

Parish Website Hosting Program

The Parish Website Hosting Program provides congregations in the Diocese of Western New York access to website development, maintenance, and security for parish websites. All congregations are welcome to enroll in the program and have their websites transferred to WordPress regardless of the state of their current website.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE PARISH WEBSITE HOSTING PROGRAM

WHY WORDPRESS?

WordPress is the most used content management system in the world, powering approximately 43% of all websites. It is open-source, which means that the source code is available for any developer to work on, allowing for a large repository of plugins that add specific functionality.

IS WORDPRESS SECURE?

No website is invulnerable, but when WordPress and its plugins are kept up-to-date, it is safe and secure. The nature of open source software means that there are many people looking at the source code and providing solutions to any vulnerabilities that are found.

HOW DO I LEARN/GET TRAINING ON WORDPRESS?

[Shawn Slother](#), Missioner for Administration on the diocesan staff, will be available to help get you up and running with the basics and he can connect you to the Diocesan Webmaster for specific questions.

The popularity of WordPress means that there are a multitude of tutorials available online. Of course, the best way to learn the system is to jump in and start working with it. We suggest creating a new page and trying different blocks to see what each of them does. You don't have to publish the page to the front of the site so you have a great opportunity to be creative!

CAN I SELECT/CHANGE MY THEME?

The short answer is no.

The theme we've selected to use is called Kadence. This is a highly customizable theme that will best highlight the programs and activities at your parish or ministry. Having one standardized theme allows us to update and maintain the themes easily, while still allowing the maximum flexibility in design and customization.

Additionally, we have the Kadence Blocks plugin installed in your site. This plugin works seamlessly with the Kadence theme to allow you to almost complete control over how your content is displayed.

CAN I ADD [INSERT PLUGIN NAME] PLUGIN?

Plugins are pieces of software that work with WordPress to provide different functionality. Some allow you to work more creatively, some help us keep the site secure, some help you communicate with your parishioners and/or visitors. There are many plugins available for WordPress, and we look to include ones that are stable, well coded, are easy to use, and provide the functionality that most parishes are looking to have.

However, we do restrict the plugins that are available to the hosting program members as a security precaution. We want to be able to react in a timely manner if there is a security update released for a plugin, and limiting the ones available helps us keep your site secure.

If there is specific functionality that you would like to add to the site and don't see a way to do that, please let us know. That functionality may already be available, but not readily apparent. If it is something that may be beneficial to many of the parishes/ ministries, we can explore other plugin options. We may even ask you to help us test it before we make it available in the program!

DO I NEED TO DO UPDATES ON WORDPRESS OR THE PLUGINS?

No. Our staff will be monitoring the sites and making sure updates happen on a regular basis. If there is a security update, we will prioritize that as soon as possible after the update is released.

WHY HASN'T THIS PARTICULAR PLUGIN BEEN UPDATED?

When an update is released we like to make sure that it is going to work properly and not break your site before we do the update. While it's rare, sometimes you may see a notification that an update is available and has been for a while. In those cases we are making sure the update process will be smooth for everyone.

Please note that in the case of security updates we will apply those to the site as soon as possible after we are made aware of the update release.

WHAT ARE MY CALENDAR OPTIONS?

GOOGLE CALENDAR

Google Calendar is a free calendar option that is linked to an email address. If your parish is using Gmail as a contact email, you already have access to Google Calendar. If not, a free email address may be created, allowing you to use the calendar component.

Google Calendar can have multiple users, and adding/editing/deleting is all done through the calendar itself —there is no need to access the website to manage events.

The calendar will be embedded in the website, and any changes made to the calendar will be reflected almost immediately.

EVENT ORGANIZER

Event Organizer is a WordPress plugin that can be used to create a calendar. It includes recurring events as well as the ability to set up different venues and categories.

CAN I ADD AUDIO AND VIDEO TO THE WEBSITE?

Audio and video files take up a lot of space. To allow for the smoothest operation of the site, we have the following restrictions:

Video – we require external hosting, such as YouTube, Vimeo, or other video hosting platforms. Videos that are hosted externally can be embedded in the website so it will appear to visitors as if the video is on your site.

Audio – if you have one or two small audio files, they may be uploaded to the site. If you have large file sizes, or a large number of files (such as weekly sermons), we recommend hosting them on an external audio hosting site and embedding the content.

CAN I ADD/DELETE USERS?

Yes. There are two roles for people who will be working in the backend of the website:

- Parish Editor – can add, edit, and delete content
- Parish Manager – can add and delete users

Having two different roles allows you to have people working on the site who need to add information or photos, while a different group of people may be in charge of adding/deleting users. A person may be assigned to both roles simultaneously.

WHAT DO I NEED TO SUPPLY TO GET STARTED?

Once you have contacted the Diocese ([Shawn Slother](#)), start gathering the items you would like to have in your site, including:

- Photos
- Graphics
- Text
- PDF downloads
- Audio*
- Video*

Our webmaster, Bill Joseph, will contact you once he is ready to begin designing your website.

We will also need to register a domain name if you don't already have one.

**Audio and video have special restrictions. See above.*

WHAT'S A DOMAIN NAME?

A domain name is the name of the site as it's typed into a web browser. For example: episcopalwny.org

A domain name must be registered before a site can be set up. Registration consists of purchasing the name for a set period of time (typically 2 years) from a domain name registrar.

WILL YOU REGISTER MY DOMAIN NAME FOR ME?

Yes. In fact, we recommend doing it this way. The domain name will be registered and updated by the diocesan office.

By having your parish's domain name registered by the diocese, it will remain safe and secure and allow us to access the settings we will need to update in order to make your site function properly.

WHAT IF WE ALREADY HAVE A DOMAIN NAME?

If you have a domain name already registered, and you are comfortable

maintaining the registration, you may continue to do so. We do ask that you allow us access to the domain name so that we may update the necessary settings.

Parishes that have a domain name but are concerned about renewing registrations, or access to the registrar's account, are encouraged to transfer the name to the diocese. We will hold it for you, ensuring that it remains up-to-date.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A DOMAIN NAME AND HOSTING?

A domain name is the name associated with your website, while hosting is the actual space on the computer (called a 'server') where your website files are located. You need both in order to have a fully functioning website.

Many online building platforms will offer to provide both a domain name and hosting. We recommend that domain names and hosting be with separate companies, and that is the way the diocesan hosting program is set up.

CAN I GET EMAIL ADDRESSES THAT USE MY DOMAIN NAME?

We don't provide email services in the hosting program. If you want to use email with your domain — for example: rector@stswithinsintheswamp.org — you can sign up for email with a company that provides that service. When you do that, there will be changes that need to be made to settings of your domain name. If your domain name is hosted with us, provide us with the information and we can make the changes for you.

WHAT WILL THIS COST?

If your congregation has an operating budget of \$150,000/year or less, there is no cost to you. The Diocese will cover all charges. If your operating budget exceeds this amount, contact [Shawn Slother](#) for the setup and annual charges.

CAN I ADD A DONATION BUTTON TO MY WEBSITE?

We can add a button/link to a Parish Hosting site that links to a payment platform that you have established. We suggest Tithe.ly or PayPal for your online donations.

WHAT IF MY PARISH'S WEBSITE IS ENROLLED IN THE PREVIOUS WEBSITE HOSTING PROGRAM?

Parish websites hosted under the previous diocesan program may transfer their site into the new program. You may also choose to remove your website from the previous program, rather than transferring it to the new hosting program. If you opt to do so, you will need to enroll your website in another hosting software as well as register your domain independently.