



10 BEST PRACTICES FOR REMOTE WORSHIP AND DEVOTIONS

- 1) **Don't try to replicate everything you were doing in your sanctuary or auditorium.** Online attention spans are shorter, and technology struggles to capture a similar experience. Adjust your expectations and your order of worship. A 20-30 minute order of service can be just as meaningful.
- 2) **Know your capabilities and your ministry context.** Are you going to be able to stream? Will your primary audience? Will they be able to see and hear you? Sometimes you may be better off recording a message and posting it on a website, emailing a link. Sometimes you may be better off providing text devotions.
- 3) **Help people know what to expect.** Introduce them to the technological tool(s) you will be using, let them know about how long you'll be together, and provide an order of worship to help them anticipate the flow of the service.
- 4) **Share leadership.** Can you invite musicians to record themselves singing or playing, or switch the camera to them if you're using a service like Zoom? Can you invite a lay leader to read a prayer or the scripture? Invite members of the congregation who are creating art during this time to take a picture and send it to you, to post. Create a simple litany with a repetitive response that allows people to follow along rather than a more complex responsive prayer.
- 5) **Adjust your preaching style.** Preaching to an empty room is very different. Consider briefer meditations – perhaps offered multiple times a week - rather than a full-on sermon or homily. See our earlier comments on attention span.
- 6) **Honor copyright.** Even if you have hardcopy songbooks and a license for reprints, there is an additional license required for streaming or podcasts. Many publishers have opened up copyright restrictions, as have some individual artists. Onelicense is offering a (temporary) complimentary license for their catalog of music. *Note that copyright restrictions apply for liturgy and children's books as well as for music. Seek permission! This is how artists make their livelihoods. Most creators are being generous right now, but that doesn't mean you don't need to ask. Public domain hymns (the oldies) can also be comforting, and these are freely available.
- 7) **Consider taking prayer requests to a private forum.** Invite parishioners to text or message prayers to the pastor, or host a private conference call for the congregation after publicly streamed worship. Individual joys and concerns can be offered there.
- 8) **Digital Fellowship Hour can be powerful!** Have a time before or after streamed worship when people can talk with one another online. Invite them to bring their coffee or tea and have some chatter with one another. This could be via comments/chat or a separate Zoom meeting.
- 9) **Don't forget about electronic giving.** A gentle reminder to continue giving in support of the church's ministry is not problematic. Letting people know about your e-giving options, and even walking them through how to sign up will be important as you seek to sustain your ministry.
- 10) **About Eucharist.** Continuing to partake of the bread and the cup while physically separate is a matter of your own tradition and theology. We've seen powerful arguments from "yes" to "no," and alternative practices to match. For example: consider inviting people to share photos of their bread/crackers/juice, as you follow a brief liturgy together. Or use prayers for Spiritual Communion as an alternative. The church has gathered in many ways for over 2000 years, through persecution, war and plague. Trust that the tradition can bear this moment, and adapt to it as well.

More resources and links available at: wchurches.org/2020/03/10/resources-for-streaming-worship/