

GUIDANCE FOR ONLINE ANNUAL MEETINGS

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First, double check that your bylaws do not prohibit an online meeting.

If it does, please contact Chancellor Bill Fleener, Jr. at wfleenerjr@gmail.com and he will consult with you one-on-one to explore options to amend your bylaws.

Next, determine your meeting platform.

We recommend Zoom over other meeting platforms for a number of reasons, including:

- Opportunity for direct feedback and conversation
- Meeting features like hand raising, chat box, break out rooms, and more
- Participants can call in - if folks don't have an internet connection or webcam, they can still call in to listen and speak (no access to other functions!)
- Institutional knowledge - this is the platform most folks are familiar with if they're using online meeting platforms, whether through the diocese, local churches, workplace, or gathering with friends.



Photo: Screenshot of Camp at Home campers gathering on Zoom this summer.

The most basic option is a *Zoom Meeting*, where people join using a link and see every participant on their screen. A Zoom Meeting allows for the common functions like chat, raise hand, polling, and break out rooms (should you be taking on small group discussions during your meeting).

Another option is a *Zoom Webinar*. This does have some additional cost. Unlike a Meeting, when a participant joins a Webinar, they will only see the presenters up on the screen instead of all participants. This gives the host a little more control, but reduces the person-to-person connection. The functions of a Webinar include the regular functions of a Zoom Meeting, plus access to Q&A.

Whether you decide to run with a Zoom Meeting or a Zoom Webinar, double check your capacity limits. If your annual meeting would include more than 100 participants, you may need to pay for extra capacity on your account for the month of your big meeting.

We need to be clear on who's eligible to vote.

First, check your parish bylaws to determine who is eligible to vote at your annual meeting. Is it everyone who *attends* the meeting? All members of the parish, even if they're not present? Only people who tithe or attend a certain number of times per year? It's important to be clear on this.

If your bylaws do not specify this, then your diocesan Canons do.

In Eastern Michigan, Canon 21.2 applies:

In all subsequent meetings of the congregation, the right to vote shall be confined to such persons who are sixteen years of age or older, for six months prior to the meetings have been regular worshipers in such congregation, are baptized and are physically present.

(For purposes of this canon, "physically present" can mean being present online.)

In Western Michigan, Canon 22.5 applies:

At all Parish meetings, whether annual or special, the right to vote shall be limited to baptized persons:

- A. not less than 16 years of age,*
- B. whose baptisms have been duly recorded in said Parish,*
- C. who for a period of not less than six months preceding have been regular worshiper in the Parish; and,*
- D. who for not less than six months preceding have been bona fide regular contributors to its support, according to the method used in the Parish. Physical*

disability or absence from the Parish during the preceding six months shall not disqualify an otherwise qualified voter.

And according to our Chancellor, “regular” attendance this year can be answered with the following question - If worship was offered in-person or online, were they consistently in attendance?

Then decide *how* you’re going to vote.

During annual meetings, the parish may need to vote on any given topic according to their own bylaws, including the budget, elections, etc.

The most user-friendly option, if you’re using [Zoom](#), is Polling. You can preload the Polls under your meeting settings to run them during the course of your meeting. When the Poll is launched by the meeting host, a window appears on the screen of the participants inviting them to make a choice and submit. A screen recording of how to set up a Zoom Poll is linked at the end of this document.

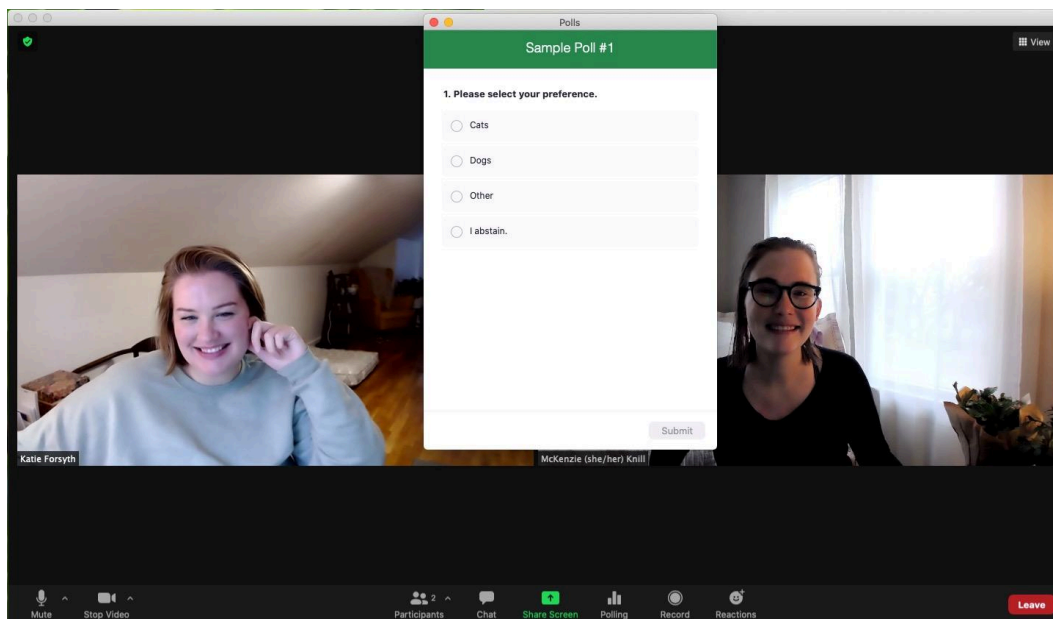


Photo: Screenshot of a Zoom Poll from the general participant’s perspective.

Opportunities: Results are immediate, user-friendly for participants, no additional cost, no pre-registration required for voters

Challenges: No ability to credential voters apart from ensuring everyone on the meeting is eligible to vote, the results of the poll are not recorded by Zoom for later viewing. Multiple members participating under one Zoom log in only get one vote.

An alternative is a third-party online voting software (we're familiar with [ElectionRunner](#)) where voters can access ballots from an email invitation or by logging into the website directly.

The screenshot shows a web interface for an election. At the top is a blue header with the text 'Election B - Standing Committee'. Below this is a sub-header 'Electing members of the Standing Committee in the clergy order.' followed by an 'INSTRUCTIONS' section. The instructions state: 'Select 1 option from the list below. * Required'. Below the instructions is a list of five options, each with a radio button and a text input field. The options are: 'The Rev. Damien Karras' (St. Regan, Exorcist), 'The Rev. William Collins' (St. Elizabeth's, Pride and St. Jane's, Prejudice), 'The Rev. Geraldine Grainger' (St. Barnabus, Dibley), 'The Rev. Gabriel Stokes' (St. Sarah's, WalkingDead), and 'I abstain from this vote.'.

Photo: ElectionRunner sample ballot from the Convention practice sessions.

Opportunities: Ability to track participation, more varied and complex options for ballots, records the results for later viewing, able give voting access to people *not* present in the Zoom meeting,

Challenges: Results take some time as voters access their ballots, requires some additional steps from the voter on their own devices, requires pre-registration (harder to do if your eligible voters are whoever logs into the meeting), not free - could be cost prohibitive if running multiple ballots.

Designate Specific Roles

Assign certain people to specific roles and communicate those roles to your participants. We recommend the following, if not already required by your Canons/bylaws:

- *Chair* - the meeting facilitator, the one with the gavel
- *Parliamentarian* - the person who helps ensure the meeting is canonical and follows the appropriate legislative process

- *Meeting Host* - the person who coordinates the technological aspects of the meeting, which may include Zoom and/or the voting process
- *Secretary* - the person who takes the minutes of the meeting



Photo: Screenshot from the Joint Diocesan Convention including the Meeting Host, the Chancellor/Parliamentarian, Co-Secretary, Co-Chair, Co-Chair, and Co-Secretary

The following roles are also recommended:

- *Meeting Co-host* - a person, located in a different location and on a different internet network than the Meeting Host, who serves as backup and default, should something happen to the Host's connection and they get kicked off. (This happened to us during the diocesan convention!)
- *Registrar* - depending on what you determine about your eligible voters and voting method, having a designated person to collect registrations and manage them with any third-party voting software could be essential.
- *Tech Support* - we strongly encourage having a designated tech support person or persons separate from your meeting host to focus on assisting participants in getting connected, voting, etc. when they run into trouble.

We also encourage you to consider having your Tech Support team conduct practice sessions, or build in opportunities to practice the functions you'll need for your annual meeting (like polling!) into your current regular online gatherings. The more familiarity folks have with the platform and its functions, the more smoothly your meeting will run.

Developing Your Rules of Order

You may already have a developed set of Rules of Order for your meeting. Check to ensure they will still apply to your meeting if you move to an online format. Check for things that assume physical presence or visuals (raising your hand or a card? Counting heads? Watching a clock?).

Make sure your rules consider the following:

- How should folks indicate they want to speak?
- How will they be recognized to speak?
- How much time do they have to speak to an issue, and how will they be told if they're running out or have run out of time?

Beginning Your Online Meeting

Your meeting should begin with a motion to regularize the online parish meeting. Our Chancellor recommends something like:

The Chair will entertain a motion to authorize the annual meeting of (INSERT YOUR CHURCH) to be done online. All official actions conducted during the meeting will be official actions of the annual meeting of (INSERT YOUR CHURCH) as required by the Canons of the Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of (Eastern/Western) Michigan.

Quick Links to Resources:

- Purchasing a Zoom Account
 - [Zoom Regular Pricing](#)
 - [Nonprofit rate](#) for organizations (requires formal approval process by TechSoup)
- [Request a Zoom Meeting](#) hosted on the Diocesan Account (free; no access to host-controls and host-only functions, like Polling and Share Screen)
- [ElectionRunner](#)
- [Episcopal Communicators Network of Eastern & Western Michigan](#)
- [\(VIDEO\) How to Schedule a Zoom Meeting](#)
- [\(VIDEO\) How to Set Up Polls in Zoom](#)

- [Tips for a Zoom Meeting](#)
- [Email Canon Katie Forsyth](#)
- [Email Chancellor Bill Fleener](#)