

Tips for planning services that work well for children

How can we make online activities or services more engaging for children and young people? Take a read of our tips for leading fun online events and services.

## Engaging children and families

### 1. Choose an interactive environment

Zoom can often work better for children's services as it is interactive but you can also make services on Facebook and YouTube interesting and fun for children. [Read our guide on using Zoom for family services here.](#)

### 2. Build anticipation

Send out a list of things to bring to a service before it starts. This builds anticipation.

### 3. Do have a host to interact

Have a team of Zoom or Facebook hosts who can interact with families through the chat function or Facebook comments.

### 4. Ask someone to help with tech

If you are leading a service, try to have someone else looking after the tech so you are not trying to juggle both.

### 5. Focus on the welcome

Really spend time on the welcome at the beginning of the service, use the Zoom Spotlight feature to ask different families to share a story or show and tell an object you have asked them to bring (e.g. a teddy bear).

### 6. Invite the children to lead

Children pay attention to other children on screen so be deliberate about including videos with children, asking a child to lead the prayers, present the notices, interview the vicar etc!

### 7. Do use music and dance

Pre-record some worship action videos that you can play. Children generally love trying to dance along.

## 8. Do learn how to edit the video

Learn to video edit. Jess, from St Matt's Church in Exeter, says "I'd never video edited until this pandemic, however it is a really easy skill to pick up the basics in and you can make a huge difference if you upskill yourself using a free video editing software like Davinci."

[Find some easy video editing tolls here](#)

## 9. Familiar faces help

Have a small team up front so that the kids can get to know the team well. They will feel safer and engage more if they know who they are likely to see each week.

## 10 .Keep it simple

Make use of resources on YouTube where there are lots of animated Bible stories and songs with actions available.

## 11. Create a pattern

Keep the pattern of services similar from week to week so that people know where it is going, e.g.

- Welcome and catch up
- Song
- Bible story
- Activity linked to objects they have brought
- Discussion/talk
- Song
- Prayer

## 12. Interact

You can still have loads of interaction with the children even if they are not in the room. For example, one family worker says “We ‘ashed’ ourselves at the beginning of Lent using used matches; tasted the different ingredients of a Passover meal and have also drawn and shared pictures.”

## 13. Keep the service short

Stick to a set start and finish time which you advertise beforehand – it’s better if people want more and don’t feel trapped by a Zoom or Facebook service which has over-run.

[Read how one church uses Zoom for their family services here](#)

## Engaging with youth in an online service

South West Youth Ministries says young people have been struggling to engage with virtual church and predominantly not engaging unless it’s relational (i.e. not with live streaming). They will do Zoom but begrudgingly because they are Zoomed-out. Zoom can also be quite exposing. Some who are shy prefer church online where they can watch without being seen. Where getting to church has physical or mental health challenges, there can be a theoretical preference for digital, but this doesn’t seem to be borne out in attendance. Most churches seem to be focusing adults and children and hoping youth will connect with adult provision. Where youth engagement is effective it seems to be where it relational and interactive.

## [This blog is part of the Step-by-step guide to online and onsite services](#)

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