



Car Park Carols

TECH NOTES

A drive-in all age Christmas carol service in a car park

What technology could be used to make this happen?

Introductory considerations

- In the words of a tech guru, “My ambition would be to keep the technology as simple as possible – this is year one, we can get complicated in year two! Right now, let’s get something that works.”
- For song words, readings and information, service sheets are a tried and tested method! Or use a very simple website (Squarespace or similar) which has the songs, readings and follow up suggestions on it.
- Consider having two (or more) services at different times to avoid cars being so far back that they can’t see. The technology cost will most likely remain the same as doing one larger service.
- Some churches have already been doing drive-in services. Do some online research to see what they did and how it went.
- Detailed guidance on planning a drive-in service, produced by CPAS, can be found [here](#).
- The key issue is ensuring those in their cars can see, hear and participate without leaving their vehicles.



Options for visuals

- Decide whether you want present 'live action', with actors/musicians/presenters on a stage, or recorded content viewed on screens (or both).

LIVE ACTION

- To be seen in the 3rd or 4th row of cars the stage needs to be at least 2m high.
- A flatbed truck could be used as a stable stage.
- Check sight lines in the car park. Will trolley shelters get in the way?
- Instead of a stage you could hire, beg or borrow a cherry picker so key people can be seen, e.g the main speaker, the angel. Cherry pickers are not in great demand on Sundays, so a good deal should be possible. (Remember that you will need long microphone cables for the PA!)

SCREENS

- If your car park looks onto a large wall, the simplest approach is to hang a canvas screen from that building and project onto it. A large projector can be hired and will need some wind and rain protection. The picture will be slightly distorted if the projector is close to ground level, but should still be good enough.
- Alternatively, you can use a large outdoor TV-style screen. Any screen will need to withstand expected (and unexpected) winds. Lorry-mounted LED screens are designed for exactly this purpose. A Sunday in December is definitely off-peak for suppliers of outdoor events equipment. Take a look at www.eventequimenthire.co.uk or a local equivalent. The owner Phil of that company is offering discounts if you mention, "Clownfish Events."

Options for sound

- If you are using musicians, speakers and/or actors on a stage you will need a PA system that can be heard loudly and clearly within all cars.
- You could broadcast sound using FM radio, to be picked up using car radios. You will not have time to apply for a temporary FM license before Christmas, but if you have access to a site where outdoor cinema screenings occur you may be able to broadcast using their existing licence. A minority of cars tuning in on their radios for up to an hour may get flat batteries. Can you supply a contingency solution for them?



Livestreaming

- Alternatively, you could broadcast visuals and sound together over the Internet, to be viewed by families in cars on YouTube/Facebook Live using their mobile phones or other devices.
- This requires you to film any live action from the stage. There will be a 20 second delay between what is happening on the stage and what is watched in cars. This would make the live experience very distracting.
- People using their own data connection is possible if the signal is strong enough, bandwidth is good enough and they have sufficient free/cheap data allowance. Otherwise, you will need to create a temporary Wi-Fi hotspot with enough capacity for 200 cars (perhaps 400 screens). This is technologically difficult.
- One church has found a company to provide a package of equipment to livestream to the net. This includes streaming equipment, lights, sound and cameras, at a cost of £2000. The church is supplying their own camera operators (with zero experience – but with zero cost!), a gazebo for shelter, and a generator / cables from the store for power. Search for 'video production' or 'streaming services' for local options in your area.
- The advantage of this approach is that people can also join in from home.

