



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Yorkshire Synod

So, you want to start a website?

Here's how...

Contents

Why have a website?	2
How?	3
Top Tips	4
Getting in touch.....	5

Why have a website?

Websites are the staple of any church wanting to disseminate information to a much wider audience than those whom it sends letters and emails to. Websites are accessible to anyone and everyone and are a great way of signposting people to your church, and giving them all of the information they may need.

That being said, websites can be a lot of work, either to set up or to maintain. But it can also be very little work, it depends what kind of option you choose, and various companies can offer different levels of management of your website.

Having an up-to-date website is important. If it's out of date, that's what your church will look like to the general public! But many people are under the impression that every website should be updated weekly. It can be, if you want, but it's equally possible for it not to be! It depends on how much time someone can commit to it. Websites are equally useful with 'static' information that doesn't change, they don't **have** to be big and flashy!

The aim of this booklet is not to teach you how to make a website, it's impossible to put that in one booklet due to how many different options there are out there. This booklet will recommend a few, but the list is by no means exhaustive.

The main thing this booklet will do is give you a starting point, from which to discuss with your church, elders, minister etc. a way forward. Contact Dan at the Synod (details at the end of this booklet), who works on behalf of the Synod,

in supporting churches with tasks like websites. He can help kickstart these discussions, or take them forward.

How?

First of all, you need to establish, preferably one, person who is going to have overall responsibility for the website. This doesn't mean they have to do absolutely EVERYTHING. But it's good to have one accountable person through which everything can pass. They are a first point of contact if there are any issues with the website.

Level of Involvement

Next, you need to look at how much involvement this person (or team) want in the website. Do you want to manage the whole thing yourselves? Do you want to pay a company to manage it for you? Or somewhere in between? There are, of course, cost implications depending on which option you choose.

Getting started

The United Reformed Church has its own website service called iChurch. iChurch can provide a variety of services which vary from setting up a basic website, through to complete design, management and upkeep. Prices are very transparent, no hidden costs.

All of the information on iChurch can be found here: www.interactivechurch.org.uk, including contact details for Natasha Springer, who is the iChurch coordinator for the URC.

Keep your web address short. It needs to be able to fit on your noticeboard for starters! But it needs to be memorable too and say what it needs to say. "unitedreformedchurch" is a mouthful, so we'd suggest using "urc" instead e.g. www.anytownurc.org.uk.

Here's a sample website to give you an indication of just some of what iChurch can offer you: www.tutorial1urc.org.uk/.

We're not saying you **have** to use iChurch. There are plenty of other options out there. And we **do** encourage you to shop around to find something that

suits you. Some may well be cheaper. But iChurch will understand your church's needs the best, as it's run by the URC, for the URC.

Top Tips

iChurch has lots of **free** resources available on its website, we encourage you to have a look at them. They will be very helpful to help you start thinking about some aspects of your website before you get started. Here's some of our tips:

- Keep your menu simple. We'd suggest no more than about 5-8 headings.
- You can have as many sub-menus as you want, but keep the main menu simple, as this looks less overwhelming. And it's easier to know where you need to go to find information.
- Make the homepage welcoming. This is the first 'picture' of the church some people will see, before the front door, make it a good one!
- Mix up use of images and text, nobody wants to read an essay on your website!
- Managing a website is not complex, but it can be time-consuming. If you're looking at doing the minimum amount of work, you should make your website cope with that, i.e. Don't put any information on there that's going to go out of date quickly. You could use your website as a 'static' information source. Signposting people to how to get in touch, or to point them towards social media, this should be the primary outlet of information.
- If you have time, have a look at how the website looks on phones and tablets (your host will have an option for this). Often it will just shrink the website to fit, which is difficult to navigate. You can adjust it accordingly so it's not too unwieldy.
- Recommended URC websites to visit for inspiration:
 - www.wokingurc.org.uk/
 - www.wilmslowurc.org.uk/
 - www.downingplaceurc.org/
 - www.churspacious.com/
- Have a chat with churches in your area to see what they're up to!

As we said at the beginning. This booklet is designed to get you thinking about a website and hopefully setting one up. If you need any help with this, do get in touch.

Getting in touch

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