

SMALL GROUP DISTANCING OPTIONS

Information for Virtual Meetings

This information is intended to provide assistance to those small groups who may consider temporarily meeting online only with video and audio connection.

This information comes from the experience of our current online small group leaders that regularly use video conferencing applications for their weekly meetings.

For those not familiar with video conferencing, when connected to the meeting, the participants appear on your device (computer, tablet or smartphone) much like the family did at the beginning of the Brady Bunch TV show.

What are Video Conferencing Technology (VTC) Platforms? Listed below are two recommended *free* apps that are being used by online small groups, their web addresses, and some information about each option. This is not an endorsement of either of these products. Rather, it is information from the applications websites and observations based on experiences of the Nativity online small groups.

General Information: Both of these options require that there be a “leader”, who creates an account using an ID and password. That individual sets up the meeting day and time once logged in and invites the other members of the group to join the video conference. The other members need to download the respective app or go to the website to join during meeting time and participate, but do not need to sign up for an account. More detailed instructions for Leader can be found by clicking into the “Support” Section on the websites below.

OPTION 1

ZOOM – www.zoom.us – This is a very stable and easy to use application. There is a free version that limits meeting time to 40 minutes. Participants can immediately click to sign back in to the link to resume their meeting. While a little inconvenient, it has not really been a problem for those online groups that have used ZOOM this way.

For those who want to avoid the inconvenience. There is a paid version available that costs \$14.99 per month that can be cancelled at any time. It allows meeting sessions longer than the 90 minutes that our small groups typically meet.

OPTION 2

FREECONFERENCECALL.COM – www.freeconferencecall.com – This application as its name says is free. For some groups it has not been as stable as ZOOM, meaning there has been some difficulty for some participants to get signed in or to stay signed in. However, this platform appears to be meeting the needs of the online groups that are currently using it. One limitation is that only 5 participants can appear with images on the screen at the same time. All participants can be heard during the meeting, just not all can be seen at the same time. This is not an issue with ZOOM.

This option is primarily an audio conferencing service that has a video component. The leader needs to make sure the click on video when setting up the meeting.