

# On the vine

## A New Way of Church

Facebook, YouTube, Zoom and Twitter have become as familiar and as well-used as the service sheets and hymnbooks in many of our now closed churches.

So while the coronavirus lockdown saw our church buildings shut to public worship, our worship has carried on and gone online, attracting new worshippers alongside our regulars who have also had to adapt to this new way of “doing Church”.

But how does that happen?

Gary Hepburn, a Churchwardens in the Parish of Wyke Regis, in the south coast town of Weymouth explains how he has helped his church move out of the building and see their community grow online:

“When the Government lockdown came due to the rapidly building coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic, as Churchwarden with some technical knowledge, I first discussed options with our Rector Br Alasdair Kay and then with wider ministry team using Zoom.

“We all had some knowledge of Facebook but other than dabbling a bit with Facebook Live and short 30 second bursts to advertise church fundraising events had never used it in earnest. One thing we were all determined about was the church building was closed, but church was very open for business – we just needed to find a new way.

“So in the first week, Br Alasdair broadcast some services from his iPhone to the parish Facebook group. Meanwhile I investigated what was possible. By week 2 we had managed to link in and broadcast live Revd Betty Port, Derek Griffin one of our organists/ music team, and our 2 LLMs Janet and Alan, together with Derek’s wife carol and Alan’s wife Gill.

“Services then included a mix of prayer, readings and music and were much closer to what was normally done from the church building. We advertised services on various Facebook groups and on the parish Twitter feed, and the following has grown each week as we have been joined by members of our local community who either infrequently come to church or who do not normally come to church at all.

“We noticed that we have up to 80 live connections to our services when broadcast, and many 100s of views on “catch up” as people replay the videos. At the same time we have checked and enhanced our copyright/performing right licences and have made contact with some great people who have given us the appropriate permissions us to use their recording such as Graham Kendrick and Make Way Music, John Rutter and Oxford University Press and the Raleigh Boychoir from North Carolina in the USA.

“We have found everyone to be most helpful and supportive. Whilst for the first 6 weeks Facebook Live served us very well and we were amazed by the number of our congregation who embraced it, it does present some problems with people finding live feeds due to the way it presents it. So I was asked can we not broadcast on YouTube as that looks easier for people.

“It would have been easy just to send our signal to YouTube, but not wanting to lose our Facebook users, I started to look at how we might broadcast to multiple platforms, and so from 17<sup>th</sup> May we have broadcast simultaneously to Facebook Live, YouTube Live and to Twitter (through periscope). We have found the number of followers has grown again and now have a following on YouTube and Twitter to.

“So how do we do it?

“Well, as well as our services we do a live quiz night at 7.30pm every Saturday evening. We have broadcast some pre-recorded concerts from local choirs, did a range of events over the VE75 weekend and for the last 5 weeks have done our live parish news programme at 6pm each Saturday, where I act as the newsreader and link together a number of video reports either produced by me or other parishioners. This is getting quite a following and we are being asked to promote events and information now from other organisations as they see we have quite a following.

“All is controlled from my “home studio and broadcast suite” (a small office at home, which has a green screen, LED studio lighting and professional microphones. For our services we link in our ministry team via Zoom as it’s easy for them to use (although now I have a more complex but higher quality way of linking people in if needed).

“I have a high power desktop PC with multiple screens that everything runs on. I feed the zoom signals into a product called OBS Studio, which is a studio / broadcast package enabling me to mix live feeds with pre-recorded video similar to a Live TV Production. From OBS Studio I feed into a second computer and a software package called restream.io which splits the signal and feeds it out to multiple platforms at the same time (currently Facebook, YouTube and Twitter).

“The other tools we use are a media marketing package called Hootsuite to post reminder messages to Facebook and Twitter about services, Filmora 9 for video editing and MailChimp for sending out emails at set times to our registered users. The final part of our new way of church is our “virtual collection” which is a payment gateway on our website enabling parishioners to make donations and their weekly “virtual collection” by use of a payment card.

“So Church in the Parish of Wyke Regis has changed but is very much alive and incredibly active within the locality and beyond through making maximum use of the technology available.”

Brother Alasdair Kay, Rector of The Parish of Wyke Regis All Saints with St Edmund said :

“When as a Parish we had to go into lockdown, our churches were closed, our plans for Easter were even scuppered. We had to quickly adapt so we could still exercise our key functions of prayer, worship, the proclamation of the word of God, the exercise of pastoral care and maintaining our public role in the Community.

“What presented as a challenge actually became the means through which our reach into the parish was extended through digital means. This is largely impart to Gary’s excellent work as Churchwarden, enabling us to move out of the building and see our community grow online. “Proclaiming Afresh” as the prayer book puts it is different, but we are rapidly adapting to the new normal. Gary has been a huge part of that and as a Parish we are enormously grateful to him.”

Gary is happy to speak to other churches and help them get an online presence or advise how they may enhance what they are doing, he can be contacted on [gary@parishofwykeregis.org.uk](mailto:gary@parishofwykeregis.org.uk) or 01305 778169.

The social media feeds for the parish are:



All Saints Church Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/allsaintswyke/>



Parish of Wyke Regis Live YouTube Channel (Where live broadcasts go out)

<https://www.youtube.com/user/WykeRegisChurch/live>

Parish of Wyke Regis You Tube Channel (Videos of previous services, quizzes and news programmes)

<https://www.youtube.com/user/WykeRegisChurch/>



Parish of Wyke Regis Twitter Feed

<https://twitter.com/wykeregischurch>