Resources for Online Formation and Education

# Platforms for Gathering

* [Vimeo](https://vimeo.com/features/virtual-events?vcid=37949&utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=google&utm_campaign=ENT_Search_US_EN_Google_NonBrand_Conference_Exact&utm_term=digital%20education%20tool&utm_adgroup=98746765083&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI2I-wva-f6AIVTV8NCh2OPwFTEAAYASAAEgJ_dvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds): This platform can support full size events with online streaming
* [Zoom](https://zoom.us/)
	+ [Best Practices for Zoom Meetings](https://buildfaith.org/webinar-thursday-march-12th-best-practices-for-zoom-meetings/amp/?fbclid=IwAR23nB8jNWH3jaa9sUYKynR1uYmFkRyMZgWsNgk13ekpKb5fObUh0rVGZBE)
	+ [Click here](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/uJcpdu-sqDst9WBxB9Oddt3370PBhw1t5w) to see how VTS has instituted Digital Office Hours
* GSuite: Google’s cloud of collaborative apps
	+ [Free for Non-Profits](https://support.google.com/nonprofits/answer/3367223?hl=en)
* [WebEx](https://www.webex.com/)
	+ [Program Overview PDF](https://www.webex.com/content/dam/webex/eopi/Americas/USA/en_us/documents/pdf/TC/pdf-TC-Corporate-Overview.pdf)
	+ Use for [Online Training](https://www.webex.com/training-online.html)
* [Mind maps through Mind Meister](https://www.mindmeister.com/blog/effective-meetings-mind-maps/): For visually brainstorming and mapping out ideas
* [Nearpod](https://nearpod.com/how-it-works/): A Digital classroom experience, mainly used by teachers but an excellent resources for all educators

# Spiritual Reflections and Resources for Pastors, Churches, and Congregations

* Deanna Thompson:  [“I thought digital presence was a poor substitute for embodied presence. Then I got cancer.](https://faithandleadership.com/deanna-thompson-i-thought-digital-presence-was-poor-substitute-embodied-presence-then-i-got-cancer?utm_source=ni_newsletter&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=ni_feature)”
* [Social Media Strategy for churches in the time of COVID-19](https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/d/1WVk0XIykFA-YY3y1sepyEZNrhvYUSG2RQ1yaJk_-OU4/mobilebasic)
* [10 guidelines for pastoral care during the coronavirus outbreak](https://www.christiancentury.org/blog-post/guest-post/10-guidelines-pastoral-care-during-coronavirus-outbreak)
* [Best Practices for Church virtual communications](http://www.thediocese.net/news-and-events/covid-19-resources/best-practices-for-virtual-communications/)
* [Seventh-day Adventist Resources for Going Digital](https://www.sdadata.org/goingdigitalcovid19.html?fbclid=IwAR12nyxnCXmpfD8p_t7IIhIoqI23MgnrpUS6VYmVS78Vf7VAsLMxt4rv9N8)
* [Ten Tips for Folks New to Online Meetings](https://nextchurch.net/ten-tips-for-folks-new-to-online-meetings/?fbclid=IwAR3091QWJ_H1jYwbBLypgmLeWQXA98YOz2xpFbVqNZCFHyMo6WtMwWYyRN4)
* Calvin Institue of Christian Worship’s [COVID-19 and Worship: Resources for Churches Adapting to Social Isolation](https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/covid-19-and-worship-resources-for-churches-adapting-to-social-isolation?fbclid=IwAR3ZLDEStbItK7BRP5vxB6nWj4WCx_XHtyfZnFmGfr4RI1DS9BcDxWJI9nw#.XnKJ0UQ5qBY.facebook)
* Sarah Bessey’s [“Breath Prayers for Anxious Times: A Centering Practice”](https://sarahbessey.substack.com/p/breath-prayers-for-anxious-times)
* [10 guidelines for pastoral care during the coronavirus outbreak](https://www.christiancentury.org/blog-post/guest-post/10-guidelines-pastoral-care-during-coronavirus-outbreak)
* [The first rule of pastoring during an outbreak: Tell the truth](https://sojo.net/articles/first-rule-pastoring-during-outbreak-tell-truth)
* [Kara K. Root: The 20-second gift of washing your hands](https://faithandleadership.com/kara-k-root-20-second-gift-washing-your-hands)
* [Five Ways to be the Church when Church is Canceled](https://www.patheos.com/blogs/irreverin/2020/03/how-to-keep-being-church-when-church-is-canceled/?fbclid=IwAR0QyamX3-em5WLfgEMkUVvIs7VJ1T5GVdYiMoH1qhm34gaweOE0gF4YGLA)
* Ministry Architects’ [FIVE IDEAS FOR HOW TO SABBATH IN THE CHAOS](https://ministryarchitects.com/covid19/five-ideas-for-how-to-sabbath-in-the-chaos/)
* [‘Lockdown’](https://www.irishcentral.com/news/coronavirus-lockdown-poem) by Fr. Richard Hendrick
* Calvin Institute of Christian Worship’s [Resources for Holy Weeks](%E2%97%8B%09https%3A/worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/holy-week-resource-guide/?utm_source=ni_newsletter&utm_medium=programpromo&utm_campaign=faithleadership)
* Faith & Leadership’s [“How Should Christian Leaders Respond to a Pandemic?”](https://faithandleadership.com/how-should-christian-leaders-respond-pandemic?utm_source=ni_newsletter&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=ni_feature)
* [Church Apps for the Quarantined](https://www.cnet.com/news/religious-apps-to-help-you-go-to-church-while-socially-distancing/)
* Christianity Today’s ["20 Prayers to Pray During This Pandemic"](https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/march-web-only/covid-19-coronavirus-20-prayers-to-pray-during-pandemic.html)
* Faith & Leadership’s  [“Resources for Christian Leader’s During the Pandemic”](https://faithandleadership.com/resources-christian-leaders-during-coronavirus-pandemic)

# General Tips when leading a Gathering

* **Make it Distraction Free-** Have participants put cell phones away and rid of as many other distractions as possible. This helps everyone honor one another and the space.
* **Create a Sacred Space-** Consider having participants set up a space that is *set apart*. If this is supposed to be a time of spiritual connection, suggest that they move to a comfy chair if they normally do work at a desk. Or, they can set up their normal working space with special objects like a candle, an icon, a cross, etc.
* **Set Expectations-** You as the leader should set clear expectations of how this will work. Consider sending out an info sheet beforehand for people to read and be prepared. It’s okay to make changes to the expectations/guidelines for future meetings if something didn’t work like you thought it might.

**Some Prompts to Think about Expectations:**

Should video and microphones be on the whole time? (Video should be encouraged. Otherwise people don’t feel as accountable to stay focused. Microphones should be muted when they are not speaking.)

If someone wants to speak, how will they know it is their turn?

Is there a limit to how many times someone should talk or how long they should talk?

How will prayer work in this space? If it is open for everyone to talk, make sure all microphones are on. If one person is leading, make sure all other microphones are off. Maybe say “The Lord be with you” and have a communal response “And also with you” and then have everyone shut off their microphones.

Make the starting time very clear and begin even if everyone is not present. As people join late, greet them and make them feel welcome. Consider opening the space 10 minutes before the meeting time and sending out a reminder email at that time. Start taking roll 2 minutes before. This will honor everyone’s time.

* **Think about a Clear Opening and Closing**- Options for opening and closing the space are a poem, a prayer, music, silence, or a blessing/benediction. Instead of rushing into the content at the beginning or abruptly ending the meeting, this is a helpful way to be intentional.
* **Slow, Steady, and Clear-** Keep the pace of your online meeting a bit slower than in-person meetings. It can be harder to digest the info since there is not a formal office setting and there is not as much body language being used. Also, there may be lag in audio.

If you’re not sharing your screen and need to describe something remote participants can’t see, try to be extra descriptive.

* **Be kind to yourself.**  This transition is hard. This is all so new. You didn’t plan for this to happen and it won’t be a seamless transition. That is *okay*. *Surround* yourself with resources and encouragers. Do the best you can and learn one day at a time. The goal is not perfection, but connection. God is with you!