

Worshipping Online Together

The current situation has made lots of our churches take the plunge and start worshipping together online. This guide offers tips and ideas to help make your online worship more intergenerational. The church is already looking very different. Let's make sure we can look back on this time in years to come, as a time when we made real progress in all ages worshipping together.

Tips if you are offering worship online:

- **MAKE IT INTERACTIVE.** Encourage and enable those joining online worship to get involved before, during and after the service. You might need to give them ideas or directions for how to do this.

BEFORE:

- Ask people to send in prayer requests and thanks to use during the service.
- Suggest something they can prepare beforehand to use during the service (eg: palm branches for Palm Sunday).

DURING: Opportunities for people to interact during the service will depend on the system you are using.

- Videoconferencing systems such as 'Zoom', allow everyone in the service to see each other. You can also put them into smaller groups for a while to pray or discuss a question together (please DO NOT just send all the children off into a group together). Zoom also allows you to run quizzes using Kahoot (another app) and have a screen that everyone can write on.
- If you are using a livestream such as 'Facebook Live' or 'Youtube', your congregation can't see each other but you can still give them something to do together (if household groups are joining in), and you can invite them to interact with you by texting or messaging you.
- Invite as many different age groups to get involved in leading specific aspects of the service eg: leading prayers; telling the Bible story; leading a song. This can be recorded beforehand or be provided live. Don't resort to previous assumptions - ask an older person to do the interactive storytelling and ask a child to preach.

AFTER:

- Give people a 'take home' – something to do after the service. This might be something for the household to do together or a way to link them up with others in the congregation (eg: younger members phoning or messaging older members to talk about what they enjoyed in the service or how God spoke to them). Or you could invite them to leave their responses to a question on the church website or facebook page.

- **BE CREATIVE.** Not being in the church building can be an opportunity rather than a problem. If you are live-streaming or video-conferencing, try doing it in different places – you could do it outside, or even go on a journey around different rooms or use different backgrounds through the service. What else might you have the freedom to do now that you don't in church?

- **UNDER 5s.** Singing, actions in songs, storytelling help this age group to join in. Try: Diddy Disciples <https://www.diddydisciples.org/thechurchathome>
'The play along Bible': <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Play-Along-Bible-Imagining-Through-Motion/dp/1496408640>

- **TEENAGERS.** It might be helpful to offer teenagers some space to engage apart from their family. This could be a challenge to do during the week eg: <https://40acts.org.uk/> or a video or photo collage to prepare for the following week's worship; you could also offer them to stay online after the service has ended to share what they were thinking.

- **PARENTS** please remember pastoral care and support for parents and carers. Many are feeling overwhelmed with the pressure to hold the family together, home-school and now engage with countless online programmes. Be supportive and caring and try not to add to their burdens – especially if they don't make it to your specially prepared worship.

- **INCLUDE** people who are not online. You can deliver copies of the service (on CD or DVD, with activity packs too) to people's homes. Church members can pre-record parts to be used in worship.

Tips if you are joining in worship online:

- Try to be ready at the normal time you would be for church and come together as a family to worship, rather than in separate rooms on separate devices/screens.

- Perhaps you can make a 'sacred space' in your home where you can worship (online or as a family). You could include objects or images to help you all to focus eg: a candle or things made during previous services.

- Go for it. Get the pots and pans ready to join in with a 'joyful noise' during the music or singing.

Resources and Support

RESOURCES

Here are just a few of the free resources you can use during your worship together or as follow up opportunities during the week:

You can watch Godly Play stories on line:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTFi5xLBbZ6OmANYKiDI03Q>

You can use music videos from Same Boat music:

<https://sameboatmusic.com/pages/sameboatmusicathome>

Using images in a powerpoint can help people engage:

<https://scottishbiblesociety.org/resource-category/all-age/>

<https://www.lampbiblepictures.co.uk/>

SUPPORT

Don't forget you are not on your own. Contact your Synod CYDO or equivalent for more support and advice: <https://urc.org.uk/cydos> or look at your synod website.

There are lots of ideas to be found on the URC Children's and Youth Work Resources Page.

<https://urc.org.uk/resources-for-children-and-youth>

Written by the Richard Knott, Steven Mitchell, Megan Tillbrook, Judy Harris, Nicola Grieves, Hannah Middleton and Ruth White.