

## MEMO

**To:** RE and TE Commissioners to Los Ranchos Presbytery  
**From:** TE Forrest Claassen, Co-Executive and Stated Clerk  
**Date:** May 11, 2020  
**Re:** Zoom Arrangements for Upcoming Presbytery Meeting

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By now you have probably heard that Los Ranchos will be holding its Spring Stated Meeting of Presbytery virtually rather than in person. As of this writing, the State has not yet lifted the shelter-in-place order. Even when it does, a group the size of our Stated Meetings is not likely to gather for the indefinite future.

We have looked into a variety of virtual meeting platforms. Zoom seems to be our best choice, at least for now. Many of you are already familiar with it, and it appears to accommodate attendance of 100-150 reasonably well.

We recognize that virtual meetings make large-group deliberative work difficult. We also recognize that the decisions we make in any electronic meeting can be, for now, only provisional at best. Our goal, then, is to create an environment in which you as commissioners can do the work you need to *and* have your voices fully heard. The rest of this memo outlines the way that we plan to use Zoom, and the help we need from you, to make the meeting as fair and orderly as possible.

Here is what you can expect. Even if you have used Zoom a great deal, please review this document carefully. Some of how we use it in the large meeting may be different than what you're used to.

### **Getting Started**

#### ***Knowing the basics***

Zoom works best as an app that is downloaded to your computer, iPad or phone. You can also access zoom with the URL link in your browser or you can call into the meeting. For our meeting, the best scenario would be one where you have the video and audio connection.

For an optimal experience you will need the following: (a) high-speed internet access, with good proximity to your Wi-Fi router; (b) a speaker; (c) a microphone; and (d) a webcam. Many laptops, tablets and smartphones include all of (b) through (d) built into the unit. Closing any applications other than Zoom, your browser, and an email client may also improve connectivity.

#### ***Signing in***

Once you've registered for the Presbytery Gathering on the PLR website, you will receive an email from the Presbytery inviting you to register for the meeting. You will be asked to provide

your first and last name and your email address. Zoom will use this information to send you an email with the login details for the meeting.

Please join the business meeting up to one hour in advance (3:00 PM). This will allow the hosts to make sure that all connections are working. It will also give time for the hosts to replace phone numbers with names so that we can see who is participating. Once you have confirmed the connection, you can set your audio to mute and return at the start of the meeting (4:00 PM).

*If you want to join the meeting by using the Zoom app:* Click on the link in the email—it should be in blue text and underlined. Your browser will open a new window or tab for Zoom. If you do not already have the app installed, click “download & run Zoom” in the browser window. If you do already have the app, the browser will ask you if you want to open the app. Click “Open zoom.us.” The app will open. Click “join meeting with video.” You will be automatically muted; you should be able to hear but not be heard (until later).

NOTE: We encourage you to download zoom.us before the first practice session. Doing so will give you one less thing to worry about.

*If you want to join the meeting by using the Zoom in your browser:* Click on the link in the email—it should be in blue text and underlined. Your browser will open a new window or tab for Zoom. You can then enter the Zoom login password, which will be in the registration confirmation email. Follow the prompts to join by video and audio (you will need to allow Zoom to access your computer’s video and audio).

NOTE: Accessing Zoom from the browser works, but if the network is busy, you may experience delays or dropped access. You can close out and re-enter to see if that solves the issue.

*If you want to join the meeting by using the Zoom call in feature:* Follow the call-in instructions that are provided in the registration confirmation email. You will be prompted to enter the meeting password.

### ***Practicing in advance***

When you register (please register early), you will receive information relating to meeting practice sessions. Even if you are familiar with Zoom, please sign up for at least one of these. Your participation will help you understand how we will handle the meeting. It will also help the meeting managers identify any necessary course corrections *before* May 28.

### ***Limited business***

We will bring only one major item of business to the May Presbytery Gathering—a recommendation from Council to establish an Administrative Commission with broad powers relating to Presbytery finances and personnel. We expect all other business to be administrative, routine, and/or non-controversial.

## **Parliamentary Decorum**

Zoom is a powerful platform for conversation. Here's how we plan to use it so that you can debate and vote effectively.

### ***Obtaining recognition in order to speak***

When you join the meeting, please click the “participants” tab at the bottom of your Zoom window. Doing this will show a list of those who are present in the meeting. It will also give you a “raise hand/lower hand” button.

You will be muted by default. If you want to speak to a motion, please click on the “raise hand” button in your participants list. The moderator will see the names of those who have raised their hands in the order that they clicked (your list will not necessarily appear in the same order). The moderator will call on the next person to speak to the motion and then unmute that person.

If you are calling in using a touch-tone phone (as a last resort), you can raise your virtual hand by dialing \*9 during the call. The moderator will see that you are seeking to address the body.

NOTE: Please do *not* lower your hand. The moderator will lower it for you at the right time.

### ***No nonverbal feedback***

Those of you who know Zoom may be familiar with its “Chat,” “Reactions,” and other functions. These are great for casual conversations and supplemental information.

But Robert's Rules is clear that clapping, booing and cheering, and expressing opinions about others' statements are all violations of parliamentary decorum. We will deactivate “Chat,” and ask that you *not* use “Reactions” or similar Zoom features for the meeting. Please also, for the same reason, do not signal your approval or disapproval with visual gestures.

Please understand, this is not merely about “following the rules.” In the same way that recognition by the moderator ensures an equal voice all participants, so does quietly honoring what each person has said.

### ***Anonymous voting***

Just as we will seek to grant each of you an equal voice, we will protect the anonymity of your votes as much as we can. We will use polls to take each vote, and will not collect individual voting information afterwards.

NOTE: For polling to register accurate results, each commissioner will need to have his or her own device.

### ***Fully enfranchised commissioners***

Even as we protect your voting decisions, it will be important to know whether anyone has not been able to vote. For that reason, we will ask that each poll include three answers: Yes, No, and Abstain. We will check the sums each time to make sure they match the total number of commissioners. This is not to force you to take a position; it is to make sure that no one is on the outside, frustrated that they have not had a chance to weigh in while the meeting keeps zooming (sorry) along.

This voting will go much better for you and for us if you can access the meeting through a computer or tablet (or smartphone using the Zoom app). If you can only access the meeting by dialing in, you will need to vote by \*9—the “raise hand” signal. During the polling, we will send you to a separate “breakout room” where a teller will count your votes and convey them back to the moderator.

### **Pace of the Meeting**

As you can imagine, some of what I have mentioned will force us to move slower than normal. Our familiarity with in-person Presbytery meetings allows us to move quickly through heavy business. Those of us experienced with smaller and more casual Zoom meetings have grown comfortable with the back-and-forth of discussions.

This meeting, by contrast, will sometimes feel formal and ponderous. But a slower approach will help make sure that no one gets left out. I ask for your patience along the way—with the process, with the leadership, and with each other. As we work together, I believe that we can discern God’s will for the months ahead while also ending on time.

I look forward to seeing you—though not in person—on May 28.

FC