"Unite Your Church" is Here

"**Unite Your Church** app" is approved by Apple and Google for immediate use.

"Unite Your Church" app is a significant advance in the history of using technology for ministry. This app brings together (unites) members with both the church and each other, resulting in a stronger, more involved congregation.

By giving congregation members access to the church database, they are able to access and monitor information that is important to them. Staff is relieved of much data entry because members can update their own information.

Here's a quick look at some of the most popular features:

- Members can update their personal information
- Members can access contact information for the staff and other members and automatically place phone calls and send text messages or emails.
- Members can easily install their photos to the church directory and view the photos of other members.
- Members can locate other members' homes on a map and get driving directions from their current location.
- Members can view their giving history for the past year and make electronic contributions.
- Printed church directories and interim contribution statements are not needed because members can view this information on the app.

Unite is cloud-hosted on Tier III Data Centers, the most secure and guaranteed up-time possible. Planned with economy of use in mind, the cost is less than seventeen cents per month per active family. Ask families to contribute $2.00 per year for its use and the cost to the church is eliminated.

If your church is using RDS Connect, the RDS cloud-hosted system, you can begin using **Unite** today.

If you are not already using RDS Connect you can move to the cloud with a day's notice.

A free 30 day trial is available for your staff.

The Move to the Cloud

RDS began serving churches using the cloud more than five years ago. Already more than 30% of the churches served have moved to the cloud. The feed-back has been very positive.

The annual/monthly support fee for the cloud is more because RDS provides and updates your server on the cloud, does daily backups with the past 90 days of backups saved, provides emergency weekend support, installs all software updates, and manages the security for each user. Churches who have compared the costs of the cloud with maintaining their own server, hardware support, backups and staff time in maintaining their systems, believe the cloud may be less costly.

Benefits of the cloud include access from any location, no time spent in maintenance, backups and installing updates, no down time, and greater security. This means more time for ministry and the work of the church.

The RDS cloud is hosted on Tier III data centers. This is the ultimate in guaranteed up-time and security. All in-transit data between the user and the cloud is 256 bit SSL encrypted with 2,048 bit key encryption. This is as good as security can get.

The introduction of the RDS Unite app brings another benefit for cloud users. This new app for members and staff has the possibility of bringing members closer together with each other and with the church, and provides members new ways to interact with the ministry of the church. It can help strengthen "community" among members.

RDS offers the staff of cloud users a test opportunity to try Unite for a cost-free experience.

If your church is not already a cloud user, contact RDS for more information. There are reasons why this is the way the world of data processing is going.

On September 16, 2015 our network was compromised with a Crypto-virus. This is a Trojan hybrid virus that encrypts files and demands a ransom be paid to the malware author to provide a key to decrypt the files. This virus moved quickly, encrypting many files. Once the virus was isolated and removed, we found our old RDS files on our server were encrypted and unusable. Our files on the RDS Connect Servers were safe and secure. This decision proved to be God sent.

We praise God for the decision to move our RDS data files to RDS Connect.

Bill Jeter, First Baptist Church, Durant, OK

CHANGE IN FORM W-2 FILING DEADLINE

In the closing days of 2015, the United States Congress passed the PATH (Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act) Act. Among the many provisions in this act are changes in the deadline for filing 2016 (due in 2017) W-2 and W-3 forms.

Next tax season, Copy A of Form(s) W-2 and W-3 will be due to the Social Security Administration (postmarked) by January 31, 2017. *There is no extension of the date for electronic filing.* Make plans now to get W-2 forms to employees well before the January 31st deadline so they can review their information before you transmit it to the SSA.

In November, get a jump on possible corrections by providing each employee with a personalized copy of the RDS "Employee Brief Report" (PR301R) so they can verify their name, address and Social Security number and also a copy of the RDS "Combined Journal Report" (PR304) so they can verify their year-to-date wages.

Is Your Church Revenue As Much As Needed? Could You Use More?

GIVING IS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE...

Some churches struggle with budget problems. The cause can be expenditures are too high; contributions are too low; or both.

At the same time there are churches reaching their budget goals, but would like to expand their ministries and outreach if they had more income.

Here are some effective strategies to increase giving:

1. Communication features in the RDS system include free easy ways to send e-mail. **More frequent contribution statements** stimulate giving. If you've been sending contribution statements annually, move to quarterly. If sending quarterly, send monthly for a trial.
2. Send "**non-contributor, non-pledger" statements** (FR305R1) to those who are making no gifts to the church. These can be sent by e-mail, and look like other contributor statements but selectively go to those without contributions.
3. Give your members the convenience of **paying electronically** (credit/debit card and ACH) using Vanco Services. Less than 5% of all money spent in the U.S. is by check. This is not the way people are in the habit of making payments today. According to CNN Money, 43% of American adults go a week at a time without using cash at all. Instead, they depend on debit and credit cards. Churches report increased contributions when offering the convenience of credit/debit and ACH payments. An average credit card donation is generally 8 to 10% higher than that of a cash or check donation. Vanco credit/debit and ACH contributions are automatically integrated with your RDS accounting system.

    A unique feature with Vanco Services is the option to offset the card fees from a transaction. This set up would charge the donor the card fees as part of their donation. With this option, a $100 dollar donation would charge the donor $104.50 (approximately) so that a full $100 donation goes to the church. Many times people are willing to pay these fees for the convenience of online card giving.

4. Give members the use of the **RDS Unite app.** The applications included in the app include electronic giving and other features that strengthen membership ties with the church and with each other. Members can see their history of giving and make new gifts and pledges (recurring giving). The Barna Group says that 78% of Millennials choose "Community" as their most important vision for the church. **Unite** (your church) strengthens community.
5. Base appeals for contributing and tithing on the basis of the person's need to give, and not on the needs of the church. Emphasis on **proportionate giving** can be more effective than talking about the church budget. At the same time be open to show members how the church receives and spends its revenues.
6. Use discipline to **live within a budget**. A "working budget" established for each fiscal year should function as a discipline for all departments and individuals. When budgets are ignored, deficits usually follow. RDS includes budget creation and analysis applications that are simple and straight forward.

RDS has built into its accounting system comprehensive revenue tracking, reporting, and gift response applications designed to help build revenue.

Contact your RDS support team if you would like help.

Making it Easy

Take a look at this new option has been added to the Utility menu at the top left corner of the RDS Dashboard.

Click on "Tutorial" to see a list of forty detailed tutorials for RDS.

Click on the tutorial you choose to read or print.

This is a fast way to find any information you want about an application.

If you open an application and click on Tutorial in the Utility menu, it will display the tutorial for the application that is open.
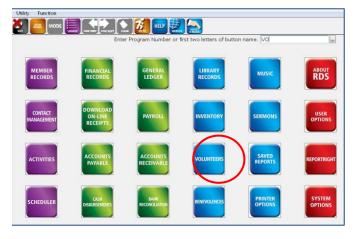

Volunteer Tracking

Coming Soon - a new program to support volunteer functions.

Click on the "Volunteer" button on the system dashboard to access the volunteer applications.

- Determine qualifications for each type of volunteer activity.
- List qualifications of volunteers.
- Match activities to members by qualifications.
- Establish volunteer groups
- Create activities and set dates for volunteer activities.
- Run reports and use communication capabilities.

These applications help automate the process of recruiting, communicating and matching members with their qualifications for volunteer activities.

A tutorial for this application can be downloaded from the RDS website or by clicking Utility.

RDS Training Classes

More than 300 new features and enhancements are added to RDS Advantage each year. You will find capabilities you didn't know you had, and learn neat shortcuts and time-savers.

You can enroll for just the classes that cover your work area:

Monday.........Member Records and Contact Management
Tuesday.........Activity Records and Insta Check-In
Wednesday...Contributions and Bank Reconciliation
Thursday.......General Ledger and Accounts Payable
Friday............Payroll and Accounts Receivable

Enroll in classes for these dates:

May 16-20	Jun 6-10	Jul 18-22
Aug 15-19	Sep 12-16	Oct 17-21
Nov 14-18	Dec 12-16	

Contact Gail Miller at (800) 337-6328 or (405) 840-5177 to enroll.