



PREPARING FOR EASTER



CHURCHES ARE PREPARING for one of the biggest holidays of the year: Easter. Some will stage large, multimedia productions while others will offer intimate services focused on sharing communion. All of them, regardless of size, need to plan carefully so their event will proceed smoothly and flawlessly.

Although every church presents the Easter message in a unique way, they all invest tremendous time, energy and preparation into making sure their congregation experiences the full meaning and wonder of the occasion. So much work is spent producing Easter and Christmas services because they are the most well-attended gatherings of the year.

As Easter approaches, it may be tempting to wait for the creative teams to submit their requirements. Instead, be proactive and make sure your sound production and tech teams are ready for the big event. The following checklist will help your organize and prepare for the big day.



DON'T PUT OFF TO TOMORROW WHAT CAN BE DONE TODAY

Avoid unnecessary stress by ensuring that all your media needs are taken care of ahead of time. The last thing you want is to call tech support for a system failure the night before. Plan and execute a thorough run-through of the entire service with the production team, giving yourself time to fix any system issues. Just like musicians practice and prepare, your sound specialists must do the same.

SOFTWARE

If your system(s) relies heavily on software and computers, make sure all software is up-to-date. If necessary, create a list that includes version numbers and available updates for:

- Computer operating system (OS)
- Media presentation software
- Lighting software
- Digital mixing console



Verify that any updates you make will work with the computer OS, Dante®, etc. In some cases, you may need to reload an older version of the computer OS to get a component to work correctly in your system. Double check with manufacturer websites for any updates and downloads, as well as user forums for any real-world issues. **Don't upgrade software on any component unless you have enough time to fix possible issues before rehearsals.**

REPLACE UNRELIABLE TECH

If you have equipment or software that's been creating problems recently, this is an excellent time to replace it. You don't want faulty tech taking away from such an important service.

SAY THANK YOU

A lot of work goes into preparing and serving on one of the busiest Sundays of the year. Show the team your appreciation by saying thank you and acknowledging their sacrifice to serve.

PRODUCTION TECH TEAM SAMPLE TIMELINE

Audio

- 1) 30 DAYS – An audio engineer(s) should audit the entire sound system. Identify hums, feedback, microphone quality, new battery supplies and cabling. Place orders for any necessary replacements or backup gear. If you have translation or accessibility equipment, that should be checked and audited as well. Create a well-organized “Punch List” of things that need to be completed.
- 2) 15 DAYS – Make sure everything on the “Punch List” has been fixed and/or replaced. Church volunteers and the worship team should meet simultaneously to prepare so they can stay in sync during the service. Make sure everyone is up-to-date on how to run the audio tech they are assigned to, especially if it's new. Use this time to answer any other questions volunteers may have.
- 3) WEEK OF – Run a full sound check and dress rehearsal. Make sure you have plenty of time on Easter morning to rehearse, as well as identify and fix glitches.

Lighting

- 1) 30 DAYS – Audit all the lighting in the sanctuary, including fixed ceiling lights. Walk your sanctuary and take note of lights that are out, light bulbs that are the wrong colors, and any stage lights that need replacing. Consider whether any lights need to be moved or relocated altogether. If required, make plans to have a correct height ladder or scissor lift available to replace bad bulbs or reposition lights hung on trusses.
- 2) 15 DAYS – Start fine-tuning lighting scenes for the Easter presentation. If you're renting gear for the service, make sure you're familiar with the models you ordered. If necessary, try to set up a gear demo to eliminate last-minute learning. Also, gather your lighting volunteer(s) and do a quick re-training to answer any possible questions.
- 3) WEEK OF – Continue to test the lighting system while doing a few run-throughs.

Projector and Computer Check

- 1) 30 DAYS – Audit all projectors/LED walls and ensure everything is working correctly. If any of the projector bulbs are high on hours operated, it's probably a good time to replace them; make sure to order extra bulbs to have on hand.
- 2) 15 DAYS – If they've been created, load sermon slides, videos and notes, then check for any incompatibilities. If possible, get a recording of the band/choir performing the service so volunteers can practice timing. Ensure the media computer is up-to-date and then turn off auto-updates – you do not want an update triggering at the last minute. Take this week to meet with church media volunteers for a quick re-training session and answer any questions.
- 3) WEEK OF – Run through the service and all the media and make sure nothing is missing. Additionally, it would be a good idea to triple-check everything with the worship leader.



Streaming

- 1) 30 DAYS – If you already live stream services, audit and double-check all the equipment point-to-point. Ask the operators if they've experienced any issues while using the gear. Carefully note the glitches or problems and start fixing them. If you plan to add live streaming for this service, it is strongly recommended that you use an experienced system integrator to ensure all hardware and software are adequate for your needs and work seamlessly with your systems.
- 2) 15 DAYS – By now, all issues that need fixing should be complete. Start setting camera positions and overall camera scenes. If possible, create a live camera "Go-To" script for the performance. Make sure you know your streaming software backward and forwards. Also, reconfirm that the platform you use for people to view the stream does not have any restrictions or copyright rules that could result in the stream being shut down mid-service. Finally, make time to meet with volunteers to do a quick re-training session and answer any remaining questions.
- 3) WEEK OF – Test the stream and confirm video and audio quality.

MAKE SURE TO:

Backup Critical Files

If you have any files that are not hosted in the cloud, back them up on at least two hard drives and the cloud, if possible. Be prepared for disaster to come in any form, especially on big days.

Have Enough Removable Media

Take an inventory of your supplies and ensure that you have enough media to cover all the technology that may require it. No tech station should have to share removable media with any other station.

Meet with the Senior Leadership Early and Often

It is crucial that all parts of the production are in sync with the message that senior leadership is trying to get across for this service. Meet with an agenda, ask questions and ensure that everyone is on the same page — this will go a long way towards creating a great production team and excellent service.

Be Prepared for Murphy's Law

“Anything that can go wrong will go wrong.” There’s no way to plan for everything. Knowing that there is a backup or contingency can go a long way in keeping things under control. What happens if the power goes out? What happens if the sound console fails? What happens if a microphone on stage fails? All these kinds of failures can occur but planning to address them, and making sure all the team — those on stage and behind it — are well informed could mean the difference between an effective service or a complete failure.

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