

During these times when many churches are streaming their services online, its good to give some thought to the planning of your service. The following list gives nine points to consider when planning your service to help it work as well as possible online.



What technology are you using?

Will the service be broadcast on social media, or will it be shared online so those watching can participate in the service, such as on Zoom?

Also, is the service online-only, or will there be congregation present in the church as well?

Considering these points will affect the way the service is conducted. For example, if the service is being filmed with no congregation, and being broadcast, how will the congregational responses be said in the service? Everything said by the leader or do you brief the camera operator to say the responses, or someone else?

If using Zoom, do you want everyone to respond unmuted, as the responses could all be out of time with each other, owing to the varying internet speeds of those watching the service? Is it best to have everyone muted, and have the responses said in the service by a designated person, or does the leader just say everything themselves?

If broadcasting to social media you can invite those watching to respond themselves at home, or write a response in the comments.

Learn more about going live on social media or Zoom in our Getting started guide [here](#).

Is the service eucharistic?

Is there Holy Communion, if so, how do we relate to those who will not be able to physically receive the bread and wine? If there is communion, it might be of use to use the Church of England prayer of spiritual communion, which can be said by those who are not able to physically receive the sacrament:

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,

for all the benefits you have given me,

for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.

Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,

I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,

may I know you more clearly,

love you more dearly,

and follow you more nearly, day by day.

Amen.

What music will we be using?

Does your church have the means to provide its own music for these services, or do you need a third-party resource? If you do, check out the Church of England's online music resource, ~~which you can read about here~~. Whatever music you use, you will need to consider whether those watching can sing along audibly in the service (on Zoom there will be a delay between participants) so you may ask them to remain muted. Also, don't forget to ensure you have the right permissions to use the music.

Do we need an order of service?

Does your style of worship require an order of worship, if so, how is this made available? Make it easy to access for those joining the service by uploading a document or PDF to your A Church Near You site or website, then post a link to the document directly in the live-stream comments,

send in the weekly email, or via messenger.

- [How to upload a file to an event on A Church Near You](#)
- **To post a link in the Facebook or YouTube video comments:**
 - Go to the web page you would like to share
 - Copy the page URL
 - Go to the comment section of the Facebook or YouTube video and paste the URL
 - Click send.
- **In Zoom,**
 - Copy the URL as above
 - Whilst the Zoom meeting is running, click on in-meeting chat and paste the URL
 - Click send.

Find an Order of Service for Lent in the Resource Hub [here](#).

Receiving online donations

Do you normally have a collection in some of your services, such as during the offertory? Are you able to do this digitally? If so, make a link available to your congregation by posting a link to your online giving page in the Zoom chat or video comments.

Many churches who have started receiving online donations have reported an increase in donations. The National Giving Team have created a suite of resources to help you get started and build a generous church, [here](#).

Getting others involved

A variety of faces and voices will bring a fresh diversity to the service and will be engaging for those watching at home - your community will enjoy seeing familiar or new faces on their screen.

Help contributors to prepare and present with confidence,

- How will they contribute to the service? The welcome? Readings? Sharing a story? Perhaps try something different each week.
- What instructions will you give to participants and how do you help them prepare for the service? [Read our tips for presenting online here.](#)
- Will they provide pre-recorded content for services, or present live from home or the building? To include presenters from different locations, you will need to use a streaming platform such as OBS or Streamyard. [Read more here.](#)
- If presenting from your church building, how will you ensure social distancing is observed for these services?
- Are you aware of the most recent [Covid-19 guidance from the Church of England?](#)

How we engage views at home

During the live-streamed or pre-recorded service, invite viewers to actively participate by singing, praying, writing something in the Zoom chat or video comments for the service so that people engage with what is going on, and with others who are watching the service.

Recently, St Albans Church in Fulham shared their tips for engaging viewers at home. [Read it here.](#)

What is the call to action?

Use this opportunity to invite people to participate in the life of the church. Include links to your newsletter, Facebook group, and other online services or events. For new viewers, direct them to your A Church Near You page so they can learn more about the community of your church.

Accessible online services

One benefit of broadcasting services online is that anyone can participate, however, we should be mindful of those with impaired hearing or eyesight. Rev'd Bill Braviner, Disability advisor for Durham Diocese, shares his [top accessibility tips with us here](#), to ensure our services remain open to all.

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