

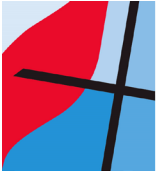


# UNITED METHODISTS OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

## Tips for Improving Your Online Sermon Delivery

Below are some general tips that will need to be adapted to your specific ministry context. Not all suggestions are going to be relevant to your personal style as a preacher, the style of your community, or your particular method of producing your sermon for video.

1. **Shorten the Sermon.** Consider preaching half to three-quarters the time of your usual sermon. For instance, if you typically preach for 20 minutes aim for 10 minutes. People's attention span with video is far shorter than in person. Edit, edit, edit! To help tighten your focus, ask yourself: what's the message about in one sentence?
2. **Connect from the Start.** With the shorter sermon time, tighten the opening. It needs to be condensed, with more immediate impact. Capture the listener's attention emotionally or intellectually to build interest. Whether you start with a personal story, a news illustration, an interesting fact, or the scripture itself, does it engage, build interest and lead into what comes next?
3. **Eye Contact.** For the most part, have your eye contact stay with the congregation, in this case, the camera. If using a phone or tablet, learn exactly where the camera is located and look at it. Decide what parts of the sermon you will memorize so that you can maintain that eye contact as much as possible. Then for a more "natural delivery" and impact, break eye contact at a few key times for a pause, to allow something to sink in, or in particular part of a story. If you have a teleprompter (there are many apps available), great, but be careful not to just read the script! Also be careful to align the teleprompter as closely as possible to the camera so that your focus is in the right location. When you play the video back, do you feel connected?
4. **Set Your Tone.** For the most part, people are watching on their phones, therefore think about the sermon more as a conversation, rather than an address to a multitude (picture having a conversation with one close friend rather than preaching to a packed church). You need to sound alive, but chances are you don't need the over-the-top, super energetic delivery it sometimes takes to command a room. Listen and watch fellow online preachers. What tone resonates with you?
5. **Composing Your Shot.** Always shoot landscape when you can. Just note that some live-stream services (Facebook Live from a phone, for example) will not permit it and force you to hold the phone vertically. You need to be close enough to the camera to achieve two things: for people to connect with you and for the on-board mic (if that's what you're using) to be effective. But you also should be far enough away so that you have some room to emote using your hands and body. Typically, this means that you are looking for roughly a waist-up shot. Locate your eyes about a third of the way down from the top of the screen (following the notion of the rule of thirds). Is there too much room above your head? Are you better served by not standing right in the center of the frame?
6. **Stand or Sit?** Sitting in a chair is a way to convey calm, steadiness, reassurance and openness. Sitting behind a table conveys that same calm but adds a sense of authority. Standing provides greater energy and movement. Which posture will best help you meet the goal of this week's sermon?
7. **Body Language.** Be natural but give thought to how you will use your voice, hands, eye contact and movement towards or away of the camera at key times. When referring to a progressive order, move your hands from right to left rather than left to right (remembering that your viewers will see you in reverse). How is your body language helping and not hindering the message?



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8. **Language Matters.** Not everyone tuning in is part of your regular worshipping community. So, take the extra moment to explain an “insider illustration,” which might include the ministry of a ministry team (don’t describe them just using their acronym!) or a celebration of a beloved member. How are these illustrations leading the at home congregation to gain a greater appreciation of what God is doing through your church? How are they helping those on the outside to see your church as a place where they \*could\* belong and encouraging them to return?
9. **Action and Application.** You need to invite people to take an action. This is true in every sermon – in person or online. It could be an act of service, a reflection on their own life, a particular prayer or discipleship focus or a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. This week, what next step are you offering the congregation?
10. **Remain focused on Jesus.** It’s easy to get overly caught up in the online production. Don’t. Instead, remember what’s most important is the living message of Christ. Use online worship to honor God, remain connected, worship with a wider congregation and experiment with new ways of being the church. Don’t let it consume you! Remember that the sermon is supposed to be life giving, not only for the congregation but also for the preacher! Are YOU hearing the gospel as you preach it?

**By Rev. James Lee and Rev. Joe Monahan**