

## Telestream Wirecast Brings Church's Outdoor Baptisms to Online Attendees

Simplifying the set up and equipment needed to move from the main service to the outdoor baptism portion.

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Illinois' Northwoods Community Church has been live-streaming services and special events since 2013. Its 4,000+ members congregate at the main campus in Peoria, regional campuses in Galesburg and Chillicothe, and its online ministry, which draws 300+ weekly attendees that are largely local, but also include people in Alabama, Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, Michigan, and even Germany, Bethlehem and North Africa.

Online Campus Pastor and IT Director Jason Lee oversees all things technological. Having launched its live-stream broadcasts using the Flash Media Encoder and Amazon Web Services, Northwoods Church switched to the Churchstreaming.tv content delivery network and Telestream Wirecast to deliver a more polished program and support a fast-growing audience. "We've seen amazing growth from 20-30 people online in our first year to where we are now," Lee says. "That has with it the challenging task of helping people find biblical community even though they may be geographically separated. We want people to move beyond isolated viewing to participation, interaction, and relationship through the Online Campus."

Lee and his team recently found a way to do just that. Using Wirecast and other technologies, they seamlessly extended their live-stream broadcast of church services and moved outdoors to give online attendees the experience of 'being there' for baptisms held in the lake on their Peoria campus.

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Jason Lee

Online Campus Pastor & IT Director, Northwoods Community Church.

“We have this big event just once a year, but for online attendees it’s a disappointment when we end the stream in the auditorium and those physically on the campus go out to the lake. This year we explored some options for how we could change that.” Two days before the event, Lee and his team ran some tests. They thought initially they might stop the stream after indoor services and restart it with another source, but realized that the complexity of the approach would be a poor experience for those attending online. “Our CDN partner, Churchstreaming.TV, asked if we’d ever used Wirecast Cam” (a free download available to Wirecast users that enables them to use an iPad or iPhone as a wireless camera and bring it into Wirecast as a camera source). “We have wifi at the lake, and this sounded ideal, so we did some quick tests. It worked perfectly.”

Two days later, Northwoods streamed the church service live as usual – full 1080p switching from five cameras in the auditorium, with audio mixed by a volunteer team, an HD/SDI signal into a Blackmagic Design capture card in a custom-configured PC, streamed with Wirecast to Churchstreaming.tv with bits for high, mid, and mobile broadcast. When the service was over, they simply switched sources to the iPad using Wirecast Cam and went live at the lake without a hitch.

“It was really great,” Lee says. “We were able to use the time between the end of the service and start of the baptism to do general announcements, interview some of the pastors and give people online a real feel for the day.” Because Northwoods Church also uses the Churchonline platform which presents a user experience including a chat window, direct messaging and other personalization features, they were able to have the announcers tell viewers who had family members or friends being baptized to let them know, using the chat window. “A family in the UK messaged us who they were watching for and we made sure to get shots of that person. It was so great to be able to deliver that experience to people so far removed geographically. Being involved in that important life moment was really special for them, and for us too. We may not be on the main stage, but being behind the scenes using technology to facilitate those moments is rewarding.”

Lee talks about his “Aha” moment with Wirecast. “Wirecast is much more of a Swiss army knife than we’d ever anticipated. At first we used it just for encoding, then realized it could do virtual switching and had all kinds of professional capabilities that gave us more polish. Now, with Wirecast Cam we don’t even need a broadcast camera to take a live shot of something. Or if we’re doing a class, we don’t need to have our entire media team there to spin up a signal to deliver video. With a modest camera and encoder we can choose a shot and get it out. We can do things faster, and don’t have to buy \$20K of gear just to stream a workshop. It gives us incredible flexibility and agility, and now we just need to figure out how to best use the technology. Wirecast helps us move our vision forward.”