HOW TO LEAD A ZOOM PCC MEETING
Ideas and Tips for Online PCCs

Unusual Times

Lockdown of some form looks like it may continue for a while, and therefore Anglican church leaders will need to think about how to conduct PCC meetings during this time.

This guide is specifically about how to use Zoom for a PCC meeting (although with a little adaptation it will be helpful for other types of leadership meetings as well, not necessarily just church meetings, for example school governors. Do feel free to share widely). Other platforms exist, for example GoToMeetings, but as Zoom seems to be the most common platform we have decided to focus on this.

We recognise of course that some PCC members won't be able to access Zoom online. The good news is that Zoom has a facility for people to be able to dial in to a Zoom meeting using their phone. This should mean everyone is able to attend the meeting. (Some diocese are suggesting that attendance by phone is not sufficient for it to be constituted as an appropriate meeting. If you are concerned about this contact your Archdeacon.)

Preparing for a Zoom PCC meeting involves some of the normal preparation we do for PCCs alongside some additional things.

Normal Preparation

A significant meeting like a PCC requires considerable time in preparation. The rule of thumb for meetings like this is 40/20/40. 40% of the time in preparation, 40% in follow up, 20% of the time is in the actual meeting.

In preparing for the meeting we are working towards:

- **Clarity** A good agenda is clear about what needs to be discussed, why it needs to be discussed and how long we have for each item.
- **Creativity** Our role is to identify the most engaging way to have those discussions, including the use of supporting papers, small group work, creative exercises or activities and so on.
- **Consistency** Aligning the meeting with your agreed protocols (code of conduct) and the legal requirements for PCCs.
- **Collaboration** Ensuring a fun and cooperative environment in which everyone feels safe to contribute their best to the important and weighty items that are being discussed.

If you want to think further about how to prepare well for a meeting, and how to handle some of the common dysfunctions of PCCs take a look at PCC Tonight, a comprehensive guide to running fun, fruitful and faith-filled PCC meetings.

Additional Preparation

Zoom meetings require some additional preparation in a number of areas.

1. Technology

Familiarising yourself with the technology will make it more likely that the meeting progresses well. Be clear about both how functions work and how you are going to use them.

If it is still relatively new to you it would be good to gather a group of around six people to trial the various functions ahead of your PCC meeting. You will be glad to find out things that don't work as anticipated ahead of the meeting, giving you time to sort them out before running the actual meeting

In addition you may need to help people on your PCC who aren't confident with technology by having a one-to-one conversation to enable them to set up Zoom and navigate basic functionality. Practising with them ahead of the meeting will help them contribute better to the meeting because the technology will feel more familiar and slightly less daunting.

We have created a single side of A4 guide called 'Getting Ready for a Zoom PCC Meeting'. This will be useful to send out to many on the PCC, but you may want to think carefully about when to send it to the less technically confident, as it could be a bit overwhelming. Perhaps instead talk through with them elements from that guide on how they can set themselves up for the meeting.

Here are six key Zoom functions that could be a great help to your PCC gathering. You will find them in the bar that appears (normally) towards the bottom of your screen when you hover your mouse over that area.

1. CHAT
This provides a place for the group to interact with one another, or potentially to interact privately between two members of the PCC. If you don't want the latter to occur you can switch off this function in your Zoom account settings (generally it is best to switch off private conversations).

Think through how you want people to use chat (if at all), and then offer some guidelines either ahead of your meeting or as you start .

For example, you could use it to post the questions you want people to think about, especially ahead of them going into breakout rooms. It is worth noting that when breakout rooms start, Chat will need to be reopened for them to see previous posts, and also that anything posted in Chat when in breakout rooms is only visible to the people in that particular breakout room.

2. BREAKOUT ROOMS
Just as in a normal PCC meeting, if there isn't a point during the meeting when you have been in small groups you are probably not enabling people to give of their best. Breakout rooms are a great way to do small groups, anything from pairs upwards.

- They can be set up so people are randomly allocated to a group, or you can choose who will be in which group. The latter obviously takes more time and may well require someone to be sorting this out as you introduce the item where breakout rooms will be used.

- You can set the time of groups, and also the length of warning before the groups close.

The difference with these groups is that you don't get any sense of (a) how they are going (b) what people are saying. As 'host' you can decide to drop into any of the groups if you like, but this can feel a bit odd.

So, when people gather back you may want to use a couple of ways of gauging how the conversation went before you get any specific feedback on content.

- You can do that with a simple show of hands where they hold up the relevant number of fingers. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is not so good and 5 is really well, how did your group go? On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is not very energised and 5 is very energised, how energised were you by that discussion?

- Or you could use a Poll (see below).

3. POLLS
Polls are found in the bar when you have scheduled a meeting with others. You can set up simple Polls, creating the questions beforehand and the possible options for them to select. It can be a quick way of gauging where people are. You can choose to share the results with the rest of the PCC or not, as seems appropriate. This can also be used as a way of closed voting on an item.

4. SCREEN SHARING
Documents, PowerPoints, Whiteboards (see below) videos, websites and so on can all be shared and seen by everyone using this facility.

If using PowerPoint here are a few tips specifically for use of PPT in Zoom:

- It works best in a 4:3 aspect ratio not 16:9 because of the way Zoom is configured on a screen.

- Avoid using more than a dozen or so words on a slide. Depending on the devices people are using, the slides can be quite small on the screen, and they simply won't be able to read the words.

- For the same reason graphs and charts often don't work very well. Check them on different screen sizes before showing them.

- Use images as much as, if not more than, words.

- Keep the number of slides down, and don't be in PPT mode for too long.

If using a video:
- Be aware you must share your sound with others so that they can hear the video.
- Videos require significant band width, and often appear smooth on your screen but jumpy/stuttery on other people's screens, so perhaps be a little cautious about using videos.

5. WHITEBOARDS

The whiteboard is found in your Share Screen options. You can create an interactive whiteboard that everyone can contribute to as a way of sharing feedback from groups, or posting ideas around a topic. You can set these up ahead of the meeting and have multiple whiteboards (click on the + in the bottom right to create an additional whiteboard). The functionality is fairly basic, but it does introduce another way of engaging.

6. RECORD

You can record meetings through Zoom. This may come in handy for the PCC secretary as they write up the minutes, especially if their broadband drops out for part of a meeting, as they can listen back after the event.

All these tools will take time for people to learn, so don't introduce them all at once, and be sure to explain clearly how to use them as you do introduce them, preferably with a bit of light-hearted humour to ease things along.

2. Chairing the Meeting

Normal good practice as chair needs to be maintained (clarifying, energising, guiding, summarising, concluding and so on), but chairing a Zoom meeting also requires both a slightly firmer hand on the tiller and a more relaxed style. These will be impacted by the size of your PCC. The smaller the group the more relaxed you can be, the bigger the group the more directive you may need to be. However, all sizes of groups require a mix of both.

A FIRMER HAND

Zoom meetings can feel more functional, sterile and stilted than normal meetings, partly because we are not used to them, and partly because the technology makes it more difficult to create a good atmosphere for a meeting. This means the chair has to work harder to run a good meeting.

Zoom is also less forgiving of people speaking at the same time (it's why, for example, saying the Lord's Prayer together unmuted doesn't work on Zoom). The way it works is that it cuts off the person speaking if someone else tries to speak.

Negatively this means than fun banter is much harder to have in a Zoom meeting. Positively it helps us to focus on the good practice of not speaking over one another.

As chair you will need to ensure that people only speak one at a time. You may need to be a bit more directive about asking people to raise a hand (virtual or physical) when they want to contribute so you can see and draw them in. It may

also require you to quieten the more vocal, or those who tend to go on a bit too long, to enable others to contribute. I don't suggest using the mute key to do this. Normal good practice will work just fine.

You may also need to draw the quieter more diffident ones into the discussion as for some being online makes it more daunting to contribute. Create opportunities for people to speak. For example, if people have been in a break out room invite a quieter member to offer any feedback from the group. Or half way through a discussion simply say 'Great contributions everyone, let's listen for the contributions of those who haven't yet said anything.' And if someone fills the silence who has already spoken ask them to hold on until others have had a chance to speak.

In a physical meeting it is easier for everyone to pick up the cues from one another about who wants to speak, what is going on. In a Zoom meeting people are far less likely to do this, so you may also need to curate the contributions in a clearer way than normal, for example, 'Mike is going to speak next, then Mai-Li, followed by Sami and then Onde.'

A MORE RELAXED STYLE

The nature of a Zoom call means that communication can 'feel' more direct, and lacks some of the nuances that happen in a physical space. So alongside a firmer hand, try to have a relaxed style. Smile, build in some moments to reduce intensity, have regular breaks, encourage some healthy banter.

For example, when we disagree with someone in a physical space there is often (a) some distance between us and them, (b) an ability to look at others as we are raising an alternative view, which lessens the sense that it is a direct conflict with the original person, (c) an ability to read some of the body language of the room, sense the temperature in the room.

In a Zoom meeting disagreement feels more intense, more personal, more direct. Knowing this means the chair can keep an eye on this, stop to check the 'intensity' level, draw others in, but as always seek to mine conflict, as healthy conflict is vital for a productive meeting.

Another thing that can help is to have coffee before the meeting starts so that people can connect at a relational level (as you would when meeting physically over

refreshments). This can either be as part of the meeting, or ahead of the meeting. If the latter set a time (for example 15 minutes before the meeting starts), and encourage people to come along for a chat before you dive into the business.

THE BUILDING OF CONSENSUS

Alongside a firmer hand and a more relaxed style, at the heart of effective PCC meetings is the building of consensus, as opposed to merely securing agreement as to future direction. This is partly effected by verbal contributions, but is equally a more visceral thing, encouraged by non verbal signals.

One of the challenges of online meetings is that they tend to be emotionally much 'cooler' and lack many of the dimensions which facilitate not just the securing of agreement but emotional buy-in to decisions. The wise chair will need not only to be aware of this, but equally, perhaps, to articulate this to others, and to devise strategies to compensate for these lost dimensions.

TOP TIPS

Here are some other tips for chairing a Zoom PCC.

- Be sure to model best practice in the way you have set up your device and space (see our other guide 'Getting Ready for a Zoom PCC Meeting').
- Send round the guide 'Getting Ready for a Zoom PCC Meeting' in advance with an encouragement for people to take 30 minutes to read it and action it ahead of the meeting. You could even have some fun by having a bit of a competition for 'best backdrop' or 'best eye alignment'.
- Provide people with a phone number to call if they have trouble connecting. This doesn't have to be your number as you may want to concentrate on welcoming people, so ask someone else who is a little tech-savvy to fulfil this role.
- Be online fifteen minutes ahead of the start time. As people arrive admit them and welcome them personally, connect with them, just as you would at a physical meeting.
- Where people have not set themselves up well for the call (for example they have a strong light source behind them so no one can see their face). be ready to gently offer them ways to improve their engagement.
- At the start of the meeting set some expectations about how it is going to feel and work. Simply acknowledging that it is going to be different from normal meetings, identifying some of the struggles listed in this guide, explaining some of the ways you're going to run the meeting, will help people enter it better prepared and with more realistic expectations about how it will go. At the same time, don't be too downbeat!
- As with any meeting people rarely fully enter a meeting

until they have spoken within it. This may be even more so with an online meeting, So use creative ways to get everyone to speak, ideally within the first five minutes. This can be in pairs or with the whole group, but get people contributing early on and you find them able to contribute better later on. For example: 'We're going to take five minutes to let each other know how we are doing at this time. I'd like to invite you to offer just one word that sums up something of how you are feeling.' Or 'Think back to our previous meeting and share one thing you are grateful for from that meeting.' Or 'What are the good news stories about church life at the moment that we are grateful for?'

- Sit either on a chair without a back, or on the front of a chair. This makes your body sit upright and brings energy to your body, which helps with alertness and also engagement. Sitting back in a chair actually de-energises us, and also communicates a lack of engagement to others.
- Look at the camera not at yourself on the screen when speaking. This comes across as good eye contact. Looking all over the place comes across as shifty and untrustworthy.
- You may even like to hide your own image so you are not tempted to keep looking at yourself. As long as you have set up your space well at the start you can trust that you are in the right place.
- Build into the meeting more frequent but shorter breaks. If the meeting is going to last over an hour build in a two minute break every 30 minutes. Staring at a screen is more intense, and these little breaks will enable people to relax their eyes, move their bodies and regain energy for the next section. The key is for people to move away from their screen (and not look at other screens) and to get out of their chair.
- When it comes to using liturgy or saying the Lord's Prayer together, ask people to mute themselves, but to join in.
- You can mute everyone except yourself as a host using Alt M on a PC and SHFT COMM M on a Mac. But be selective when everyone is muted (probably best when someone is doing a presentation) as sometimes the buzz of people agreeing, interacting is what you need to help gauge the response/energy in the meeting.

- If your PCC is particularly big, try to find someone who will manage the technology you are going to be using (for example setting up the breakout rooms, starting a poll) so you can concentrate on chairing the meeting well. This person doesn't necessarily have to be a member of the PCC. You will need to make them host of the meeting and yourself co-host.

- Silence can be very awkward on Zoom, but actually may be really helpful, as time to reflect, process, think is always good in a meeting. It will be best to acknowledge the awkwardness, and introduce it carefully, and be clear it isn't an opportunity to do other things (more tempting when you aren't in a room together).

- Look out for those who are struggling, finding it difficult to contribute or seem disengaged. It may be good to give them a call the day after the meeting and chat through how they felt about the experience. Some are going to find meeting in this way hard, perhaps because one of the main reasons they joined the PCC was to be a part of a group, and a Zoom gathering feels too functional for them.

3. Code of Conduct

Ideally your PCC will already have a Code of Conduct which guides how you operate as a PCC. (For instruction on how to create a Code of Conduct see PCC Tonight). As always it is good to remind people of this Code on the agenda and/or at the start of the meeting. However, it will also be good to review and revise your Code of Conduct for meeting online.

Remember, a code works best when it is generated by the group, and therefore the simplest way to review and revise it is to do the end of meeting review, and to add an additional question or two to the normal practice. For example:

- What has worked well in this meeting?
- What are we noticing about meeting online that is different?
- What could we have done to improve this meeting?

When something helpful is suggested, ask if the PCC would like to add that to their code of conduct, and once agreement is given, be sure at the start of the next meeting to highlight this new part of the code.

4. The Legal Stuff

Whilst not an expert on Church polity, the following is a summary of advice that has been offered in a number of quarters. If in doubt contact your Archdeacon or your Diocesan Secretary.

- Standing Committees are a great way to prepare for PCC meetings, and conduct emergency business between PCC meetings, but should not take the place of the PCC meeting.

- Recent changes mean that there is no longer the legal requirement for the PCC to meet four times a year, but instead 'a sufficient number of meetings to enable the efficient transaction of business' (rule M 23/1). It is possible for the PCC to do business by correspondence (rule M29) and to take quick decisions outside of an actual meeting, but this should be the exception.

- With lockdown in some form looking like it will go on for a considerable length of time, it will be necessary to find ways to meet as a PCC to conduct both the normal business and consult over the church's response to the exceptional circumstances we find ourselves in.

- These meetings will need to be virtual either online or using a telephone conference facility (or a combination of

both – it is possible for people to connect to a Zoom meeting via phone). Everything should ideally be done to ensure inclusion of all members of the PCC in the meetings.

- Following a virtual meeting, any decisions such as the authorising of expenditure, entering into contracts or those that require a formal resolution of the PCC should be put in written form and circulated for formal approval under the correspondence procedure in rule M29 (which under rule 76 can be conducted by email). This is to enable formal acceptance of the motions and also to register objections which will be recorded and reported at the next meeting. This process isn't there to attempt to replicate meeting discussions for those who didn't attend (impossible to get across with complex discussions) or simply extend the meeting with further discussions in an email afterwards, which isn't great for good decision making, or the point of the process. It enables those who weren't there to register objections or agree, and formally checks the vote. Also specify how long people have to reply with their vote and comments and how many replies are needed.

Let us Have Your Ideas

As you conduct online PCC meetings please send us your ideas and suggestions for improving this guide. It will enable us to share best practice in an updated version of this guide. Please send your ideas and thoughts to info@cpas.org.uk.

Go For It!

PCCs are a vital part of the life of Anglican churches. Now is a time for them to lead well by asking for wisdom, courage and faith from the God we serve, so that we may shape congregational life to reflect the person of Jesus and the priorities of his kingdom.

Any season of disruption brings both unexpected challenges and unprecedented opportunities. Part of the role of the PCC is to try and respond as well as possible to both these realities.

We hope this guide will enable you to continue to have fun, faith-filled and fruitful meetings during lockdown.

James Lawrence,
June 2020

Further Resources

PCC Tonight A comprehensive guide to fun, faith filled and fruitful PCCs, including how to tackle the ten common dysfunctions of a PCC, six sessions to use with your PCC, and over 30 practical tools and guides to help your PCC function well. Order it here.

Zoom safety You may be aware that there has been some concern about the security of Zoom. Recently they have updated security provision, but if this is a concern for you take a look at some helpful advice on Worcester Diocese's website.

The PCC Member's Essential Guide, Mark Tanner (CHP). An excellent guide for all PCC members to help them make sense of what it means to be a part of the PCC. Introductory video here, and you can order the book here.

Church Representation Rules 2020 can be found online here. Part 9 is the section that particularly applies to business conducted outside of a physical meeting.

Leadership in Lockdown Webinars CPAS is running a series of free webinars to help resource Church leaders at this time. Details can be found here.

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