

ARTICLE

Live Service Broadcasting for Churches

LIVESTREAMING 101

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“It’s a new day, and streaming is here to stay.”

Why You Should Livestream Your Church Services

It was a long time coming. Global sequestering finally pushed the technology forward so that we could all connect online using our home computers, phones, and tablets in the comfort of our own homes. That said, global pandemics aren’t the only good reason to take advantage of streaming technology. Consider the following:

- **GROWTH:** Reach a larger audience – global, in fact – with minimal effort and expense.
- **CONNECTION:** Folks may move away, or family may want to see a talk or performance; those who are ill, stranded, or otherwise homebound can attend and be welcome. *Keep the connection strong by inviting far-away friends to participate.*
- **FUNDRAISING:** Virtual participants can be very generous.



Getting Started

Here are 3 common ways to share your live service online:

- A. With a **Zoom Meeting**
- B. With a **Zoom Meeting livestreamed to Facebook or/and YouTube** (for wider reach)
- C. **FREE OPTIONS!** Install free streaming/production environment software and stream to Facebook, YouTube, and more: Streamlabs Desktop streamlabs.com; streamyard.com; or use **Facebook Live** or **YouTube Live** in your **Google Chrome** browser. [This is more *manual*, but these are better ways to present higher-quality video and audio online.]

A. Zoom Meeting

With a **Zoom paid account** [see techsoup.org below for amazing discounts], you can present your church services as video meetings in Zoom. (A Zoom Meeting can be compared to a private TV broadcast studio where viewers watch on computers, tablet devices, and smartphones instead of on a TV.) I know you know this already. It’s a powerful tool.

What will I need? How much will it cost?

1. **Sound system** (see the paper by Richard Mekdeci: *Sound Advice: Recommended Equipment and Tips on Using Them*) [A low price range: \$600–\$3,500]

2. **Decent Internet service** ~ [\$40–\$80/month]
3. Desktop or laptop computer [\$1,000–\$2,000]
4. An Ethernet wire (probably long) connecting computer directly to your Internet Router – probably CAT 7 or 8 cable. [\$10–\$25 from monoprice.com] (You might need a small adaptor or hub to connect it to your computer. [\$20–\$30])
5. A video camera, DSLR or mirrorless camera, or iPhone with Camo (<https://reincubate.com/camo/>) installed.
6. A digital audio interface [\$100–\$200] or digital USB mixer [\$200–\$600]
7. License your Pro (paid annually) Zoom account from TechSoup (<https://www.techsoup.org>) and create your Zoom account through them. They can't be beat!
8. Download my tutorial, "[How to Sound Great In Zoom](#)". Do what it says ;-)
9. Find someone who knows how to make it all work every Sunday, or is willing to figure it out.
10. It is difficult to check your own *stream* sound from where you sit (or even from another room in the building), so find *another* someone who can help you check and adjust your meeting's sound quality and output level — *remotely*. [\$99/hour at <https://streamable.cc>]

I've taken care of steps 1 through 5. Now what?

Step 6, of course. Get your sound into your computer.

You need an audio interface (A/D, D/A converter) or a USB mixer. Simply put, **an audio interface is** a device that's typically about the size of a thick, small paperback book. It converts analogue sounds to digital code so the computer can process them, and then it converts them back to analogue so we can hear them through speakers or headphones. There are many kinds and qualities, and decent 2-channel units (recommended) commonly range in price from \$99 (Behringer – low-end, great sound) and \$189 (Focusrite, or Universal Audio Volt – my favorite choice on a budget) on up. Learn more in my [5 Top Tips For Livestreaming](#).

(https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/sj3syrvcvzsr3xfqp5bgkm/Glen-s-5-Top-Tips-For-LiveStreaming_SLI_DES.pdf?rlkey=8zldcfmqe55jyzof9f7cw0l91&dl=0)

What would a Zoom Meeting service look like?

You would schedule a meeting (it *can* be programmed to repeat weekly using the same link for everyone's convenience) and send an email invitation to attendees who will have installed the free Zoom application in their computer or device. They'll only need to click the **meeting invitation link** at the scheduled time, "allow" their computer/device to *use the microphone and camera* (permission will be asked in a pop-up window when they first log in), and *voila!*

A Zoom Meeting service can be *interactive* (with attendee microphones on), or it can be a *one-way presentation* (with attendee microphones off). Since it isn't practical to have everyone's mic live all the time (which would cause constant interruptions to the sound), you might consider a happy middle ground for the best results: open mics before and/or after the service. More about this later.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Zoom was not designed for excellent audio or video quality, it is optimized for groups of people to communicate and share in both directions – it’s amazing for that! Some special settings will allow you to get the best sound possible. [Download my tutorial, “How to Sound Great In Zoom”](#) for guidance setting up your Zoom broadcast computer for good sound — necessary whenever any kind of music will be played or performed. (This includes Tibetan singing bowls, bells, chimes, and a radio playing in your room too!) **Note: Your viewers do not have to do any special configurations at their end to enjoy the pristine sound you will broadcast.**

Your Zoom Service could look something like this:

1. Folks click your invite link and join.
2. They wait in a “waiting room” (which you enable in advance when you set up the meeting).
3. At the start time (or when you are ready) you open the waiting room and let folks in.
 - a. You can **mute guests upon entry**, allowing you to start the event immediately, or
 - b. You can have their **mics open when they enter**, allowing them to commiserate a while before the service. (Many churches have open discussion “community time” before *and* after the service.)
4. At the end of the service, invite everyone to “unmute” and enjoy open discussion “community time”. Maybe invite folks to stay and chat with the guest musician.

If you’ve already made your audio settings changes, follow this checklist before every service (this presumes you aren’t using a smartphone to broadcast):

ZOOM CHURCH SERVICE PRE-FLIGHT CHECKLIST:

- Connect your desktop or laptop computer directly to your router with a fast Ethernet cable. (*...because WiFi is much less stable and reliable.*)
- Restart your Zoom computer then open only the programs you will need.
- Turn off WiFi.*
- Clean up your staging areas.
- Close curtains, power on your artificial lighting, check for shadows, adjust.
- Silence any area noises, cellphone, and computer notifications
- Mute speakers, put on headphones
- Turn on Original Sound (Musicians Sound)
- Mute everyone else** during **any** musical performance...
- Spotlight whoever you want visible at any given time (ex. your minister, while they speak) so they fill the entire screen. Otherwise, they will be just another tiny square on the screen. (This is also important and useful for featuring other speakers or performers who are logged in to the service via Zoom. Just click on the square of the desired featured person and choose “Replace Pin” or “Replace Spotlight”. It’s also possible to “Add to Spotlight”. This allows you to feature two or more people together.)

B. Zoom Meeting livestreamed to Facebook or/and YouTube

With a paid Zoom account, you can stream your meetings/services to Facebook, YouTube, and other platforms. It isn't very complicated to configure. (Instructions for streaming your Zoom meeting to Facebook and YouTube are below). Each Sunday's stream can then be saved as a Post on Facebook or a Video on your church's YouTube Channel, and you can post or embed them on your church website for a growing and accessible archive of services!

Why do this?

Holding your gathering in Zoom allows you to interact with attendees face-to-face. Streaming your meeting to Facebook or YouTube extends your reach to social media platforms, taking advantage of the tools offered by those gigantic social networks and allowing you to keep an archive of your services online for folks to view any time. (NOTE: With Zoom you cannot stream your meeting to Facebook *and* YouTube simultaneously. For that you would have to use third-party software such as Streamlabs Desktop, streamlabs.com, and possibly pay a premium.)

Stream Your Zoom Meeting Servicer to Facebook or YouTube? Yeah. *Let's do it.*

First, you'll have to enable livestreaming in your paid Zoom Account.

To enable Zoom for livestreaming of your meetings to Facebook and YouTube:

1. Sign in to your Zoom web portal at <https://zoom.us>.
2. Click Settings.
3. Click the Meeting tab.
4. Under In Meeting (Advanced), verify that **Allow livestreaming of meetings** is enabled.
5. Select the Facebook and YouTube check boxes.
6. Click Save to save the changes.

[Learn more about Zoom streaming to Facebook here.](#) It's a good read:

[Learn more about Zoom streaming to YouTube here.](#) There are extra steps involved:

C. FREE OPTIONS!

Install free streaming/production environment software and stream to Facebook, YouTube, and more: **Streamlabs Desktop** streamlabs.com; **StreamYard** streamyard.com (and others); or use **Facebook Live** or **YouTube Live** in your *Google Chrome* browser ([Get Google Chrome](#)). [It's a little trickier, but all of these allow you to broadcast the best quality video and audio online...and record *video only* without streaming. The links above contain excellent info for each.]

BONUS THOUGHTS: Different levels of gear investment

Here are other approaches, plus different levels of technology and investment:

1. **LEVEL 1.** Make it as easy as possible. Here's what you'll need:
 - **iPhone or Android phone + Facebook App**
 - Ensure that your **cellular** service includes Unlimited data, otherwise, **only connect and stream using WiFi** [Use Airplane Mode on your phone, and turn on WiFi!]
 - **Tripod**
 - **Phone clip/holder**
 - **Plenty of artificial lighting.** (LED panels are very nice.)
2. **LEVEL 2.** NEXT step-up.
 - **USB mic**
 - **Webcam** (780p or 1080p) on a tripod
 - **Laptop or Desktop computer**
 - **FB Live Producer** in **Google Chrome browser**
 - **Wired Ethernet connection to the Internet** (connected from a WiFi router port to your computer – you might need an adaptor.)
3. **LEVEL 3.** *Really* doing it!
 - **Audio Interface / mic(s)**
 - **Webcam (780p or 1080p)** on a tripod
 - **Laptop or Desktop computer**
 - Production software or online service, including logo and overlays:
 - **OBS**
 - **Streamyard**
 - **StreamLabs Desktop** (Now allows GUEST PERFORMERS, INTERVIEWEES – for *FREE*, with some restrictions)
 - **eCamm Live**
 - etc.
 - **Wired Ethernet connection to the Internet** (connected from a WiFi router port to your computer – you might need an adaptor.)
4. **LEVEL 4.** *Going pro!*
 - Audio Interface / mic(s)
 - Webcam/Digital Camera (780p or 1080p) or Multiple Cameras on tripods
 - Production software or online service – build a custom production:
 - **OBS**
 - **Streamyard**
 - **StreamLabs Desktop** (Now allows GUEST PERFORMERS, INTERVIEWEES – for *FREE*, with some restrictions)
 - **eCamm Live**
 - etc.
 - Bring in GUEST PERFORMERS, INTERVIEWEES!
 - GoLive / **multi-stream** to YouTube, Facebook, and more simultaneously.