Suggested Tools & Resources

to help with church publicity & communication

Part of the "Flourishing Now" resource pack, and updated January 2023.

This document is for signposting external 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 but summarises the most common and useful.

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.

Adobe Creative Cloud (www.adobe.com/uk/creativecloud.html) This is a more advanced, paid option that includes programmes like InDesign, Illustrator, and Photoshop.

Photos, Videos 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.

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.

Ministry Designs (https://ministrydesigns.media/) Free church graphics and media if you signup. Includes social graphics, countdown timers, motion backgrounds, and templates.

Go Chatter Videos (https://gochattervideos.com) - 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) - an online tool 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.

Free 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

Free Video Editing Software (beginner to mid-range)

Windows Video editor, in the Photos app (www.howtogeek.com/355524/how-to-use-windows-10s-hidden-video-editor/) Very limited in functionality, but easy to use and comes as standard already installed on Windows computers.

OpenShot (www.openshot.org) A basic and simple free video editor. A step up from the Windows Video Editor, but still has limited functionality. However, it may be perfect for beginners looking to combine some clips in a simple video.

iMovie (for Mac users) (www.apple.com/uk/imovie/) A versatile editor that would be suitable for most church uses and comes installed as standard on Apple Mac computers.

VSDC video editor (www.videosoftdev.com/) A mid-range, more powerful video editor that's still free and user-friendly.

ShotCut (https://shotcut.org/) A mid-range, more powerful video editor that's still free and user-friendly.

Digital Guidance, Tutorials and Training

Church of England Digital Labs (www.churchofengland.org/labs-learning) - a hub of resources, news and events to support churches. Particularly, a blog containing: How-to guides, first hand stories, and digital news covering digital communications, strategy, social media and technology. Industry standard advice made relevant to you and your church.

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.

Digital Church Toolkit (www.digitalchurchtoolkit.com) – Online (paid) training for church leaders, staff members and volunteers to equip you to use digital tools and platforms to preach the Gospel, build His Church and expand the Kingdom with relevant methods to 2023 and beyond. Some free resources are available.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Meta Business Suite - Manage your church's Facebook page and Instagram account all from one app. The app 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.

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.

Other

Bit.ly (https://bitly.com) - 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 available.

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)! This is a place to share good practice, ideas, ask questions, inspire others and gain from shared knowledge.

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.