

Search Engines

The internet contains a huge amount of data, both good and bad. Finding information on the internet would be impossible if it were not for search engines which sift through the millions of web sites.

Almost everyone who uses the internet will have used a search engine to find a particular website or piece of information. Christians will often use the web when locating a church as the web should be an easy way to find that information. This is why it is so useful to have a Church website that not only provides information to members, but also to non-members.

However a Church website will only be useful to visitors, if those visitors can find the site. This may be through search engines or it may be by having links from other sites.

Search Engines have automated programs call "*Robots*". These will trawl through the internet and "*index*" the websites by following the links on each site. The web pages that are retrieved are then analysed and stored on the search engine servers to be used when people search the internet.



A note about Google

The most important search engine to index your site is Google. This is the most popular engine, indexing over 4 billion web pages around the world. Google is also used by other search engines such as Netscape.

Google uses a facility called page ranking (PR) which will rank your website pages in terms of how important it defines that page. 0 is unimportant, whereas 10 is very important (and impossible to achieve!). A website which has a high page ranking will be more likely to be indexed by Google as it is deemed to be of high importance. It is rare for sites to have a higher PR than 6 as this will likely be only large corporation sites. If websites have a PR then it is most likely to be between 1 and 5.

To find out what your page rank is you can download the Google toolbar from google.com. Note that it can take time for some sites to achieve a page ranking above 0 so don't be surprised if at first your site does not appear to have a high page ranking. Over a period of a few months this will hopefully change and you should start to get a PR of 1 or greater. Having more sites linking to your Church Edit site will likely increase the PR Ranking.

Meta Data

Meta data is usually made up of two parts :

description

keywords

The description should be a short summary of your Church/ Organisation. For example : "The Kenton New Life Church is an Assemblies of God Church with approximately 300 members based in Kenton, New Staffordshire."

The keywords will be a listing of 'key-words' that could be used by someone trying to find your site. There is no limit to the number of keywords that can be used and they should include where your church is based, church name and perhaps the names of the key staff. The keywords could also contain a combination of words that could be used such as "Kenton New Life Church".

The example below shows how keywords could be used with each keyword or group of keywords separated by a comma:

"Kenton, new life church, Kenton new life church, church, Christian, Christianity, new Staffordshire, pastor Joe Bloggs,"

This meta data is not shown on your website, but is hidden in the HTML code on your homepage where it is only used by the search engines as they scan your site.

To add or edit the meta data for your Church Edit site you will need to go to the Control Panel and then select 'Meta Data' from the left hand menu.

Back Links

Having links to your site from other websites will also help a search engine robot to find your site. If a search engine robot is indexing another site and it comes to a link to your website, then it is likely to follow that link to your site where it will then index it. Having a link from another site to yours is called a 'Back Link' and the more sites that are linked to yours then the more likely a robot will index your site. Back links will also increase your Google Page Ranking which increases the likelihood of Google indexing your site. Suitable links to your site could be Churches in your area or your main denomination website. Most denominations have a listing of Churches on their site which also contain a web address.

Submitting your site to the search engine

Many search engines have their own database which lists all the websites that they index. You can often submit your site to these search engines for free. Some search engines charge for this service but Created Media do not recommend that you use the 'pay for' submission. See the following links for how to submit your site to the search engine:

<http://www.google.com/addurl.html>

<http://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html>

Search Engine Directories

There are a few directories on the web which lists millions of websites splitting them into categories and sub categories. These directories are referenced to by search engines when indexing sites so it can be useful to have your site listed here.

Yahoo.co.uk

The Yahoo directory is free for charities and is used by Yahoo as a reference when indexing sites. You will need to find the appropriate category for your website by going to <http://uk.search.yahoo.com/dir>. Once you have found the appropriate category click on 'Suggest a Site' then select Standard Submission to add your site. (The free submission).

Dmoz

Dmoz.org the largest human edited directory on the web and is used by the likes of Google , AOL and Netscape.

Submitting a site to www.dmoz.org can be done by finding the right category to place your site (ie United Kingdom > England > West Staffordshire > Kenton) and then pressing the 'Suggest URL' link. Note that the time taken from submitting a site, to seeing your site listed on DMOZ can be many months.

Homepage

A search engine robot will scan the contents of webpage's to analyse for keywords that could be used in a search. It is therefore essential that the homepage contains words that could be used by someone trying to find your site. For homepages, most sites contain information about the Church and this is likely to contain the keywords that are used. If your homepage contains your Church Name, and location (which sites often have) then this will help in improving where your site appears in a search.

Note

Please note that it can take sometimes take months before your site is actually indexed by the search engine. The tips contained in this document are for guidance and it is not a guarantee that your site will be indexed. All Church Edit sites are search engine friendly by providing hidden (non JavaScript) links to all pages within the site.