



Live Streaming

THE COMPLETE DIGITAL GUIDE

Church is (in the words of Kayne West) closed on Sunday... at least for the time being. The Coronavirus breakout and the restrictions on public gatherings has given churches a choice - either adapt or close. As churches across the UK are facing up to this reality, streaming is becoming the obvious route forwards in the present situation. Initially this approach was a survival reflex, but we believe that, harnessed properly, this revolution could enable the church to truly thrive.

In this document we have attempted to outline three tiers of livestream, to give you an idea of what is achievable on any budget and for any size of church. We understand the pressures/tight finances that most UK churches operate within; so if possible we've attempted to find the cheapest (or even FREE) options.

We have highlighted the following three levels of livestream, which we will unpack in more detail later in this document. None of these options are shameful or desirable, it's all about selecting the option that is most relevant to your setting/budget/congregation:

Beginner - live but unprofessional

Intermediate - high end but pre-recorded

Advanced - high end and live

Introduction

Right... before we hit 'LIVE', before we draft a service plan, before we do anything we should chat about some of the fundamentals, the basics that are the foundation of this idea.

The natural disposition is to recreate digitally everything that you'd usually do in a service on a Sunday. Try to avoid this thinking and ensure you craft your content around what best serves the purpose and your congregation.

Filming the delivery of your Sunday Sermon, on stage, to an empty room will be jarring and (frankly) weird, but filming that same talk as you sit in a cosy nook, or smaller room, will seem far more intimate and powerful. Before we dig into the practicalities, please understand that this shouldn't be an exercise in *doing what you've always done*; instead we should analyse what is required and adjust accordingly.

Start by asking important (but difficult) questions:

- *Do you need a full band to enable worship?*
- *Would a single guitar and voice be more appropriate?*
- *Do you really need to give out news/notices?*
- *Does a long format 'sermon' work?*
- *Would a live Q&A be more appropriate?*

If your live stream is being shared publicly, you may, hopefully, reach people that would never usually 'attend' church, so it's also worth considering how you are going to adjust your content to welcome and include these individuals.

Technology

You will need to consider what platform/software you're going to use to stream your live content. There are several options, many of them free. However, as with most things, if you want specific functionality or to increase quality, you are probably going to have to pay premium for the privilege. We've listed various options below, but there are also options like: zoom.us / www.twitch.tv / meet.google.com:

STREAMING

Church Online Platform (www.churchonlineplatform.com)

A free resource from Life Church. Relatively robust and well executed layout and functionality. Allows you to stream live, to simulate live, and also create a back catalogue/ on demand archive of previous streams.

Open Broadcaster Software : (<https://obsproject.com>)

A little more technical but this piece of open source software can be used for both video recording (for catch-up) and also for live streaming.

Youtube Live (www.youtube.com)

A universal and free resource that allows you to stream live, to simulate live (via Youtube Premier) and also create a back catalogue/ on demand archive of previous streams. People are already familiar with the name and layout of Youtube, plus it's free!

Facebook Live (www.facebook.com)

Facebook is an easy choice because you've probably already invested time and resources into your Facebook page/groups. Worth considering that Facebook Live video notifications are received by about one-third of page followers (organically) and although Facebook Live videos are accessible to non-Facebook users, the interface and ease of access is limited.

EDITING

If you decide to prerecord, or want to take your live content and repurpose it for catchup or social media, you're going to need some editing software. There are many different options:

If you are fortunate enough to have a Mac computer, one of the simplest desktop programmes is a built in piece of software called iMovie and is available for Apple computers via the OSX app store. Another free solution is Adobe Premiere Rush. Again, this is a relatively simple editing package and the beauty of this is that it's available for smartphone and desktop computers.

If you're looking for a more professional approach, we'd recommend either using Adobe Premier (registered charities can apply for a discount on Adobe products, or Final Cut Pro X which retails at around £300.

Technology Continued.

UPLOADING

If you want to take your live or pre recorded content and keep it somewhere so that those unable to watch live can catch up, your video content will need to be hosted somewhere. There are a variety of platforms you can use, many of which are totally free:

Youtube is free and simple to use. If you have a gmail account, you already have access to YouTube. One nice feature is that you can make videos 'unlisted' so that only those with a link (your people/congregation/members) can access it, or you can send it public to the world if you wish! Videos from YouTube are also easy to share and embed on your social media accounts, allowing you to reach people where they are and reach outside your usual attendees.

Vimeo is another free option, and it also has the functionality to circulate password-protected links or create public videos that anyone can see. Again, these can be embedded into your website and shared on social media. One additional benefit of Vimeo is it also allows downloads of videos, if that's something you need to do.

Google Drive is another platform you could use to host your videos, This is different from YouTube and Vimeo in that it's not designed with video content in mind, it is a storage facility for all media formats, but is very robust and does the job well. Google Drive can take some time to process videos so if you are running to a strict deadline, this may not be the best option.

Dropbox is another great way of being able to host your content and share it to people with your church through the use of a link. Especially if you are recording material to reach a smaller group of people, such as leaders or a ministry team.

Kit List

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MICROPHONES

Audio quality is a really important consideration when streaming. If you're using a smartphone as your 'camera' you will need a convertor to connect a mic up. We've outlined a few options for you below:

Lav Mic (cheaper option)

<https://amzn.to/2U5JuBH>

Lav Mic (high-end option)

<https://amzn.to/3949B0o>

USB Mic (for plugging into laptop etc)

<https://amzn.to/2U4zdG7>

Shotgun Mic (great for dual/group interviews)

<https://amzn.to/33wAwAM>

TRIPODS/STABLISERS

You're going to want your footage to be stable and to not make viewers feel ill, so some form of stabilising would be a great addition to ensure the stream feels like a quality experience and to not distract people from the content being shared.

Desktop Tripod

<https://amzn.to/2U7s730>

Standard Tripod

<https://amzn.to/3a95L7n>

Smartphone Gimble

<https://amzn.to/2wgnfQN>

Smartphone Video Rig

<https://amzn.to/2U7i2Us>

SLR Handheld Stabiliser

<https://amzn.to/33zBrjP>

SLR Gimble

<https://amzn.to/2IZHmFx>

Kit List Continued

CAMERAS

Remember that any sort of production value is a bonus; no-one is expecting high quality, they just want to hear from you. This is about community and being authentic to who you are.

It can be as simple as a smartphone on a stand; give your viewers a taste of something real, of a caring attitude and a heart on fire for Jesus and wanting to connect with them. So at the start of this document we mentioned three stages of production; I believe this is best unpicked through the exploration of different hardware:

BEGINNER - LIVE BUT UNPROFESSIONAL

Let's start with the camera in your pocket that is more than capable of capturing decent video, your phone! Almost all smartphones are equipped with a very high-quality camera and microphone. Nevertheless, we would recommend considering ways to improve the quality of the stability, sound and picture, to make all video work more easily accessible and professional looking. The strength here is in its portability and cost. It's essentially free (unless you buy a phone mount or microphone to improve quality), and it provides a great, informal experience that lends itself well to live video platforms, providing a personal and "behind the scenes" experience.

INTERMEDIATE - HIGH END BUT PRE-RECORDED

We would highly recommend that almost every church should at least consider this approach if you're wanting to take live-stream seriously. You may not have the budget right now, but working towards this model is a great benchmark to set yourself. The beauty of this approach is that it technically isn't live; which means you have loads of opportunity to do multiple takes, to reshoot and adjust audio etc until you're totally happy, before then posting for all the world to see! We would suggest that for this level, you invest in a camera(s) capable of HD capture. Something along the lines of the following would do the job:

Mevo Start (£250)

Launched April 2020

Panasonic HC-V770 (£350-400)

<https://amzn.to/33xqVtz>

Mevo Plus (£400-500)

<https://amzn.to/3bbTsap>

Panasonic Lumix G7 (£400-500)

<https://amzn.to/396tmUT>

We would also recommend you look at our microphone list to ensure you have a high-quality microphone. However, one option (if in your usual venue) is that you could just use the PA setup that you would usually use for your Sunday Service and take a direct line out of that as your audio feed. Finally you will need to edit your video together before 'premiering' or 'live posting' your content. (Please see editing software suggestions above)

Kit List Continued

CAMERAS CONTINUED

ADVANCED - HIGH END AND STREAMED LIVE

HD video capture that is processed and streamed live via multiple cameras. Would recommend that within this you select different angles and, if using a DSLR that you use different lenses for a more cinematic feel. This level of live stream is usually only accessible for churches with large budgets or substantial media teams. You'd probably want to be using cameras like the following:

Canon 700D (£400-500)

<https://amzn.to/398CcBI>

Canon XA10 (£500-700)

<https://amzn.to/2J2j1yH>

Sony A7 II (£800-900)

<https://amzn.to/2vBnQMk>

You will also need a visual mixer or some way to edit your live output and (as in the intermediate overview) would need to find a way to pull high quality audio into the stream to ensure clarity. Through this approach you should be able to get production quality very high, but it's also important to note that the more equipment you're using, the more likely it is that something will go wrong! *Therefore, we'd only really suggest this level if you have an experienced leader/team overseeing it all.*

Worship/Music

As we've just said, audio is a major consideration in your livestream, and nowhere is this more apparent than in any musical/worship section of your online content. If you're using one of the microphone suggestions from above, you'll probably be ok, but the best option would be to run all audio into your desk and then take a direct feed from that.

It's worth considering that (depending on which approach you take) you may need to have different licensing and copyright protection in place. Playing, storing and displaying songs/lyrics all have different criteria when it comes to streaming or posting anything online. We would suggest checking out this article (<https://jamesdoc.com/blog/2020/covid-19-live-streaming-song-licensing>) if you need a more in depth view on this.

Offering/Giving

It's worth considering how people give in your church. If many of them still give via cash/cheque in person, your giving may be significantly impacted by moving people online. This is simply worth bearing in mind as you may have to educate or incentivise people moving their giving in this way.

PayPal (www.paypal.com)

PayPal has a simple button users can add to any page on a website or embed in an email. Donors can choose to give through automatic monthly payments by clicking a simple checkbox. Transaction fee: 2.2% + £0.30 per transaction (for qualifying non-profits)

Tithe.ly (<https://get.tithe.ly/>)

Tithe.ly is a great option, as it is quick to implement and has no start up fee! They have great customer service and are available to answer questions through online chat or over the phone. Transaction fee is 2.9% + £0.30 per transaction.

EasyTithe (<https://www.easytithe.com>)

If your church is looking for something simple, the free option gives you the functionality of mobile & online giving. There's no startup fee & transaction fee is generally about 3% + £0.39

Givelify (<https://www.givelify.com>)

Givelify is another awesome option with no start up cost and low transaction fees. Easy to set up and add your church's branding, plus donors can give through the app in less than three steps

Pushpay (<https://pushpay.com>)

Pushpay built their platform to nurture non-givers through a journey toward becoming recurring and fully engaged mobile givers. The transaction fee varies by card type, and can range from 2.5% – 3% per transaction.

Preaching

AUDIENCE

Remember that you are livestreaming to a congregation that is remote and not present in the room. What style of delivery, what topic will best suit that audience and be in-line with what God wants to communicate with your people?

It may be comfortable and familiar for you to retain the traditional long format 'preaching from the front' style but within that, we would suggest that you encourage viewers to comment, to share and to ask questions.

Preaching Continued

PRESENTERS

We need to talk about WHO you're putting in front of the camera. Delivering to camera is not the same as speaking/teaching to a room, so it'll take some time to get used to the nuanced differences.

There are several practical things to consider. Firstly, stand if you can/if it makes sense to, mount the camera in line/slightly above your eyeline and ensure you have a bottle/glass of water to hand. Finally it's worth ensuring you look at the camera (not yourself) when presenting; if needs be put a post-it or sticky dot above the lens to remind you where you should be looking!

REHEARSE

Rehearsing and running through what you have to say is not in congress with your theological beliefs! Yes, the Holy Spirit may guide you to say something differently, in the moment, but knowing roughly what you want to say and doing some run throughs to the camera will hugely improve your delivery.

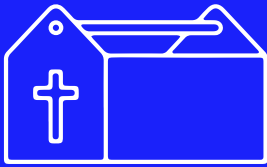
Watch yourself back (yes we understand it's excruciating) to see what works and what doesn't. Practice also helps remove nerves and novelty from the experience; this means you're less likely to collapse in a fit of giggles or freeze altogether. You can also run through getting into and out of different service sections, don't just assume that jumping from prayer right into your sung worship will work, or that going from singing into your sermon will be a smooth flow; rehearse these transitions and ensure clarity for the whole team. Practice makes perfect.

Audience Engagement

Whatever style or 'level' of live stream you go for, we would suggest that you have someone monitoring comments and interacting with those online. If you're streaming to multiple social platforms, you may want a different 'Social Media Manager' monitoring each platform, or you may feel that one person is able to oversee all of these. Either way you want someone who can react quickly, has a pastoral and caring approach and is well versed in social media jargon.

Part of this role may be reacting to comments and info given, so ensure you have created something of a 'crisis strategy' so that your Social Media Manager is prepared with appropriate responses to any comments that need challenging, deleting, hiding, or where it may be necessary - to escalate to a latter personal pastoral conversation.

We would also suggest that you offer live prayer; that your Social Media Manager is encouraging those viewing/commenting to share how the church community can be lifting them up, supporting and celebrating with them in prayer. The more you can interweave or hook this around the sermon being delivered, the better.



A final word on live stream is to encourage you to start, no matter what...

Even if you feel you don't have the team or don't have the budget, start with something and grow from there. There is nothing wrong with starting slowly and growing with time. Even if you have a catastrophic experience for the first attempt or two, do not be disheartened, instead debrief and examine what worked, what didn't, try to work out why and ensure you're referring to your analytics.

Also, don't be afraid to lean into other churches; find someone in your area who is doing this well and ask to shadow them to see what they do. Most churches are more than willing to share insight and resources to enable more people to find and follow Jesus through your live stream.

Live Stream is a fantastic way to connect people with transformational content. In the same way the disciples used the technology of the time (parables, letter, boats) to reach people and start the church; we believe that live stream is just one of the tools we've been given to reach people with the message of the gospel.

The church has the power to bring hope, peace and love into the lives of those that desperately need answers and need the power of Jesus in their life. You can do it!
