



FREE GUIDE · TOOLS AND SYSTEMS

Digital Tools Comparison Sheet for Churches

An honest comparison of digital tools for UK churches across 8 categories with pricing, GDPR notes and verdicts.

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.

Digital Tools Comparison Sheet for Churches

Who this is for: the person who has been asked to choose a database, giving platform or communications system for the church, and wants an honest comparison before spending money.

How to Use This Guide

Choosing digital tools for your church can feel overwhelming. There are hundreds of options, and it's hard to know which ones are trustworthy, affordable and actually useful.

This guide compares the most popular tools in eight categories, with UK pricing, honest verdicts and a recommendation for where to start. Every tool listed here is used by UK churches right now.

What the Ratings Mean

- **Ease of Use: 1/5** - Needs technical confidence. You'll probably need someone with IT skills to set it up and maintain it.
- **Ease of Use: 3/5** - Most people can figure it out with a bit of patience and a YouTube tutorial.
- **Ease of Use: 5/5** - Your least tech-confident volunteer could use this on their first try.

A Note on Pricing

All prices were checked on 3 September 2026 and are in GBP where possible. Many tools offer charity or nonprofit discounts - we've flagged where these apply. Prices change frequently, so always check the provider's website before committing.

A Note on GDPR

If a tool stores personal data (names, email addresses, phone numbers), you need to know where that data is hosted and whether the provider is GDPR-compliant. We've flagged UK/EU data hosting where confirmed, but always check the provider's privacy policy and data processing agreement. If you're unsure, ask them directly: *"Where is our data stored, and are you GDPR-compliant?"*

1. Church Management Systems

A Church Management System (ChMS) helps you manage your congregation's contact details, track attendance, manage rotas, handle giving and communicate with groups. It's the digital backbone of a well-organised church.

Tool	Price	Charity Discount?	UK Data Hosting?	Ease of Use	Best For	Verdict
ChurchSuite	From £15/month (scales with modules)	Already church-priced	Yes (UK servers)	4/5	Small to large churches	The gold standard for UK churches. Built in the UK, excellent support, GDPR-compliant by design. Start here.
iKnow Church	Free tier available; paid from £10/month	Church-focused pricing	Yes (UK)	3/5	Small churches on a budget	Good free option with basic contact management. Less polished than ChurchSuite but solid for smaller churches.
ChurchDesk	From £54/month excl. VAT (Basic, billed annually)	Church-focused pricing	EU (Denmark)	3/5	Medium to large churches	Strong on event management and website integration. Popular with Church of England churches but works for any denomination. GDPR-compliant.
Tithe.ly	Free tier; paid from \$72/month (about £55) for Church Management	Church-focused pricing	US	3/5	Churches already using Tithe.ly for giving	US-built and US-hosted. Comprehensive features but data is stored outside the UK. Check GDPR implications.
Breeze	From \$72/month (~£57)	None	US	4/5	Medium churches wanting simplicity	Very user-friendly but US-based and more expensive than UK alternatives. Hard to justify when ChurchSuite exists.

Hosting locations are as described by each vendor at the time of writing; confirm with the vendor's data processing agreement before relying on it.

Bottom line: For most UK churches, **ChurchSuite** is the answer. It's built for UK churches, hosted in the UK, GDPR-compliant and has excellent customer support. If budget is tight, **iKnow Church** has a genuinely useful free tier.

2. Email Newsletters

Regular email communication keeps your congregation informed and connected. A good email tool lets you design attractive newsletters, manage subscriber lists and track who's reading.

Tool	Price	Charity Discount?	UK Data Hosting?	Ease of Use	Best For	Verdict
Mailchimp	Free up to 250 contacts and 500 emails/month (cut from 500 in January 2026); paid from £10/month	15% nonprofit discount	US (GDPR-compliant with data processing addendum)	4/5	Small to medium churches	The most well-known option. Easy to use with good templates. Free tier is limited but workable for small churches.
beehiiv	Free up to 2,500 subscribers on the Launch plan (checked 5 September 2026); paid from \$43/month (about £33)	None currently	US	3/5	Churches wanting a modern newsletter platform	Growing fast, great for content-focused newsletters. Free tier is generous. Less template variety than Mailchimp.
Brevo (formerly Sendinblue)	Free up to 300 emails/day; paid from £19/month	None	EU (France)	3/5	Churches sending frequent emails	EU-hosted, which is good for GDPR. Free tier is limited by daily sends rather than contacts, which suits churches that email weekly.
Buttondown	Free up to 100 subscribers; paid plans priced by list size	None	US	3/5	Very small churches wanting simplicity	Stripped-back and simple. No fancy templates, just clean emails. Good for a church that wants to write a weekly email without fuss.

Bottom line: **Mailchimp** remains the safest choice for most churches – it's well-known, easy to use and the nonprofit discount helps. If you're just starting out and want something simple, **Buttondown** is refreshingly straightforward. If your congregation is growing, **beehiiv**'s free tier is very generous.

Note: If you use **ChurchSuite**, it has built-in email communication that may be sufficient for your needs without a separate tool.

3. Website Builders

Your church website is often the first impression someone has of your community. It needs to be welcoming, up to date and easy to find on Google.

Tool	Price	Charity Discount?	UK Data Hosting?	Ease of Use	Best For	Verdict
WordPress.org (self-hosted)	Hosting from £3–10/month + domain (~£10/year)	Some hosts offer charity discounts	Depends on host (UK hosts available)	2/5	Churches wanting full control and flexibility	The most powerful option, but needs someone with technical confidence to set up and maintain. Security updates and backups are your responsibility.
Squarespace	From £13/month	None	US (GDPR-compliant)	4/5	Small to medium churches wanting a beautiful site	Gorgeous templates, very easy to use. Good for churches that want a professional-looking site without technical skills.
Wix	Free tier (with Wix ads); paid from £7.50/month	None	US (GDPR-compliant)	5/5	Very small churches on a tight budget	The easiest website builder to use. Free tier is usable but includes Wix branding. Paid tiers are affordable.
A Church Near You	Free	N/A (CofE funded)	UK	3/5	Church of England churches	Free listing and basic website for CofE churches. Essential for CofE churches to keep updated, but limited as a standalone website. <i>Church of England specific.</i>

Tool	Price	Charity Discount?	UK Data Hosting?	Ease of Use	Best For	Verdict
ChurchSuite Websites	Included with ChurchSuite subscription	N/A	UK	3/5	Churches already using ChurchSuite	Convenient if you're already on ChurchSuite, but less flexible than a dedicated website builder. Good for a simple, functional site.

Bottom line: If you want something that looks great with minimal effort, go with **Squarespace**. If budget is the main concern, **Wix** is hard to beat. If you have a technically confident volunteer, **WordPress.org** gives you the most flexibility. If you're Church of England, keep **A Church Near You** updated regardless of what else you use.

4. Design Tools

You don't need a graphic designer to create good-looking social media posts, service sheets and posters. These tools make it easy.

Tool	Price	Charity Discount?	UK Data Hosting?	Ease of Use	Best For	Verdict
Canva	Free tier (excellent); Pro £100/year	Free Pro for registered nonprofits (Canva for Nonprofits)	US (GDPR-compliant)	5/5	Everyone	The best design tool for non-designers. Huge template library, drag-and-drop simplicity, and the nonprofit Pro plan is free. Apply at canva.com/canva-for-nonprofits .
Adobe Express	Free tier; Premium from US\$9.99/month (about £8)	Discounts via Goodstack for nonprofits	US (GDPR-compliant)	3/5	Churches already using Adobe products	Decent free tier but less intuitive than Canva. The template library is smaller.

Tool	Price	Charity Discount?	UK Data Hosting?	Ease of Use	Best For	Verdict
Pixlr	Plus from €2.49/month (about £2), Premium €9.99/month (about £8.50); no free plan listed	None	US	3/5	Quick photo editing	Good for basic photo editing (cropping, filters, adjustments) but not a full design tool. Use alongside Canva rather than instead of it.

Bottom line: Use **Canva**. Apply for the free nonprofit Pro account – it covers up to 50 users. ⚠️ **Approval is not automatic for a church.** Canva's eligibility guidelines ask for a registered charity with a clearly stated charitable public benefit, and say that meeting the criteria does not guarantee approval, so write the application around the community work you do rather than around worship. There's really no reason to use anything else unless you have specific Adobe needs.

5. Social Media Scheduling

Scheduling tools let you plan and queue your social media posts in advance, so you can batch-create content and not worry about it for the rest of the week.

Tool	Price	Charity Discount?	UK Data Hosting?	Ease of Use	Best For	Verdict
Buffer	Free for 3 channels, 10 queued posts each; paid from \$5/month per channel (about £4)	None	US (GDPR-compliant)	5/5	Small churches with a few social accounts	Clean, simple and the free tier covers Facebook, Instagram and one more. Perfect for most churches.
Later	14-day trial, no free tier; paid from \$18.75/month (about £14) billed yearly	None	US (GDPR-compliant)	4/5	Churches focused on Instagram	Strong Instagram features including visual planner. There is no longer a free tier, only a two-week trial.
Meta Business Suite	Free	N/A	US/EU	3/5	Churches only on Facebook and Instagram	Free and built into Facebook. Scheduling, insights and inbox management for Facebook and Instagram. Slightly clunky interface but perfectly functional.

Bottom line: If you're only on Facebook and Instagram, **Meta Business Suite** is free and does the job. If you want something cleaner and easier, **Buffer**'s free tier is excellent for up to three channels.

6. Video and Streaming

Whether you're livestreaming Sunday services or recording short videos for social media, these tools can help.

Tool	Price	Charity Discount?	UK Data Hosting?	Ease of Use	Best For	Verdict
OBS Studio	Free	N/A (open source)	N/A (runs locally)	2/5	Churches wanting full control over their livestream	Incredibly powerful and completely free. But the learning curve is steep. You'll need a volunteer who enjoys technical challenges.
StreamYard	Free tier (StreamYard branding); paid from \$35.99/month (about £28) on an annual plan	None	US (GDPR-compliant)	5/5	Churches wanting easy, professional livestreams	The easiest way to livestream. Runs in your browser - no software to install. Free tier adds a small StreamYard logo. Excellent for multi-camera setups and guest speakers.
Restream	Free tier; paid from \$19/month (about £15)	None	US (GDPR-compliant)	4/5	Churches wanting to stream to multiple platforms simultaneously	Stream to YouTube, Facebook and more at the same time. Useful if your congregation is split across platforms.
YouTube Studio	Free	N/A	US (GDPR-compliant)	3/5	Everyone	If you're streaming or uploading to YouTube (and you probably should be), YouTube Studio is where you manage it all. Free, with good analytics.

Bottom line: Start with **StreamYard** if you want ease, or **OBS Studio** if you have a technically minded volunteer. Upload everything to **YouTube** regardless - it's the most accessible platform for archived

services.

7. Online Giving

Making it easy to give online removes a significant barrier for many people. These tools handle donations, regular giving and Gift Aid.

 Compare these on the right thing

Some of these are payment processors; some are apps that sit on top of one. Give A Little charges a monthly subscription and takes nothing per transaction – the card fee comes from whichever processor you connect it to (SumUp or Stripe). Comparing its subscription against Stripe's percentage is comparing two different things, and you may well end up paying both.

Check the Gift Aid handling separately from the card fee. JustGiving takes **5% of the Gift Aid** as well as the card fee, which for a church – where Gift Aid is often a quarter of the value of a donation – can matter more than the headline percentage does.

And check where your donors' cards are issued. Stripe charges 1.5% + 20p on UK cards but **2.5% + 20p on EU and EEA cards**, so a congregation with a lot of European members costs materially more to serve than the headline rate suggests.

Tool	Price	Charity Discount?	UK Data Hosting?	Ease of Use	Best For	Verdict
Give A Little	Tiered monthly fee by amount raised (£0 under £1,000/yr, then £7.50–£50); no fee of its own per transaction	Church-focused pricing	UK	4/5	Small to medium churches	UK-built, low fees, handles Gift Aid declarations. Simple to set up with a giving page you can link from your website.
Stewardship	3% fee on each donation (3.5% where Gift Aid is reclaimed)	Church-focused	UK	3/5	Churches wanting a trusted, established giving platform	Well-known in UK church circles. Handles Gift Aid efficiently. More established and trusted than newer alternatives.

Tool	Price	Charity Discount?	UK Data Hosting?	Ease of Use	Best For	Verdict
PayPal	1.4% + 20p (charity rate); 0% via PayPal Giving Fund	Reduced charity fees (apply via PayPal Giving Fund)	EU (Ireland for UK accounts)	5/5	Churches wanting something everyone recognises	Almost everyone has a PayPal account. Easy to add a "Donate" button to your website. Apply for charity rates.
Stripe	1.5% + 20p (UK cards); 2.5% + 20p (EU/EEA cards)	None specific	EU (Ireland)	2/5	Churches with a developer or tech-confident volunteer	Powerful and flexible but needs technical setup. Best used as the payment processor behind another tool rather than on its own.
JustGiving	0% platform fee; 1.9% + 30p processing, plus 5% on Gift Aid	Charity-focused	UK	5/5	One-off fundraising campaigns	Familiar to donors from charity fundraising. Good for specific appeals but higher overall costs and less suited to regular giving.

Bottom line: For regular giving, **Give A Little** or **Stewardship** are purpose-built for UK churches and handle Gift Aid properly. For a quick "donate" button on your website, **PayPal** is the easiest option. Use **JustGiving** for specific fundraising campaigns rather than regular giving.

8. Communication

Staying in touch with your congregation between Sundays. These tools help with group messaging, team coordination and community building.

Tool	Price	Charity Discount?	UK Data Hosting?	Ease of Use	Best For	Verdict
WhatsApp	Free	N/A	EU (Ireland, with some US processing)	5/5	Informal church communication	Everyone already has it. Great for prayer groups, home groups and quick updates. Remember: check the platform's own minimum age, and your denomination's safeguarding policy governs contact with under-18s – it takes precedence over anything here. Independent advice: thirtyone:eight , 0303 003 1111.
Slack	Free tier (limited message history); paid from £5.75/user/month	Free Pro upgrade for workspaces of 250 or fewer – 85 per cent off above that	US (GDPR-compliant)	3/5	Church staff teams and organised volunteer groups	Excellent for team communication with channels for different topics. Free tier limits message history. Apply for the nonprofit discount.
Microsoft Teams	Free with Microsoft 365 for Nonprofits	Free Business Basic licences (up to 300) for eligible nonprofits via Microsoft's nonprofit portal	UK/EU options available	3/5	Churches already using Microsoft products	If your church has Microsoft 365 nonprofit licences (and many do – check Microsoft's nonprofit portal), Teams is included. Video calls, chat, file sharing and calendar.

Tool	Price	Charity Discount?	UK Data Hosting?	Ease of Use	Best For	Verdict
Google Chat	Free with Google Workspace for Nonprofits	Free Workspace licences via Google for Nonprofits	EU (with UK data region options)	3/5	Churches already using Google products	Similar to Teams but in the Google ecosystem. If your church uses Gmail and Google Drive, Chat integrates naturally.

Bottom line: For informal, everyday communication, **WhatsApp** is king – your congregation is already using it. For staff and volunteer coordination, use **Microsoft Teams** or **Google Chat** if you already have nonprofit licences (check the vendors' nonprofit portals – most churches qualify). **Slack** is excellent but the paid tier gets expensive for larger teams.

How to Choose: A Simple Decision Framework

Feeling overwhelmed? Ask yourself these three questions:

1. What's the one thing that would make the biggest difference right now?

Don't try to adopt five tools at once. Pick the category that's causing you the most pain and start there.

2. Who's going to use it?

The best tool in the world is useless if nobody can figure it out. Match the tool to the technical confidence of the person who'll be using it day-to-day.

3. What can you actually afford?

Free tools are often good enough. Don't pay for features you won't use. But also: check whether you're eligible for charity pricing or nonprofit programmes. Many churches are sitting on free or heavily discounted software they don't know about.

Where to Check for Charity Discounts

- **Goodstack** (formerly Percent; the verification partner used by Google, Canva and others) – Microsoft 365, Adobe and other software at deep discounts for registered charities. TechSoup UK runs a separate discounted-software catalogue; it is not the same scheme
- **Google for Nonprofits** (google.com/nonprofits) – free Google Workspace, YouTube Nonprofit Programme, Google Ad Grants

- **Canva for Nonprofits** (canva.com/canva-for-nonprofits) - free Canva Pro
- **Slack for Nonprofits** - free Pro upgrade for workspaces of 250 or fewer, 85 per cent off above that
- **GitHub for Nonprofits** - free team plans for open source and nonprofit organisations

Tool Selection Worksheet

Use this to record your decisions. Fill it in, share it with your church council or leadership team, and revisit it annually.

Category	Tool Chosen	Monthly Cost	Who Manages It?	Review Date
Church Management System				
Email Newsletter				
Website				
Design				
Social Media Scheduling				
Video / Streaming				
Online Giving				
Communication				
Total estimated monthly cost: £_____ · Annual: £_____				

What All This Actually Costs

No individual guide tells you this, so here it is in one place. A church that followed every recommendation across our whole guide set - a website, a mailing list, a design tool, a streaming setup, the copyright licences, ICO registration - would be spending somewhere in the region of **£800 to £1,400 a year**.

That is a real number and worth naming, because it is easy to say yes to eight small monthly subscriptions and never see the total.

⚠ Assume every price you see is ex-VAT unless it says otherwise, and most churches cannot reclaim it. A "£10 a month" tool is £144 a year, not £120. Build VAT into the figure you take to whoever holds the budget, or you will be back asking for more.

Three things worth doing before you commit to any of it:

- **Take the annual figure to whoever holds the budget, not the monthly one.** "£12 a month" gets waved through; "£144 a year, for five years, is £720" gets a proper decision. Both are the same request.
- **Check the free charity tier first, every time.** Google Workspace, Microsoft 365, Canva and several others are free or heavily discounted for registered charities – see the nonprofit discounts above. Churches routinely pay full price for something they could have had free.
- **Put a renewal date in the church diary, with a named person.** The most common way a church wastes money on software is not choosing the wrong tool; it is paying for the right tool for three years after the volunteer who set it up moved away.

And you do not need most of it. A small church with a Google Business Profile, a free mailing list and a CCLI licence is doing the important things. Start there and add only what answers a problem you actually have.

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.

- **Stripe UK card fees:** [Stripe Pricing](#). Confirms 1.5% + 20p on standard UK cards and 2.5% + 20p on EEA cards.
- **JustGiving charity fees:** [JustGiving Fees Explained](#). Confirms the £0 platform fee, 1.9% + £0.30 processing and the 5% administration fee on Gift Aid.
- **PayPal merchant fees:** [PayPal Merchant Fees](#). Confirms the 1.4% + 20p charity rate and that it requires application and pre-approval.
- **Give A Little pricing:** [Give A Little Pricing](#). Confirms the tiered monthly subscription (free under £1,000 raised, then £7.50 to £50) and that Give A Little charges no transaction fee of its own.
- **Stewardship fundraising fees:** [Fundraising for Churches and Charities](#). Confirms the 3% fee on donations, 3.5% where Gift Aid applies.
- **Mailchimp pricing:** [Mailchimp Pricing](#). Confirms the free plan's 250–contact and 500–emails–a–month limits, and the 15% nonprofit discount.
- **beehiiv pricing:** [beehiiv Pricing](#). Confirms the free Launch plan to 2,500 subscribers and that the cheapest paid plan is Scale at \$43 a month. Rechecked 5 September 2026.
- **Buttondown pricing:** [Buttondown Pricing](#). Confirms free for the first 100 subscribers and the \$9 a month add-on structure.
- **A Church Near You:** [A Church Near You](#). Confirms it is free to use and run under the Archbishops' Council.
- **Canva pricing:** [Canva Pricing](#). Confirms Canva Pro at £100 a year and that Pro covers one person.

- **Canva Nonprofits:** [Canva Nonprofits](#). Confirms the free nonprofit plan covers up to 50 users.
- **Adobe Express pricing:** [Adobe Express Pricing](#). Confirms a free plan and Premium at US\$9.99 a month.
- **Pixlr pricing:** [Pixlr Pricing](#). Confirms the tier names and prices: Plus EUR 2.49 a month, Premium EUR 9.99 a month, Ultra from EUR 24.99 a month.
- **Buffer pricing:** [Buffer Pricing](#). Confirms the free plan's 3 channels and 10 scheduled posts per channel, and \$5 a month per channel on Essentials.
- **Later pricing:** [Later Pricing](#). Confirms a 14-day free trial and Starter at \$18.75 a month billed yearly.
- **StreamYard pricing:** [StreamYard Pricing](#). Confirms the free tier carries the StreamYard logo and that Core is the cheapest paid plan at \$35.99 a month billed yearly.
- **Restream pricing:** [Restream Pricing](#). Confirms a free plan with 2 channels and Standard at \$19 a month.
- **ChurchDesk pricing:** [ChurchDesk Pricing](#). Confirms the plan tiers from Basic at £54 a month excluding VAT, billed annually.
- **Tithely pricing:** [Tithely Pricing](#). Confirms the free giving plan and Church Management at \$72 a month.
- **Breeze pricing:** [Breeze Pricing](#). Confirms the single flat rate of \$72 a month.
- **Slack pricing:** [Slack Pricing](#). Confirms Pro at £5.75 per user per month billed annually and the free plan's 90-day message history.
- **Slack for Nonprofits:** [Apply for the Slack for Nonprofits discount](#). Confirms the free Pro upgrade for workspaces of 250 or fewer members and the 85% discount above that size.
- **Google Workspace for Nonprofits:** [Google Workspace for Nonprofits](#). Confirms \$0 per user per month and that Google Chat is included.
- **Google's verification partner:** [Country eligibility requirements](#). Confirms Google uses Goodstack to verify nonprofits, and lists the UK qualifying routes including churches.
- **Microsoft 365 for Nonprofits:** [Technology and software grants and discounts for nonprofits](#). Confirms Business Basic is free for up to 300 users.
- **Goodstack:** [Goodstack for Causes](#) and [Percent is becoming Goodstack](#). Confirm the discounted software programme for nonprofits, that Canva is among Goodstack's partners, and the rebrand from Percent on 15 October 2024.
- **UK VAT rate:** [VAT rates](#). Confirms the 20% standard rate behind the "£10 a month is £144 a year" arithmetic.
- **Safeguarding helpline:** [thirtyone:eight](#). Confirms the 0303 003 1111 helpline number.