

Pastor and business executive start company to help churches bridge digital divide by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [January 18, 2017](#) issue

Boise Kimber, pastor of First Calvary Baptist Church in New Haven, Connecticut, saw his congregation pay more than \$1,000 for a website, only to have the people they purchased it from disappear.

Now Kimber's church is the model for a company, Grace Church Websites, launched in partnership with Kimber's friend Don Vaccaro, a business executive who is also a Baptist.

"A lot of people could not afford to buy the domain and some of the churches are rural churches," Kimber said. "We are certainly dealing with the digital divide and trying to open the doors for more advancement for people who are in need."

Through Grace Church Websites, more than 670 churches and nonprofits, many of them predominantly black or Hispanic, have new sites. They include African Methodist Episcopal, United Methodist, and nondenominational congregations.

In a 2015 Faith Communities Today survey, about 80 percent of the 4,400 congregations contacted have websites, a 10 percent increase from 2010. Thirty-one percent offer online giving, which raises annual per capita giving in those congregations by \$114 per person.

Scott Thumma of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research said there is "still neither overly robust nor effective use by a majority of congregations" of the Internet and social media.

Vaccaro hopes that websites might help churches network with local businesses.

"I wanted to bring churches back a little bit in prominence because they really do deserve that in our society," he said. —Religion News Service