Mailchimp is one of the most well-known email marketing programmes available.

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There are lots of alternatives, but we think MailChimp is a great tool to get started with managing email lists.

What is MailChimp and why should I be interested?

MailChimp is an email marketing tool that allows you to send mass emails to subscribers. You can design great looking emails and then send them out using the MailChimp system, rather than through your own email provider.

So if you're looking to send out regular email communications to people in your church, want them to look great and allow people to manage their own email preferences in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018), read on.

How much is this going to cost me?

Nothing – at least not to start with. That's because Mailchimp offers a free plan, which allows up to 2,000 contacts and 10,000 email sends per month, with a daily send limit of 2,000. A few more features are:

- **1 audience** – an audience is a group of people you send the email to

-

1 seat, with Owner permissions – a seat is a login to the Mailchimp platform

- **A few? basic email templates** – to help you get started with your emails

- **Single email automation** – simple automated actions that can happen when someone signs up to your list e.g. being sent a welcome email

- **Basic reporting** – simple reports to give you statistics and analytics about your emails

To sign up for an account, visit their website

How do I use it?

There are a few basic things you need to know before jumping in.

- **Audiences** - an audience is a list of people who have signed up to receive emails from you. For example, you could have a 'church membership' audience that can be used to send out news, information and other helpful details to everyone on your church's electoral roll.

- **Segments, Tags and Groups** - these are different ways of splitting up your audience into categories of people based on things like interests, responsibilities, and interactions with your content. For example, you might have a Segment of people who sign up at a specific event that you can then send emails to as a follow up. You might Tag people when they've clicked on a link in an email (this can be automated) so you know they are interested in something you've said. You might allow people to add themselves to a Group so that you know more about their interests. Segments and Tags are managed by you as the administrator of the account whilst Groups are available for subscribers to add themselves to.

- **Campaigns** - these are the actual emails you are creating that you'll then send out to your audience. They can be scheduled to be sent at future dates and times, set to be sent automatically once someone signs up to your audience or adds themselves to a particular group and much more.

- **Templates** - this is where you can design emails and then re-use them by adding new content. For example, you might design a 'weekly news' template that you use to create a new campaign each week to add your latest content into. The design stays the same so that people recognise the email is from you, but you just refresh the content.

What has this got to do with GDPR?

GDPR is important to organisations that hold peoples' data because it requires the organisation to be open and transparent about how that data is used. This means that we need to be clear about what someone is signing up for when they give us their data and have an easy way to remove themselves from email lists. MailChimp makes managing data in a GDPR compliant way much easier through a number of ways:

- Every email that gets sent out has an 'unsubscribe link' that allows the user to quickly remove themselves from email lists themselves. They are in control of what they are receiving, which also reduces the burden on you.

- If someone does unsubscribe from your email list, their data remains as an entry in case of a Subject Access Request. This is the right

someone has to ask an organisation whether or not they are using or storing your personal information. You'll be able to show them how they signed up, what they agreed to and when they unsubscribed etc. This is important as it means you're being transparent about people's data.

While just using Mailchimp doesn't make you GDPR compliant, the platform gives you a really good footing to help ensure that you're meeting the legal requirements for storing people's data. There's a lot more to GDPR than what is mentioned here, so please take independent advice on what you need to do as a church to comply with the law.

What might a simple Mailchimp set up look like?

It's all well and good reading this and thinking: "It sounds nice, but how do I actually apply it to my situation?". Take a look at the below example, which should give you a good basis for getting up and running with some simple workflows.

Case study

St Thomas' Church would like to start collecting the email addresses of those who attend their church services and events. They want to be able to send out emails to regular churchgoers on news and information about the church community as well as details surrounding different locations for services. They also want to be able to send emails to people who come along to their outreach events, inviting them to future events.

1. **Set up a new audience** - this audience will be the main contact list for everyone who signs up whether they are a regular churchgoer or someone who came along to a single event.

2. **Set up two segments** - the two segments St Thomas' create are 'Regular churchgoers' and 'Outreach events'. People who regularly attend church services are added to the 'Regular churchgoers' segment and those who sign up at other events are added to the 'Outreach events' segment. This allows St Thomas' to send relevant information to the right people. For example, details about upcoming parent and toddler groups, children and youth work, coffee mornings etc. can be sent to the 'Outreach events' segment as an invitation, while news about the church building project and rotas can be sent to the 'Regular churchgoers' segment. As they've also collected the names of their subscribers, MailChimp can automatically insert them into the welcome text so every email is personalised. Another thing to note is because we're only using a single audience, if someone who came along to an outreach event decides to start attending regular church services, we don't need to create a separate account for them and can simply add them to the 'Regular churchgoers' segment.

Set up tags on the 'Outreach events' segment - St Thomas' want to know how they can better engage people who have come along to particular outreach events as they want to make sure the areas that they are focussing on are the right ones. Everyone who signs up at the Toddler group open morning are tagged with 'Toddler group' so that St Thomas' can send them messages regarding future Toddler group dates and information. They make it clear to those sharing their details that they'll use the contact information to send news about future Toddler group news.

This is just one way that you can set up some simple workflows in Mailchimp and begin organising your subscribers into different categories so you can send them relevant information.

As you may have noticed, one of the most important things to do when asking people for their information is to be clear about what they are signing up for. Once they've signed up for a particular reason, you should only send them information relating to that reason. So, if your sign up text reads: *Sign up to find out about the latest news and information from St Thomas' church throughout the year*, people could expect to receive general news and information about the church. However, if your sign up text reads: *Sign up for information about our cake sales,* you should only be sending them information about the cake sales. Make sure you're being clear and transparent about what people are signing up to.

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