

Presbytery of Newton – JAN 2020

Tips for hosting a Virtual Annual Meeting

T'is the season for Annual Meetings - a time when church members come together to make decisions that affect their common life. The leadership of each congregation chooses the business they will address from reflecting on events of the past year to planning financially and programmatically for the year ahead. Annual meetings can also be a time to elect leaders and celebrate life together in community. But how do we do this when we can't meet face-to-face.

There is one big difference between holding a virtual session meeting or committee meeting and holding a congregational/annual meeting - size. Online meeting platforms are limited in the number of participants that can be displayed on the screen at one time (Zoom is 49). Even in a small congregation, this means there are more opportunities for things to go awry. With a little extra prep and planning, you can host your annual meeting with confidence.

Make a plan

☐ Read the document [Chapter and Verse Online Congregational Meetings](#) and follow the steps outlined in [Steps for Online Congregational Meetings](#). Both documents can be found on the Presbytery's website.

☐ Send out an invitation and the agenda so everyone understands the topics you'll cover and the order you'll discuss them.

☐ You may wish to have people submit video reports in lieu of or in addition to written reports. If you are using videos, remember to test the videos prior to the meeting for compatibility with your computer's software.

Plan a rehearsal

☐ Schedule a time with your presenters and speakers before the event for a dry run. If you're sharing slides, videos or other documents during the meeting, load them all onto the host's (or co-host's) computer.

Set up early

☐ Give yourself plenty of time to set up your equipment and make sure everything works. Open documents you want to share before the meeting starts. Test any links you may want to open during the meeting beforehand. Don't forget to close any applications you won't be using.

Recruit a co-host

☐ If you're the moderator as well as the host for the annual meeting, you might want to enlist the help of a facilitator or co-host. This will give you an extra set of hands and eyes to help with any technical issues your attendees may experience. A co-host can also watch the moderator controls to make note of any participants asking a question via chat or raised hand and take

care of administrative tasks, like muting participants or recording. **To make another meeting participant a co-host, click 'Manage Participants' in the meeting controls at the bottom of the Zoom window, choose 'More' next to their name, and select 'Make Co-Host.'**

Send a welcome message to attendees

☐ If you'd like participants to use chat or other interactive features during the meeting, send them an email with welcoming instructions. You may also want to remind attendees to turn on their camera and that they'll be muted upon entry to the meeting. You may also wish to include instructions for how people will be recognized to speak and voting procedures.

Mute participants upon entry

☐ Take action before the meeting starts to prevent disruptive noisy feedback when someone joins your meeting by muting all participants upon entry. You can allow participants to unmute themselves once they're in the meeting. **To enable this feature, click 'Manage Participants' in the meeting controls at the bottom of the Zoom window. Click 'Mute All' or click the drop-down menu next to 'More' and select 'Mute Participants' on Entry.**

Prepare a greeting slide

☐ Let participants know that they're in the right place by making a welcoming slide visible to them when they join the meeting. This can be done in powerpoint and simply share your screen with this image displayed.

Voting

☐ The voting method used for Presbytery meetings has been very effective. When using Zoom, there are various controls at the bottom of the screen (PC users): On the far left the microphone icon to mute or unmute; the video icon to turn off your camera on or off; the participants icon and the chat icon next to that. Invite participants to click on the participants icon where they will see a blue "raise hand" and if you click on that a hand will appear next to your name in the participants list and will notify the host or co-host that a person wishes to be recognized. For those gathering on cell phone the process is to press *9 (star nine).

If people wish to make a motion ask them to type the motion into the chat so that everyone online can see it. The raised hand can be used to second a motion.

Once you are ready to vote, the moderator can say something like, "Friends it's time to vote and if you're in favor of the motion or the action, please do nothing for account of five-four-three-two-one. That is, you don't have to do anything to register a yes vote. However, if you wish to vote in the negative then I use the raise hand feature and give another countdown five-four-three-two-one. You can clear the raise hands and move on to the next item of business.

You can also use a similar process using the yes and no icons in the participants list.

Finally, read [HELPFUL TIPS to the TECHNICAL SIDE OF a ZOOM meeting](#).