

Streaming Advice - keeping worshippers safe

Since lockdown, congregations are increasingly using live streaming to broadcast worship services, or filming services to allow access to it at a time convenient to the individual. This is an excellent way to reach out to those who are unable to be attend physically but we must consider doing any activity safely and with consideration for people's dignity. With Christmas approaching and perhaps more visitors to our churches, this is just a reminder of good practice and protocol.

The most common mode for streamed worship is to point a camera or cameras at ministers and others leading the service (scripture readers, intercessors etc), closely framing them and minimising the risk of images of members of the congregation also being streamed.

Although many people may be content to be part of a streamed service, they may be happier if the camera points at the ministers, and some may have good reason to be excluded from streaming, for example, a child, adult at risk, or a survivor of domestic abuse may need to be protected from another person and any information about their life, especially their location may be highly sensitive. Children may be present who are subject to legal child protection measures. Similar considerations may apply to children who are adopted or placed with families by social services and to survivors and their children affected by domestic abuse who have separated from abusive partners.

Although religious affiliation is legally classed as 'sensitive personal data' and therefore subject to protection, the act of attending public worship in a church building manifestly makes public some degree of religious affiliation to those present and to those who see a person entering or leaving a building. People have chosen to act publicly in this way.

The responsibility of churches is to:

- understand exactly where in the building people entering, leaving or circulating might come into the view of cameras.
- provide for people attending worship to choose whether they place themselves in part of the building that is included in streaming or a part that is excluded

Churches can then do the following, which represents best practice:

1. Notify people in advance, with signage at entrances and on service sheets, that the service is streamed.
2. State that streaming does not normally include images of the congregation, but of the ministers and leaders. Any images of the congregation will be distant or in passing. Images of people in close up, praying, or at the communion rail should be avoided.
3. Signpost an area of the church which is guaranteed to be free of image recording.

Any member of the congregation taking part in the service in a capacity where they will be prominent in the streamed video, ie reading scripture, leading intercessions or children coming to show and tell what they have done in Children's Church or Sunday School, then written consents should be sought. /cont...

.../cont. Obtain the formal written consent from all children's parents/carers/guardians prior to broadcasting as best practice, and although this is not always achievable in practical terms, every effort should be made.

- Children under the age of 13: consent should be gained from their parents;
- Children aged between 13 and 16: consent should be gained from parents and the children themselves;
- Children aged 17: consent should be gained from the children themselves.