

Facilitator Communication: A Website Example

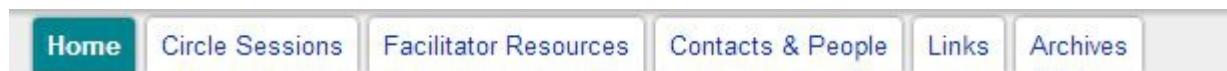
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First let me admit that I'm a bit of a geek when it comes to things like this. And the idea that I could successfully create a website and not have to pay anything for it definitely fired up my geeky interest.

There are many different ways for coordinators or leaders of a small group program to communicate with their facilitators. Email of course, but when it comes to sharing session plans and other resources, I wanted to do a little more than just email them out or hand them out in hard copy form, which is what I've done in the past. I wanted a central place where sessions and resources could be shared and then be able to be accessed throughout the year. And I wanted it to be easily accessible to all of my facilitators. And given my initial success making a Google site last year, this is where I turned first.

A variety of means exist for sharing information over the internet – there are blog-making websites, discussion boards, shareable cloud software like Dropbox, and then ways to create websites, like Wordpress for instance – the options can get overwhelming! I chose Google sites to use because it wasn't too terribly difficult for me to learn and it didn't require any special software or skills on the part of my facilitators to be able to use. And on top of that, it's free!

With Google sites (<http://sites.google.com>) one can start with a template and then modify it to meet one's specific needs. Here are the sections on my site:



Some of my sections have subpages, like the circle sessions page where the sessions are organized by month, since we correspond with the overall monthly worship themes. The content on pages includes text and also files which can be downloaded. Overall, it's really helped out with coordinating the seven circles that we have running right now. And I've gotten feedback from my facilitators that they like this way of sharing our resources.

Here are some other lessons that I've learned (some of them the hard way):

- First thing, change your site's permissions – it defaults to being searchable on the internet; given that I was including my facilitator's contact information, I wanted it more secure than that
- At the request of my facilitators, I started posting sessions in both .doc format and .pdf format. Some of them prefer one, and some prefer the other.
- I was initially hoping to use the comments feature in Google sites, but that would require folks signing in to the site – this never worked out since I didn't want to add that layer of complexity to accessing it, but I'm hopeful in the future to add this in.
- Once you get a little more advanced, it's fun to play with Site Layout and with Manage Site-> Colors & Fonts to change the feel of your site. But there's no need to start out there.

It took a bit of up-front effort to learn how to fiddle with Google sites, but I think that overall it is worth it. I am looking forward to the future as our program's cache of resources continues to grow. I recommend giving it a try!