

# The United Reformed Church

## House Style Guide



This is the new House Style guide for the URC.

### Font

Arial 12pt is the preferred font and size for communications from the URC. This is because Arial is close match to the font used in the logo.

Also, Calibri, the default font for Microsoft applications since 2007, is smaller, as you can see in this example. Both the above sentence and this are 12pt in size. Arial is bigger and easier to read, and given the demographic of our churches, it's better to use a more accessible font.

### Abbreviations and acronyms

Generally, spell out in full for the first mention, with the abbreviation in brackets; thereafter use the abbreviation alone. Thus: **A major contributor to the debate is the Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF). In 1993, a CMF publication...**, thereafter **CMF**; **The United Reformed Church (URC)**, thereafter **URC**; **The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)**, thereafter **JPIT**.

Some abbreviations – eg **BBC**, **EU** are well known and don't need spelling out.

**CRCW** should be spelled out in full when included in a public-facing document (including those who may not know what CRCW means): **Church Related Community Work(er)**. Thereafter **CRCW**.

**GEAR** should be spelled out in full when included in a public-facing document (including those who may not know what GEAR is): **the Group for Evangelism and Renewal in the United Reformed Church (GEAR)**, thereafter **GEAR**.

Acronyms (pronounced as a word) take the initial capital: **Nato**, **Aids**. Eg Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of Nato ...; A look at Nato's new defence policy ....

Initialisms (pronounced as letters) are capitalised throughout. Thus: **BBC**, **USA**, **RSPCA**, **CRCW**, **HTML**, **CNN**.

**St** when short for 'saint' does not take a full stop.

**ie**, **eg**, **etc** – no full points.

**&** – Usually use **and** not **&** in text with the exception of some job or team titles, church groups and Yearbook listings. There is an exemption for social media but only on limited character channels, eg Twitter, where there is a maximum character count.

- Many social media platforms (Buffer, Tweetdeck, Hootsuite etc) offer the opportunity to post one message across multiple social media channels. Do not use the style of one platform for others. Don't use **&** on Facebook or Instagram, and limit **#hashtags** to Twitter and Instagram.

**A Level** as a noun, **A-Level** when adjectival: Tasha got four A grades in her A Levels; It was an A-Level-style exam.

## **Bible references**

Bible references take the form: **1 Corinthians 5:9**. Do not abbreviate the name of the book. We are a Church! (It's like shortening Christmas to Xmas. Please don't!).

When giving just the verse number or chapter number during a longer study of a passage, spell it out: **verse nine, chapter 21**.

Bible versions: generally, let the author choose the translation they wish to use, but avoid the King James Bible (KJV)/Authorised Version (AV) unless there is a good reason for using it. It's more than 400 years old and the language is far from accessible. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is our default version.

Check that the quotation is from the Bible rather than a half-remembered mishmash ('You shall not steal, even if their lunch looks better than yours?').

Writers qualified to make their own translation (ie biblical scholars) should indicate that this is what they're doing.

## **Capitalisation**

Job titles are capitalised in cases where you would use **the** rather than **a**: **Moderator of General Assembly, General Secretary, Synod Moderator, Archbishop of Canterbury, Lucy Brierley, Minister of Woking United Reformed Church**, but **Lucy Brierley is a minister in Surrey**.

Minister of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers are the exceptions that prove the rule – they both take the upper case. However, it is **the ministry of Word and Sacraments**

**Synod**: capitalise only when giving its full title: **The Revd Jamie Kissack is the Moderator of Yorkshire Synod; he has served the synod for five years**.

**Church Related Community Workers** (CRCWs) but it's church-related community work when talking about their work, or that of others, in general.

In recognition of the time donated to the life and work of the church, voluntary roles are capitalised: **Committee Convenor, Convenor-Elect, Elder, Church Secretary, Chaplain, Treasurer and Moderator-Elect.**

'government' is lower case

Lower case pronoun for God: 'Praise his name', not 'Praise His name'.

## **URC bodies/Church specifics**

General Assembly and Mission Council are always capitalised  
Names of URC committees, task or advisory groups, and Church House departments are capitalised: Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG), thereafter HRAG. Youth and Children's Work and so on.

Church Meeting and the Elders' Meeting are both capitalised. Please note the apostrophe after Elders' when referring to something that belongs to the Elders. Remember that we should closely follow what was, and still is, taught at school.

Synod: capitalise only when giving its full title. Thus: 'The Revd Geoffrey Clarke is the Moderator of the East Midlands Synod; he has served the synod for five years'

'Church' is capitalised when talking about a denomination or the whole worldwide Church; 'church' when referring to a local congregation (unless giving its full name). Thus: 'Tulse Hill United Reformed Church is a church in Tulse Hill'

Church initiatives such as Walking the Way and Stepwise are capitalised.

'the Bible' but 'biblical'.

'The Gospel of Matthew' but 'the book of Acts'. 'Gospel' is upper case, whether referring to a book or the Good News.

'Holy Communion', 'Mass' and 'Eucharist' take capitals, as does 'Communion' when it has the same meaning. Otherwise 'communion' takes lower case. Thus: 'The sacrament of Communion is celebrated in different ways throughout the Anglican communion'.

Other theological terms are generally lower case (whether or not they include the definite article). Thus: 'the nativity', 'the kingdom of God', 'salvation'

- Exceptions: 'the Trinity', 'the Son of God', 'the Word', 'the Gospel', 'the Resurrection'.
- If in doubt, follow the usage of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

'Reformed' (as in the religious tradition). Thus: 'The Church of England joined the Reformed tradition after it was reformed in the 16th century.'

'Nonconformist', 'Nonconformity' – one word and takes a capital when it has a religious meaning eg In Britain the Nonconformists are Protestants that do not belong to the Church of England; but, when it has a secular meaning it takes a lower case 'n', eg 'Her belief that

purple was the only proper colour to wear on Wednesdays was responsible for her reputation as a nonconformist’.

‘Dissent’, and ‘Dissenting’ – as above, takes a capital when it has a religious meaning but is lower case when its meaning is secular.

Note the style for these URC documents:

- the Basis of Union
- the *Book of Reports*
- ‘A statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church’.

## Dates

Dates take the format ‘6 September, 1992’ if the year is needed. If it’s a short-term date, then the year can be omitted. ‘The event will take place on 6 September.’

‘the 20th century’, ‘first-century Palestine.’  
‘from 9-12 September’, not ‘ from 9 to 12 September’.

2004 to 2011, not 2004-11 or any other variation. Spelling out the full years is important because many people of a certain age will think about 1911 first not 2011.

When noting a death, the normal style is: ‘He was born on 24 February, 1939, and died, aged 70, on 27 September, 2019.’ Be consistent. Don’t mix styles. Please use a comma if using a full date – 24 February, 1939. I know Microsoft doesn’t like the comma and underlines it in blue. Ignore it!

## Hyphenation

In general, do not hyphenate words eg restructure, deckchairs, subedit, interracial.

Compound adjectives are hyphenated, compound nouns are not. Thus: ‘Do self-deprecating people have low self-esteem?’

Same-sex marriages (although please check as some in LBGT+ communities prefer the term equal marriages).

Use a hyphen when it’s the same vowel eg re-educate. Reeducate looks like a typo.

## Inclusive language

Avoid masculine language when referring to a mixed group or a person of unknown sex.

Respect people’s choice of pronoun – he/she/they.

It is also acceptable to use ‘they’, ‘them’ etc in a neuter singular sense. Thus: ‘Whoever the next Moderator may be, they will have a hard job’.

Ask 'them' not 'him' or 'her'.

Use spokesperson not spokeswoman or spokesman.

## **Military**

the army, the navy, national service, all lower case

Royal Navy, Royal Air Force or RAF take capitals.

The British Army, the Swiss Army, but it's a lower case army tank when used generally. Eg a British army tank.

## **Numbers**

Numbers one to ten are spelled out in full; larger numbers are written as numerals. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, 11, 12, 13 etc ...

Exceptions:

If the first word of a sentence is a number, it is spelt out – so avoid this where possible, especially in the case of long numbers

Time of day: '6pm', '3.30am' 16:00 but not 'two o'clock', 'four in the morning', '12 o'clock', '11 in the morning'. Use the 24-hour clock so people won't be confused between 2am or 14:00.

In cross references, spell out 'page', and use a numeral. Thus: 'page 3'

All numbers of four digits or more need commas: 1,305.

'£12m', '2.4bn tonnes'; but '12 million' when it applies to people. Trillion is abbreviated to T. or tn, not Tr.

## **Personal names and titles**

Job titles are capitalised in cases where they take, or would take, the definite article. Thus: 'Moderator of General Assembly', 'Archbishop of Canterbury', 'Clerk', 'Lucy Brierley, Minister of Woking United Reformed Church', but 'Lucy Brierley is a minister in Surrey'.

Bishops, on first mention, take the form 'the Rt Revd Paul Butler, the Bishop of Durham'; thereafter, 'Bishop Paul' or 'the Bishop'. Archbishops on first mention, take the form 'Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury', thereafter 'Revd Welby' or 'the Archbishop'.

You can remind people about someone's title if you're writing a long piece. Sometimes readers forget that the Rt Revd Justin Welby is a Revd, so switch between Mr Welby and the Revd Welby when needed.

If it's appropriate, you can refer to someone's first name, but this depends on the type of article. If it's an official announcement then the titles protocol above should apply. If it's more

of an informal article, then this is an option. Consider the readership. If they would use Dr Bradbury instead of John, then use Dr Bradbury. If they would use John, then use John (assuming Dr Bradbury is happy for his first name to be used like this).

‘the Revd Fleur Houston’; not ‘Rev Fleur Houston’ or ‘Revd Fleur Houston’ or ‘the Rev’d Fleur Houston’.

No spaces or points between initials in someone’s name. Thus: ‘CS Lewis’ rather than ‘C S Lewis’ or ‘C.S. Lewis’.

Elders: URC members can be Elders ‘of’ (not ‘for’) a church.

The Clerk or Assistant Clerk of the General Assembly, not for the General Assembly.

On its own ‘moderator’ or ‘moderators’ can often be ambiguous. Take care to distinguish clearly between the Moderators of the General Assembly and Synod Moderators.

Avoid ‘co-moderator’ when referring to the URC post. ‘Clare Downing is one of the Moderators of the United Reformed Church General Assembly.’ \*After the 2021 General Assembly this may be out of date as there may be just one Moderator.

‘Convenor’, not ‘convener’.

As above in inclusive language, please respect the title preference provided by the person.

## **Phone numbers**

Phone numbers are easiest to read when the numbers are split into smaller groupings of code plus 4 +3 or 3 + 3 digits. Thus: 020 7916 2020; 01325 371 489 and for mobiles 07976 444 555

## **Punctuation marks**

Quote marks: Use double quote marks (then single for a quote within a quote). “Kanye West said the United Reformed Church was ‘awesome’”.

The concluding punctuation of a quote goes inside the quote mark if the quote is a full sentence, and outside the quote mark if it is not. Eg I was moved by the child who said: “Thank you, God, for making me.” A spokesperson said that the agreement was “not perfect, but a good start”.

Colon: Except in titles, a colon is usually followed by a lower-case initial letter.

Prefix a quotation with a colon, when the quotation could stand on its own as a sentence. Otherwise no added punctuation is needed: ‘He told protestors: “We will take your concerns seriously”’; but ‘She dismissed the proposal as “a miserable compromise”’.

Prefix a list with a colon, only if the previous part of the sentence could stand on its own as a sentence. Thus: 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...', but 'There are three reasons to love this book: its charm, its wisdom and its price'.

A stroke has no space before or after it: 'the BC/AD system'.

An ellipsis has a space before and after. Eg: 'She said the closure "would have a devastating impact ... and must be fought all the way".'

An ellipsis is not normally needed at the start or end of a quotation.

## Spelling

'-ise', not '-ize' – the use of a z instead of an s can be punishable by large fines or imprisonment 😊.

- **Top tip:** Some people share documents and the dictionary is set to English (United States). You can see which dictionary is being used at the bottom left of the Word document, next to the page number and word count. Simply click on English (United States) and double click on English (United Kingdom) in the menu box. Then a lot of the red and blue lines will vanish!

'judgment', 'acknowledgment' etc

'convenor'.

## Symbols

Use '%' not 'per cent'.

No use of subscript. Thus: 2nd not 2<sup>nd</sup>.

US currency is written thus: '\$100'. The default usage by most people is US Dollars. Add the country of currency origin if it is different: \$100JMD for 100 Jamaican Dollars.

## Titles of publications etc

Titles of books, magazines, newspapers, films, TV programmes, albums and both exhibitions and individual artworks are italicised. Subtitles take initial capital only. Thus: *The Year of Living Biblically: One man's humble quest to follow the Bible as literally as possible*. The titles of poems, songs, hymns, magazine articles, essays, NGO reports, committee reports, campaigns and online videos are given in single quotation marks, without italics.

Note the style for these URC documents:

- the Basis of Union
- the *Book of Reports*
- 'A statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church'.

For newspapers and magazines, 'the' is treated as part of the title if it appears in the masthead. Thus: 'The story was on the front page of *The Times*, but didn't appear in the *Daily Mail*'.

When giving publication details of books in the text of an article, state publisher, date and publisher's price. Please also say if it's available from the URC Bookshop.

## **Other**

Use 'US', rather than 'America' or 'American', where possible. In sentences such as '42% of Americans deny evolution', it is often possible to say 'US citizens', but 'Americans' is permissible if the alternative is awkward or inaccurate. (Please note that not all Americans are US citizens – please be accurate in your text).

Use bold for a URL, email address, or phone number where possible. And don't include really long URLs. Use [bit.ly](http://bit.ly) instead. It's easier to type, especially when in printed matter! Please include [www.](http://www) on all URLs, especially in print, including [bitly](http://bit.ly) links. It's not needed by the browser but it helps those unfamiliar with web technology identify that it's a website. Eg <http://bit.ly/urc-house-style> or [bit.ly/urc-house-style](http://bit.ly/urc-house-style) should be written as [www.bit.ly/urc-house-style](http://www.bit.ly/urc-house-style)

Use 'while' rather than 'whilst', 'among' rather than 'amongst' etc.

**In matters not covered above, follow the Guardian style guide:**

<http://www.theguardian.com/guardian-observer-style-guide-a>

*Adopted by the Communications Committee, 2020*