

ARE THERE LEGAL ISSUES TO HOSTING A CHURCH WEB SITE?

Many churches have Web sites and should be aware the pages can generate legal problems. Following are some (but not all) areas of concern.

1. Copyright infringement for articles, music, or pictures published on the Web site.
2. Trademark infringement.
3. Children's online Privacy Protection Act – Don't use a picture of a child without proper approval from authorized sources.
4. Defamation – Don't use your Web site for any reason to spread negative information about people. Letters to congregants about discipline of members or staff

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should be strictly prohibited on Web sites. This is not the place for making that kind of information public.

5. Political Campaign Activities – Do not put political speech(es) on your Web site and DO NOT ALLOW under any circumstances links to political sites.
6. There are federal laws that only apply for organizations engaged in commerce. If you host a Web site you are most probably engaged in commerce and will be subject to all federal laws on employment and discrimination (depending on whether or not you have the requisite number of employees).
7. If you sell items on your Web site, sales tax issues may arise.

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