

## **Church Websites- some guidelines to get you started**

### **What's the point?**

First it's worth thinking about who and what your website is for. Is the aim to show people what your church has to offer? To attract room booking hirers? To provide information to existing church members? To parents wanting their child baptised, or couples looking to get married?

Then think about what the people you are aiming at would want to know about the church. For example: what is worship like, and when is it? Are there children in the congregation? How do we get there, and where can we park? Are there baby changing facilities? A hearing loop?

### **How will people find your church website?**

If you were new to the area, and were looking for a church to join or just curious about what was going on in the local area, what words might you type into a search engine? Probably something like the name of your community and 'church'. Maybe 'Methodist', possibly 'chapel' or 'Christian'.

The more of those words you have in the address of your website, or on the 'Home' page of your website, the more likely it is that people will find your site.

Once people reach your site, how will they find their way around? Is information arranged logically? Can people easily see if they have found the right page?

### **What should your website include?**

- A welcome and introduction to the church community.
- Your church's vision and mission statement.
- An introduction to what worship at your church is like, including the day and time, and including if there is junior church or similar provision for young people.
- Information about some of the things your church does beyond worship- coffee mornings, foodbanks, playgroups, house groups, music groups etc. An embedded calendar showing what happens when is a good way of showing how your church is active beyond Sundays.
- Information on the building- the facilities available (where is the nearest parking, are there toilets, are the building and facilities accessible for wheelchair users, pushchairs, people with sight or hearing loss?), and possibly something about the history of the church or any notable features.
- If rooms are available to hire, what are they like, what does it cost and who can people contact? Photos here are as valuable as words, but try to make the place look inviting.
- How to find the church building- ideally a map and directions both by road and public transport, including parking or drop-off facilities. Address including postcode is important, for example if an ambulance needs to find your building.
- How to get in touch- at minimum a contact email address. You might want to set up an email address just for this purpose, which one person could check and forward enquiries to the relevant person.
- If you are offering worship online, details on how to connect to that, or who to contact to be invited.

- Directing people to your social media feeds, if you have any.
- Links to other groups in your community- people who use your building, for example, and to the Circuit, District and Connexion web pages.
- If you have a church office, the days and times when it is open and how to get in touch.

Above all, try to include photos. Make your church look inviting, and if possible include people in the pictures so the building doesn't look empty. (Remember to get the person's consent before using photos online, and be careful when taking photos of children to get their parent or carer's consent if they are under 13). In general you might find it easier to take a picture when people are facing away from you and so aren't identifiable.

Use photos that show typical activities- for example if your congregation is mainly elderly and you don't normally have many children, it might be giving the wrong idea to use lots of photos of children and none of older people.

A suggested set of pages might include:

- **Home page:** Welcome, introduction to your church, your mission and vision.
- **About us:** Introduction to worship and weekday activities.
- **Our building:** Facilities, accessibility, history or notable features.
- **Hiring:** facilities available for hire, outline costs and who to contact.
- **Find us:** map, address including postcode, parking, directions by road and public transport.
- **Contact us:** how to get in touch, church office details.

Each page might have subpages focusing on different topics within that area, for example 'About us' might have a 'Worship' subpage; a 'Young people' subpage, a 'Church groups' subpage and a 'Community activities' subpage.

### Keeping going

Try to keep the site up to date. If a website doesn't appear to have been updated recently people might think it is out of date and move on. Information can quickly become unreliable- are the Tuesday Guild still meeting at 7pm, or have they moved to 2pm now the clocks have changed? Is the mother and baby group having a break for the summer holidays?

If you're going to struggle to update your website regularly, then it's best if you only put information that isn't going to change frequently. For example, you might say "Playgroup usually meets Thursday mornings in term time, please contact the church office for more information before you come or see our Facebook page for updates".

Facebook is easier to update if you're new to online publishing, so it's great if you can use it for more up to date information. You could even use an app to display your latest Facebook, twitter or Instagram posts on your website- that will show you're active and that information is up to date.

### Circuit Website

Each church in the Circuit has a page on the Circuit website. You can see what is on yours at <https://www.yorkmethodist.org.uk/churches.html> To update this please send the text you would like adding to the Circuit office with a request that your church page be updated. This should also contain a link to your church website if you have one.