

Over the past few weeks, Zoom has become the new meeting place, prayer space, classroom or café, as churches look to new and inventive ways to keep connected with those in their community. In this blog, we share our tips and best practice for using Zoom.

## How are churches and groups using Zoom?

Churches and groups have revealed their creativity in keeping their community alive virtually. Some examples include:

- Mid-week prayer meetings
- Small group Bible studies
- A quiz night
- Virtual coffee morning
- After service hang-out with breakout rooms. Learn more about those below!

## So, what is Zoom?

Zoom is an online video and audio conference platform. The free account allows up to 100 people to join a call for 40 minutes. Meetings can be scheduled in advance. Scheduling a meeting creates a link which can be shared so that anyone with the link can join the conversation at the scheduled time.

Learn more about the features [here](#).

## Set up your meeting

1. Log in to Zoom
2. Click on **Schedule**
3. Select the date and time of your meeting, and fill in the further details
4. Add a password for extra security
5. Click **Schedule** to finish
6. Send out the meeting link or share the ID
7. The host needs to start the meeting before anyone can join. When logged in, go to 'meetings' and select 'start' next to the scheduled meeting.

Read more about scheduling a meeting [here](#).

## Tips for hosting your meeting on Zoom

As the host, be clear about the purpose of the chat beforehand so attendees know what to expect.

Include this in your communication to inspire your community to join the meeting.

**At the start, tell people how they can interact.**

Will it be an informal discussion where anyone can talk or will someone be leading? This is important in a larger group to enable everyone to feel able to contribute.

**Use the in-meeting chat box for your attendees to send messages or questions.**

The host will be able to see and answer the questions in the call. When answering, address attendees by name to make the meeting more personal. Learn more about how to use chat [here](#).

**Ask everyone on the call to mute their microphone when not speaking.**

You may need to continue to remind people throughout the chat. Use these handy short links to mute attendees quickly.

- Alt+A: Mute/unmute audio
- Alt+M: Mute/unmute audio for everyone except host. This can only be done by the meeting host.
- As an attendee, press and hold space bar to unmute yourself. When unpressed, you will be muted again.

**Set up Zoom breakout rooms to split attendees into different conversations within the same meeting.**

Perfect for larger groups, this allows you to create small discussions where everyone can have a meaningful contribution. Read more about how to set this up [here](#).

**Show a video or presentation by sharing your screen.**

Click 'share screen' in your meeting control panel, then select which screen to share. Before the meeting, open the video or presentation so that it's ready. Read more about [sharing your screen here](#).

**Record your meeting to share with those who could not attend.**

Record it to your computer to upload to YouTube or your website, or record it on the cloud and share a link to those wishing to watch. Learn more about recording [here](#).

### **Think about your environment**

Your community won't expect you to have a studio set up in your home but there are a few things you can do to improve your video. Position yourself near a window for natural light, but direct sunlight will overexpose your features. Use headphones with a microphone plugged into your phone or laptop to improve the sound quality, although a quiet spot in your house should also be good enough.

Learn more about setting up a video [here](#).

### **Don't share the Zoom link publicly on social media.**

If you do, be aware anyone can join! Instead, share the link in private groups or ask people to contact you for the details.

### **In-meeting chat**

During Zoom meetings, attendees can chat privately 1:1, as well as with the whole group. This feature can be turned on or off. A general good rule for this is:

- Leave on for a private meeting where 1:1 conversations may support the whole discussion, where you know all the attendees and everyone is comfortable having the function turned on
- A public service where this feature may be distracting or open to abuse should have this function disabled
- The function must always be disabled if children or young people are attending.

Find out how to turn off private chat [here](#).

### **If you would like to host a more public meeting, have you considered live video?**

Learn more about [going live here](#).

### **Liz Morgan**

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