



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

How to stream your worship service — A starter guide

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If you've ever wondered how to stream your congregation's worship or events online, this guide is for you. It's not comprehensive, and the information contained here may change at any time because the software and hardware are always evolving. But the guide explains how to begin streaming for very little money and with equipment you already own or might borrow.

Following are some suggestions and considerations. We will recommend several programs and services, but we do not endorse any product or receive compensation from any of the providers mentioned.

1. Focus this process on people rather than technology

You may think that streaming your worship service is primarily about technology. Consider instead that it's about connecting people through technology. Starting with people as your priority will foster a more harmonious process and a better outcome. Simple and low-tech solutions might be best.

Streaming doesn't require a lot of money; it can be done by a few people and need not detract from the worship experience. People's worship experience and desire for privacy are important. Giving them advance notice of the recording and allowing them to opt out of participating will help build trust and goodwill.

2. Identify your audience

Do you want to stream your service for members, or is it also open to the public? If the stream will be public, you will need to address privacy issues for anyone on camera and copyright issues pertaining to music and other creative works. If the stream is for members only, copyright and privacy issues are simpler. If you stream for a public audience, see number 5 for guidance on copyright and photographic permission.

3. Streaming options

There are many programs and apps that enable you to stream a live event. Here are a few options, starting with the most basic:

a. Smartphone

If you own a smartphone, you can download an app (Skype and Zoom are among the most popular) that lets you create a meeting and email members a link that directs them to the smartphone's video feed. You can also use a service like Facebook Live.

b. App-driven stream

There are a myriad of apps that allow you to stream. Two of the simplest are Switcher Studio and ManyCam. Both allow you to create a multiple-camera stream using mobile devices (such as smartphones or tablets). You can use the same devices to both serve as cameras and the switcher. Switcher Studio (switcherstudio.com) works only with Apple devices and requires an annual subscription fee (starting around \$400/year). ManyCam (manycam.com) works Apple and Android mobile devices, also with PC or Mac computers. It allows you to use smartphones, tablets, webcams and conventional video cameras all together. It is free if you are using one mobile device. If you want to add additional mobile devices, you will need to buy an upgrade of the app for \$2.99. ManyCam also can be controlled with a PC or Mac. If you use the computer version, it requires an annual subscription (starting around \$120/year for businesses).

c. Stream hardware

Among the many hardware streaming products and systems are Elgato HD60 S capture card (costs around \$180 from Amazon, Best Buy and Target) and Sling Stream (mySlingStudio.com). Hardware streaming requires conventional video cameras and an operator for each.

4. Streaming platforms

Facebook Live and YouTube Live are two popular platforms for streaming video online free of charge. Any of the aforementioned recording options are compatible with these platforms. You can make the stream viewable by anyone or limit the viewers only to those with a direct link.

5. Copyright and photographic permission

If you stream music, you will need to obtain clearance to stream any copyrighted music being used in worship. Christian Copyright Licensing International (ccli.com) and One License (onelicense.net) both offer licenses for streaming worship music, with rates based on average attendance. Once License is currently offering [gratis license options for new users through April 15](#). Subscriptions to sundaysandseasons.com and to the Augsburg Fortress liturgies licenses include permission for livestreaming Augsburg Fortress and ELCA liturgical text and music content which is copyrighted or administered by Augsburg Fortress. Augsburg Fortress is temporarily expanding permission for all ELCA and ELCIC congregations and worshipping communities to include Augsburg Fortress administered liturgical text and liturgical music copyrights in a livestream or podcast. More details are available at www.augsburgfortress.org/temporary-licensing.

If you don't want to pay for a license, you can silence the audio signal during any musical portions (if you're streaming live, you should avoid stopping and restarting the stream). You could also prerecord the service and then edit out the music, but watching the service in the moment might be important to viewers.

You must also be certain that people know you're streaming an event and agree to be seen on camera. Get people's consent *before* they're recorded. Instead of asking each attendee to sign a consent form, you might post a notification at each entry to the worship space, leave notification cards at the entrances and in the pews and announce during the service where people can sit to avoid being on camera.

6. Start small. Keep it simple. You can do this.

For most congregations, we recommend starting small, keeping the process as simple and inexpensive as possible and not spending a lot of money right off the bat. Maybe start by recording a stream of the sermon with a smartphone. If you can borrow several mobile devices, try ManyCam. Two or three mobile devices placed around your worship space might be all you need.

Think of your stream less as a production than as a conversation. Who is watching, and who might you invite to watch? What works for them? Consider how can you include your audience, incorporating their online comments or their own video. Have fun with this! It may open up new ways of engaging as a community.

Please send us your feedback, recommendations and experiences.

Go in peace, stream your worship!

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