

ONLINE WORSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

If you choose to livestream or record worship services in response to COVID-19, remember these worship services will be aimed primarily at an internal audience – people who are already members of our churches, especially the elderly who may be most isolated during this time. In the future when it's less of an urgent issue, there are definite outreach possibilities that may lead you to a different video hosting platform, such as YouTube, Vimeo, and others.

Livestreaming

We recommend using Facebook Live to stream worship services online in real-time. This platform is free of cost, and you may use pre-existing church account or create church Facebook account. You are able to capture video and stream it online using a phone, tablet, or laptop with a webcam. Use what you have! Facebook is also highly interactive. People with Facebook accounts can comment live while they watch and see the names of fellow viewers, which builds the feeling of community during an isolating time.

Viewers do not need to have a Facebook account in order to view a live stream of your service; be sure to warn individuals without a personal account that there will be pop-up instructions to sign up for Facebook, but that they can ignore and close them. Another plus is that Facebook Live builds content on your church's Facebook account, where people can experience a worship service even after the livestream is finished. You will be prompted to "Save" or "Delete" the live video once it is completed. When you select "Save and Post Now" Facebook will save the video permanently on your account's page for future access, unless you choose to delete it at a later date.

Audio / Video Recording

Instead of a livestreaming option, churches may record worship services, upload the full video file to a hosting site, such as YouTube or Vimeo, or directly to social media accounts, and then share it in an email or on social media to allow home-bound parishioners to experience the service after the fact. You may use any recording device that you have on hand, including the phone in your pocket. Again, use what you have. A digital camera placed on a tripod and located in a close enough range to pick up audio in the sanctuary will also do the trick.

Considerations for Livestreaming and Recording

We recommend you consider the following questions as you plan your streaming or recording:

- 1) **Camera Placement:** What do you want viewers to see? Does the focal point of the service move around; can the camera follow the “action” or does it need to be static? Where in the sanctuary will wireless internet signal be strongest? How close to the front of the sanctuary can the camera be placed? (Choose a place where you won’t need to zoom in and lose image quality.) What will the room and natural lighting look like at that time of day? Will the priest be backlit?
- 2) **Audio Quality:** Does your sanctuary or chapel have good acoustics for a recording? Will you want to, or need to, utilize an external mic?
 - a) Try to position the camera and microphone (or phone) close enough to the person speaking that you do not need to utilize the PA sound system that your church may use during an in-person gathering. Often, the audio is much clearer to online participants if the worship leader is speaking (or singing) directly to the recording device with no voice amplification, especially in some of our sanctuaries, that echo with amplification.
- 3) **Licensing:** In order to stream or publish services that include music, legally, you need to have permission to perform and broadcast/stream any music that is not in the public domain. To use copyrighted music on any of these platforms, you need a streaming license.
 - a) **One License Streaming License – Free:** Through April 15, One License is offering a one-month Podcast/Streaming License to churches and schools for free. This grants permission to stream religious services that contain music from their covered publishers, which includes most of the Hymnal 1982. Sign up for a new account at <https://onelicense.net> and use code “CRVS20” at check out.
 - b) The Department of Communications will be purchasing a Group License as soon as possible, which will provide the licensing necessary for all institutions within the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas to stream services online indefinitely. The process to acquire the group license is subject to the response time of OneLicense, and we are working as quickly as possible to offer this to our worshipping communities. We recommend creating a free account for the time being.
 - c) Many hymns are within the public domain and available for use in worship services without a license. Visit www.hymnsuntogod.org/index.html for a complete list of these hymns for church's consideration in planning live-streamed or recorded worship service.
- 4) **Other Notes:** First and foremost, if you are setting up a livestream on short notice and with few resources, have grace with yourself. Don’t expect perfection, and know that it can still be a sacred space of worship and community connection.
 - a) Practice! Schedule a test run (or two or three) to check out the set-up and get comfortable with the technology and with being in front of the camera.

- b) Create a communication plan to let people know when, where, and how to participate and provide any resources that will help them prepare (like PDF bulletins and links)
- c) Take time during your livestream to speak directly to the people gathered on the other side of the camera (look directly into the lens to “make eye contact” with folks)
- d) Acknowledge that this is new, may feel awkward, and highlight ways to participate through comments; encourage at-home participants to incorporate traditions, such as lighting a candle, into their worship preparations; send written instructions and invitations to the congregation ahead of time, add them to the video description, and share verbal announcement at beginning of the service.

VIRTUAL MEETING RECOMMENDATIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

During this season, it will be important to find ways for church leadership, Christian Formation, Recovery Meetings, and fellowship groups to continue meeting in virtual spaces.

For these gatherings, we recommend using Cisco Webex or Zoom.

Cisco Webex – In response to COVID-19, Webex has expanded its free plan for 90 days to include the following:

- a) Unlimited meetings for up to 100 participants
- b) No time length restrictions
- c) “Toll dial-in” available

Zoom – Zoom has two plan options, with annual and month-to-month payment options:

- a) Highly interactive, with video, audio, typed chat, and phone options
- b) Free plan includes up to 100 participants, for up to 40-minute meeting
- c) \$15 per month plan removes time limit on meeting

EQUIPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

Equipment for livestreaming worship or hosting virtual meetings does not need to be fancy or expensive, especially since we're already several months into the budget year. It does not have to be complicated; use the equipment you have.

Internet – the most important piece of virtual church activities will be a reliable, wireless internet connection:

- a) Livestreaming will require upload speeds between 5 and 10 megabytes per second for an HD video source.
- b) Visit www.speedtest.com to determine your wireless internet upload speed.
- c) Boost your signal: contact your church’s internet or phone service provider for quotes on a wireless internet router or an extender to boost signal from your church office to

sanctuary or chapel; contact your phone service provider to purchase a stand-alone mobile hotspot (which comes with a monthly subscription fee).

d) Use your cell-phone data: set up a mobile hotspot through your cell phone data plan.

Tripod / Stand – Even steady hands can become shaky after holding a phone upright to record for more than five minutes; invest in a simple phone stand or tripod, [available from Amazon](#), BestBuy, and many other retailers.

Microphone – If you wish to boost the audio quality of your phone, you can purchase external directional microphones at a relatively low cost. We recommend this [RODE condenser microphone](#) for use with an iPhone.

People power – Identify a person to operate and keep an eye on the equipment you use to record. Because these are easy systems, almost anyone can serve in this role. With proper preparation, all that needs to happen during the service is to push the “start” and “end” buttons and make sure nobody bumps the camera or stands in front of it.

ONLINE GIVING RECOMMENDATIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

In your communications, it will be crucial to address the importance of regular tithing, even in times of uncertainty. Providing members with an online payment method will be helpful.

[PayPal](#) is a simple solution if your church does not offer an online giving option currently. You may also encourage check writing or online bill payment options offered through an individual's bank.

We are including some verbiage you may use and alter as needed to share the message with your church:

"God does not give us a spirit of fear and we are not reacting fearfully. Rather, he calls us to love one another and serve our community. As such, for the safety and well-being of our church community and protection of the most vulnerable among us, we will follow the guidance of our local officials and Diocesan Bishop. We recognize this exercise of caution will create financial strain on our church, but are prayerful our needs will be met.

Please do not the absence of an in-person gathering stop you from giving. Our goal is to limit the economic impact on our staff and day-to-day operations of the church and our missions. While we may not meet face-to-face in large groups at this time, the work of the church continues, and your support is crucial. You may contribute online via our online giving portal (INCLUDE LINK) or by mailing a check or online bill payment to the church office at: CHURCH ADDRESS."