

How to be found

Online visibility for churches

Course introduction



Instructor background

- Researcher and writer on intersection of tech and church
- Author of:
 - *Grace and Gigabytes: Being Church in a Tech-Shaped Culture*, available now from Fortress Press
 - *The Holy and the Hybrid: Navigating the Church's Digital Reformation*, available September 2022

Agenda

- Part 1: Why should church leaders care about digital marketing?
- Part 2: What is SEO and why does it matter?
- Part 3: What is SEM and how is it different from SEO?
- Next steps and recommended resources

Learning Outcomes

1. Compare and contrast search engine optimization and search engine marketing
2. Define when SEO and SEM are appropriate for congregations
3. Articulate how SEO and SEM fit within a relational worldview
4. Describe why to use Google My Business, Search Console, and Ads
5. Locate resources for assembling an SEO and SEM plan for an upcoming season in the life of your ministry



Marketing Skills & Marketing Tactics

To be *skilled* with marketing is to...

- Tell a story
- Sequence the story so that it creates human connection
- Publish the story to surround a specific moment
- Share the work of storytelling

To do marketing is to...

- Create digital content
- Share digital content
- Measure the effectiveness of digital content



Marketing Skills & Marketing Tactics

Marketing Tactics:

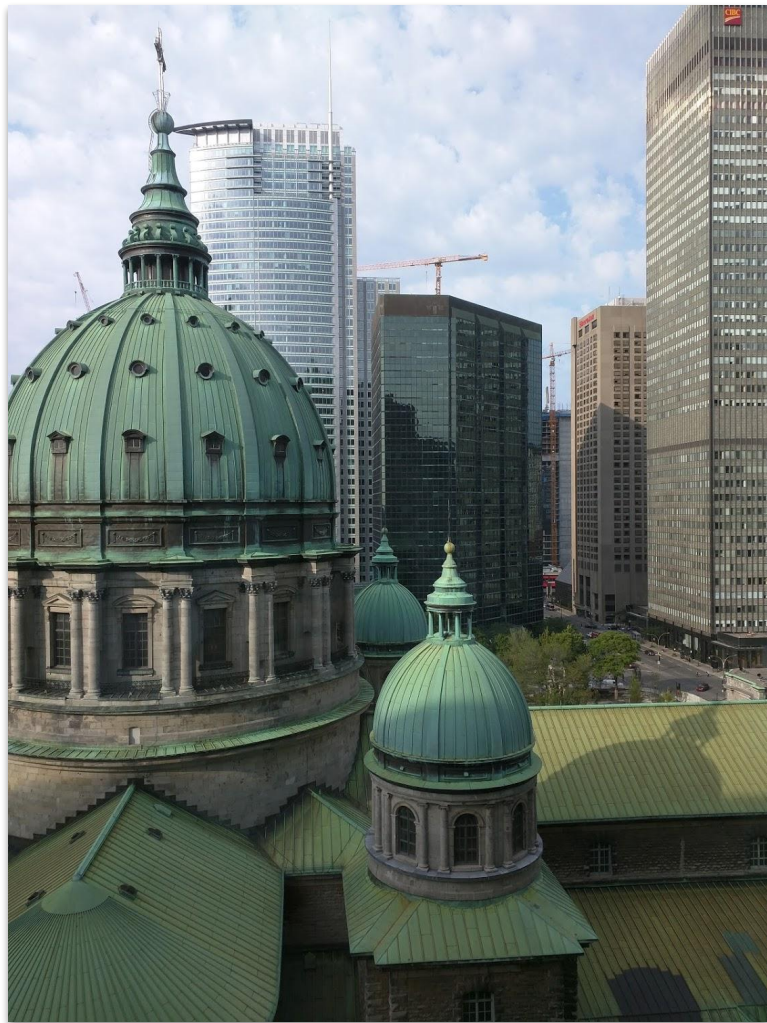
- Advertising
- Blogs
- Videos
- Podcasts
- Social media
- Website development/SEO
- Newsletters

Marketing Skills:

- Listening
- Storytelling
- Creativity
- Collaboration

Marketing Skills for Ministry:

- Articulating how God shows up in real, lived experiences
- Explaining how you see God at work in specific situations



Foundations

- Churches cannot approach SEO and SEM through the transactional lens of the typical marketer
- SEO and SEM help churches only in the presence of a relational or narrative antecedent
- Church leaders can become more adept at SEO and SEM through free, accessible tools

Part 1:

The why and what of digital marketing

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was with God in the beginning. **3** Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. **4** In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. **8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.**

...

15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") **16** Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. **17** For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and ^{is} in closest relationship with the Father, **has made him known.**



Google

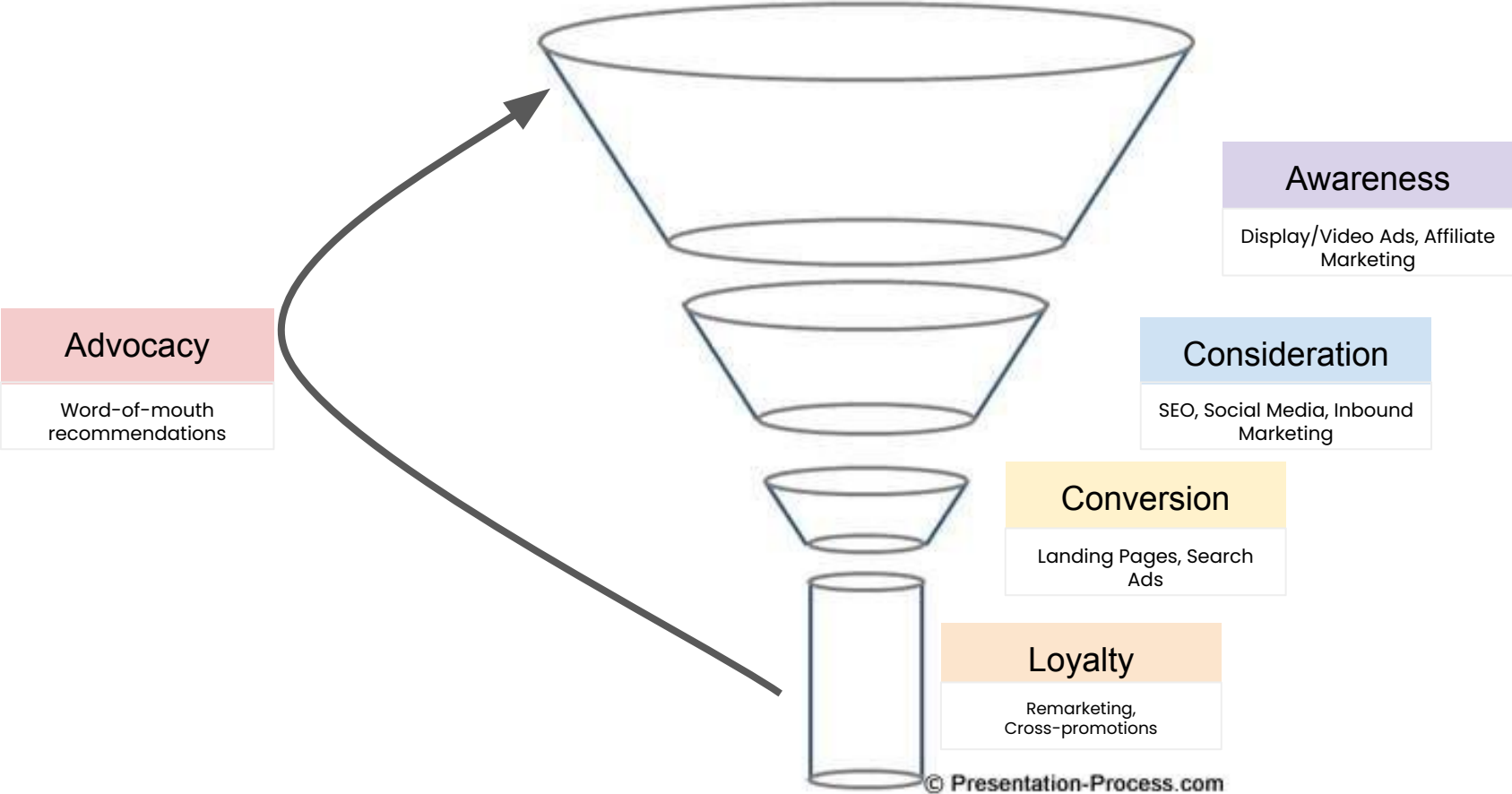
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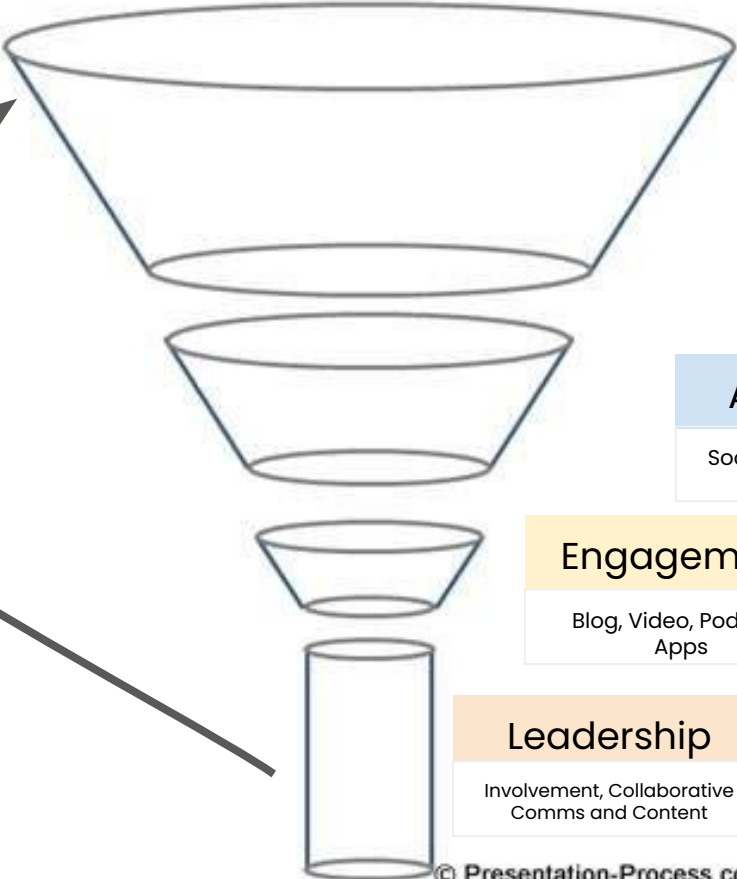


Business Digital Marketing Funnel



Church Digital Marketing Funnel

You are here



Evangelism
Word-of-mouth invitation

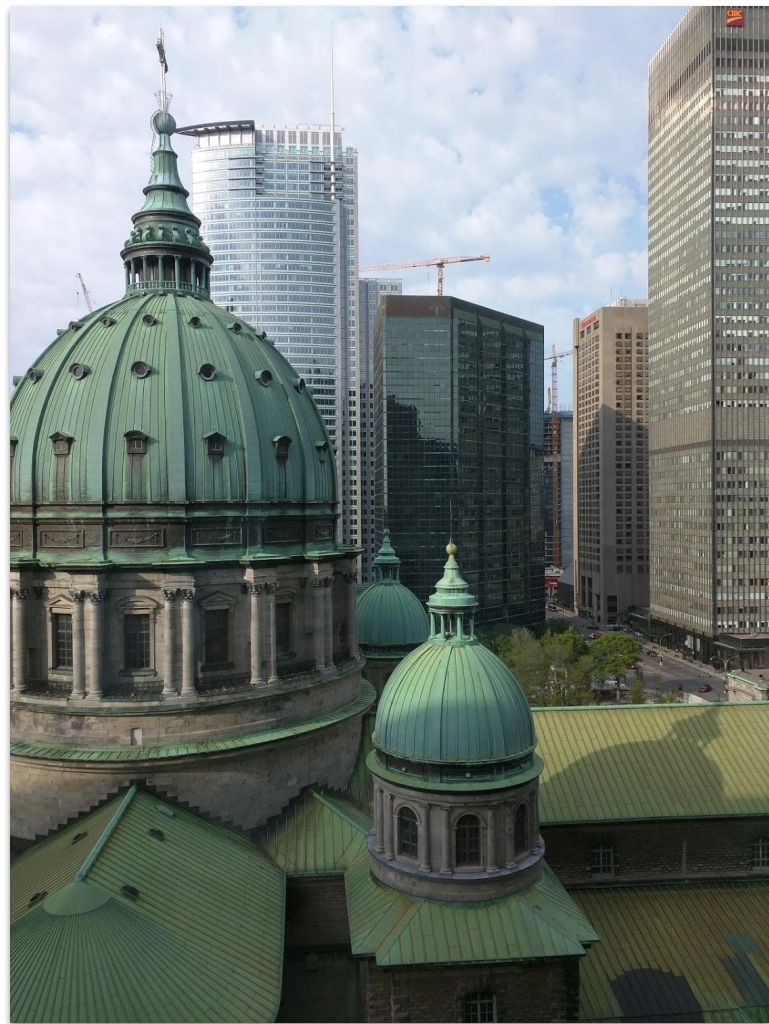
Awareness
Website, Ads, SEO

Attendance
Social Media, Calendars, Newsletters

Engagement
Blog, Video, Podcast, Apps

Leadership
Involvement, Collaborative Comms and Content

	Church	Everyone else
Steps	Awareness, Attendance, Engagement, Leadership, Evangelism	Awareness, Consideration, Conversion, Loyalty, Advocacy
Momentum	Generated in part by content Solidified by relationship	Generated by technology
Outcome	Relationship	Transaction



Breakout

How do you think church marketing is similar to, or different from, all other marketing?

Part 2:

Search engine optimization

“SEO stands for search engine optimization. In simple terms, it means the process of improving your site to increase its visibility when people search for products or services related to your business in Google, Bing, and other search engines.”

- [Search Engine Land](#)



● church online
Search term

+ Compare

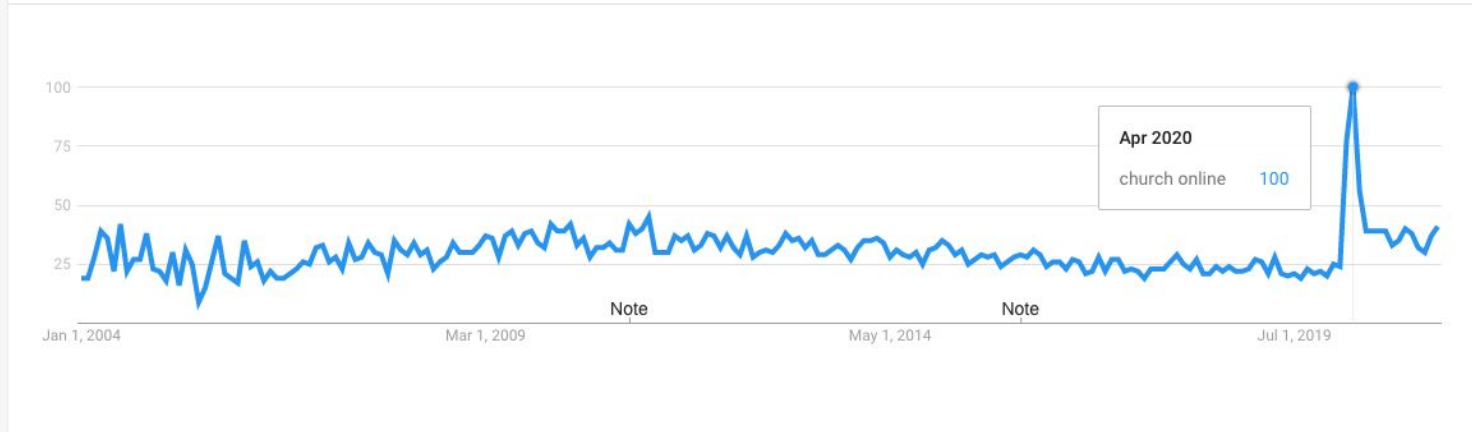
United States ▾

2004 - present ▾

All categories ▾

Web Search ▾

Interest over time ⓘ



madison, wi churches



 All

 Maps

 News

 Images

 Shopping

 More

Tools

About 2,560,000 results (0.70 seconds)



SEO themes

- Most “church search” is local
- There is only one tool for optimizing local search
- All other search optimization is about relatively simple **content** or **quality**



● church
Search term

+ Compare

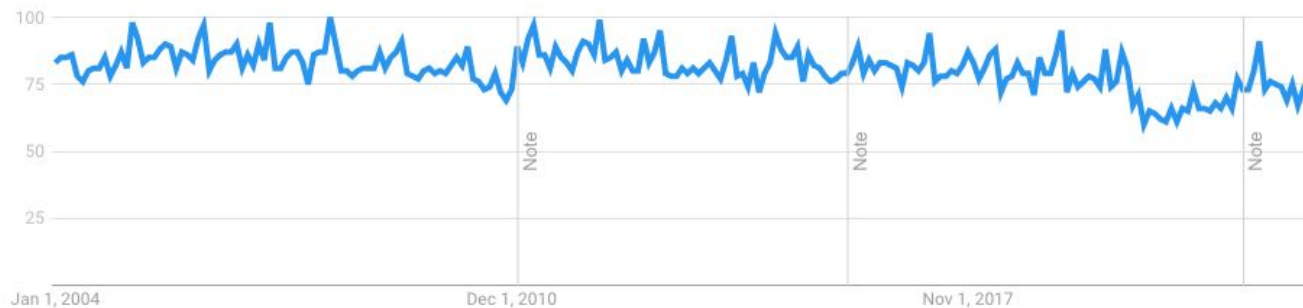
United States ▼

2004 - present ▼

All categories ▼

Web Search ▼

Interest over time





● church near me
Search term

+ Compare

United States ▾

2004 - present ▾

All categories ▾

Web Search ▾

Interest over time ?



About 1,830,000,000 results (0.53 seconds)



Rating ▾ Hours ▾

Hours or services may differ

Doxa Church ▾

Ad · 5.0 ★★★★★ (21) · Church
2700 Novation Pkwy
Closed · Opens 9:30AM Sun

[WEBSITE](#) [DIRECTIONS](#)

Meadood Baptist Church

No reviews · Baptist church
2817 Prairie Rd
(608) 271-0711

[WEBSITE](#) [DIRECTIONS](#)

Chapel Valley Church

No reviews · Church
2601 Prairie Rd
Closes soon · 4PM · (608) 515-8855

[WEBSITE](#) [DIRECTIONS](#)

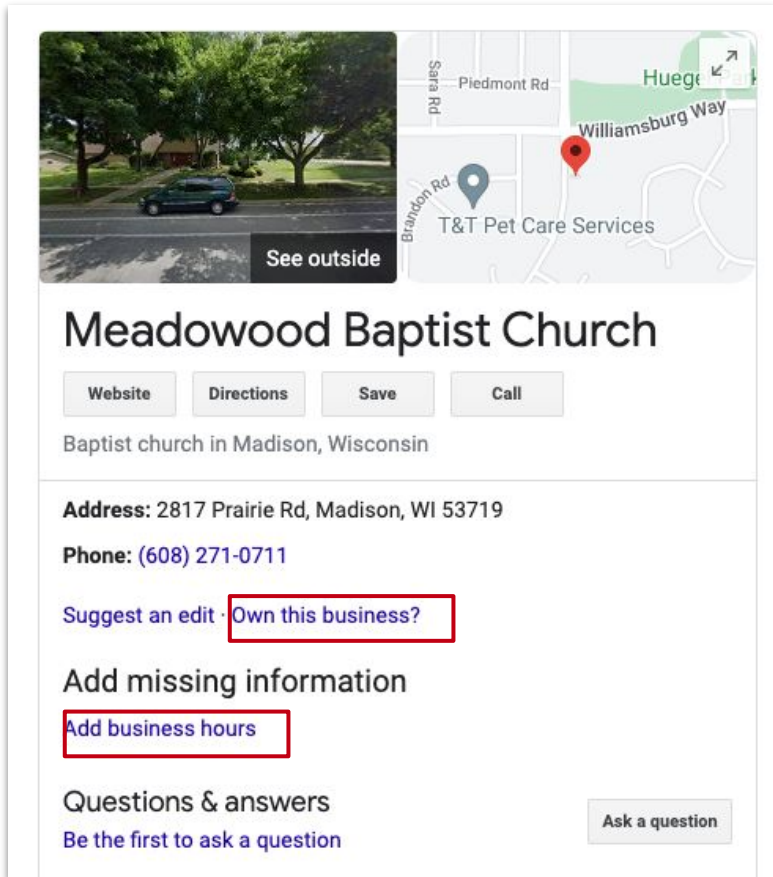
Heritage Congregational Church

5.0 ★★★★★ (3) · Church
3102 Prairie Rd
Closed · Opens 9AM Thu · (608) 274-0833

[WEBSITE](#) [DIRECTIONS](#)

[More places](#)

Google My Business



The image shows a Google My Business listing for Meadowood Baptist Church. At the top, there is a street view image of the church building and a map showing its location at the intersection of Williamsburg Way and Sara Rd. Below the map, the church name is displayed in large black text. Underneath the name are four buttons: Website, Directions, Save, and Call. A short description follows: "Baptist church in Madison, Wisconsin". The address is listed as "2817 Prairie Rd, Madison, WI 53719" and the phone number as "(608) 271-0711". There are two links: "Suggest an edit" and "Own this business?". Below these are two options to "Add missing information": "Add business hours" and "Add business hours". At the bottom, there is a section for "Questions & answers" with the text "Be the first to ask a question" and a button labeled "Ask a question".

Meadowood Baptist Church

Website Directions Save Call

Baptist church in Madison, Wisconsin

Address: 2817 Prairie Rd, Madison, WI 53719

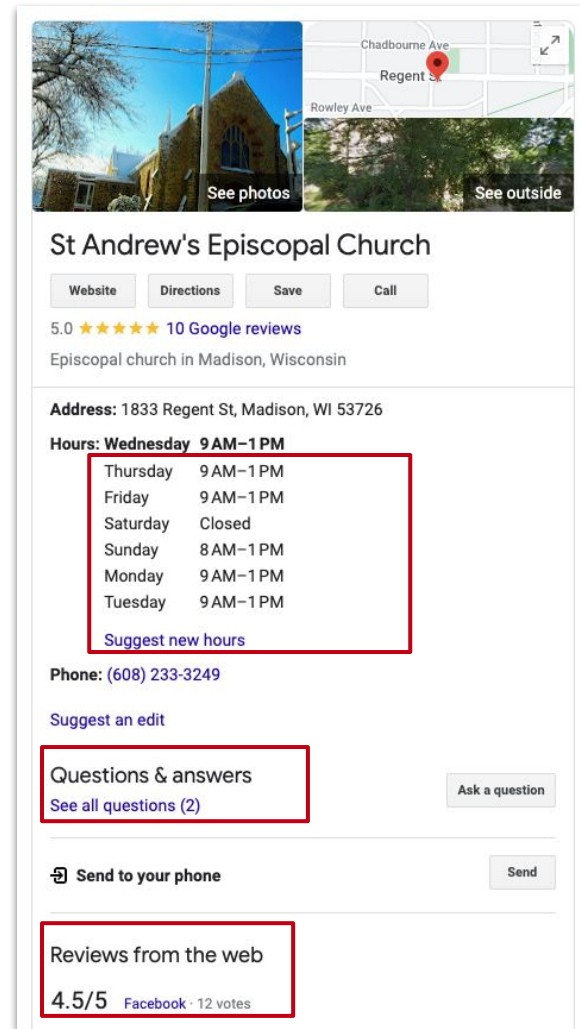
Phone: (608) 271-0711

[Suggest an edit](#) · [Own this business?](#)

Add missing information

[Add business hours](#)

Questions & answers
Be the first to ask a question [Ask a question](#)



The image shows a Google My Business listing for St Andrew's Episcopal Church. At the top, there is a street view image of the church building and a map showing its location at the intersection of Regent St and Rowley Ave. Below the map, the church name is displayed in large black text. Underneath the name are four buttons: Website, Directions, Save, and Call. A short description follows: "Episcopal church in Madison, Wisconsin". The address is listed as "1833 Regent St, Madison, WI 53726". The hours of operation are listed for Wednesday through Tuesday, with Wednesday hours highlighted in a red box. There is a link to "Suggest new hours". The phone number is "(608) 233-3249". There is a link to "Suggest an edit". Below these are two options to "Add missing information": "Questions & answers" and "Add business hours". At the bottom, there is a section for "Send to your phone" with a button labeled "Send".

St Andrew's Episcopal Church

Website Directions Save Call

5.0 ★★★★★ 10 Google reviews

Episcopal church in Madison, Wisconsin

Address: 1833 Regent St, Madison, WI 53726

Hours: **Wednesday 9 AM–1 PM**

Thursday	9 AM–1 PM
Friday	9 AM–1 PM
Saturday	Closed
Sunday	8 AM–1 PM
Monday	9 AM–1 PM
Tuesday	9 AM–1 PM

[Suggest new hours](#)

Phone: (608) 233-3249

[Suggest an edit](#)

Questions & answers
[See all questions \(2\)](#) [Ask a question](#)

Send to your phone [Send](#)

Reviews from the web
4.5/5 Facebook · 12 votes

In the chat:

Reviews are a part of life on the web.

How do you respond?

How would you address a negative review?

Page Speed Insights

PageSpeed Insights

https://www.ryanpanzer.com/

Analyze



Mobile



Desktop



Discover what your real users are experiencing



No Data



Diagnose performance issues

71

Performance

96

Accessibility

75

Best Practices

100

SEO

71

Performance

Values are estimated and may vary. The performance score is calculated directly from these metrics. [See calculator.](#)



0-49



50-89



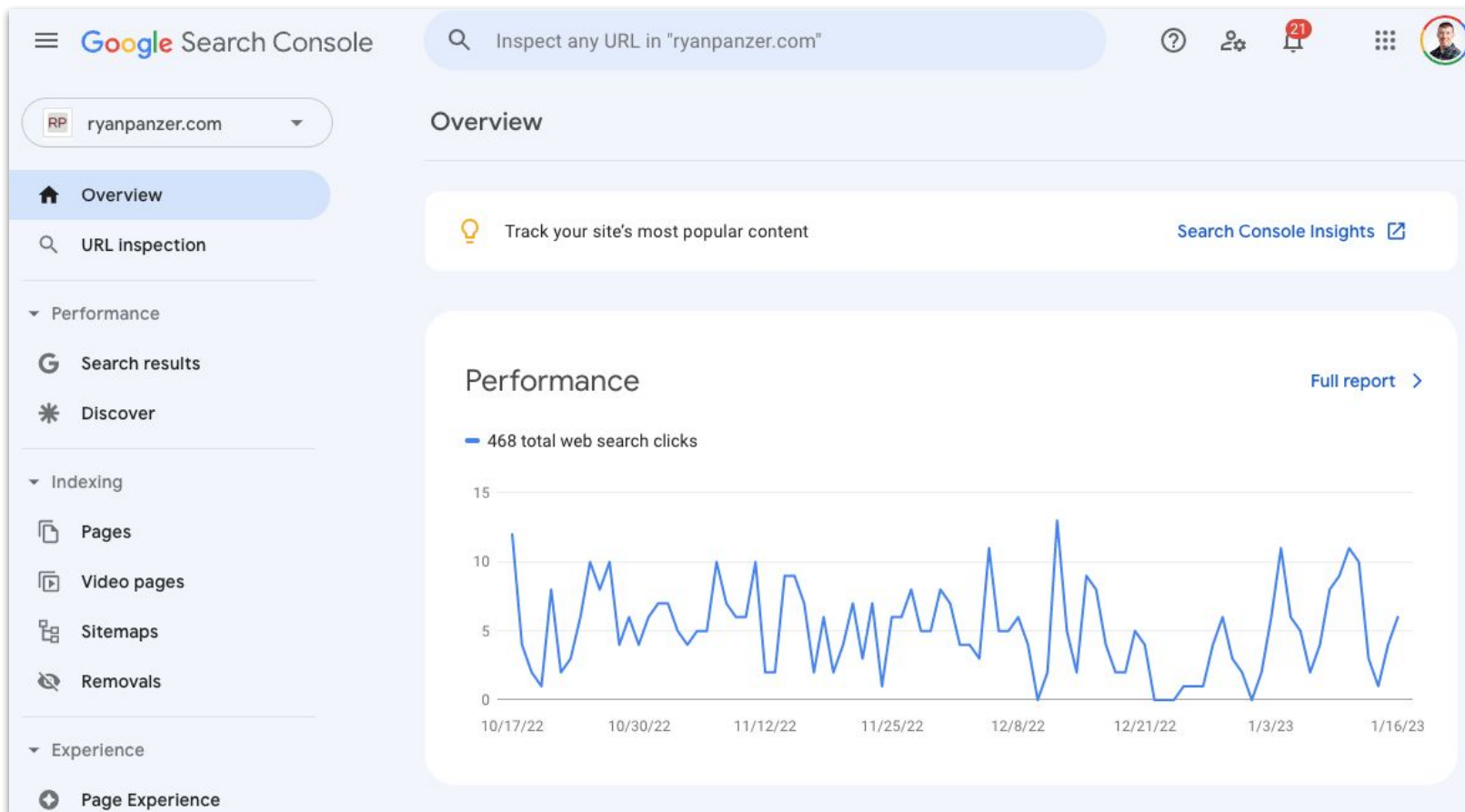
90-100



In the chat.

On a scale of 1-5, rate the quality of your website as seen on a mobile device.

Search Console Overview

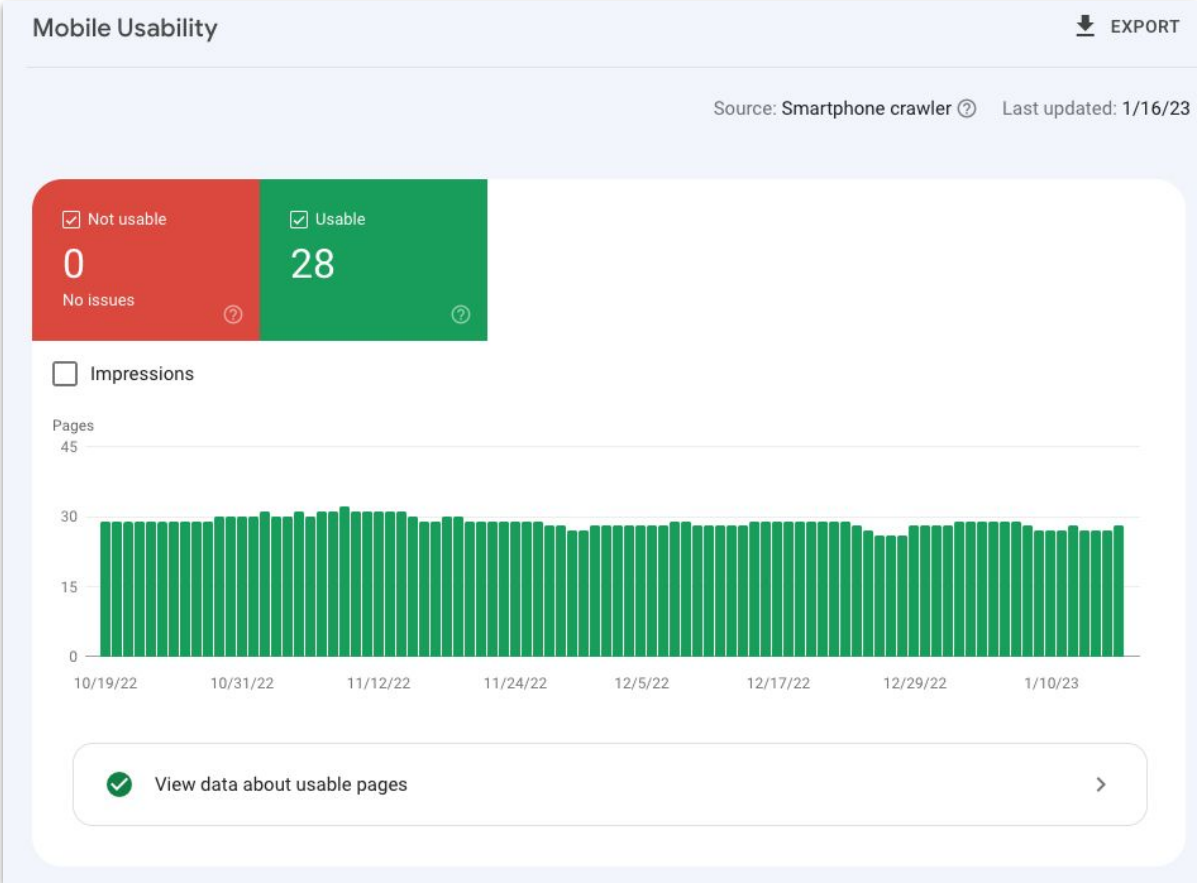


Search Console > Performance > Search Results

QUERIES	PAGES	COUNTRIES	DEVICES	SEARCH APPEARANCE	DATES
Top queries				↓ Clicks	Impressions
slack for churches				38	128
ryan panzer				21	50
coaching circles				8	444
coaching circle				5	284
facebook ads for churches				4	174
what is a coaching circle				4	53
hybrid ministry				4	24
what is a spiritual shut-in				2	59
the innovative church				2	58
digital ministry				1	823

Rows per page: 10 1-10 of 1000 < >

Search Console > Experience > Mobile Usability



SEO Theme	Recommended action
"Church search" is local	Active, verified, and updated Google Business listing
One tool for optimizing local search	Add photos and update hours
All other SEO is about content and quality	Claim listing on Google Search Console to view most searched/clicked content

Part 3:

Search engine marketing

“Search engine marketing, or SEM, is **one of the most effective ways to grow your business in an increasingly competitive marketplace...** search engine marketing is the most effective way to promote your products and grow your business.”

-[Wordstream](#)

Ad · <https://www.churchinmadison.org/> ⋮

The Church in Madison - Find A Local Church

Hear about God's purpose and God's plan

About Us

We Hold The Faith Which Is Common To All The Believers: The Bible Is

Contact Us

Contact Us For More Information.

Ad · <https://www.riveroflifeag.org/> ⋮ (320) 597-7777

River of Life At Home - Watch Our Church From Home

Looking For Things To Do From Home. Experience River of Life **Church Services from Home**
Become a Ministry Leader · Plan Your Visit · **Watch Online Live** · Watch Sermons On-Demand

Ad · <https://www.chapelvalley.org/> ⋮ (608) 515-8855

Chapel Valley Church - Church Madison

No matter where you are in life, there is a place for you at Chapel Valley! Find out how you...

Ad · <https://www.onereasonchurch.com/> ⋮

You Belong Here - One Reason Church - onereasonchurch.com

Welcome home! You will love our warm and welcoming, multi-cultural, thriving, new **church!**

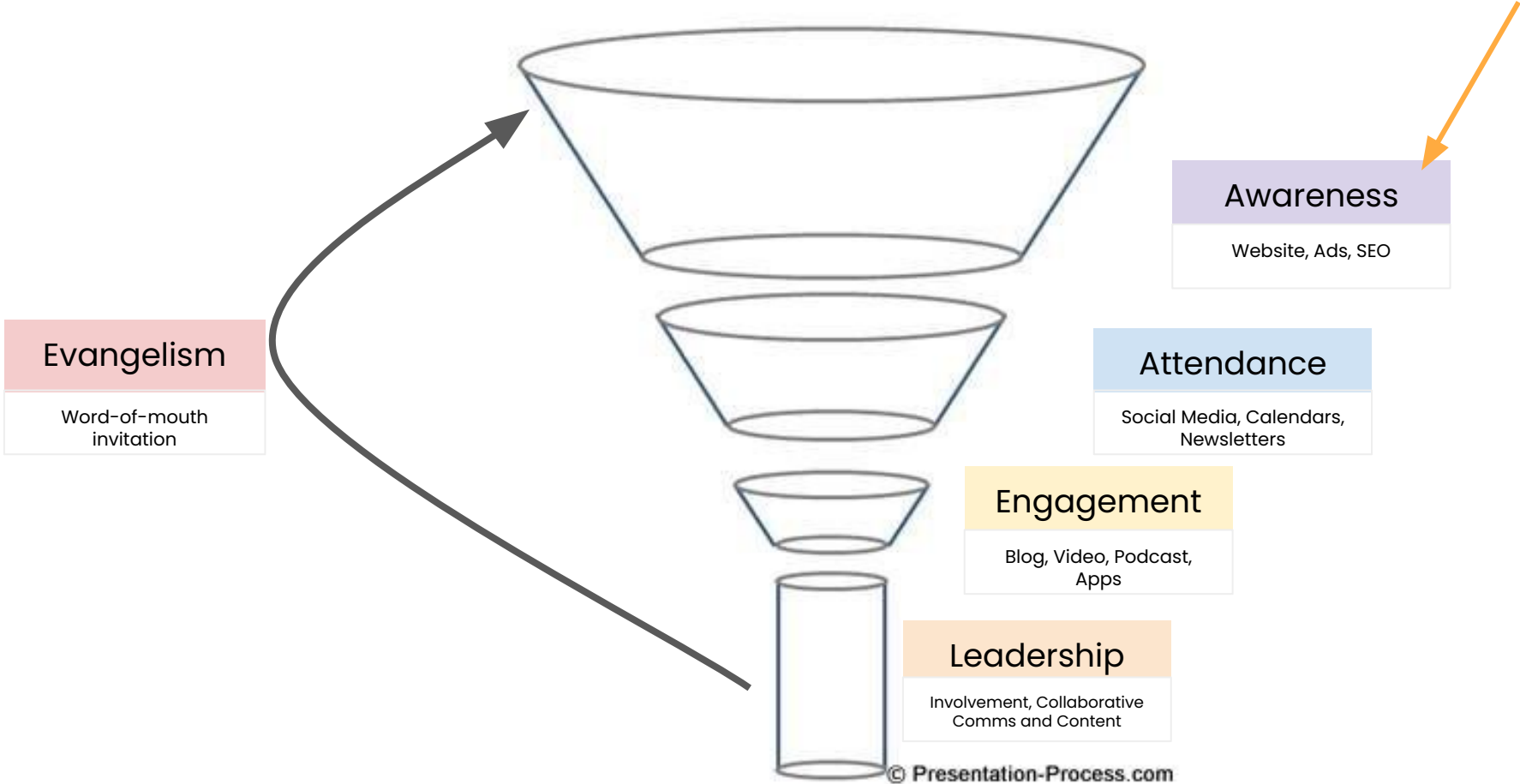
Search Engine Optimization	Search Engine Marketing
Difficult to measure, harder to optimize	More insights than you really need
Seemingly “free”	Priced on a per-click basis
Takes months to improve	Can have an immediate impact



Search marketing themes

- Google Grants is an overlooked tool for churches
- Search marketing is only useful with relevant, original digital content

Church Digital Marketing Funnel



Google Ads: Campaign set-up demo

The screenshot displays the Google Ads campaign setup interface. At the top, the 'Ads' section shows a 'Poor' ad strength, indicated by a circular progress bar and a warning icon. A message suggests adding more headlines for better performance. Below this, there are four options to improve the ad: 'Add headlines', 'Include popular keywords', 'Make headlines unique', and 'Make descriptions unique', each with a 'View ideas' link.

The 'Final URL' field is set to 'www.gslcwi.org' and includes a warning icon. A note states: 'This will be used to suggest headlines and descriptions'. The 'Display path' field shows 'www.gslcwi.org' with two empty boxes for additional path segments, each with a '0 / 15' character count.

The 'Preview' section shows a mobile device view of the ad. The ad text is: 'Ad · www.gslcwi.org/' followed by the headline 'ELCA Church in Madison | Join for Worship | Lenten Services' and two description lines: 'Description 1. Description 2.'.

On the right side, a summary panel shows a lightbulb icon, a '60.9%' metric with a progress bar, a line graph icon, and the following performance metrics: 'Ad gro...', 'Weekly clicks 424', 'Weekly cost \$178.50', and 'Avg. CPC \$0.42'.

At the bottom of the preview, a disclaimer states: 'This preview shows potential ads assembled using your assets. Not all combinations are shown. Assets can be shown in any order, so make sure that they make sense individually or in combination, and don't violate our policies or local law. Some shortening may also occur in some formats. You can make sure certain text appears in your ad. [Learn more](#)'

5 tips for church search advertising

Keep the grant-funded campaigns on all the time.

For paid ads, think **seasonal campaigns rather than always-on**.

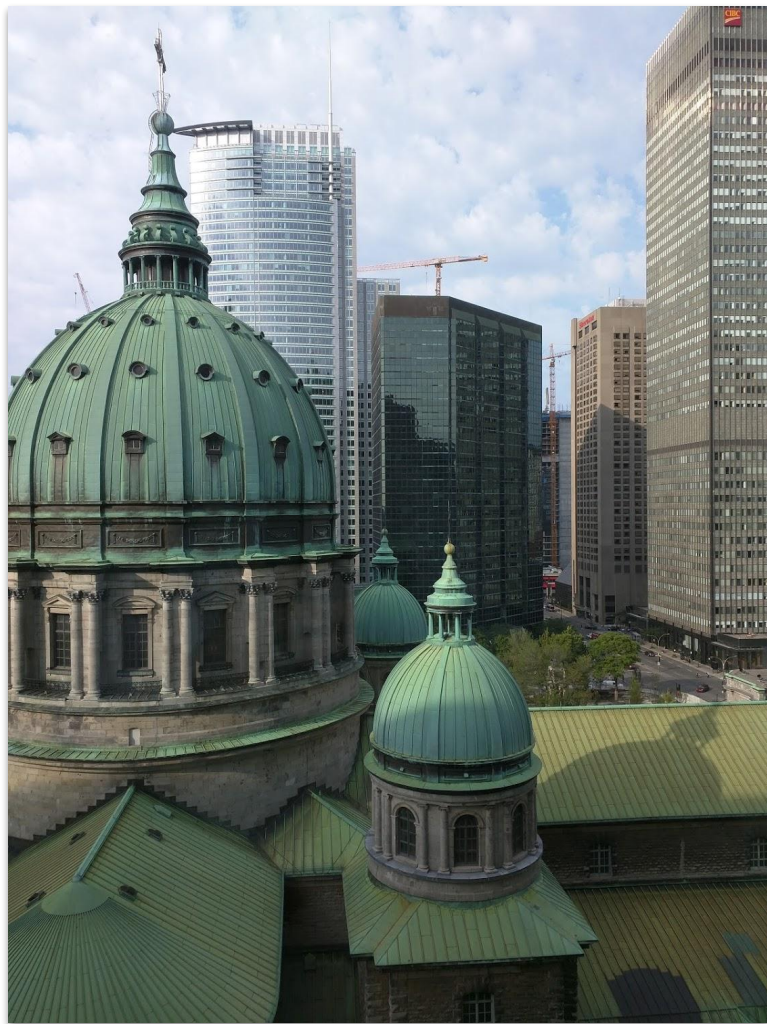
Use **specific keywords**. “Minneapolis ELCA Lutheran church” rather than “church.”

Write and test **new ad copy**

Build **seasonal landing pages** with content and contacts

SEM Theme	Recommended action
Google Grants is an overlooked tool	Enroll in Google for Nonprofits to received an ads grant of \$329/day**
Search marketing is only useful with relevant, original content	Develop a content strategy before investing in paid search

** = \$2 USD max bid



Breakout

Which of any SEO and SEM tactics are you already using?

Which will you try?

Tools

- [Google My Business](#)
- [Google Search Console](#)
- [Page Speed Insights](#)
- [Mobile Friendly Test](#)
- [Google for Nonprofits and Google Ad Grants](#)

For further reading

- [What every church leader should know about Google My Business](#)
- [The importance of content in digital ministry](#)
- [The church guide to content curation](#)
- [What every church leader should know about Google Ads](#)
- Vanco: [Complete Guide to Ad Grants](#) for Churches
- Online course: [Fundamentals of Search Advertising](#)
- Books by Seth Godin:
 - [This is Marketing](#)
 - [The Practice](#)
- Books by Ryan:
 - [Grace and Gigabytes](#): Being Church in a Tech-Shaped Culture
 - [The Holy and the Hybrid](#): Navigating the Church's Digital Reformation

Newsletter and hybrid ministry blog:

www.ryanpanzer.com

**Free chapters of Ryan's book on the Faith
Lead website:**

[The Holy and the Hybrid](#)

