

During the lockdown, we've been hearing from churches on how they are using digital to keep their church connected. In this blog, Fountains Church in Bradford, share how they've provided a safe online space for families and children to keep connected:

Fountains Church Bradford is one of the new City Centre Resource Churches. We meet in the Centre of Bradford and we are just over six-months-old. We don't have a church building before. Now, like everyone else, we have needed to transition online. Lockdown did



We began our online presence using [Zoom](#) as a tool to allow our congregation to join the Fountains Team in a pattern of Morning and Night Prayer. This has been really useful in us learning how to share screens, manage the different speeds of internet connection and to learn how to develop relationships over technology.

For our main service, we chose to use [Facebook and YouTube Premiere](#) to share pre-recorded video, and at first, these worked well for us. But, within a few weeks, we realised we were not really providing support for our families. Our focus began to shift to how we could provide a safe place for our families and their children to interact, and for us to run an engaging Kids Church for them.

We decided to use Zoom as that gave us the ability to safeguard the interactions of the children. We have the meeting password protected and people are admitted first into the 'waiting room' so we have a double vetting process on who is coming in. We advertise Kids Church on our social media profiles and website, but in order to join, parents or carers must connect with us through our [ChurchSuite](#) database, giving us the child and parent/carer details. Once registered, we email out the access link.

- [Learn how to set up a Zoom meeting here](#)
- [Read our Safer Environments and Activities guidance from the National Safeguarding Team](#)

The service is very simple with a welcome as everyone arrives, and lots of chit chat about their weeks or the toys that the children might have brought. We then ask people to mute their microphones so that we can go around and ask each child what they are thankful for from that week. Each week we prepare the children for the next week asking them to send in photos or video clips of what they have been up to. We often use these as part of this section too. The leader of the service then prays a prayer of thanks for the things the children have spoken about.

Next, we have an action song that ties into the theme of the service, again we keep everyone on mute so that the leader of the song can be heard clearly. We use [screen share](#) to show the words to the song with the person doing the actions on video so that everyone can join in.

The Bible story is read, sometimes the children have created their own lego version, or it is read from a Bible storybook and then a short reflection is given. This section often has a game included so that further interaction is had. There might then be some time for prayer and a final song.

For the older children, those around five and above, the zoom room is kept open so that the children can interact with each other. We found that they were missing their church friends, and they, unlike some of the adults, did not seem to have any inhibitions around talking and sharing with each other online. The leader of the service will also usually stay on and if it is appropriate they will dig a little further into the Bible story.

The whole thing has been a significant learning curve for us, but, our families and their children seem to be really enjoying what we are doing, and the children seem to be continuing to develop their relationships with each other and with God.

**Linda Maslen**

Church Leader, Fountains Church Bradford

**For more advice on using Zoom safely take a read [here](#).**

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