.

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MARINERSCHURCH

Mariner's Church

Mariner's shares a website across its four campuses, but once you've chosen one, it's difficult to switch back.



HIGHLAND PARK
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Highland Park United Methodist

Highland Park has a couple of services that meet in different venues at the same campus, and also another location that is much more independent -- accessible in a drop down menu.



It might be obvious to you which of these models your church falls into, or it might not. Your church may be firmly in the “A” camp, on “Team B,” or you may be in transition from one model to another. Or you may land somewhere along the spectrum. And that’s completely fine.

Use this time to dig in and think about how you would define your church structure. Is your style obvious?

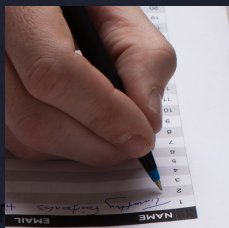
Do you need a little help with your strategic assessment and planning?

Strategy Help

MULTI-SITE CHURCH SELF-ASSESSMENT

As you go through the following section, you're ultimately trying to answer these main questions: What "kind" of multi-site church are you? And how should you portray your multi-site church online?

Those decisions inform the rest of your answers and trigger different questions. Think of it like a branching pattern in a set of dominoes. We'll do the work of lining them up and then you get to tip over the first one.



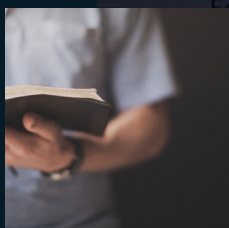
NAMING: Do you use phrases like: main campus, satellites, or sister churches? Do you have the same name? Is one location called “Trinity Fellowship” and the other is “Trinity Fellowship East?”



SMALL GROUPS: Do small groups, volunteering, and special events get sorted by location and campus? Or are they sorted by theme, day of the week, demographics, life stage, or ministry category, etc. Would all members be equally invited to each campus’ events and small groups? Of course, you’d never send anyone home, but what are you hoping to accomplish with the different groups?



GIVING: Is each location independently funded? Is fundraising based on specific decisions at each location or the overall goals of the whole group of churches? Where does gift money go and how is it spent? How are financial decisions made?



SERMONS: Who preaches? Which locations have live or streamed preaching? Which sermon ends up online? Is there a separate place to see all of them? Do you provide live worship in each location? Is it the same style of music? Do you have a band in one location and a choir in another? Who is in leadership? Who is the most prominent?

STEP ONE

STYLE ASSESSMENT

Hopefully, as you read through the multi-site church organization options and the questions above, one of the models seemed the most like your church.

- A. One Church, Many Locations
- B. Plant-and-Release
- C. Independent Multi-Site



Discover Who You Are and Who You Want to Be

Do you have a clear idea where you're going? Consider a mission statement and make sure you know what you're trying to do as a church. How honest and self-aware is your leadership team? Are you really as great as you say you are? Or are you even more interesting than you are in public?

Assess Any Needed Changes

Unless you're consciously working really hard on constant alignment and improvement, it's likely you're not in full agreement (most churches aren't). And that's ok. You can get there. The website design process can be a great time to sort out these questions. As you plan the functionality you need, you can think about how you will use those features.

STEP TWO

WEBSITE FEATURE ASSESSMENT

Your next step is to determine where it's important to show unity across your web presence and where you'd like to highlight some differences. What's important to you? How do you want it to look and function?

From a technical standpoint, the three main ways are using **cookies**, **subsites**, or **filters**.



Strategy



Design



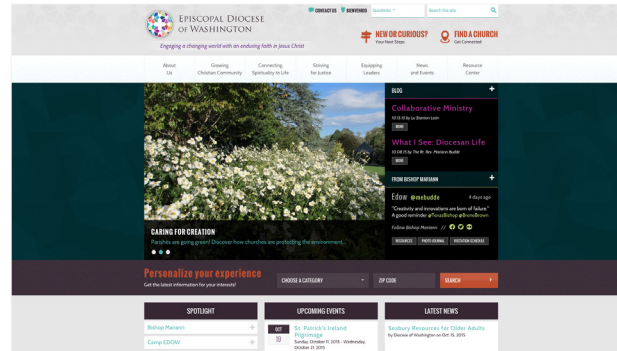
Development

MULTI-SITE CHURCH WEBSITE EXAMPLES USING COOKIES

A “cookie” is a piece of code we can set up on your website that knows whether or not any given website browser has visited your website before. If your web visitor has been to your website before, the cookie remembers which campus was selected and shows that information as the default.

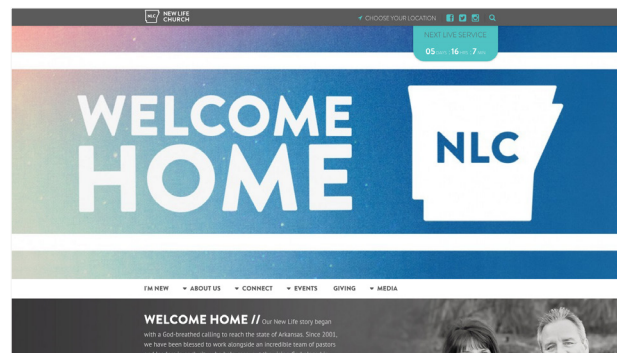
Here are a couple examples that use cookies:

These cookies don't track purchases or follow your members after they've left your website. They simply allow you to provide a customized, personalized experience for your website visitors. This improves the odds they will find what they're looking for and come back again and again.



Episcopal Diocese of Washington

The Episcopal Diocese of Washington has over 80 active churches with relevant news, resources, and events. Visitors to the EDOW site simply select from a drop-down list and enter their zip code to receive relevant information throughout the site. Using cookies, the EDOW site updates the featured news and events items to match the visitor's criteria.



New Life Church

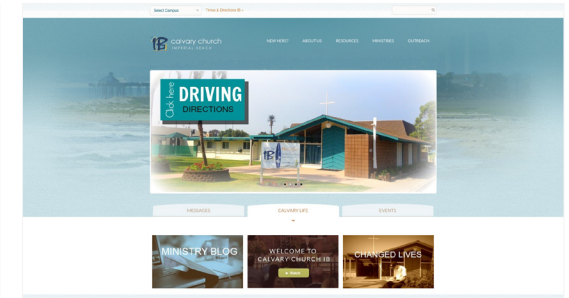
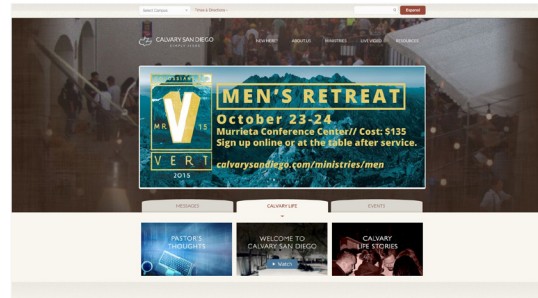
New Life Church has a “Choose Your Location” option across the top. Once chosen, that will be the default location for the viewer. Sections of the homepage auto-populate with information for the chosen location. Cookies seamlessly keep the most relevant information in place on a website enabled with them.

MULTI-SITE CHURCH WEBSITE EXAMPLES USING SUBSITES

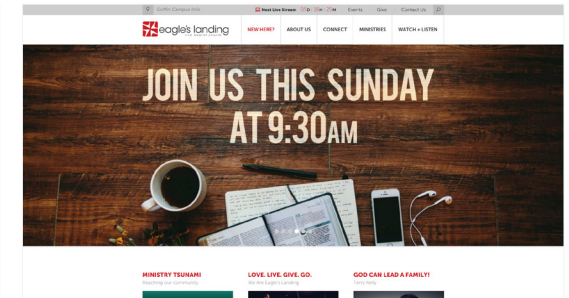
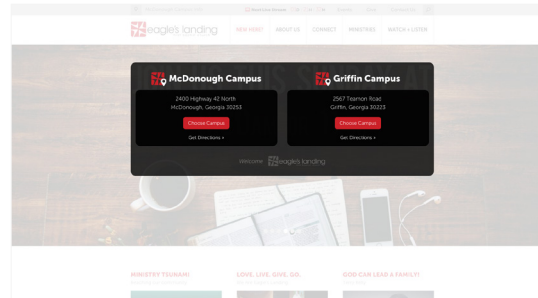
Another way to technically organize your multiple locations is using subsites. Subsites are almost like building another website. You can have a totally independant color schemes and design. You can also keep them similar if you want to. Subsites allow you to build independent menus and keep campus information separate from each other. But the information also stays connected by having a similar URL and being easy to switch back and forth.

Compare the two locations in each of the examples:

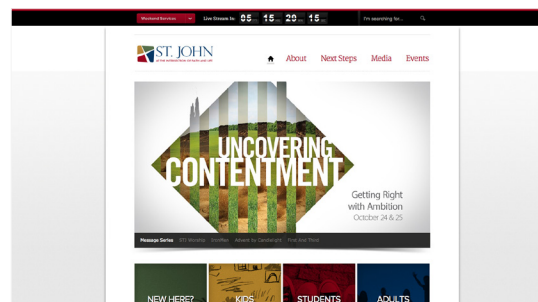
Calvary Chapel San Diego:



Eagle's Landing:



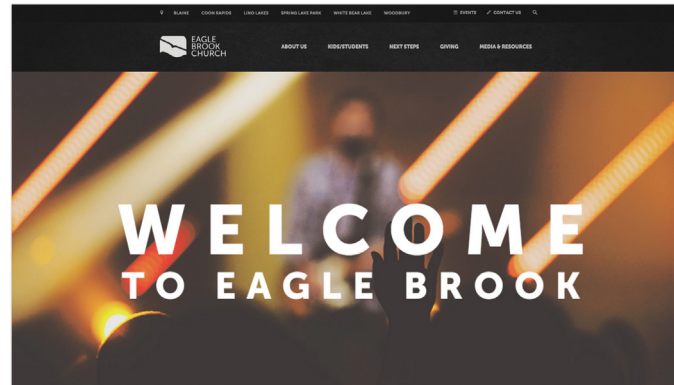
This technique is used often for churches with an affiliated school, for example:
St. John Lutheran Church and School:



MULTI-SITE CHURCH WEBSITE EXAMPLES USING FILTERS

Filters are a way to search and sort the information. People are increasingly familiar and comfortable with this option because they are able to sort complex information to get the most relevant answers. It can be designed so campuses or services can be selected right from the home page. Or a website could be the same across all campuses until the viewer gets to a specific feature and then they can sort between small groups on various days of the week or sermons on different campuses.

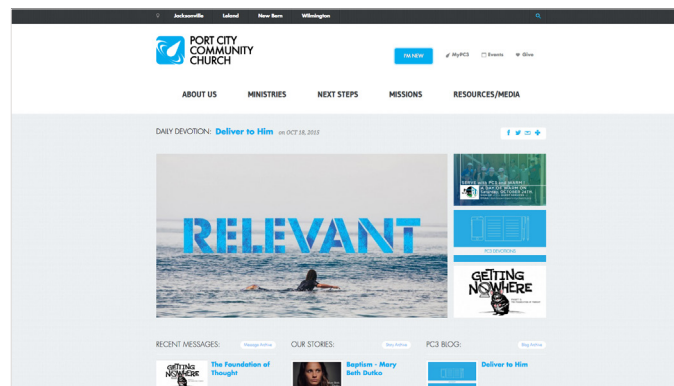
Here's a few great examples:



Eagle Brook Church



Vineyard Columbus



Port City Community Church

STEP THREE

A TIP FROM THE PROS

Being a multi-site church requires a certain level of commitment. If your leadership and staff isn't "all in" and ready to maintain these processes, you may burn out. Capacity, time, and funds are finite -- some of the options we present take more than others. We would hate to recommend or build a site that looks great but relies heavily on up-to-date content that a church simply cannot keep up with.

The tipping point for this usually comes with the 4th or 5th campus. At that point, the church may need to hire additional staff to maintain multiple sets of content or rethink their multi-site strategy.

This is important to realize as early as possible because it raises questions around "why we are multi-site" on a mission/vision/values level for many churches. If your church has a Vision in place, you can allocate resources in ways that will get you there. Running a multi-site church website can be a very rewarding endeavour (as well as everything else that goes into running a multi-site church). We want you to set yourself up for success.

STEP FOUR

BUILD YOUR WEBSITE

You've done the work, made the plan, and organized your church information. Now, it's time to put the details into action. The rest of this eBook is a series of examples of website features for you to consider and decide which will best suit the needs of your multi-site church.

If you're ready to jump in and get started building your website, we'd love to give you a free quote and assessment.

Get a Free Quote



Continue reading to see examples of multi-site church website features.



EXAMPLES OF MULTI-SITE CHURCH WEBSITES

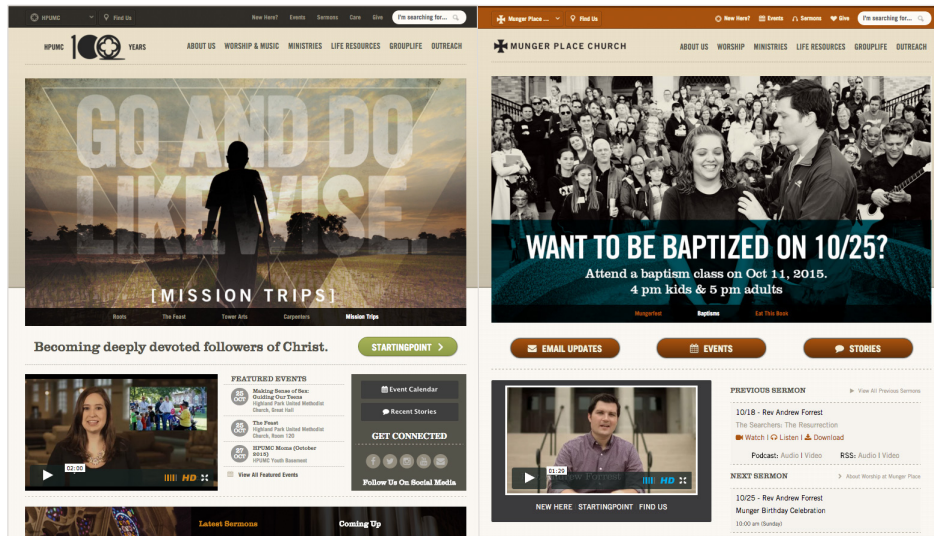
FEATURES & FUNCTIONALITY TO CONSIDER

This final section is a series of examples of different features and functionality using a mix of cookies, subsites, and filters.

1

LOOK AND LOGO

As you plan how your campuses will interact, keep the look and feel of your site in mind. This will include things like color palette, logo, and layout.



Highland Park United Methodist Church

Highland Park uses a similar layout, but different color choices and logos to help build a sense of unity with distance.



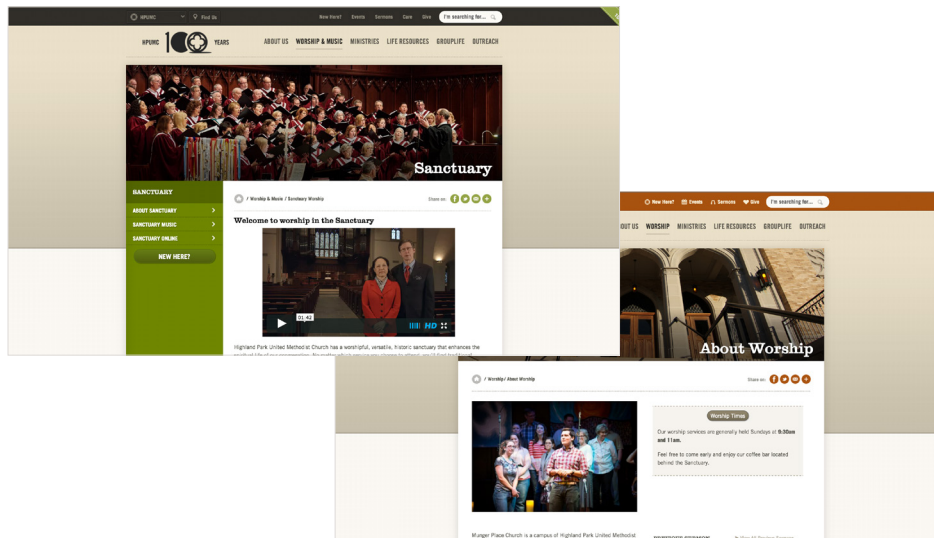
The Village Church

The Village uses a very integrated look and feel throughout their locations and the various websites.

2

WORSHIP

During your actual service, how similar does each location feel? How hard to do you work to remain consistent or set each campus apart from each other?



Highland Park Baptist

Highland Park is live in each location, but very different in style. Munger Place is rock and roll with a coffee bar while the Sanctuary and Chapel services have a choir and pews.



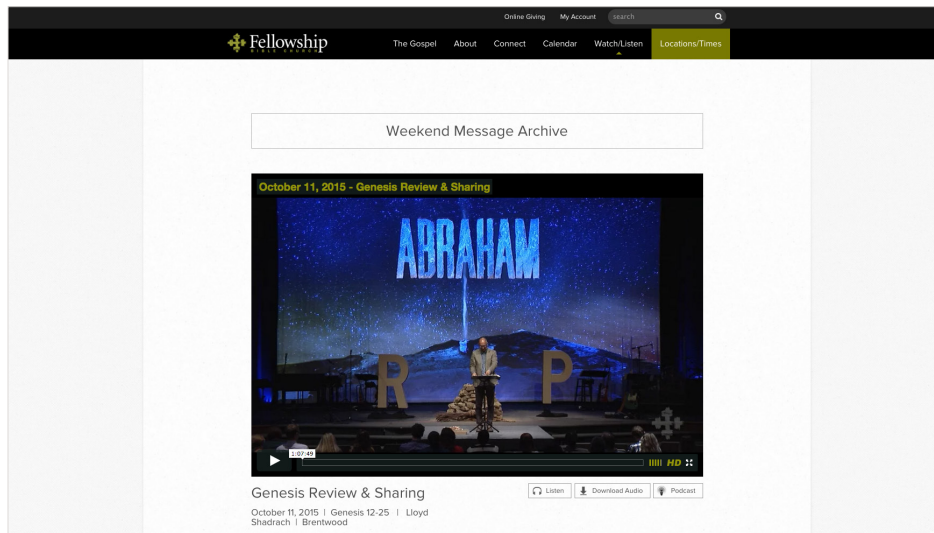
Fellowship Bible Church, Little Rock

In their largest location, Fellowship Bible has three different venues and they livestream the pastor from one venue into the others (as well as their other locations). Each venue has a different feel from worship to decor.

3

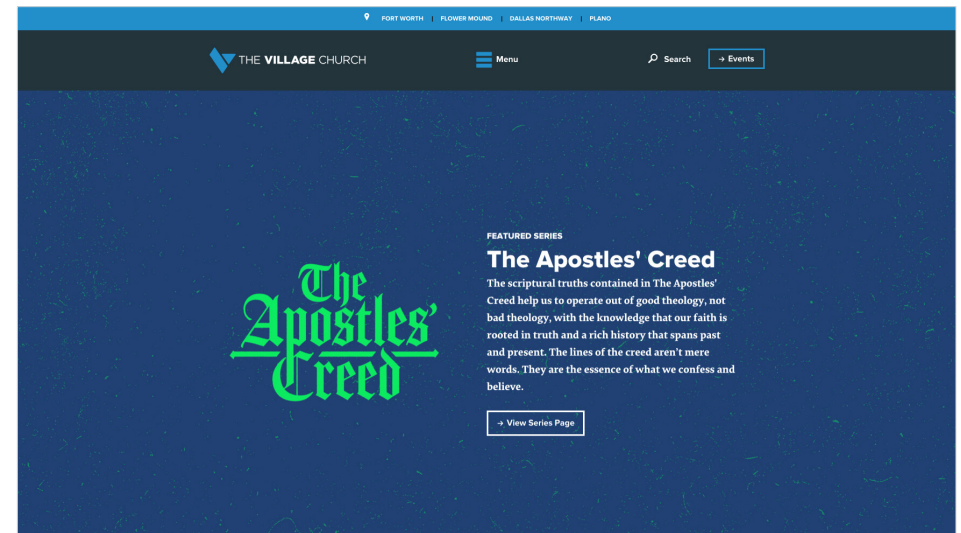
SERMONS

Preaching and teaching is arguably one of the key things your church does each week. How does your church want to share that with your congregation online?



Fellowship Nashville

Fellowship offers messages from multiple locations in a clean, easy-to-use list. They don't have filters or cookies. They provide all the campus messages with an equal emphasis.



The Village Church

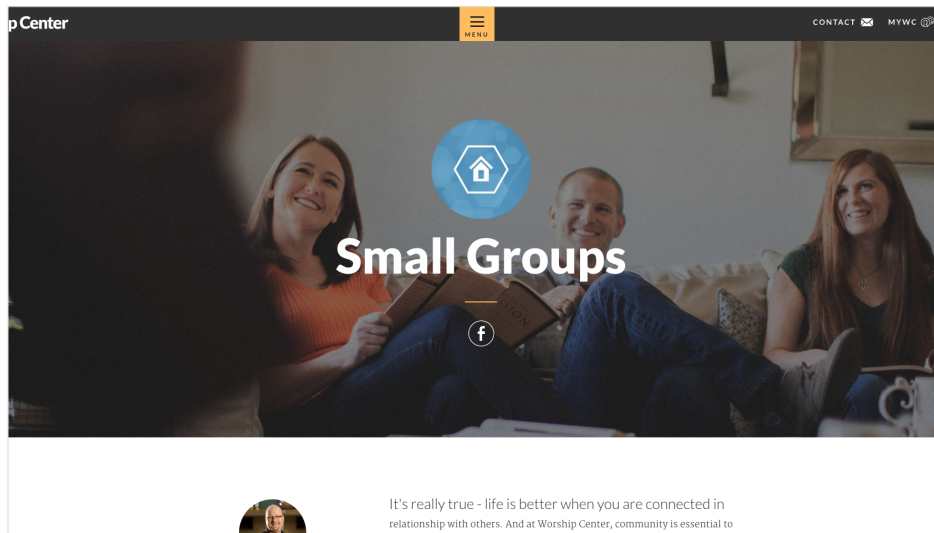
The Village Church allows site visitors to sort by sermon series, campus and also an archive based on past years.

4

SMALL GROUP FINDER

In multi-site churches, small groups (life groups, missional communities, etc.) take on new importance. In a larger church community, Small Groups are one

of the key ways your congregation feels connected and loved. This is how individual people connect.



Worship Center

The Worship Center has a button that links out to a form asking the visitor a few questions about the “type” of small group they are looking to join. These questions are based on age or demographics -- not location. The request form collects some basic contact info from the visitor and the relevant group leaders reach out right away.



Pinelake Church

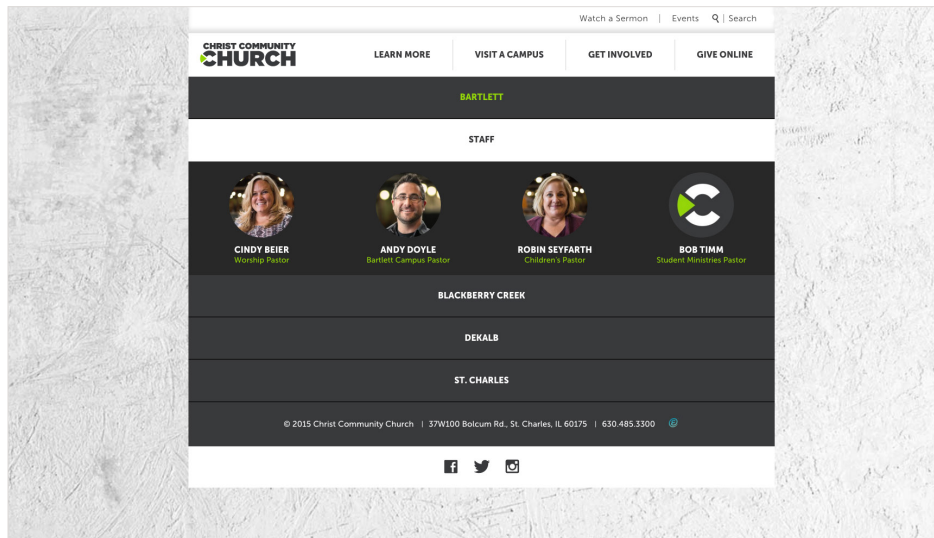
Pinelake Church starts with a more general introduction about small groups at any of their campuses. They then offer a campus selector to ensure each visitor finds a group near them before using a drop down menu to ask what “type” of group the visitor is looking for.

5

STAFF PAGE

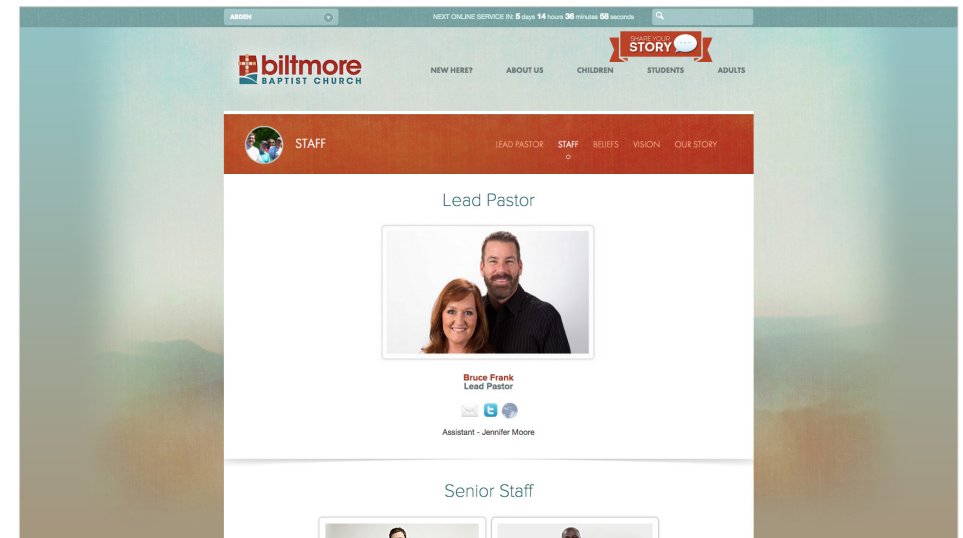
It is important that your congregation knows how to reach out to different staff members. If the staff your congregation will meet depends on which campus

they attend, you should make it easy for them to find the person they are looking for.



Christ Community Church

Christ Community Church asks you to choose a campus before showing you the staff most relevant to you.



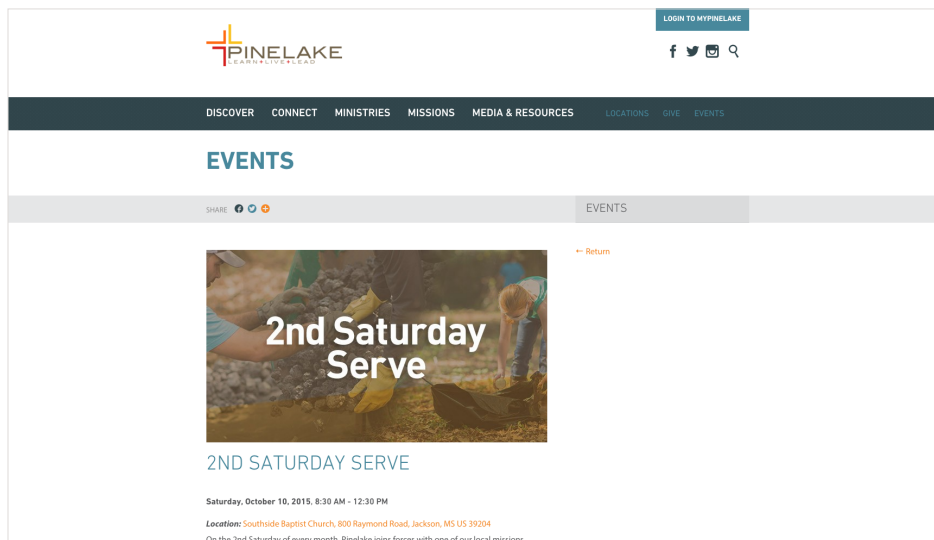
Biltmore

Biltmore uses a default of their senior staff. That list stays the same no matter which campus is chosen. The staff roles are clearly labeled, but this list highlights how the team works together.

6

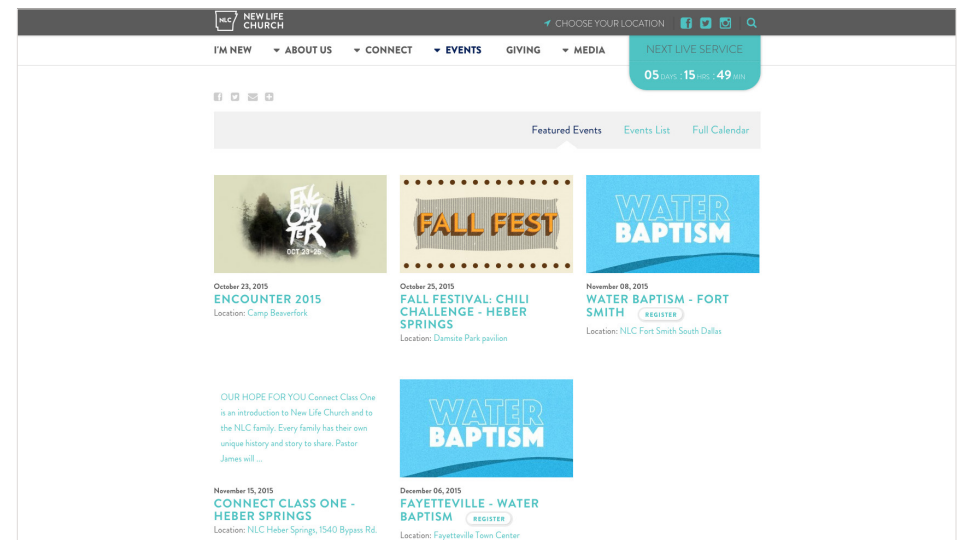
EVENTS

How segmented are your events? Do you have many “full church” events or are most things based around the individual campuses?



Pinelake Church

Pinelake Church uses a filter to sort their events information. When you select “all” as the filter, it shows a list of all the events. In the event description they tell the location information.



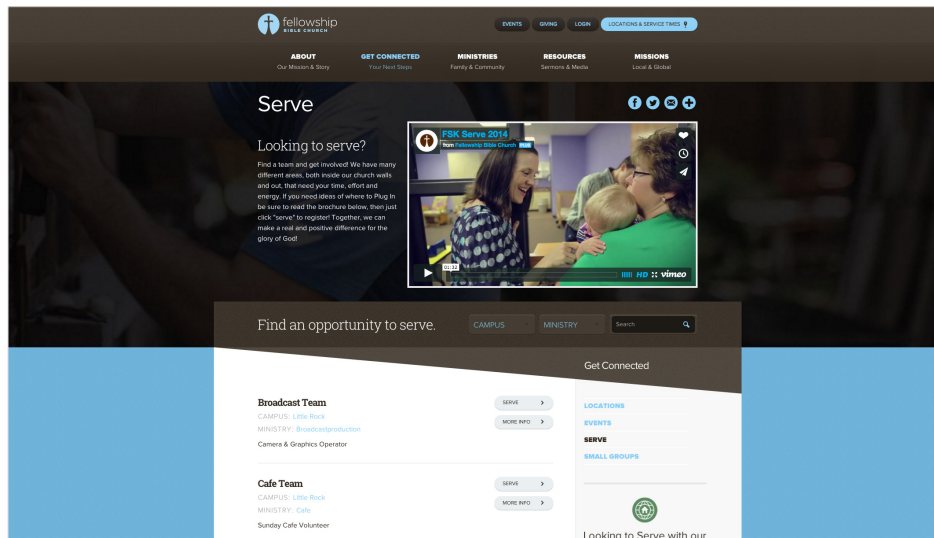
New Life Church

If you’ve visited their site before, New Life uses a cookie to automatically display the events for your campus choice on the home page.

7

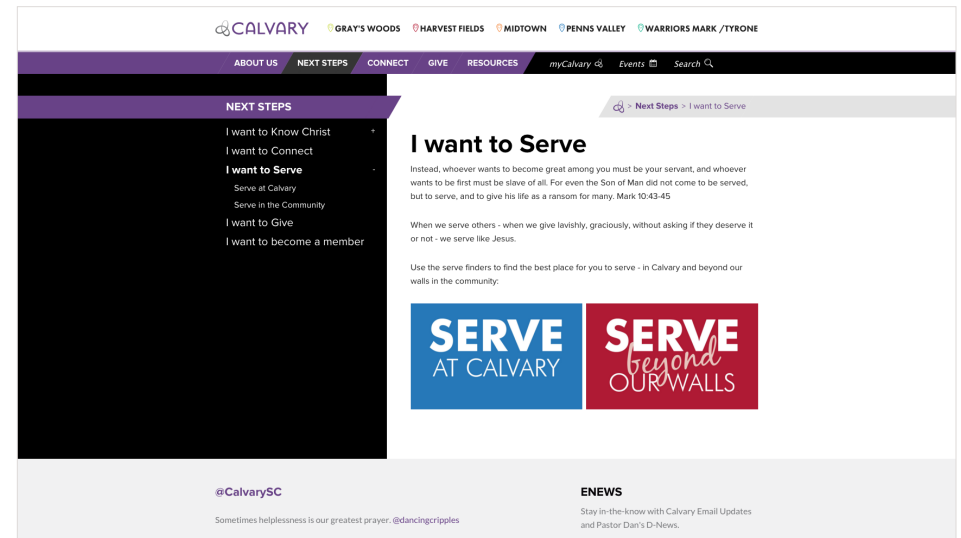
VOLUNTEERING

Do you recruit volunteers based around particular campuses or based on ministry areas or teams?



Fellowship Bible Church, Little Rock

Fellowship Bible has a welcome video orienting viewers to their opportunities to Serve. From there, people can sort by either ministry area or campus.



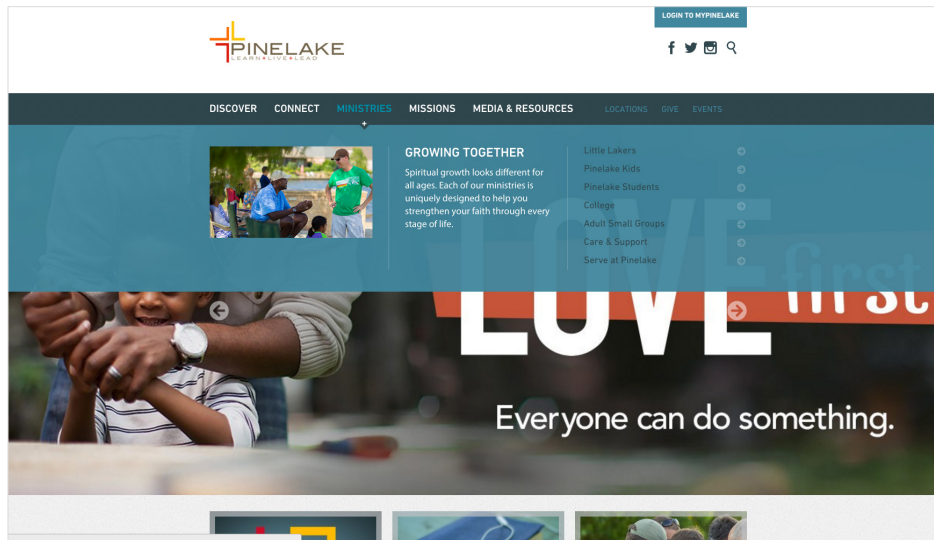
Calvary Church

Calvary Church divides their serving opportunities into two groups: within and outside of the church. From there, opportunities can be filtered by type or location.

8

MINISTRIES

How segmented are your ministries? Do you support most things as a “full church” or do you have many areas that are based around the individual campuses?



Pinelake Church

Pinelake Church starts by asking you to select a category of ministry from a drop down menu. A general introduction with locations and times follows in a sidebar. This information is also sortable by location.



The Village Church Flower Mound

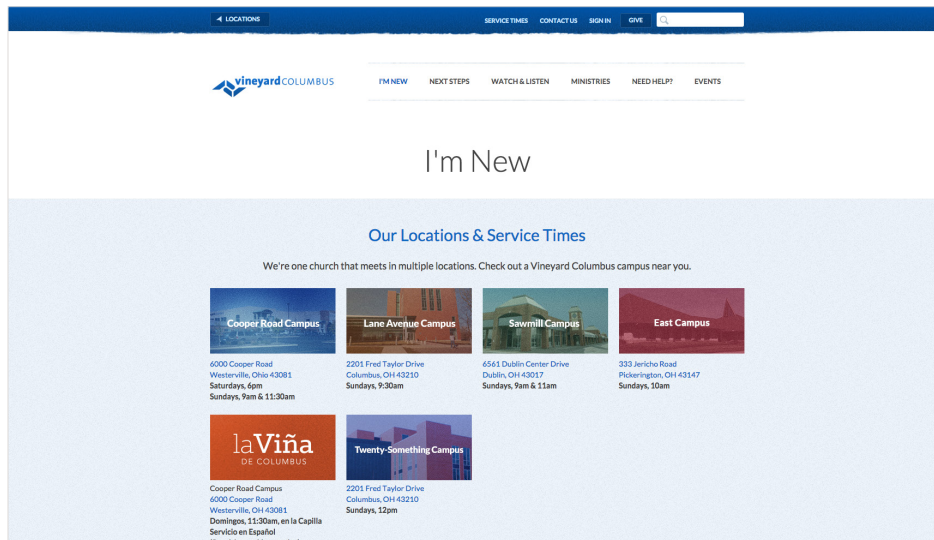
The Village church highlights their ministries on each campus landing page. This is the only place on their site that they have campus-specific information. They strive to be uniform in their approach to ministry across all other areas of their website.

9

NEW HERE PAGES

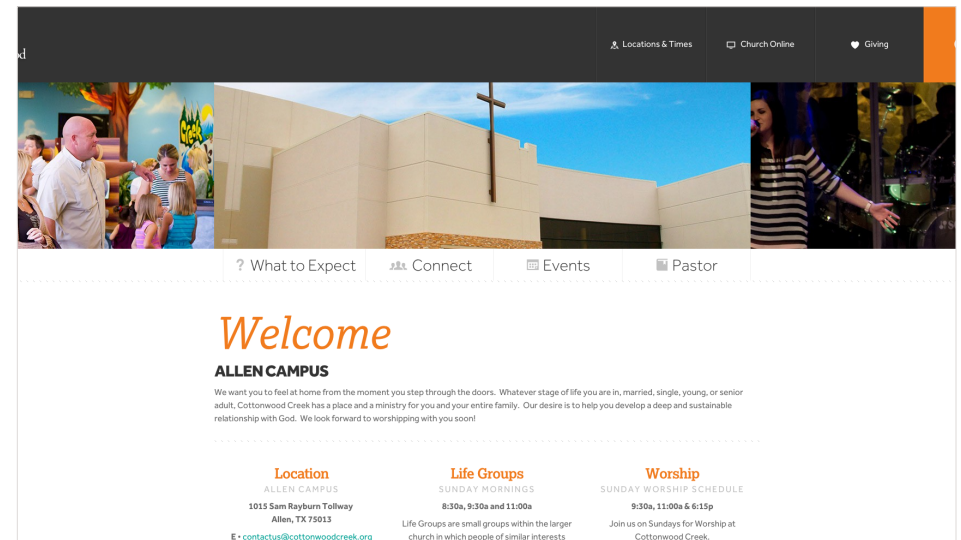
No matter your organizational goals, greeting new visitors will always be important. In a more unified campus, you can have an overall greeting. With a

more diverse campus organization, it may be best to have more than one welcome.



Vineyard Columbus

Vineyard highlights each campus, but has a single welcome video and a single set of information about ministries and next steps.



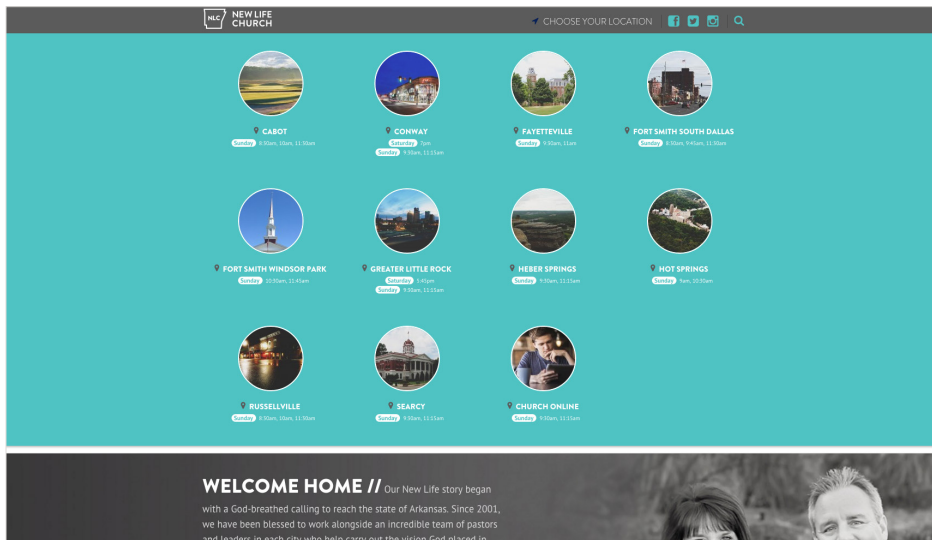
Cottonwood Creek

Cottonwood Creek has separate welcome pages for each campus. This defaults to their largest campus, Allen, and highlights campus-specific information for a newcomer.

10

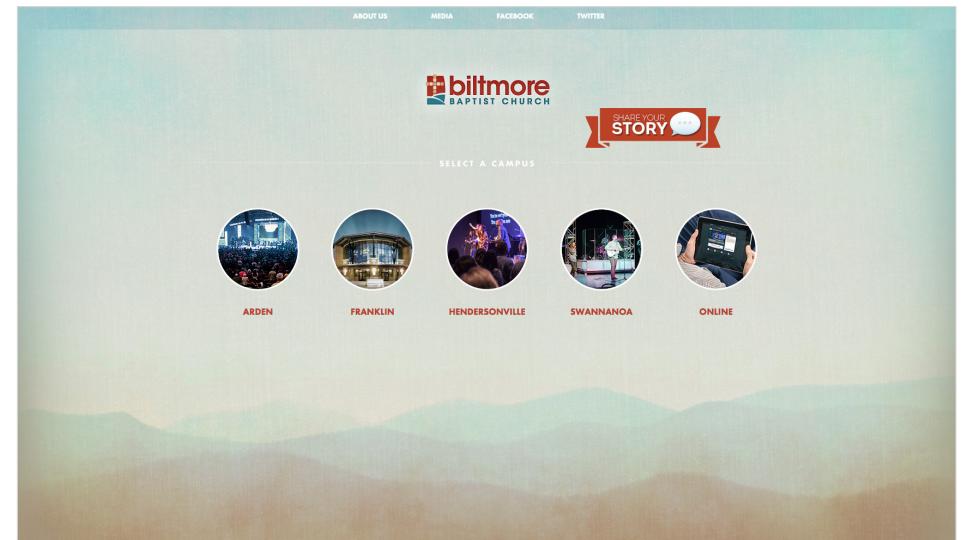
CAMPUSES

The most obvious difference -- where you physically meet for a service -- can be the most confusing to explain. How unified do you want to appear?



New Life Church

New Life uses cookies, but they don't require you to choose a campus right away. Choosing a campus enhances your experience, but it is not vital.



Biltmore Baptist Church

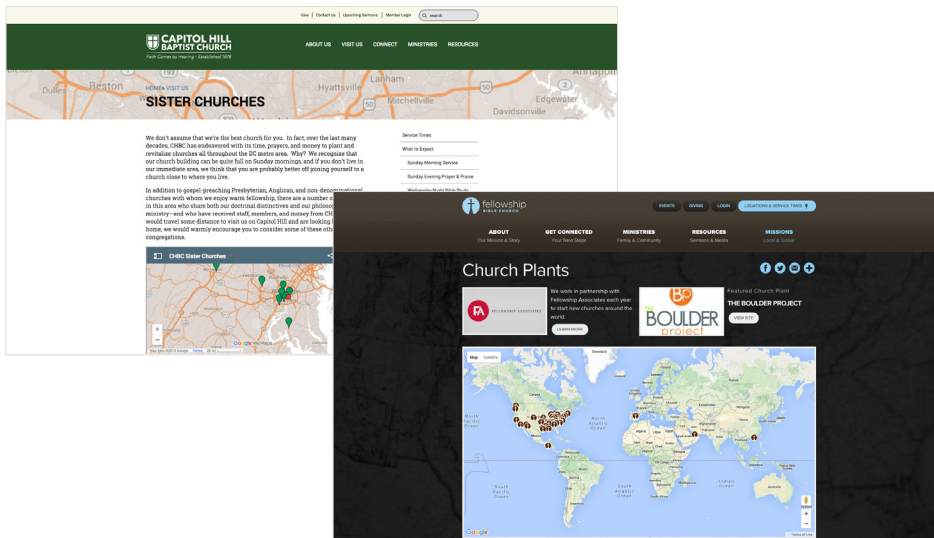
Biltmore Baptist has one of the clearest examples of asking a visitor which campus to select. The first time you visit their homepage you are greeted with images of all their campuses and almost nothing else to click on.

11

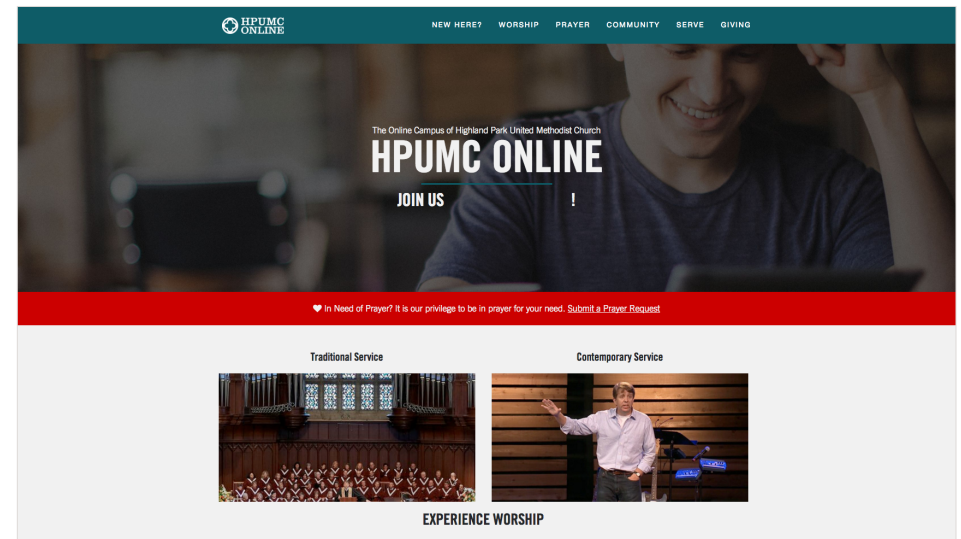
OTHER CUSTOM MULTI-SITE FEATURES UNIQUE TO YOUR CHURCH

Not every church needs every feature. And some churches need custom features. Here's a few examples of custom features you may consider:

You might consider a "Sister Churches" page like these:



Or a Prayer Request Banner, like this one:



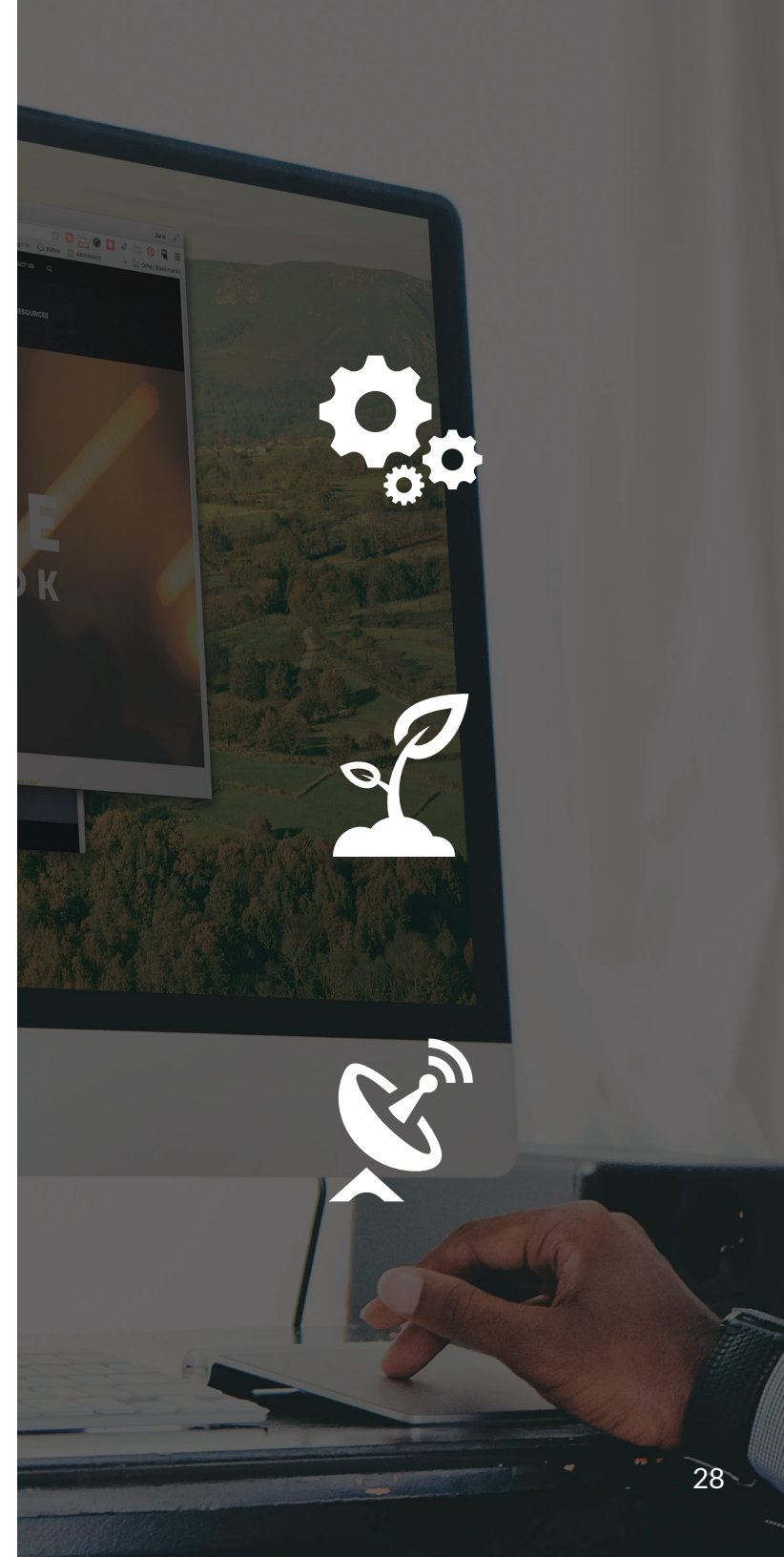
NEXT STEPS

Your church is so much more than your website. But having an under-performing, confusing, or unclear website affects so much more than *just* your website.

We hope this eBook helps you decide what kind of multi-site church you are, and also has shown you some examples of different features you should consider and how they can be executed in technically different ways with many different designs.

There's no one "right" way to build a multi-site church website. It's important to take the time early on to make sure you're going the best direction for your church and getting answers to all the questions you have. As you proceed on this journey, look for a ministry partner that is well positioned to help you define and reach your destination. There are so many great options for building a multi-site website -- we want yours to be the best for your church.

VISIT: www.ekklesia360.com OR CALL: (877) 452-0015



Get a Free Website Design Assessment & Quote!



Thanks for reading!

We hope you have a better understanding of just how many ways there are to organize a multi-site church. Hopefully, you even have an idea of what may be best for your church.

If you're ready to learn more, or if you want some help answering your questions, set up a free quote and assessment.

[Schedule Your Free Quote](#)

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