

When it all works ... it is seamless

Some of you know that I have been setting up the livestreaming desk at McAllister Memorial Presbyterian Church. It has been an interesting and at times all-consuming project. Before this endeavor, my knowledge of the requirements for livestreaming video and sound was almost non-existent. But I have persevered (some would say muscled through) and with generous help from others and copious research online I have managed to put together something that works! We are livestreaming our church's Sunday Worship Service and other services (Christmas Eve) and all is good until we had a day like the 27th of December 2020.

Oh, the day itself wasn't bad. Setting up for the broadcast everything looked good -- camera ready, sound ready, OBS software working and Facebook open. We were ready to go live.

Then it starts. Facebook will not accept the stream key when we attempt to go live. Not once, or twice, or three times...finally on the fourth try the stream key is accepted and with a click of the blue button we go live. Yes, the video comes in. We have sound. The blue color changes to pink and we are live.

It wasn't until the end of the service that I discovered that for whatever reason Facebook did not capture the broadcast. That is despite all indicators being "green" or in the case of Facebook, "pink" throughout the broadcast.

Fortunately, OBS allows simultaneous recording while broadcasting live....and fortunately this operator did hit the record

button shortly after starting the livestream.

With no live broadcast posting, the recording of the live service was the next best option. However, on attempting to post the recording, Facebook again was not cooperating. "VIDEO PUBLISHER ERROR" it said. "AN ERROR OCCURRED WHILE PUBLISHING, MAKING YOUR POST INACCESSIBLE ON NEWS FEED."

Multiple attempts at posting the recording of the service resulted in the same error. Facebook accepts video files in multiple file formats. The recording of the Sunday service was an MKV file. So, I converted to an MP4 file and an attempt was made to post the file again. Again, seemingly no luck, but then on closer inspection it appeared that the file was undergoing some sort of "review" prior to posting. I decided to leave the church and let things percolate and try to post the recording again from the computer at home.

Upon my arrival home, Elizabeth (Beth) told me, "You did it!" The morning's service was playing on her iPad on the island in the kitchen. It appears that Facebook needed time to process the recorded video of the Sunday service we were posting and perhaps review its content.

Such are the challenges of livestreaming our Sunday morning worship service from McAllister Memorial Presbyterian Church to Facebook LIVE. When it all works, it works and appears seamless, but when it doesn't, well, that's when a bit of patience is required to try to understand what is happening or not happening.

The technology that brings us together is a wonderful thing, but it is not without its occasional challenges. I ask for your patience and understanding as we continue to become better educated in this new avenue of ministry. Please join us Sunday at 11:00 AM, or at 9:45 AM for Adult Sunday School, or Wednesday evening at 6:00 PM for Bible Study.

Andy

Cookbook in progress

With the Live Streaming Desk now in use an effort is underway to document how it all works. We are documenting the steps that are specific to our going live for McAllister's Sunday worship service or any event with the equipment installed in the balcony.

A rough outline of the topics being covered.

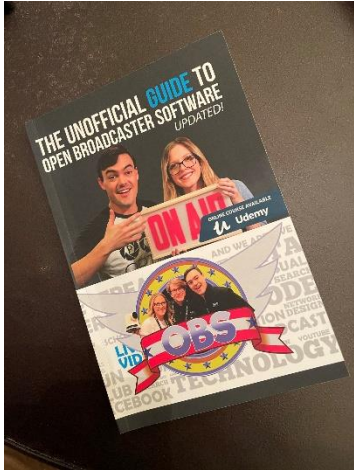
- What connects to what and what type of cable is being used to make the connection.
- How to set up and use Open Broadcaster Software (OBS).
- How you insert slides into a scene during the broadcast or set a scrolling ticker.
- How Scenes and Sources are used in OBS to deliver the broadcast.
- How to use a stream key to provide the link between OBS and Facebook Live.
- How despite all the other preparations you have made, you are not live until you click on that BLUE button on the Facebook page.
- What is the sequence for getting the livestreaming desk up and running ready for broadcast.
What needs to be turned on first, second and so on.

The draft of the book is well underway but will take some time to complete.

With the cookbook in-hand we can begin training one or more additional operators.

However, with local COVID-19 numbers increasing we want to be prudent about when we start interfacing additional operators with the equipment as keyboards, joysticks, the wearing of headphones, and other parts of this process are very much hands on.

The Unofficial Guide to Open Broadcaster Software



This unofficial guide is written by Paul William Richards who is the Chief Streaming Officer for StreamGeeks, a group of video production experts dedicated to helping organizations discover the power of livestreaming.

The book provides a guide to OBS which stands for Open Broadcaster Software. It is the software that McAllister is using to livestream its Sunday Worship Service.

A copy of the book has been donated to the church and can be found at the livestreaming desk in the church's balcony.

According to Richards, OBS is the most popular free livestreaming software in the world. OBS is 100% open source which means the project is reviewed, maintained, and enhanced by a community of volunteers. Anyone can use OBS for free and participate in its development.

The book offers a good general guide to the use of OBS software along with pro tips. It was a help in getting McAllister's Live Desk up and running.

The software is free. Anyone interested in livestreaming can download the OBS software onto their computer and with a copy of the unofficial guide, a webcam and microphone begin to learn the basics of livestreaming.

Organ Update

Our Holtkamp pipe organ is back in service. Thomas Rohlfs will be back mid-January to address some remaining issues.



McAllister's Weekly Line-UP

Sunday Worship Service 11:00 AM
Adult Sunday School 9:45 AM
5-Minute Bible Study
Wednesday 6:00 PM

Each is Broadcast Live on the church's Facebook page

Join US!

McAllister Memorial Presbyterian Church
Covington, VA

Thank you for your faithful support of McAllister Memorial Presbyterian Church!



We have several ways to support the many ministries at McAllister Memorial. Please pick the one that is most convenient for you. Thank you!

GIVE ONLINE

It's easy to give online at McAllister. You can make a one-time gift or a recurring gift using tithe.ly. Go to this link <https://tithe.ly/give?c=898167>

GIVE IN-PERSON

Simply stop by the office any weekday to drop off your check. Collection plates can also be found at the back of the sanctuary.

GIVE BY MAIL

If you would like to give by mail, you can mail your checks to the following address:

McAllister Memorial Presbyterian Church
900 N. Alleghany Avenue
Covington, VA 24426



Tithe.ly