# **ARP CHURCH WEBSITE GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1: Preamble**

 As churches throughout the ARP have developed websites to serve their membership, reach out to their communities, and allow potential visitors to learn about their church prior to an in-person visit, issues have come up regarding the management of the various moving parts as it pertains to the upkeep and management of the website.

 Websites have three primary components:

· **The Domain Name** - i.e. http://www.example.com

· **The Website Hosting Environment** - where the website and services physically reside (may or may
 not be the same service provider as the domain name) i.e. HostGator, PowWeb, etc.

· **Contacts and Registrants** - the names and contact information of individuals who have access to
 register, renew, and manage the domain and website.

 The purpose of this document is to help churches protect their online identity, provide security for the upkeep and maintenance of their website, and to assure continuity of service regardless of who is managing the website.

 Prior to these guidelines the following scenarios have presented themselves which led to the creation of this set of recommendations. These scenarios included, but were not limited to:

 · A church contracts a web developer to build their website. Later the web developer is no
 longer in business. When it is time to renew the domain, church staff have no way to get the
 name out from the ownership of the web developer, and the domain expires, taking the
 church’s email and website offline.

 · The individual managing the website and services dies or leaves the church and all renewal

 notices go unheeded and the website expires. Legal documents are forwarded / notarized,
 mailed, etc. in order to secure ownership of the domain and services to the church requiring
 many man-hours to prove the church is the rightful owner of the domain and website.

 · The individual managing the website and its services leaves the church on less than favorable
 terms and willfully shuts down or disrupts the website and / or associated services (email,
 social media) which shipwrecks the church’s online presence. Aside from legal wrangling,
 there is little the church can do to restore its online presence outside of changing its online
 identity, not to mention damage done in the meantime.

 The recommended policies and procedures within this Guidelines document should help keep our churches safe from experiencing these and other scenarios that may interrupt or hijack their online presence, which in very real terms is church “property” despite its digital nature.

**2: Domain Names**

 The **domain name** is the web address that people use when wanting to visit your website, i.e. http://www.MyARPChurchName.org.

 Each domain name has what is known as a WHOIS record which contains Registrant (owner), Administrative, and technical contact information. These can all be the same, but ANY time that there is a personnel change which affects the contact records in the WHOIS the changes should be made to the domain record immediately.

 The three primary contacts are Registrant, Admin, and Tech. They should be selected as follows:

 **Registrant:** The church should be the registered owner of the domain name, with the contact information being info@MyARPChurchName.org. By making it the info@ address the emails are not tied to a particular individual. For instance, in a small church without a secretary or administrative staff the address can forward to the pastor. In a church with a secretary or administrator it can forward to the individual or to the info@ mailbox if it is not forwarded. The main goal is to AVOID having the domain name tied to an individual whose departure or death may cause the ownership of the site to be in question should church staff need to perform operations on the domain such as renewal, modification, etc.

 **Admin:** This contact should be whoever pays the bills, i.e. the church treasurer or administrator.

 **Tech:** This should be the individual who manages the technical aspects of the website.

 Whoever the contacts are, the church should put in place a policy to confirm twice per year that this information is correct .

 **Billing:** The login information to the domain registrar should be the individual who has access to the info@ email address. That way, whoever is “in the seat” of the info address will be able to renew the domain each year.

 Central Services is available to our churches as a resource to assist in the acquisition and management of your domain name.

**3: eMail**

 It is recommended that email addresses for various offices are created so that the recipient can be changed as individuals rotate through the offices. For instance, pastor@myarpchurch.org, treasurer@myarpchurch.org, info@myarpchurch.org, etc. When a new treasurer is elected, for example, the email box can be assigned to the new treasurer and the password changed, keeping continuity with the role and not the individual. If the email address is a pointer instead of an actual mailbox, the mail can forward to the new treasurer. In either case, the individual does not have ownership of the name and its resources, but rather the church maintains ownership.

 This will be a great help with various online services. For instance, if the church had a merchant account, a domain registration, a hosting company, a PayPal account, and an Amazon account, when a new treasurer is elected, instead of having to change contact information across a whole range of websites, only the treasurer email need be reassigned to the new treasurer.

**4: Hosting**

 The hosting company is where the website files physically reside.

 Emails managing hosting access should be sent to a church address and not an individual’s address.. In some cases, hosting accounts have an “owner” role which is the primary billing information, and an “admin” role where an individual allowed to manage the account has access to the hosting “space.”

In this scenario, if the church changed website administrators, they can cancel the old “admin” account and create/grant access to the new admin without having to remove ownership of the account of the church’s primary ownership account.

**5: Social Media**

 When creating a “page” in FaceBook or an account with Twitter, Instagram, etc., all efforts should be made to use a church email such as info@myarpchurch.org, or similar address, rather than an individual.

**6: My Church Website Safety Checklist**

 This is a initial suggested checklist. Feel free to modify/enhance as your church needs evolve. If your enhancements may benefit other churches, please forward any suggestions to (name / email) at Central Services and this form will be updated appropriately.

**Domain Registrar:**

· Registrar Company Name:

· Registrar Company Home Page:

· Login Name:

· Password:

· Security PIN / Questions:

· Registered email address:

· Annual Renewal Date:

· Domain Registrant name and email:

· Domain Admin name and email:

· Domain Tech Name and email:

**Hosting Plan:**

· Hosting Company Name:

· Hosting Company Home Page:

· Login Name:

· Password:

· Security PIN / Questions:

· Registered email address:

· Annual Renewal Date:

**eMail Addresses:**

· info@ address created (y/n)

· info@ is a forward? (y/n)

· info@ is forwarded to:

· Mail Client Configuration:

o Login:

o Password:

o SMTP server / port / SSL:

o IMAP server / port / SSL:

· treasurer@ address created (y/n)

· treasurer@ is a forward? (y/n)

· treasurer@ is forwarded to:

· Mail Client Configuration:

o Login:

o Password:

o SMTP server / port / SSL:

o IMAP server / port / SSL:

**Social Media Accounts:**

· Social Media Site:

· Login Name:

· Password:

· Security PIN / Questions:

· Authorized Admin(s):

· Social Media Site:

· Login Name:

· Password:

· Security PIN / Questions:

· Authorized Admin(s):

· Social Media Site:

· Login Name:

· Password:

· Security PIN / Questions:

· Authorized Admin(s):

· Social Media Site:

· Login Name:

· Password:

· Security PIN / Questions:

· Authorized Admin(s):

**Contacts and Consultants:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Role: **Webmaster**Name:Phone: ( ) -Email: | Role:Name:Phone: ( ) -Email: |
| Role:Name:Phone: ( ) -Email: | Role:Name:Phone: ( ) -Email: |
| Role:Name:Phone: ( ) -Email: | Role:Name:Phone: ( ) -Email: |

**Diaconal Audit:**The information above has been audited and approved of by the Diaconate of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ARP Church on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.Next year’s ( ) 12-month / ( ) 6-month review is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

Signed, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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