

Today marks a significant milestone since the founding of the Digital Communications team at Church House in London one year ago. We're thrilled to announce the launch of the new Church of England website, which has been rebuilt from scratch with the help of many colleagues in the national office in just seven months from start to finish.

While the old website received lots of traffic and interest, the confusing user experience and the 75,000+ documents and pages on the site were identified as key issues. These were resolved by content and plain English workshops for staff.

In January 2017 we ran an extensive research project with 1,800 Christians and non-Christians across the country. This included doing the following to understand what people found frustrating, what they'd like to see more or less of and, crucially, how Christians grow in faith and how we bring new people to faith:

- Focus groups in Carlisle, Blackburn, Birmingham and London
- 1:1 interviews
- Targeted national online surveys through social media
- Website analytics and heatmapping how users interact with the content.

**The clear conclusion was we needed to produce a site that better supported people who lead and go to church regularly but pivot to engaging occasional visitors and those who are open to the Christian faith across the country.**

The Digital Communications team and colleagues across Church House have been working at pace to deliver this new resource with Reading Room, a leading digital agency.

The five major changes visitors will see from today are:

1. Simple navigation, a good search engine, improved website accessibility, mobile first and a clean design! Over 250 professional new images have been shared by local churches and taken nationally that show the breadth of the Church and activities that go on.
2. A transformed *Our faith* section that explains Christianity in an engaging way. Built in collaboration with Church House Publishing, new videos form a key part of this project.
3. New *Faith in action* films that bring to life the missional work of the Church. All of the *Faith in action* and *Our faith* videos are available for local churches and dioceses to use on their own websites and social media accounts from our YouTube page.
4. A streamlined *Prayer and worship* section, including liturgical and prayer resources, thanks to the work of Church House Publishing. Prayer will feature at the heart of the website with the day's Collect now far more visible.
5. A new *Life events* section better explaining baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals as well as vocations.

As these screenshots show, you can see how the design and menu have been simplified and focused:



The new A Church Near You will be integrated into the new [www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org) when it launches soon, making it easier for visiting to connect with the Christian presence in every community.

By the end of January 2018, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York websites will go live.

My hope and continued prayer is that this transformed resource will help Christians to grow in faith and give those exploring Christianity the opportunity to know the love of Jesus Christ in their lives.

We will be further developing the website in 2018 and beyond. This is only phase one and we've focused on putting the website on solid foundations.

*The work of the Digital Communications team is part of the Church of England's Renewal and Reform programme, aimed at helping us become a growing Church for all people and for all places.*

**Adrian Harris is Head of Digital Communications at the Church of England**

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