

How To Get your Church Podcasting



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If you belong to a church, synagogue or other place of worship/faith that has messages given on a regular basis, you should consider podcasting as a delivery channel for your congregation. Podcasts of your messages are especially useful to those who can't come to your church building due to illness, travel, or missionary work away from home. It's an easy and inexpensive process that allows your vital words to be heard anytime.

Difficulty: Average

Time Required: 3-6 hours

Here's How:

1. It's important to ask your church (synagogue, etc.) leadership if you think your congregation would benefit from having material available as a podcast. Having worked in a church myself (in NYC), I know we spent a great deal of time making cassette tape reproductions and mailing them to congregants who couldn't come to the service. I would have LOVED to simply have them subscribe to a podcast when they could listen to the material on their own time.
2. In terms of cost for a podcast, remember the savings involved when you don't have to buy CD's or cassettes, pay someone to reproduce them, and mail out the pieces every week. There may be a few congregants who still need these "hard copies," but as rule, they'll probably have access to a computer where they can [stream versus subscribe](#) if that's easier for them to understand. You might want to consider hiring an outside podcast consultant to initiate your program (see below) or your present audio people and make content available digitally (as they may be doing already).
3. Learn some basics. Although you may not need to get as specific as I describe in my article on [How to create and promote a podcast](#), reading these steps will get you familiar with terms you'll want to know in the future. Then check out my article on [How to podcast your next speech](#), as the same logic applies for presenting a sermon as it does for a speech. The idea here is that you can record sermons/messages either by going through a sound system (where the person speaking wears a microphone) or by having them wear a small microphone attached to a digital recorder they wear as well.
4. In terms of the digital recorder, speakers can use [this model from Olympus](#), for about \$100 plus \$15 for a lavalier microphone (that they can wear on their lapel) or spend around \$300 plus the cost of a mic for [this recorder from MicroTrack](#). The money you spend is up to you and your budget, but I highly recommend the MicroTrack in terms of sound quality; remember that you're providing people with a listening experience versus simply a recorded version of what's been said. Remember that the last thing you want when people listen to a sermon is for them to be distracted by poor sound quality.
5. **Andy Robbins**, from [AudioFile Solutions](#) provided me with some other church specific advice I'd like to include here. "When editing or producing audio/video for a church, the most helpful and necessary skill for an editor is to understand the topic at hand. While [conference calls](#) may be anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour, a church sermon must be a very specific amount of time. It may need to be edited down to exactly 22 minutes, for example. This requires the editor to cut out a significant portion of the sermon which must be done with great care without omitting anything that is essential to the message."
6. Andy went on to say the following, regarding Power Point presentations: "More and more pastors are using PowerPoint to get their message across. Our [DVD production service](#) synchs the audio and video of their sermons together with their PowerPoint slides. In addition, we offer an interactive CD-ROM that allows the user to jump directly to the slide they want to view. It also includes an HTML section that can include the transcript of the sermon and hotlinks to web sites. Multiple sermons can be placed on one CD-ROM with an opening menu page that allows the user to select the appropriate sermon."
7. Once you've recorded your sermon, check back on my tutorial regarding [How to record and promote a podcast](#). Depending on the digital recorder you've purchased to record your messages (or if you have an audio team who will give you a file), this recorded audio file can either be edited (with software for your PC/Mac) or uploaded directly (I recommend editing; get out all of the coughing and other announcements people at home don't need to hear).
8. After editing, you'll upload the finished file to your website host via your ftp server. This can then be converted into your RSS feed which is what people will need to subscribe (there's also a great inexpensive service online called [The podcast RSS buddy](#) that will do this for you, and create your feed so it can be sent to iTunes).
9. Once you've got the programs online and you've tested them to make sure they work (make sure to stream and subscribe to emulate the listener's experience), it's time to announce to your congregation that your sermons are available via podcast. Here's my suggestion - you don't need to use the term "podcast" when you talk about your new service. You can say something like, "our sermons are now easily available online every week. Just go to our website and click on 'audio sermons' and you can either listen right away or subscribe." Create a one-two paragraph on how to subscribe as well, with links to any software.
10. Again, you can refer to my longer tutorials for the specifics on creating church-based podcasts. But I wanted to cover the "churchcasting" specifics here for you to consider whether or not they're right for your congregation. Don't worry if at first people seem reluctant to go online and listen. Having worked at a church, I know that people don't always welcome change. But as long as they have a computer (and it doesn't need to be a brand new, superfast one either) they'll be thrilled that they can hear messages right away versus having to wait for the mail or volunteers to do the production work.

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