

# The Church Livestream Journey: A Starter Kit

## A Senior Tech Advisor's Note:

Pastor,

The "Flat Creek Livestream Story" is a perfect example of a truth we see in church tech every day: building a streaming ministry is a **journey, not a destination**. It's a story of steady, prayerful progression.

Before you look at a single piece of gear, remember the most important lesson from their presentation: "**Volunteer Hearts > Technology**." The right equipment is a tool, but a dedicated team of "learners" who are "good under stress" and "people people" is the real engine.

This kit is designed to help you find your *next step*, not to make you feel like you need to take the *final step* all at once. God bless your efforts to spread the Gospel in this new way.

## Where to Start: The "\$5k - \$10k" Starter Kit

I would recommend a **\$5,000 - \$10,000 starting budget**. This is an excellent, realistic target to get a high-quality, reliable stream online. This budget aligns with "Phase 2" of my journey but with modern, available-now equipment.

Here is a sample "starter kit" that fits this budget:

1. **Video Switcher - The "Brain" (Est. \$300 - \$1,100):**
  - This is the modern replacement for the (now-discontinued) Sling Studio they used.
  - **Good:** **Blackmagic ATEM Mini Pro** (~\$300). This is the gold standard for starting. It lets you switch 4 HDMI cameras, has a built-in-streamer, and is easy to learn.
  - **Better:** **Blackmagic ATEM Mini Extreme** (~\$1,100). If your budget allows, this gives you 8 HDMI inputs, more controls, and more room to grow.
2. **Cameras (Est. \$1,200 - \$3,000 for 3):**
  - You do *not* need the \$2,000+ studio cameras to start.
  - **Good:** Use **smartphones with gimbals** (like Flat Creek did) or existing **camcorders** with a clean HDMI-out.
  - **Better:** Purchase 2-3 **PTZ (Pan-Tilt-Zoom) cameras** or quality **mirrorless cameras** (like a Canon M50 or Sony ZV-E10) with a "dummy battery" to keep them powered.
3. **Audio - A Part (Est. \$150 - \$500):**
  - **Good:** A simple **Behringer XENYX 1202SFX** (~\$120) to mix a couple of room mics and a feed from your main soundboard.

- **Best:** A dedicated **digital mixer** or taking a "matrix" feed from your existing FOH soundboard straight into your video switcher or Stream PC.

4. **Stream PC (Est. \$1,000 - \$2,000):**
  - A dedicated PC for encoding and streaming. The presentation mentions **NZXT PC**. A pre-built "Player One" or "Player Two" (~\$1,000 - \$1,800) is more than enough for this.
5. **Software/Encoders (Est. \$0 - \$200/mo):**
  - **Good:** **OBS Studio (Free!)**: Use this on your Stream PC to add graphics (lyrics, slides) and stream.
  - **Better:** **Restream.io (Free or \$39/mo)**: The free plan (with watermark) or "Professional" plan lets you stream to both YouTube and Facebook at the same time.
  - **Best:** **Resi Studio (\$200/mo)**: Resi lets you stream to both YouTube and Facebook at the same time with a reliable hardware encoder. This also includes a buffer and a native recorder.

## The Livestream Journey: 4 Phases

Use this as a map to find where you are and see what's next.

### Phase 1: The "Record & Upload" Start

- **Vibe:** "Record Keeper," "Cheap"
- **Tech:** One camcorder on a tripod, using the built-in mic.
- **Workflow:** Record the service, edit (or don't), and upload to YouTube/Facebook on Sunday afternoon.
- **Team:** 1 Volunteer.

### Phase 2: The "Scrappy Live" Start

- **Vibe:** "Great Value," "Learn As You Go," "Scalable"
- **Tech:** An entry-level switcher like the **ATEM Mini Pro**, 2-3 existing camcorders or smartphones, a feed from the soundboard.
- **Workflow:** Live-switched, streaming directly from the ATEM to one platform (e.g., YouTube).
- **Team:** 3-5 Volunteers (Director, 2-3 Camera Ops, Audio).

### Phase 3: The "Pro-Sumer" Leap

- **Vibe:** "Results!", "Difficult," "Learning Curve"
- **Tech:** Upgraded switcher (**ATEM Mini Extreme**), 3-4 pro-level cameras (**Blackmagic Studio 4K**), dedicated **ProPresenter** for lyrics, and a **Stream PC** running **OBS**.
- **Workflow:** Using a service like **Restream** to send a high-quality (1080p) stream to multiple platforms.
- **Budget:** \$20,000+
- **Team:** 8+ Volunteers (adds Producer, Director, dedicated Lyrics, etc.)

## Phase 4: The "Professional" Setup

- **Vibe:** "Quality," "Complex," "Big Team"
- **Tech:** Pro-grade switchers, 5-7+ **Blackmagic cameras** (some on gimbals), and a pro-grade streaming platform like **Resi** for maximum reliability and quality.
- **Workflow:** A multi-platform, high-reliability stream that *just works*.
- **Budget:** \$30,000+ (but would include prior phase)
- **Team:** 11+ Volunteers (all roles filled, with redundancy).

## Building Your "Dream Team"

As the presentation showed, the team grows with the tech. You start by finding the "Dream Team":

- **Learners:** People willing to watch YouTube and figure it out.
- **Good Under Stress:** Things *will* go wrong. You need people who can troubleshoot, not panic.
- **People People:** This team works closely with pastoral, worship, and FOH (Front of House) staff.

## Key Roles

- **Producer:** The "big picture" manager. Oversees the entire process and team. Ensures the stream is being sent properly to the internet.
- **Director:** The one "calling the shots" during the service (e.g., "Ready camera 2, take camera 2...").
- **Stream Audio:** Dedicated to making the *online* mix sound great (it's very different from the in-room mix).
- **Lyrics/Slides:** Runs **ProPresenter** or your slides software.
- **Stage Tech:** A "floater" who can fix a mic, move a cable, or help on stage.
- **Camera Ops (GMB):** Camera operators, some on gimbals (GMB) for moving shots.

## Technology & Resource Directory

Here is a list of the key products and services from the presentation, with my notes, current (Nov. 2025) pricing, and links.

### Video Switching & Cameras

Item	Advisor Note	Price	Link
<b>Blackmagic ATEM Mini Pro</b>	The <b>best</b> place to start for a multi-camera	~\$285 - \$325	<a href="#">B&amp;H Link</a>

	stream. 4 HDMI inputs and a built-in streamer.		
<b>Blackmagic ATEM Mini Extreme</b>	The "next step" up. 8 HDMI inputs, more audio control, and more "pro" features for a growing team.	~\$1,095	<a href="#">Sweetwater Link</a>
<b>BMD Studio Camera 4K Pro</b>	A professional studio camera. Not a "starter" item. This is for your "Phase 3" leap.	~\$2,055	<a href="#">B&amp;H Link</a>

## Streaming Platforms & Software

Item	Advisor Note	Price	Link
<b>OBS Studio</b>	<b>Free!</b> The #1 most popular streaming software. Use this on your Stream PC to mix in video files, graphics, and more.	Free	<a href="#">obsproject.com</a>
<b>Restream.io</b>	A "multi-streaming" service. Send your stream <i>one</i> place (Restream), and they send it to Facebook, YouTube, etc., all at once.	<b>Free Plan</b> (with watermark)  <b>Standard:</b> \$16/mo  <b>Pro:</b> \$39/mo	<a href="#">restream.io</a>
<b>Resi</b>	A "pro" platform (from the "Phase 4" setup). Offers extreme reliability (e.g., it can stream	Custom (Contact for Quote)	<a href="#">resi.io</a>

	through internet drops).		
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## Presentation & Planning Software

Item	Advisor Note	Price	Link
<b>ProPresenter</b>	The industry standard for churches. Manages lyrics, sermon slides, and can send "lower thirds" to your stream.	<b>Standard:</b> \$29/mo (per seat)  <b>Campus:</b> \$59/mo (20 seats)	<a href="http://renewedvision.com">renewedvision.com</a>
<b>Planning Center</b>	The all-in-one "church management" system for service planning, volunteer scheduling, and more.	Modular (starts at \$14/mo per product)	<a href="http://planning.center">planning.center</a>
<b>Canva</b>	For creating graphics, sermon series branding, and social media posts.	<b>Free Plan</b>  <b>Pro:</b> (Varies)	<a href="http://canva.com">canva.com</a>
<b>Notion / MS Teams</b>	Team collaboration tools for planning, organizing, and communicating.	(Varies, Free Tiers available)	<a href="http://notion.so">notion.so</a>

## Audio & Communication

Item	Advisor Note	Price	Link
<b>Behringer Mixers</b>	A workhorse brand for audio. The choice depends on	Varies	<a href="http://behringer.com">behringer.com</a>

	your needs, from a small <b>XENYX</b> (~\$120) to a full <b>X32</b> (~\$1,500+).		
<b>Eartec Headsets</b>	Wireless "talkback" headsets for your team (Director, Camera Ops) to communicate. This is a <i>huge</i> quality-of-life upgrade.	<b>2-Person:</b> ~\$385 - \$425  <b>4-Person:</b> ~\$795 - \$815	<a href="http://eartec.com">eartec.com</a>

## Computers & Hardware Vendors

Item	Advisor Note	Price	Link
<b>NZXT PC</b>	A reputable builder for pre-built PCs. A "Player" series PC makes a great, reliable Stream PC.	Varies (\$999 - \$4,000+)	<a href="http://nzxt.com">nzxt.com</a>
<b>B&amp;H Photo Video</b>	A major, trusted retailer for all this equipment.	(Retailer)	<a href="http://bhphotovideo.com">bhphotovideo.com</a>

## Learning Resources

Item	Advisor Note	Price	Link
<b>YouTube</b>	As the presentation said: "Learn on YouTube." There is a tutorial for everything.	Free	<a href="http://youtube.com">youtube.com</a>
<b>Churchfront</b>	A fantastic resource (run by Jake Gosselin)	(See site)	<a href="http://churchfront.com">churchfront.com</a>

	specifically for church tech leaders. They offer training, courses, and consulting.		
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## Final Lessons from the Journey

I'll leave you with the two most profound lessons from the presentation.

1. **"Expect and Embrace a Livestream Journey."** Don't be discouraged if you're in "Phase 1." Every large ministry started there.
2. **YGWYF.**
  - "You Get What You Pay For". This is reality. Investing in better gear (like the \$20k leap) does produce a better result.

That's the final lesson. You can buy all the tech, but the *results* ultimately come from what you **build**—a strong team, a clear vision, and a volunteer culture built on grace.