

Equipment recommendations for online and hybrid services

It is tempting to go and buy lots of equipment before you launch an online service, or move from online only to a hybrid service where you stream live from church. It can be cost prohibitive, completely confusing or lead to purchasing overly expensive equipment that ends up being under- used.

The Diocese of Guildford is full of a variety of churches, all thinking about how they best might serve their community. On 17 July we took a straw poll to get a snapshot of where churches are at in terms of equipment for livestreaming:

- 12 are currently using a smart phone to stream their services
- 11 are looking to build a team dedicated to this work
- 8 are currently using a camera
- 8 are currently using an independent mic
- 3 are thinking of buying a mic or audio kit
- 2 currently have a team and 1 is thinking of buying a camera

This document is intended to provide some information on what options and providers are available to help you as you consider equipment options to enable you to continue an online service. Thank you to those on the Transforming Church Facebook group who shared what equipment they are using and to the Archdiocese of Birmingham for the wealth of information on live streaming.

Before you start

You will need a good broadband connection (speed and reliability). Audio is equally important, even more so than the visual; if the video is interrupted people can still engage if they can hear what's going on, but if the audio is interrupted people are left out of the loop.

If you are considering streaming from your church for the first time, we recommend the following three step approach and equipment types.

1. Use what you have

Before you buy new equipment try what you already have to hand. This option gives you a quick and easy start but is often a temporary solution as the quality isn't great.

- Stream from your mobile device using Facebook/YouTube/Zoom etc. A smartphone will produce something that shows the people online what is going on and that they can see and hear. Make sure the phone is in landscape mode, and you don't have any filters turned on.

- Stream from the web camera on a laptop or desktop using Facebook/YouTube/Zoom etc

When you have a congregation sitting in the church you may need to rethink the positioning of the equipment so it doesn't obstruct their view of what is going on.

Book an afternoon with someone to have a go and work out how to get the best audio and visual quality.

2. Improve your smartphone tech

Buy a couple of things to add to what you already have.

- Use a lapel mic, the sound quality will be noticeably better. Make sure it has a long cable and the right connector before you buy it. Starting from around £10 there are lots of mics to choose from, **Best Reviews Guide has an excellent comparison list of mics**. East and West Clandon Churches stream to Facebook and use a **Rode wireless go** with a **Rode lapel mic** for the priest, a **Rode videomicro** and a Bluetooth speaker for music and readings recorded by the congregation, as well as a **Rode SC6 connector** to connect both to a phone.
- With a bit of experimenting you may be able to feed the audio from your sound desk (if you have one) into video/livestream.
- A wobbly picture is very noticeable. You can prop your phone on a music stand but a smartphone tripod is a good investment. However you do it, try to get the camera in line with the eye level of the person speaking – on a ladder, window sill, music stand or whatever. Some of the tripods can be wrapped around objects so will go almost anywhere. They cost from £15+ and there are lots of **tripod recommendation lists** across the internet.

3. Borrow or rent equipment before you buy or sign a long term rental contract

You may decide to invest in some dedicated equipment. A dedicated camera and audio, which is often a permanent installation, can cost from a few hundred pounds to less than £2,000 for a high spec fixed camera. A camera that can pan, tilt and zoom will be more expensive.

The more advanced the kit, the more skills that the team using it will need to make it work to its best, or to make it work at all. We recommend you rent short term or borrow equipment to see if it is going to fit your requirements before you dive in and buy or sign a long lease.

Remember that you may need to have permission to fix equipment to your church building, please get in touch with Wendy Harris to check:

wendy.harris@cofeguildford.org.uk.

Higher quality camera recommendations for streaming direct to YouTube, Facebook, and other broadcasting outlets:

- **Mevo Start Live Event Camera** available from Amazon £399.
- Axis – P13 (Box) series or V59 (PTZ) series. These have the advantage that they can stream direct to YouTube with **Camstreamer** (\$299) which can be downloaded to the camera. Typically P13 series (£700) to V5915 (£2,000). Use a memory card to use as a back up for your recordings.
- **PTZOptics 30X Zoom** £1,800 from Amazon. Will stream direct.

Other considerations:

- Video mixing. This allows you to take feeds from multiple cameras, pre-recorded videos and other inputs such as song words and decide what the end use sees.
- Use a provider of live streaming equipment. Costs can range from £3,000 to £5,000 for set up and the first year of streaming. We have included a list of providers to consider on the next page.

There are lots of options available and it is worth searching for something that will suit you and your church well.

We'd strongly recommend finding a church that has done this already; to talk to them, and maybe borrow some of their kit (when they aren't using it). Get in touch with us, and we will see who we can introduce you to.

You can also take a look across the internet and YouTube specifically as you can see what it being used and how. For example, see **Churchfront**.

Sound and visual providers

Please note this list is not exhaustive, nor does it constitute a recommendation of any individual contractor.

- Cunnings Recording Associates 020 8767 3533
Brodrick Hall info@cunnings.co.uk
Brodrick Road www.cunnings.co.uk
London
SW17 7DY
- Church Media 028 8773 8494
info@churchmedia.tv
churchmedia.tv/
- Church Services 0203 808 8099
info@churchservices.tv
www.churchservices.tv
- DM Music for Churches Unit 4 01582 761122
Riverside Estate info@dmmusic.com
Coldharbour Lane www.dmmusic.com
Harpenden
Herts.
AL5 4UN
- Hazelwood Sound & Vision 01256 357993
Hazel House 079894 406206
Hatch Warren Lane Basingstoke info@hazelwoodsv.co.uk
RG22 4DB www.hazelwoodsv.co.uk
- MCN Media 0288 772 8580
support@watchmcnmedia.tv
www.mcnmedia.tv
- Newtech Southern Ltd Centaur 01252 761399
House Ancells Business Park sales@newtechsouthern.co.uk

- Ancells Road
Fleet
GU51 7U
www.newtechsouthern.co.uk
- Dominic Boyle
Palace Communications Ltd 1a
Woodland Road
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07956 449294
dcb@palacecomms.com
www.palacecomms.com
 - Idium Technology
020 3393 7710
technology@idium.co.uk
<https://www.idium.co.uk/>
 - Sound Analysts Ltd (Andy Pennington)
Warwick House
Monument Way West
Woking
GU21 5EN
01483 715300
07831 137635
info@soundanalysts.co.uk
www.soundanalysts.co.uk
 - SFL Group
Unit 5, Headley Park
10 Headley Road
East Woodley
Reading
RG5 4SW
0118 9690900
info@sflgroup.co.uk
www.sflgroup.co.uk