EMAIL MARKETING FOR CHURCHS





Email Marketing for Churches

And Other Religious Organizations

You have this guide because you know that email can help your church both find members in your local community who fit with your church's beliefs and values and keep the members you have engaged, strengthening your community, helping you accomplish more as a congregation.

We'll take you through the steps of setting up a campaign. Along the way, you'll see examples from real churches out there who are marketing themselves and serving their congregations with email.

Here's the basic flow you'll be taking:

Establishing your purpose.

What does your church want to accomplish with an email campaign? Knowing your purpose will help you set things up properly and make decisions further down the road.

Setting up your campaign.

In your account, you'll create the foundation of your campaign. You'll get all the basics in place so you're ready when people start signing up.

Building a subscriber list.

You'll need to get out there and invite people to subscribe. They can automatically add themselves online, or you can collect their information in person.

Sending out emails.

You can use email to introduce people to your brand, send them regular updates or make time-sensitive announcements. The possibilities are endless.

Strengthening your campaign.

Over time, you can add things like sales tracking, segments and split tests. As you keep polishing the campaign, your results will get better and better.

Ready to put together your church's email campaign? Let's get started.



Establishing Your Purpose

Email is an extremely versatile tool. And with AWeber, you have endless customization options: you can send as often as you like, schedule your messages for whenever you want, use different templates for different types of content... the list goes on.

So it's possible to jump head first into emailing without a clear idea of what you're trying to accomplish, and end up with a messy set of messages.

Instead, take a moment to clarify the purpose of your church's campaign. From there, you'll you'll be able to figure out what to send, when to send it and who to send it to.

Is the purpose of your campaign:

- · Reaching out to your local community
- · Finding new attendees
- · Getting members to be more active
- · Or something else?

If you're looking for inspiration, you may want to scroll through this guide; you'll find several examples of how various real-life churches use email.

You may find that you have several different things you want to accomplish with email. You can certainly send different types of content to the same group of your subscribers, as long as you've told them what to expect.

But if you'd like to send different content to a few different audiences, you may want to set up several campaigns.



Setting Up Your Campaign

Once you've gotten your account set up, you'll want to lay the foundation for your church's first campaign.

To start, you're going to add a new list. Right away, you'll see the setup wizard on the bottom of the page. Follow the wizard's instructions to get everything set up properly, using the "skip" option on the bottom right if you'd rather come back to something later.



During setup, you're going to be prompted to create a welcome message. This message goes out automatically when someone signs up, so it's your first chance to make a good impression.

Your welcome message should:

- thank your new subscribers for their interest or support
- let them know what to expect will you be sending weekly? Monthly? Here and there?
- be simple and to the point. You don't want them to feel overwhelmed.

Include your logo, or use an $\underline{\text{email template}}$ that you'll use throughout your campaign, so your emails are recognizable.

How to Build A Subscriber List

Anyone who signs up for emails about your church is one of your subscribers. You'll likely have two main categories of subscribers: members and people who have already been attending for awhile and people who live locally, who may or may not have visited and who are interested in finding out more before they commit to attending full-time.

People who already attend your church will be easy to invite onto your email list. And of course, they can refer you through word of mouth and forward your emails on to whomever they think may be interested.



But there are many other ways you can find subscribers both in your neighborhood and online, whether you have a web site or not.

Building Your List Online

You probably run into a few dozen people in a typical day. Most likely, there are thousands of others that you *don't* run into who live within a few miles of your church.

Many of them go online regularly. In fact, if they're new to town and searching for a church, that's where they're likely to start Meet them there, and invite them to subscribe with an online sign up form, called a **web form**.

With AWeber, you can create a web form in your account. Site visitors just enter their information, and they're automatically added to your subscriber list.









We even have a library of <u>web form templates</u> you can choose from. Pick one that matches your site or looks good with your logo, then customize it however you like with the <u>web form generator</u>.

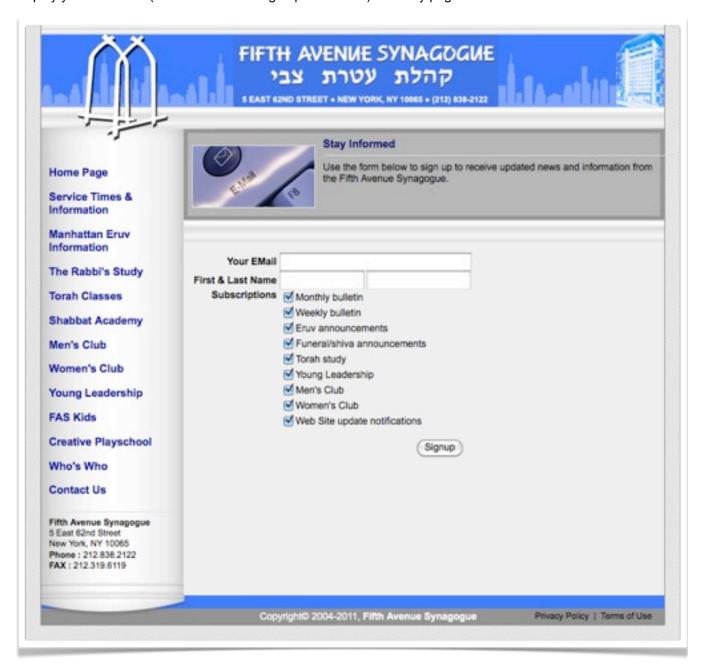
Once your form is ready, it's time to get it out there!



There are three places you can put your web form.

1. Your church's web site.

Not only will current members know exactly where to got to sign up, but everyone who searches for churches in your area is likely to stumble across your site. You never know when someone might be ready to sign up, so display your web form (or an invitation to sign up elsewhere) on every page.

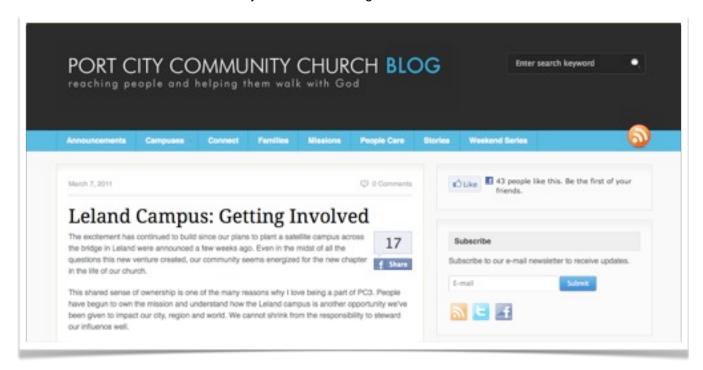


The <u>Fifth Avenue Synagogue</u> offers many different options for the curious to explore and members to receive whatever announcements they'd like to stay on top of.



2. A church blog.

Perhaps someone in your church keeps a blog updated about church projects, events or outreach efforts. Display your web form so people can up to get email updates whenever there's a new development. Then they don't have to remember to take time out of their day and check the blog.



3. Social media sites.

If your church has an account on a social network, it's only a few clicks away from millions of people. Direct those millions to a sign up form, and it's likely that a few will find you're just the right match.



Project Nourish, the <u>Apostolic Pentecostal Assembly'</u>s outreach project to Haiti, invites its Facebook fans to subscribe to monthly newsletters for updates.

You may even want to <u>post a sample newsletter</u> so Facebook and the Twitterverse can see what you have in store.

Even if your church doesn't have a website or your blog won't display forms, you can still collect subscribers online. Just create a web form in your AWeber account, and we'll host it for you. Then you can link it when you ask people to subscribe.



Building Your List Offline

Just because emailing happens online doesn't mean you're limited to the Internet for finding subscribers. Anyone in your local area is a potential member, so don't be afraid to offer them your emails so they can get to know you.

The key to collecting sign ups is in the way you approach them. You don't want to be too reserved (you do need to ask for their subscription), but you also don't want to be off-putting.

- If you have first-time visitors fill out information cards, ask on the card if they'd like to get your emails. If they do, add them to your list.
- If your town has a parade, fair or community day, sponsor a table. Make sure to include a sign up sheet where people can leave their email addresses to hear from you.
- If you have an event at your church, do the same thing.
 Display a sign up sheet on a welcome table or in another central location, along with a clear description of what people are signing up for.
- If you hold a fundraiser for your church, make sure that everyone who makes a purchase or donation gets a thank-you note. On the note, include an invitation to sign up on your web site.
- Pass out <u>QR codes</u> on postcards, flyers or business cards.
 People with smartphones will be able subscribe immediately.

However you collect email addresses, make sure to include a clear explanation of what will happen next. People need to understand that they are signing up for regular email updates, so they aren't surprised when your messages start arriving.

<u>Highlawn Baptist Church</u> asks for email addresses on their visitor information card.

Welcome Guest! Today's Date:/ So that we may minister to you, please complete this tear-off portion of our bulletin and place it in the offering plate or give it to an usher. Thank you. Name:			
		41	
		Address & Zip:	
1			
Phone:	<u> wait in 11</u> 4,		
E-mail:			
I am a guest of:			
Home Church:			
Age Group:			
□ Age 0-5	☐ Age 30-39		
☐ Gr. 1-6	☐ Age 40-49		
☐ Gr. 7-8	☐ Age 50-59		
☐ Gr. 9-12	☐ Age 60 and Up		
□ Age 20-29			
Please Check Proper Boxes:			
☐ I am a first time guest			
☐ I am a returning guest			
☐ I'd like information abo	out becoming a Christian		
☐ I'd like to be baptized.			
☐ I'd like information abou	at joining this church		
☐ I'd like more information	about this church		
☐ I'd like the pastor to con	ntact me.		



What Happens After Sign Up?

Occasionally, computer scripts (or even people) may stumble across your web form and subscribe with someone else's email address.

Other times, someone misspells their address, and you end up sending to the wrong person.

In these situations, the recipient thinks the messages are unrequested junk mail, otherwise known as spam. You're not likely to get much response from these people.

And if they click the "report spam" button, I(Gmail, Hotmail and the like) notice. If enough people complain, they may stop delivering your messages.

The Solution: Confirmed Opt-In

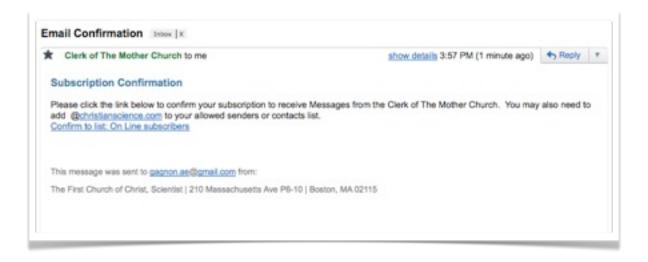
To prevent this problem, the first thing that happens after sign up is confirmation.

This simply means new subscribers are sent a message asking them to confirm their choice to opt into your mailing list by clicking a link.

When the link is clicked, the address is added to your list. As a sender, you're assured the address is legitimate. And since your new subscribers have bothered to confirm their interest, they're likely to be engaged and responsive.







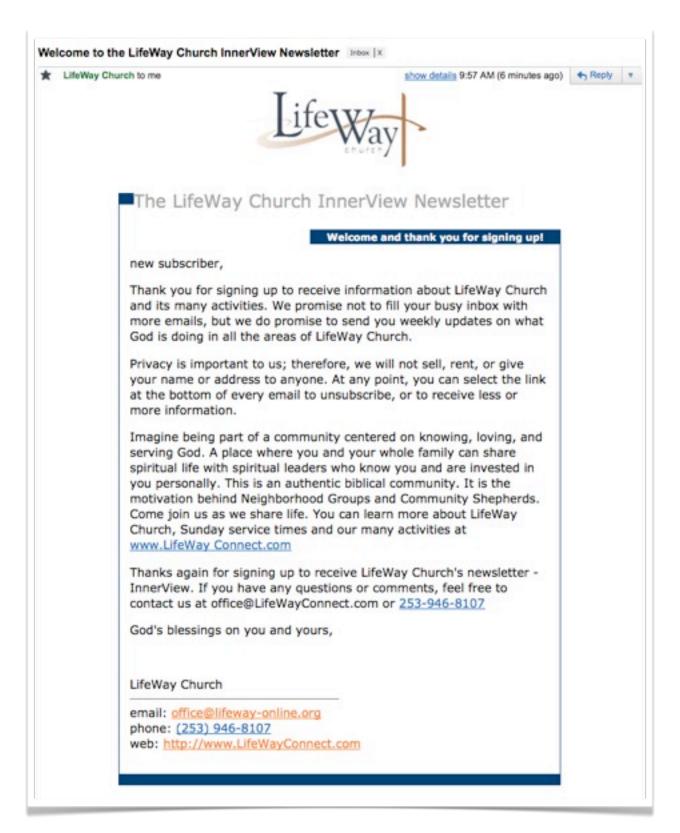
Welcoming New Subscribers

Someone's interest is often at a high point when they first sign up for your email campaign. For prospective members, it's important to start emailing them right away, or their search may take them elsewhere.

So greet them with a welcome message. Let them know they've signed up successfully and tell them what they can expect from you.

Tell them how often they'll hear from you. Invite them to respond to any email by hitting "reply" or calling you. And make sure you're regularly checking the email address they'd be responding to!





<u>Lifeway Church</u> uses its welcome message to let subscribers know they'll be getting weekly emails, share the church's vision and invite response through email or phone.



Setting Up Your Emails

Every email is going to have different content, but give them a comfortable and reliable template base:

No matter which type it is, each email should include the following:

- A subject that accurately reflects the content inside. You want your subscribers to be able to trust you.
- Your church name. Put this in your from line so readers can see who the message is coming from.
- Your contact info all of it. Web site, email address, postal address, phone number, Twitter handle give subscribers every available option for contacting you.
- A call to action ask your readers to respond in some way, whether it's clicking over to your site to see more photos, booking a session, following you on Facebook or just keeping you in mind.
- Pictures. Your work is your eye candy. It's what attracted your subscribers in the first place, and it's what will
 get them to buy.

The specific content of each email will be different depending on who you're sending it to and what you're trying to accomplish with it. You can choose to send that content in one of four ways:

- 1. As an autoresponder (or "follow up") to get new readers started
- 2. In a regularly scheduled newsletter
- 3. As an occasional update or time-sensitive announcement
- 4. As a report pulled directly from your blog

Let's take a look at the kinds of content you might send for each of these.

Follow Ups: Getting Readers Started

Church members will already be fairly familiar with your services, programs and members. But as people in your area decide to explore you as an option by signing up for your emails, or as new members sign up to find out more about this group they've just joined, they're going to want to find out what you're all about.

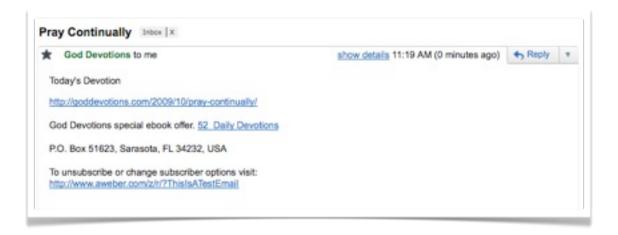


You can introduce people to your church with a <u>follow up series</u>. This is a sequence of messages that are automatically sent to new subscribers. Each follows the other at a predetermined interval that you set. (You can even <u>choose windows of time</u> for these to go out.)

You can design your follow up series around whatever information you think would make a helpful introduction to your campaign, but here are a few suggestions:

- Introduce your church leadership. Fill a message with the names and faces of your pastors, elders, cantors, those in charge of different programs...anyone a new visitor may want to get in contact with.
- Explain each program you run or are involved in. Share pictures and stories about Sunday School, your nursery, mission trips, your choirs, the monthly food drive and so on.
- Share your church's mission and your doctrinal policies. What's your stance on baptism? How involved are
 you in the community? Then visitors can know what to expect from your services and decide if they're a
 good fit.

Your new subscribers will appreciate your helpfulness and over time, they'll grow familiar with your church and look forward to returning.



The site goddevotions.com uses follow ups to take subscribers through a series of daily devotions.

Readers can click the link to each day's devotions to view it on the web site along with other Bible lessons.





Sending A Regular Newsletter

Sent monthly, weekly, or even (with the right kind of content) daily, newsletters keep all of your members and attendees up to date on church happenings.

Since newsletters usually include timely information, they're sent as <u>broadcasts</u>. While follow up messages are sent in sequence to each subscriber, a broadcast is sent just once, to your entire list (or the <u>group of people</u> you specify), at the <u>date and time</u> that you specify.

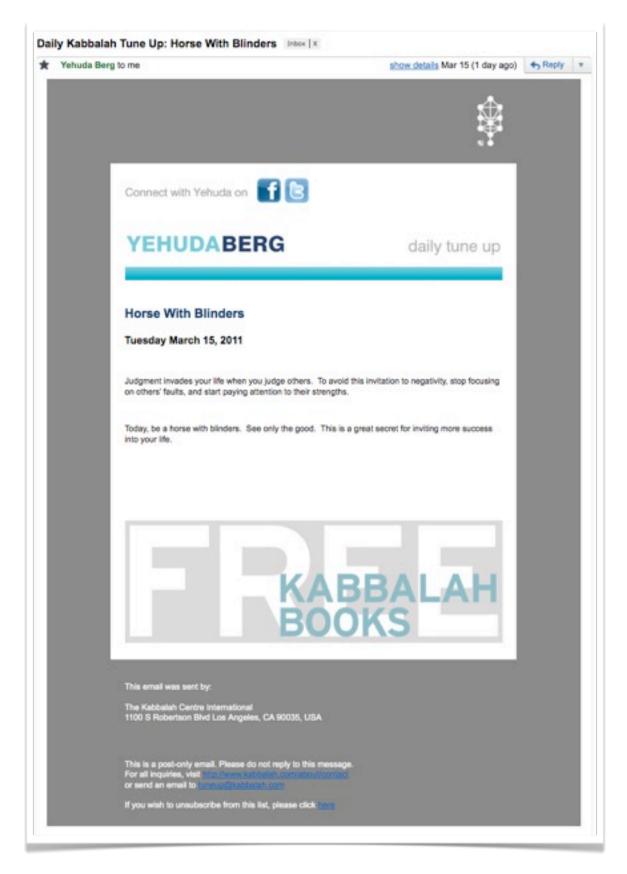
With a newsletter, you can share the status of fundraising efforts, list upcoming events and let readers know where and when you may need volunteers.

The frequency of your newsletter will depend on how often you have time to put one together and how much you have to say. Make sure you establish a frequency that you can keep up with – your mailings will become something your subscribers count on as part of their church experience.

If you send more often than monthly, you may want to include only an item or two in each message. This gives you room to go into specifics without overwhelming your readers. The less often you send, the more you can put into each message.

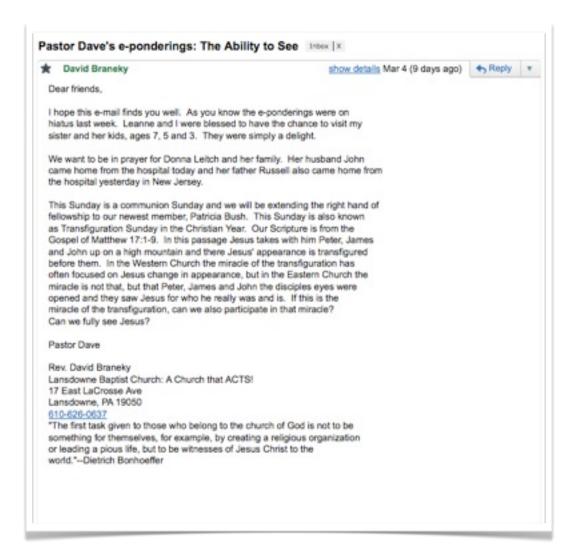
How to send a broadcast in AWeber





The <u>Kabbalah Centre International</u> sends daily "tune-ups" upon request to keep subscribers in a divine frame of mind.

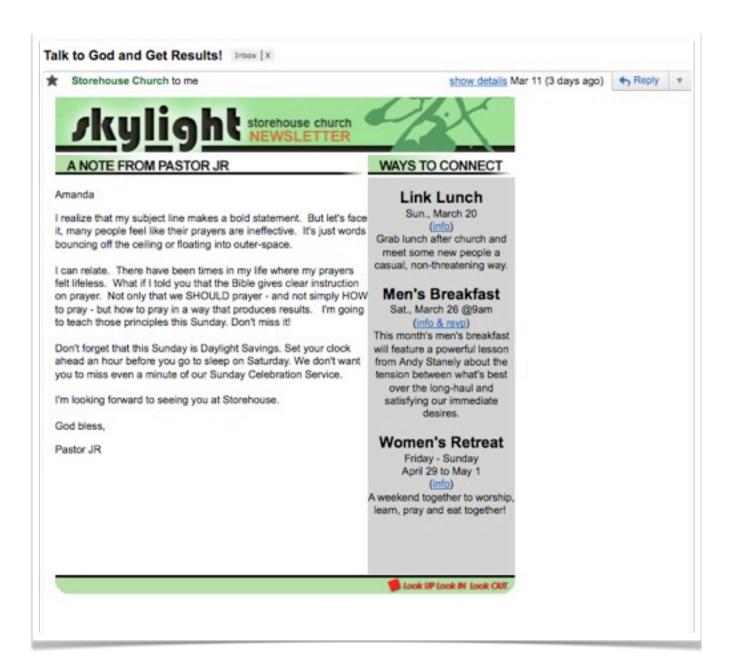




Every Friday, the pastor of <u>Landsdowne Baptist Church</u> sends out the topic of the next Sunday's sermon along with some questions to ponder so congregants can prepare themselves for the service.

Note that, like the Kabbalah Centre's updates, the subject line starts with the same phrase each day. This does help subscribers recognize the message in their inbox, but if the phrase were moved to the "from" line instead, there would be more room for attention-grabbing subject lines.





<u>Storehouse Church's</u> pastor sends inspirational thoughts throughout the week, along with timely reminders about things like Daylight Savings schedule changes and upcoming events.



Making One-Time Announcements

Occasionally, things may come up that you'd like to share with the church's subscribers without waiting for the next newsletter to go out.

Or maybe you've chosen to avoid the pressure of a regularly scheduled mailing and instead, send a separate email whenever something important comes up.

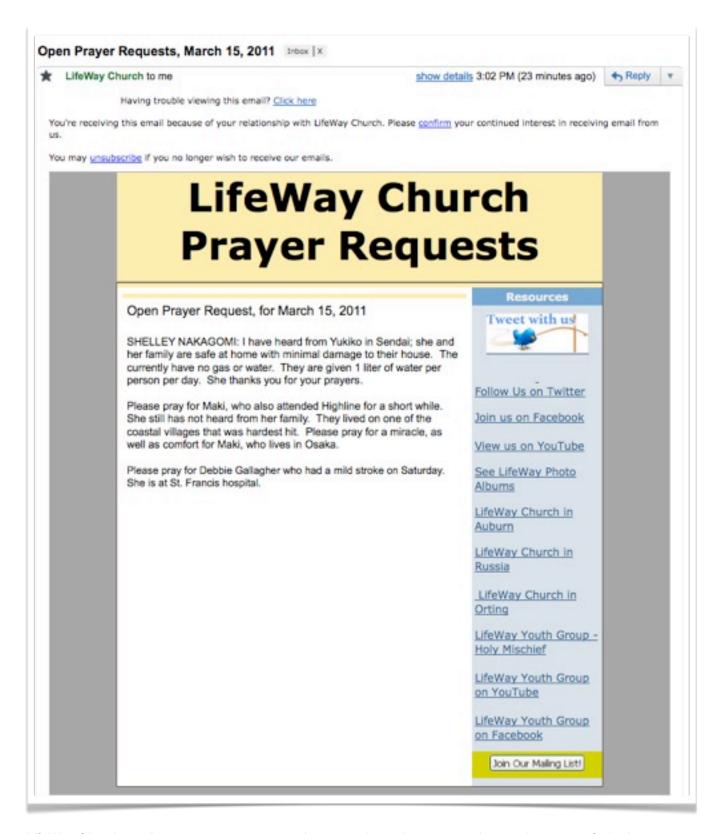
Either way, you can use broadcasts for any time-sensitive announcements. As with newsletters, announcements can be send to your entire list or to a specific <u>group of people</u> you specify, at whatever <u>date and time</u> you choose.

Each announcement should have its own, specific subject. You can use them to let your subscribers know:

- · if a meeting is cancelled or a service time changes
- if there is a birth or death in the congregation
- · if a new, urgent prayer request comes up
- · if a fundraising goal is met midweek and you want to celebrate

Or you can share scriptures and reflections – whatever you promised to send subscribers when they signed up.





<u>LifeWay Church</u> sends out prayer requests as they come in so the congregation can be aware of what's happening and support each other as needed.



Broadcasting From Your Blog

A blog takes your church community to the next level. Posts on the latest happenings and spiritual teachings keep your members engaged.

But life is busy, and readers may not often remember to keep coming back on their own. So if you're blogging, you may want to set up a <u>blog broadcast</u>. It will automatically convert your latest posts into email.

You set the preferences: how many articles, how often and who will receive them, and the rest is taken care of automatically.

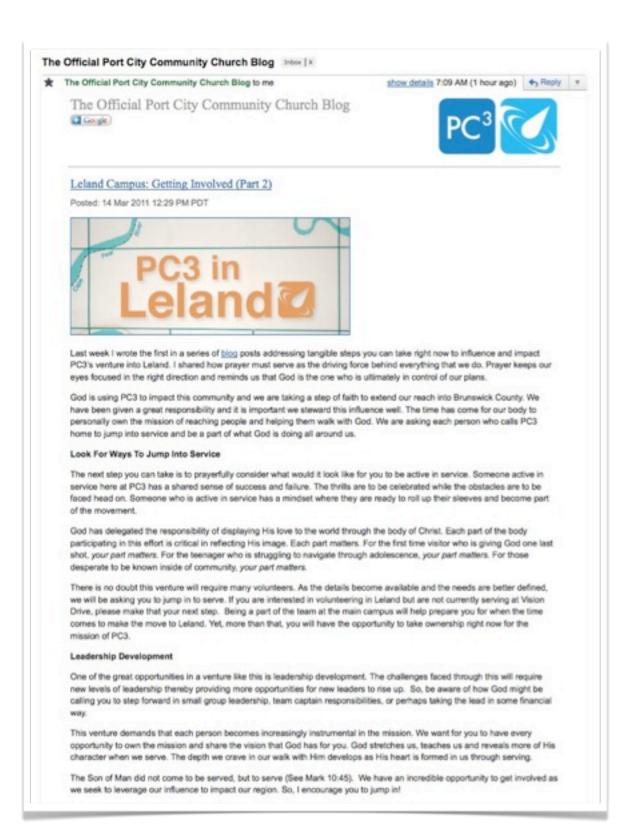
Blog broadcasts are good for sharing much the same kind of information as regular broadcasts. You'd choose to use blog broadcasts instead if you already have a blog – it's just easier to make the updates in one place.

(Alternatively, you could add a blog to your site and then set up blog broadcasting so people can get your information there or by email, whichever way they'd prefer.)

Either way, once your blog is ready, it only takes a few minutes to <u>set up your blog broadcast</u> and start sharing your posts with your subscribers.







<u>Port City Community Church</u> blogs about various ways readers can get involved with the church, then sends the posts out to their email subscribers.



Scheduling Your Emails – When to Send?

Once you've got your email campaign set up, you'll develop a regular routine for creating and sending emails. But occasionally, you may have an extremely busy spell.

For example, if your church celebrates Christmas, you may be busy organizing rehearsals, making house visits and dealing with choir crises. Email just won't happen that week.

Or will it?

If you ever know beforehand that you'll be running short on time, you can just create your emails beforehand – whenever you have the time and the inspiration. Then <u>schedule them</u>, and they'll automatically be sent on the date and time you choose.

In the midst of the chaos, your emails will be already taken care of!

Getting The Right Message to The Right People

The <u>Shepherd's Valley Cowboy Church</u> sign up form asks people to choose which newsletters they'd like to receive.

The church has a lot going on, but they don't want to cram all kinds of information into one general, giant missive. (A 50+ choir member, for example, doesn't need the children's newsletter!)





If your church has more information than one general newsletter can handle, you may want to try something similar. To make sure everyone gets the information they requested, you can divide your list into segments.

First, you'd run a search to see who requested what information. Then, you'd put everyone who requested a certain type of information, such as choir updates, into a segment called "choir."

Whenever it's time to send out an announcement to choir members, you'd just write up the message and send it to the choir segment.

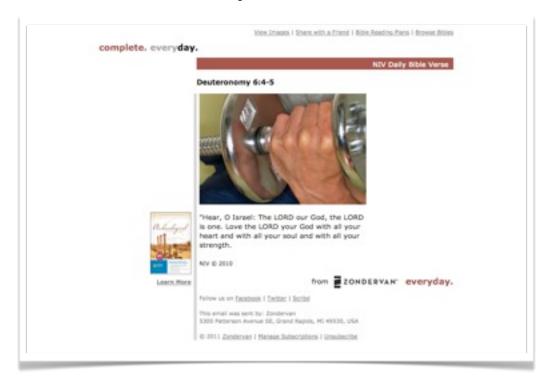
How to segment in AWeber



Here's another example for ways you can segment to make sure each subscriber gets content that's just right for them. Zondervan has a daily Scripture email list. Each subscriber gets the day's verse in whichever version or language they chose when they signed up.



King James Version



New International Version





Scripture in Spanish



Moving Forward

With the information and ideas you have here, you should be able to create and run your own reactivation campaign.

When it's over, and you're ready to explore other ways to make your emails even more effective, come find us on our site or social pages!









Stop by Inbox Ideas, our blog.

Follow our <u>Twitter feed</u> for the latest marketing links.

Watch our <u>YouTube videos</u> for helpful how-to's.

Become a fan on <u>Facebook</u> to interact with other marketers.

And if you have a question about how to complete these steps in your AWeber account – or how to sign up for one – give us a call!

Toll Free Phone: International Phone: Live customer support:

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+1 215-825-2196

Mon-Fri: 4 a.m. - 8 p.m. ET Saturday: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. ET

