

Tips for Leading Distance Worship

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1. **Be yourself - you have something that the world does not: the Gospel. Focus on that.**
 - a. You cannot be Robin Williams, nor should you try to compete in the world of entertainment.
 - a. Send the good news of Jesus the Christ to your physically distanced *congregation* - this is not performing for an audience; worship simply is being shared over Zoom, Skype, Facebook livestreaming, or being recorded for posting later on You Tube, website, etc.
2. **The congregation at home will want to see and hear.**
 - a. Test your equipment during the week so you're comfortable on Sunday morning.
 - b. For better audio quality, consider recording in a smaller space - possibly move a cross and the baptismal font to the library, lounge, chapel, even an office, or put the camera right up on the chancel; check and see whether musical instruments need amplification.
 - c. Adapt your "choreography" so that worship leaders are as near the camera as possible - essentially, you are contributing to home worship, not recording a regular Service for the Lord's Day with multiple cameras, production-quality lighting, and an amazing audio system.
 - d. If you have one camera (or even a phone with a camera), start with an establishing shot (wide shot), but don't keep it on one static wide shot for an hour (or even 10 minutes).
 - e. Arrange for a microphone input into your phone or camera; echo-y, hollow sounding audio is really hard to listen to for an hour, even by devoted and willing listeners!
 - f. Remember that whatever the camera operator whispers near the camera will be heard over the voice of the liturgist, pastor, or musician who is leading worship 10 feet away.
 - g. Coach anyone who is visible "on camera" (sitting on the chancel for the hour?) that *all* their actions will be seen - playing with their hair, looking bored, falling asleep, walking in and out of the camera shot; such actions will distract listeners from having a worshipful experience.
 - h. Tend the camera - an un-tended camera can tilt down, get bumped, go out of focus...
 - i. Use images judiciously - proper use of Powerpoint, font sizes/colors is its own lesson 😊.
3. **The children's lesson is an opportunity for creativity.**
 - a. Communicate directly to children through the camera - children will be happy to see their Sunday School teacher, pastor, church educator, or youth leader talking with them.
 - b. Smile, look into the camera, mention something the children can listen for or watch for during the sermon, and suggest something they can do through the week as Jesus' disciple.
 - c. Consider sending out in advance by e-mail (or posting on a website) a children's page relating to the scripture verses, hymns, and themes of the day.
4. **The sermon is an opportunity for personal connection.**
 - a. Zoom in to get a relatively close up (head and shoulder) shot of the preacher.
 - b. The preacher should look directly into the camera as much as possible to connect personally with the virtual congregation (it may feel funny, but it makes a huge difference for the person who is watching on their phone, computer, or TV).
 - c. Consider recording yourself delivering the sermon early in the week, then watch the recording; keep working on spending more time looking up than looking down.
5. **Music will be a blessing.**
 - a. Use music; with or without lyrics, there's something about hearing a familiar organ, guitar, piano, or ensemble - even when listening by phone or computer.

- b. Be sensitive to physical distance among singers / musicians - model physical distancing.
- 6. **Be gentle with yourself, and ask for the congregation to be patient.**
 - a. Admit up front that you're on a learning curve and just roll with the "oops" moments.
 - b. Honor ordination vows of serving with imagination; on-line worship just looks different!
 - c. Recognize that it takes MORE time to prepare for worshiping well on-line than it takes to prepare regular Order of Worship and sermon content: thinking things through technically and logistically may drain your energies from some of your other pastoral duties.
 - d. You don't have to re-create the wheel. Ask for help. To God be the glory.