



FREE GUIDE · DIGITAL FOUNDATIONS

Church Domain and Email Setup Guide

How to register a custom domain and set up professional email for your church, including free nonprofit options.

We try hard to get everything here right, and every guide and template shows when it was last reviewed. But they are free, they are general and things change: the law, prices and the tools themselves. We cannot guarantee they are complete, current or right for your church, so check anything you rely on and take professional advice where a decision matters.

Church Domain and Email Setup Guide

Who this is for: the volunteer who has been asked to sort the church's website address and email, often the same person who already looks after the website.

Setting this up means two things: buying a domain name from a registrar, then choosing how your church email will work – a free nonprofit plan through Google Workspace or Microsoft 365, Zoho's free tier or simple forwarding to an address you already use – then pointing the domain at your choice with a few DNS records. This guide walks through both, plus what it typically costs.

Why a Custom Domain Matters

Your church's web address is part of your first impression. Compare these two:

- **stmarkschelmsford.org.uk** – looks established, trustworthy, professional
- **stmarkschelmsford.wixsite.com/home** – looks temporary and a bit amateur

A custom domain says "we're a real organisation that takes itself seriously." It also makes your email addresses look professional: office@stmarkschelmsford.org.uk carries more weight than stmarkschelmsford@gmail.com, especially when you're contacting schools, councils or grant funders.

The good news: it's cheap, straightforward to set up and something you only need to do once.

Choosing a Domain Name

Keep It Simple

Your domain should be easy to say out loud, easy to spell and easy to remember. If you have to explain it ("it's st dash marks dash church dot org dot uk, all one word, no spaces"), it's too complicated.

Good examples:

- stmarkschelmsford.org.uk
- trinityMethodistchurch.org.uk
- allsaintsoxford.org.uk

Avoid:

- Hyphens (hard to say out loud and easy to forget)
- Very long names (people won't type them)
- Unusual spellings

Domain Extensions: Which One?

Extension	Best For	Typical Cost	Notes
.org.uk	UK churches (recommended)	£5–10/year	The standard for UK non-profits and community organisations. Immediately signals "UK-based organisation."
.org	Any church	£8–12/year	Internationally recognised. Good alternative if .org.uk isn't available.
.uk	UK organisations	£5–8/year	Shorter and modern, but less immediately associated with non-profits.
.church	Churches specifically	£15–30/year	Very clear, but more expensive and less well-known. Some email systems may treat it with suspicion.
.com	Not recommended for churches	£8–12/year	Looks commercial. Fine for businesses, but not ideal for a church.

My recommendation: Go with **.org.uk** if you're a UK church. It's cheap, trusted and clearly identifies you as a UK-based organisation.

Scotland and Wales. Two national extensions exist alongside these: **.scot**, run by a not-for-profit company and open to anyone in Scotland or connected to it, and **.wales** and **.cymru**, run by Nominet, the same registry that runs **.uk**. They are legitimate and people do recognise them. Our judgement is still to register **.org.uk** as your main domain, because it is what people type when they guess a church's address and what email systems have seen most often. If a Welsh-language or a distinctly Scottish identity matters to your congregation, buy the national one as well and point it at the same site.

Where to Buy Your Domain

You buy domains from a "domain registrar." Here are the main UK-friendly options:

Registrar	Pros	Cons	.org.uk Price (approx.)
Namecheap	Clear pricing, no hidden extras, good support	Interface can be slightly technical	~£6/year
123 Reg	UK-based, straightforward	Often tries to upsell extras you don't need	~£8/year

Registrar	Pros	Cons	.org.uk Price (approx.)
Squarespace Domains (formerly Google Domains)	Clean interface, easy to use	Fewer advanced options	~£10/year
GoDaddy	Well-known, lots of support articles	Aggressive upselling, renewal prices often higher than first year	~£8/year (first year)

My recommendation: Namecheap or Squarespace Domains for simplicity and fair pricing. Whichever you choose, **leave auto-renewal switched on** and keep the payment card current, so you don't accidentally let your domain expire.

Typical Cost

Budget **£5–15 per year** for your domain. That's it. If someone is asking you to pay significantly more, they're likely bundling in extras you don't need.

- ☐ Check if your desired domain is available at your chosen registrar
- ☐ Register the domain
- ☐ Enable auto-renewal so you don't lose it
- ☐ Make a note of the login details somewhere safe and shared (not just one person's email)

Email Options for Churches

Once you have your domain, you can set up professional email addresses. There are several options, and the best one depends on your church's size and whether you're a registered charity.

Option 1: Google Workspace for Nonprofits (Free)

Best for: registered charities wanting a full email and collaboration suite

Google offers its Workspace suite (Gmail, Google Drive, Google Calendar, Google Meet) **completely free** to registered charities through the Google for Nonprofits programme.

What you get:

- Professional Gmail addresses (office@yourchurch.org.uk)
- **100TB of storage, pooled across all your users** (not per user – a large shared pot)
- Google Meet for video calls, up to **150 participants**
- Google Calendar, Docs, Sheets – the full suite
- Up to 2,000 user accounts

How to apply:

- ☐ Go to google.com/nonprofits
- ☐ You'll be directed to verify your charity status through **Goodstack** (formerly Percent – Google's verification partner for the UK; renamed from Percent in October 2024)
- ☐ You'll need your **charity registration number** (Charity Commission, OSCR or CCNI), or your HMRC charity reference if you are not registered
- ☐ Verification typically takes 3–5 business days
- ☐ Once approved, you can set up Google Workspace and connect your domain

Note: Registered charities qualify (Charity Commission, OSCR or CCNI), and so do exempted and exempt charities and churches that hold HMRC charity tax exemption, which covers most churches that are not registered.

Option 2: Microsoft 365 for Nonprofits (Free)

Best for: churches that prefer Outlook and Microsoft Office

Microsoft grants **Microsoft 365 Business Basic** free to eligible registered charities for **up to 300 users**, giving you Outlook email, OneDrive, Teams and the web and mobile versions of Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Note Microsoft's own nonprofit pages now lead with Business Premium at a 75 per cent discount, so the free grant is easy to miss on the way in – it is still there.

 **Two grants were withdrawn on 1 July 2025.** The free **Office 365 E1** grant and the free **Business Premium** grant (which included the desktop Office apps) both ended. Business Basic and Business Premium are different products, and older guides that say "Business Basic (E1)" are conflating them. What remains free is **Business Basic**; the desktop apps are now a discounted purchase, not a grant. Check the current offer before you plan around it.

What you get:

- Professional Outlook email addresses (office@yourchurch.org.uk)
- 1TB OneDrive storage per user
- Microsoft Teams for video calls and chat
- Web and mobile versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint (**not** the desktop apps – those are the discounted purchase, not the grant)
- Up to 300 user accounts on the free grant

How to apply:

- ☐ Verify your charity status through Microsoft's nonprofit portal (Microsoft runs its own checks; you may be asked for your charity number and a governing document)

- ☐ You'll need your **charity registration number** (Charity Commission, OSCR or CCNI), or your HMRC charity reference if you are not registered
 - ☐ Once verified, request Microsoft 365 nonprofit licensing through Microsoft's nonprofit portal
 - ☐ Verification typically takes up to 7 business days
 - ☐ Set up your Microsoft 365 tenant and connect your domain
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Option 3: Zoho Mail Free Tier

Best for: very small churches (up to 5 email users) that aren't registered charities

Zoho offers a free email plan for up to 5 users with a custom domain. It's a good option if you don't qualify for the Google or Microsoft nonprofit programmes.

What you get:

- Up to 5 email addresses on your domain
- 5GB storage per user
- Zoho's own webmail and mobile apps

⚠ The free plan is webmail only

Zoho excludes **IMAP, POP and Active Sync** from its free tier. In practice that means you **cannot connect it to Outlook, Apple Mail, Thunderbird or the stock mail app** on a phone – you use Zoho's own webmail and Zoho's own app, or nothing. For a church where volunteers expect to see church email alongside their personal account in the app they already use, this is usually the deciding factor.

Note too that the free plan covers **five users total**. Adding a sixth doesn't cost you one more licence – it moves **every** user onto a paid plan.

- Basic calendar and contacts

How to set up:

- ☐ Go to zoho.com/mail
 - ☐ Sign up for the free plan
 - ☐ Follow the prompts to add and verify your domain
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Option 4: Basic Email Forwarding

Best for: the simplest possible setup, or as a temporary measure

If you just want info@yourchurch.org.uk to forward emails to an existing Gmail or Outlook account, you can set up email forwarding through your domain registrar.

What you get:

- Emails sent to info@yourchurch.org.uk arrive in your existing personal or church Gmail/Outlook inbox
- No new login or email system to learn
- Usually included free with your domain registration

Limitations:

- You can receive emails at your custom address, but replies will come from your Gmail/Outlook address unless you configure "Send As" settings
- No shared mailbox features
- Not ideal for multiple users

How to set up:

- ☐ Log in to your domain registrar (Namecheap, 123 Reg, etc.)
- ☐ Find the "Email Forwarding" option
- ☐ Set info@yourchurch.org.uk to forward to your existing email address

Connecting Your Domain to Your Email Provider

This is the most technical step, but it's a one-time setup. You're telling the internet "emails for yourchurch.org.uk should be handled by Google/Microsoft/Zoho."

DNS Basics (Simply Explained)

DNS (Domain Name System) is like the internet's address book. When someone sends an email to office@yourchurch.org.uk, the internet looks up the DNS records for yourchurch.org.uk to find out where to deliver it.

You'll need to add a few records to your domain's DNS settings. Your email provider will give you the exact values – you just need to copy and paste them.

The Records You'll Need

Record Type	What It Does	Plain English
MX records	Tells the internet which email server handles your mail	"Deliver emails for this domain to Google/Microsoft/Zoho"

Record Type	What It Does	Plain English
SPF record	Tells receiving servers which servers are allowed to send email from your domain	"Only Google/Microsoft is authorised to send emails from our address"
DKIM record	Adds a digital signature to your emails to prove they're genuine	"This email really is from us, not a scammer pretending to be us"
DMARC record	Tells receiving servers what to do with mail that fails SPF and DKIM – and emails you a report	"If it isn't really from us, bin it, and tell us someone tried"

How to Add Them

- ☐ Log in to your domain registrar's dashboard
- ☐ Find the "DNS" or "DNS Management" section
- ☐ Your email provider (Google, Microsoft or Zoho) will provide step-by-step instructions with the exact values to enter
- ☐ Copy and paste the MX, SPF and DKIM records exactly as provided
- ☐ Add a DMARC record too – your provider probably won't prompt you, and it is the one that matters most (see below)
- ☐ Save the changes
- ☐ Wait up to 72 hours for the changes to take effect (though it's often much faster)

Tip: If you get stuck, search for "[your email provider] DNS setup [your registrar]" – e.g., "Google Workspace DNS setup Namecheap." There are step-by-step guides for almost every combination.

DMARC: The Twenty-Minute Job That Stops Your Treasurer Being Impersonated

This is the most valuable thing in this guide, and almost no church does it.

The most common fraud against UK churches is not hacking. It is a message that appears to come from the vicar or the treasurer, asking someone to move money, buy gift cards or change the bank details on an invoice. **The fraudster does not need to break into any account** – without DMARC, anyone in the world can send email that claims to be from your domain, and most mail servers will deliver it.

That is why good passwords and two-factor authentication, both essential, do not touch this particular risk. DMARC is what does. The Charity Commission has issued repeated alerts about charities being impersonated by email; DMARC is the control that stops it.

How to set it up:

- ☐ Confirm SPF and DKIM are both working first – DMARC depends on them, and turning DMARC on over a broken SPF record will send your own newsletters to junk

- ☐ Add a TXT record at `_dmarc.yourchurch.org.uk` starting in monitoring mode: `v=DMARC1;p=none; rua=mailto:office@yourchurch.org.uk`
- ☐ Leave it in monitoring mode for a few weeks and read the reports. You are looking for legitimate senders you'd forgotten – the mailing list tool, the giving platform, the website contact form – and adding them to SPF
- ☐ Once everything legitimate passes, tighten to `p=quarantine`, and later `p=reject`
- ☐ Don't jump straight to `p=reject`. It works immediately, including on the newsletter you didn't know was sent from somewhere else

List every service that sends email as you. Churches are routinely surprised here: the booking system, the rota app, the fundraising platform and the website form may all send "from" your domain. DMARC monitoring is the cheapest way to find out what they are, and it is worth doing for that reason alone.

Also worth having: a simple standing rule that **any request to change bank details or move money is verified by phone**, on a number you already had, to a person you know – never on the number in the email. That rule costs nothing and catches what technology misses.

Setting Up Shared Inboxes

Most churches need more than one email address. Think about who needs to be contactable and set up appropriate addresses.

Recommended Email Addresses

Address	Purpose	Who Monitors It
info@ or office@	General enquiries, first point of contact	Church administrator or office volunteer
minister@ or pastor@	Direct contact with the minister	The minister (consider whether this is appropriate or if general enquiries should go through the office)
treasurer@	Financial matters, giving enquiries	Church treasurer
bookings@	Hall or room hire enquiries	Whoever manages bookings

You don't need all of these on day one. Start with **info@** and add others as needed. Whether your church publishes a safeguarding email address, and who reads it, is a question for your denomination's safeguarding policy, not this guide.

- ☐ Set up your initial email addresses

- ☐ Make sure more than one person can access the general inbox (shared mailbox, or delegate access)
 - ☐ Document who monitors each address
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Managing Access When People Move On

People leave roles in churches. Treasurers step down, ministers move on, administrators retire. Plan for this from the start.

- ☐ **Use role-based addresses** (treasurer@, not john@) so the address stays the same when the person changes
 - ☐ **Keep a shared record** of all email accounts and who has access – store this securely (not on a Post-it note on the office computer)
 - ☐ **When someone leaves a role:** change their password, remove their access and add the new person. Do this promptly.
 - ☐ **Never let one person be the only one with admin access** to your email system. At minimum, two people should have administrator rights.
 - ☐ **Set up a handover process:** when someone finishes in a role, they should hand over login details and walk the new person through the inbox
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Charity Registration

To qualify for free Google Workspace or Microsoft 365 nonprofit plans, your church needs to be a **charity**: registered with the Charity Commission, OSCR or CCNI, or an excepted or exempt charity, or one that holds HMRC charity tax exemption (see the note in the Google Workspace section above).

How to Check

- **England & Wales:** Search the [Charity Commission register](#)
- **Scotland:** Search the [OSCR register](#)
- **Northern Ireland:** Search the [CCNI register](#)

Most established churches are registered charities, and most that are not registered are excepted charities or hold HMRC charity tax exemption, which also qualifies. If yours has none of these (a brand-new church plant, for example), you can still use Zoho's free tier or basic email forwarding.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The excepted-charity route above is an England and Wales rule. In Scotland there are no excepted charities: every church that calls itself a charity is on the OSCR register, so you will have an OSCR number. In Northern Ireland registration is compulsory too, but the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland calls organisations forward in

stages and paused new invitations in 2026 while it upgrades its systems, so a church that has not yet been invited will have an HMRC charity reference and no registration number. Use that.

- ☐ Confirm your church's charity registration number (or its HMRC charity reference, if it is not registered)
 - ☐ Keep this number handy - you'll need it for the Google/Microsoft application
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Security Basics

Church email accounts are a target for scammers - especially treasurer@ and minister@ addresses. A compromised church email can be used to send convincing phishing emails to your congregation.

Two-Factor Authentication (2FA)

This is the single most important security step. With 2FA enabled, even if someone steals your password, they can't access your account without a second verification (usually a code on your phone).

- ☐ Enable 2FA on all church email accounts
- ☐ Use an authenticator app (Google Authenticator, Microsoft Authenticator) rather than SMS where possible
- ☐ Make sure at least two people know how to access each account in case of emergency

Strong Passwords

- ☐ Use a unique password for each church account (not the same one as your personal email)
- ☐ Make passwords at least 12 characters long
- ☐ Consider using a password manager (Bitwarden has a free tier) to keep track of shared passwords securely
- ☐ Never share passwords over email or WhatsApp - use the password manager or tell people in person

What to Do If an Account Is Compromised

If you suspect someone has gained unauthorised access to a church email account:

- ☐ **Change the password immediately** on the affected account
- ☐ **Check for forwarding rules** - scammers often set up rules to forward all incoming emails to their own address. Check your email settings for any unfamiliar forwarding addresses.
- ☐ **Review sent items** - check whether any emails have been sent from the account that you didn't write

- ☐ **Notify your congregation** if any suspicious emails were sent from the church account – let people know not to click any links or reply
 - ☐ **Enable 2FA** if it wasn't already on
 - ☐ **Check other accounts** – if the same password was used elsewhere, change those too
 - ☐ **Report it** if any financial harm has occurred. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland that is Report Fraud (reportfraud.police.uk or 0300 123 2040), which replaced Action Fraud. In Scotland, call Police Scotland on 101.
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Quick-Start Summary

If you want to get this done today, here's the minimum:

- ☐ Choose and register a domain name (.org.uk recommended) – 10 minutes, ~£8/year
- ☐ Set up email forwarding for info@yourchurch.org.uk to your existing email – 10 minutes, free
- ☐ When you're ready, apply for Google Workspace or Microsoft 365 for Nonprofits – 15 minutes to apply, a few days to be verified
- ☐ Enable two-factor authentication on all accounts – 5 minutes per account

That's it. You'll have a professional web address and email for your church for under £10 a year.

Sources

Figures in this guide were checked against the pages below on 3 September 2026. Prices and product names change; the date at the top of the guide says when they were last confirmed. Claims that rest on pages we could not reach at the time of checking are not listed.

- **Google Workspace for Nonprofits:** [Google Workspace for Nonprofits](#). Confirms the plan is \$0 per user per month, with 100 TB of storage shared across all users, 150-participant Meet calls, a 2,000-user maximum and the app list.
- **Google for Nonprofits eligibility:** [Country eligibility requirements](#). Confirms Goodstack is Google's validation partner and lists the UK qualifying routes: Charity Commission, OSCR, NICC, HMRC charity tax exemption, exempt charities and churches.
- **Goodstack verification:** [Get verified by Goodstack](#). Confirms Goodstack's role and that most requests are reviewed within 3 to 5 business days.
- **Goodstack rebrand:** [Percent is becoming Goodstack](#). Dates the Percent to Goodstack rebrand to 15 October 2024.
- **Microsoft nonprofit grant changes:** [Microsoft for Nonprofits updates](#). Confirms the Office 365 E1 and Microsoft 365 Business Premium grants were discontinued on 1 July 2025, that up to 300 Business Basic licences remain granted, and the up to 75 per cent nonprofit discounts.

- **Microsoft nonprofit FAQ:** [Nonprofit FAQ](#). Confirms validation is by a third-party supplier and can take up to seven business days.
- **OneDrive storage limits:** [OneDrive service description](#). Confirms Microsoft 365 Business Basic gives 1 TB per user.
- **Zoho Mail pricing:** [Zoho Mail Pricing](#). Confirms the free plan's five-user limit, 5 GB per user, the exclusion of IMAP, POP and Active Sync, and that a sixth user moves every user to a paid plan.
- **DMARC deployment:** [Implement a DMARC policy of 'none'](#). Confirms the _dmarc record name, the v=DMARC1 p=none record, monitoring mode first, and checking SPF and DKIM before tightening.
- **MX propagation:** [Set up MX records for Google Workspace](#). Confirms MX changes can take up to 72 hours to be recognised.
- **Charity cyber crime guidance:** [Protect your charity from cyber crime](#). Confirms the Charity Commission's phishing and impersonation warnings and the advice to telephone and check a suspicious request.
- **Charity fraud scale:** [Charities at risk of 'underestimating' online fraud as one in eight experienced cybercrime last year](#). Confirms 12 per cent of charities were hit in a year and that phishing and impersonation are the most common attacks.
- **Bitwarden pricing:** [Bitwarden Pricing](#). Confirms a permanently free plan with unlimited devices and passwords.
- **Scottish charity register:** [Scottish Charity Register Search](#). Confirms the OSCR register is searchable by charity name and number.
- **No excepted charities in Scotland:** [Registration: cross-border charity regulation in Scotland](#). Confirms that all organisations representing themselves as charities in Scotland must register with OSCR and that there are no exempt or excepted categories (checked 5 September 2026).
- **Registration in Northern Ireland:** [Registration](#). Confirms that every charity must register however small, that organisations are invited in stages and that invitations are paused during a systems upgrade (checked 5 September 2026).
- **.scot domains:** [About dotScot](#). Confirms .scot is run by a not-for-profit company for people, businesses and organisations in Scotland or connected to it, and has been available to the public since September 2014 (checked 5 September 2026).
- **.wales and .cymru domains:** [.cymru and .wales registry-registrar agreement](#). Confirms Nominet is the registry for both extensions (checked 5 September 2026).
- **Where to report fraud:** [Report a scam email](#). Confirms reportfraud.police.uk and 0300 123 2040 for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and Police Scotland on 101 for Scotland (checked 5 September 2026).
- **Report Fraud replaced Action Fraud:** ['Report fraud' service replaces Action Fraud as UK's official fraud reporting portal](#). Confirms the City of London Police launched Report Fraud on 4 December 2025 to replace Action Fraud (checked 5 September 2026).