



Some UM pastors are serious bloggers, writing daily for thousands of readers. Some don't even know what a blog is (it's short for "web log," like an online journal). But many have found that blogging is a great way to connect with colleagues and congregants alike, sharing insights, news, and a little piece of themselves . . .

Blogging for Pastors

By Katie Z. Dawson

I am a pastor who blogs. But I'm not a "blogger" per se.

I don't make a living writing things online. I only have a few consistent readers of my musings. My calling is not to write, but to share the love of God with oth-



ers through the ministry of the church. So most days I am spending my time with my congregation and my community, walking them through life's ups and downs. Blogging is something I do on the side. One among many things that I do on the side.

But I have come to realize that it is an important addition to my ministry.

I wandered into the world of blogging (AKA the "blogosphere") in seminary. During my years in Nashville at Vanderbilt Divinity School I was surrounded by deep thinkers, both in class and in my local congregation. We could spend hours having long, intense discussions about faith and church and culture. And in the pro-

cess, I grew and stretched and matured in my faith.

I worried that when I went back to my home conference of Iowa to be in ministry, I might find myself very alone in some tiny rural church and I would miss those types of interactions. So blogging became a vehicle for community. My blog, Salvaged Faith (www.salvagedfaith.blogspot.com), was a way to hold on to those nuggets of insight that I discovered, to pull out of the past those pieces of our tradition that we needed to remember, and to keep wrestling with what was happening in my local context.

I was pleased to find in Iowa that a community of colleagues surrounded me. My local ministerial alliance has proved invaluable.

Facebook has been an amazing way to stay in touch with seminary classmates. We have a strong effort to keep young clergy con-



nected in our state through monthly lunches. I found that I did not "need" my blog for community and connection like I thought I might. But I have found that it still serves a valuable purpose.

In the world of ministry, there is a very fine line between being someone's friend and being someone's pastor or colleague. And when you enter the world of technology, it becomes difficult to separate the two. I have done so by simply taking seriously the fact that my blog is not my pulpit. And that's a good thing.

There are many conversations that I do not feel comfortable having with people in my local congregation: politics, the latest

Where Do I Begin?

If you're interested in starting a blog, start by reading other people's blogs and learning about this genre of short-form writing. Then check out these popular blog-hosting sites to choose the one that's right for you!

- www.blogger.com
- www.typepad.com
- www.wordpress.com

Tips for a great blogging experience:

- **Write frequently—at least several times per week. New content is key to building your readership.**
- **Keep posts short and readable—500-750 words is ideal.**
- **Interact with readers by reading and responding to their comments. Ask questions in your posts to encourage reader interaction.**
- **Read other people's blogs and leave comments.**
- **Be yourself, but exercise caution. Remember that the Internet is a huge, open forum and anyone could find what you write.**

episode of “Dexter,” what it feels like to be a pastor who has doubts and makes mistakes, and sometimes a deep wrestling with what a word in Greek or Hebrew really means.

While I don’t go out starting conversations about these topics in my church, occasionally these topics find me. If someone comes in and asks what I think about the latest policy decision in the White House, on a personal level, I will respond honestly and pastorally. But I won’t walk into Sunday school and cry out, “Whew, did you see that State of the Union address last night?!”

On my blog, however, I will explore these complex issues, because my blog is not my pulpit. My blog is a place for me to start conversations. My blog is a place for me

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to seek out community and to engage with people who both agree and disagree with me. My blog is a place for personal wrestling and thinking. Most of the time, this is with friends and companions from all around the world. A network. A connection, in the best Wesleyan sense of the word. Together, we seek one another’s wisdom and advice and creative impulses.

I know that many colleagues of mine have created pseudonyms that they blog under to protect their personal/professional boundaries. But for me, that artificially splits me into separate personalities. And just as folks from the church occasionally want to know what the pastor *really* thinks and come into the office to ask me a question, sometimes I have church visitors on my blog too. I gently remind them that my office is not my pulpit, that my blog is not my pulpit, and that I am human like everyone else. So take my thoughts with a grain of salt and let’s have a conversation. ☐



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A Few Good Blogs ^{UM}



Mark Beeson
www.markbeeson.com



Theresa Coleman
www.reverendmommy.blogspot.com



Adam Hamilton
www.adamhamilton.cor.org



Kim Matthews
www.sandpipersthoughts.blogspot.com



John Meunier
www.johnmeunier.wordpress.com

Shane Raynor
www.faitheexperience.com

Bishop Robert Schnase
www.fivepractices.org

Mike Slaughter
www.mikeslaughter.com/blog

Andrew Thompson
www.genxrising.com

Sonja Tobey
www.revsonja.blogspot.com

Bishop Will Willimon
www.willimon.blogspot.com

Joseph Yoo
www.pressingtoward.wordpress.com