



Episcopal Charities

A Commitment to Caring

Creating Church Online: Guidelines for Safeguarding Church

In this brave, new world of online meetings for worship and fellowship there are some easy ways to maintain our Safeguarding Church policies and keep everyone safe. [This video from Lifelong Learning](#) at VTS gives some good basics of what to remember when hosting interactive meetings online.

Guidelines from the Video

- Maintain the “Rule of Three.” Make sure to never be alone in a chatroom with a parishioner, particularly a minor. Have your hosts (two unrelated, trained adults) log in a few minutes before the scheduled time.
- Don’t post links to meetings on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or other public places online. Send them in emails or texts. Don’t invite people you don’t know into a private space with youth and children.
- For meeting with anyone (adults and/or minors): the host can mute, turn off video, or remove participants from the call. We suggest, if possible, that whoever is spiritually leading the meeting is NOT set as the host, so they can focus on their ministry. Ask another trust leader to be the host of the meeting to run a ministry of boundaries.
- Be aware of what is open on your desktop, particularly if you’ll be sharing your screening.
- For Zoom meetings, go into your [settings](#) and make the following changes:
 - o Turn off “join before host”
 - o Turn off private chat
 - o Auto-save all chat history
 - o Turn off file transfer
 - o Turn off screen sharing for participants
 - o Turn off the whiteboard feature, or set it to auto-save if you’ll be using it in your meeting for a lesson or game
- Do not post screenshots of online meetings without the permission of everyone in the photo. If possible, remove names from the photo before posting. Do not share screenshots of minors without written permission from their guardian

Extra Measures with Youth:

- All online gathering links should also be shared with parents and guardians
- If a youth contacts you via email or text, do not delete the exchange
- Even with the permission to post photos of youth, do not tag them on social media
- Have two adults as administrators on all social media accounts
- Remember there may be people tuning in who are not as comfortable or familiar with your group. Be careful about inside jokes or statements that can be misconstrued if not understood in context

Live Streaming:

- When possible have an administrator monitor comments and delete inappropriate content if necessary.

As with any new ministry, there will be a time of adjustment as we learn more about how these things work and what best practices are. If you have any questions, additions, suggestions, or concerns, please contact [SK Doyle](#) or [Patrick Bergquist](#) in the Program Office at Episcopal Charities.

Adapted from "Creating Church Online," by The Very Rev. Katherine Doyle, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries for the Diocese of Kentucky