



DIGITAL STRATEGY & DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY FOR SYNOD TOGETHER

In March 2021, the moderator approached the members of the IT Team (Mark Rigby and Adam Earle) asking if it would be possible to develop a Southern Synod Digital Strategy. This was to build on the advances in IT and Digital Technology use over the Covid period and some of the preliminary work carried out by the IT Team, drawing on progress made by projects in local church.

The strategy needs to focus on and support the current and future mission of our local churches, supported by the the Synod Officers, Council and Committee members. It also needs to be flexible to fit in with other key aspects of development. IT and digital technology are intended to support, enhance and extend our mission and are not to be viewed as an end in themselves.

The key objectives of the digital strategy, commended by Synod Council to Synod Together for implementation by local churches in partnership with and supported by Synod Office, are:

1. **MISSION** – To make full and effective use of IT and digital technology in declaring the truth of the gospel, growing the kingdom of God and making God's love known.
 - Synod acknowledges that IT and digital technologies are a key means of communication, interaction and provision of information in our modern world and that we can and will continue to identify the most effective ways to use these resources to promote mission, evangelism and community service from our local churches.
2. **COMMUNICATION** – To promote efficient and effective communication and provision of information to support and enhance the work, life and mission of the Synod and local congregations.

- Synod Council recognise the value of effective communication and interaction. In partnership we will seek to maintain and enhance our use of IT and digital technologies (e.g. websites, social media, email, messaging, video messaging, Zoom, Teams etc.) to maximise efficiency in interaction, ensure up to date information is available in a timely manner and enable participation in meetings and activities.

3. RESOURCES – To make accessible, where possible, resources (including missional finance through the Synod Strategy Fund as appropriate), advice, support from “real” people as well as signposting to ensure effective deployment of resources, equipment and people and ensure that any projects undertaken by local churches, with the support of Synod have ongoing value and are sustainable once initiated.

- Synod will work to build on IT and Digital Communication projects already in place and to extend the range and quality of provision within local churches, extending the work of the IT Team as possible including allocating specific resources to support this work. This may, in time, require paid staff.

4. WORSHIP & LIVESTREAMING – To enable churches, where possible and appropriate, to offer online and/or livestreamed worship (and other activities) to enhance mission and secure ongoing provision in light of the changing landscape of provision for ordained ministry, the demands on local leaders and elders and ensuring our small or remote congregations are not neglected.

- Synod will work to enable local churches to introduce, maintain or introduce online or live streamed worship including ensuring that all such activity is compliant with GDPR, Safeguarding and Copyright legislation. We will do so by reviewing current practice, signposting to or providing specific information for churches and supporting churches and their officers to fulfil all their responsibilities in these respects.

SYNOD TOGETHER

On the recommendation of Synod Council, Synod Together endorses and commits to the key aims of this strategy as presented in this summary

(acknowledging the greater detail and proposals outlined in the full Digital Strategy Document to be shared at a later date) and the continued partnership between Synod and Local Churches to work towards these objectives, ongoing review and allocation of resources to fulfill these aims with their underlying missional purpose as the key intention.

MINISTER FOR DIGITAL WORSHIP

Synod welcomes and give thanks for the appointment of Rev'd Andy Braunston as Minister for Digital Worship for the United Reformed Church. We acknowledge the range and variety of the resources being made available through his ministry and will, in partnership with Synod Office, seek to promote full use of the material in support of local churches, members and associates.