

During lockdown, St Albans Church, Fulham, have been holding their weekly services on Facebook, and like many churches, it's been a learning curve. We invited Rev Matt Hogg to share his tips on how to build connection with those viewing at home.

How have you been getting on during lockdown and going online with your services? If your church is anything like ours you will have had challenges and setbacks, but what an amazing opportunity it has been for all of us! I am reminded of the headline in the paper, *'British Public turn to prayer as one in four tune Into religious services'* – The Guardian (3 May).

While lots of people have been attending online services we need to work just a little bit harder than normal to connect with our viewers. We don't want people to simply watch, we want them to engage and experience the love of God. Using the acrostic **Build Connection**, there are some simple practical steps you can take that can help people connect with each other and with God.

Bring warmth

Imagine that you are speaking with a room full of people. Smile and be warm. This helps people connect.

Understand the context

You might want to say things like 'wherever you are watching the service today, maybe in your kitchen or your bedroom'. If your service is on Youtube or Facebook you could ask them to say where they are watching from in the comment section.

Increase engagement

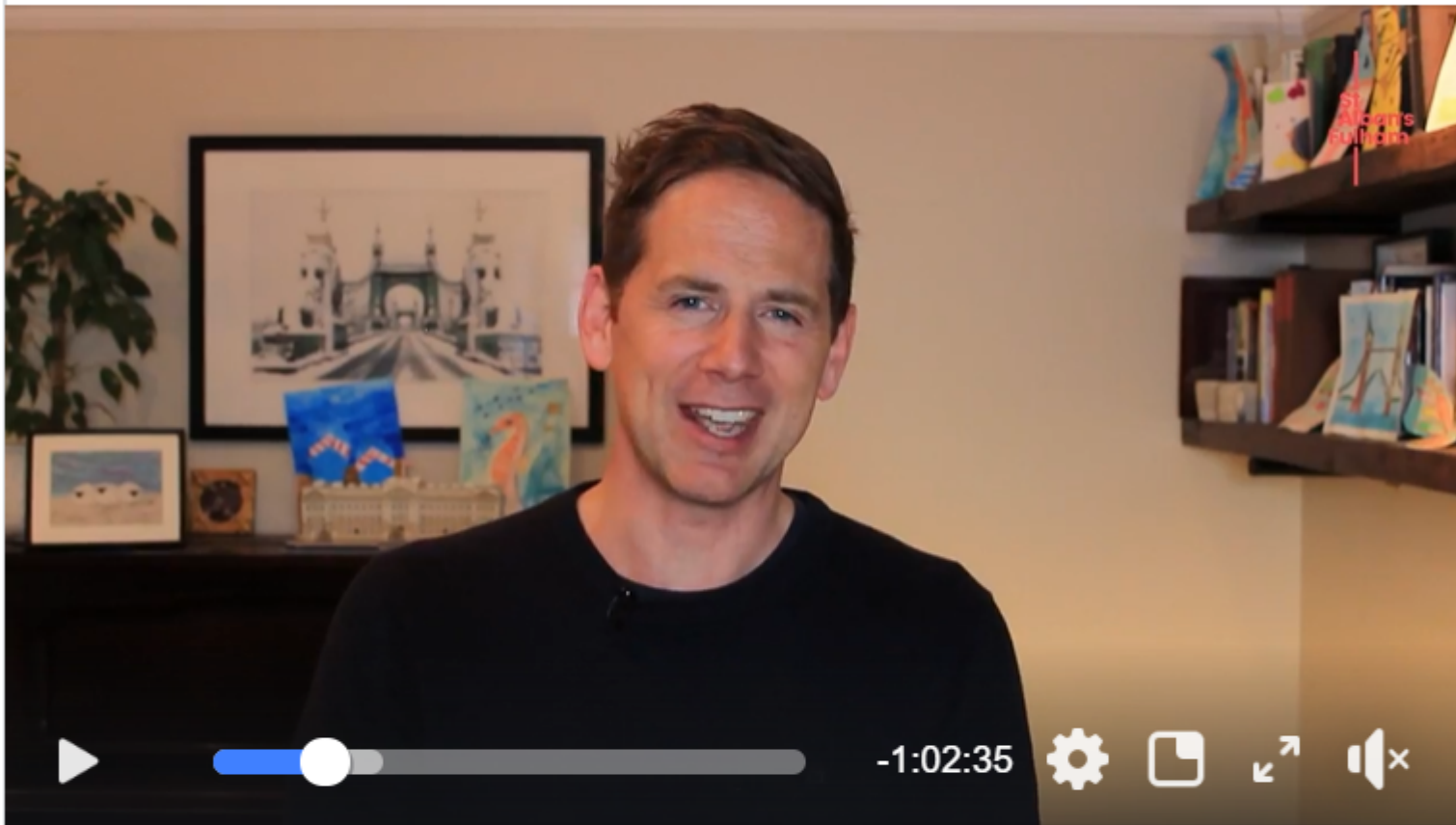
We ask people to comment and click the emoji's and interact as the service is going. Not only does that enable them to feel part of the service, but also the platform algorithm causes the service to become even more visible to others because the engagement tells it that people must like it. This means that others may get to enjoy the service simply because people clicked or commented.



St Alban's, Fulham was live.

Yesterday at 10:49 · 🌐

'How to Live Differently', from our sermon series on the book of Philippians.



Watch together with friends or with a group

Start

👍❤️ 23

92 comments 12 shares 622 views

👍 Like

💬 Comment

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St Alban's, Fulham · 1:13 Morning everyone! Welcome to 'At home with St Alban's Fulham'. We are so happy you are here with us.

Do say hello in the comments, we would love to engage with you this morning.

Like · Reply · 1d



Livestream and pre-recorded

We livestreamed our pre-recorded video using a platform called [ECAMM](#) which is another platform like [OBS](#). It means that we have peace of mind knowing that the content is good quality, but it also means our service team can watch it live and engage in the comments and connect with people.

Deadlines

We have found that anyone working on content for the service (the talk, the prayers, readings etc) need to be clear about the timeline they are working to. This means that everyone is working together and the service has a coherence to it.

Communicate

We have found telling people what's coming up in the service to be really helpful. Tell them up front what they can expect. What are the different elements of the service? Also encourage the audience to communicate with emoji's and comments.

Online is not the same as offline

The length of the service needs to be shorter online compared to in the physical space. Statistics show that attention is much shorter online. People are used to flitting around between platforms. With that in mind we reduced our service length by 40%.

Noise reduction and audio

Anyone taking part in the service needs to make sure that ambient noise levels don't distract the viewer. Also not relying on the internal microphone of the camera or phone. You can pick up a cheap external mic which completely changes the audio experience.

- Read the blog on the best audio set up for videos [here](#).

New presenters training

We found that it's quite a skill to present in front of a camera. Everything from thinking about lighting (face a window) and audio (external), but also positioning on the camera (head in the top third of the screen). It all helps to create consistency and quality across the service.

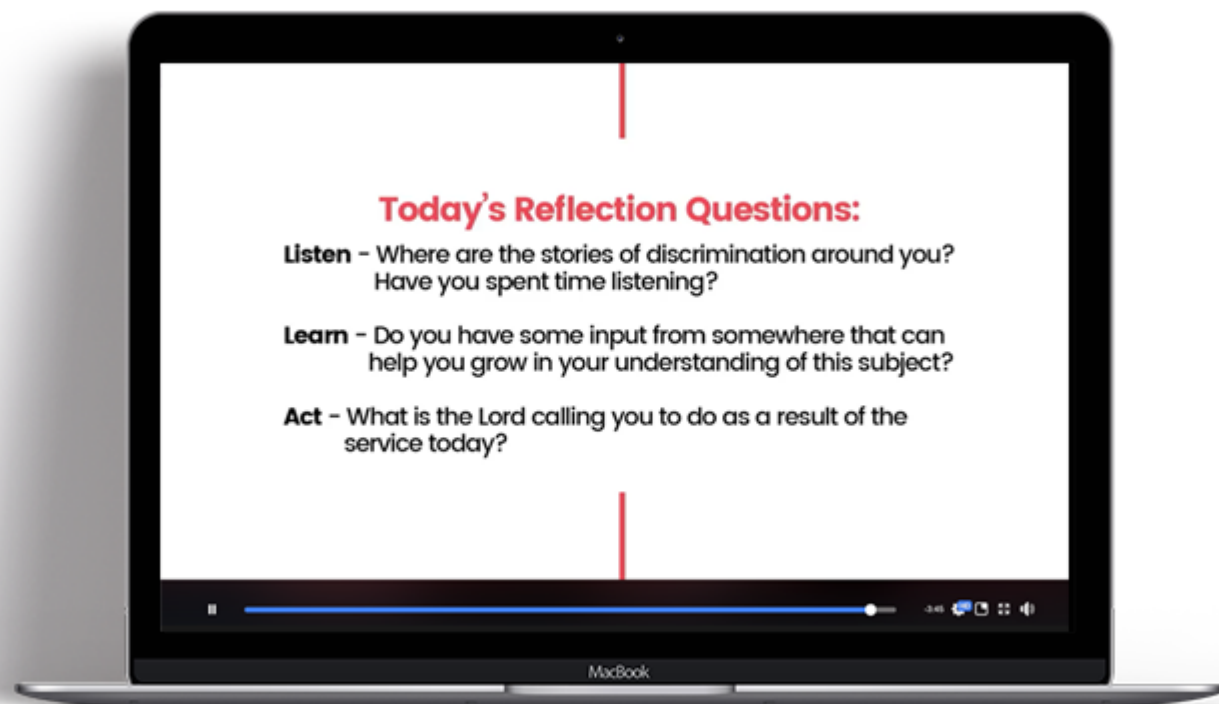
- Learn more about setting up to recording a video [here](#).

Elevate key messages

Pin comments to show what the topic of the broadcast is or to highlight specific messages or links to bible readings.

Connect with Questions

At the end of our service we leave a slide up with three reflection questions for people to engage with. The questions enable people to go a bit deeper with what they heard in the service.



Tricks with Presenting

Use the space you are in by moving closer or further away from the camera whilst you are speaking as this helps it more engaging to watch; pray with your eyes closed encouraging people to close their eyes too; if pre-recorded services don't cut the video, do it in one take as it makes it feel more live.

Insights and Analytics

It's helpful to find from the analytics who is watching - where are they from, what age are they and how long are they watching for? It's also good to ask for feedback from your community. What do they want more of?

- Discover the YouTube analytics to track [here](#).
- Learn more about Facebook Insights [here](#).

One person isn't enough

We have found having a few people ready to interact by posting comments and replying, and being present in the comments section helps people connect with us. We've had people join our church from watching our online services and making connections in the comment section.

Not too Dark

Light is your friend. Make sure the person on camera is facing a window for natural light, or has a light facing them so that they can build connection with the viewer. This is also important for accessibility, so that those who lipread can see your face and expression.

- How can you make your online services more accessible? [Read the guide here.](#)
- Read the live streaming advice for churches [here.](#)

Rev Matt Hogg

St Albans Church Fulham

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