

The  
Church



Setting

Instagram

Account



# Setting up an Instagram account



## What is Instagram?

Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social networking service owned by Facebook.

The app allows users to upload photos, graphics and videos, which can be edited with filters and organised with hashtags and location information and posted to your account. You can also choose to allow your posts to be shared publicly or with pre-approved followers.

Instagram users can search for content using hashtags, locations or by seeing what's trending on the platform. You can follow different accounts and like or comment on their content if you wish.

## Check it's the right channel for you

Instagram is primarily used for sharing visual content. Check if it's the right platform for you.

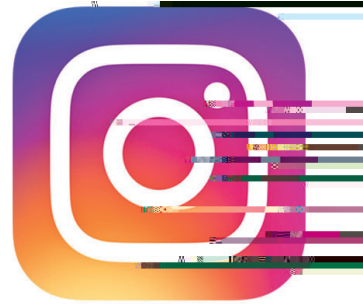
Do you have enough good quality photos or videos to share on a regular basis? If you don't, Instagram is probably not the right social media platform for you.

However, if you can produce this type of content then Instagram is for you.

Have a think about who your audience is. This not only includes your congregation, parish or wider community but can also include local councillors, MPs, local authorities, religious groups, etc.

If people you want to engage with are on Instagram, think about what you want to say and how of en.

Make sure you have the time to manage your account. If you don't have the resources to post regular content and respond to and/or moderate comments on your posts, it's probably best you don't set up an Instagram account. Not using your account is like advertising a phone number that no one ever answers.



## Setting up your account

1. Think of a username for your account. Choose one that's as near to the name of the church or organisation you're setting the account up for so people think to search for it on Instagram.

The name of your account is what appears in your account's Instagram address. For example, the United Reformed Church's Instagram account is

<https://www.instagram.com/unitedreformed/>

You may find the name you want is already taken. Don't let this put you off.

For example, St John's United Reformed Church in York wants to use the username /stjohnsurc but finds it's already taken.

One way to make their username more unique could be to include the area that they are located, e.g. stjohnsurcyork.

2. To set up your account, you can either install the Instagram app to your iPhone or Android or visit [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com) and do it from your computer.

If you've downloaded the app to your phone, tap it and

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When choosing your account's profile picture opt for an image that identifies your church. If you have a church logo use it as your profile picture as it helps people identify your online brand.

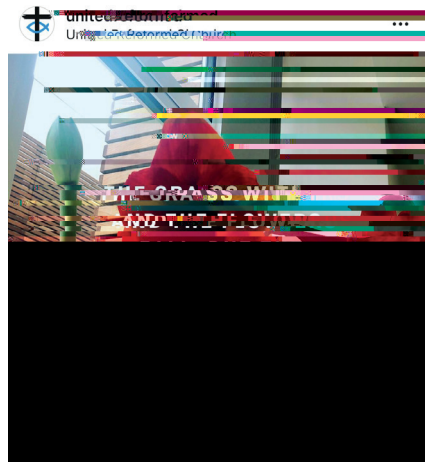
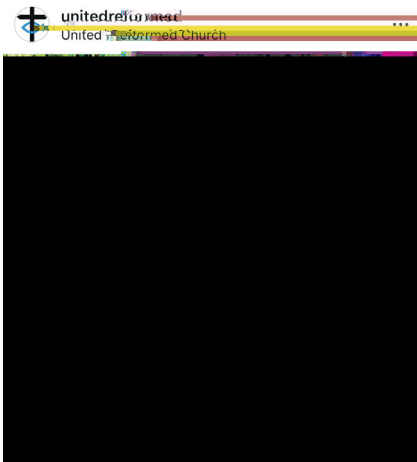
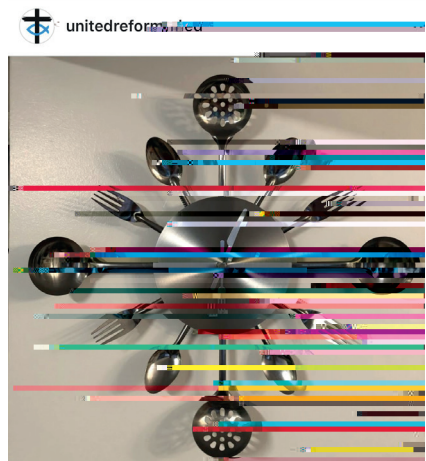
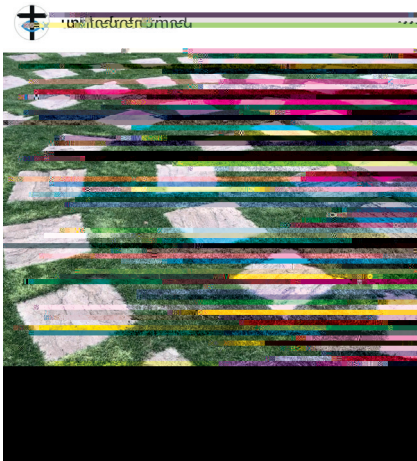
## Instagram posts

Aim for a minimum of one but a maximum of three Instagram posts a day. But find whatever suits you and your audience. Too few posts and your followers will think the account is unused and too many posts can end up with your account

being unfollowed as you're taking over your followers' Instagram feed and preventing them from seeing other posts.

As always, think about what you want to post and why. You can be more creative about what you post on Instagram. In fact the platform lends itself to this type of post more than the informative posts you tend to see on Facebook or Twitter.

## [Guide to image sizes and formats for Instagram](#)



## Be more creative

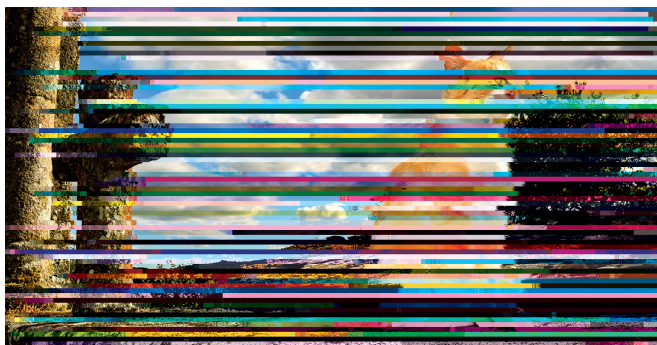
Perhaps more than other social media platform, Instagram lends itself to creative posts rather than posts about upcoming events or report launches.

This means your posts can be about the every day joys of life in the parish, community or the church organisation you run, to give an insight into what it's like. This can also help people see the role your church plays in the immediate community.

You can also share pictures from events you've held. There's a gallery option in Instagram that means you can post more than one photo at a time and you can use this to let your followers know how well an event went.

If your church has a unique or unusual architectural style, post photos of it with information about the architect and/or the history of the building. There is a huge interest in design and architecture on Instagram. Hashtag the design period, the architect, etc, to help garner interest.

Even simple occurrences that put smiles on followers' faces work. For example, perhaps there's a cat that likes to visit and spend time in your church grounds. Take a photo or video of it and post it. There's a very popular #hashtag for cat pics and videos and that's #catsof nstagram so use that when you post your update.



## Limitations to Instagram

Instagram doesn't really lend itself to promoting upcoming events or things you might want people to join, especially if this requires a link to another website for more information or to complete an action.

This is because Instagram doesn't allow your posts to include links to other websites and so forces you to include all the information in one post.

If there's a lot of information this can cause problems as people tend to scroll past posts with that much text. People may also fail to follow the 'more info' link when the text gets cut off on their news feed.

One way of getting around this is for your post to say: "For further information see link in bio". However, if you've got another post about a different event that needs a different link for further information, this might not be the right workaround for you.

You can get around this issue by using Linktree. Linktree allows you to create a personalised and easily customisable page, that houses all the important links you want to share with your followers on social platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Once you've setup your Linktree and added all your links, you simply copy your unique Linktree URL and paste it into the 'Website' field of your Instagram or Twitter bio - you never have



to change the link in your bio again. So for example, if the links you've added to Linktree are to your main website, and then you've added other links to direct people to your events, news, and calendar pages, when you say "for further information see link in bio" people will click on the Linktree link in your bio, and be easily directed to the relevant page your post refers to. Check out the United Reformed Church's Instagram bio for an example.

## Don't forget to use #Hashtags

Whenever you post, don't forget to use #hashtags as people use them to search for content they're interested in. Don't add too many hashtags, otherwise those viewing your Instagram posts may not remember your key message!

Some say three hashtags are enough but see what looks right. A short Bible verse followed by 30 hashtags will look odd.

may want to ask the account to call your church as in some cases it can be quicker to sort things out in person.

If it's vindictive don't feel that you have to reply. Unfortunately there are accounts out there that do this. If an account is persistently vindictive you could think about muting them or reporting them to Instagram. The latter option should only be used as a last resort.

If you like a post from another account like it and write a positive comment if you have time. As well as making Instagram a more positive platform it also helps make people aware of your account.

## Find accounts to follow

Think of what accounts you want to follow. These may be members of your congregation who you know are on Instagram, other churches, local councillors, food banks. Think of organisations that play a role in your local community and/or that you have dealings with in real life.

Of en accounts like these will follow you back and so will add to your list of followers.

You may want to follow accounts that are known as 'Influencers' on Instagram. These are popular accounts of en posting updates on a niche area – beauty, exercise, mindfulness, etc.

Follow verified news accounts so you can get information you can trust.

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Once your account is created you can help promote it outside of Instagram. Add it to your website, put the account address on printed materials and posters in your church, email your congregation about it. Share it on your other social media platforms.

Do everything you can do to help people find you on Instagram, but most importantly enjoy your time on the platform. There are lovely accounts and lovely people using it.



This is one in a series of booklets designed to give information to those working and volunteering within the United Reformed Church.

The booklets can be read and downloaded at [www.urc.org.uk/information-guides](http://www.urc.org.uk/information-guides)



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