

How to stream worship beyond the sanctuary



Last month, we shared ways churches can [use technology to reach beyond the sanctuary](#).

Using a simple [Flip cam](#) or digital recorder you can extend the reach of your message. The thought process, not the technology is important. Focus on **WHOM** you want to reach and **WHAT** the objective or purpose will be before deciding **HOW** you wish to reach people. This process can ensure you focus the right resources in the right way for maximum impact.

One technology that surfaces repeatedly in interest surveys and comments is video streaming. Streaming a service is not easy. While many online services promise that all you need is a webcam and an Internet connection, streaming requires a significant amount of time, resources and the commitment of volunteers to start and continue it.

Start with why – Evaluate why the church needs to stream its service. It may be to connect congregants who move to warmer climates for the winter. You also could use streaming to transition from a multipoint parish to a multivenue worship service. Determine **WHOM** you are trying to reach, **WHAT** your purpose is and **WHY** it is important. Create measures around these objectives to assess the effectiveness of your efforts. Understanding the **WHY** will help you evaluate whether the time and resource investment is worth the potential results.

Build the infrastructure – Many streaming services state that you can start with a simple [webcam](#). Do so, though, and the sound and video quality will resemble an old home movie, making it difficult for your online audience to engage with the message. A full web-streaming setup requires several quality components to be successful.

- Internet connection – High-speed Internet connection is critical for effective streaming. Make sure you have at least a 5MBPS upload speed for the streaming location and at least 10 MBPS download speed. [Test the speed](#) and then call your Internet service provider if the speeds are insufficient. Wired Ethernet connections are preferred to Wi-Fi whenever possible. Make sure your connection is not shared with any other computers or devices that might compete for network resources, especially when upload bandwidth is limited.
- Video camera – While you may be tempted to use any video camera you can find, take the time to select the right one. Ensure that it has a good optical zoom and that you can connect your soundboard to the camera to improve audio quality. Test the camera to ensure you have both high-quality sound pickup and video picture. A tripod is vital to stabilize the video and allow you to pan and zoom as needed.
- Cabling – You must find the right cables to connect the camera to your encoder. The type of cable depends on both the camera and the encoding device you have. Look up the technical specifications of the camera to determine if you need an encoder and what types of cables you need.
- HD encoder – To stream at the highest quality, you also will need a software or hardware encoder. Video encoding is the process of preparing the video for output. The digital video is encoded to meet proper formats and specifications for recording and playback through the streaming engine or player.
- High-quality computer – Make sure to get a high-quality computer. It can be a Mac or a PC, but a desktop allows for faster processors, more memory, larger hard drives and the ability to upgrade over time. Make sure you have a

wired connection to the Internet, if possible. This should not be the same computer you use for the projection system but a dedicated machine to support the webcast.

- **Streaming service** - Two streaming engines that can be used to broadcast, stream or play live/recording video are [LiveStream](#) and [uStream](#). Set up a free account and your channel. You also can purchase their “pro” account to remove the ads and increase storage space. This is highly recommended. Streaming services have production software for your computer and apps for mobile devices.

Each streaming service has recommended setups. Check out [Ustream's](#) and [LiveStream's](#) recommended setups to get a clearer idea of equipment needs and descriptions. The average setup cost can be between \$2,000 and \$5,000, with a monthly cost of \$250 to \$1,000 for high-speed Internet, streaming service and storage.

Define the production – Determine what you want to broadcast. Do you want to show the whole service or just the sermon? If you want to show the praise band, do you have everything microphoned and mixed properly? Do you have the licenses to allow you to stream the music legally? During the sermon, do you want to display slides or Scripture? Plan the entire service and map out what you will display.

Practice, practice, practice – You will find training videos on many streaming sites or on their YouTube channel. Train at least two people on how to produce the webcast. Practice producing several services before going live and promoting the webcast. Review each session, make adjustments and repeat. If you intend to use webcasting to support a multisite strategy, test it at the broadcasting and receiving sites.

Once you are ready to go live, promote the webcast and experiment with the different capabilities the streaming services provide. Consider ways to improve your webcast and interact with your audience using Twitter tools embedded in the streaming service. You can also post your completed webcast on YouTube and then promote playbacks via Facebook and Twitter.

Protect yourself – In general, your CCLI and CVLI licenses do not cover publishing these images, words and videos to the Internet unless you have added this coverage to your agreement. Even if you shot the video of the worship service yourself, you cannot legally post it to the Internet if it contains copyright material, such as the music, without specific permission. There are several affordable services available that help you to legally post recorded and copyrighted materials to the Internet, and you would be wise to invest in one of these if you plan to share this type of material online. We suggest several resources that will help you in the article, [Web Ministry: Privacy and Permissions](#).

Video streaming your service is not easy and should not be entered into lightly. It requires significant money, time and people to do correctly and with the right quality. Even large multisite churches often capture the sermon digitally, burn it to DVD and transport it to their other locations instead of broadcasting live. Take plenty of time to assess your objectives and determine if this strategy makes sense for your church.