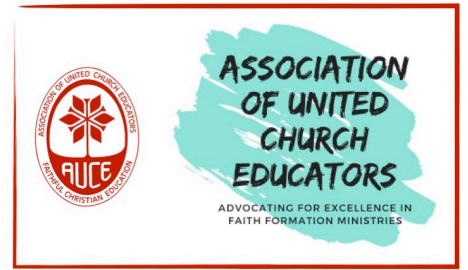# Using Zoom® Tools for Online Learning Experiences in a Congregation

Zoom® (https://zoom.us) is a popular video conferencing platform which is currently being utilized by many congregations across the U.S. during social distancing due to COVID-19. It offers many tools to users that provide almost as many benefits to each virtual experience as meeting face to face.

The information in this file has been compiled with a focus on educational learning experiences in a local congregation:

- For information on how to choose and set up a Zoom® account and to get started with the basics, visit https://zoom.us/pricing, which will show you the different pricing and feature options.
- *Note that the features listed below are not available on the free version.*
- Click on the "Resources" tab at the top of the Zoom® webpage to view the FAQs and tutorial videos.
- In order to have access to the features listed below, after clicking on "Schedule a Meeting," click on Settings in the lefthand column to select them before you create ("schedule") your session.
- Zoom® is also offering special resources for navigating this challenging time: https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/covid19.html.
- Be sure to schedule a practice Zoom® with a colleague to experiment with all of the features before actually using them in a Zoom® session.

The Tools

Chat
The chat feature allows the host and the participants to "send written notes" to the group when someone else is talking. To pull up the Chat Box, click on the Chat icon in the toolbar. You can choose whether or not to allow private chatting (between individual participants) under Settings (see the fourth bullet point above) before you create your meeting. *This is a helpful feature for typing in last-minute information and for participants to communicate with the instructor without interrupting the presentation. It can also be used for participants to type short responses to questions in the lesson simultaneously and is more effective than having everyone try to speak at once.*

Non-Verbal Feedback
In video conferencing, non-verbal feedback happens with the use of icons. Click on the Participants icon in the toolbar to bring up the list of participants; you will see the non-verbal feedback icons in that box. These icons represent a raised hand, yes, no, thumbs up, thumbs down, and clapping as well as others. Remember to select this feature before you set up your meeting. *These icons are great for quickly getting the sense of the group (Who knows who Jonah is? Click on the hand), a quick response to a yes or no question, or for asking, "Do you agree or disagree, thumbs up or thumbs down?"*

Polling
The polling feature allows you to create single- or multiple-choice questions that you make visible to your attendees. They then respond, and a chart of the group's choices is shown on the screen. You have the option of creating up to 25 questions. To create the poll, select the Poll option in Settings before you set up your meeting. You may then start your meeting in order to create your poll. Locate the option to create a poll and follow the prompts. During your session, initiate the poll by clicking on the Polling icon in the toolbar. You may download the results of your poll after the meeting has ended in your Account Management tab under Reports. *This is great for Bible quizzes, voting, and opinion-sharing. Use your imagination with each session you create!*

Screen Sharing
This feature allows you to share what is on your screen, such as a video, a slide presentation, a photo, and the like with the participants. If you select the option to allow participants to share their screens when you set up the meeting, they can share as well. Use the Share icon in the toolbar to select what you'd like to share. *This is a great tool for sharing your lesson/(PowerPoint) presentation visuals and for participants to share photos they've taken, videos they've created, artwork saved as computer files, and the like.*

Whiteboard
After clicking on the Share icon in the toolbar, one of the options is a Whiteboard. When selected, you may choose a "tool" from a new toolbar with which to write on the Whiteboard. There are options for text boxes and stamps as well. Click the Format icon in this toolbar to change the color, line width, and font size. Your end result can be saved to share later. Before you create your meeting, you can allow (or not allow) participants to write on the Whiteboard with you. There is also a tool for the host to stop participants from writing during the session found by scrolling over the green Share bar at the top of the screen and clicking on "More," then selecting "Disable Attendee Annotation." *This is a great tool for creating group artwork, a Prayer Wall, and the like.*

Breakout Rooms
The breakout room feature can be used in the same way that you divide a face-to-face class into discussion groups. Zoom® allows you to create up to 50 "rooms" to accommodate up to 200 people, two "rooms" with two people, or any combination in between. When the breakout rooms are started (by the host), participants watch all but the people in their "room" disappear from the screen, and then can begin their own conversation together. The host is "left alone" on the screen, but has the ability to select rooms to "visit" if desired. When it's time for everyone to return to the main screen, the host clicks on the breakout room icon in the toolbar and a timer will appear on everyone's screen to let them know how long they have until they will be returned back to the group. Be sure to select the breakout room option when you set up your meeting and select the desired settings. If you do not have a pre-registered group, you will need to create the breakout rooms during your session, but it is not complicated and does not take long.

Virtual Backgrounds
A virtual background is an image you can display as your background during a Zoom® meeting. This will work best with the recommended camera settings and a green screen behind you. You may choose from the backgrounds provided by Zoom® or you may upload your own. Here is a video to show you the specifics: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/210707503-Virtual-Background.
A virtual background will be especially effective for Biblical and other types of storytelling. Practically, it can hide any distracting items/views that may be behind you as you teach.