

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 let's 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
Blackmagic ATEM Mini Pro	The best place to start for a multi-camera	~\$285 - \$325	B&H Link

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

Streaming Platforms & Software

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

	through internet drops).		
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Presentation & Planning Software

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

Audio & Communication

Item	Advisor Note	Price	Link
Behringer Mixers	A workhorse brand for audio. The choice depends on	Varies	behringer.com

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

Computers & Hardware Vendors

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

Learning Resources

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

	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. **YGWYPF.**
 - "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.