The purpose of the day is to reflect both theologically and in terms of practice on the lockdown experience of the streaming of Sunday worship and where there are plans to continue. It also asks what light these experiences have thrown on our standard (pre- and post-lockdown) ‘gathered’ worship, its shape and content.

Speakers will be the Revd Dr Tom Shields, former member of the Roman Catholic / Church of Scotland Commission on Doctrine and parish priest of Crieff and Comrie, and the Revd Fraser Penny, minister of Dunkeld Cathedral, whose Sunday broadcasts have attracted special mention. Opportunity will be given for participants to share their own experiences and practices.

The event will run from around 10.15am until 4.00pm. We hope to keep the cost down to £10 (payable on the day) but it is subject to adjustment when we finalise the arrangements for catering (a buffet lunch). Those interested please contact any of the following:

Douglas Galbraith (Church Service Society) dgalbraith@churchofscotland.org.uk
Christoph Wutscher (Holy Trinity) christoph.wutscher@hotmail.com
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Further information

For many, one of devastating things about the corona virus ‘lockdown’ was not being able to come together with others in worship, to derive strength from our ecclesial communities. Yet throughout the land local churches rose to the occasion by streaming their services, discovering a new set of skills by which to relocate Sunday worship in the homes of the people. Many took the opportunity to experiment with content and presentation, finding new patterns of participation, fresh images and often, in the bygoing, new congregations.

But many questions were raised. Some were technical and practical: how well were we responding to the nature of the medium we were using, and how do we go about making more out of the opportunities it offers.

Others related to how genuinely people were able to participate in the act of worship as it was streamed into their homes: how far can you be ‘present’ in front of a screen when we emphasise the ‘gathered’ nature of the act; how ‘real’ can an event be which by its nature relies for fullest participation in the use of the five senses; and, given that we understand that in the act of thanksgiving and in giving and receiving of the elements of bread and wine Christ is made present, can this act be ‘efficacious’ when it is observed at one remove?

Finally, many have also realised that the experience we have been through has thrown light upon our worship practices, and not always a flattering light. Reflection on the streaming of Sunday worship is therefore an opportunity to do what we must always keep doing, to ‘listen to ourselves’, to review how faithfully we are receiving, and how imaginatively we are enlivening, the traditions that have been handed down to us.

The Church Service Society was founded in 1865 for the study of liturgy and to work for the reform and renewal of the worship of the Church of Scotland. Now ecumenical, it includes ministers, elders, organists, church members – in Scotland and beyond – who are all convinced that worship is the Church’s fundamental task and privilege and wish more fully to explore its possibilities. Recent study day topics have included: technology in worship, bringing out the drama that is embedded in liturgy, ordination and presiding at Holy Communion.