

SUMMARY

Website Design for the Laatre St. Lawrence Congregation of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

This thesis focuses on the design and prototyping of a user-friendly and accessible website for the Laatre St. Lawrence congregation (Laatre Püha Laurentsiuse kogudus), a small Lutheran parish in southern Estonia. The objective of the project was to create the congregation's first official website prototype by following user-centered design principles and accessibility standards, with a particular focus on the needs of the elderly. The project combines practical design work with theoretical insights from usability, accessibility, and digital service design.

The research began with defining the congregation's needs and the target audience through the creation of three user personas representing older adults, middle-aged users, and young adults. These personas helped guide design decisions and ensured that the final solution would meet the needs of a diverse group of users. I conducted a user experience survey and analysed more than 30 existing church websites from Estonia, the Nordic countries, and the United States. This revealed common structural elements and best practices in church website design, such as clarity of navigation, legible typography, and the inclusion of information like service times, contact details, and community news.

After gathering user needs and mapping the site's navigation architecture using tools such as Miro, I created low-fidelity wireframes to explore structural solutions. The layout was organized around a homepage offering quick access to the most important sections and a clearly structured menu system covering key topics like worship services, recent news, and contact information. Additional sections addressed topics like accessibility, instructions to request a prayer, and donation information.

The design emphasized compliance with WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines), especially regarding contrast, font sizes, button clarity, and keyboard navigation. Special care was taken to ensure that older adults—who may struggle with vision or motor control—would be able to comfortably navigate the site. These considerations were supported by insights from articles and research.

The final product was a set of high-fidelity interactive prototypes developed in Figma. These detailed mockups mirrored the intended visual and functional state of the final website, including typography, color palette, imagery, and button interactions. The content was developed in close collaboration with the congregation, based on texts they provided. Where necessary, I edited or reformulated these texts to improve clarity and user experience—for instance, by shortening sentences or transforming information into buttons or interactive elements. I also added original content, such as a social media prompt and an accessibility information block, both of which emerged from user research and comparative analysis of other church websites. Although the congregation had not initially requested these additions, they were deemed valuable for the site's usability and inclusiveness.

Before the final handover, usability testing was conducted using a small group of informal testers. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to test the site with a full representative sample of the target audience. However, the selected participants—who belonged to the broader target group—were able to complete task-based testing scenarios and provide valuable feedback on the prototype's functionality and clarity. While the results cannot be generalized, they helped validate key design decisions and highlighted areas that could be improved in future iterations.

At the time of writing, the website was not yet fully complete. The historical section, for instance, remained unfinished, as the congregation was still compiling the necessary content. We agreed that I would finalize this section once the information is ready, maintaining the same visual style and structure to preserve the site's consistency. Since the congregation is only beginning to adopt a digital presence, the website's current version serves as the first step toward building a long-term digital and visual identity. It is expected that the design may evolve in the future based on user feedback and extended usage.