

Church Life

Coronavirus

Worship

The Super Basic, Low-Budget Guide to Livestreaming for Churches

By Grace Ruiter

If your church has never done a livestream before, here's the absolute essentials you'll need to start livestreaming your worship services without breaking the bank or hiring a professional film crew.

The simplest video equipment you can use



If your church has the resources and know-how to enhance your livestream with a microphone or better lighting, go for it! But we know that's not an option for everyone. So these are absolute simplest and lowest cost tools your church needs to livestream a service.

Smartphone

Using your phone is the easiest and cheapest way for your church to start livestreaming. Smartphones are capable of taking better videos than ever before. And using your phone means you don't have to worry about connecting a traditional video camera to your livestreaming software.

Your video quality isn't going to be quite as high when you use a phone as it would with a professional camera, but that's okay!

Phone tripod

If possible, invest in a basic phone tripod to stabilize your camera. It is challenging for a person to hold a phone steady for long periods of time. A phone tripod also allows you to have fewer people in the room since no one needs to hold the camera. (With a tripod, a solitary person can do all the streaming on their own.) Some tripods also come with a boom microphone that can connect with your phone, though this isn't essential.

[Here's a tripod you can get on Amazon for less than \\$15.](#)

Where to host your church's livestream

Facebook Live



It's free and easy to use, and many churches already have a Facebook page where they can host a Facebook Live video stream. People without Facebook accounts can still watch Facebook Live videos posted to a public page. You'll just need to send them the link to your page.

[How to use Facebook Live »](#)

YouTube

YouTube is free and easy to use. You don't need a YouTube account to watch. And YouTube is the [second most popular website in the world](#) (#1 is Google). While you can watch a Facebook Live video without a Facebook account, streaming on YouTube may be a simpler option for churches who have a number of members who are not on Facebook.

Zoom

Zoom video conferencing isn't just a great option for virtual consistory, ministry team, and Bible study meetings. You can also use it to livestream your church service. This is a good option if you'd like to keep the church service more private, especially for churches who use Zoom already for other things. While creating a Zoom account is free, your church will need a paid account to use Zoom to livestream your church service.

[Here's a great guide to using Zoom for meetings with lots of people.](#)

[Here's a YouTube tutorial to help people in your church who feel less comfortable with technology get the hang of Zoom.](#)

Right now, [Tech Soup is offering Zoom at half price.](#)





Setting up for your church's livestream

Lighting

For the best lighting, position lights or lamps so that they are facing the subject of the video; set up light sources angled toward the subject from two sides, forming a triangle with the subject, to help minimize shadows. (Unless you are trying to make it look like your pastor has a halo, too much light from behind is worse than not enough light at all. It will make it difficult to see your pastor's face because the camera will overestimate how bright the area is.)

Sound

Film in a quiet area. If you have a microphone that can be used with a phone, use it. Especially when you are not using a microphone, you may want to consider filming in a smaller space for better sound quality—try the pastor's office instead of the sanctuary.

Background

A simple backdrop is best. Avoid distracting or “busy” backgrounds if possible. It is also better for the scenery to be a different color than the clothing the person or people being filmed are wearing.

General tips

- Do a test run before you try to livestream your service; this lets you work out the kinks.
- Set up your livestream area in advance and take a couple pictures and videos to make sure that people's faces are well lit and that the sound is easy to hear.
- Have someone on your team watch the stream for technical problems and contact you (or someone in the room with you) during the stream if there are significant issues.



- Make sure you stream in a place where you're connected to high-speed Internet. Streaming requires more bandwidth than most activities, so slower Internet speeds can cause glitches and delays.
- Position your camera within ten feet of your subject. You shouldn't need to zoom in on the subject at all to get a good shot.

How to stream on Facebook Live

1. Open the Facebook app on a phone, making sure you're logged into an account that can post on your church Facebook page.
2. Go to your church Facebook page and tap the "Live" icon. (It's beneath the "Create a post" button.)
3. Type a description of your video if you'd like, and consider turning your phone sideways so that you can fit more in the video frame.
4. Once you're ready to go live, tap the blue camera icon.
5. You can end your video by clicking the "Finish" button. If you'd like to allow people to watch the video later, you'll have the option to "save" the video once you finish your broadcast.

About the author



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