



FREE GUIDE · STREAMING AND VIDEO

Church Livestream Setup Checklist

Everything you need to start livestreaming church services, from free phone setups to quality rigs with audio tips.

We try hard to get everything here right, and every guide and template shows when it was last reviewed. But they are free, they are general and things change: the law, prices and the tools themselves. We cannot guarantee they are complete, current or right for your church, so check anything you rely on and take professional advice where a decision matters.

Church Livestream Setup Checklist

Who this is for: the AV or livestream volunteer setting up Sunday's stream, and the minister or leadership team who want it to look and sound right.

For most churches starting out, the right platform is YouTube Live or Facebook Live – both free, and places your congregation probably already uses. StreamYard and Zoom are the other options, compared below alongside three budget tiers and audio advice.

Why Livestream?

Livestreaming your services isn't about replacing in-person worship – it's about extending your welcome beyond the building.

- **Housebound members** – people who can't get to church still want to feel part of the community. A livestream keeps them connected.
- **Visitors checking you out** – before someone walks through your doors for the first time, they'll often watch online first. A livestream lets them see what to expect.
- **Midweek content** – a recorded service can be clipped into shorter pieces for social media, prayer resources or midweek encouragement.

If even one person in your congregation can't attend regularly, livestreaming is worth exploring.

Platform Comparison

Platform	Best For	Cost	Key Strength
YouTube Live	Discoverability and archive	Free	Anyone can find you via search; recordings stay on your channel forever
Facebook Live	Communities already on Facebook	Free	Your congregation probably already checks Facebook; easy to share
Church Online Platform (Life.Church)	A hosted 'church online' page	Free	Chat and prayer buttons around your stream; you still stream from YouTube or another host
StreamYard	Easy multi-platform streaming	Free tier available (StreamYard branding); paid from \$35.99/month (about £28) on an annual plan	Browser-based, no software to install. The easiest option for churches just getting started. Streams to YouTube and Facebook simultaneously.

Platform	Best For	Cost	Key Strength
Zoom	Interactive or small group worship	Free (40-min limit) or from £11.99/month	Two-way interaction; great for midweek groups or smaller congregations

My recommendation: Start with YouTube Live or Facebook Live. They're free, reliable, and your congregation probably already uses one of them. You can always add other platforms later.

Three Budget Tiers

Free / Phone Tier (£0)

Use what you already have.

- ☐ Smartphone (most phones from the last 3–4 years will do)
- ☐ Phone tripod or stable surface (a stack of hymn books works at a push)
- ☐ Natural audio from the phone's built-in microphone
- ☐ Stream directly from the Facebook app, or from the YouTube app once your channel has 50 subscribers

Best for: Testing the waters, very small congregations, getting started this Sunday.

Limitations: Audio quality will be poor in a large or echoey building. The phone microphone picks up everything – coughs, rustling, echoes.

Basic Tier (~£200–300)

A significant step up, especially for audio.

- ☐ Smartphone or laptop with webcam
- ☐ External microphone – **Rode VideoMicro II (£60)** or a ~~Rode Wireless GO~~ (£200) for picking up audio from the front. Rode now sells a Gen 3 alongside the older GO II, so check which one you're buying
- ☐ Phone tripod with adapter (~£15–25) or laptop stand
- ☐ Basic LED light panel (~£20–30) – helps enormously in darker buildings
- ☐ Stream from phone app or laptop browser

Best for: Regular weekly streaming on a modest budget. This setup will sound noticeably better than the free tier.

Tip: If you can only spend money on one thing, spend it on audio. A £60 external microphone makes more difference than a £500 camera.

Quality Tier (~£500–800)

A more permanent setup for churches committed to regular streaming.

- ☐ Dedicated camera or quality webcam – **Logitech C920** (£70) or **Logitech C922** (£80) for a webcam option; a secondhand camcorder for more flexibility
- ☐ Audio interface or direct feed from your church's sound desk (3.5mm or XLR to USB adapter, ~£30–80)
- ☐ **OBS Studio** (free, open-source streaming software) – allows you to add titles, switch between camera angles and manage your stream professionally
- ☐ Dedicated streaming laptop (doesn't need to be brand new – a refurbished laptop with an i5 processor and 8GB RAM is fine, ~£200–400)
- ☐ Ethernet cable for wired internet connection (~£10)

Best for: Churches that stream every week and want a polished, reliable setup.

Audio Is More Important Than Video

People will watch a slightly fuzzy video with clear audio. They will not watch a beautiful video with terrible audio. Get the sound right first.

Common Audio Mistakes and Fixes

Mistake	Fix
Phone microphone too far from the speaker	Move it closer, or use an external microphone near the front
Echoey sound in a large stone building	Use a directional microphone (shotgun mic) aimed at the speaker, not an omnidirectional one
Audio feed from the sound desk is distorted	Turn the output level down – streaming needs a lower level than PA speakers
Background noise (heating system, traffic)	You can't eliminate it, but a directional microphone and getting closer to the source will help
No sound check before going live	Always do a 2-minute test stream to check audio levels

Internet Requirements

Your stream needs a reliable upload speed. Download speed (what you use for browsing) is irrelevant here – it's upload that matters.

- **Minimum upload speed:** 5 Mbps (for 720p streaming)
- **Recommended upload speed:** 15–20 Mbps (for 1080p streaming with genuine headroom)

⚠ **Don't match your upload speed to the bitrate.** YouTube wants roughly 10 Mbps of video bitrate for 1080p at 30fps, so a 10 Mbps upload line gives you **no headroom at all** – and a stream with no headroom is the stream that buffers whenever someone else in the building opens their email. Aim for upload speed comfortably above the bitrate you're sending, and if you can't get there, stream 720p properly rather than 1080p badly.

- **How to test:** Go to speedtest.net on the device you'll stream from, connected to the church's internet. Look at the **upload** number.

Tips

- ☐ Use a **wired ethernet connection** wherever possible – Wi-Fi in church buildings is often unreliable
- ☐ If you must use Wi-Fi, position the streaming device as close to the router as possible
- ☐ Ask your broadband provider about your upload speed – some church contracts have very low upload speeds
- ☐ Consider a dedicated mobile data connection (4G/5G dongle) as a backup – check coverage in your building first
- ☐ Test your connection at the same time of day you'll be streaming (Sunday morning broadband speeds may differ from Tuesday afternoon)

Copyright Compliance for Livestreaming

This is important. Streaming worship online is a public broadcast, and you need the right licences.

CCLI Streaming Licence (Mandatory)

If you sing hymns or worship songs and stream your services, you need a **CCLI Streaming Licence** in addition to your standard CCLI Church Copyright Licence.

- Cost: from £31 a year if you already hold a CCLI Church Copyright Licence; £75 for a church of 50–99; more for larger churches
- Covers: song lyrics on screen during a livestream, and your own musicians performing songs from the CCLI catalogue
- Covers your own website, social media and streaming platforms (YouTube, Facebook, Zoom) – see below
- Apply at: uk.ccli.com

Two things that licence does not cover

Both of these catch churches out regularly.

Streaming anywhere other than YouTube or Facebook. Those two platforms have their own arrangements with PRS for Music. Your own church website, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Vimeo may need a **PRS Digital Music Licence for Worship** as well: ask PRS for Music (or CCLI, who act for them) before you rely on the CCLI licence alone. If you run a midweek service or prayer group on Zoom with a hymn in it, that includes you.

Hymns from publishers outside the CCLI catalogue. CCLI leans towards contemporary worship songs. Taizé, the Iona Community, Oxford University Press, Stainer and Bell and Kevin Mayhew sit outside it, and streaming their material needs **OneLicense**. Traditional and ecumenical churches are the ones most often caught here, and the ones least likely to expect it.

PRS for Music

- Your church may already hold a PRS Church Licence, sometimes through a denominational arrangement
- ⚠ That licence covers **performance in the building**. It does not cover streaming: the separate PRS Digital Music Licence for Worship does that, and only for platforms outside YouTube and Facebook
- Check with your denomination's central office before buying anything – Methodist, Anglican, Baptist and Catholic churches often have collective arrangements

What You Can and Can't Stream

- **You can stream:** hymns and songs covered by your CCLI Streaming Licence, original prayers, sermons, readings
- **You cannot stream:** pre-recorded commercial music (e.g., playing a CD or Spotify track during the service) unless you hold **CCLI Streaming Plus**
- **You cannot stream:** video clips from films or TV; no church licence covers putting those online, whatever you hold for showing them in the building
- **Check first:** some anthem arrangements and newer songs may have additional restrictions
- **Ask the people at the front:** musicians and visiting preachers hold rights in their own performance, and a visiting preacher owns the sermon they wrote

My [copyright and licensing guide](#) works through all of this in more detail.

Safeguarding and Consent: Read This Before Your First Stream

This section does not replace your denomination's safeguarding or data protection policy. Where they differ, **your denominational policy takes precedence**. If your church has no

livestreaming policy, agree one with your trustees before your first stream.

We do not publish an escalation procedure and you should not use a generic one. Yours comes from your denomination's safeguarding team, and your safeguarding lead has it. For independent advice, [thirtyone:eight](https://www.thirtyoneeight.org) runs a helpline on 0303 003 1111. If a child is at immediate risk, call 999.

A livestream is a permanent, public, searchable broadcast of a room full of people, most of whom did not choose to be in it. It is the single highest-risk thing on this list, and it is the part most churches set up last, or never.

The one decision that removes most of the risk: never point the camera at the congregation. Frame the chancel, the lectern, the band, the screen – not the pews. A fixed shot that cannot pan into the congregation is safer than a policy asking a volunteer to remember not to. If you take nothing else from this section, take that.

Who is put at risk by a camera pointed at the pews

This is not a safeguarding guide, and these are not our categories: your denomination's livestreaming and safeguarding guidance governs here, and your safeguarding lead should see the camera plan before the first stream. Each of the following is a reason a person may be in your building and must not be on the internet:

- **Someone who has fled an abusive partner.** A stream tells that partner they are alive, in this town, at this named church, at this time, every week. Attendance is one of the most common ways people are found.
- **A child in foster care or subject to a care order,** whose image must not be published at all, and whose placement can be compromised by it.
- **Anyone with a protected address** – a witness, someone with a non-molestation order, a person estranged from family.
- **Someone whose faith puts them at risk** from their family, their community or their country of origin. A convert from another faith being visibly in a church is, in some contexts, dangerous.
- **Anyone who simply hasn't decided yet** whether they are a churchgoer, and does not want their employer or their family to see them working it out.

Consent

- ☐ **Announce it every service,** out loud, before you go live – not just in the notices. "We stream this service; the camera points at the front and not at you."
- ☐ **Sign it at every entrance,** visibly, before someone commits to walking in
- ☐ **Provide non-streamed seating** – a clearly marked area the camera never covers – and make sure a newcomer can find it without asking anyone

- ☐ **No child appears in shot** without written parental consent, and not at all if they are looked-after. Children coming forward for a talk should be filmed from behind, or not filmed
- ☐ **Baptisms, weddings, funerals and anything pastoral: ask the family first**, well before the day, and honour a no without argument
- ☐ **Visiting speakers and musicians must be told** they will be streamed and archived

Adults who cannot give consent. For someone who lacks capacity – advanced dementia, some learning disabilities – a relative's agreement is not automatically valid consent. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 frames this as a best-interests question rather than a matter of convenience, and how it applies to a particular person is a decision for those who know them and their care arrangements, not for a checklist. If in doubt, keep them out of shot.

The part almost everyone gets wrong: intercessions

Prayers that name a person and their illness are special category data, being broadcast and permanently archived. "We pray for Margaret, who's just been diagnosed with cancer" is a health disclosure about a named identifiable individual, published to the world, indexed by search engines and still there in five years.

- ☐ **Use first names only, or no names at all**, in publicly streamed prayer
- ☐ **Never state the condition** – "for those who are unwell, whom we hold in our hearts" carries the same pastoral weight and none of the exposure
- ☐ Keep the full, named prayer list for the gathered congregation, on paper, or on a screen the camera does not cover
- ☐ **Mute or cut away** during open prayer where people speak aloud from the floor
- ☐ Ask before naming anyone at all, including the recently bereaved

While you are live

- ☐ **Comments are moderated by a named person** for the whole service, or turned off entirely. An unmoderated church stream is an open comment box on a video of children
- ☐ **Check your denomination's policy on who may moderate or operate the stream**, particularly the position on under-18s and on working alone – it is a supervision question its policy answers, not one we can answer for you
- ☐ Know how to **stop the stream immediately**, and make sure at least two people do. Agree in advance who can call it – a steward, a churchwarden, the minister
- ☐ If something goes wrong on camera – a medical emergency, a distressed child, someone saying something in the open that should not be broadcast – **cut the stream first and apologise afterwards**. Stopping the broadcast is a production decision and it is always the right one.

☐ ⚠️ **What happens next is not a production decision and is not ours to set out.** If what occurred was a safeguarding disclosure or concern, your denomination's procedure governs from that moment, and your safeguarding lead runs it. Do not let anyone improvise from a technical guide, including this one.

Afterwards

- ☐ **Decide deliberately whether to keep the recording.** Not keeping it is a legitimate and often better choice. If you keep it, say for how long, and actually delete it
- ☐ Set old services to unlisted or delete them on a schedule you have written down
- ☐ **Have a takedown route:** one named contact, published on your website, who can remove a recording quickly. Someone whose circumstances have changed must not have to explain themselves to three people to get their image taken down. Treat every such request as urgent, and act first, ask later
- ☐ Remember you cannot recall what has already been downloaded or reshared – which is the whole argument for not filming the congregation in the first place

This needs a written policy, and a DPIA. Livestreaming is a textbook trigger for a Data Protection Impact Assessment: systematic monitoring of a public space, processing special category data, involving children and adults at risk. It is a page of work, it is a legal requirement and it is the document that protects you if something goes wrong. See our [GDPR Compliance Checklist](#).

If your denomination has a livestreaming policy, it takes precedence over this guide.

Roles and Responsibilities

Don't leave it all to one person. Livestreaming works best as a small team effort.

Role	Responsibility
Stream operator	Starts/stops the stream, monitors the feed, switches cameras if applicable
Chat monitor	Watches comments during the stream, welcomes online viewers, flags any issues
Backup operator	Knows how to run the stream if the main operator is away
Content uploader	After the service, checks the recording and shares the link

- ☐ Document your streaming process so anyone on the team can step in
- ☐ Keep login details in a secure, shared location (not just on one person's phone)

- ☐ Brief the minister – they may need to adjust their position or speak towards the camera at key moments
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Pre-Service Checklist

Before anything technical: camera framed off the congregation, streaming notice at every entrance, non-streamed seating clear, comment moderator named and the person leading prayers briefed on first-names-only. If any of those is missing, fix it before you check the audio.

Run through this every time, at least 15 minutes before the service starts.

- ☐ Internet connection tested (run a speed test)
 - ☐ Camera positioned and framed correctly
 - ☐ Audio tested – do a short test recording and listen back
 - ☐ Stream title and description updated for this week's service
 - ☐ CCLI licence number ready to display (shown on screen during songs, or in the video description)
 - ☐ Lighting checked – can viewers see the speaker clearly?
 - ☐ Phone/device on "Do Not Disturb" (no notifications popping up mid-sermon)
 - ☐ Battery fully charged or device plugged in
 - ☐ Chat/comments enabled and someone assigned to monitor
 - ☐ Test stream started and checked on a second device (ask someone to watch on their phone)
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Post-Service Checklist

- ☐ Stop the livestream (don't leave it running during coffee!)
 - ☐ Check the recording has been saved (YouTube and Facebook do this automatically, but verify)
 - ☐ Upload or publish the recording if it's not automatic
 - ☐ Share the link – email, WhatsApp group, church website, social media
 - ☐ Review any comments or messages from online viewers and respond
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Accessibility

Livestreaming can be wonderfully inclusive – but only if you think about accessibility.

Captions

- **YouTube:** auto-generates captions in real time. They're not perfect but they're a good start. You can edit them after the service for the recorded version (English only, and being rolled out to

larger channels first; they do not stay on the recording, so add captions afterwards).

- **Facebook Live:** auto-captions are available but less reliable. Consider adding captions to the recording afterwards.
- **Manual captions:** if you have the sermon script in advance, you can add captions manually using YouTube's subtitle editor.

Other Considerations

- ☐ Ensure the speaker is well-lit and visible for lip-reading
 - ☐ If you use a sign language interpreter, frame them clearly in shot
 - ☐ Provide a text summary or sermon notes alongside the stream for those who find audio difficult
 - ☐ Check colour contrast if you display song lyrics or notices on screen
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Troubleshooting: The 5 Most Common Problems

1. "The stream keeps buffering or dropping out"

Cause: Insufficient upload speed or unstable internet connection. **Fix:** Switch to a wired connection. Lower your streaming quality from 1080p to 720p. Close all other applications on the streaming device. Ask the congregation to disconnect from church Wi-Fi during the service.

2. "Viewers can't hear anything" or "The audio is terrible"

Cause: Wrong audio input selected, or relying on a built-in microphone in a large space. **Fix:** Check your audio source in your streaming software or app settings. Use an external microphone. Do a test recording before every service.

3. "The stream started but nobody can find it"

Cause: Stream set to private, or wrong account used. **Fix:** Check your stream visibility is set to "Public" (not "Unlisted" or "Private"). Share the direct link with your congregation. Make sure you're streaming from the church account, not a personal one.

4. "The camera fell over / the phone died mid-service"

Cause: Unstable mounting or insufficient battery. **Fix:** Use a proper tripod, not a stack of books. Always plug in to mains power. Have a backup device charged and ready.

5. "We got a copyright claim on our recording"

Cause: You streamed music not covered by your licence, or the automated copyright system flagged a false positive. **Fix:** Check your CCLI Streaming Licence covers the songs you used. For

false claims on YouTube, you can dispute them – but make sure you're genuinely covered first. Avoid playing any pre-recorded commercial music during the stream.

Sources

Figures in this guide were checked against the pages below on 3 September 2026. Prices and product names change; the date at the top of the guide says when they were last confirmed. Claims that rest on pages we could not reach at the time of checking are not listed.

- **CCLI Streaming Licence:** [CCLI Streaming Licences](#). Confirms the Streaming Licence is an addition for churches already licensed with CCLI, its entry price of £31 a year (£75 for a church of 50 to 99) and that recorded artist and backing tracks need Streaming Plus.
- **CCLI licence terms:** [CCLI Streaming Licences Summary](#). Confirms what the Streaming and Streaming Plus licences cover, and that the song credit and licence number may appear in the stream or in the video description.
- **YouTube encoder settings:** [Choose live encoder settings, bitrates, and resolutions](#). Gives 10 Mbps as the recommended video bitrate for 1080p at 30fps, 12 Mbps at 60fps and 6 Mbps for 720p at 30fps (checked 7 September 2026).
- **YouTube live captions:** [Use automatic captioning](#). Confirms live automatic captions are English only, normal latency only and rolling out to channels with more than 1,000 subscribers.
- **YouTube stream archiving:** [Archive live streams](#). Confirms streams under 12 hours are archived automatically and longer ones may not be captured.
- **YouTube copyright disputes:** [Dispute a copyright claim](#). Confirms a Content ID claim can be disputed and that the claimant has 30 days to respond.
- **YouTube eligibility:** [Get started with live streaming](#). Confirms channel verification, no restrictions in the past 90 days and a minimum age of 16.
- **Filming and consent in churches:** [Filming and photography in churches: consent and GDPR](#) (Church of England Digital Labs, 18 May 2021). Confirms that attendance at a service reveals religious belief, which is special category data, so those shown need to give written consent, and recommends a film-free area of the building.
- **YouTube mobile streaming:** [Create a live stream on mobile](#). Confirms mobile app streaming requires at least 50 subscribers.
- **StreamYard pricing:** [StreamYard Pricing](#). Confirms the free tier carries the StreamYard logo and the current paid plan prices.
- **Zoom free plan limit:** [Zoom Workplace Pro](#). Confirms the free Basic plan caps meetings at 40 minutes.
- **Logitech C920s price:** [Logitech C920s PRO Full HD Webcam](#). Confirms the current UK price.
- **Logitech C922 price:** [Logitech C922 Pro Stream Webcam](#). Confirms the current UK price.

- **Rode Wireless GO range:** [Wireless GO \(Gen 3\)](#) and [Wireless GO II](#). Confirm both generations are current products on the UK store.
- **OBS Studio:** [OBS Studio](#). Confirms it is free and open source.
- **Safeguarding helpline:** [thirtyone:eight](#). Confirms the helpline number 0303 003 1111.
- **Special category data:** [UK GDPR, Article 9](#). Confirms data concerning health is special category data.
- **DPIA requirement:** [UK GDPR, Article 35](#). Confirms the high-risk test and the mandatory cases, including systematic monitoring of a publicly accessible area on a large scale.
- **Mental capacity:** [Mental Capacity Act 2005, section 4](#). Confirms the best-interests framing for a person who cannot consent.