

Considerations for Worship in Virtual Space

Updated April 7, 2020

Revised and updated from [an article published March 11](#), by the Rev. Dr. David Gambrell (Office of Theology, Formation, and Evangelism), Dr. William McConnell (Mission Engagement & Support), and the Rev. Tricia Dykers-Koenig (Office of the General Assembly)

As the COVID-19/Coronavirus outbreak advances, congregations are responding in creative and highly effective ways. Given strong guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and federal, state, and local governments against gathering in person, many have chosen live-streaming or pre-recorded modified services as a way to glorify God together, stay connected as the body of Christ, and seek the healing work of the Spirit.

Service for the Lord's Day

- *Livestreamed or pre-recorded* -- The order of worship may remain virtually the same as your normal service or may be altered to reflect pastoral decisions and needs.
 - **Things to think about**
 - *Movements of Worship (Gathering, Word, Response, Sending)*
 - How can each be included?
 - How will each be communicated, both to those online and those without such capability?
 - *Congregational Participation*
 - Comments during worship
 - Prayer requests posted in worship or relayed to the leader offline
 - Responsive posts to questions/prompts
 - Likes
 - Shares
 - *Offering*
 - Do not deny your congregation the opportunity to continue supporting your congregation's mission and the mission of the larger church during a time of crisis
 - Online Giving Platform – [The Presbyterian Foundation](#) (gifts to your congregation and to other projects you designate during set-up)
 - Text to Give
 - Direct payments from the congregation member's bank or credit union
 - [PC\(USA\) Special Offerings](#)
 - [10 Stewardship Do's and 1 Stewardship Don't During a Pandemic](#)
 - *Music Copyright Considerations*
 - We have a moral, ethical, and legal responsibility to acknowledge and compensate authors, composers, and publishers for their intellectual property.

- If the tune, the text, or both are still under copyright, does your congregation hold the appropriate copyright license to copy, livestream, or podcast?
- Streaming and podcasting copyrighted music and texts require an additional license beyond the standard [One License](#) or [CCLI license](#) that many congregations hold. Contact the licensing agency to establish or upgrade your license.
- Hymns and songs with text and music in the public domain may be used without obtaining permission.
 - [List of hymns and songs in *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal* that are either completely or partially in the public domain](#)
- Other guidance from Presbyterian Publishing Corporation
 - [Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal rights & permissions](#)
 - [Hymnal and Book of Common Worship rights during COVID-19](#)
- Music not used for/composed as congregational song is *not covered* under a copyright license. Contact the individual publisher for permission to livestream or podcast.
- *Audio/Visual Production*
 - Camera (and microphone) placement to allow for clear, non-distracting visuals and good quality audio
 - Adequate lighting on the presenter's face, clear projection
 - Screen sharing without icons of non-worship-related programs
 - Amplification of voices (if in a larger space)
 - What is behind the speaker, especially if you are broadcasting from a place other than the church sanctuary
- *Technical Specifications.*
 - Smartphones or another camera?
 - If another camera - HDMI or SDI out components
 - Digital SLR camera may be challenging to zoom in or out.
 - Will you need special hardware/cords to convert into a USB format to stream through your computer?
 - *Editing* (If pre-recorded)
 - Allow plenty of time to gather pre-recorded raw components, edit, render, and upload the finished product. This usually takes longer than anticipated.
- *Sacramental Celebration.* The Book of Order assigns responsibility for the congregation's sacramental life to the Session. [G-3.0201b]
 - [Advisory Opinion from the Stated Clerk on Communion in an Emergency/Pandemic](#)
 - [Office of Theology and Worship supplemental statement on Celebrating the Sacraments in a Time of Emergency/Pandemic](#)
 - *Preparations*

- Liturgical options are available in the *Book of Common Worship (2018)* and *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal (2013)*
- How will communion elements (bread, cup) be provided? What instructions will be provided?

Other worship possibilities

- *Daily Prayer*. Services of daily prayer
 - Includes Psalms, Scripture, and prayers of thanksgiving and intercession
 - A sermon or meditation may be included after the reading of Scripture
 - Orders of Worship may be drawn from the *Book of Common Worship (2018)*, *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal (2013)*, and the PC(USA) Daily Prayer App (from the App store or Google Play)