

# Online Worship Services

## The structure behind our Online Ministry

- In the Episcopal Church, our Book of Common Prayer contains several forms of worship (liturgies) - morning and evening prayer, simple and complex services, with and without communion. This guide focuses on the logistics used for the larger services that include readings, songs and sermons; many of the simpler versions lend themselves well to small groups and live Zoom calls that don't need everything discussed here.

### **Don't be afraid to start simple!**

- The Lectionary (a 3-year cycle of preselected readings that covers much of the Bible's Old and New Testaments) provides a known progression of readings which makes it possible to preselect hymns and special music for a given Sunday service.
- The Rector and Music Director work with the Clergy and Staff to produce a weekly order of service with list of hymns & music
- The Choir and Folk group uses this guidance to independently produce recordings that can be used in future services. See the "Virtual Music Recording Guide" for details.
- We use the Order of Service, conveniently found in the bulletin, as our weekly script for producing our services:
  - Each part of the service gets recorded or produced.
  - Post assemble all the recordings on a timeline along with titles, boilerplate & end matter.
  - Finally, upload the result to Vimeo.
- See the "Online Service Recording Guide" for details.
- We visually bring in our extended community by soliciting photos and selfies that we include along with a postlude at the end of every service. See the "Postlude Slideshow Guide" for details.

## Roles and Use Cases

There are several players in this drama. The titles you use might be different, and you certainly will have your own staffing and volunteer constraints, but the following roles should be transferrable:

- The **Rector** (Pastor, Priest, Chaplain) provides executive direction and liturgical structure, and is the primary Minister to the community.
- Other **Clergy** (deacons, assistant priests, presbyters, sextons...) assist the Rector in the planning and execution of the church's ministry.
- The **Musical Director** provides musical direction and structure, picks the hymns and choral music, arrangements, voicing, and musicians.
- **Church Staff** provides access to musical scores and bulletin content, sets up Internet and online accounts in the church's name, manages copyright licenses, etc.
- **Volunteers** record the parts of the service that are created by the Rector, Clergy, musicians and lectors.
- The **Producer** is a creative technician who will put all the audio and video files together, and tune the arrangement into a pleasing combination of audio and visual segments.
- The **Performers** (Rector, Musicians, Lectors and Clergy) provide the video content for songs, liturgy and bible readings.
- The Community (Congregation, members, newcomers) is not only the passive audience, they are also volunteers, performers and ministers.

## Equipment

The instructions in this guide are based on an Apple MacBook Pro laptop or iMac desktop (16GB+ RAM, flash storage) running Final Cut Pro X. Vegas Pro and DaVinci Resolve! are comparable Video editors for Windows; A full featured Video Editor like these costs a couple of hundred dollars; you can spend considerably more, and there are several limited or trial versions you can try for free.

Simple software (Photo Booth on your phone, iMovie on the Mac, MovieMaker on Windows) may be sufficient in the beginning, and for recording individual performer's solos, but most have limitations that will preclude more complex tasks (such as virtual music compositions.)

## Good Practices

Filming out of order and in different places at different times opens up inclusive possibilities even as it adds complexity. This guide discusses ways to take advantage of this flexibility to include a larger slice of the community, virtual choirs, congregational responses and multi-part hymns in a service otherwise recorded with only 3 people in the sanctuary.

First and foremost is keeping track of everything. We use a Google shared spreadsheet to keep track of each week's "artifacts and their current status."

From a video production standpoint, it is good to have everything that goes into a video be in its own file (also known as a clip or track), so each can be independently and dynamically adjusted in the Video Editor.

We've found that a two-week cadence keeps coordination delays from turning into emergencies. We front load the musical activities so performers can record their parts without stress the week before, and build a routine where everyone knows when things are due and which shared cloud storage folders to use.

An online video is only as good as the individual recordings that go into it, so it makes sense to think about room lighting, dress and scene composition.

In the same way, an audio track's quality depends on a quiet environment, a good microphone and good placement. Don't let unwanted background noise ruin everything.

All shared cloud storage isn't equal. Dropbox will say "no space" if **your** Dropbox account allotment doesn't have enough free space for all the uploaded videos in **someone else's** share; this happens frequently with the "5G free" plan because the video files in a shared folder can easily consume gigabytes. Either upgrade, or use a Google Drive shared folder.

## See Also

- Virtual Music Recording Guide
- Online Service Recording Guide
- Postlude Slideshow Guide