



Van Buren First Assembly of God Streams Services Live to Web Audiences using Wirecast

Broadcasts are available on the church website, YouTube, and Vimeo – enabling cost-effective, real-time outreach to members at remote sites and on-demand viewing for those who are unable to attend church

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Ryan Hodges, Media Director
Van Buren First Assembly of God

Background

Van Buren First Assembly of God (VBFA) is a house of worship that broadcasts its services throughout most of Arkansas, reaching into Oklahoma and Missouri. Located in Van Buren, Arkansas, VBFA is a medium-sized church that focuses on outreach.

VBFA has been producing television programs for 23 years. Services are broadcast to members located at remote church sites for live viewing. The same live video feeds are sent to independent-living retirement centers which VBFA also operates. Most recently, these services have been made available for viewing on the church's website, YouTube and Vimeo.

The Challenge

When VBFA began broadcasting online, they initially streamed live shots off a hardware video switcher to a Windows Media encoder. They looked at other hardware solutions as well as production solutions offered by streaming service providers, however, none of these solutions offered the level of flexibility VBFA needed. They wanted something that could both stream and record at the same time for their website and YouTube. They needed to overlay video files with full transparency (rather than just static images) on top of the live stream. They also needed the ability to quickly change text on lower thirds.

The Solution

Van Buren First Assembly of God purchased Wirecast in November 2008.

"Wirecast offers the quality and flexibility we needed," explains Ryan Hodges, Media Director at Van Buren First Assembly of God. "It allows us to stream live and record to a hard drive, overlay video files with full transparency on top of the live stream, and quickly change text on the lower thirds."



The Workflow

Van Buren uses Wirecast to broadcast live and on-demand videos of its services to the general public three times a week on its own website (www.vbfatv.com), on YouTube (www.YouTube.com/vbfatv), and due to YouTube's 10-minute restriction, longer video is broadcast on Vimeo (www.vimeo.com/vbfatv).

The Results

"Wirecast provides a cost-effective solution," adds Hodges. "Importantly, since we work only with volunteers, it is easy to use and train the volunteers. Wirecast allows us to reach out to members who are unable to attend church due to health issues or travel, members located at remote sites, potential members who want to get a sense of our service before visiting, and members who want to watch archived services."

System Configuration

Wirecast runs on a Windows XP SP3 desktop computer. VBFA uses a Sony e3 camera and an N-Vidia G Force 295 graphics card. Video is captured using a Canopus AVDC 300 capture device, and uses S video as its primary input. Other video sources are connected using Firewire. Wirecast Desktop Presenter is used to run a weekly bulletin on a separate computer prior to the service. VBFA's broadcast protocol is RTMP (Flash) over the Internet. Files are uploaded in H.264 video and AAC audio formats, at a data rate of 30 fps at 750kb.

VBFA's audience size is about 400 people per service (based on hits to its own website vbfaonline.com). Broadcast frequency is 3 times a week: 6 hours on Sunday (two 3-hour broadcasts) plus 2 hours each Wednesday. VBFA uses Livestream (formerly known as Mogulus) as its live streaming service provider. Short-form archive content is hosted on YouTube and long-form archive content is hosted on Vimeo for on-demand viewing.

June 2009

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