**Hospitality, Security, and Zoom for Church Worship**

Jeff Martinhauk, April17, 2020 (Source: Episcopal Diocese of San Diego)

The Cathedral is, like so many congregations, using Zoom as a big part of how we connect right now.  We currently host between seven and ten zoom meetings a day, including worship services, formation offerings, committee meetings, and staff meetings.  Some are public-facing, others are not.  With increasing security threats and our own recent Zoom bombing, I hope your congregation can learn from some of our experiences.

There are lots of articles on the internet with good advice on how to prevent disruptions in your Zoom meetings.  A good one is [**here**](https://www.adl.org/blog/how-to-prevent-zoombombing).  At the cathedral, we are very aware of our mission to Welcome All, especially during this time of deep hunger for comfort and hope in the world around us. Most of the articles on Zoom-bombing prevention are not equipped for public meetings or liturgical offerings where the meeting can’t stop periodically for room management.  The Church’s mission is to restore *all people* to unity with God and each other in Christ, and we have decided that at the Cathedral we will increase deterrence efforts in Zoom without providing total lockdown so that we can continue to live into that mission- our virtual doors must remain wide open.  The precautions we are taking at the Cathedral for account settings and prevention include:

* Every public-facing meeting will have a host (see below for how we are managing our account users).
* Every public meeting will have the Waiting Room feature enabled.
* Every public meeting will have the screen and file sharing features disabled by default.
* We do not use passwords for public meetings.
* We have not yet limited public or private chat, but it is a worthwhile consideration as it is often used by disruptors.

Our public Zoom meetings include two of our four worship services on Sunday, daily Morning and Evening prayer, formation offerings, coffee hours after live-streamed services, and semi-weekly noon-day prayer services.  Several new members have joined us in each of these settings, and we want the doors to remain open for new people to keep coming as they are able.

We have been “Zoom-bombed.”  While there is a lot of documentation on the internet about how to prevent zoom-bombing, we have found very little helpful documentation about what to do in the middle of a disruption.  Based on our experience, we are rolling out new safeguards, and are planning to train a corps of virtual ushers and vergers to assist with meeting facilitation.  Smaller congregations may find it helpful to separate the meeting host function from the presider role (you can have co-hosts or simply let the “usher” be the host and the presider a participant).  In the event of a meeting disruption (Zoom bombing) Cathedral meeting hosts are being trained to **quickly** take these steps (in this order):

1. Lock the meeting (Under the Security button)
2. Mute all, and uncheck the “Allow participants to unmute themselves” box
3. Pin or spotlight the host’s panel so that all viewers are focused on the host. This minimizes the chance that visual distractions can occur in disruptor’s tiles for participants who are in gallery view.
4. Then identify the accounts/panels that are disruptive and remove them, one by one.
   1. Remove disruptors using the three dots in the video tile.
   2. You can also remove people one at a time in the participant panel. There is also a “Remove participant” option under the Security button that allows you to click through many participants.  However, be aware that the disruptors may have mimicked legitimate participants’ names, so using the name alone may result in removing the wrong people.
5. Once the meeting is under control, unpin/un-spotlight the host panel and continue. Participants will be in speaker view and may switch back to gallery view if they choose.

Our meeting hosts will be encouraged to practice taking these steps in advance because once a disruption begins occurring time is of the essence and there is no time to look for instructions.

Larger churches may be interested to know some other aspects to our setup.  All our staff users are under the same Zoom Pro account so that we can have each clergy person designate our Communications Coordinator as a scheduler.  That way he can create Zoom meetings on their behalf, and each of our worship services is created with each clergy account as a named alternative host and we do not have to constantly search for the host login credentials in order to quickly get the meeting going- and we ensure every meeting has a host.  For more details on our schedule and logistics management, please contact Wayne Riehm (riehmw@stpaulcathedral) or me ([**martinhaukj@stpaulcathedral.org**](mailto:martinhaukj@stpaulcathedral.org)).  We manage about 80 Zoom meetings a week.

Zoom has been a source of anxiety for some with new privacy practices and Zoom bombing challenges in the news.  There is so much changing that it is easy to be anxious with uncertainty and want to make things feel secure and known.  Zoom is also a tool that connects with community, that is providing hope, and that is bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who would otherwise be isolated.  Our faith is not one that offers certainty that we will be free from disruption in life, and Zoom is no exception.  With a few simple steps, though, we can reduce the possibility of unwanted disruption and continue to let the technology be a tool that empowers and equips the Church to do what it does best, and love God and our neighbor in this challenging time:  Fearless Love, with boundless courage.