

Church website launch checklist

Eighteen checks worth making before a church website goes live. **Two of them are hard to repair afterwards** — missing redirects from the old site, and a domain registered in a volunteer's name rather than the church's. Those two are marked below.

How to use this. Print it and work through it with whoever built the site, a few days before launch rather than on the day. Tick what is done, write the date beside anything you are waiting on. Items marked **HARD TO FIX LATER** should be settled before anything else.

Addresses and domain

4 CHECKS · DO THESE FIRST

- ☐ **Every address on the old site redirects to its equivalent** **HARD TO FIX LATER**
Rankings attach to individual addresses. An address that returns an error loses everything it accumulated, and recovery gets harder the longer it waits.
- ☐ **Redirects tested one by one, not sampled**
A redirect list that was never opened is an assumption. Test each one, including the addresses nobody expects anyone to visit.
- ☐ **Domain registered in the church's name, with a church email address** **HARD TO FIX LATER**
Domains held by individual volunteers are lost when those people move away. Recovery goes through the registrar and takes 5 to 10 working days if it works at all.
- ☐ **HTTPS forced, with no mixed-content warnings**
Load the site and check the padlock. A single image or script loaded over plain HTTP breaks it on every page it appears.

Content

4 CHECKS

- ☐ **Service time and address correct, visible without scrolling**
This is what most visitors came for. If it requires scrolling or opening a menu, the site fails its commonest visitor on the first click.
- ☐ **Everyone listed on the site is still there**
Staff and team pages survive redesigns unedited more often than any other content. Check each name against who is actually serving now.
- ☐ **No placeholder text anywhere, including page titles and image captions**
Placeholders hide where nobody reads while reviewing: browser tab titles, alt text, the last paragraph of a long page.
- ☐ **Footer checked: year, address, phone number**
The footer is reviewed less than any other part of a site and carries some of its most dated information.

NOTES ON THESE EIGHT CHECKS — AND WHO IS CHASING ANYTHING OUTSTANDING

Technical

4 CHECKS

☐ No leftover "noindex" from the staging version

The commonest launch failure. Staging sites are built with indexing off and the switch is forgotten.

☐ The 404 page returns status 404 and does not redirect to the homepage

Redirecting missing pages to the homepage is a soft 404: Google treats the address as existing when it does not.

☐ Sitemap reachable and lists only final addresses

A sitemap of addresses that redirect is a list of detours. Every entry should return 200 directly.

☐ robots.txt does not block anything the site needs

Check CSS, JavaScript and images are reachable. A blocked stylesheet makes the site look broken.

On a phone

3 CHECKS · USE MOBILE DATA, NOT CHURCH WIFI

☐ Main content appears in under 2.5 seconds

Test on a real phone on mobile data. Church wifi hides oversized photographs.

☐ Nothing requires zooming; tap targets at least 44 × 44 pixels

Try what a visitor does: find the time, find the address, tap the number. Anything needing a pinch fails.

☐ The phone number is tappable

A number that cannot be tapped forces the visitor to retype it. Many do not.

With real data

3 CHECKS · NOT IN TEST MODE

☐ The contact form delivers, tested from an outside address

Send one from an address that is not the webmaster's. Forms that fail silently are common and unreported.

☐ A real gift reaches the bank account

Send a small amount from a phone, on a card that is not the treasurer's. Test mode does not prove the payout path.

☐ Every email account on the domain still works

Send and receive on each one. Mailboxes are the item most often forgotten in a move.

After launch: watch for four weeks

Google Search Console

Watch for crawl errors on old addresses. An error there means a redirect was missed, and it is repairable if caught quickly.

A two to four week dip

Normal while pages are recrawled. A drop that persists beyond that points at redirects rather than settling.

Ask the congregation

Members find problems faster than any checklist, including this one.

Sign-off

CHECKED BY

DATE CHECKED

LAUNCH DATE

OUTSTANDING ITEMS AND WHO IS CHASING THEM