BILL'S HOME TECH
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BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Watching Church Online & Online Giving

Finding the livestream, putting it on the TV, joining in and giving safely — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for every congregation member and family

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

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What's Inside

This is your guide to taking part in worship from home: finding your church's livestream, watching it on the big TV with good sound and captions, joining a small group on Zoom, and giving online safely. It works for any congregation and any faith tradition. Read in any order and at your own pace. If a screen looks a little different on your device, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

Getting Started

What you need to worship from home, and how to find exactly where your church streams its services.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Many churches, parishes, synagogues and other congregations now stream their services online. For anyone who is homebound, recovering from surgery, caring for a loved one, traveling, or simply snowed in on a January Sunday, that livestream can be a real lifeline to the community you love.

I'm Bill. For more than 30 years I've helped people make sense of their technology, and I serve folks right here in Portage County, Ohio. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it at your kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, one step at a time. It's written for every tradition, so where I say "church" and "pastor," please read in your own words for your congregation and its leaders.

Who this guide is for

- Anyone who wants to watch their church's service on a phone, tablet, computer or TV.
- Anyone who'd like to give their offering online, safely.
- Family members setting up a parent or grandparent to watch from home.
- Church volunteers who are asked "how do I watch online?" every week.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

By the end, you'll be able to find your church's livestream, put it on the big TV with sound you can hear and captions you can read, catch up on a service you missed, join a Zoom prayer group, and give online with confidence. You'll also know the scams that target churchgoers, so you can stay safe.

The big promise: you can't break it

Watching a livestream can't harm your TV, your phone or your church's broadcast. Tap around and explore. The one place to slow down is **giving money**, and I'll walk you through that carefully in Part 6.

You're never stuck alone

If anything here feels like too much, call or text me at **(330) 200-8042**. Start with Chapter 3, *Finding Your Church's Livestream* next.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What You Need to Watch from Home

The good news: you very likely already have everything you need. Here's the short list.

You need	Why
A screen	A smartphone, tablet, computer or smart TV. A bigger screen is easier on the eyes.
Internet	Home Wi-Fi is best. A phone's cellular data works too, but an hour-long service uses a fair amount of data.
The right app or website	Usually YouTube, Facebook, your church's website or your church's own app. See Chapter 3, *Finding Your Church's Livestream*.
Sound you can hear	The TV speakers, a soundbar, or headphones. See Chapter 20, *Getting the Sound Right*.

Which screen is best?

Device	Good for	Keep in mind
Smart TV or streaming stick	Watching with family, large picture, big sound	May need a one-time setup
Tablet (iPad, Android tablet)	Easy to hold, good size, works in any room	Keep it charged
Computer or laptop	Big screen, easy to type in chat	Speakers can be small
Smartphone	Watching anywhere, quick reminders	Small screen; best for short sessions

TIP

Wi-Fi is your friend

Streaming an hour of video over cellular data can use a good share of a limited phone plan, especially at high quality. If your plan has a data cap, watch at home on Wi-Fi.

GOOD TO KNOW

No account needed for most services

Most church livestreams on YouTube and church websites can be watched without signing in to anything. Facebook sometimes asks you to sign in or shows a pop-up; we'll handle that in Chapter 7, *Watching on Facebook Live*.

CHAPTER 3

Finding Your Church's Livestream

Every church does this a little differently. The quickest way to find out is simply to ask, but here are the places to look, in the order I'd try them.

1. **The church bulletin, newsletter or email.** Most churches print the livestream address or say "watch us on YouTube" or "on Facebook."
2. **The church's website.** Look for a button or menu item called **Watch**, **Live**, **Livestream**, **Online Worship** or **Sermons**.
3. **YouTube.** Search for your church's full name and town, like the name of the church plus "Kent Ohio." See Chapter 5, *Watching on YouTube*.
4. **Facebook.** Search for the church's page. Live services show a red **LIVE** label. See Chapter 7, *Watching on Facebook Live*.
5. **A church app.** Some churches have their own app, often built with Subsplash or Church Center. See Chapter 8, *Your Church's Own App*.
6. **Call the church office.** They'll be glad to help, and they'll know about anything that's changed.

HEADS UP

Make sure it's the real one

Search results sometimes show copycat pages or channels with your church's name and photo. The safest path is always the link on your church's own website or bulletin. See Chapter 35, *Copycat Pages, Fake Livestreams and Fake Giving Links*.

Write it down once

When you find it, note where your church streams and at what time in the "Keep this handy" table in Chapter 39, *Your Church Online Cheat-Sheet*. Next Sunday you won't have to hunt.

TIP

Bookmark it

On a phone or tablet, once you've found the church's livestream page in your web browser, add it to your home screen or bookmarks so it's one tap away.

CHAPTER 4

Making a Simple Sunday Routine

Worship at home is easier when it feels like a routine instead of a tech project. A few minutes of setup on Saturday can make Sunday morning calm.

1. **Charge the tablet or phone** the night before, or plan to watch on the TV.
2. **Set a reminder** for ten minutes before the service starts. On YouTube you can tap **Notify me** on an upcoming stream. See Chapter 6, *Getting a Reminder Before the Service Starts*.
3. **Open the stream early.** Many churches start the stream a few minutes before the service with music or a countdown.
4. **Have your Bible, hymnal or bulletin nearby.** Many churches also post the order of worship on their website.
5. **Turn on captions** if the words help you follow along. See Chapter 21, *Turning On Captions*.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why a routine helps

When the steps are the same every week, they become second nature, and you can focus on worship instead of buttons.

TIP

Watch together, even apart

Some families call each other and watch the same livestream at the same time, then chat about it afterward. It's a lovely way to stay close.

PART 2

Watching on a Phone, Tablet or Computer

YouTube, Facebook, church apps and church websites, plus how to catch up on a service you missed.

CHAPTER 5

Watching on YouTube

YouTube is the most common home for church livestreams. It's free, it works on nearly every device, and you don't need an account just to watch.

To find and watch your church on YouTube

1. Open the **YouTube** app, or go to youtube.com in a web browser.
2. Tap the magnifying glass and type your church's name and town.
3. Tap the church's channel (it has the church's name and usually its logo).
4. Look for the **Live** tab, or a video marked **LIVE** in red. Tap it to watch.
5. Tap the video once to show controls. Tap the full-screen button (the corners) to make it bigger.

TIP

Subscribe so it's easy to find

On the church's channel, tap **Subscribe**. It's free and private. Your church's new videos will show up in your **Subscriptions** tab, so you don't have to search each week.

Browsing what's live now

On a computer, YouTube has a **Live** section where you can see current and upcoming live streams. For your church, though, going straight to its channel is quickest.

GOOD TO KNOW

Ads on YouTube

Sometimes YouTube shows an ad before or during a video. That's YouTube, not your church. Tap **Skip** when it appears, or wait a few seconds.

CHAPTER 6

Getting a Reminder Before the Service Starts

If your church schedules its livestream ahead of time on YouTube, you can ask YouTube to tap you on the shoulder when it begins.

To get a reminder

1. Open your church's YouTube channel and find the **upcoming** stream. It shows the date and time it will start.
2. Tap it, then tap **Notify me**.
3. Make sure the YouTube app is allowed to send notifications (on iPhone, **Settings > Notifications > YouTube**; on Android, **Settings > Notifications**).
4. When the stream goes live, you'll get a notification. Tap it to start watching.

GOOD TO KNOW

This only works if the church schedules it

If your church starts its stream without scheduling it first, there won't be a Notify me button. A simple alarm or calendar reminder on your phone works just as well.

A calendar reminder that works for any stream

1. Open your phone's **Calendar** app and add a new event called *Church online*.
2. Set it for your service time, and set it to **Repeat** every week.
3. Set an **Alert** for 10 minutes before.
4. In the notes or URL box, paste the link to your church's livestream page.

TIP

Tap the link right from the reminder

When the calendar alert pops up, tap it and tap the link inside. It opens the livestream directly.

CHAPTER 7

Watching on Facebook Live

Many churches stream on their Facebook page, especially smaller congregations. If you already use Facebook, it's easy. If you don't, you can often still watch, though Facebook may nudge you to sign in.

To watch in the Facebook app

1. Open the **Facebook** app.
2. Tap the magnifying glass and type your church's name.
3. Tap the church's page (look for the right town and photo).
4. When the service is on, you'll see a video with a red **LIVE** label near the top of the page. Tap it.
5. Turn your phone sideways for a bigger picture, and tap the speaker icon if there's no sound.

Following the page

Tap **Follow** (or **Like**) on the church's page so its posts and live videos appear in your feed. Facebook may also notify you when the church goes live, depending on your notification settings.

GOOD TO KNOW

No Facebook account?

Some churches post their Facebook livestream on their website too, so you can watch it there without Facebook. Others also stream on YouTube. It's worth asking the church office.

HEADS UP

Comments are public

Anything you type under a Facebook live video can usually be seen by everyone watching, and often by anyone who visits the page later. Keep prayer requests general and private details out. See Chapter 25, *Live Chat, Comments and Prayer Requests*.

CHAPTER 8

Your Church's Own App

Some churches have their own app with the livestream, sermons, events, a prayer request form and giving all in one place. These apps are usually built on a platform such as **Subsplash** or **Church Center** (from Planning Center), so they can look similar from church to church.

To get your church's app

1. Ask the church office, or look on the church website, for the **exact name** of its app.
2. Open the **App Store** (iPhone or iPad) or **Google Play Store** (Android).
3. Search for that name and check that the publisher matches what the church told you.
4. Tap **Get** or **Install**. Church apps are free to download.
5. Open it and look for **Watch**, **Live** or **Media**.

Church Center

If your church uses Planning Center, you may be asked to download the **Church Center** app and then search for your church inside it. Church Center is where you can see events, sign up for groups and, if your church uses it, give.

TIP

One app, many uses

If your church has an app, it's often the single easiest place for everything: the stream, the bulletin, and giving. Ask whether it's the recommended way to watch.

SCAM ALERT

Only install the app your church names

App stores sometimes have look-alike apps. If you're not sure which one is real, ask the church office before you install or give through it.

CHAPTER 9

Watching on Your Church's Website

Many church websites have a page with the livestream right on it. Behind the scenes it may be coming from YouTube, Facebook or another service, but you just watch it on the church's page.

1. Open your web browser (Safari, Chrome or Edge).
2. Type your church's web address, or search for the church's name and tap its website.
3. Look for **Watch**, **Live**, **Online** or **Sermons** in the menu. On phones, the menu is often behind a button with three short lines.
4. Tap the play button on the video. Tap the full-screen button to enlarge it.

TIP

Make it a home screen button

On iPhone in Safari, tap **Share**, then **Add to Home Screen**. On Android in Chrome, tap the three dots, then **Add to Home screen**. Now the church's watch page is an icon like any app.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the video won't play

Refresh the page, check your Wi-Fi, and make sure your browser is up to date. Some church pages only show the video once the service actually begins.

CHAPTER 10

Missed the Service? Watching a Replay

One of the best things about church online is that you don't have to catch it live. Most churches leave the recording up afterward, so you can watch Sunday's service on Monday afternoon.

Where they stream	Where to find past services
YouTube	On the church's channel, look in the **Live** tab or **Videos** tab. Past streams are listed by date.
Facebook	On the church's page, look under **Videos** or scroll down the page to the post.
Church website	Look for **Sermons**, **Archive** or **Past Services**.
Church app	Look under **Media**, **Sermons** or **Watch**.

Skipping to the part you want

Tap the video once to show the controls, then drag the dot along the line at the bottom to move forward or back. On YouTube, you can also double-tap the right side of the video to jump ahead a few seconds, or the left side to go back.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some parts may be left out

Churches sometimes don't keep certain parts in the replay, such as music they don't have permission to rebroadcast. If a hymn is missing, that's usually why.

TIP

Captions on replays can be better

On YouTube, automatic captions are usually created again after the live stream ends, so a replay may have different captions than you saw live. See Chapter 21, *Turning On Captions*.

CHAPTER 11

When the Livestream Stutters, Freezes or Won't Play

A spinning circle or a frozen picture during the sermon is frustrating. Most of the time the fix is quick. Work down this list in order.

1. **Wait ten seconds.** Live video sometimes pauses briefly and catches up on its own.
2. **Check that the service has started.** Before the start time, some pages show only a countdown or a "waiting" message.
3. **Close and reopen the app** (or refresh the web page).
4. **Move closer to your Wi-Fi router**, or switch from cellular data to Wi-Fi.
5. **Lower the picture quality** (below). A slightly softer picture that doesn't freeze is better than a sharp one that does.
6. **Restart the device**, and if several devices are struggling, restart your internet router.
7. **Ask whether others are having trouble.** If the whole congregation's stream drops, the problem is at the church, and they usually post the recording later. See Chapter 10, *Missed the Service? Watching a Replay*.

To change the picture quality on YouTube

1. Tap the video once to show the controls.
2. Tap **Settings** (the gear), then **Quality**.
3. Choose **Data saver** for a picture that loads faster, **Higher picture quality** for a sharper one, or leave it on **Auto**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Higher quality uses more data

YouTube notes that higher picture quality uses more data and may buffer more often, while Data saver may start faster. On a phone plan with a data cap, Data saver is the kinder choice.

TIP

Slow every Sunday?

If streams stutter every week, your internet speed or Wi-Fi coverage may be the bottleneck. My guides on slow internet and Wi-Fi dead zones can help, or I can check it with you.

PART 3

Putting the Service on Your TV

The big screen makes worship at home feel like worship. Here are all the ways to get there, from the simplest to the most flexible.

CHAPTER 12

Ways to Watch Church on Your TV

Watching on the TV lets you see faces and hear music the way they were meant to be seen and heard. There are several ways to get there. Pick the first one that fits your TV.

If…	Do this
Your TV has a YouTube app	Open YouTube right on the TV and find your church. See Chapter 13, *The YouTube App on Your Smart TV*.
You want to send it from your phone	Use the Cast or AirPlay button. See Chapter 14, *Sending YouTube from Your Phone to the TV*, Chapter 15, *AirPlay from an iPhone or iPad* and Chapter 16, *Casting from an Android Phone (Chromecast and Google TV)*.
You have a Roku or Fire TV	Use the YouTube app on it. See Chapter 17, *Roku and Fire TV*.
Your church streams on Facebook	Send it from your phone. See Chapter 18, *Getting a Facebook Livestream onto the TV*.
Your church streams only on its website	Mirror your phone or connect a laptop. See Chapter 15, *AirPlay from an iPhone or iPad* and Chapter 19, *Connecting a Laptop with an HDMI Cable*.

TIP

The simplest way, if you can

If your church streams on YouTube and your TV has the YouTube app, using the app right on the TV is the most reliable choice. Your phone is free, and nothing stops if a call comes in.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not sure what kind of TV you have?

Press the **Home** button on the TV remote. If you see a screen of app tiles, you have a smart TV or a streaming device. My TV manuals walk through each brand.

CHAPTER 13

The YouTube App on Your Smart TV

Most smart TVs sold in the last several years, including Samsung, LG, Vizio, Roku TVs, Google TVs and Fire TVs, have a YouTube app built in or available for free.

To find your church using the TV remote

1. Press the **Home** button on the remote.
2. Find the red **YouTube** tile and select it. If you don't see it, look in the TV's app store and add it.
3. Choose **Search** (the magnifying glass) on the left side.
4. Type your church's name with the on-screen keyboard, or press the microphone button on the remote and say it, if your remote has one.
5. Select the church's channel, then the live video or the most recent service.

TIP

Sign in so your subscriptions follow you

If you sign in to YouTube on the TV with the same Google Account as your phone, your subscribed channels appear on the TV too. Then your church is right there under **Subscriptions**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Typing with a remote is slow

If spelling out the church's name with arrow keys is a chore, send it from your phone instead. It's often quicker. See Chapter 14, *Sending YouTube from Your Phone to the TV*.

HEADS UP

"YouTube TV" is something different

YouTube TV is a paid cable-style TV service. You don't need it to watch your church. The free **YouTube** app is all you need.

CHAPTER 14

Sending YouTube from Your Phone to the TV

If both your phone and your TV have YouTube, you can find the service on your phone, where typing is easy, and send it to the TV with one tap. The phone becomes the remote.

When both are on the same Wi-Fi

1. Turn on the TV and open the YouTube app on it.
2. On your phone, open the YouTube app and find your church's livestream.
3. Tap the **Cast** button (a small rectangle with curved lines in the corner) at the top of the video.
4. Choose your TV from the list. The service starts on the TV.

If your phone doesn't see the TV: link with a code

1. On the TV's YouTube app, go to **Settings** and choose **Link with TV code**. A blue code appears.
2. On your phone in YouTube, tap the **Cast** button, then **Link with TV code**.
3. Type the code from the TV and tap **Link**.
4. From now on, your phone can send videos to that TV.

TIP

Your phone is free while it plays

Once it's playing on the TV, you can lock your phone or take a call and the service keeps playing on the TV.

GOOD TO KNOW

Menu names can vary

Depending on the YouTube app version, the phone side may say **Watch on TV** in Settings instead. The idea is the same.

CHAPTER 15

AirPlay from an iPhone or iPad

If you have an Apple TV, or a TV that supports AirPlay (many recent Samsung, LG, Vizio, Sony and Roku models do), you can send the service from your iPhone or iPad to the TV.

To AirPlay a video

1. Make sure your iPhone and TV are on the same Wi-Fi network.
2. Start the livestream on your iPhone.
3. Tap the **AirPlay** button on the video (a rectangle with a triangle at the bottom). In YouTube, you may need to use the Cast button instead.
4. Choose your TV. If a code appears on the TV, type it on your iPhone.

To mirror your whole screen (for church websites)

1. Swipe down from the top-right corner to open **Control Center**.
2. Tap **Screen Mirroring** (two overlapping rectangles).
3. Choose your TV. Everything on your iPhone screen now shows on the TV.
4. Open the church's livestream page and tap full screen. Turn your iPhone sideways.
5. When you're done, open Control Center, tap **Screen Mirroring**, then **Stop Mirroring**.

HEADS UP

Mirroring shows everything

While mirroring, text messages and notifications may pop up on the TV for everyone to see. Turn on **Do Not Disturb** in Control Center during the service.

TIP

Keep it plugged in

Mirroring uses a lot of battery. Plug your iPhone or iPad into its charger before the service.

CHAPTER 16

Casting from an Android Phone (Chromecast and Google TV)

If you have a Chromecast, a Google TV streamer, or a TV with Google TV or Chromecast built in, you can "cast" from apps on your Android phone (and from YouTube on an iPhone).

1. Make sure your phone and TV are on the same Wi-Fi network.
2. Open the livestream in YouTube or another app with a **Cast** button.
3. Tap **Cast** and choose your TV.
4. Use your phone to pause, adjust volume, or stop casting.

To cast your whole screen from Android

For a livestream that's only on a church website, many Android phones can cast the whole screen. Swipe down from the top to open Quick Settings and look for **Cast**, **Screen Cast** or, on Samsung, **Smart View**. Pick your TV.

GOOD TO KNOW

Casting vs. mirroring

Casting tells the TV to play the video itself, so your phone is free. **Mirroring** copies your phone's screen, so the phone has to stay on that page. Casting is smoother when it's available.

TIP

If your TV doesn't show up

Restart the TV and the phone, and make sure both are on the same Wi-Fi network, not a guest network.

CHAPTER 17

Roku and Fire TV

Roku and Amazon Fire TV devices both offer the free YouTube app, so you can watch your church's YouTube stream right from the remote, and send it from your phone with the Cast button.

On a Roku

1. Press **Home** on the Roku remote.
2. Select the **YouTube** app. If it's not there, go to **Search**, type YouTube, and add it (free).
3. Search for your church and choose the stream.

On a Fire TV

1. Press **Home** on the Fire TV remote.
2. Open **YouTube** from your apps. If it's missing, search for it with the magnifying glass and download it (free).
3. Search for your church and choose the stream. With an Alexa remote, you can hold the microphone button and say the name of the app.

GOOD TO KNOW

Church streams on Facebook or a website?

There's no Facebook video app for Roku or Fire TV anymore. Use your phone to cast or mirror instead. See Chapter 18, *Getting a Facebook Livestream onto the TV* and Chapter 15, *AirPlay from an iPhone or iPad*.

TIP

Some churches have their own TV app

A few churches publish their own Roku or Fire TV channel through their app platform. Ask your church office, then search for it in the Roku or Fire TV store.

CHAPTER 18

Getting a Facebook Livestream onto the TV

Facebook ended its separate "Facebook Watch" TV app, but you can still send Facebook videos from the Facebook app on your phone to a TV with a casting device.

1. Make sure your phone and TV (or Chromecast) are on the same Wi-Fi network.
2. In the Facebook app, open your church's live video.
3. Tap the video, then tap **Options** (three dots) and choose **Cast video**.
4. Pick your TV from the list.

GOOD TO KNOW

iPhone owners: use AirPlay or mirroring

Facebook says Chromecast casting isn't available from iPhone and iPad. On an iPhone, use Screen Mirroring to an Apple TV or AirPlay TV instead. See Chapter 15, *AirPlay from an iPhone or iPad*. You may also need to allow Facebook to use your local network when it asks.

TIP

Or ask if it's on YouTube too

Many churches stream to Facebook and YouTube at the same time. If yours does, YouTube on the TV is usually easier.

CHAPTER 19

Connecting a Laptop with an HDMI Cable

If nothing wireless works, an HDMI cable is the old reliable. It's a single cable from your laptop to the TV, and the TV shows whatever is on the laptop's screen, including any church website.

1. Plug one end of an HDMI cable into the laptop and the other into an **HDMI** port on the TV. (Some newer laptops need a small USB-C to HDMI adapter.)
2. With the TV remote, press **Input** or **Source** and choose that HDMI port.
3. On the laptop, open the church's livestream page and make the video full screen.
4. If the picture doesn't appear, on Windows press the **Windows key + P** and choose **Duplicate**.
5. If the sound still comes from the laptop, click the speaker icon on the laptop and choose the TV as the output.

TIP

A long cable gives you room

A 10- or 15-foot HDMI cable lets the laptop sit on a side table instead of the floor.

GOOD TO KNOW

More on cables

My TV cables and connections guide explains HDMI ports, inputs and adapters in detail.

PART 4

Hearing and Seeing Clearly

Sound you can hear, captions you can read, and the words of the service right in front of you.

CHAPTER 20

Getting the Sound Right

Church audio online can be uneven: a soft-spoken reader, a loud organ. A few adjustments make a big difference.

1. **Check both volumes.** The video player has its own volume, and so does the device or TV. Turn both up.
2. **Unmute the video.** On Facebook and some websites, videos start silent. Tap the speaker icon.
3. **Use the TV or a soundbar.** Phone and laptop speakers are small. The TV almost always sounds better.
4. **Try headphones** if others in the house are sleeping or if you want to hear every word. Many TVs and streaming devices support Bluetooth headphones.
5. **Turn on dialogue or voice settings.** Many TVs and soundbars have a "clear voice" or "dialogue" mode that makes speech stand out.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the stream itself is quiet

Sometimes the problem is at the church's end. If everyone online hears it too softly, let the church know kindly; volunteers often appreciate the feedback.

TIP

TV listening help

My TV listening headphones and dialogue guide covers TV headphones, Bluetooth and dialogue modes in detail.

CHAPTER 21

Turning On Captions

Captions put the spoken words on the screen. They're wonderful for anyone hard of hearing, and helpful for anyone in a noisy room or trying to catch a reading.

On YouTube (phone or tablet)

1. Tap the video once to show the controls.
2. Tap the **CC** (Closed captions) button. If you don't see it, captions aren't available for that video.
3. To make captions your default, tap your profile picture, then **Settings**, then **Captions**.

On YouTube (computer)

1. Click the **CC** button at the bottom right of the player.
2. Click the gear icon, then **Subtitles/CC**, then **Options** to change the size and color.

GOOD TO KNOW

Live captions depend on the church

Captions during a live stream only appear if the church turns them on. YouTube's automatic live captions are English only, and new automatic captions are made for the replay after the stream ends.

On the TV

In the YouTube app on a TV, press the remote's select button during the video to show the controls, and choose **CC**. Many TVs also have their own Accessibility caption setting; if captions appear twice, turn one off.

TIP

Your phone can caption anything

iPhones and many Android phones can create live captions of any spoken audio, even on a church website with no captions. See the "Ways to Make Life Easier" topic in the web version of this guide.

CHAPTER 22

Following Along: Bulletins, Hymns and Readings

At church, you have a bulletin and a hymnal in your hands. At home, you can still follow along.

- **Online bulletin.** Many churches post the weekly bulletin or order of worship as a PDF on their website or in their app.
- **Words on screen.** Some livestreams show the song lyrics and readings on screen. Watching on the TV makes them easier to read.
- **Two screens.** Watch on the TV and keep the bulletin open on a tablet in your lap.
- **Your own Bible or hymnal.** Nothing wrong with paper. Ask the church for the readings ahead of time.

Making small words bigger

- On a phone or tablet, spread two fingers apart on a PDF bulletin to zoom in.
- In a web browser on a computer, hold **Ctrl** (or **Command** on a Mac) and press **+** to enlarge the page.

TIP

Ask to be on the email list

Many churches email the bulletin each week. It's the easiest way to have it ready on Sunday morning.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it matters

Following along helps you feel part of the service, not just a viewer. Singing along at home counts.

PART 5

Taking Part from Home

Joining a Zoom Bible study or prayer group, calling in by phone, and using live chat wisely.

CHAPTER 23

Joining a Small Group or Prayer Meeting on Zoom

Many Bible studies, prayer chains, committee meetings and coffee hours meet on **Zoom**. Unlike a livestream, Zoom is a two-way conversation: you can see and hear each other.

To join from an invitation

1. Find the invitation email or text from the group leader. It has a link, and usually a **Meeting ID** and **Passcode**.
2. A few minutes before the start time, tap the link.
3. If asked, let it open the **Zoom Workplace** app (on a phone or tablet you may need to install it first from the App Store or Google Play; it's free to join).
4. Type your name the way you'd like the group to see it, and tap **Join**.
5. When asked, allow Zoom to use your microphone and camera, and tap **Join with Video** and **Join Audio** (or **Wi-Fi or Cellular Data**).

The three buttons you'll use

Button	What it does
Mute / Unmute	The microphone at the bottom left. Stay muted when you're not speaking.
Start / Stop Video	The camera button. Turn it off if you'd rather not be seen.
Leave	The red button. Tap it at the end, then **Leave Meeting**.

TIP

Practice with a family member

Ask a grandchild or friend to start a short Zoom call with you before the first group meeting. Ten minutes of practice makes the real thing relaxed.

GOOD TO KNOW

More on Zoom

My Zoom manual covers everything from gallery view to raising your hand.

CHAPTER 24

Joining Zoom by Telephone

No computer, no smartphone, or just prefer a regular phone? You can join most Zoom meetings by dialing in, even from a landline. You'll hear everyone and can talk, though you won't see them.

1. Look in the invitation for **Dial by your location** or a list of phone numbers. Pick one marked US.
2. Dial that number.
3. When asked, enter the **Meeting ID** on your keypad, then press #.
4. If asked for a participant ID, just press # again.
5. If asked for a passcode, enter the numbers-only phone passcode from the invitation, then press #.

Handy keypad commands

Press	To
***6**	Mute or unmute yourself
***9**	Raise your hand so the leader knows you want to speak

GOOD TO KNOW

Calling in may cost

Zoom's U.S. dial-in numbers are regular phone numbers, so your usual calling plan applies. Most plans include unlimited U.S. calling.

TIP

Ask the leader to include the numbers

If the invitation doesn't list phone numbers, ask the group leader to include the dial-in details for you next time.

CHAPTER 25

Live Chat, Comments and Prayer Requests

YouTube, Facebook and church apps often have a live chat or comments area beside the livestream. It's a warm way to say good morning to your church family, and sometimes a way to share prayer requests.

To type in YouTube live chat

1. Open the livestream. On a phone, the chat is usually below the video; tap **Chat** or **Live chat**.
2. You'll need to be signed in to a Google Account to type.
3. Tap the box that says **Chat** or **Say something**, type your message, and tap the send arrow.

Good habits

- Keep it kind and short. Many people may read it, including visitors.
- Keep private details out of the chat. For personal prayer requests, use the church's prayer form, email or phone.
- Remember that comments can remain visible on the replay.

SCAM ALERT

Never post your phone number or address

Scammers watch public church livestreams and comment sections. If someone in the chat or comments asks you to message them privately, offers a "blessing," a prize, or investment help, ignore it. Real church staff won't contact you that way.

TIP

Wave hello

A simple "Good morning from Ravenna!" lets your church know you're with them. It's encouraging for the people up front.

CHAPTER 26

Sharing the Service with Family and Friends

A livestream can reach people who can't come: a sister in another state, a friend in the hospital, a grandchild away at college. Sending them the link takes seconds.

To share a YouTube service

1. Open the livestream or replay in the YouTube app.
2. Tap **Share** below the video.
3. Choose Messages, Mail or another app, pick the person, and send. Or tap **Copy link** and paste it anywhere.

To share a Facebook live video

1. Tap **Share** under the video.
2. Choose **Send in Messenger**, **Copy link**, or another app.

TIP

Add a personal note

A short message like "Here's this morning's service, the choir sang your favorite" makes the link feel like what it is: an invitation, not spam.

HEADS UP

Share the church's link, not a copy

Always share the link to the church's own video or page. Don't download and re-post the service yourself; churches often have permissions only for their own stream.

PART 6

Giving Online

The ways churches accept gifts online, what the fees are, how to set up, change or stop a recurring gift, and keeping records for taxes.

CHAPTER 27

Ways to Give When You're Not in the Pew

Churches accept gifts in more ways than ever. None is "better" in a spiritual sense; pick whatever is simplest and most comfortable for you. And mailing a check is still perfectly fine.

Way to give	How it works
The church's website	A **Give** button that opens a secure giving form.
A giving app	Your church may use Givelify, Tithely, Church Center, Subsplash, Pushpay or another service. See Chapter 28, *The Giving Services Churches Use*.
Text-to-give	Some churches let you text an amount to a special number, then complete it on a secure page the first time.
During the livestream	Some church apps show a Give button right beside the video.
Your bank's bill pay	Many banks can mail a paper check to the church for you on a schedule.
A check by mail	Still welcome everywhere.

STAY SAFE

Start from the church, not from a message

Always reach your church's giving page from the church's own website, bulletin or app. Never through a link in an unexpected text, email or social media message. See Chapter 36, *A Safe-Giving Checklist*.

GOOD TO KNOW

Ask what your church prefers

Every giving service charges the church a processing fee. Some churches prefer bank transfers (lower fees) or checks. It's fine to ask the church office which they'd like.

CHAPTER 28

The Giving Services Churches Use

Your church chooses its giving service, not you. Here are the names you're most likely to see, so you'll recognize them when you're asked to use one.

Service	What to know
Givelify	A free app for donors. You search for your church inside the app. Givelify says donors pay no fees; the church pays 2.9% plus 30 cents per gift on Visa, Mastercard and Discover (3.5% plus 30 cents on American Express).
Tithely (Tithe.ly)	Giving through a Tithely app or the church's website. Offers "Cover the Fees," where you can choose to add the processing fee so the church receives your full gift.
Church Center (Planning Center)	A free app and website. You can give, see your giving history and statements, and change recurring gifts from your profile.
Subsplash	Powers many churches' own apps and websites, with giving built in, sometimes right beside the livestream.
Pushpay and others	Other services work much the same way: a secure form, a saved payment method, and email receipts.

TIP

One account per service

If your church uses Givelify, you'll create a free Givelify account; if it uses Church Center, a Church Center profile, and so on. Use a strong password you don't use anywhere else.

HEADS UP

Check that it's really your church

In giving apps where you search for a church, several may have similar names. Check the city and address before you give.

CHAPTER 29

Giving with the Givelify App, Step by Step

Givelify is one of the most widely used church giving apps, so here's a full walkthrough. If your church uses a different service, the steps will be similar.

1. Install the free **Givelify** app from the App Store or Google Play.
2. Tap **Search** at the bottom of the screen, and search by your church's name, your pastor's name, or city and state. You can also find it on the map.
3. Tap your church, checking the address, then tap **Give**.
4. Choose an amount, or tap **Other** to type your own.
5. Choose where your gift goes (the fund or "envelope").
6. On the **Gift Summary** screen you can add a message, or tap **Set Recurring** to repeat the gift.
7. Create your account (with your email, or with Apple or Facebook) and add a debit or credit card. It's saved in your **Wallet** for next time.
8. Confirm the gift. Givelify emails you an activation link for your account; you can finish your first gift before clicking it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Givelify doesn't charge donors

Givelify says giving through the app costs you nothing. The church pays the processing fee.

TIP

Giving from a computer

Givelify also works on a computer or tablet at givelify.com, if a phone screen feels too small.

CHAPTER 30

Making Your First Online Gift

The details vary by service, but every online gift follows the same simple pattern. Take it slowly the first time; it gets easier.

1. Go to your church's website (from the bulletin or a bookmark) and tap **Give**, or open the giving app the church told you to use.
2. Check that the church name and city at the top are right.
3. Type the amount.
4. Choose the fund, if there's a choice, such as General Fund, Building Fund or a special offering.
5. Choose **one time** or **recurring**. For your first gift, one time is fine.
6. Choose how to pay: a debit or credit card, or a bank account. Type the details carefully.
7. If offered, decide whether to cover the processing fee. See Chapter 31, *"Cover the Fees": What It Means*.
8. Review everything, then tap **Give** or **Submit** once. Wait for the thank-you screen.
9. Look for a receipt in your email within a few minutes.

HEADS UP

Tap Give only once

If the screen seems slow, wait. Tapping again can create a second gift. If you think you gave twice by mistake, see Chapter 32, *Recurring Gifts: Set Up, Change or Stop*.

TIP

A bank account often costs the church less

Card fees are usually higher than bank-transfer (ACH) fees. Tithely, for example, lists cards at 2.9% plus 30 cents and bank transfers at 1% plus 30 cents.

CHAPTER 31

"Cover the Fees": What It Means

Most giving forms now have a checkbox that says something like **Cover the fees** or **Add the processing fee so my church receives my full gift**. Here's what it means in plain numbers.

Example: a $75.00 card gift	You're charged	The church receives
You don't cover the fees	$75.00	about $72.50
You check "Cover the fees"	about $77.55	$75.00

GOOD TO KNOW

It's entirely your choice

Covering the fees is optional, never required. Some people do it, some don't. Your gift is just as welcome either way.

TIP

Not every service shows it

Givelify, for example, says it charges donors nothing and takes its fee from the church's side. Other services let you choose. Read the form before you tap Give.

If fees matter to you, ask your church office whether a bank transfer, a check or a different method costs them less. They'll be glad you asked.

CHAPTER 32

Recurring Gifts: Set Up, Change or Stop

A **recurring gift** is given automatically on a schedule, such as every week or the first of each month. It's convenient, but it's important to know how to change it.

To set one up

1. Start a gift as in Chapter 30, *Making Your First Online Gift*.
2. Choose **Recurring**, then the frequency (weekly, every other week, monthly) and a start date.
3. Finish and look for an email confirming the schedule.

To change or stop one

1. Sign in to the giving service you used (the app or the church's giving page).
2. Look for **My Giving**, **Recurring Gifts**, **Scheduled** or your profile.
3. Choose the recurring gift, then **Edit**, **Pause** or **Cancel** (or **Delete**).
4. Look for a confirmation email.

GOOD TO KNOW

In Church Center

Planning Center says donors can adjust recurring donations and see their giving history and statements from their Church Center profile. Changes to your name or contact details are made by a church administrator.

If you gave twice by mistake or the amount was wrong

Don't worry, this happens. Contact the church office or treasurer as soon as you can, with the date, amount and your receipt email. Churches can usually refund a mistaken gift through their giving service, or apply it toward a future gift if you'd prefer.

HEADS UP

Update your card when it changes

If you get a new debit or credit card, your recurring gift may fail. Sign in and update the payment method.

CHAPTER 33

Giving Statements and Tax Records

If you itemize deductions on your taxes, you'll want records of your gifts. Online giving makes this easier, because every gift is recorded.

- Most giving services email a receipt for each gift and offer a **year-end giving statement** you can download from your account.
- Your church may also mail or email a yearly statement in January.

The IRS $250 rule

The IRS says that for any single gift of **$250 or more**, you need a written acknowledgment from the church to claim a deduction. It can be a letter, a postcard, a computer-generated form or an email. It should show the church's name, the amount, and whether you received anything in return. Separate gifts under $250 aren't added together for this rule.

GOOD TO KNOW

I'm not a tax advisor

This is general information, not tax advice. Talk with your tax preparer about what you can deduct and what records to keep.

TIP

Keep receipts in one folder

Create an email folder or label called *Church giving* and move each receipt into it. At tax time, everything is in one place.

PART 7

Staying Safe & Getting Help

The scams that target churchgoers, how to give safely, setting up a parent to watch from home, and how to reach me.

CHAPTER 34

"Pastor" Texts and Emails Asking for Gift Cards

This is one of the most common scams aimed at people of faith. The Federal Trade Commission has warned about it for years. A scammer pretends to be your pastor, priest, rabbi, imam or bishop and asks for a quiet favor.

How it usually goes

1. A text or email arrives from what looks like your pastor: "Are you available? I need a favor."
2. When you reply, they say they're in a meeting, traveling or at a hospital and can't talk on the phone.
3. They ask you to buy gift cards (or send money by Zelle, Cash App or PayPal) for a good cause: a sick member, a family in need, a surprise for the staff.
4. They ask you to scratch off the backs and send photos of the card numbers.
5. Once you send the numbers, the money is gone.

SCAM ALERT

The rule to remember

Your pastor will never ask you to buy gift cards, and won't ask you to keep a request secret. Any request for gift cards is a scam, no matter whose name is on it.

What to do

1. Don't reply, and don't buy anything.
2. Call your pastor or the church office using a number you already know, from the bulletin or the church website, not the number in the message.
3. Let the church know so they can warn others.
4. Report it to the FTC at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**.

FROM BILL

If you already sent gift card numbers

Contact the company that issued the gift card right away and tell them it was used in a scam; keep the receipt and the card. Then call me at **(330) 200-8042**, and my "I think I've been scammed" guide walks through the next steps.

CHAPTER 35

Copycat Pages, Fake Livestreams and Fake Giving Links

Because church pages are public and friendly, scammers sometimes copy them. They borrow the church's name and photos to make a look-alike Facebook page or channel, then reach out to members or post links.

Warning signs

- A **second** page or account with your church's name, often brand new, with few posts.
- A friend request or message from your pastor's "new account."
- A link in the comments or a message to "watch the livestream here" that goes somewhere other than the church's usual page, especially if it asks you to sign in or enter card details to watch.
- Requests to give through an unfamiliar link, app or payment service, or to a person's name.
- Pressure: "today only," "urgent need," "keep this between us."

SCAM ALERT

Watching a church service is never paid

Your church will not charge you to watch its service, and won't ask for your card number to "verify" you. Close any page that does.

What to do

1. Go back to the church's official website and use its Watch or Give links instead.
2. Don't accept friend requests from a "new account" without checking with the person by phone.
3. Report the fake page using the platform's report option, and let the church office know.

TIP

Know your church's real addresses

Write down your church's real website, YouTube channel and Facebook page in Chapter 39, *Your Church Online Cheat-Sheet*. If anything else shows up, you'll know it's not them.

CHAPTER 36

A Safe-Giving Checklist

Run through this short list before you give online, especially the first time with a new method.

1. **Start from the church.** Use the website, app or text-to-give number printed in the bulletin or on the church's own website.
2. **Check the name and city** at the top of the giving page.
3. **Look for a secure page.** The web address should start with https and show a padlock or similar icon.
4. **Never give by gift card**, wire transfer, or cryptocurrency because someone asked by text or email.
5. **Never send money to a person's name** for the church unless you've confirmed it in person or by phone with the church office.
6. **Keep your receipt.** Look for the confirmation email.
7. **Check your statement** each month for gifts you recognize.

STAY SAFE

Use a strong, unique password

Your giving account holds a payment method. Give it its own password, and turn on two-step verification if the service offers it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Credit card or debit card?

Many people prefer a credit card online because disputes are often easier to resolve than with a debit card tied directly to your checking account. Either can work; just be careful where you enter it.

CHAPTER 37

Setting Up a Parent to Worship from Home

If a parent can't get to church right now, setting them up to watch is a gift. Do it together, with their blessing, and let them press the buttons.

1. **Pick one way to watch** and stick with it, ideally the YouTube app on their TV. See Chapter 13, *The YouTube App on Your Smart TV*.
2. **Subscribe** to the church's channel on their TV so it's under Subscriptions.
3. **Turn on captions** if they help. See Chapter 21, *Turning On Captions*.
4. **Set a weekly reminder** on their phone. See Chapter 6, *Getting a Reminder Before the Service Starts*.
5. **Write it down** step by step in big letters, and tape it near the TV.
6. **Tell the church** they're watching from home; many churches have visitation, communion or call ministries for homebound members.
7. **Talk about scams**, especially gift-card "pastor" texts (Chapter 34, *"Pastor" Texts and Emails Asking for Gift Cards*).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it matters

Staying connected to a faith community is a source of comfort and friendship. A working livestream keeps that connection going through illness, weather and winters.

TIP

A simple remote helps

If the TV remote is the obstacle, my universal and simplified TV remotes guide has options with fewer, bigger buttons.

CHAPTER 38

When to Call Bill

This guide is meant to help you worship and give online on your own. But some things go faster with a patient person beside you.

Good reasons to call

- You'd like your church's livestream set up on your TV so it's one or two button presses every Sunday.
- Casting, AirPlay or mirroring won't connect, or the sound is too quiet.
- You'd like to join a Zoom Bible study and want to practice first.
- You're setting up a homebound parent and want it simple and reliable.
- You got a text from your "pastor" asking for help and want a second opinion.
- You're not sure whether a giving page or app is really your church's.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

TV & Streaming Setup

This guide pairs with my **TV & Streaming Setup** service: I'll set up your TV, streaming device and apps so your church's service is easy to find, with captions and sound adjusted for you.

SCAM ALERT

A quick check beats regret

If any message pressures you to buy gift cards, send money, or keep a request quiet, stop and call me first at **(330) 200-8042**. I'd much rather spend two minutes reassuring you.

How to reach me

I'm Bill, and Bill's Home Tech serves **Portage County, Ohio**. Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book online at **billshometech.com/book**. If you reach my assistant **Sophie** on the main line, she can answer simple questions and get you on my schedule. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. With 30+ years of professional experience, I promise there's no question too basic.

— Bill

CHAPTER 39

Your Church Online Cheat-Sheet

The whole guide, boiled down to what you'll reach for most.

Watching

I want to…	Do this
Find the stream	Church website, bulletin, YouTube search, or Facebook page.
Watch on the TV	TV's YouTube app > Search > your church.
Send from phone	YouTube > **Cast** button > pick the TV.
Phone won't see TV	TV YouTube > Settings > **Link with TV code**.
iPhone to Apple TV or AirPlay TV	Control Center > **Screen Mirroring**.
Facebook video to TV	Video > **Options** > **Cast video** (Android).
Captions	Tap the video > **CC**.
Reminder	Upcoming stream > **Notify me**, or a weekly calendar alert.

Zoom by phone

I want to…	Do this
Join	Dial the US number, enter Meeting ID then #, passcode then #.
Mute / unmute	*6
Raise hand	*9

Staying safe, the short list

1. Your pastor will never ask for gift cards.
2. Give only through your church's own website or app.
3. Watching church online never costs money.
4. Keep phone numbers and addresses out of live chat.
5. When in doubt, call the church office on a number you know.

Keep this handy

Item	Write it here
My church's website	_____
Where the service streams	_____
Service time	_____
How I give	_____
Church office phone	_____
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book

FROM BILL

You're part of the family, wherever you watch

Take your time with all of this. And if you get stuck, call me.

— Bill