



Launched in 2010, Instagram is a photography-based social networking platform that continues to grow in popularity and is a happy place full of rainbows and unicorns. Users upload and share photos and videos (3-60 seconds) with captions via smartphone, typically with creative hashtags. Filters and color correction can also be applied to alter and enhance the photos and videos.

Instagram provides another way for churches to tell their stories visually in real-time. It also offers members, visitors, and strangers the opportunity to see what is going on in the church and allows engagement via likes, comments, and private messages.

Time Commitment:

10-30 minutes to initially set up a ministry account

1-2 hour per week to share photos and to comment or like other people's photos

Who uses Instagram?

- Instagram has 1 billion monthly active users, more than 500 million of them use the platform every day
- 71% of Instagram users around the globe are under the age of 35
- 72% of U.S. teens use Instagram
- 4.2 Billion Likes and 95 Million Photos shared every day
- 500 million people use Stories every day
- Users spend an average 53 minutes a day on the app

Churches can use Instagram to share:

- Highlight volunteers and ministries
- Behind the scenes look at ministry
- Quote your pastor and turn it into art
- Teasers for worship service
- Bible quotes or quotes of Saints
- Create a specific hashtag for an event
- Share church activities and events (cantatas, fundraisers, covered dish, socials, etc.)
- Post recap collages (What did they miss?)
- Create a photo challenge to encourage engagement and participation
- Show what you are doing in ministry (as opposed to just writing words about it)

Instagram ‘How To’¹

Step 1: Download the Instagram app from Apple App Store, Google Play Store, or Windows Phone Store.

Step 2: Once the app is installed, tap to open it.

Step 3: Tap Register with Email to sign up with your email address. (I recommend using a generic church email account to link to your Instagram account)

If you register with email, create a username and password, fill out your profile info and then tap Done.

Instagram App Features:

The App offers several different ways (“tabs”) to interact: Home, Search, Camera, Notifications, Profile, Your Story, Live, and IGTV .

- Home: This tab is what shows the news feed—posts from those Instagram accounts followed by your account. Here you can like or comment on posts.
- Search: Search Instagram for users or hashtags. Searching for hashtags can offer ideas as well as keep track of a church-specific or event-specific hashtag.
- Camera: This is where you actually take photos. Photos can be taken using the camera on your device or you can use photos already stored on that device. Use the video camera icon to switch to video mode. Once a photo is taken/chosen, Instagram offers opportunity to make small edits as well as to add a creative filter to alter the look of the image. Then you are offered the opportunity to add a caption, tag other users, and post to additional social media platforms.
- Notifications: This tab offers a list of user activity (liked or commented on your posts, new followers, etc.) and another tab for who you follow that allows you to see what they are going as well.
- Profile: Shows your posts, number of followers, and number of Instagram accounts you are following. From this tab you can edit your profile information, profile image, and settings.
- Your Story: Similar to Snapchat. Allows quick video/photo that disappears after 24 hours.
- Live: Appears in “Your Story” and is visible for 24 hours. The video can be saved to your device for later use. Live is great for wanting to interact with your audience. Q&A, share a sermon live, live feed church, etc.
- IGTV: A way to store longer videos for more than 24 hours. For details and directions, go to <https://help.instagram.com/225190788256708>.

¹ As quoted from <https://help.instagram.com> “Creating an Account and Username”

Other Notes:

- You can only post to Instagram from a smartphone, tablet, or 3rd party app like Hootsuite and not from a computer.
- You can view, like, comments and follow on Instagram via computer at Instagram.com.
- The goal is to not just post images/videos, but to interact (like, comment, etc.) with others. This helps circulate your account and your message to a wider audience.
- Instagram can (and should) be linked to other social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. While Facebook users don't necessarily use Instagram, a photo on Instagram can be published to a Facebook Page and Twitter account and allows an opportunity for more engagement with a different demographic. 1 post - 3 places.
- You can use the @ symbol before typing another Instagram account name in order to 'tag' them in the comment.
- Tag the location the image is taken to increase reach, and help others find out where you are, ex: your church, State Park, Chic-fi-la...
- Use hashtags to reach an even wider audience. Hashtags can be researched on the computer and notes should be made on which ones you want to use. Use 10-30 hashtags per post. Ex: #VAUMC #bible #JesusLovesYou #churchfun #PickaCityUMC
- Setting up your Instagram account as a business account (in settings) allows you to create ads for marketing events and has insights (AKA analytics). Insights can help you better post at the best times and days when you followers are on the app.

Additional Helpful Apps:

Re-post: Allows you to share a post from another user

Boomerang: mini videos that loop back and forth

Collage: Several photos together in 1 image, add text and stickers