

# Paper C1

## Communications strategy

### Communications Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	<p>The Revd Peter Stevenson, Convenor, Communications Committee revdpete@btinternet.com Andy Jackson, Head of Communications, andy.jackson@urc.org.uk</p>
<b>Action required</b>	<p>Decision.</p>
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Resolution 14</b></p> <p><b>General Assembly adopts the Communications Strategy, and instructs the Communications Committee and Communications Team to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• undertake a research project to build a communications profile of each local church and Synod</li> <li>• to produce a series of easy-to-use, time saving toolkits to help churches to communicate more effectively</li> <li>• to create a network of Communications Advocates in each Synod who can be an informal link between the Communications Team, resources available, and local churches and the Synods</li> <li>• share the new Design and Digital Visual Identity Guide.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resolution 15</b></p> <p><b>General Assembly requests that the URC website, <a href="http://www.urc.org.uk">www.urc.org.uk</a>, be the website on which all Assembly-approved work is hosted, making searching for URC resources and information easier. General Assembly tasks the Communications Committee and the Communications Team to work with those hosting URC websites outside of the URC's domain to consolidate those websites into the URC's website by General Assembly 2025.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 16</b></p> <p><b>General Assembly urges all churches without a website, or with a website that has been inactive for more than six months, to use iChurch to engage digitally with all those</b></p>

	<p><b>who are interested in attending worship or activities taking place in church buildings.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 17</b></p> <p><b>General Assembly strongly encourages the United Reformed Church at all levels and in all teams to use the revised Design and Digital Visual Identity to ensure quality and consistency across the work of the denomination.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 18</b></p> <p><b>General Assembly urges everyone connected to the Church to read <i>Reform</i>, the magazine of the URC, either in print or digitally.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 19</b></p> <p><b>The United Reformed Church thanks all who helped with the Church's 50th anniversary.</b></p>
--	--

## Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	A communications strategy for The United Reformed Church.
<b>Main points</b>	A communications strategy for The United Reformed Church.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Communications Committee; the Revd Dr Romilly Micklem.

## Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Cost of a research project to establish the communications needs of the URC, followed by the production of toolkits to help local churches (from existing budgets).
<b>External (eg ecumenical)</b>	Greater awareness of the United Reformed Church.

## Communication team update

### Follow up from General Assembly 2021: The URC's Jubilee

The Jubilee resource pack was produced by a number of contributors in 2021 and was designed and distributed by Communications to all churches in early 2022. Further copies were sent out on request.

The Worship Resources Competition gave us two amazing hymns and a poem, judged from a wide range of entries. You can see the hymns and poem, which were shared at the 2022 General Assembly, on the URC's YouTube channel, [www.youtube.com/URCUK](http://www.youtube.com/URCUK). They were also part of the URC's Jubilee Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration. We thank all who entered and those that judged the competition.



The URC's Jubilee Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration finally took place on 15 April 2023, after being postponed due to a rail strike that was rescheduled after the death of Queen Elizabeth II, and the next preferred date of 6 May being taken by the coronation of King Charles III. The service can be watched on our YouTube channel. The service, the Open Church House event and the Walk to Westminster, which also took place on 15 April, were some of the many services and events that took place around the URC to celebrate the Church's first 50 years.



## Highlights: press and public relations

On 14 October 2022, the URC got 5½ minutes on the Chris Moyles Show on Radio X which has over 1 million listeners:

[www.globalplayer.com/podcasts/episodes/7DreXBy/](http://www.globalplayer.com/podcasts/episodes/7DreXBy/)

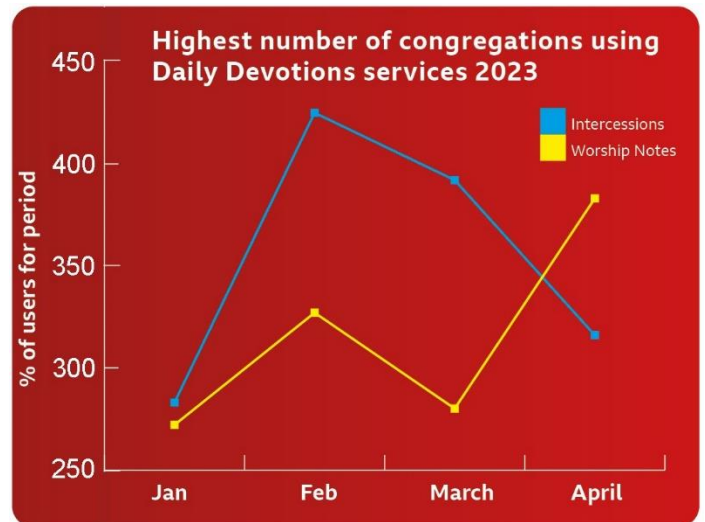


Starting at 25m 48s, host Chris Moyles reads a letter sent from the URC Bookshop and mentions a range of merchandise from the URC Bookshop that was sent to the presenter and his team.

Premier Christian Radio has also been back in touch, inviting URC people to submit prayers for Christmas, Lent, Easter and the Coronation, and has also shared Daily Devotions content.

The Daily Devotions services are being used by *The Methodist Recorder* now that the Methodists stopped providing the readings which were started during the pandemic.

John Bradbury, the General Secretary, has continued the partnership with UCB by featuring on Talking Point's Friday Round-up.



## Getting the name right

Communications Officer, Ann-Marie Nye, corrects many a news report which misses the 'ed' from the Reformed part of our name, but it's good to see that sometimes journals such as *The Guardian* do it themselves: "This article was amended on 14 March 2023 because an earlier version misnamed the United Reformed Church as the 'United Reform' church." [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/mar/12/migration-bill-is-cruelty-without-purpose-says-archbishop-of-york](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/mar/12/migration-bill-is-cruelty-without-purpose-says-archbishop-of-york)

## iChurch

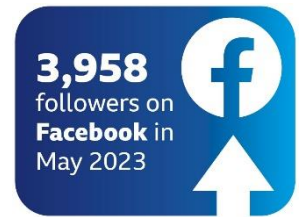
2023 will be the first year that the iChurch scheme for affordable local church websites will have been in the black. Many thanks are owed to Dan Morrell, Reuben Watt and others for helping iChurch website managers during the long absence of the iChurch Coordinator, who has now left the staff team.



The long-term relationship between the URC, Dan and Reuben has seen iChurch websites grow in number and the committee is now deeply confident about the long-term future of the scheme. There are now 127 websites with iChurch, with another 11 in development, including some Synod website developments.

Email services are also now being offered for an extra fee, as well as a quarterly update service for churches who struggle to find people to regularly update their websites.

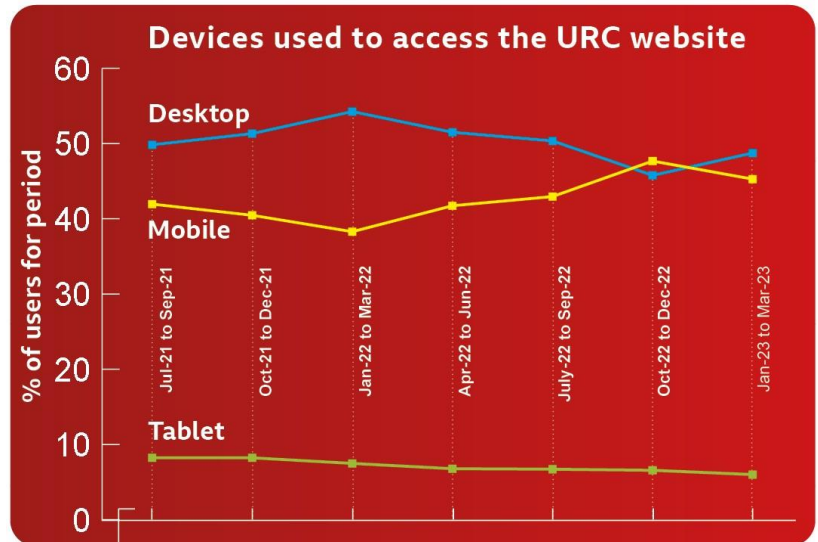
A new template for iChurch templates is under development, which will make all iChurch websites even easier to use and easier to be found by search engines.



## The URC Bookshop

In 2022, the bookshop sent out 2,498 orders containing 40,566 items. This does not include items sold at synods, General Assembly and other events, such as the URC Minister's Gathering and regional events and gatherings. The turnover in 2022 was £82,635.54. This is more than previous years and the range of jubilee merchandise and books helped to increase the annual turnover.

[www.urcshop.co.uk](http://www.urcshop.co.uk)



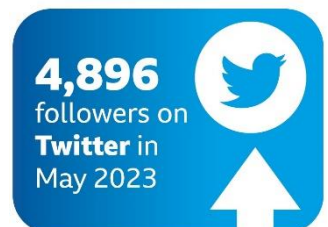
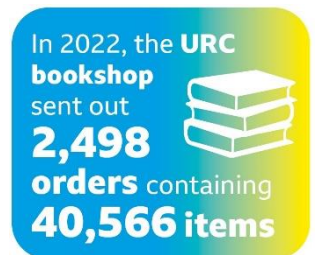
At the request of Jane Baird, the Deputy General Secretary (Admin and Resources) until very recently, the Head of Communications developed the URC Bookshop Procurement Policy which was presented to the Communications Committee. General Assembly is requested to note this.

## Publishing Board

The Publishing Board is a group of the Communications Committee which manages the books published by the URC. Proposals for books are invited – a proposal form can be found on the URC website – and the group meets three times a year to consider new proposals and to review those that have been selected for print.

A number of books were published for the URC's 50th anniversary:

- *Golden Threads – Reflections from 50 years of The Congregational Federation and The United Reformed Church*, published by the URC in partnership with The Congregational Federation, a collection of dozens of reflections from ministers and others about the denomination's first 50 years. The planning group included the late Revd Dr Walter Riggans who passed away in June 2022.
- *Traditions and Transitions, Studies in the history and theology of the URC*, edited by, and with contributions from, David Cornick and Robert Pope.
- *That They All May Be One*, a highly readable account, of the story of the URC from 1972 to 2022, by Stephen Tomkins, noted writer and Editor of *Reform*.



# Paper C1

- *50 Hymns for 50 Years*, by Anne Sardeson, which looks at the hymns written since 1972 and how hymnody has reacted to the national and world events that have taken place.

This year, a new book by the Revd Neil Thorogood will be published, and in the planning stage is a large collection of new hymns by the Revd John Campbell, author of *Sunflower and Thistles*, published by the URC as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement.

## Thanks and welcomes

Our thanks to the Revd Dr Peter Stevenson for convening the Communications Committee since 2019, and to the Revd Lucy Brierley who takes on the role after General Assembly has finished.

We are also deeply grateful to Jane Baird for her wisdom, warmth, humour and leadership, and wish her a very long, happy and well-deserved retirement. We welcome Victoria James to the role of Chief Operations Officer.

The average page viewing time on URC YouTube is

**4.45 mins**



Our viewers are

**46.6%** of women and

**53.4%** of men on YouTube

