

Online Worship

In the light of government advice the Church of Scotland's Covid-19 Task Group has asked, in the strongest terms, that all physical gatherings for worship should cease until further notice. Other Scottish Churches are taking similar actions. This will include, but not be restricted to; services, housegroups, meetings for youth work, and church cafes.

We are very conscious of the need to maintain church community and to provide spiritual resources in this time, both nationally and locally. The following guidance is offered as a starting point for exploring this and will be updated in the days and weeks ahead. There are two main styles of online worship – livestreaming and virtual meetings – as well as spiritual resources which people can use in their own time. There is information about each of these below.

It is also important to emphasise that online resources cannot be a complete substitute for connecting with our church communities as there are many who are not digitally connected. While some of the suggestions below offer ways around that, we would suggest that telephone trees and cards which can be posted through doors such as the [#ViralKindness](#) campaign are equally important tools right now.

Please stay in touch with us about any questions you have that are now answered here, to let us know what training and resources would be useful at this time, and recommendations of what is working for you locally which we can share with your colleagues [Resourcing Worship/Faith Nurture](#).

Livestreaming

The natural instinct for many will be to access something similar to the Sunday morning in person experience. The Church of Scotland will be providing an online service each Sunday during this time which will allow people to access a time of prayer, music and reflection on scripture led by people from across the Kirk. Sunday broadcasts of a weekly service are also available on BBC Radio 4, Radio Scotland and other radio stations.

It is possible for local worship leaders to stream some parts of a service for their own congregation. This can be done on most social media platforms, including YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. We would ask you to follow government advice around physical distancing and not to gather other people such as musicians together to lead a service.

There are lots of useful guides to how to do this covering everything from practical advice to guidance on copyright and music. Some belong to a day when recording a whole, live service was possible. It will be again.

- [Circular from the Church of Scotland Law Department](#), including information on copyright.
- Rural ministries have issued a really comprehensive [communication](#).
- [A beginner's guide to going live](#) with your service or event for free by the Church of England.
- [How to Livestream Your Church Service: A Practical Guide by The Gospel Coalition](#)
- [Open Broadcaster Software](#) is a free and open-source cross-platform streaming and recording programme that plugs into Facebook Live and others.
- CCLI have a [concise article](#) on recording, streaming and podcasting your services.
- For those looking to learn to podcast here is [a wee film](#) from The Rev Bryony Taylor who has been learning how to do this.
- A note about [livestreaming and song licencing in churches](#).

Virtual meetings

Another option to consider is to have a virtual meeting using videoconferencing software such as Zoom, Skype or Teams. This will allow much more interaction than livestreaming, with people able to see each other if using webcams, speak to each other, and to type into the chat box. We would strongly encourage this as an option for services, Bible studies, prayer gatherings and pastoral conversations.

- [Zoom](#) is widely considered one of the more stable platforms for group meetings. It is free for 1-1 meetings or for groups up to 40 mins with paid versions allowing more features. It doesn't require a login, and people can also phone-in to the meeting allowing those who don't have access to the internet to join you.
- You can download a guide to using Zoom from the Priority Areas Team who use it regularly and they will also be holding webinars on how to use this. Sign up to these by email: jfinch@churchofscotland.org.uk.
- There is an [online community](#) developing around good practice for using Zoom for worship which is being coordinated by a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church (USA).
- It is important to consider safeguarding when using online meetings and the principles outlined in the [Safeguarding handbook](#) around social media are a good starting point.

Other online resources

As well as times to meet together regularly it is really important for people to find regular rhythms for their own spiritual practice. Over the next few weeks we will be aiming to provide and signpost to resources which people can use in the pattern of their daily life.

- Find out more about the Kirk's online worshipping community, [Sanctuary First](#), led by Very Rev Albert Bogle.
- [Christian Aid](#) offer a Bible reflection, action and prayer each day.
- [The Taizé Community](#) have daily prayer responses and are also livestreaming a daily service each evening.
- [d365](#) provide simple five step devotionals which can be accessed online or through apps.
- [Sacredise](#) have short daily devotionals which can be printed from their website.

Live video streaming worship

During the time when our congregations are not able to hold services in person, we will be providing a short act of worship online each Sunday, led by a range of people from across the Church of Scotland.

In unusual and unsettling times we are asking questions about how we meet as a church and worship God. This is a time of physical distancing, but of social and spiritual solidarity. This worship is open to all. Whether you call yourself a church member, a believer, an agnostic or a spiritual searcher. You are welcome here. We hope that sharing together will be a blessing to you in these days of challenge and uncertainty.

Watch our [online service for 22 March 2020 on YouTube](#).