



THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH
A GUIDE TO PRODUCING ONLINE WORSHIP

Part 2: Pre-recorded Worship

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Introduction

Pre-recorded worship services were until recently quite rare, being mainly the preserve of TV companies, as opposed to the live streaming of worship services. Like live streaming, pre-recorded worship can be an important form of outreach for those members of the Church who cannot worship in person.

This guide has been prepared by the General Synod Office of the Scottish Episcopal Church in order to answer some of the commonly asked questions regarding pre-recorded worship, as well as to offer some questions for assessing whether pre-recorded worship is appropriate and desirable in your particular context.

The guide is divided into four main sections - Why, Who, What, How – as well as a final section on some pieces of legislation that intersect with the provision of pre-recorded worship and how to be compliant with them.

The early sections include some questions for you to consider when beginning to broadcast. If you can answer most of them, this is a good indication that you are ready to begin pre-recorded worship. If you are already pre-recording worship, then the questions may give a good indication of how you might improve your practice in future.

It is important to note at this point that this is not intended to be a comprehensive instruction manual, nor is it a troubleshooter for specific issues. Pre-recorded worship is effectively a form of video production, a task that has a myriad of ways of achieving results. Similarly there may be specific problems in your context that are proving difficult but are not covered by this guide.

If you are coming to this guide from Part 1, which deals with live streaming, you may notice some similarities, especially in early sections. This is intentional, as the various forms of online worship share many similarities, despite their key differences.

If after reading this guide and completing the checklist you have any further questions about pre-recorded worship, or there is something you feel has not been covered, please contact the Digital Communications Co-ordinator at the GSO at: aidans@scotland.anglican.org

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This section will take you through the pros and cons of pre-recording worship from your church or home

Section 2 – Who are you broadcasting to?

This section will cover identifying your target audience, as well as considering others who may offer pre-recorded worship in your area.

Section 3 – What are you recording?

Covered here is a discussion on some of the different types of service that can be recorded and some of the liturgical issues for consideration when recording.

Section 4 – How are you recording and editing?

This section covers some of the nuts and bolts – the cameras and tripods - of pre-recorded worship. It is written to be as accessible as possible, and to take differing budget levels into consideration.

Section 5 – Legal considerations

Section 5 covers some of the implications of pre-recorded worship on various pieces of legislation, particularly Copyright law and the GDPR.

Section 6 – Other form of online worship

This final word offers some thoughts on other forms of online worship that may also be appropriate for your worship.

Section 1 - Why Pre-Record your worship?

Pre-recorded worship is a robust and relatively simple way for congregations and groups to begin offering online worship. There are many good reasons for bringing pre-recorded worship into your cycle of worship, and some reasons why it may not be the most appropriate option for a congregation.

This section will take you through some of the benefits and difficulties with pre-recorded worship, as well as give some examples of use cases for pre-recorded worship.

Use cases of Pre-recorded worship

Pre-recorded worship can be of use in a number of situations. Some non-exhaustive examples in the Scottish Episcopal Church include large congregations where social distancing measures have meant restrictions on the numbers allowed to attend in person worship, linked charges who wish to share worship from one church to the congregation of another, rural and remote congregations where significant travel is required for members of the congregation and larger congregations with a desire to do dedicated digital outreach.

The benefits to these congregations and groups include:

- Bringing people virtually into the building and the worship who cannot, for various reasons, attend church in person
- Opening up the worship of a congregation to a wider geographic area than travel would permit
- Allowing potential new congregants to sample the worship offered in a church
- Broadcasting pre-recorded worship as live engenders interaction with the service via comments or a chat function if these tools are used to allow a sense of connection with worship.
- Avoiding the pressure of live streamed worship situations where everything must work at the same time for the worship broadcast to be successful

The disadvantages of pre-recorded worship can include:

- The overwhelming amount of literature relating to filming material
- Technical requirements – especially processing power
- The preparation work is significant. It takes time to produce this material.
- Technical capacity to produce, record and edit video is necessary. The learning curve is steep, but most can pick it up quickly
- Some of the process can incur a cost in terms of cash for services, cash for equipment, or employee or office holder hours.

When considering whether you wish to begin pre-recorded worship, it may be helpful to consider the following questions when making that decision after reading the rest of this guide:

1. What do we hope to achieve by pre-recording worship?

2. Who will take responsibility for managing this project?
3. Do we have the necessary skills, or is this something we will need to outsource or undergo training?
4. Do we have a budget for this?

Section 2 – Who are you broadcasting to?

One of the major decisions that should be made when embarking on a pre-recorded worship project is identifying your audience. There are a number of options here, and this decision will have an impact on a variety of other matters, such as broadcasting platform, equipment, type of worship broadcast amongst others.

Pre-recorded worship can be made open – that is, in the public domain – or it can be closed, on an invitation only basis. It has the potential to reach around the world, or it can be kept within the congregation. There is no one correct solution here, it all depends on the individual context that you find yourself in.

Some issues to consider when identifying your audience include:

- Are we planning to broadcast to our existing congregation?
- Are we planning to broadcast just to those who cannot attend in person, or more widely?
- Are we planning to broadcast to our local area?
- Have we had requests from groups or individuals to create online worship?
- Are there others in our geographic area who are already broadcasting worship? If so, could this affect our potential numbers?
- Do we have ecumenical partners who are broadcasting?
- Are any nearby Scottish Episcopal Churches broadcasting?

Once you have considered these questions and have an idea who your target audience is, you might want to consider the numbers you would hope to get on a regular basis. Be realistic about these numbers, especially if you are using them to justify the purchase of equipment, training or funding staff hours.

It may be helpful to conduct some formal research with a survey, or you could contact directly people who may wish to use the broadcast service to establish a demand and get some suggestions as to who is most likely to find your broadcast useful.

This could be done anonymously using an online survey tool, such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms. If your congregation or group has a facebook or twitter presence then polls can be conducted on those platforms as well.

Section 3 – What are you broadcasting?

Different services in churches have different structures and different emphases. The same can be true of broadcasted worship. The Provincial online worship offering has been a Celebration of the Eucharist every Sunday and, at different times, mid-week services have included Services of the Word and Evening Prayer.

Each of these services have their own distinct structure which impacts the shape of the liturgy in a church, and likewise will impact the shape of the liturgy as it is recorded. It will vary in most circumstances as to which type of liturgy you will offer in your recordings. You may choose to do different types, or stick to one type of service. There are clear differences in how these will be recorded. For example: a short service of evening prayer can be recorded very effectively using just one camera angle in a side chapel, or from home, with no additional microphone, by one person. However a full celebration of the Eucharist, with music from a choir, multiple readers and other contributors, as well as various camera angles within the Church would suggest that a more complex recording and editing setup is required.

This is not to say that one form of worship is better suited than another, simply that considering in advance these issues will allow you to make informed choices later.

There are no right answers to this question. Much of it will depend on local context and the decisions made as a result of the previous section regarding target worshippers. As circumstances change and experience develops the structure of the pre-recorded worship can develop as well.

Some questions to encourage decision making on this subject:

- What is the regular worship in your congregation?
- Which services are most well-attended?
- Which services will your congregation expect to see?
- How do you feel theologically about various aspects of pre-recorded worship?
- Do you have restrictions on your equipment/finances/labour capacity that will make certain services easier than others?
- Is your church currently able to open?
- Are you subject to restrictions on your numbers?
- How much time and labour does it take to prepare for a service?
- Will you be working on this alone, or will you have assistance?
- Do you think you have enough work time available to dedicate to pre-recorded worship?

Section 4 – How are you recording and editing?

This section assumes you have decided to broadcast worship and want to make a start with the technology. There are a few things you will need in order to begin recording and editing worship. The options facing you may seem daunting, and there are a large number of companies and products that offer a variety of services that brand themselves as essential. This is not necessarily the case.

This guide is not designed to be exhaustive and will generally avoid making recommendations on specific products or services, but it has been written with general principles in mind, erring on the side of the simple and inexpensive.

We have broken down the sections into essential elements and desirable elements.

Essential

In order to broadcast you will require at the bare minimum:

1. A camera
2. An audio system
3. A computer and appropriate software for editing
4. A broadcast platform

1. The Camera

There are many options for cameras, however one of the simplest and most multipurpose tools for pre-recorded worship is a Smartphone. The camera quality on most modern smartphones is more than sufficient for most pre-recorded worship purposes. They are portable, often to hand, do not require additional expensive purchases and crucially include a built-in microphone.

Other options include a dedicated video camera, a digital camera with video capabilities, or an action camera such as a GoPro. It is important to note that if you are using a separate camera you will require a camera that has a digital video output. You can refer to the manufacturer's technical specification to ensure this. Most digital cameras produced recently have these outputs, but the format of the output and the cables required will vary. You will require to connect these cameras to a computer in order to edit the video from them.

A further option is to simply use the webcam on a laptop or desktop computer and stream directly from that. This is best suited to recording from home.

When pre-recording worship it is important that for the majority of the time, the camera is kept as stable as possible. This is achieved by using a tripod. Tripods are inexpensively available in photography shops and online. Most have a standard attachment that will fit many cameras. If you are using a smartphone you can buy attachments very cheaply that will house your smartphone and attach to the tripod.

It may be helpful when recording the worship to create a list of all the different chunks of a worship service, then recording them individually. This allows you to be creative in how you choose angles or locations for each section. You will cut all of these shots together later in the edit session. When filming, it is good practice to leave a couple of seconds of silence at the start and the end of each section in order to have space for transitions between sections.

Pre-recording your worship opens up the possibility of having contributors from different places film a portion of the service (for example a reading, or the intercessions) and interpolating that into the rest of the service. This guidance may be useful when gathering video files from contributors:

1. When transferring files you could use dropbox/icloud/google drive or any of the major file sharing sites.
2. Alternatively, <https://wetransfer.com> is a very good alternative that doesn't require any apps on the computer, or an account.
3. Please don't send the videos by email – that will compress the file beyond the point of being useable. Some email carriers will simply reject large files.

2. Audio system

In some ways the audio is one of the most important aspects to get right when pre-recorded worship. If the video is of a lower quality but can the congregation can hear you clearly, they can still follow along with the worship. The opposite is often not the case.

Most smartphones and cameras and computers will contain a built-in microphone. These are often of reasonable quality when capturing audio a short distance away from the camera/smartphone. If you are recording in a small room, a chapel or with the camera/smartphone set up directly in front of you at a lectern or the altar then the audio quality will in most cases be sufficient. The audio quality will deteriorate as you move further away from the camera/smartphone. This is a major consideration when choosing camera angles in different areas of the Church building.

Another potential issue is that of background noise in buildings. The sound of the wind, or traffic, or visitors to the church walking around may not disturb us much when we are in a building, but in the context of pre-recorded worship a quiet but repetitive noise can become overwhelming. This also happens frequently when filming outdoors on a breezy day.

In order to remedy these potential issues, there are a number of options. You can purchase lapel (or lavalier) microphones that will attach either wirelessly or with cables to your camera/smartphone, or purchase handheld microphones and stands and connect in a similar way. This may require the purchase of cables, adapters, wireless receivers or audio interfaces to connect a microphone with a smartphone/computer. Cameras often connect quite easily to microphones.

Another alternative is to purchase a dedicated voice recorder. This is particularly useful for wide shots (for example filming some distance from the sanctuary to take in a number of people.) When recording audio separately to video a simple trick is to start filming, then start the audio recorder, then clap your hands together. This replicates the clapper-board from film productions. The purpose of this is to give you a reference point to line up the audio and video in your editing software.

In some churches where there is an existing sound system within the church building the audio can be captured from that system and synced with the video. If your existing sound system does not have a recording function, this may require the purchase of an audio interface which acts as a bridge between your sound system and a camera/smartphone/computer or separate audio recorder. This is a more complex process with potentially high cost implications which allows the existing microphone setup in your church building to act as the source of the sound. If you have radio mics or lectern mics already set up you can use this method to achieve good quality audio throughout the building.

Worship music is a complex issue which will be addressed partially in a later section on copyright, but the technical elements are worth mentioning here. The built-in microphones on cameras/computers/smartphones are often ill-equipped to handle music from a choir, organ or worship band. If you intend to record worship music, it is advisable to consult with your musicians before hand about microphone setups.

3. A computer for editing

The editing software is where much of the work will take place. Most modern computers will have editing software included by default, and if not then there are many free or inexpensive software packages available, many of which have the same functions and features. When editing together the worship one thing to bear in mind is the pace and flow of the worship – it isn't helpful to think of the service as a film. You may want to leave space for people to say the responses if you are filming alone. You may also want to leave space for quiet reflection after prayers and intercessions.

When using separate audio and video sources if you have left a few seconds at either end of the section of worship, and have used the clapping method described above you should be able to use this to line up the audio and video perfectly. If you film from different areas of a church, or even different buildings, the volume of the audio may be higher or lower in each section. It is good practice to try and match the volume of different sections as close as possible so that the whole service is roughly the same volume.

Transitions between clips should be simple and quick. Many video editors have a whole slew of Star Wars style wipes and cuts. There's nothing to say that you can't use them! But they may prove distracting. The simplest transitions are called fades – they simply fade to a colour (normally black) then fade back up to the next clip. Another common transition is the crossfade, where two clips fade into one another simultaneously.

When deciding what to cut and what to keep have a think about the normal flow of worship. Whilst it is traditional in many places to have a procession into church over music, is that really necessary for an online worship? Likewise an additional hymn post-communion gives an opportunity for the worship team to perform the post communion ceremony, but that might be something that is simply cut. Leaving space for quiet reflection is good, but what feels like a short break for a couple of minutes in an in person service might feel significantly longer on video, thus breaking up the flow of worship.

Most video editing packages will have features that allow for Titles and Subtitles. These can be used for responses, for hymn lyrics, for indicating who is speaking at any given moment and for general information. Do bear in mind when using titles that blind and partially sighted people may not get all the information, so it is good practice to have essential worship information communicated through audio and visual means.

When you have finished editing your worship service you will need to export and upload the video. There are a myriad of video formats and compression types. In most cases the default option will be appropriate for online worship. You should try to keep your video in the highest quality possible. This may result in large file sizes which will take a longer time to upload. If you have slower internet connection, living in a remote or rural area for example, you may wish to downgrade the quality of the video in order to get a smaller file size. Any video size lower than 480p (often called 'Standard Definition') will begin to look poor on modern screens.

4. Broadcasting platform

A broadcasting platform is the place where you host your worship. There are many different platforms. The most common platforms for online worship appear to be Facebook and YouTube. These are often used as many churches already have a presence on either or both platforms, and they both have high user familiarity amongst the general population.

The process for uploading your video to the broadcasting platform is simple in most cases. Both Facebook and YouTube offer a 'premiere' function which allows you to schedule your video ahead of time. The video will then play back for all viewers at the appointed time and they will all be watching in the same virtual space with the option to communicate with each other over the chat and comment functions

In almost all cases Churches will find that YouTube and Facebook are the most appropriate solutions for pre-recorded worship. You can of course broadcast in a number of locations simultaneously should you wish.

Desirable

In order to make your broadcast as accessible as possible to your online congregation you may want to investigate the following additional features. These are not related directly to the process of pre-recorded worship, but they will add comfort and ease of use to the worship experience for worshippers.

1. Signposting
2. Orders of service
3. Social elements
4. Subtitling
5. Donations
6. Telephone access to broadcasts

1. Signposting

Ensuring that your congregation know where to go to access the broadcast is very important. If you are broadcasting on a public platform it is still important that the congregation know where to go and at what time. This can be achieved in most broadcasting platforms by scheduling the broadcast ahead of time. This will give you a dedicated link that you can distribute by email or social media post ahead of time.

It is wise to give your broadcast a title that matches the occasion. This may include the specific Sunday, or the date and time. This indicates to people that they are in the right place at the correct time.

2. Orders of service

If you are expecting the congregation to join in at the appropriate times from their own homes it is wise to provide a digital copy of the order of service by email. If you are broadcasting on a public platform then it may be more desirable to post a copy of the order of service on your church website and put a link to that on the broadcast description. Other options include a dedicated file hosting platform such as Dropbox or Google Drive.

Morning, Evening and Night Prayer for each day of the Church's year is hosted on the Scottish Episcopal Church website here and can be used for this purpose:

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/spirituality/prayer/daily-offices/>

Digital versions of other liturgies can be found here:

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/publications/liturgies/>

3. Social elements

Many broadcasting platforms will include a social element that allows worshippers to leave comments or contribute to a chat feed. This can be an excellent way of keeping in touch with fellow worshippers and can allow the congregation to contribute to the service by typing responses such as the sharing of the peace.

It can also allow for notices to be given in text form, or for communicating with the congregation if broadcast issues occur.

There are potential risks with this as well however. The potential for unpleasant or abusive comments always exists in these public forums. If it is possible it is advisable to have someone monitoring the social elements of a broadcast to remove comment that may disturb the worship for the congregation.

4. Subtitling

There are various software packages that will transcribe your broadcast and produce subtitles. They can be quite expensive, but they may open up your broadcast to people with a hearing impairment. It should be mentioned at this point that most of the developers of these packages are based in the USA and therefore the transcription capabilities vary in their capacity to accurately transcribe Scottish accents. If you have the text of sermons, intercessions, readings and the order of service this can dramatically speed up the creation of subtitles.

5. Donations

There are a number of platforms that will allow churches to seek donations online. These include directly distributing bank details, or by setting up a crowd funder, or one of various online tip jar services.

6. Telephone access to broadcasts

An additional service that churches may wish to offer is an option to call a number that will allow someone with no internet access to phone a number and hear the broadcast service. This is an option that requires a number of steps to achieve. The method used in the Provincial worship relies on Zoom to provide an audio-only service, while video goes out on Facebook & YouTube. This will involve a cost implication, not only to the church, but potentially also to the worshipper phoning in, unless the church decides to absorb that cost.

Section 5 – Legal considerations

Copyright: Music

Those churches wishing to include music, hymns or songs as part of their online worship should make themselves aware of copyright restrictions.

Churches should not assume that easy public availability (e.g. online), or the existence or creation of a local recording of a piece of music, means that there is no copyright issue.

It should also be kept in mind that a piece of music could have multiple forms of copyright restriction – melody, arrangement, lyrics for example. In addition, the musicians performances in recorded music may be copyrighted, even if the hymn melody and lyrics are public domain. One or more streaming licences may also be required. Again, avoid assuming that holding a single licence will cover the use of all pieces of music. **Check if the licence includes the material you wish to use, and the circumstances in which you want to use it. Streaming license in this context refer to both live and pre-recorded broadcasting.**

Ascertaining copyright can be a complicated and time-consuming process, as can be the securing of permissions to use a particular piece. Often the licensor will require a fee to be paid to cover the composer/artist's income. CLAS (Churches' Legislation Advisory Service) has produced helpful guidance on copyright and the live streaming of services, which can be accessed here on pages 5 and 6: <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Circular-2020-13-.pdf>

Copyright: Use of photographs

Please take great care when selecting photographs for publication, whether that be as part of a video broadcast, on a website, via social media or in a church newsletter.

If you, when publishing, do not have permission to use the image from the copyright holder, the use of the image is a breach of copyright and the copyright holder is entitled to pursue a claim. Unfortunately, the extent of this claim cannot be estimated, and it could end up at a figure that is significantly greater than anticipated. **This is a situation to avoid.**

There are several websites which offer images that are free to use in some circumstances. They are sometimes referred to as being available through "Creative Commons licensing". At point of publication, the photographer or 'Creative Commons licence' must be credited in most cases. Full information on these licenses can be found here: <https://creativecommons.org>

Other useful website resources include Unsplash & Pixabay which both offer a large selection of Creative Commons licensed images. In addition geograph.org.uk offers a wide selection of images, licensable under creative commons, with an easy to use accreditation tool. **Warning: these sites can also include pay-for images so please check in each individual case.** Please read website guidelines carefully if using any of these sources.

Section 6 – Other form of online worship

If, having read, marked, learned & inwardly digested the information above, you have decided that pre-recorded worship online worship is not something you or your congregation are in a position to offer at this point there are other options for online worship.

1. Live streamed worship

Live streaming has many of the benefits of broadcast worship, without the time commitment of recording everything ahead of time. It is similar in some ways to filming a recorded worship service except that the edits are done live. There are various methods of achieving this which can be as simple as a single camera shot of someone leading the worship, up to a fully realised worship service. Live streaming requires more effort and investment up front in order to make sure your live streaming setup is robust, and to ensure that you are comfortable with the more involved process. It also likely requires someone to assist during the live streaming in order to ensure there are no issues as it is running. It may prove cumbersome to try and live stream whilst also leading worship. There are other benefits and pitfalls which are [detailed here in this short guide to creating pre-recorded worship is available here.](#)

2. Video Conferencing Worship

Using video conferencing for worship has become increasingly common throughout the COVID-19 restrictions. This method is more suited to sustaining online worship within a pre-defined group of people rather than public broadcast of worship, but there are functions within most video conferencing platforms to broadcast to various broadcasting platforms.

In addition, some of the principles outlined in this document could be used in the context of a video meeting. Guidance from the Scottish Episcopal Church, specifically on the use of Zoom, a popular video conferencing program, is available here: <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/coronavirus-updates/zoom-guidelines-and-tips-for-scottish-episcopal-church-use/>

Much of the information at the above link will apply more broadly to other video conferencing platforms. Some adjustments may need to be made to accommodate the specific requirements of worship.