



# Twitter

## What is "Twitter?"

Twitter is a free "micro-blogging" service that allows you to send and receive brief messages (limit: 140 characters). It's especially useful for texting to mobile phones. You can also "tweet" (send a message) using the web browser on your computer or mobile device.

Twitter is now the third most used social network (after Facebook and MySpace) with up to ten million accounts.

## So what?

Because "tweets" are limited in size, they're ideal for brief comments, messages and announcements.

Youth ministers often use Twitter to keep in daily contact with members of congregational youth groups.

Congregations can use Twitter to send reminders about events, or to send brief prayer requests to members and family.

The UCC's national office uses Twitter for news headlines ([twitter.com/unitedchurch](https://twitter.com/unitedchurch)), daily inspirational messages ([twitter.com/stillspeaking](https://twitter.com/stillspeaking)) and occasional tips on evangelism ([twitter.com/uccvitality](https://twitter.com/uccvitality)).

Twitter is often used to broadcast links to interesting articles or blogs. The "tweet" provides just enough space for a brief description and link.

## How do I use it?

- Establish your free account on [twitter.com](https://twitter.com). This can be a personal account, or an account for your congregation or ministry.
- Choose a safe password. This is important. The password should include a combination of letters and numbers, and should be difficult for someone else to guess.
- Post an avatar (any picture or graphic image that will visually represent you in the Twitter community).
- Personalize your settings (including a bio and a link to your blog or website, and a choice of colors and wallpaper for your Twitter page).
- If you prefer not to log into twitter.com every day, install a free program like TweetDeck ([tweetdeck.com](https://tweetdeck.com)) which will automatically download tweets to your mobile or computer web browser every day.
- FutureTweets ([futuretweets.com](https://futuretweets.com)) is one of many free services that allows you to schedule tweets in advance.

- Free URL compression services allow you to reduce the size of a long web address: this is helpful since the address will take up less space and leave more room for your tweet. We recommend <http://tr.im> and <http://ow.ly>.
- Use a “hash tag” to create a discussion thread for your church or ministry. Each hash tag is preceded by a hash symbol (#). For example, if the youth group at St. Paul’s United Church of Christ created a unique hash tag like “#uthstpl” then members of the group could easily share messages by adding the tag to their tweets.
- Be sure to link to your ministry’s Twitter page on your congregation’s website.

### **Safety tips**

- Change your password occasionally to protect the security of your Twitter account.
- Pay attention to your list of “followers.” (“Followers” are persons who elect to receive your “tweets.” When you subscribe to another tweet, you are “following” that tweet.) Spammers sometimes will follow tweets in an attempt to drive traffic to commercial services or porn sites. Be sure to monitor your list of followers at least once a week, and block those who appear to be misusing your account.

### **For more information**

How to use hashtags

[help.twitter.com/forums/10711/entries/49309](http://help.twitter.com/forums/10711/entries/49309)

Five quick tips for using Twitter for youth ministry

[www.youthministry.com/?q=node/22581](http://www.youthministry.com/?q=node/22581)

Wikipedia article on micro-blogging

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micro-blogging](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micro-blogging)

How Twitter can be used for prayer

[thinkchristian.net](http://thinkchristian.net)

United Church News Tweets

[twitter.com/unitedchurch](http://twitter.com/unitedchurch)

Congregational Vitality Tweets

[twitter.com/uccvitality](http://twitter.com/uccvitality)

Stillspeaking Devotional Tweets

[twitter.com/stillspeaking](http://twitter.com/stillspeaking)

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Congregational Vitality and Discipleship

Local Church Ministries

United Church of Christ

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