

ZOOMing - ONE WAY OUR CHURCH CAN GROW, EVEN DURING A PANDEMIC

Why Zoom at Such a Time as This?

Zoom is one tool that can unify West Van Baptist Church at a time of isolation. It creates intimacy when we've lost our social forum. Zoom can allow groups within the church to maintain or increase momentum, as we learn what it means to "Be still, and know that [He] is God." You may have a ministry to reach out to others. Helen Miller demonstrated such a ministry, inviting persons to pray together by Zoom last week. Zoom can help us stay connected - to church people, family members, friends, and business associates.

I began using Zoom about three months ago for videoconferences. It's free, easy to learn, and versatile. It allows us to speak to and see people from all over the world. I can mute myself, turn off my video, choose to participate by video, by audio, or both; and distribute a recording. People can participate by laptop, iPad, or phone. You can participate "on the go", as long as you have wifi or data.

It's not tough to learn. Here are a few tips I've picked up that can make your Zoom experience effective and enjoyable. These are both for observing our Easter Service and for broader use.

Learning Zoom Basics

Zoom Training tutorials - general: <https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/covid19.html>

Plan to do your Zooming at the place in your home or office with best internet connectivity.

You can subscribe to Zoom at no charge: zoom.us Unless you lead an organization, the free subscription should be good enough. It allows for video and audio conferencing. Up to 100 persons can participate at one time. On the free version, your session will end after 40 minutes. You can simply initiate a new call after the 40 minute time period and start the clock anew.

For CD\$20 monthly, you can have more people on the Zoom video, have more options relating to recording, and other add-ons. Most people do not need these.

Hosting a Call versus Participating in a Call that Someone Else Hosts

Setting up a call is different from joining a call.

For any one time in the Calendar, register only one Zoom meeting. If you put more than one Zoom meeting side by side, one or both will not work.

Zoom Training - Scheduling a meeting: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362413-How-Do-I-Schedule-Meetings->

To host a Zoom call for the first time, open Zoom, click “schedule a meeting”, “Select a time”, and follow the prompts. To invite others, you either (a) tap on the relevant Calendar application and add the names of your guests, or (b) tap on the button to “copy invitation” and enclose the copied invitation in an email you send independent of Zoom.

Be mindful of the 40-minute limit on the free version. Watch the clock and warn people before the conference ends - there’s no warning.

One good practice is to require participants to register in the set-up process. A password is generated that screens out unwanted guests. Asking participants to register also helps you monitor who has committed to your conference, and who has yet to respond.

How You Sound to Others

Use the mute button at the lower left bottom corner of your screen when you’re not speaking, if you’re in a large group. This reduces feedback. Even in a small meeting, the mute button is useful when someone enters the room where you’re Zoom-ing or, as in my case, when one of the housemates has four legs and a bark. You might also consider closing the door of the room in which you are Zooming.

If you can’t hear others speak, you may need to increase the volume on your device.

How You Look to Others

This is not a beauty contest! Especially for people feeling unwell, or anxious during a pandemic. But you might want to consider how your image appears to others.

Do you look as presentable as you would if you were meeting in person?

Check lighting - try not to look dark or shadowy.

Think of your background. A pleasant backdrop creates a better viewing experience. Some people like to use a “virtual background” - it might be more inspiring or appropriate to choose a photo to put behind you than your bedroom or home office wall. To do this,

1. Sign in to **Zoom** desktop client.
2. Click Settings.
3. Click **Virtual Background**. ...
4. Click on an image to select the desired **virtual background** or add your own image by clicking +Add Image. ...

For instance, I might use as a Virtual Background the photo I took from Tunnel Point, near Lions Bay yesterday - nice, eh?

I sometimes put my device on a stack of books to create a better perspective. This helps me achieve good eye contact, looking right at the camera on my device (not at an attached video screen, for those who use them).



Use the “video off” button at the left bottom corner of your screen if you don’t want viewers to see what you’re doing. If you and your device are moving while the conference is in place, you’ll dizzy your viewers. Turn off the video, then move. Viewers will see your name or a photo of you (depending on what’s in your settings). This is useful if you want to get a drink or a document during a conference but want to stay engaged.

Other Ways to Communicate While Zooming

The “chat” button at the centre bottom of the screen allows you to send written messages to selected persons or to everyone during the videoconference.

The “share” button at the centre bottom of the screen allows you to share your screen. This allows you, for instance, to share a document.

Finally...

As for any meeting, having an agenda in advance is good practice. If you expect several people to participate, it’s good to indicate in advance in what order you expect them to speak, and for how long.

John Weston, April 6, 2020