



LIVE STREAMING YOUR CHURCH

**The Ins, Outs, Tips and Tricks to Make
Your Live Stream POP!**

Provided by: SGMDigitalTV.com

We at SGMDigitalTV.com are constantly striving to provide the very best in live streaming services for you, our clients.

Although we cannot and do not take credit for the content you will be reading, we have included in some of our own words and thoughts in the area you will be exploring. We just found information that was needed and put in words that we wanted to say when it comes to improving your live stream church services.

Thanks to the writers, bloggers and folks at ALTA SYSTEMS and ReStream and even some from our organization for some great material along with various references found in research on the internet for the content of this booklet.

This year, in 2021 and just the first 6 months of this year our streams have gone into over 24000 homes. If you take the average home size of 3.5 people in each home, that's 85,043 potential viewers of the streams alone on websites or mobile devices who have gone online to view. This does not include the amount viewers watching our streams on Facebook, Youtube, or Roku / Amazon Firestick. Those are statistics we never see on our end.

With knowledge of that amount of viewers, we take our services very serious as in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ around the world. Folks from over 45 countries have been able to view the church streams on SGMDigitalTV.com

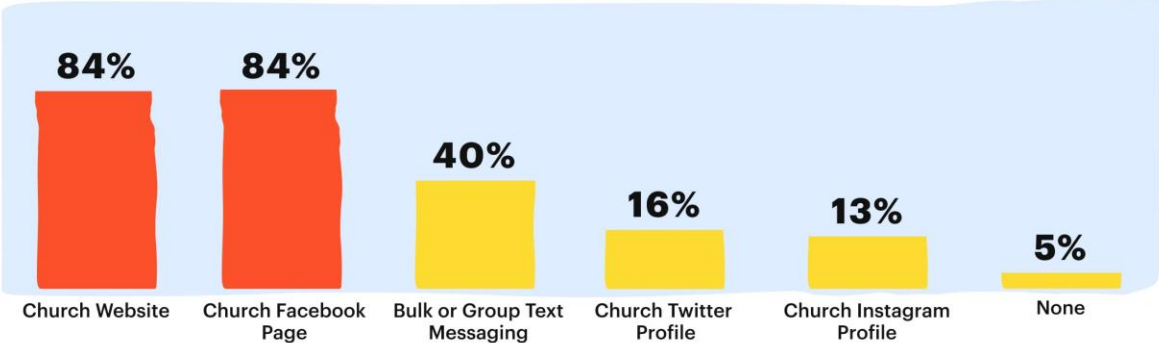
We want the best for our viewers,.. Don't you?

For ages, people have been regularly attending church services, such as group singing or praying, to be closer to God. But modern life is changing. Sometimes it becomes so unpredictable that people can't physically attend a church service or ceremony — but they may not want to miss it, even being in another city or country. Sometimes even people from other parts of the planet want to join a sermon, and fortunately, both situations become easily solvable nowadays through the power of the Internet, which allows for streaming live church services online and lets churches get closer to their followers, despite any distance.

Churches all over the world actively use digital technologies and communicate with their congregations through websites, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and Instagram, which are known as the most important communication channels, surpassing email, events, print, etc. And since live video is one of the leading forms of content on social media, broadcasting is likely to become the next step to make church services even more accessible for people.

What **digital communication channels** does your church use?

According to 2017 Lifeway Research Survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors



The advantages of sermon broadcasting include:

- Possibility to engage people who cannot attend worship personally.
 - Being closer to the members of your parish and providing support wherever they are and whatever they experience in their lives.
 - Sharing inspiring live videos easily and encouraging more people to join your community.
 - Bringing church to more people's lives.
 - Soliciting donations for further live video development.
- Before moving on to actual streaming, let's dive into the basics.

Expand Your Viewing Audience.

Location, location, location. Many church streams are only available at one destination, whether it's Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, Periscope or an Online Video Platform (OVP). Expanding to multiple destinations could and does make it much easier for people to locate your stream. Not everyone in your church uses just Facebook believe it or not. And even when they do, it's not JUST to watch church streams.

The more places you are, the more viewers will have a chance to see your broadcast.

The first and foremost place for people to see your stream is a prominent easy to find place on your church web page. Also archived video can be shown there as well.

If you don't have a web site, we can provide one for you, quickly and easily enabling easy access to your video or archives. Other outlets can utilize the simulcasting feature in our stream control panel.

Restream.io offers a great solution for streaming to multiple platforms as well both free and paid.

Social Media Ambassadors

Would you believe that there are people out there who would watch your church's stream but they just don't know about it or where it is.

You can have a several people from your congregation begin a Watch Party on Facebook that their friends can see. Additionally, it will help to have a few people reference your stream on their Instagram stories. This is a chance to get your live stream in front of people who don't know about or don't follow your church on social media.

Paid Advertisements

In order to gain some extra traction, consider investing in a targeted advertising campaign. Your ad should give people a sample of what your services are like, and invite them to your website or streaming destination.

Two of the best platforms for this are Facebook Ads and Google Adwords. Both of them allow you to choose which geographical region and age group that your ad targets. Don't forget to include your links to the stream in your church bulletins so folks can share it with friends with out mistake.

Chat Features

For in-person services, most churches employ a volunteer team of greeters and ushers. The same is needed for your online ministry.

Boost engagement on your live stream by having volunteers represent your church in the chat. You can think of them as digital ushers and greeters, which are meant to improve the overall experience of someone watching. People do tend to keep watching when they see the live reactions of fellow viewers.

Chat features are optional and not included in the cost of the basic stream service we offer, but we can set one up for you.

Acknowledge the Online Crowd From the Platform.

When churches are new to live streaming their services, they don't always acknowledge that some people are tuning in online. One of the best ways to make people online feel important is to recognize them from the platform. Treat these online viewers just as you would live in person attendees. They are a part of your church worship experience.

Have your teaching pastor look at the live camera as well as the in-room congregation. When you're doing announcements, have some that are tailored to the online crowd. Whoever speaks from the platform should reference the fact that people are watching online. This could even include how your worship leader introduces worship.

Giving

One of the most misunderstood things about live streaming a church service is "people won't give in the offerings". However, this is not exactly true. Statistics show that **60% are** willing to give to their church digitally. Tithers make up only 10-25 percent of a normal congregation. Churches that accept tithing online increase overall donations by 32%. Only 5% tithe, and 80% of Americans only give 2% of their income.

Source Below:

Church And Religious Charitable Giving Statistics | Nonprofits ...
<https://nonprofitssource.com> › online-giving-statistics

The biggest problem in not getting online "offerings" is we don't address the availability to do so. Telling the viewer HOW to give online will greatly increase giving not just tithes, but general offerings as well.

Streaming Weddings

Streaming of Weddings are becoming more of a normal thing in churches today since many of the out of town family are not always able to attend the ceremony. This “service” is something that can be easily made available to the Bride and Groom as an option when they ask to use the sanctuary for the event.

Of course the focus of the ceremony will be the bride, groom, and the minister, don't forget to include the parent's of the couple, special hand holding moments or the cute little flower girl or ring bearer. Often a multiple camera set up can be made for capturing all the special moments of the day. This makes not only the couple happy when they see the archived video, but makes the viewer feel like they are attending in person, sort of.

Camera persons should never be obvious in movements and in these situations, headsets can be beneficial in “calling a shot”.

A handy feature included in our selected streaming software is the ability to record everything that is live on the screen. You can duplicate this and make available to the couple to have as a keepsake.

Streaming Funerals

Most funeral homes can and will do live streams from their establishment, but not on location in a church held service. This can be made available to the family, and links provided on the churches website or social media pages to make people aware of the times and broadcast schedule.

Being mindful and sensitive to the event is of great importance. The focus is not on the family, yet the order of the service, that being spoken word or music.

A little quick preparation on your part can make the stream be viewed as an honorable occasion.

Unless it is absolutely unavoidable, never show the open casket. It is often difficult for people to listen as the focus goes more to the body than that which is being said. If it is an open casket service, then try to get your shots over the casket directly on the speaker if at all possible. This will not only make it easier for family in later viewing, but provide a more memorable experience for those watching live. Use of graphics during songs, or prior to the service starting and ending is an asset as well. All of this is made possible through the software we utilize.

THE TECHNICAL SIDE OF STREAMING

Include Camera Shots of the In-Room Crowd

One of the downsides to an online experience is that it's easy to have a feeling of being disconnected from the other people participating in the service. A way in which to counteract this disconnect is to include camera shots of the audience. When viewers see other people participating, it will encourage them to participate as well. We don't know it but if someone online watching sees someone in the live audience with hands raised in worship, they may do the same in the place they are watching from. True worship is not just limited to the inside of the church building.

Lighting Differences

Lighting is one of the main factors for overall video quality. If you want more viewers for your church live stream, make sure that you have good lighting.

Lighting that works well for the in-room experience may not be best for your stream. Generally speaking, you will want to have fewer shadows and more brightness when you're filming for the stream.

Also, for in-room lighting, you must consider multiple viewing angles and lines of sight. When lighting for video, what matters most is the viewpoint of the camera.

It can be tricky to find the harmony between lighting for in-person and lighting for your stream using the same space. Here's a quick guide of things to avoid for your lighting set-up.

Audio Differences

Just like with lighting, the rules for sound are different for online viewing. There are different speakers, the audience is typically closer to the speakers, and there are different kinds of background noise and acoustic features to their environment.

You should have a dedicated audio mix just for your online viewers. This can be accomplished through a separate audio output on your soundboard, or through a separate soundboard altogether. You should not rely on the microphone built into your cameras.

Graphics Tailored For The Online Crowd

One mistake that many churches make is using graphics that were not designed for online viewership. Or, they don't use screen graphics at all.

In general, online graphics require a smaller font size, and they should only take up the lower third of the viewer's screen so that they can still see the pastor or band. Depending on your presentation software and video switcher, you could send one version of your graphics to your main sanctuary display, and key another version onto your stream at the same time.

Upgrading Your Equipment.

Certain audio, visual, and lighting gear functions better for an in-room experience, while some gear works better for online. If you are new to live streaming, it is important to select the right gear for the job. At the minimum, you want to have the right camera, lighting, and microphone.

There are different options for different budgets. Don't think that you need to break the bank on high-end gear if something more cost-effective will work for your context.

Getting started with live video

Below, you will find the details that will help you get familiar with camera settings and lighting design, choose the recording gear and streaming platform that would perfectly meet your goals, and more.

Choosing the right gear for a church live stream

The first step is, of course, a nice camera that will help you make videos of good quality. There is a rich assortment of church live streaming equipment from which you can choose either more affordable or high-budget solutions. It all depends on how much you are ready to spend.

To get the sermon across, you basically need a camera recording in HD and featuring an HDMI output. This is enough if you have a

relatively small amount of money for planned spending or don't strive for super-professional quality of BBC level. You can, however, purchase a camera or camcorder that costs up to 1,000 dollars. If you plan to go with high-end video production, we recommend considering one of the top camcorders that capture video in UHD 4K up to 30 fps.

These Are Some of The Top Camera Picks:

- Canon Vixia HF G21: a great solution for newbies who just plan to go live with worship.
- Panasonic 4K Cinema-Like Video Camera Camcorder: effectively works in low light.
- Canon EOS REBEL T7i: belongs to DSLR cameras and also works well in poor lighting conditions.
- IP live camera AXIS M3045-V: good for shooting from different perspectives and streaming directly to your site, where parishioners can watch the worship live.
- Canon XA15: high-budget and usually attracts people who are more familiar with the technology.
- Sony PXW-Z150: captures videos in UHD 4K up to 30 fps and provides a lot of professional features that make it one of the best cameras for live streaming church services.

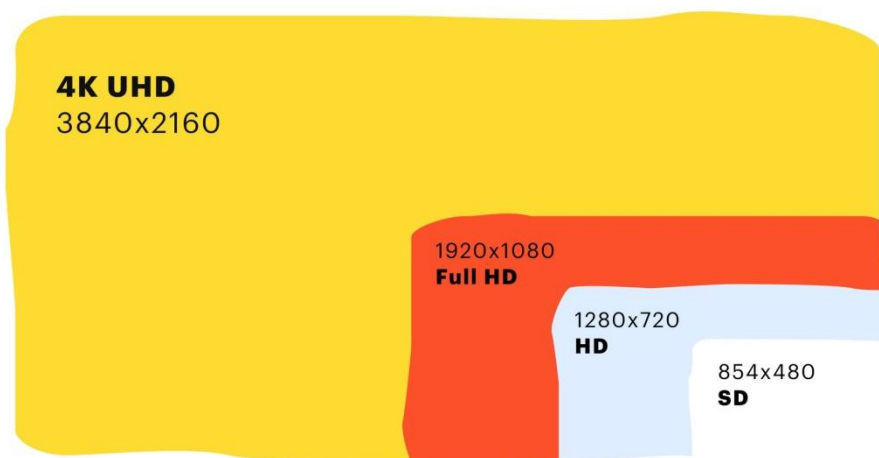
For a good quality camera without breaking the bank, you can get a camera for a little less than \$300.00 We recently purchased through Amazon an Ordoro AC3 for \$249.00 Even though the zoom was not as tight as desired, it gives an excellent quality in the video production at HD 1920 x 1080.

Regardless of the camera you choose, it should meet the basic requirements in categories such as:

- Frame rate.
- Shutter speed or motion control.
- Aperture or depth of field.
- Gain or image noise (aka ISO).
- Resolution.

Let's look at the two most essential parameters, the resolution and frame rate of the camera, since they directly influence the quality of the live stream and the way viewers perceive motion in the video.

When talking about video resolution, the next four commonly used parameters should be highlighted.



The video resolution you'll choose will directly affect the image size, which leads to a larger and better quality image in the case of higher definition. If parishioners have a slow Internet connection, they may encounter issues watching HD live video. To avoid troubles, you may need multistreaming or simulcasting, which will help broadcast both HD and SD video simultaneously so that the viewers can choose the option that suits them best.

As for the frame rate, the most commonly used parameters include 24, 30, and 60 frames per second. The principles that apply to video resolution and the way it affects the final image can also be noticed in terms of frame rates — the more frames per second, the higher the image quality you get.

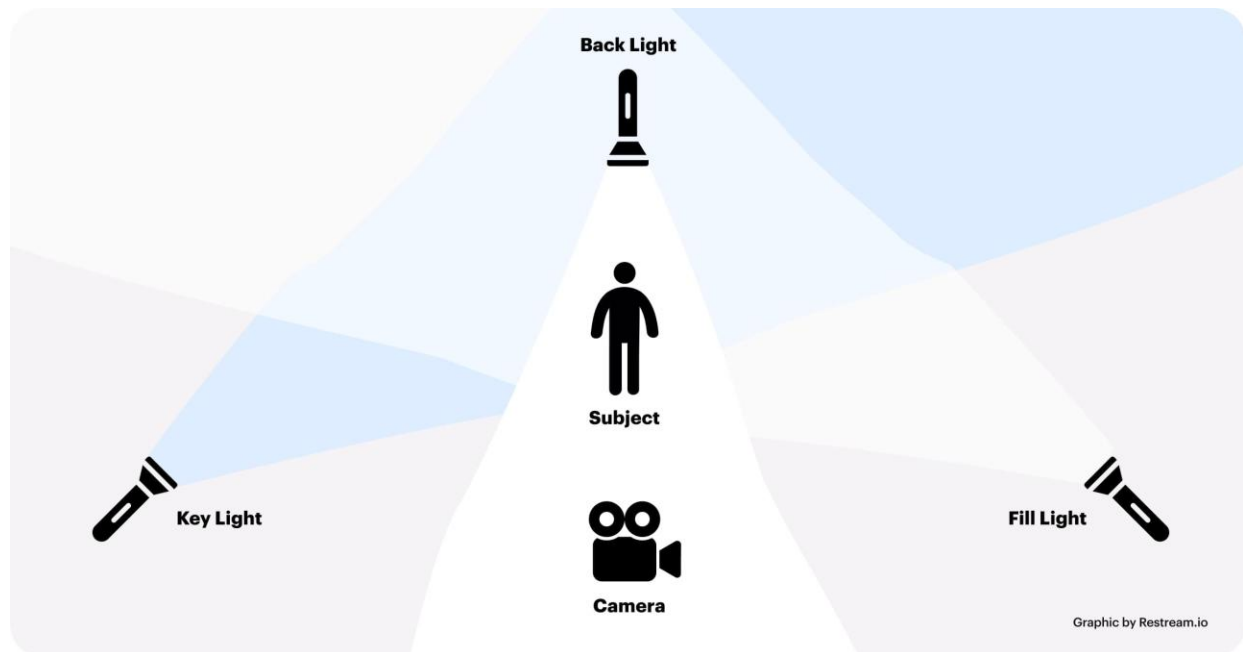
Tip: If you plan to use multiple cameras, take into account that the parameters have to be the same for all of them. To gain a more visually attractive live video, stop at the progressive scanning under camera settings, which is usually indicated as 720p or 1080p.

Lighting

No matter how well the camera works in low light conditions, you can still end up with an image with low brightness and deep shadows if the light in your church is too faded. This is where installing additional lighting may come to the rescue.

If you are new to lighting design, we recommend trying the easiest three-point scheme. Let's imagine that the pastor stands in the center of the platform and the camera is placed right in front of his eyes. Now, you should put two light sources at 45 degrees ahead of him and

one more light source behind so that they can all light up the pastor without creating dense shadows, and people can clearly see him.



If there are more people you want the camera to capture, you should install more lighting sources or apply adjustable lighting that can be controlled from a single system.

Other church live streaming accessories

In addition to recording and lighting gear, there are several other accessories needed to go on air with live church streams.

- Tripod to ensure video stabilization.
- Microphone for a church leader to make certain the congregation can clearly hear the worship.
- HDMI cable to get the video feed from the camera.

- HDMI extender is needed only if your camera is apart from the PC or encoder.
- Video switcher to switch between multiple cameras or video signals you leverage.



Graphic by Restream.io

Audio and video parameters

With configuring the video resolution and frame rate done, it's time to select the bitrates you will leverage while encoding the signal before going live. The bitrates define the data volume packed in one second of audio and video being recorded. To fine tune audio and video encoding bitrates, you will need the encoder, which we'll consider later. For now, let's find out about common audio and video bitrates.

64 kbps and 128 kbps are two of the most frequently used settings, but some real-time streaming services like YouTube support 320 kbps audio bitrates. That is why it makes sense to find out in advance which encoding settings are recommended by the service you plan to stream to.

For even better sound recording, you may also need an external microphone to connect it right to the camera. As an alternative to the external mic, consider investing in an HDMI audio inserter that allows adding digital or analog audio to the video feed, or a small mixer

designed specifically for live video streams. The latter will give you added support in case you add multiple audio sources by letting you monitor their tones and volumes.

As for video bitrates, which refers to the amount of data transferred at any given time, they can be as follows:

- 5 Mbps for full HD
- 3 Mbps for HD
- 2 Mbps for SD

Remember that a high resolution and frame rate together with a high bitrate will make the video look as good as it can.

Encoders

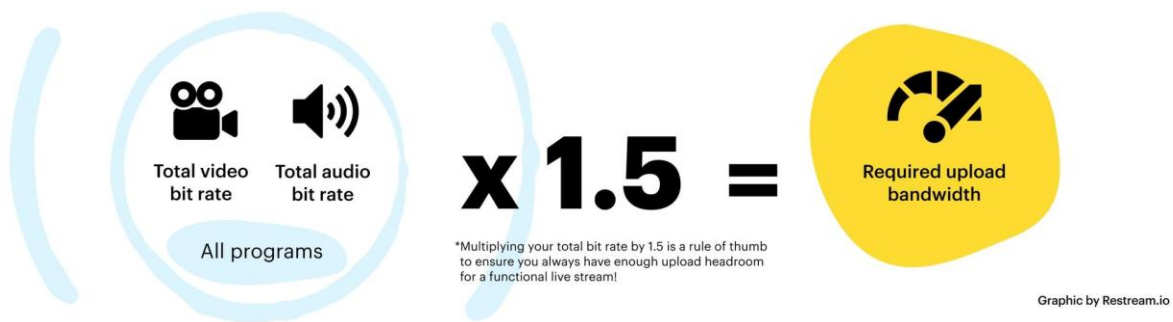
Another tool that plays a significant role in church live streaming setup is an encoder, which is needed to transfer the information to a communicable format for broadcasting services. Depending on your purposes and needs, you can choose from software or hardware encoders. They both bring much value to their users, although a software encoder is more suitable for those who are not professional broadcasters and are hunting for cheaper, more accessible, and easy-to-use solutions.

We at SGMDigitalTV use vMix. We will assist you in setting it up and teach you how to use it. From Basic to more advanced you can start with 2 cameras and two other frames to show online.

Bandwidth

When opting for the encoding parameters for your live video, keep in mind the bandwidth. In live streaming, video bitrates are usually limited by the uploading and downloading bandwidth of broadcasters' and their viewers' networks. So, the higher the data volume, the more bandwidth is needed. In the case of limited capacity from the viewer side, your live video will be streamed in a lower resolution and frame rate, which will consequently worsen the viewing experience. Fortunately, there are adaptive bitrate streaming platforms that allow for automatic resolution optimization and overcoming network limits.

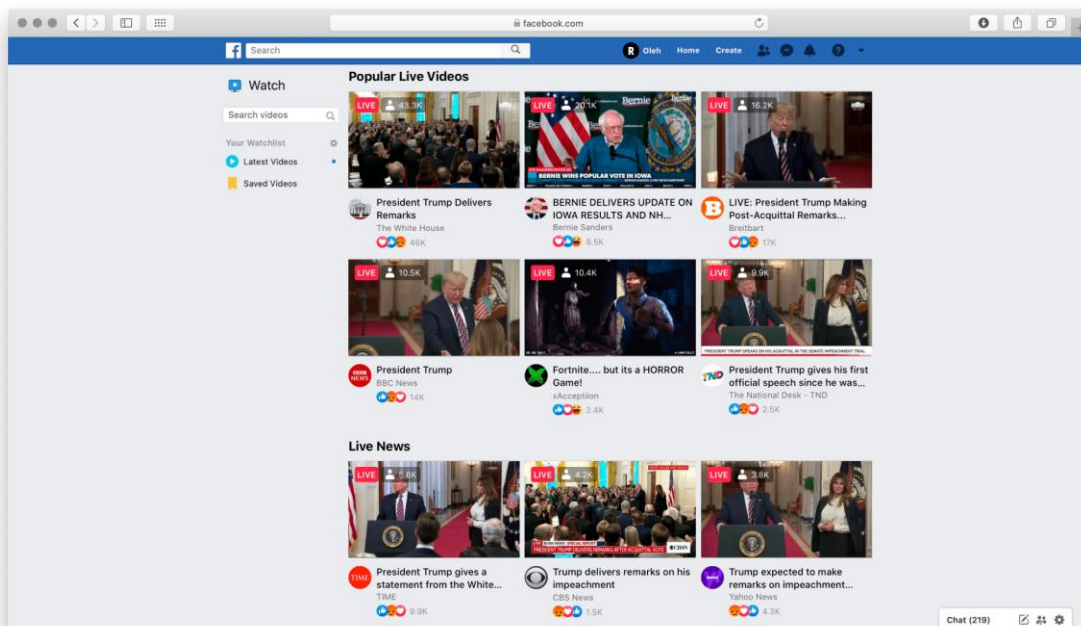
Tip: Calculating the approximate minimum of upload bandwidth aims to make the live stream successful. Once audio and video bitrates are added and multiplied by 1.5 or 2, consider testing the speed of your system upload bandwidth. Repeat the test on different days and at different times to get the average value. The latter will show if you need to request more bandwidth from your ISP.



What is the best live streaming platform?

Once you have a camera, lighting, and the church live streaming audio setup done, you may wonder which live streaming site is best to use.

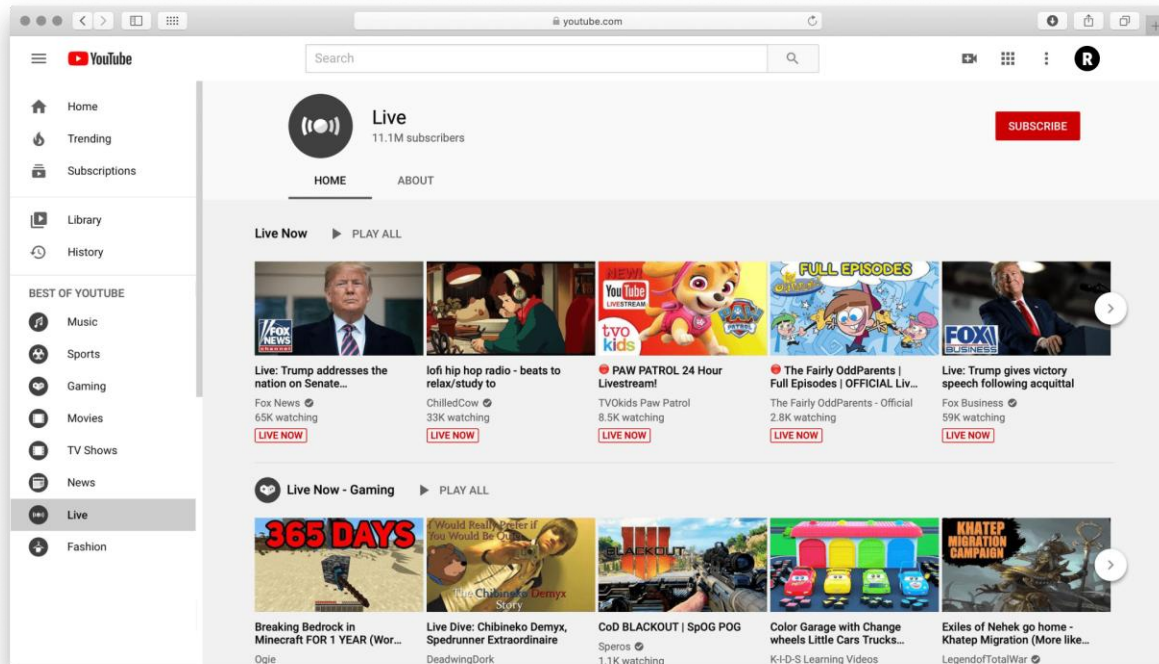
Facebook



[Facebook Live](#) is one of the social media platforms with the possibility to go on air. It is a great option not only because it's free, but because so many people actively use it. In its third quarter of 2019, [Facebook reported 2.45 billion monthly active users](#). Basically, if you want to reach an audience, your church better have a Facebook page. Using Facebook Live is relatively user-friendly, so you don't need a degree in digital content to start live streaming your church service. With

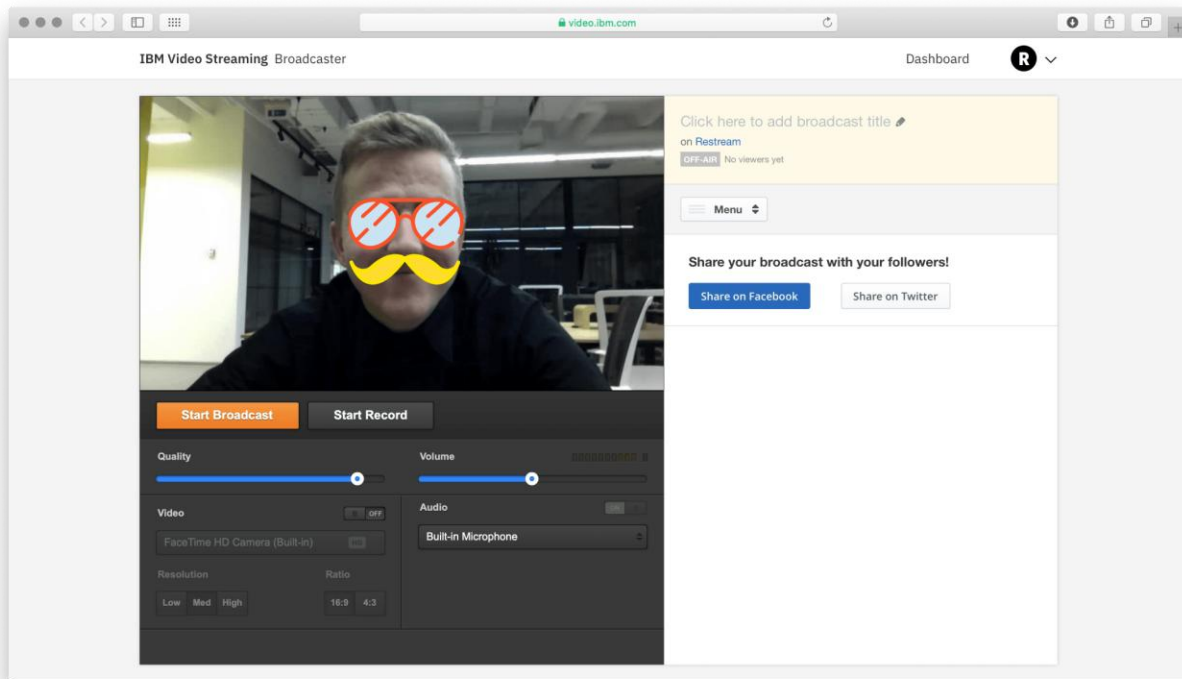
Facebook Live, you can let your audience engage with your church in a way they are already familiar with.

YouTube



[YouTube Live Streaming](#) is another simple option that many churches take advantage of already. When a person thinks they want to connect with someone or something through video, they think of YouTube. Once again, YouTube Live is free, though there are paid services available. With [two billion monthly active users](#) (and even more who don't actually sign in to use their services), YouTube is a guaranteed way to reach your audience. The fact that users can access YouTube without signing in is part of why it has become so popular. It's not necessary to keep track of passwords or make sure your account is set for viewing services — literally all your viewers have to do is follow a link directly to your video.

IBM Cloud Video



Ustream, now known as [IBM Cloud Video](#), is an easy-to-use live streaming tool that allows members to stream from the website or directly from a mobile device. Ustream is known for its ability to offer members different ways of interacting with their audience while streaming. Ustream attracts over 50 million unique monthly users and offers the option to notify members by email when you are posting new videos, so your congregation will always be in the know and in a comfortable way.

What About Licensing

	Facebook Live / YouTube Live / other social networks	IBM Cloud Video / Livestream / other live streaming platforms
Content ownership	You don't own the content stored on social platforms	You own the content and fully control it which allows adding optional tools to keep your viewers engaged, e.g. including passages and other media
Copyright issues	Facebook and YouTube are known for their algorithms that analyze music and can take your broadcasting down if find it violating the copyright	At streaming platforms, you will not be experiencing copyright issues
Cost	Free use	You have to pay a monthly fee to use the platform
Core advantage	The ability to reach all followers you have on social media sites	The ability to embed video into the website

Graphic by Restream.io

Whether it is a social media website or a real-time streaming platform, the choice sometimes becomes confusing, since both have their pros and cons and bring value to their users.

Restream is a service that allows broadcasting to multiple platforms all at once, which lets your congregation interact with your church on the platform that is most convenient for them. You can work with Restream for free and don't need any technical knowledge to set it up.

We do recommend that you purchase a CCL License for your live stream. <https://us.ccli.com/>

How to create your first live video

Now that you know which platform or platforms you plan to stream to, it's time to start preparing for your first live stream! Many people think that live video is spontaneous and ad hoc. While it certainly can be, the most successful live streamers spend significant time organizing and preparing their content to get the most out of the live video experience. Here are the steps you need to take to ensure your first live videos are well-received.

1. Research

If you have never watched a live video, you should. It's helpful to see how others are using the technology and start brainstorming how those techniques can be adapted to drive the message you want to share.

2. Plan

Live video scares people away because they think it's all improv or spontaneous. Sometimes it is, but most of the time there is significant planning and preparation to ensure success and quality. Live videos also give your audience a sense of authenticity and personability.

Decide which programs in your church are the best fit for live video. The easiest place to start is to simply live stream your church services. However, there is probably much more value to your

congregation if you consider adapting a program specifically for live video. For example, the pastor may give a short, separate sermon directly to the camera and interact in real time with the congregation. These live stream sermons can be scheduled at times when the ideal audience is most active.

3. Outline

Once you decide the tone and structure of your first live video, outline! Write out how you want the live video to go, the topics you plan to discuss, and the questions you want to use to prompt your audience to comment and engage. Keep in mind that you will see their comments in real time, so part of your live video should incorporate these interactions.

4. Test

Before you hit "Go Live," practice — especially if you are just getting your feet wet with video. Try to test your content in the same location and at about the same time of day as your live video so that you'll know how noise and light work for your video. Questions you need to keep in mind include: Does the focus of your video shift at all? Will you need to change camera angles or adjust lighting?

PRO TIP

Record your test run and watch it back to help you understand how to improve pacing and troubleshoot audio or video issues that might come up.



Graphic by Restream.io

5. Promote

Let your congregation know that you will be launching a live stream. In the weeks preceding the live video launch, be sure to share information on the location where people can watch the live stream and how they can engage. Naturally, live video announcements should become a regular part of your social content and your printed church schedules.

6. Finally, go live!

Just try it! Whether you decide to do a special kind of service specifically for your live video or simply live stream your regular service, the experience will give you a new and dynamic way of connecting with your church community.

Helpful tips to give your live stream a boost

1. Choose the right equipment

For smaller congregations, or even if you're just starting out, a decent smartphone or tablet will do just fine — and they are super easy to connect to live streaming services. If you're a larger congregation, you're going to want to invest in some higher-quality equipment, which is still just as easy to use with social media these days — many automatically connect to social platforms.

2. Start small

- Do a test run.
- Try individual videos with church leaders speaking for 10 to 20 minutes on a specific topic to work out the kinks.

- If you offer several different service times, always stream the most popular one. Try streaming services with lower attendance rates, too. You may get more traffic online.

3. Reach a Bigger Audience with Simulcasting

Multicasting, or simulcasting, takes your live video stream and redistributes it to multiple channels simultaneously. Restream is a leader in multicasting and integrates with over 30 major live streaming platforms to help you get the most out of your live video. Publish your live video via Restream and that video is redistributed to all your preferred channels with no loss in quality or performance.

Even though we have the ability for simulcasting within our control panel, Restream.io is a leader in the simulcast industry and does an excellent job in sending your stream to multiple outlets.

3. Boost on social media

Use your already existing personal accounts as well as your church profiles to reach out to your audience. Let them know when you will be live streaming and what events they can look forward to in your posts.



PRO TIP

Make sure you promote your videos early enough so that your audience has plenty of time to schedule them in.

Graphic by Restream.io

Also, you will get more traffic if people are referred to your videos by their friends. Events that are solely promoted by their event creators tend to not attract as much of an audience. Consider including church members in your live stream to help motivate sharing. For example, you can invite your youth group to prepare a contribution or regularly host "guests" from your congregation. Members of your church who are included in the streaming process will do a lot of promotion for you.

Another benefit to keep in mind if you decide to try Restream.io is that you can enable alerts that will send your followers notifications when your live video is about to start.

5. Remember your audience

With live video your audience can grow significantly and is almost always larger than just who is in the pews. It's extremely important

now that you've successfully set up your live streams (and let your users know when and where to find them) to include your entire audience in your videos. Make sure to engage with your online audience as much as your live audience. Make sure they feel included! Use chat and commenting functions for this. With Restream it is easy to maintain chat conversations and get a feed of the comments coming in from online viewers.

No matter what you decide to try, don't be afraid to take the first step. Even a little bit of authenticity through live video can go a long way toward building a vibrant online community around your church.

Conclusion: Live video streaming comes in very handy when it comes to spreading the word about your church online and encouraging more people to join your community. Many churches have already tried broadcasting and in turn have decreased the number of leaving members. Not only do they engage the parishioners who cannot physically attend the sermons, but they also bring the church straight to people's hearts and inspire them to join.

To go live with church services, it is not mandatory to invest in high-budget equipment with feature-rich functionality. A volunteer-friendly camera that is not very much inferior to high-end, professional gear, along with a tripod, microphone, and HDMI cable, may work just fine. With a little work to set up the camera, audio, and lighting, you can end up gathering hundreds of people around your church service broadcasting, no matter what gear you use.

Content:

Adapted from an article written by:

Victor Bous

Head of Marketing at Restream.io

Other material included from [ALTA Systems](#)
[BLOG](#)

SGMDIGITALTV.COM is a live stream provider to churches and ministries around the world.

Our office hours are 8:00 AM - 6:00 PM Central Time

Support hours:

Live telephone support 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM Central Time
615/478-8624

24 hour online support with rapid response at
www.sgmdigitaltv.com/support

May God Bless You in Your Live Streams!