



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

www.urc.org.uk



Paper C5

Design and digital visual identity for The United Reformed Church

Communications Committee

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Why is visual identity important?

Visual identity refers to all the graphics and pictures that express who we are and set us apart from other churches. To put it another way, it refers to everything that can be seen by the naked eye, from the logo to the layout of a room. It also refers to identifying materials such as business cards, letterheads, newsletters, PowerPoint presentations, social media, and posters, where the main goal is to distinguish the Church.

Each church has its own unique personality. How do people feel when they hear the name of your ministry, see the logo, go to the website, or interact with the church either in person or online? Your identity is in the impression you made on them. The church's members will be more likely to recognise and identify themselves as part of the United Reformed Church if they are exposed to the same consistent aesthetic features.



Our visual identity is largely established through logos and design. Fundamentally, a person's emotional and intuitive response to an organisation can be evoked through design. By expressing the cultural relevance, mission, and ideals of the Church and unifying the many various characteristics through unified graphics, it can educate audiences about the essence of the Church. For instance, by using plain English in place of jargon, you are demonstrating that our Church is inclusive, by speaking to as many people as you can in your conversations.



This guidance is to help you unify these identifying elements in your work.

Our conversations

Identify your audience before creating content that enhances their lives, fuels their aspirations, and addresses their needs.

Consider your tone of voice when writing. How does the Church wish to convey its principles, purpose, and vision?

Design should come first in your discussion of content, rather than being an afterthought. To achieve the best results, involve the communications team as early as possible in the conversations. This is especially true when creating material for websites, videos, social media, and other digital platforms.



Visual elements

Logo

Logos are at the heart of establishing visual identity.

We are keen for the logo to be used as widely as possible to promote the URC and the URC community. However, derivative versions of the URC logo are generally prohibited, as they dilute the URC's brand identity. For example, the URC logo should be used in its entirety and not broken into elements – the words and the fish symbol may not be used separately as a logo.

Where possible, the blue logo with web address should be used. It can appear on a white background, or reversed out white, as below. We also have a mono version for when colour printing is not available.



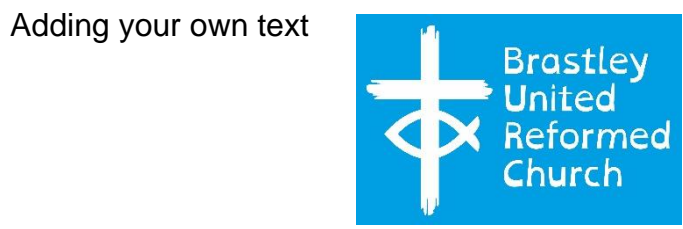
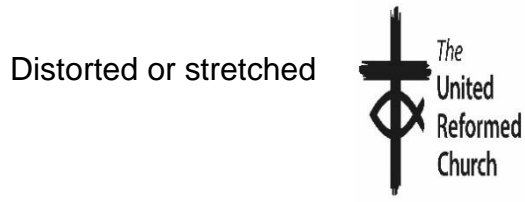
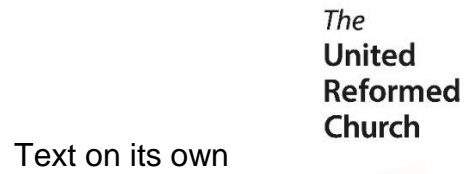
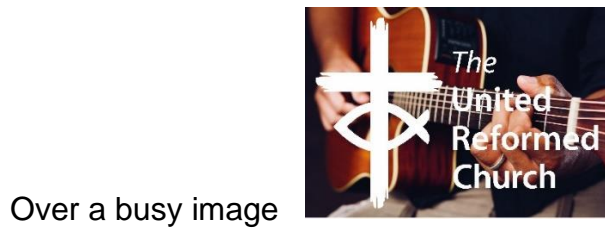
For samples of placement in design see section Examples / templates

Do not try to recreate the logo yourself. We are keen for the logo to be used as widely as possible to promote the URC and the URC community. If you have any questions, please contact us by email at graphics@urc.org.uk.

A variety of logos are available for download from the URC website: www.urc.org.uk/urc-logo. For more information on how and when the logo may be used, please refer to the leaflet *Guidelines for the use of the URC logo*.



Here are a few examples of incorrect use. **Do not use like this...**



The URC logo is copyrighted to the United Reformed Church © 2016. The URC takes seriously its responsibility for defending our logo against any damaging or confusing uses. The logo it is a registered trademark number, UK00003252243.

Sub-identities

Each sub-brand is distinctive, while also retaining assets of the main visual identity, such as in the samples below.





Stepwise logo



Retired Ministers Housing Society logo

Colour palette

These colours are used to identify the Church.

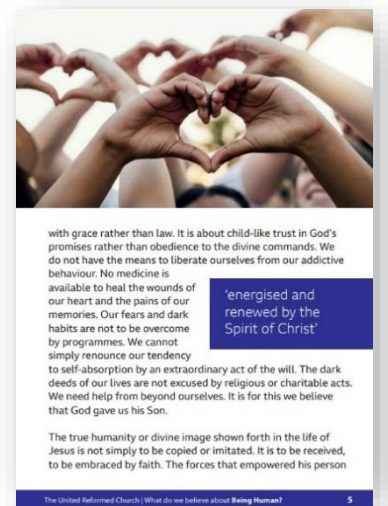
- CMYK: 100-0-0-0 (print)
- Pantone: Cyan Blue (print)
- RGB: 0-153-255 (web/digital)
- Hex: #0099FF (web/digital)



Typography

The way you style or shape your text is known as typography. To make the work of the URC appear professional, it's best to use a consistent typeface throughout everything produced. We advise utilising the **clear print standard** of Arial 12pt on 1.15 spacing in order to make the URCs work as accessible to people with different abilities as possible. Use of Times New Roman is also acceptable.

Calibri uses less ink, but the size of the font is smaller than Arial, which is recommended by charities such as **The Sensory Trust**. Pull quotes, illustrations, and other design elements can be used to break up pages of text-heavy publications and keep readers' interest. Here are a few URC book examples that make use of white space, visuals, and simple typography.



2016

Our hymn for 2016 is 'Cantico di frate sole', or 'Canticle of brother sun', by St Francis of Assisi

This time, the hymn really is by St Francis of Assisi.

Rejoice and Sing includes a hymn based on this canticle: 'All creatures of our God and King' by WH Draper. We sometimes forget that this well-known hymn, first published in 1919, has its roots in a text that is much, much older.

'Cantico di frate sole' ('Song of brother sun' or 'Canticle of the creatures')¹ was most likely written over a period of time, and is believed to have been finished in about 1225. This was a time when Francis was struggling in mind and body, and what we know as the sixth verse of 'All creatures of our God and King' ('And thou, most kind and gentle death') was most likely a reflection of how life was for the ageing Francis.

The words of the saint echo Psalm 148, but paint a familial relationship with creation that is significant in our time of ecological crisis. In this, the words of St Francis go further than the hymn in *Rejoice and Sing*. There we have 'Mother Earth' – which we might not consider that radical until we recall that 'mother' is also 'life bearer'. St Francis gives us more much – sister water and brother fire, sister moon and brother wind...

One of the ways we need to respond to the ecological crisis is through the way we speak of the earth. The language of St Francis helps us to do just that. Language has such power, and the way we speak can change the way we

¹ *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth*, Ita Dello, OSA, Keith Douglas Warner, OFM and Pamela Wood, Franciscan Media, 2008.

aggressively marketing powdered formula milk at mothers, to the serious detriment of babies' health. Tactics highlighted by campaigners included giving free samples to mothers until their breastmilk dried up, and giving 'material benefits' to doctors who recommended formula milk. Families might end up spending half of their income on powdered milk, while lack of clean water to mix it with led to high levels of life-threatening diarrhoea. UNICEF estimated that the decline in breastfeeding cost 1.5 million lives a year.

Campaigners, led by Baby Milk Action, asked shoppers to boycott Nestlé products to put pressure on the company to change its ways. The organisers lifted the boycott in 1984 when Nestlé promised reforms, but reinstated it in 1987 after it failed to keep its promises.

Many members of the URC joined the boycott as individuals

Many members of the URC joined the boycott as individuals – as they did the boycott of South African goods – or persuaded their local church to join communally. FURY took a keen lead. But in 1992, the URC decided to take a collective stance on the issue. Yorkshire province brought a resolution to General Assembly encouraging the councils of the Church at every level – local churches, districts and provinces – to boycott Nescafé and other Nestlé products, and Assembly agreed. Some members argued that Nestlé's talks with UNICEF, and assurances that it would phase out free samples, were evidence of imminent change, so the Church and Society department was asked to monitor progress and report back in 1993, in the hope of lifting the boycott.

Readers of *Reform* got their teeth into the debate. Donald Scott said that the boycott was the perfect example of why people do not respond to the URC's attempts at evangelism: they 'wonder why churches take actions which are to them incomprehensible'. Alan Howe argued that Christianity is primarily spiritual, not social, adding: 'I believe that the Church's judgmental attitude towards Nestlé will itself bring judgment upon a church which has largely abandoned adherence to her (primary) mission.'²⁴

Elizabeth Jones suggested that instead of boycotting Nestlé, it would be less drastic to ask hospitals not to accept free samples. Patricia Mills, a Baby Milk Action representative, responded, 'I wouldn't know how to persuade all Third World

Appendix 2 A quick guide to CCLI licences

Not sure which licence(s) you need?

This quick guide licence table from CCLI will help you help you determine which licence(s) you require. To find out more about copyright in church and the licences available visit uk.ccli.com/churches

	CCL	Streaming Licence	MPL	CIA/CL	Public CL	PRS CL	CVL	SongSelect
Reproduce/project the words to hymns and worship songs	✓							
Make audio or video recordings of services (non-commercial use only)	✓							
Stream or rebroadcast your services including the live worship*	✓	✓						
Photocopy, scan or electronically share typeset pages from music publications or sheet music files	✓		✓					
Photocopy from non-music publications such as study guides, course resources, bibles, journals, or children's activity books				✓				
Hold concerts or recitals on church premises outside of Acts of Worship					✓			
Play music recordings such as CDs/MP3s during activities outside of Acts of Worship					✓	✓		
Play live or recorded music during Acts of Worship only (e.g. regular services, weddings/funerals)					No license necessary			
Show films or film scenes in all activities					✓		✓	
Show film scenes during services only							✓	
Access the lyrics and transposable lead, chord and vocal sheets to thousands of songs	✓							✓

*Covers streaming/broadcasting via Facebook and Youtube. To host streams on your own website, or via video-conferencing apps such as Zoom, a PRS for Music Limited Online Music Licence is also required.

Pull quotes are a good way to break up long passages of text since they encourage reader participation. Also consider the contrast between backgrounds and type. As a general rule use dark type on a light background.

Tip: A colour contrast analyser (CCA) [free to download] may be beneficial when employing text on coloured backgrounds, to determine if colours pass accessibility criteria. Using CCAs, you can modify your content to make it more accessible to users with vision impairments such as poor vision and colour blindness.

For an example of a typical A4 Word document and to download templates visit: www.urc.org.uk/your-church/church-guides/urc-visual-identity-guide

Style guide

Using a style guide is essential to ensuring that various authors produce improved communications in a clear and unified manner since it ensures consistency both within and between publications. For anybody who reads or develops documentation for the Church, the URC style guide serves as both a reference resource and a training tool:

www.urc.org.uk/house-style



Imagery

An image can influence how a user feels, thinks, or behaves while also improving the appeal of your content.

It may demonstrate how welcoming and inclusive your church is. Illustrations, iconography, photography, video content, and any spokespeople who serve as the "image" in action, are all examples of imagery.



For you to use in your church materials, the URC Communications staff has gathered a range of photographs and placed them onto the URC Flickr website. These are free to use within churches: [flic.kr/s/aHsmNAhoEM](https://www.flickr.com/photos/urc-communications/)

For guidance on taking good photographs see www.urc.org.uk/your-church/church-guides/taking-great-photos-in-church



Tip: Use only photos that appear to be authentic and not staged, with as much diversity as possible



Tip: When taking photos on a smartphone, first clean the lens, then focus the camera by tapping on the subject. When taking a photo in low light, turn on the flash and hold the camera steady.

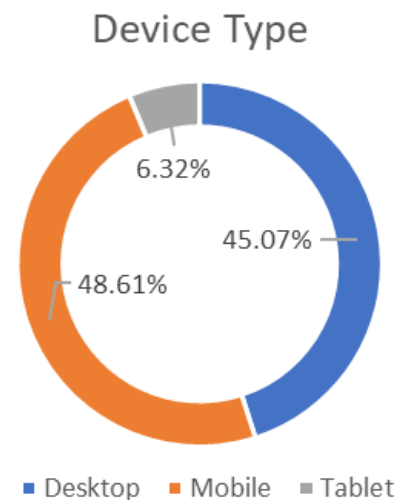
When taking photographs in churches, please remember Safeguarding, GDPR and Consent. You can read more about these on the [guide from the Church of England](#).

Web and digital design

Visual identity components are commonly communicated through hero or website photographs, interface colour schemes and layouts, social media content, animations, icons, buttons, and much more. In this setting, visual identity must gently support the user in achieving their objective.

Data from the URC website from 31 January 2023, reveals an increase in mobile users over the previous 13 months.* **Smartphone users are typically younger** and read less extensively than desktop users. When creating and delivering content, it is important to keep this in mind.

* Data by Neil Hunter, Communications Team, URC website performance report, 1 November to 31 January 2023.



Upload your copy as HTML wherever possible to allow your documents to use the users' individual browser settings. Other formats, eg PDF files, may make it more difficult for users to identify, access, and maintain your material, as they may not be as compatible with assistive technologies like screen readers (see www.gds.blog.gov.uk/2018/07/16/why-gov-uk-content-should-be-published-in-html-and-not-pdf/).

Keep a careful eye on your analytics and constantly examine your posts to see what has and has not worked to engage readers.

Tip: The sermon is the mechanism that creates content in your church. This occurs every day in the ministry of your church; people receive value, and inspirational tales are being told. Find a technique to record these events on camera so you can use them as social media material.

When taking videos in churches, please remember Safeguarding, GDPR and Consent. You can read more about these on the **guide from the Church of England**.

Useful guidelines

The United Reformed Church Social Media Guidelines and Digital Charter:
www.urc.org.uk/your-church/church-guides/getting-your-church-online/social-media-guidelines-and-digital-charter/

Writing for the web: www.urc.org.uk/your-church/church-guides/getting-your-church-online/writing-for-the-web



A variety of other media information can also be found here: www.urc.org.uk/your-church/church-guides/getting-your-church-online/

Where to start

- Select your audience and target the individual rather than a group.
- Explore the concept of video, audio and social-only content, rather than print (with the communications team).
- Use Arial or Times New Roman 12pt on 1.15 leading.
- Simplify your document. This includes keeping fonts and Styles used basic, so that each document is transferable for web use if needed.
- Keep copy brief and to the point.
- Good headlines get people to stay longer on a page. Keep them short and punchy. The same goes for headings.
- Instead of using Word Art or Clip Art, utilise only high-quality photographs (where possible use images from URC churches). Most people will have read the captions to all the pictures first. Prior to becoming readers, your audience should be treated as viewers. Pick your pictures wisely. Be welcoming and represent diversity (see www.urc.org.uk/your-church/church-guides/portraying-diversity/).
- It's important to check that your imagery and text adheres to copyright regulations: www.urc.org.uk/who-we-are/what-we-do/communications/copyright-licensing-urc-materials/
- Keep file naming conventions for photos and files concise and easy to understand when storing your work. Commas, brackets, slashes, and full stops should not be used (apart from before the end file type, ie .jpg). If necessary, hyphenate instead of using an underscore.
- Use a **Production Request (PR) form** to book work in – or your request may be lost within the email system!
 - ✓ Fill ALL sections of the PR form in – It saves lots of emails later!
 - ✓ Allow adequate proofing time for both design and copy (factor in your annual leave and the fact that we don't all work weekends too.)
 - ✓ Supply high quality images (do not supply them embedded in Word files)
 - ✓ Create realistic deadlines – and stick to them! (Avoid entering ASAP in the field, as you will always be at the back of the line!)
 - ✓ Check quotations fully before signing off – especially paper thickness and delivery date (and make sure you are there to receive delivery!)

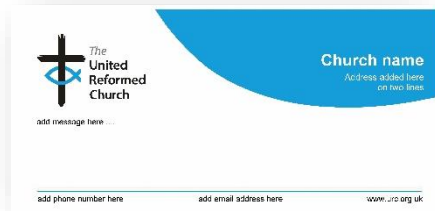
Once you have a new product don't forget to promote it! Tell everyone about it: when it's being published, how it can be accessed and what's great about it.

Examples / templates

Here are some examples of recommended layout and logo placement.



Letterhead



Complements slip



Business card



URC customisable banners, postcards and bookmark templates, can be found here:
www.cpo.org.uk/urc.html

Other URC templates, including a cross stitch and knitting/crochet pattern of the URC cross, are available on a new downloads page on the URC website:
www.urc.org.uk/your-church/resource-downloads/

Tip: Make use of social media and include the icons in your marketing material.



Contact details

If you have any questions about the URCs design and digital visual identity, please contact our Communications Team.

020 7916 2020

graphics@urc.org.uk