What is a blog?

A blog is a Web site on which an individual or group of users record opinions, information, etc. on a regular basis. (Google)

In 2006, New York Magazine charted the history of the medium. According to them, blogging has been with us since 1994, rescuing us from corporate mainstream content—that is, un-customized content—and ending the snail’s pace of information exchange as we’d known it.

Blogs stole a great many pair of eyeballs—and “street cred”—from established media institutions as well. This capacity to engage wider audiences with fewer resources more quickly is the single most astounding feat of the blogging revolution.

In 1999, Blogger was born, allowing absolutely anyone to harness the power of lightning speed information sharing.

As the blogosphere has charged on, it continues to excel in meeting the demand for faster content publishing that satisfies the need of shorter attention spans.

Tumblr is simply one more outgrowth of this 18-year-old movement.

Why start blogging?

Your ministry should start blogging because it’s a Biblical imperative.

In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus implores His disciples to, “Go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the
Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you. …”

Twitter and Tumblr users ever so clearly ask audiences to “follow” them. So why hasn’t the church caught on to the glaring opportunity for ministry?

While more than a full third of the United States is tweeting fragments and hashtags on Twitter, more than a full half of the United States is chronicling every aspect of their existence on Facebook, and 6+ billion blog posts are being written on Tumblr.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:22b-23, “I have become all things to all people so I could save them in any way possible. I do all this because of the Good News and so I can share in this blessing.”

Yet, the church is overwhelmingly AWOL in the crowded halls of social media, despite its duty to exemplify the love and grace of Jesus Christ, connect with those who are hungry for The Word, and bear witness to souls, who just like us, need to be saved.

Buzzplant, a Christian advertising agency, conducted a survey of over 250 churches across the country. These churches were asked a number of questions about how they were implementing technology. One of the most interesting findings produced by their data regarded the use of new media to further the Gospel.

Forty-two percent of churches surveyed admitted that their place of worship holds “conservative” attitudes about new media or has been “slow” or “resistant” to embracing such trends.

The results are telling: More than newspapers, radio, and TV combined, a whopping 46.1% remarked that social media tools—like Facebook, Twitter, and blog sites—have been the single most effective means of outreach for their churches. Even face-to-face interaction came in a nowhere-near second place to new media engagement.

While this isn’t a call for you to do away with all other forms of outreach, it is an indication that it’s time to do your beloved church newsletter a favor. Join the 21st century.

How does Tumblr fit into my ministry outreach?

Let’s start at the start: If you don’t already have a plan, Tumblr is absolutely where your plan should begin.

Blogging is part of, what I deem, the Big Three of social media presence. That includes: (1) Tumblr; (2) Facebook; (3) Twitter.

Here are four suggested ways to integrate Tumblr into your evangelistic efforts:

**Ministry Spotlights** —What kind of amazing work has your ministry been involved in lately? A ministry spotlight post is an excellent way to let newcomers—and members—know what’s been happening beyond the Divine Worship service.

**Testimonies** —Why wait until Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting or Sabbath School or Special Prayer when believers can testify right now? Bearing personal witness via blog entry is a great way to engage everyone in your church in the day-to-day—not simply Sabbath morning—presence of God.

**Devotional Thoughts, Texts + Notes** —Linking to sermon notes, summaries, and Bible references for further unpacking is a great way to expound upon the Word further. Devotional sharing can be a rotational responsibility between ministries in your church to encourage and empower followers on a regular basis.

**Event News + Announcements** —This is simply an informational post or an invitation to worship with your ministry. Is there a church picnic or Revival coming up? Are the Junior Ushers meeting after service? These posts simply serve as a convenience when other lines of communication may become muddled.

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One of the most effective methods of delivering content is through presentations. They are used from Apple launch events to boardrooms and there are several presentation software packages available. The most popular are PowerPoint, Keynote, and Prezi.

When utilized properly they are extremely effective in assisting to tell the story. They are very user friendly and come with many bells and whistles, which if not not handled correctly and used wisely become more of a distraction than an assistant.

Here are a few guidelines and best practices for using them.

**Use in ministry**

There are multiple ways this technology can be used in and for ministry. Sermons take on a new look and feel when presentation software is used, as do the children’s story, evangelism, small group bible studies, and vision planning sessions. Many of the Adventist television ministries have presentation slide packages of the evangelistic series that can be used to conduct a bible study. Take your tablet and connect it to the HDTV and there you have it. There are a number of other places to obtain slides and content for your next presentation.

Just a few are: www.gracewaymedia.com, http://www.sermonspice.com/, http://www.creationswap.com/ are just a few of the them.

**General best practices**

1. Use as few bullet points as possible. Three is optimum but no more than 5 per slide.
2. Use the Rule of 7. No more than seven lines of text and each line no more than seven words per line.
3. Present the way people learn, use both text (left brain thinkers) and visual charts, diagrams, and illustrations (right brain thinkers).
4. Engage and interact with the audience, ask good/challenging questions, then stop and wait for a response.
5. Provide handouts after the presentation, which allows your audience to concentrate on the presentation, not the slide. Handouts should include detailed information.

**Formatting best practices**

1. Be consistent in your use of backgrounds, logos, fonts, and colors. The theme feature is excellent for accomplishing this.
2. Present data in as uncluttered a way as possible so that it is clear and readable. (Use the slide layout feature)
3. Be sure to list the source for facts and figures given. Data sited without a source tends to invite questioning the presenter rather than questions concerning the content. It lessens the credibility of the presenter and thus the presentation.
4. Animation is a great way to liven up a presentation, to add that wow effect when it’s needed. However, just because you can doesn’t mean you should. The over use and misuse of animations will become the focal point and the content will loose out to the flipping, twirling, flying, and dipping letters.
5. All title slides should be at least 44 pt. and a clear, crisp font. Arial and Times New Roman are good examples. Content should be no smaller than 32 pt.
6. When using lists of items or points animate each bullet point so the audience will not get ahead of you.
7. Use clean, crisp, and high resolution images. This will enable you to resize the image without losing image quality.

Presentation software brings a freshness to ministry. Use it and liven up the room.
Soaring to New Heights

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The best way to begin your T umblr is by gathering your church bulletin, newsletters, recent photographs, recorded messages, and upcoming event flyers. Every one of these materials is a ready-made post waiting to be shared with the virtual world.

Blogging is the root from which all your future social media endeavors will grow. Simply connect with your existing audience in the virtual realm and watch the Holy Spirit go to work.

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