Suggested External Resources

This document is for signposting resources that already exist and can be made use of by Methodist Churches. Some will be more suited to certain churches, projects and uses than others. It's not a comprehensive list of all online resources, as there are many others, but this list summarises the most common and useful. The majority are free of charge, but some are paid resources, or organisations which charge for their services. All descriptions are taken from the organisations / websites themselves.

Graphic Design Platforms

Canva (www.canva.com) - Canva is a free online simplified graphic-design tool, founded in 2012. It uses a drag-and-drop format and provides access to photographs, vector images, graphics, and fonts. It is used by non-designers as well as professionals. The tools can be used for both web and print media design and graphics.

Church Comms Create, by CPO (www.churchcommscreate.com) - Church Comms Create is a paid desktop design platform for church communicators and Christian creatives in the UK provided by CPO (Christian Publishing and Outreach - www.cpo.org.uk). Optimised for desktop computers, Church Comms Create allows you to instantly resize any design, integrates thousands of free fonts and makes it easy even for those less confident with design, saving you time and money.

Photos, Images and Graphics

Unsplash (https://unsplash.com) – Unsplash provides over 1 million free high-resolution images brought to you by the world's most generous community of photographers. All photos published on Unsplash can be used for free. You can use them for commercial and non-commercial purposes. You do not need to ask permission from or provide credit to the photographer or Unsplash.

Pexels (www.pexels.com) - The best free stock photos & videos shared by talented creators. Pexels is very similar to Unsplash, and by providing free stock photos Pexels helps millions of creators all over the world to easily create beautiful products and designs. All photos on Pexels are free to use and attribution is not required.

Flaticon (www.flaticon.com) – Flaticon is a Freepik company (www.freepikcompany.com) and is the largest database of free customizable icons. Flaticon has more than a million icons in all formats, for all kind of projects: presentations, apps, websites, catalogues, infographics etc. They are free to download and can be used for multiple purposes (with a few restrictions).

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Photo editing

PIXLR (https://pixlr.com) – a free online editing service (with a paid option available). Take photo editing to the next level with AI-powered tools. Experience speedier and easier edits for maximized creativity. Designed to be easy, you can now edit images smarter and faster for Free - with Pixlr. No steep learning curve, no design experience needed.

More options are available under Mobile Apps

Video Production and Downloads

Go Chatter Videos (https://gochattervideos.com) - Go Chatter helps those in Christian ministry discover helpful videos that can get people talking about Jesus. The Go Chatter site brings videos together from over 20 different Christian content creators who have kindly given permission to make their videos available for churches to download for free.

Go Chatter Customisable Videos (https://gochattercustomvideos.com) - the Go Chatter team have created an online tool to that enables you to create your own customised videos in just a few minutes for only a small price per video. The tool is easy to use and doesn't require any video editing experience. Simply choose a template video, add your text, logo, photos etc and then the online tool will compile your finished video. For the price of a coffee you can download the video for showing in your church or posting on social media.

More options are available under Mobile Apps

Background Music

Hooksounds (www.hooksounds.com) - Highly curated collection of exclusive royalty free music, produced by hand-picked artists. The music on HookSounds is copyright free and you can download and use it for various purposes with a mention / attribution.

Bensound (www.bensound.com) - You can use Bensound's music available under the Creative Commons License in your multimedia project (online videos, websites, animations, etc.) for free as long as you credit Bensound.com. The site is created by a Composer & Musician who has been creating music for more than 10 years.

Digital Guidance, Tutorials and Training

The Methodist Church (www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/technology-and-church) – Digital Communication guidance for churches. Information on websites and social media and how to effectively use them for mission and evangelism.

Church of England Digital Labs (www.churchofengland.org/labs-learning) - a hub of resources, news and events to support digital evangelism and digital discipleship in the Church of England. Digital Labs now consists of a number of areas: 1.Labs Learning blog: Weekly blogs on helpful topics for churches around maintaining a good digital and online

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presence. 2.Labs Learning roadshow: Large events held across the country, where we bring our training to you. 3.Labs Latest newsletter: Monthly email newsletters filled with digital hints, tips & good practice. 4.Digital Labs Live: An event for Christian creatives

Seventh-day Adventist Church digital resources (www.sdadata.org/resource-menu.html) - resources to empower and equip ministries to accomplish our shared goal of serving the community and advancing the gospel message. Resources include: Branding, Images & Design Resources, Church/Ministry Specific Resources, Copyright & Trademark Resources, Digital Discipleship & Evangelism, Email Resources, Guidance for Hiring a Social Media Position, Social Media Guidelines, Podcasts, Reports & Case Studies, (SEO) Search Engine Optimization, Video Resources, Videos & Tutorials, Website Tips.

United Methodist Church (www.umcom.org/topics/learn) – digital resources from the United Methodist Church.

Pro Church Tools (https://prochurchtools.com/free-tools) – free tools for churches provided by Brady Shearer from the USA. Whatever your learning style, you'll find video, audio, and written training to help your church seize the 167 (your week has 168 hours. If your Sunday Service is just 1hr, how is your church reaching people in the other 167?). Pro Church Tools provides guidance on all aspects of digital communication, websites and social media.

Church Train (www.churchtrain.uk) - Church Communication Training (paid). Equipping UK churches and volunteers to communicate effectively with free blog posts on digital guidance and as a business providing paid graphic design, websites and branding for churches.

Social Media Resources

Hootsuite (https://hootsuite.com/en-gb) – Hootsuite is a social media management platform and allows you to integrate and schedule social media for your church across different platforms. There is a free version and paid version with additional features, which can be offered at a discount for churches and charities.

Planoly (www.planoly.com) – free Instagram scheduling tool (paid options available). Planoly was thoughtfully created from a designer's and editor's point of view. Beautifully crafted to be simple, clean and easy to use. It's the first visual planner for Instagram. Clear and to the point web and mobile app — Planoly is the most effective visual social media planner on the market (oh, and you can schedule too)!

Buffer (https://buffer.com) – Social media management platform with free and paid options available. Plan and publish your content for Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn, all from one simple dashboard. Craft the perfect post for each social network, all in one place.

Later (https://later.com) – free marketing and scheduling platform for Instagram, but also you can visually plan, schedule and analyse posts for Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter. Plan a Week of Instagram Posts in 20 Minutes. Spend less time posting to Instagram and more time growing your business.

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Tweet Deck (https://tweetdeck.twitter.com) - TweetDeck is a social media dashboard application for management of Twitter accounts. The most powerful Twitter tool for real-time tracking, organizing, and engagement. Reach your audiences and discover the best of Twitter.

CPO, Christian Publishing & Outreach (www.cpo.org.uk/Digital) – Digital downloads provided by CPO for sharing on social media, most free and some at a small cost. Facebook banners, Social Media images and videos. Themes for Christmas, Easter and general use.

Website Design Companies

Chrestos (www.chrestos.co.uk) - 'Chrestos' is a suite of easy-to-use online computer tools designed for Methodist circuits. It is produced by ThenMedia (www.thenmedia.co.uk), a Cheshire-based web-design company. Chrestos provides cloud-based storage of contacts, documents and dates online plan-making, a content management system for Chrestos-built websites, and a tool for managing social networking. Pricing available on website.

Church Edit (https://churchedit.co.uk) - Church Edit is perfect for churches of all sizes looking to start their own website as it requires absolutely no technical knowledge. It is so easy that with Church Edit you can have a website up and running very quickly. No software needed and technical support is provided. Pricing is available on their website.

Church123 (www.church123.com) – A complete online system designed to help churches run effective websites. The powerful editor makes it simple to communicate your message. The system is open to all Christian churches and organisations.

Church Pages (www.churchpages.co.uk) - The Church Pages Initiative seeks to equip churches to reach the next generation by providing mobile-friendly websites & contribution-based hosting. It's their desire that cost isn't a barrier to having accessible websites.

Fonts

Font Squirrel (www.fontsquirrel.com) – a range of fonts that are 100% free for commercial use.

Font Space (www.fontspace.com) - Founded in 2006, FontSpace is a designer-centered free font website that has quick customizable previews and hassle-free downloads.

Church Management Systems

iKnow (paid) (www.iknowchurch.co.uk) - All of the tools to equip your church, giving you more time for mission. From managing your contact list, to events, rotas and finance. There are many different administration tasks that need to happen to make the wheels of a church keep turning. You can find the tools to help within iKnow. We've developed tools such as journey tracking, relationships, groups and networks to help you do this. Use iKnow to ensure no church visitor or member goes unnoticed. Sometimes church communication

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can be messy. Centralise all your church communication to be sure no one will end up with their wires crossed. Use communication suite for Text Messages, Emails & Mail Merge.

ChurchSuite (paid) (https://churchsuite.com) - ChurchSuite is a cloud hosted, web-based church management system, ideal church database software for churches. It is for Churches of all sizes and denominations will benefit from the ChurchSuite church management system. ChurchSuite allows unlimited users to manage unlimited amounts of data, from anywhere. Putting you back in control.

GoogleDrive (free) (www.google.com/drive) - Google Drive is a free file storage and synchronization service developed by Google. Launched on April 24, 2012, Google Drive allows users to store files on their servers, synchronize files across devices, and share files. Limit of 15GB storage.

DropBox (free and paid options) (www.dropbox.com) - Dropbox is a file hosting service operated by the American company Dropbox, Inc., headquartered in San Francisco, California, that offers cloud storage, file synchronization, personal cloud, and client software. Limit of 2GB storage on a free account.

Office365 (paid) (www.office.com) - Office 365 is a line of subscription services offered by Microsoft as part of the Microsoft Office product line. Store and share files with 1 TB of OneDrive cloud storage (or more depending on the subscription service you sign up to).

Mobile Apps

Canva – see description under Graphic Design Platforms.

Snapseed - A free photo editing app to enhance your photos. This app is for those who want to quickly edit photos but want them to look professional. You can apply pre-set filters for quick edits or create your own style with the app's more advanced features.

PIXLR – see description under Photo Editing

Unfold - Turn your photos or videos into collages ready for your Instagram and Facebook story feed. Unfold is quick and easy to use with multiple templates ready to go. You can save your templates to use again, add text and customise backgrounds.

Over - Over is another tool for editing photos, creating posters, videos and much more. Choose from multiple templates and custom fonts to create content for your social media profiles. The user-friendly design makes this app easy to use, but you'll need to ignore the invitations to upgrade to a paid account!

InShot - This free app is great for editing and resizing videos on the go. Trim videos, merge clips, resize, or add music, filters and text. It is simple to use and ideal for any church looking to increase the number of videos they are posting on social media.

Facebook Pages Manager - Manage your church's Facebook page and Instagram account all from one app. Pages Manager helps admins monitor activity, keep up to date with notifications and reply to comments and messages all within one app for both Facebook and Instagram.

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Planoly – see description under Social Media Resources

Apphi – Apphi helps you schedule everything, and automatically post them on your Instagram. New - Apphi now supports Facebook! Schedule and Auto Post Photos, Videos, Story on Instagram. Plan all your Post and Story ahead. Organize and import your media from anywhere, any devices.

Repost (for Instagram) - Repost makes it easy to share photos and videos while giving credit to the original Instagrammer. You could use it for posts from other local churches or share a photo or video from The Methodist Church Instagram account.

Books and Publications

So Everyone Can Hear: Communicating Church In A Digital Culture by Mark Crosby (2019) – Communication lies at the heart of every healthy community; the church is no exception. In Matthew 11:15, Jesus says, 'Whoever has ears, let them hear'. How do we make sure we are saying things in a way that invites all people - no matter their background - to engage with what it means to be church today? This colourful, engaging and practical book will help leaders and members alike be more mindful of how they 'communicate church' both inside and outside of it within our dynamic and ever-changing digital culture.

The Social Church, a theology of digital communication by Justin Wise (2014) – We've been living in a digital world for quite a while now. Justin Wise speaks about social media as this generation's printing press--a revolutionary technology that can spread the gospel farther and faster than we can imagine. It's time to take what we know (and admit what we don't know) and learn together how to move forward as the church. Are you ready to think theologically about this digital age and reach people in a new way?

Church Online: websites by Laura Treneer from CPO (2017) – part of the CPO series "Reach Out: Church Communications". Combining missional vision with practical advice, this resource gives you the tools you need to transform a church website or create one for the first time. Ideal for church teams who want to reach their communities effectively.

Church Online: social media by Laura Treneer from CPO (2017) – part of the CPO series "Reach Out: Church Communications". Combining missional vision with practical advice, this resource gives you the tools and checklists to consider your approach to social media as a church. Ideal for church teams who want to reach their communities effectively.

Online Mission and Ministry: A Theological and Practical Guide by Pam Smith (2015) – Many clergy and churches are now taking to the internet and social media to promote their churches or ministries, but few have thought through some of the difficult pastoral and theological issues that may arise. 'Virtual vicar' Revd Pam Smith guides both new and experienced practitioners through setting up online ministries and considers some of the issues that may arise.

Youth Ministry in a Digital Age: Understanding and Reaching a Generation of Digital Natives by Liz Dumain (2017) – The digital revolution that has transformed how young people communicate, interact and live every aspect of their lives. This vital booklet argues that if ignored, the impact of digitalization—where connection to social media and digital

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networks is as intrinsic as the act of breathing—is a divided church with generations drifting further apart. But opportunities abound for youth workers to be digital prophets to a generation of digital natives who have disengaged from traditional church.

Sharing Faith Using Social Media by Bryony Taylor (2016) - How can my church utilize social media for outreach and evangelism? Are my online friends real or virtual? And does Jesus really have his own Facebook page? This compelling booklet draws on primary research to explore these and many other questions. It sets out a series of implications for mission in the inter-connected, tech-savvy world that the church is called to bear witness to today.

Using Social Media for Evangelism by Laura Treneer from CPO. This A5 booklet will help you think through how you use social media both individually and as a church. It will give you tools to make the most of social media to share your faith in a way that doesn't feel too awkward, and help you consider your boundaries and opportunities on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Digital Millennials and the Bible report by CODEC in partnership with Barna and Bible Society (2018) - Discover how the Bible is perceived by 'digital millennials'. Available online.

Other

Bit.ly (https://bitly.com) - Shorten, create and share trusted, powerful links for your business. Bitly helps businesses shine by shortening URL links. With Bitly, you can easily track your customers' journeys on every link and channel from a single, sleek dashboard. Free and paid accounts are available.

Digital Church Toolkit (www.digitalchurchtoolkit.com) – An organisation helping you preach the Gospel, build His Church & expand the Kingdom in the Digital Age. They equip the church with tools and wisdom to spread the gospel and reach communities in the digital age. They provide training, paid services, and bespoke packages in the UK.

Missional Generation (www.missionalgen.co.uk) - Missional Generation is about equipping young people to be influential for God in every arena of life. Their work is to help the Church strengthen its voice and be at the cutting edge in society. Their Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality resources are a powerful means to inform, expose and help young people explore faith, mission and evangelism. There is an exciting technological growth within the secular world, and they want to resource the church.

Church Comms Collective UK (www.facebook.com/groups/churchcommscollectiveuk) – a Facebook group specifically for those who help provide communications for churches, Christian charities, or Christian content creation in the UK. This includes leaders, administrators, designers, videographers & social media managers (if you contribute to a church social media page that means you)! There are many church communication groups on Facebook full of great content, however, there are specific cultural factors unique to UK that are sometimes missed, and this group is designed so we can help one another in that void. This is a place to share good practice, ideas, ask questions, inspire others and gain from shared knowledge.

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Church Communications Improvement Project by CPO (www.churchcomms.uk) - The Church has a world-changing message of hope to communicate, but sometimes needs help with design, with digital, with all that is needed in communication. The Church Communications Project is a comms improvement fund for churches who lack the financial resources to improve their communications. Grants are between £50 and £1000 in the form of communication tools provided by CPO or its partners.

Christian Creative Network (https://christiancreativenetwork.com) - The Christian Creative Network UK was launched in May 2017 to get Christian creatives together to connect, share ideas, grow and encourage one another. The vision of the Christian Creative Network is to "Champion creativity in the body of Christ" and it does this through providing a free network for Christian creatives, made up of branches up and down the UK.

Premier Digital Conference (www.premierdigital.info/conference) - discover a world of advice, ideas, insight and guidance to help you communicate credibly and effectively online. Through 32 sessions delivered by over 40 contributors you are sure to find the help you need for your digital endeavours. New ideas that you can use in your church, charity or project. Understand how digital tools can work for you in your context. Learn new skills that will help you grow your project or ministry. Explore how digital is impacting our theology and humanity. Meet new people, build relationships and learn from one another. Pro or beginner come along as a church, team or on your own for an inspiring day that provides content & value for money you can't find elsewhere. Ticket pricing available on website.

Centre for Digital Theology formerly CODEC (www.dur.ac.uk/digitaltheology) - a research centre at Durham University – their staff write both academic papers and publications as well as writing for a more general audience. They supervise postgraduate students researching at Durham and elsewhere, and have a world first MA in Digital Theology. Their MediaLit course offers a great opportunity for those seeking an introduction to theological reflections and practical training on digital culture.

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