



It's a Small World After All

I have a personal belief that as I get older, time goes faster, I get slower, and the world gets smaller. No, the planet isn't shrinking, but the distance between me and the people in this world is getting closer and closer. Initially, I blamed this phenomenon on the fact that I live in Wyoming, which is often called a small town with long streets. However, I am certain that at every LWML rally, retreat, or general gathering, I meet someone who is somehow acquainted with me, my family, or friends!

"A social network is a social structure that maps out the relationships between individuals." If you drew a social network, it would look like a web; you are in the middle, your friends and family surround you, connected to you and to each other. At the outskirts of the web, acquaintances are linked to you through the relationships they have with your family and friends. Social networks have always existed, because people have always been in relationship with one another. With the advent of modern transportation and technology, social networks have become easier to form and have grown in scope. The Internet, in particular, has had a tremendous impact on social networks; they make invisible relationship webs visible and immediately accessible.

A social network Internet site is an interface through which individuals from anywhere can connect with old friends or make new ones, share pictures, videos, or music, and interact with people who share similar interests or hobbies. Examples include MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube. Social networking sites are easy to use, making them popular among all demographics and cultures.

Social networking begins when you create a user profile on your chosen networking site. Your profile is the window through which other network users view you. On many sites, you have the ability to upload pictures, music, or video that define who you are. Once you have created a profile, you can begin making connections to

other network users (this is often called inviting friends to join your network). A good place to start is with someone that you already know; once they have joined your network and you have joined theirs, you each have access to the other's social network 'friends'. Through this connection, you may meet someone new, or you might discover a mutual friend. Another way to create your social network of friends is to search the networking site for individuals with common demographics, hobbies, or interests, and invite them to join your network. As more friends join your network, you increase your 'social capital'.

Social capital is "the resources accumulated through the relationships among people," and they might include useful information (such as restaurant recommendations or physician referrals), personal relationships, or the ability to organize groups for a common goal (such as an advocacy group). Recall the adage "It's not what you know, but who you know" – the underlying meaning of this statement accurately describes the goal of social networking: the advancement of personal relationships, interests, or goals through valuable interactions with others.

How does social networking impact the LWML and our mission? According to Pew Internet & American Life Project, in a 2004 survey, 60 million Americans said they'd used the Internet in the past two years to help make an important life decision, including dealing with a major illness, finding a new job, relocating, making financial decisions, and choosing a school for themselves or their child(ren). And, research shows that Internet use is growing exponentially. It is probably not too far-fetched to assume that a number of those 60 million people would have benefited from information about Christ and His salvation and the ministry of the LWML. What an opportunity to reach others with the Gospel message and to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ!

If you choose to participate in a social network, make it an opportunity to share

Christ with others. Take care in how you create your network profile, so that you present yourself in a manner worthy of Christ. When you create your network by inviting friends to join, look for friends who will edify you in your faith, and be aware that by inviting them to join you, you are granting their network of friends permission to connect with you and your network of friends to connect with them. And, when you post information to your profile page, remember that you represent Christ, even if the message you post has nothing to do with the Bible, Jesus, or the LWML.

The Internet provides endless opportunity to share the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ. May God use tools such as social networking sites to increase HIS 'capital': His Kingdom.

Information for this article obtained from "How Social Networks Work" by Dave Roos, www.howstuffworks.com.

LWML & Networking

You may be wondering if it is alright to post information about the LWML on your profile page or to create a network specifically for LWML members. It is acceptable to post information about your personal faith and LWML experiences; however, all official communication about the LWML and all LWML-associated groups must originate from the national LWML Board of Directors. The reason for this is so that appropriate accountability is afforded to the message presented through such communication, including pastoral review, if necessary. If you would like to promote the work of the LWML in your social network, you are encouraged to provide a link to the LWML Web site.



Make lwml.org Your Home Page

When you open your Internet browser, are you often greeted with Hollywood gossip, politics, or tips on how to look ten years younger? Would you prefer to start your online experience with the LWML? It's easy to set your Internet browser home page to www.lwml.org! Just follow these steps (for Microsoft Internet Explorer):

1. Access your browser
2. Click on Tools in the top menu bar
3. Select Internet Options
4. Select General
5. In the dialogue box, there will be a Home Page section. Type <http://www.lwml.org> into the address text box.
6. Select OK

When you are navigating the Internet, and wish to return to your home page, just click on the icon that looks like a house at the top of your screen.

Logos & Style Sheet Available Online

As mentioned in the article "It's a Small World After All," it is important that the LWML message is communicated with words and images that are consistent and that accurately reflect The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In addition, it is important to abide by applicable copyright laws (see "Copyright Provisions for Information Obtained on the Internet" in the October 2008 Cyber Scoop) for images and text.

To assist you, a new Logos and Style Sheet page has been added to the LWML Web site. Here, you will find the LWML Logo, the Teen LWML logo and word mark, the Mite Label, and both the LWML and LCMS Style Sheets. The page is accessible by selecting the Resources link in the left-hand navigation bar on www.lwml.org.

If you have questions regarding the appropriate use of LWML logos or text, please contact the Vice President for Communication at depcom@lwml.org.

Online Registration for Portland

The 2009 LWML National Convention in Portland, Oregon, is a mere three months away! Online registration for the convention opened on March 2. As with all new ventures, the online registration system presented a few challenges for the Web Site Task Force to work out. The new system is functional and has been a big success! Note: In order to register online, you need to have an account set up through the Member Login system (see the "Secret Society" article in this issue for details about Member Login).

Some of you may be interested in implementing a similar online registration system for your District. To do so, a secured site, a database to store the information, and a programmer are required. Information about obtaining a secure site certificate is available in the February 2009 Cyber Scoop for Webmasters. The database and programming will likely require outsourcing, unless you are well versed in PHP language. You will want to contact your service provider or a local professional for complete information on system requirements and costs.

Is There a Secret Society?

A quick glance across the top menu bar of the LWML Web site should alert you to a recently added feature — Member Login. Selecting the Member Login link allows you to register for access to a secure section of the LWML Web site.

The secure Member Login feature currently serves two primary functions. First, it allows secure documents to be available online for the (national) LWML Board of Directors and Committee members. Call letters, minutes, and meeting forms can now be viewed from one convenient location. Second, it permits online registration for the Portland convention. Once a member registers for access, she can then proceed to completing her convention registration in a few easy steps. The Member Login is secure, allowing for easy payment of registration fees.

National LWML Board and Committee members also have access to an Online Directory that is created when members register for an account through Member Login. Personal data is stored in a secure database; this information is then transferred to a separate Web page where Board and Committee members can search an alphabetized

listing of fellow Board/Committee members for phone numbers, mailing addresses, and e-mail addresses. The online format makes accessing the information so much more convenient than having to search for a hard copy printout of the directory. Members can even edit their own account information! This personal editing function reduces the probability for errors, and means that the directory is always up-to-date.

Member Login functions very similarly to Online Registration, and it is something that you may want to consider for your District's Web site, especially for the Online Directory feature. As mentioned in the "Online Registration" article, you will likely want to contact a professional service provider or programmer in order to establish a secure member login.

The future of Member Login is full of potential! We won't spill all the beans, but one possible future function could include an online edition of the *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly*, available via subscription and for viewing purposes only. Member Login isn't exactly a secret society, but it certainly provides benefits that would otherwise be unavailable!