

Churches across the country and in Europe have been sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and the hope and comfort of the Christian faith



as built on the digital work that our Church of England worshipping

As church buildings begin to open their doors for individual private prayer, weddings, baptisms and services, we have written this blog to share a range of options for the way churches may continue to offer some form of online service, whether live or recorded at the same time as the service and shared afterwards.

We have also explored the national resources that continue to be available for those churches who, due to reception or resources, may not find it easy to provide online or streamed services and events.

The below is just advice - no one should feel compelled to start or continue streaming services and events but if you do, we're here to help along with your diocesan communications colleagues!

How can local churches approach filming from church buildings or homes?

Many churches are streaming and recording services and events through Facebook, YouTube, Zoom and other platforms. As church buildings begin to reopen, it is worth considering what provision you wish to make available online to enable those members of your congregation who may still be shielding or unable to join in person.

In addition, many churches have reported substantial numbers of people engaging online who may only come at Christmas, Easter or not at all. This has certainly been the national experience. How can they be included in ongoing activities? The [Opening the Doors project](#) is the national Church's initiative providing resources to help encourage people into churches, when it is safe to do so.

Churches have a range of options available to continue sharing content online by recording in church and sharing afterwards on Facebook, YouTube or other platforms, or alternatively sharing in real time with tools such as Zoom. A key question is what you wish to share. Is it a portion of the service, perhaps the sermon or prayers, or the whole service?

There are number of ways in which you can film the service or event:

- Filming using a smartphone or tablet – [read this blog](#) for more information on where to position the device and inexpensive microphones and lighting that can be purchased to significantly improve the quality. If you do not have Wi-fi or 3G/4G that enables you to livestream a service, then recording and then uploading after the service or event is a preferred option.
- Bristol Diocese produced very [helpful guidance](#) for churches on equipment options from a supplier.
- For more permanent installations in church buildings, it is worth considering the overall AV installation in your church. There is [more information here](#). A supplier selection is in progress at [Parish Buying](#) with video and audio-visual suppliers who can provide guidance and a

quote to recommend equipment, installation and ongoing maintenance. For installations as part of your response to Covid-19 there is guidance on permission for [temporary permissions](#). This will enable you to get started quickly.

- Record audio of the service or event using a smartphone and inexpensive microphone (a list can be found in [this blog](#) and share through free platforms such as [Soundcloud](#)). If your service or event will be featuring more than one person (such as musicians), the equipment suggested in [this blog](#) may be preferable. This will be significantly less expensive and could also rely on AV equipment your church may already have in place.
- [This blog](#) explores how to schedule content on the different platforms.

What do you need to consider when livestreaming or sharing recordings from your church building?

- Sharing services online is an exciting opportunity to reach out, however, should be balanced with continuing to provide a safe and secure environment for all. Some members of our community may not feel comfortable appearing in video, and for others it may compromise their safety. **Safeguarding, GDPR and creating safe places** are all key factors before any recordings are made.
- If no one from your congregation will be identifiable during filming or photography then you don't need to gain consent. However, if members of the congregation will be visible, consider the following:
 - **GDPR and permissions for adults:** Those appearing in film or photography will need to have given consent, as religion is a protected feature under GDPR. A photo release form can be signed by adults and must include all the places that the photo or video may be used by the church. Regular attendees at the church need to only sign this once but it should be refreshed regularly, such as every three years. However, new visitors should be asked before the service or event begins.
 - **GDPR and permissions for children:** Videos containing children may be used by the church if consent has been given by their parent or guardian, following the same guidelines as above. If permission has not been given, it can be helpful to identify these children by using a simple paper wristband, or by asking them to sit in the photo and video free zone.
 - **Prepare ahead for filming in your church:** Tell your community your plans for filming and send out the photo release forms to your email list, WhatsApp groups, or Facebook groups – anywhere your community can see it - so they are ready. Have spare copies with you on the day for anyone who has not yet signed. Remember, your regular attendees only need to sign this once every three years.
 - **Create photo and video free zones:** Those who do not give consent to be in a video or photo do not need to sign the consent form.

Create a safe space within your church building where they may sit. This could be a side aisle, or a few rows at the back. Simple signs will help identify where this space is, and make sure that those who are filming or taking photos are aware. At the beginning of the service, remind people and give them opportunity to move.

- **Update your privacy policy:** Include [this paragraph](#) in your privacy policy and display it somewhere with your church building and on your website so that it can be read before the consent form is signed.
 - [Use this paragraph in your church privacy policy](#)
- **Remember, consent can be withdrawn,** resulting in deleting videos or images of that person. It is more likely that a church would experience members of their community not giving consent than withdrawing it later, however it is wise to be prepared for this to happen.
- **Read the Safer Environments for Churches guidance** from the National Safeguarding Team which covers more on GDPR and safeguarding.
- **In-meeting chat-** During Zoom meetings, attendees can chat privately 1:1, as well as with the whole group. This feature can be turned on or off. A general good rule for this is:
 - Leave on for a private meeting where 1:1 conversations may support the whole discussion, where you know all the attendees and everyone is comfortable having the function turned on
 - A public service where this feature may be distracting or open to abuse should have this function disabled
 - The function must always be disabled if children or young people are attending.
 - Find out how to turn off private chat [here](#).
- **Be welcoming to those online and in the room -** Make sure you introduce yourself, your church and the service itself – this may sound silly but lots of people are watching online for the first time.
- **Licensing of music -** This is key to ensure you can use the music you wish, whether live streaming or sharing a recording. We published comprehensive guidance for churches [in our live-streaming guide](#).
- **Live musicians and streaming -** You will need to have specific agreement with musicians involved in the service that they are willing to be included in a livestream or recording. This will need to be established in advance. If you have a contract with a musician, it may have fee

requirements if an act of worship is recorded or streamed. With voluntary musicians you may need to consider the impact of streaming – could it make people more nervous of performing or, conversely, make them think more of performing for viewers at home? Please remember that you may not play wind instruments or sing live within the service, other than by a single cantor.

- **Make sure you add your services and events to AChurchNearYou.com** - The site has had more than 40 million page views so far this year, a huge increase on previous years. Do also promote on your website and social media platforms to help reach and engage the widest possible audience.
- **Using online giving** - Giving is a way we live out our faith, and it funds our churches' ministry and mission. This blog explains what you need to do to set up online giving for your church and how to encourage people to give.
- For tips on **creating a more accessible online service**, read this blog here from Revd Bill Braviner.

Supporting those who cannot use the internet

- A number of churches have been finding ways of supporting those who cannot access the internet enabling them to participate in worship through such things as telephone services. You may wish to consider how you can continue this perhaps by offering an audio link to your service. See more information here on how to make this happen.
- There has been significant engagement with and use of the Daily Hope telephone line. This offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line. It includes prayer resources, mental health reflections and the weekly online service. To access the service, ring this freephone number: 0800 804 8044.

Point people to national, diocesan or local online weekly services

- Nationally we are continuing with online weekly services for the months ahead, ensuring a diverse range of contributors from across the Church. We have seen very good levels of engagement, with 5.2 million views and a range of contributors, including the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, HRH The Duke of Cambridge and Pope Francis. Social media posts relating to the weekly services have now been seen 21.5 million times.
- According to surveys run after recent online services, up to one in five people watching go to church monthly or less, which shows we are

reaching well beyond the core audience. Related to this, up to one third of people are not watching any other Christian service and we are engaging a younger demographic. Read more in [this blog](#).

- Each week we share a press release with information on the upcoming service and post through the Church's national social media accounts.

Do like [our Facebook page](#) or subscribe to [our YouTube page](#) to be alerted when new videos go live.

- Churches across the country and in Europe have continued to run services and events and more than 5,500 are listed on [AChurchNearYou.com](#), which has increased by a further 2,500 in recent weeks. You can use this to find a worshipping community near you. In addition, a number of dioceses such as [Oxford](#) and [Exeter](#) are also running their own weekly services.
- As well as weekly services, there are number of national resources available to help people at this time, including [mental health reflections](#), [coronavirus prayers](#), bereavement materials and other content. Explore more on the [church online page](#).

Conclusion

We hope this article helps you prepare for streaming or recording services and events from your church building or home. We have deliberately provided a range of options so that all churches can, if they wish, provide an ongoing digital offering, even if this is using the national resources which will continue in the months ahead.

There are a range of [Digital Labs blogs](#) available that provide guidance on other topics and the Digital Team continue to [run webinars](#) to help upskill churches to use digital platforms at this time.

Do use the [contact form](#) if you have any comments and questions and we will continue to update this article based on your suggestions and changes to Government guidance.

Church of England Communications

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