



The State of Church Technology
March 9, 2022 at 3:00pm EST via Zoom.

View the recording at www.cornerstonefund.org/about-us/resources

WEBINAR CHAT

00:16:00 Support: Welcome to the State of Church Technology webinar, co-hosted by the UCC Cornerstone Fund and the Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ. Glad to have you here with us.

00:24:38 Jennifer Schneider: We've had hybrid services since last June, and recently BOTH in person and livestream has increased to above pre-pandemic levels. Our REAL TIME livestream is small but good, views on the YouTube channel after Sundays is extensive.

00:25:11 Support: Have Questions? Please jot them down to discuss during the Q+A session, or drop them here in the chat in advance.

00:25:12 Jennifer Schneider: We also include a podcast of just the scriptures and the sermon.

00:28:13 Jennifer Schneider: Are you maintaining COVID protocols for in person worship? masks, distance, sanitizer?

00:29:35 Jennifer Schneider: Are you also holding meetings and/or classes in person or hybrid or remote?

00:31:03 Kevin Williams: @Jennifer - We are currently distanced with masks required and plenty of sanitizer. We expect we'll likely lift the mask requirement in the next few weeks, which will make digital as an option even more important for folks where that might not feel safe for their circumstances.

00:31:51 Kevin Williams: So far meetings have split a bit. Formal meetings like Board meetings have remained remote only - in part because it makes it easier for working folks to join from home.

00:32:02 Rev. Thad Winkle (he/him): @Jennifer we require masks but not distancing. We have sanitizer available for those who would like it. We anticipate continuing with masks for the foreseeable future.

00:32:23 Kevin Williams: Other events are only starting to be pulled back together for some form of balanced approach.

00:33:11 Jennifer Amy-Dressler: We are a highly vaccinated, mostly older congregation that has been hybrid since September. Our CDC risk level is -- finally -- considered low, but we are okay with masks. Distancing is done by worship seating, but doesn't happen so much afterwards. Sanitizer and masks are always available.

00:33:52 Jennifer Schneider: We plan to continue to keep up safety protocols at least through Easter - many of our members care for elderly folks, and since we've been successful so far, we are going to just keep doing it... no reason to stop. All our inperson people are vaccinated - 100%. But many of them have immunocompromized family members.

00:35:24 Jennifer Schneider: Do you think that investing that much money has reaped valuable returns?

00:36:29 Jennifer Amy-Dressler: We use Zoom, which is much more extensive and has had a steep learning curve -- and requires at least two volunteers each week. But we committed to it because we greatly appreciate the interaction during prayer concerns and announcements. Attendance is roughly half in person, half on line. We did have to spend considerable funds for cables and to upgrade our internet service. Once youngest children can be vaccinated, that will bring a couple of our young families back in.

00:37:29 Jennifer Amy-Dressler: We're watching what happens with case counts these first several weeks of official unmasking before making any change in protocols. Fortunately, most of our folks don't much mind wearing the masks.

00:38:17 Nina Faulknight: Kenneth check out "Sermon by Phone" \$10.00 monthly for your seniors who don't have computers, tablets... and don't mind just listening to the sermon.

00:38:50 Jennifer Schneider: We stream directly out on YouTube - we already had a channel, so that was an easy yes. We DID need to run a Cat5 cable for hardwired internet (you cannot stream on wifi) We figured it all out for under \$500

00:39:18 Kevin Williams: In our case, the investment has been well worth it. If you put a business hat on (I know, one of the things we hate most as a church), those with the most treasure to share back from God's bounty are typically older in age. They tend to have more people who are in positions where digital ministry is critical to their spiritual needs (in assisted care facilities, retired and moved to other communities, etc.).

00:39:53 Jennifer Schneider: Thank you Kevin!

00:40:27 Jennifer Amy-Dressler: Jennifer, I'd say that our investment has been vital for us as a small congregation. We can see the Zoom participants during worship, and they can see the congregation. We have to be careful with muting / unmuting. But since folks learned the basics of Zoom, the burden has been on the church, not on folks at home; they learned Zoom in 2020.

00:41:40 Jennifer Schneider: Agreed, our investment has seriously benefited not only our regular attendees, but folks that had moved away and were able to watch from FL, TN, WI, etc.

00:43:03 Jennifer Schneider: Kevin's right though - our Audio has been lousy all along. We struggle through with it, and people are good about listening anyway, BUT the investment to upgrade the audio is too much money, and not enough personnel to run it.

00:43:07 Jennifer Schneider: (volunteers)

00:44:49 Kevin Williams: You can start with the basics. We have a Sennheiser MKE600 shotgun mic that sounds amazing and can pick up at far distances

00:44:52 Jennifer Schneider: @jennifer We did a Zoom/Hybrid Annual Meeting in January (most folks in person, with a dozen or so on zoom) and it was AWESOME. I'm the president of the congregation, so I got to run it, and it went so well we might do it from now on for the benefit of some of our "snobirds"

00:45:37 Jennifer Schneider: Kevin, we learned that to do that we'd need a mixing board and someone to run it. At the moment, its only possible for one person to run the tech on Sundays

00:47:02 Support: Thanks to all of our attendees for engaging in the discussion. Our roundtable discussion will be closing soon, and we'll open up for Q&A.

00:47:12 Jennifer Schneider: We pre-recorded ALL of our worship services from March 2020 thru Jan 1 2021 and premiered them on YouTube at 10am on Sundays. We got GOOD at video production.

00:47:52 Jennifer Amy-Dressler: Our audio was AWFUL at first. Two things that have helped. One, using an ethernet instead of wifi for pastor's Zoom. Eventually we took the leap to pay for faster internet -- not budgeted for, but greatly appreciated. When we were not hybrid, Zoom only, we learned to prerecord music and compress the file (and add visuals, thanks to a volunteer), then play it as a screenshare file instead of live.

00:48:38 Kevin Williams: Before I forget, we all often need a message to lift our spirits when we're feeling at our most challenged. Search YouTube for "A Church Media Manifesto" by blkbar. It will be among the best 4 minutes you will ever spend.

00:50:25 Jennifer Schneider: Jennifer, we learned that too - better internet, and hardwired cable. Our fantastic pipe organ tends to overload the mic we are using tho - sounds like it is under water. I was producing the videos for most of 2020 in Adobe Premier Pro, but had to back out - it was a part time job (and I already work full time!)

00:51:24 Jennifer Schneider: We use a really good quality Logitech webcam with HDMI cable to a MS SurfacePro and a Rode mic to stream out live on YouTube.

00:51:55 Kevin Williams: @jennifer - We found a digital adapter kit for our Allen organ that feeds our live stream. That way we can mix to balance the organ sound perfectly to voices along with it.

00:52:35 Jennifer Schneider: oops, sorry - I forgot, we aren't using the Logitech, we are using a handcam on a stand

00:53:14 Jennifer Schneider: Kevin - I'd be interested in learning more about how to mix to balance without a mixing board! Sounds like a great solution for us.

00:54:10 Robert Stone: What is the digital adapter kit used to balance organ with vocal singing and speakers?

00:54:28 Jennifer Amy-Dressler: We do use a little Logitech camera. And I can imagine that a pipe organ can be too much for anything but top professional quality mics and systems being able to give it its worth. We use piano only in our worship space, which is no longer the sanctuary but the fellowship hall area. Our organists do, though, know how to record themselves, so we actually get to have organ in worship again.

00:54:59 Kevin Williams: Two things you can focus on. Mic placement and mic choice. For example, shotgun mics can pinpoint their pickup to a person's voice at a distance while ignoring the "peripheral" sound around it. It's a bit of trial and error but you can get there.

00:55:12 Support: Thanks so much to our panelists, and Rev. Eric Elley for a great discussion. Let's get into some Q&A. Raise your hand and ask your questions aloud, or drop them in the Q&A portal.

00:55:48 Jennifer Amy-Dressler: Kevin, right; we have different mics to pick up choir and congregation than we do for piano.

00:55:58 Jennifer Amy-Dressler: different kinds of mics, I mean

00:57:05 Brooke Willis: We have 3 guys rotating the tech each week, and 2 of them are paid \$50/Sunday (the 3rd person is a church member and volunteers). This is complimented by one camera volunteer.

00:59:31 Brooke Willis: *complimented

00:59:54 Jennifer Amy-Dressler: We have a remote cohost who does special videos and assists with prayer concerns. We have five other folks trained to do sound and/or video or both, and rotate. It would be great if we could find a few more. We also do Zoom only on the last Sunday of each month, which gives volunteers a break and everyone is comfortable with.

01:00:32 Jennifer Schneider: Im 53 and I figured it all out with the help of my 58 year old husband, and it has been me only running it for a year now!!!

01:01:52 Jennifer Amy-Dressler: You go, Jennifer! Our primary tech volunteers who just plugged away to learn and lead are both over 60. Actually, as I think about it, all our volunteers are over 60, some over 70.

01:02:11 Jennifer Schneider: :-)

01:03:12 Brooke Willis: I think we need creative ways to lure/welcome/convince folks watching at home to come back to the sanctuary....

01:04:45 Jennifer Schneider: This is also an opportunity to have a shift in mindset to be OK with people staying home...

01:05:17 Jennifer Schneider: Amen Kevin!

01:05:46 Jennifer Schneider: We have gotten gifts from people who have never even been in our building thanks to our digital ministry.

01:06:30 Kevin Williams: The link to the SNEUCC Tech Deacons Control Room is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/181895886938061>

01:07:22 Jennifer Schneider: Us too! Paypal and Text to Give

01:07:23 Kevin Williams: In the lower right of the chat box, click the three dots in a row and click on "Save Chat"

01:07:33 Support: The chat should be saved with the recording, which will be uploaded onto the website.

01:10:24 Support: Thanks so much for joining us for today's webinar. To learn more about Cornerstone Fund and what we offer, visit www.cornerstonefund.org or email info@cornerstonefund.org.