

HOW TO STREAM MY SUNDAY SERVICE

Church services will look different in the coming weeks. In-person gatherings will be replaced by digital gatherings and streaming in order to mitigate the epidemic through social distancing. Some churches are ready with the equipment and know-how to start streaming their churches, but some need assistance in knowing where to even start. My goal today is to try to help you get set up for live streaming your services as fast as possible for as cheap as possible.

We're going to talk about three different options today, a bit of good, better, best. Are there better ways to do all of the things on this list? Of course. But all of the ways I know are either too much money or too much time to be reasonably executed in the window I know many churches are dealing with. We're talking about quick and dirty today. Will it be perfect? No. Will it be polished? Probably not. But the gospel will be preached. So let's talk about how we can livestream during this time and beyond.

OPTION 1: USE THE BEST PHONE YOU HAVE.

First, and simplest, use the best phone you have. My friend Caleb Weidman's church experienced a massive, sudden power outage on a Sunday morning. All of their equipment went down. They proceeded to power to makeshift sound system and construction lights using a backup generator and a whole heck of a lot of extension cords. To live stream the service, they slapped a phone on a tripod and prayed for the best. It was far from perfect, but their community was incredibly, vocally thankful for the service amid the crisis.

Make sure to have the phone connected to the Internet via Wi-Fi and give it the best signal you can. If you don't have to worry about getting in the way of an in-house audience, get the phone up on stage and close with your pastor and keep the camera as steady as you can.

If you need to stream from an area not in your church, choose a quiet, well-lit room, like an office. Have the phone in a landscape perspective. In order to stream live to Facebook, simply go to your church's Facebook page and click the "Go Live" button. This will open up your camera on your phone. If you need to know how to create a Facebook page, please read our how-to section on our resource page for that information.

OPTION 2: PRE-RECORD YOUR SERVICE

Second, if you have access to a decent camera, pre-record the service and release it online as a premiered video. The quality of this option is going to take a big jump, but it does require that you figure out the logistics of when you want to record. If you can, I'd suggest trying to record the service earlier in the week and scheduling it to go up during whenever your first service usually starts. Releasing the video as a Premiere on Facebook or YouTube allows your audience to interact with it as if it was being streamed live. Comments are live, likes are live, even your responses are live. Attentive users can even request to be notified when the premiere begins. If your soundboard can, try to get a recording output straight from the board and sync it with the video from the camera using a basic video editor like iMovie. This will go a long way in making

your service more watchable. If you have some extra time, you can even edit in your sermon slides, announcement slides, and song lyrics.

OPTION 3: BEGINNER LIVE STREAM SETUP

Lastly, let's talk about an actual beginner live streaming set up. *This is going to be quite a bit more technical than the other two options, but if you stick with me, you should be able to get it set up.* As a quick plug, if you have any problems at all, please join the SCBC Media and

Commutations Facebook Group. We are happy to help you and others be successful in this area. We're all in this together.

First, you're going to need a camera. Specifically, I'd try to find one with HDMI out. Nearly every consumer grade camera has the ability to output a signal via HDMI these days - though you'll probably need a mini-HDMI to HDMI cable (you should be able to find one at Best Buy) If you don't have one, talk to anyone at your church that is a photographer or has a camera. I found that most people are happy to help in these sorts of extreme situations, as long as you take care of their gear.

Second, you'll need to get a live output from your soundboard to XLR. You'll need to pick up an audio interface. If you don't have one, I'd highly suggest the scarlet by focus right. Obviously, it costs a bit of money. But it's an incredibly reliable interface that we even use here. If you don't have the time to wait for shipping, ask any musicians you have around at your church. Specifically, guitarist or vocalists. This is an absolutely necessary piece of equipment in every home studio set up, so any musician who's recorded themselves at home should have one. again, make sure to take care of their gear.

Third, you'll need a way to get the HDMI signal into a computer. HDMI ports on computer some selves are almost universally output only ports. You won't be able to just plug in your camera and expected to work. Instead, you'll need a dedicated video interface. If you don't have one, I'd suggest two different options. If you're using a PC, the Elgato cam link is just about the cheapest option available. It's basically just an HDMI in, USB out. please note that this is not compatible with Apple computers. If you can't wait for shipping, ask around at your church for anyone really into video games. These little cards are incredibly popular for recording game footage, and you might get lucky and find a nerd willing to part with his capture card for a weekend. if you're on a Mac, or looking for something a little bit more versatile, the Blackmagic Ultrastudio Mini Recorder is a super reliable converter that also accepts SDI in. It is compatible with both Windows and Apple computers, but it's a thunderbolt out, so make sure the computer you're using has the port.

And on that point, you're going to need a computer. Preferably, the beefiest one you have. I'd highly suggest something with at least a four core CPU and a dedicated graphics card.

All right, it's time to put it all together. Your computer needs to be connected directly to the video input, audio input, and the internet. It's technically possible to do this on Wi-Fi, but if you can help it, I'd highly suggest plugging in via ethernet. It will be much more reliable and less prone to buffering or skipping.

Next, you're going to need a program called OBS Studio. It's a completely free video recording and live-streaming program that's incredibly simple and intuitive. You can download it from obsproject.com. Install it and pop it open. When it asks if you'd like to go through the wizard setup process, hit yes. Optimize it for streaming, set the base resolution to either 1920x1080 if you have reliable, speed internet or 1280x720 if you don't. Next, you'll have to pick your streaming platform. We'll cover YouTube, then Facebook.

Make sure you're logged into your YouTube account in your browser and hit the "link" button next to stream key in the OBS window. This will bring you to a new page in your browser. Hit "Get started" and scroll down until you find your stream name/key. It will be censored. It's very important that you don't share this key with anyone else, as anyone with the key can livestream to your account. Copy the code from OBS and paste it into the box in OBS. After a few tests, OBS should be ready to go. Hit apply settings.

Now, let's go through the process for Facebook. Switch the service to Facebook and hit the "link" button next to stream key in the OBS window. This will bring you to a new page in your browser. Hit "Create Live Stream." Scroll down to the "Get Started" menu and click "Use a persistent Stream Key," then copy the stream key from the live API menu on the right. Paste that into the box in obs. After a few tests, OBS should be ready to go. Hit apply settings. Great, now let's configure your video and audio inputs. By default, OBS creates a scene for you to start placing inputs into. Head to sources, then click video capture device. Create a new device and hit OK. Find the device in the dropdown and set the preset to whatever resolution you set during the setup process. Hit OK and you should have a video signal! If needed, scale the video to match the size of your frame, then I'd suggest locking it into place to avoid accidentally moving it during your stream.

Next, head to the audio mixer. Click the gear icon next to your input and select your input device from the menu. Send a signal from your board to the computer to make sure that it's receiving a signal. Make sure it's not peaking, and you should be ready to go.

If you're getting video and audio in, you should be set to go live. Both Facebook and YouTube have settings to configure in their own streaming menus to set the title, description, etc. before you start streaming. Hit the "Start Streaming" button in OBS when you're ready and make sure to have someone monitoring the stream at all times. If you streaming to Facebook, you'll actually need to hit "Go Live" in the bottom left-hand corner of the screen to make your livestream visible to your audience.

BE A GUTENBURG.

500 years ago, the Word of God was given to the masses via an innovative and new technology from Johannes Gutenberg known as the printing press. In the Sundays to come, many people will hear the Word of God preached via streaming video over the internet from churches.

I don't believe that the Lord called me to be a pastor, but He did call me to be a Gutenberg. He created me for such a time as this. In the days, weeks and months ahead, may Jesus equip you with the wisdom you need in media, tech, comms, web and streaming. May the Church strive to always adopt technology for the sake of the Gospel. I pray He would raise up and equip even more Gutenbergs to innovate further in the next eight weeks, and even more so, in the years ahead.

If you have any questions or have a specific case scenario you need help with, don't hesitate to ask me for help.

Alex Lyons
Creative Director
South Carolina Baptist Convention
alexlyons@scbaptist.org

**This article is adapted from [Blackbar](#), a group of church media professionals, and their YouTube video "[Fast and Cheap Ways to Livestream Your Church Service THIS SUNDAY.](#)" Used with permission.