

Summation: Facebook Facts, Strengths & Weaknesses

<p>Number of Users -- All data is as of March 2012 Source: Facebook March 2012 press releases and Jupiter Research 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total Worldwide: 900 million monthly active users. They visit the site 40 times per month and average more than 23 minutes on the site per session. • Daily Users: 500 million of which 400 million users are on six hours a day. • Uploaded Photos: 300 million photos a day • Facebook Languages: Facebook is available in 70 languages • Best Time to Post Content: 4 p.m. EST on Weds – publish content then to reach people during the highest peak usage time • 2nd Best Time to Post Content Daily: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and at 8 p.m. EST
<p>User Demographics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Women: 57% female/ 43% male • Ages 45 and Up: 45% of the women on Facebook are 45 and older (Our UU churches skew female) • Retirees: the fastest growing Facebook demographic • Teens: Heaviest users, but they don't represent the majority
<p>Key Features</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy & Effective: It's easy to use and to stay connected and involved in the lives of people, causes, and issues your church and ministries care about. • The Wisdom of the Crowds or Up From the Pews: Collective Sacredness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For individuals: The variety and volume of shared activities of friends and family keeps one more informed about shared interests than a person could manage on his or her own. Facebook friends are like little search engines, or hundreds of worker bees or hundreds of information sources. ○ For UUism, ministries, and congregations: Facebook is a container for UU Best Practices, advice, and relationships. It's a bridge that connects UUs all over the world through Facebook Groups and also through individual official church Pages.

<p>Facebook Strengths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>125 billion “friend” names = painless, evangelism:</i> It offers an unparalleled ability to instantly spread via word-of-mouth anything about your church and UUism that you post. • It’s The Largest Gathering of Human Beings anywhere at any time. Facebook already is UU Central: It holds a worldwide gathering of UUs every day! • Best Use of Facebook for UUs is as a retention and engagement tool. There is no greater channel, or pipeline, for UUism and our ministries than Facebook. • Social Media Standards & Expectations: Users expect to see their UU content in their News Feeds because they can aggregate content from other websites and view it all within Facebook. They may not take the time to visit your church’s website even if it has it’s own social network platform outside of Facebook. • Google Search Results: An official Facebook Page for your church helps make a Google search for local UUs more successful and useful for seekers. • Parishioners Gotta Share: Your Facebook Page itself is not likely to attract any new Facebook inquisitors into your sanctuary. Your church website should do that. But your church members on Facebook can share church content and dramatically increase the interest in your church.
<p>Weaknesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggest Operational Hurdle: Facebook’s Whims & Priorities. You do not control your church Facebook Page, Facebook does. Facebook also mines personal information for its business purposes. It counts on its users to draw more personal information out of their friends that it can then use. • You Don’t Control Your “Brand: Facebook does. It sets all of the parameters that determine if your official church Page is a safe harbor. It changes the parameters governing privacy rules, tools, and access options routinely. It’s very difficult to manage the effects of significant changes over time – especially if you have rotating staff or volunteers managing the church’s Page. • Some Church Members Are Left Out: If members of your church are not registered on Facebook, they may not be able to see any content on your Page. And they won’t see any activity in your ministry Groups on Facebook because those are only open to registered users. Be sure to make content on your official church Page visible to the general public outside of Facebook. See “Privacy Settings” in the Facebook Features Overview REACH document. • UU Groups on Facebook: Many UUs worldwide run Groups on Facebook to collaborate and share best practices. These groups have uploaded documents to them. We run a significant risk of losing this knowledge. Facebook could limit storage allocated to Groups at any time or change other features that affect the usability of it. It is risky to assume that our collective wisdom and work online will always be available on Facebook. • Consumer-Centric Relationships: While you can create islands of church counter culture on Facebook, remember that Facebook’s consumer dynamic shapes your island and everything that takes place on it.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White, Western Footprint: While Facebook tools allow many cultures to express themselves and to co-exist on Facebook, its view of the world is fundamentally white, capitalist, western, and secular. • Facebook & Philanthropy: It's not clear what kind of a corporate citizen Facebook is. Its philanthropy emphasizes free technical expertise. Not much is known about how Facebook supports social causes and who benefits from it. By comparison, Google and Microsoft, are far more transparent and give millions away to a variety of causes to affect change. They also provide free technology and expertise. • Facebook Isn't a Search Engine: Do not consider Facebook as a search engine, itself, where people expect to find information on your congregation. • Biggest Ministerial Problem: Facebook doesn't hold fast and let go. True, individuals can set access controls to block content they don't want to see from friends, but there is still an issue. Whether it's through Facebook UU Groups or mutual friends, we see the presence and activity of former ministers and former congregants. Misunderstandings can arise because of this. In addition, Facebook can complicate professional courtesies between arriving and departing ministers who publicly interact with members. Meanwhile, regardless of whether ministers "friend" congregants, the activity of mutual friends of both parties may unwittingly make visible relationships from the last call. There are steps ministers can take to mitigate the chance for misunderstandings. See the "A Digital Ministry Primer" REACH document.
<p>Similar Platforms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google+ and MySpace are also open to anyone and are often used to combine professional, recreational, and personal relationships in one place. MySpace attracts young adults and emphasizes music-related communities. Google+ has yet to be as popular as Facebook. If you are on Facebook, forget about Google+ for now. • Pinterest.com is a one-year-old social network that is similar to social scrapbooking. Users post images and some text-based content to their "pin boards." It's a way to visually share interests and needs instead of through the written word. The company hasn't released usage numbers but third-party ratings companies have cited anywhere from 4 million to 10 million users. It's an interesting idea and could be integrated into a church ministry. But it's not a ready to be a primary component of one yet. • LinkedIn.com has 25 million active users. It is focused on careers, professionalism, jobs searches, and best practices for various industries.
<p>Cost</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook's Free or is it Really? There is a negative cost, or negative externality, as economists would say, to using Facebook as your UU community of practice and purpose. It's the cost of perpetuating values that don't reflect what we aspire to be. Facebook mirrors offline dominant culture. It's hard, however, to argue against a <i>free</i>, very robust community/social network. UU congregations are strapped for cash. We need to examine the digital environment in which we're practicing faith. We must ask ourselves if that environment unwittingly subverts an effort to be a recognizable force for good in the world. We can broadcast our beliefs easily

	<p>and can tell politicians and businesses our position on various issues. The collective “polling” of Facebook users on Facebook does affect national discourse and the behavior of corporations. See more on this in the “Is Facebook a Trojan Horse?” REACH document.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is Facebook “Priming” us For Consumerism? Our “shared” and “liked” activities on Facebook may perpetuate priming, a technique used in experimental psychology to influence people unconsciously based on the emotional influence of friends. A friend’s recommendation stimulates and primes us to look at what they’ve recommended or to respond to them in a way they’ve asked us to such as complying with a request to join them in a game.
Bottom Line	Use Facebook in Digital Ministry For These Reasons: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Reach people where they’re at & practice REACH principles.2. Engage existing churchgoers more.3. Collaborate with UUs everywhere on best practices.4. Attract friends & family of members into online church life.5. Show up, represent & advocate UU values in Facebook.