

Seven Tips for Using Zoom like a Pro in ministry

As we are getting used to the term 'Social Distancing' we see the rise of the usage of teleconferencing. Out of several platforms, such as Cisco Webex, Ring Conferencing, at this moment, Zoom.us seems to dominate the field of conference calls. We can carefully predict that this trend will continue, even after the 'Stay-at-home' orders are lifted.

The question of 'How to utilize Zoom in our ministry of gathering and growing together as followers of Christ' will need to be answered. So, we will attempt to share a couple of tips on how to use Zoom, in ministry, like a pro, to help prepare for that answer.

*Disclaimer: we are assuming that your church will soon have Zoom Pro plan, which is \$14.99/ month \$149.90/ year. Some Districts might have a District account for the churches, or grants to supplement the cost.

Preparation

1. **Better Sound** - Besides downloading a Zoom app on your phone or computer, there is an important setting one should consider; purchasing a USB mic.

In many of the articles or YouTube channels offering tips to stream, there is one common advice; 'You need quality sound.' People can bear horrible visuals, as long as the sound is decent. Remember that we will easily flip to the next video if the video has horrible audio. In the same way, when a person attends a Zoom meeting with bad sound, it makes it difficult to concentrate. So, abstain from using the built-in mic during a Zoom conference call.

Search 'USB mic' on your internet browser and you will find many decent mics in the range of \$50-70 (Of course, quality mics will range in a higher price). If that is not available, try a headphone with a mic. The quality isn't great, but better than a built-in mic.

2. **Use a Consistent Link** - Many of the meetings have a potential to become recurring. Imagine if you have to dig out from the pile of emails/ text to find the link for every meeting. One way to avoid this would be sending out a reminder an hour to 30 min before the meeting starts. There might be ways to set up automated reminders, but setting a consistent link that is consistent for the majority of your gatherings (online worship, small group, council meeting) can help your participants.

To send out a consistent link, we need to understand the nature of Zoom meeting links.

Hi there,

is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android <https://.zoom.us/j/>

Or iPhone one-tap :

US: [+16468769923](tel:+16468769923), or [+16699006833](tel:+16699006833),

Or Telephone:

Dial(for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

Zoom links are followed by your Personal Meeting ID. A PMI generates automatically, but you are allowed to change it. Go to your 'Profile,' and to 'Edit PMI.' You may use your church's phone number or any 10 digit number that is unique to your church. (*Note that when setting a recurring meeting on Zoom, you are not able to use your PMI.)

Also, you may send a zoom link with the password embedded in the link. By providing a password embedded link, participants do not have to separately enter the password to enter the meeting. Zoom scrambles the password as an added security measure.

3. **Virtual backgrounds** - Have you led a Zoom meeting with teenagers? Have you wondered how they change their backgrounds every 2 minutes? It is easy, and you can do it too! The benefit of using a background is 1) you can use a banner reminding them it is a church meeting, and 2) you don't have to tidy up your room every time you have a Zoom meeting.

During the meeting

4. **Call-in option** - One advantage of zoom is that you can invite members who might not have a smartphone or computer. If they are cautious of calling a New York number, which is closest to us in Virginia, there is an option to purchase an additional Toll-Free number. Note that even with that addition, which is around \$100/ month, there is an additional cost for providing a toll-free number). Despite the limitations of long-distance calling, when members are logged in, they can participate in the gathering via phone. They why not try Call-in Worship? In our church, we found that many of our members over 90 were not able to join any of the online worship experiences. So, at 11:00 am we host call-in worship for members who can only connect with us via a landline. As they gather, they talk and check with one another. After a while, we pray and read the Scripture for that Sunday. Then we play the recorded sermon of that Sunday, using the 'Share Screen' feature, described in detail below. After the sermon, we share our thoughts and end with the Lord's Prayer. We have learned that this became one of the only times, throughout a week, our seniors interacted with other people. And it is truly a joy to hear them chat and laugh over the phone.
5. **Break out rooms feature** - Imagine on Sunday, members enter into the gathering area, you briefly greet them and send them to a Sunday School (Sunday Bible Fellowship at our church). Did you know that this can happen over Zoom, using the breakout room feature?

Breakout room is similar to a Sunday school room in your church building. The host designates how many breakout rooms they have in the church. The Zoom host can set up the breakout room and wait in the Main Session, greeting and waiting for members. When people enter the Main Session, it is similar to the gathering area. And when the Zoom host sees more than two people from a certain Small group present, they can be sent to the breakout room. And this process happens every time someone enters the main session. By using this feature, you may continue to have Sunday Schools on your regular schedule.

Then you might ask, what about the Children's Sunday School. We have learned that having all children and adults gather for Sunday School, on Sunday morning can be difficult. So we have a similar gathering on Wednesday afternoon.

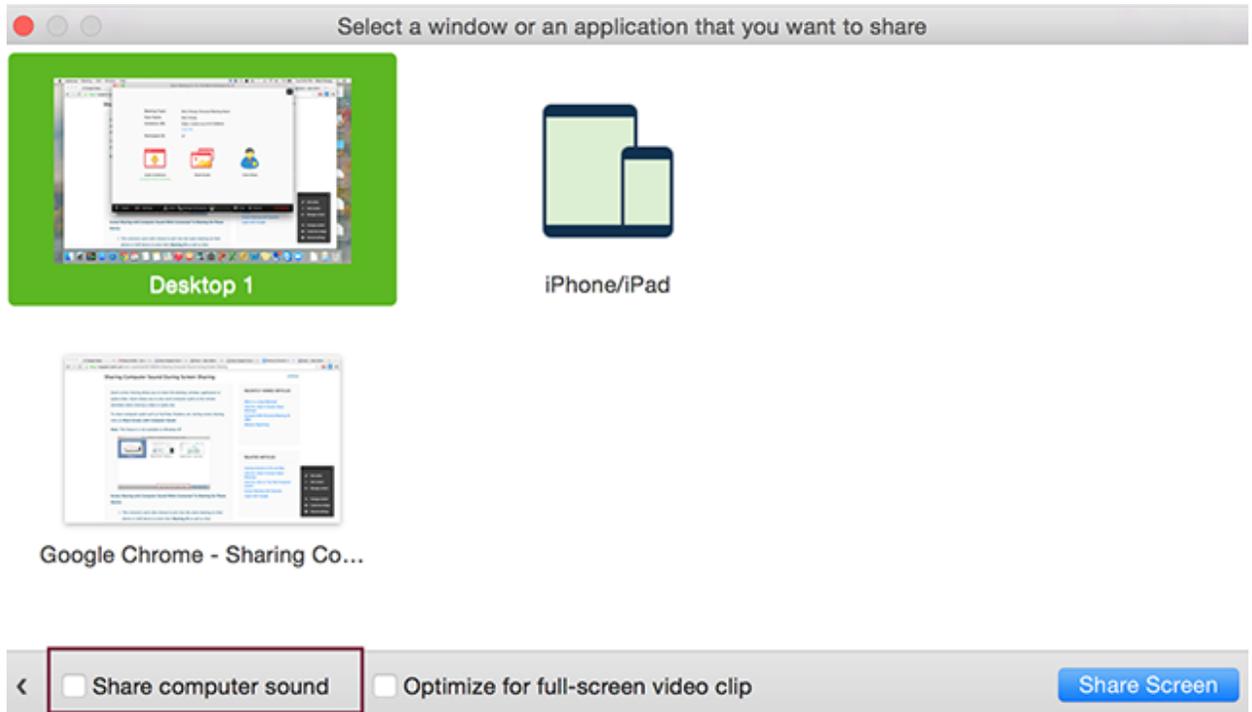
How to set up breakout rooms in Zoom.us

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206476313-Managing-breakout-rooms>

6. **Share screen option** - Then you might ask, what do they discuss in their breakout rooms. Some small groups merely check how everyone is doing, share prayers, and pray together. Some groups actually have a Bible study. We normally use Bible Studies that come with a video lesson.

How to Share Screen in Zoom

- 1) Click 'Share Screen' button in your control panel
- 2) Click the screen or app you would like to share
- 3) When playing a video, make sure the check, 'Share Computer Sound' and 'Optimize for full screen video clip'



By using the Share Screen feature, the leader of the group can play the video lesson, and the members can discuss and share their thoughts after the lesson. For our Children Sunday School, our Director of NextGen records a lesson for each week. In the main session, they play the recorded lesson and get a chance to get together with their Sunday School class through the breakout room session.

Sharing after the meeting

7. **Recording your zoom** - In order to enable recording, you will have to go to your Zoom profile and allow recording. Instead of using the cloud, there is an option to save the recording on your local drive.

I would advise recording a small group gathering for the ones who missed the gathering. Rather using the record feature like a webinar will be recommended. For example, if you can start the meeting, and record yourself leading a Bible study. Or you can invite one or two members or anyone in particular professions, who can join and discuss a certain topic while you record it. In that case, invite them to

the Zoom meeting, talk and rehearse what you want to share, and then start the recording, like a webinar.

I hope these tips help us to effectively use this tool that allows us to grow closer with each other, in the time of 'Social Distancing.' If you have further ideas or questions, please do not hesitate to contact us!