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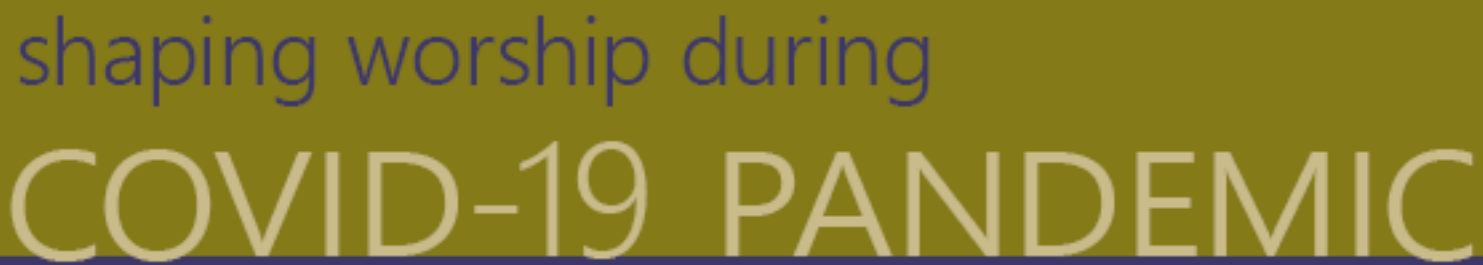
Shaping Worship During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Livestream at Christian & Missionary Alliance Churches in Hong Kong

Yvette Lau explains how Christian & Missionary Alliance churches in Hong Kong are deciding whether or how to do virtual worship or even virtual communion. In this edited conversation, she suggests that worship planners consider what will be communal, hospitable, and beneficial to the whole community—during and after COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

By: [Yvette Lau](#), [Joan Huyser-Honig](#)

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shaping worship during
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Yvette Lau: [Anabas Ministry](#) founder; seminary guest instructor on worship

Current city: North Point, Hong Kong

Denominational context: Christian & Missionary Alliance Church Union of Hong Kong (CMACU of HK)

Worship roles: Lau has served as a worship pastor and seminary instructor and, since 2006, on the CMACU of HK worship committee. Her passions are worship renewal, contextualization of Western hymns, and translating worship resources from English to Chinese.

COVID-19 situation (as of March 25, 2020): The Hong Kong Special Administration Region (HKSAR) government advises people to stay at home as much as possible and to avoid social meetings. And because we experienced SARS in 2003, most people voluntarily wear masks wherever they go and stay at home to avoid social gatherings. Most churches have been quick to switch to digital channels for meetings and worship. Many have canceled all meetings except worship services and/or prayer meetings.

About a fifth of congregations in my denomination still have on-site worship, often along with livestream worship. Even if people gather in the church, different measures have been taken: taking body temperatures and wearing masks; encouraging recent travelers to worship online, not on site; sanitizing hands before entering the worship space; sitting in alternate pews; using projection rather than touching hymnals and Bibles; ushers holding the offering plate in front of each congregant instead of passing plates; and smiling or nodding instead of shaking hands.

Many churches have switched completely to streaming or prerecording worship. A few with less resources have ceased to hold any worship services.

My home church, [North Point Alliance Church](#) (NPAC), has over six thousand members. It started online worship in late January and three weeks later switched completely to online worship and prayer meetings. We use YouTube to livestream adult worship for the 10:45 a.m. Sunday service. People may also select from prerecorded services for adults, young adults, youth, Mandarin speakers, and English speakers.

Good Friday's service will be a communion service, so the church invited brothers and sisters to collect packaged sets of bread and juice up to three weeks beforehand so they can partake at home.

What's working well—or not: Communion is not possible for many churches now. Some would still execute it with people partaking the elements at home, either collecting the packaged set from the church or preparing their own bread and juice. They mostly agree that the brothers and sisters will only take the elements when the worship is being livestreamed—that is, not taking it when you are viewing the worship afterward.

We assume most people will have a cell phone and internet access. Some people, especially elderly people, will have difficulty joining online worship unless churches help them. You need a Facebook account to access Facebook livestream, and you need to sign into a group for a private group livestream. That's why NPAC embeds the YouTube videos in our church website.

Also, personal space is so limited here. A family may be squeezed in a space of 400 to 800 square feet or even less. It can be hard for people to worship without disturbance when they are the only Christians at home or if they have little kids.

Most helpful worship resources: We appreciate copyright special treatment from music agencies or publishers; special prayers; and lament songs. More churches have applied for copyright to sing the lament songs of Psalms by Anabas, songs based on [Psalm 13](#) and [Psalm 22](#). It's also helpful to learn how online worshipers can make an offering through different channels.

I have written an article, "[Unavoidable Online Worship](#)" (scroll down for English version), for church leaders to reflect on how to conduct online worship with pastoral consideration and how the congregation can still participate in online worship with intention and concentration instead of just watching.

Needs, questions, or insights to share: We need to reflect on many questions. What is the essence of worship? How are we going to be God's people during a time of challenge? Which best practices or measures will benefit our whole community? How can we be communal and hospitable even if we are temporarily online for our church life? How can we take care of the least among us during this time?

Leaders are thinking about whether to continue livestreaming worship after the COVID-19 pandemic. Some members might see it as convenient, but would it benefit our whole congregation's spiritual health and growth?

LEARN MORE

Read Yvette Lau's essay "[Unavoidable On-line Worship](#)" (scroll down for English version). Check out Church Juice for free resources on how churches [can use social media](#) and [livestream worship](#) (scroll down).

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Yvette Lau

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