



FREE GUIDE · COMMUNICATION

Church Newsletter Starter Kit

A complete guide to starting a church newsletter with platform options, content structure and GDPR-compliant list building.

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 Newsletter Starter Kit

Who this is for: the volunteer who has been asked to start a church newsletter, and the leadership team who need to agree it before anything gets spent.

A church newsletter – whether printed or emailed – is one of the simplest and most effective ways to keep your congregation connected. This guide will help you get started, even if you've never sent one before.

Two things to sort before your first send. An email list is personal data, so you need a **lawful basis** for holding it and a **privacy notice** telling people what you do with it – our [GDPR Compliance Checklist](#) covers both, and getting them right at the start is far easier than retrofitting consent to a list of 300 people.

If your leadership team hasn't agreed to this yet, agree it before you spend anything. Even a free tier commits the church to a data processor and a recurring job somebody has to keep doing. Get it minuted.

Email vs Print: When Each Makes Sense

It doesn't have to be one or the other. Many churches find that a combination works best.

Email newsletters work well when:

- Most of your congregation uses email regularly
- You want to include links (to your website, sign-up forms, YouTube)
- You need to send updates quickly
- You want to track who's reading and what they click on
- You're trying to reach people who've moved away but still feel connected

Print newsletters work well when:

- A significant portion of your congregation doesn't use email or smartphones
- You want something people can pick up at the back of church
- You're reaching out to the local community (e.g. posting through letterboxes)
- You want something people can stick on the fridge

The practical answer: Use email as your primary newsletter and print a simplified version for those who don't have email. You don't need to produce two completely different publications – just adapt the same content.

Platform Options for Email Newsletters

You don't need to spend money to get started. Here are four solid options, all with free tiers:

Platform	Free Tier	Best For	Notes
Mailchimp	Up to 250 contacts and 500 emails a month (recently cut from 500 contacts)	Churches who want the most well-known option	Widely used, lots of templates, can feel complex
beehiiv	Up to 2,500 subscribers on the Launch plan (checked 5 September 2026)	Churches who want something modern and clean	Growing platform, very easy to use, good analytics
Brevo (formerly Sendinblue)	Up to 300 emails/day	Churches who want strong GDPR tools	EU-based, excellent GDPR compliance features
Buttondown	Up to 100 contacts	Very small churches who want simplicity	Stripped back, no fuss, easy to learn

My suggestion: Check the free limits against your actual list size before choosing. Mailchimp's free tier was recently halved to **250 contacts**, so a congregation of 300 now hits the paywall on day one – it is no longer the obvious free starting point it was. Brevo's free tier is limited by **sending** rather than list size (300 emails a day), which suits a larger list emailed occasionally. If GDPR compliance is a particular concern (and it should be), Brevo's built-in tools are worth a look.

Building Your Mailing List Legally

Under **PECR** – the rules that govern marketing email, sitting alongside UK GDPR – you need **clear, informed consent** before adding someone to your email newsletter.

Since 5 February 2026 there is a **narrow charity exception**, and it is narrower than it first appears. It covers people whose details you obtained when they expressed an interest in, or offered support to, your charitable purposes; the **sole purpose** of the email must be to further those purposes (a hall-hire promotion in the same email takes you outside it); and – the part that catches most churches – **the person must have been given a simple way to refuse at the moment their details were first collected, and in every email since**. A list you already hold, gathered without that, does not qualify. Detail in our [GDPR checklist](#).

For a church starting a newsletter now, the practical answer is unchanged: **ask, and record that you asked**.

What counts as valid consent?

- ☐ The person has actively opted in (ticked a box, filled in a form or explicitly asked to be added)

- ☐ You've told them what they're signing up for ("Our monthly church newsletter")
- ☐ You've told them they can unsubscribe at any time
- ☐ You have a record of when and how they consented

What does NOT count as valid consent?

- Pre-ticked boxes
- "We've always had their email address"
- Being on the membership roll or membership list (that's for a different purpose)
- Someone giving you their email for a different reason (e.g. booking a hall)

Sign-up methods

- **At church:** A simple paper sign-up sheet at the welcome desk or back of church. Include: name, email and a clear statement like "I'd like to receive the monthly newsletter from [church name] by email. I understand I can unsubscribe at any time."
- **Online:** Add a sign-up form to your website. Most email platforms provide an embeddable form.
- **At events:** If you run community events, include a newsletter sign-up option on any registration forms.

Migrating an existing list

If you already have a list of email addresses but you're not sure whether people consented properly:

- **Option 1 (safest):** Do not email the old list at all. Start the new list from scratch with a sign-up slip, a QR code on the notice sheet and a line in the notices, and let the old list lapse. You'll lose some people, but everyone on the new list has given clear consent.
- **Option 2 (in person):** Ask people face to face or on paper. A sign-up slip at the back of church for three Sundays and a line in the notices will re-consent most of an active congregation without a single email.

Neither option involves emailing the old list, and that is deliberate. An email asking people whether they want your emails is itself a marketing email under the rules above, and the ICO has fined organisations for sending exactly that.

When in doubt, re-consent. It's better to have 50 people who genuinely want your newsletter than 200 who didn't ask for it.

What to Include: A Suggested Monthly Structure

You don't need to reinvent the wheel each month. Here's a structure that works:

1. Welcome / Personal Note from the Minister

Two or three sentences. Something personal, warm and brief. This isn't a sermon – it's a hello.

2. This Month's Highlights

Services, events, key dates. Use bullet points. Include dates, times and locations. Link to further details if you have a website.

3. One Story or Testimony

This is the heart of your newsletter. A person, a project, something that happened. "How our Toddler Group reached 30 families this term" or "Meet Jean, who's been arranging flowers at St Mark's for 40 years." People read stories – they skip lists.

4. Practical Information

Rotas, contact details, building works, requests for help. Keep it brief and scannable.

5. Prayer Points

Three or four prayer points for the month ahead. Keep them specific but sensitive.

6. One Call to Action

Just one. Not five. What's the single most important thing you'd like people to do? Come to the summer fair? Sign up to help with holiday club? Volunteer for the food bank? Make it clear, make it easy.

Design Tips

- **Keep it simple.** Resist the temptation to use every colour, font and graphic available. Clean and readable beats flashy every time.
 - **Use your church logo.** If you have one, put it at the top. It builds recognition.
 - **One or two photos maximum.** A good photo of real people at your church is worth more than ten stock images.
 - **Think mobile.** Most people read email on their phones. Use short paragraphs, clear headings and a single-column layout.
 - **Short paragraphs.** Three or four sentences maximum. White space is your friend.
 - **Consistent branding.** Use the same colours, logo and layout each month so people recognise it instantly.
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Subject Lines That Get Opened

Your subject line is the single biggest factor in whether someone opens your email. Be specific.

Good subject lines:

- "St Mark's June Newsletter: Summer Fair Details Inside"
- "This Sunday: Guest Speaker + Harvest Festival Sign-Up"
- "5 Things Happening at St Mark's This Month"
- "Our New Toddler Group Starts 12th September"

Poor subject lines:

- "Newsletter"
- "June Update"
- "St Mark's Church"
- "News from the Church"

The rule: if someone can tell what's inside before they open it, they're more likely to open it.

How Often Should You Send?

Frequency	Realistic For	Notes
Monthly	Most churches	Enough content, manageable workload, predictable rhythm
Fortnightly	Active churches with lots happening	Only if you genuinely have enough to say
Weekly	Very few churches	Ambitious - be honest about whether you can sustain it

Our recommendation: Start monthly. If it's going well after six months, consider fortnightly. Weekly is rarely necessary and often leads to burnout.

Pick a consistent day (e.g. first Monday of the month) so people know when to expect it.

Measuring Success

Most email platforms give you basic statistics. Here's what to look at:

Metric	What It Means	What's Good
Open rate	% of people who opened the email	Mailchimp's non-profit average is about 40 per cent; a small list of people who know you should do at least that
Click rate	% of people who clicked a link	2–5% is typical
Unsubscribes	People who opted out	A few each month is normal – don't panic
Bounce rate	Emails that couldn't be delivered	Remove bounced addresses after 2–3 attempts

Don't obsess over numbers. If 50 people out of 200 are opening your newsletter each month, that's 50 people staying connected with your church. That matters.

Sample Newsletter Outline

Here's what a completed newsletter might look like:

Subject line: St Mark's March Newsletter: Lent Groups, Mothering Sunday & Spring Clean

From: St Mark's Church newsletter@stmarkschurch.org.uk

Hello from Sarah

Spring is on its way – I saw daffodils in the churchyard this morning. As we journey through Lent together, I've been thinking about what it means to slow down in a busy world. I hope you'll join one of our Lent groups this year.

What's On This Month

- **Lent Study Group** – Wednesdays, 7:30pm in the church hall (starts 5th March)
- **Mothering Sunday** – 30th March, 10:30am service. All welcome.
- **Church Spring Clean** – Saturday 22nd March, 10am–1pm. Tea and biscuits provided!
- **Leadership Team Meeting** – Tuesday 11th March, 7:30pm

A Story: "I Didn't Expect to Make Friends"

When David started coming to our Thursday morning coffee group last autumn, he wasn't sure what to expect. "I'd just retired and I was a bit lost, honestly. I'm not particularly religious, but someone at the Post Office mentioned it. Now I come every week. I've made proper friends." David's story is a reminder that our simplest activities can make the biggest difference.

Practical Bits

- The boiler repair is now complete – thank you for your patience!
- If you're on the flower rota for March, please check the church office noticeboard for your dates
- We're looking for two more volunteers for the welcomers' rota – speak to Janet if you can help

Prayer Points

- For our Lent study group as we explore together
- For the family of Margaret Dobson, whose funeral was last week
- For our local food bank, which is seeing record demand

One Thing to Do

Sign up for a Lent group! There's a sheet at the back of church or reply to this email. We'd love to see you there.

Monthly Newsletter Checklist

Use this checklist each month to prepare and send your newsletter:

- ☐ Gather content: check diary, speak to minister, collect any stories or photos
- ☐ Write the minister's welcome note (or ask them to send you 2–3 sentences)
- ☐ List upcoming dates and events for the month ahead
- ☐ Write or edit the story/testimony section
- ☐ Add practical information and any calls for volunteers
- ☐ Check prayer points are appropriate and sensitive
- ☐ Proofread everything – ask someone else to read it too
- ☐ Send a test email to yourself and check it looks right on your phone
- ☐ Send the newsletter at your agreed day and time
- ☐ Check open rates after 48 hours and note anything useful

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.

- **Mailchimp pricing:** [Mailchimp Pricing Plans](#). Confirms the free plan limit of 250 contacts and 500 emails a month.

- **beehiiv pricing:** [beehiiv Pricing](#). Confirms the free Launch plan to 2,500 subscribers. Rechecked 5 September 2026.
- **Buttondown pricing:** [Buttondown Pricing](#). Confirms the free plan covers the first 100 subscribers.
- **Email benchmarks:** [Email Marketing Benchmarks & Industry Statistics](#). Confirms Mailchimp's non-profit averages of 40.04% open rate and 3.27% click rate.
- **PECR regulation 22:** [The Privacy and Electronic Communications \(EC Directive\) Regulations 2003, regulation 22](#). Confirms the prior-consent rule for marketing email and the charity exception at regulation 22(3A).
- **The charity exception:** [Data \(Use and Access\) Act 2025, section 114](#). Confirms the conditions of the exception and that the section came into force on 5 February 2026.