



The
United



Reformed
Church



Recording a podcast

Introduction

Recording audio for a podcast isn't as hard as you might think. With the right equipment and know how, anybody can do it. In this guide, you'll find everything you need to know about producing high quality audio.

Equipment

It doesn't take much equipment to record audio and it's not expensive. The main piece of equipment you will need is something to record the audio onto. This could be a computer, laptop, tablet or mobile phone.

Secondly you will need a microphone. Devices such as tablets and phones will have a microphone installed, and will produce fairly good quality audio. If possible, use a separate microphone plugged into your device. This will pick up sound and reduce background noise better than the device's microphone. (Consider something like a DISDIM PC Microphone, which comes with cables and a stand.) Make sure that the microphone is fixed in place, preferably with a stand, as it's important that the microphone doesn't move around during recording.

Alternatively, if you have a hand-held audio recorder, you could use that, and then transfer the audio onto your computer. Hand-held audio recorders can be expensive, so we wouldn't recommend buying one especially for recording podcasts, unless you're planning on doing a lot of audio recording on the go.

What to say

Introduce yourself! Listeners want to know who is speaking. Tell people your name and what part of the country you're in, as well as what church you're at. You might also want to tell people your role within the church, or another interesting fact about the church.

Don't forget to record a sign of too. Thank people for listening and invite them to visit your church at any time. Try including service times or a website link.

How to talk

This is the most important part. To make the audio sound engaging, you need to think carefully about how you speak while recording. Firstly, read the text you are going to record a few times in your head, as well as out loud, to familiarise yourself with all the words. It can be easy to stumble over words, even simple ones, if unprepared.

Next, consider the text carefully. Think about what you're actually saying and what it means. If you just read the text out without any meaning behind the words, it can sound dull and uninteresting to listeners. Instead, you need to communicate the significance of the words with your voice. Are there particular words that need emphasis? Maybe underline them. Are there places where you need to pause, for emphasis, or draw a response from the listener? Mark the script so that you don't forget these pauses; steady pace, not rushing, will give your words a greater degree of authority.



When recording, make sure to:

- Sit up straight. This will help you project the words better.
- Sound happy, engaged and confident.
- Speak clearly and enunciate all the words. Consonants especially need to be clearly sounded, especially at the ends of words.
- Keep at a steady pace; don't be in a rush to get all the words out.
- Have a glass of water nearby. People can tell when your mouth goes dry!

Top tip:

Record yourself practicing, so you can hear what you sound like. This will help you to make any necessary improvements or changes.

It's okay if you make a mistake or stumble over a word when recording. Just pause or stop the recording, take a breath and start again, from the beginning of the last sentence. The audio can later be cut and clipped together to take out any mistakes.

Remember: you are speaking to people, so imagine them listening as you record. Perhaps have a person in mind who might be listening to what you are saying. A smile on your face will be heard in your voice. This authentic intention will add a sense of integrity to your communicating. Speak from your heart, not just from a script.

Recording considerations

The first thing you need to figure out before you do any recording is where to record it. Inside an echoey church isn't a good idea, as it will make the audio harder to understand. Instead, choose a small room. It's better if it is carpeted and there are other soft materials inside the room; this will help avoid echo.

The other thing to consider when choosing a room is ambient noise. Is there traffic outside? Do planes go overhead? Is there a ticking clock or a hum of machinery nearby? All these things will be picked up by the microphone. Decrease ambient noise by choosing a time of day when you know things will be quieter. Don't forget to turn your phone off too!

Do some tests beforehand, so you know what the audio will sound like in that room. You might find you need to do a few tests in different rooms to find the right one. The tests will also help you check that everything is working. The last thing you want to do is finish the recording and discover that nothing actually recorded!

Keep the microphone at the same height as your mouth, and keep it steady. Moving it around will change the volume and sound. Consistency when recording is key. The mic should be about two to four inches away from your mouth.

Remember, everyone sounds different. If you are recording multiple people, you might need to make adjustments for each person. The testing will come in handy again here.

Finally, give yourself enough time. You might think that it will only take five minutes to record, but setting up and testing will take more time than you think. You will also need to give yourself extra time for any mistakes or re-recording. If you rush, it will be noticeable in the audio.

Top tip:

Stick a notice on the door outside your recording room to let people know that recording is in progress. This will stop people from coming in and ruining the audio.

Top tip:

Share the test recording with someone else and get their opinion. They might hear things you don't and give you feedback on how you sound.

Putting out a podcast

There are a few different options once you have the podcast audio recorded:

Option 1 – Audacity and Soundcloud

This is possibly the easiest option and maybe a good place to start. The analytics will give you an idea of the take up and you can develop it further from there.

Audio can be edited using Audacity, which is free to download. You'd need to add an intro and outro to the audio you get from churches. Each episode can then be uploaded to the online platform Soundcloud. Once episodes have been uploaded to Soundcloud, the entire playlist can be embedded into any website page with just a small bit of code. Any church involved in recording could also embed the individual episodes into their website.

Soundcloud's Pro account is around £6 per month (when paid yearly.)

Option 2 – Anchor

Anchor.fm is a great tool for creating podcasts. Once you've created an account, you'll have access to a really easy podcast builder. There are free audio effects and music which you can add in. You can upload your own audio or record straight into the podcast builder. The easy-to-move-and-edit blocks allow you to switch the order of the audio. Once you're ready, Anchor will distribute the podcast to every major podcast platform, including Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and Spotify.

What's also great about Anchor is that people can record audio messages really easily and this audio can be added with just a couple of clicks. Not only could churches upload their audio to you this way but you could also look at including people's messages in response to your podcast, within a future podcast episode.

Anchor has useful analytics, an easy-to-use app, and the hosting of the podcasts is completely free. Another great feature is its ability to create animated videos of your audio-use

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Other things to consider

Start small

You might want to start off small at the beginning to see how things go. This might mean only putting out one or two recordings a week. One every day is a lot of work, and you need to know if there's definitely interest before you invest that much time and resources. It's also important to publish things consistently. If you choose to put one out every Monday and Friday, keep to that schedule. You might want to also publish it at the same time of day, so people know it'll be there for their commute home, for example.

Branding

Ensure you have branding, including an icon or

Don't forget to include website and social media links in the outro. You might also want to include a way for other churches/people to get involved or share feedback link via a dedicated email address.

Creating a longer podcast

If people are enjoying your podcasts, you may want to look at expanding them further. This might include discussing the content in more detail. For example: Is there more than one meaning? How can we use this podcast or reflection in our daily lives? Is there anything happening in the news that relates to this?

One option is to write down questions and ask the church recording the podcast to answer them on a recording limit the people discussing it to two or three people.

Alternatively, you might want to look at getting others to record their response to your content.

Sharing on social media

Audiogram – getaudiogram.com

Audiogram lets you turn audio into engaging video for social media. Its website says: 85% of Facebook video is watched without sound, so being able to put out video clips with subtitles increase engagement over just a link to the audio on its own. The free plan lets you create two videos a month with captions (however, these are automatically watermarked).

Alternatively, create a video with a text overlay

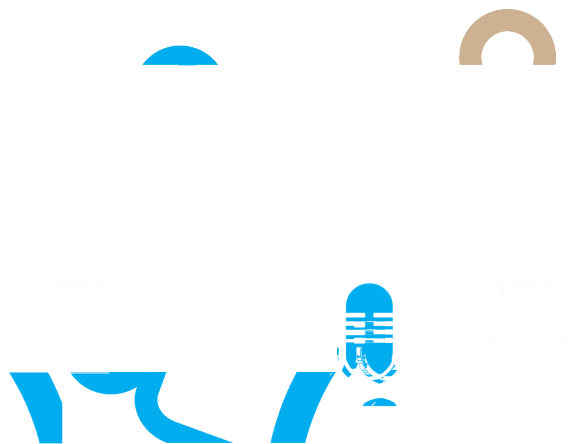
Örroð

It's important to keep the text version of podcasts available on your website for people with hearing difculties.

Alexa skill

This is a costly option but you could follow in the footsteps of the Church of England and produce an Alexa skill, where people can ask for your church's podcast, prayer, location of your church and other questions (e.g. what it means to believe in God, or how to become a Christian). The Church of England estimated that the cost for the production of the Church of England's skill was between £10,000 and £20,000.





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those working and volunteering within the United Reformed Church.

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