

Suggested Tools & Resources

to help with online ministry, systems & processes

Part of the “Flourishing for the Future” 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.

Free Video Editing Software (mid-range to advanced)

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.

HitFilm (<https://fxhome.com/product/hitfilm>) Powerful VFX & video editing software – free and paid versions available. For more advanced users – requires a high spec laptop or desktop to run well.

DaVinci Resolve (www.blackmagicdesign.com/uk/products/davinciresolve/) Powerful VFX & video editing software – free and paid versions available. For more advanced users – requires a high spec laptop or desktop to run well.

Background Music

YouTube Audio Library (www.youtube.com/audiolibrary) - As the name suggests, the YouTube Audio Library is a collection of audio tracks such as music and sound effects that you can use in your videos. These sounds are available to use under a free license, which means that you can use them without having to worry about copyright.

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

United Reformed Church Digital Guides (<https://urc.org.uk/your-church/church-guides/getting-your-church-online/>) - From setting up and using social media accounts to streaming your services, here you'll find guidance and advice for getting your church online. Includes guidance on online and contactless giving; Podcasts; WhatsApp; and tips for improving online worship.

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 & your church.

Pro Church Tools (<https://prochurchtools.com/free-tools>) - free tools for churches provided by Brady Shearer in 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.

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.

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.

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. Use iKnow to ensure no church visitor or member goes unnoticed. 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.

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.

Office365 (paid) (www.office.com) - Office 365 is a line of subscription services offered by Microsoft as part of the Microsoft Office product line. OneDrive, Outlook, SharePoint, Teams, amongst many others. Eligible UK charities can get access to the discounted version of Office 365's Business Premium or Nonprofit subscriptions by signing up to the Charity Digital Exchange platform for free. This gives access to all the main Office apps, along with 1TB of storage in OneDrive and Sharepoint.

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.

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

MetaChurch: How to use digital ministry to reach people and make disciples by Dave Adamson (2022) – Digital ministry is complicated and exhausting. You know there's more to it than just streaming services and posting on social media. But where do you start? Dave Adamson draws on his experience to give church leaders a detailed, practical guide to help them develop a church strategy in which online and on-site ministries work together seamlessly. Learn how a digital ministry can complement physical ministries and help them grow, and discover how to reach & connect with people beyond the church building.

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. Social media is this generation's printing press—a revolutionary technology that can spread the gospel farther and faster than we can imagine. It's time to 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?

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.

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.

Online & Contactless Giving Platforms

Here are some good options for online giving platforms that come recommended by others: (in no particular order). Prices, fees, and commission on transactions may vary.

Stripe (<https://stripe.com/en-gb>)

PayPal (www.paypal.com/uk/home)

Give.net by Stewardship (www.give.net)

NowDonate for UK Charities (www.nowdonate.com)

ChurchSuite management system that includes online giving (<https://churchsuite.com/>)

Dona – contactless and online donations (<https://donadonations.com/>)

Some options of chip-and-pin card readers for church collections (in no particular order). Again, prices, fees, and commission on transactions vary.

Sumup (www.sumup.co.uk/)

Goodbox (www.goodbox.com/)

Square Reader (<https://squareup.com/gb/en>)

iZettle Reader (www.izettle.com/gb/card-readers)

Other

Christian Creative Network (<https://christiancreativenetwork.com>) - Launched in 2017 to get Christian creatives together to connect, share ideas, grow and encourage one another. The vision 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 (www.premierdigital.info) - discover a world of advice, ideas, insight and guidance to help you communicate credibly and effectively online. Currently only a blog and weekly email newsletter. New home of the **Centre for Digital Theology** (<https://digital-theology.org/>) which offers an MA in Digital Theology.