Guidelines for Using Virtual Meeting Technologies

The First Presidency letter dated September 11, 2020, "Safely Engaging in Church Meetings and Activities," outlines principles and details to help leaders adjust Church meetings and activities, whether in person or via technology. The following guidelines are provided to assist local units in making decisions about the use of technology for these meetings and activities.

- **Assign one or more assistant technology specialists for each unit** and ensure they have adequate training and support. If ward technology specialists are called, they may be recorded in Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR) as a stake assistant technology specialist. This would provide access to broadcast systems in meetinghouses that are equipped with such systems.
- **Ensure that technology does not become a distraction.** For sacrament meetings, a one-way streaming solution will avoid inadvertent interruptions caused by those participating using technology. For second-hour meetings, an interactive, two-way solution will support effective teaching.
- **Choose technology that will be easy for remote participants to use.** Care should be taken to avoid choices, whenever possible, that would exclude someone from worshiping due to resource constraints or technology complexities.
- **Preserve flexibility by avoiding significant equipment purchases and permanent meetinghouse modifications.** This can be done by focusing on simple solutions that can adapt as needs, policies, conditions, and technologies evolve.

Additional detail on selecting and utilizing technology can be found below and on the Church's technology forum https://tech.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/forum. This forum will be used to share ideas and provide current best practices.

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September 17, 2020

Wards and branches will generally have two types of meetings: non-interactive and interactive. Non-interactive events, or broadcasts, allow members to view or listen remotely, but participation by speaking or asking questions is limited to those physically gathered. Sacrament meetings and similar meetings are typically non-interactive events.

Class and quorum meetings are typically interactive events, allowing teachers and all learners to contribute thoughts and ideas. Although not required, these meetings may work best when everyone participates using technology instead of a format where a portion of a class gathers at a single location and the remainder participate using technology. Due to limited resources in meetinghouses, all participants, including teachers, may participate in these meetings from their homes.

Selecting appropriate hardware and meeting platforms, along with proper setup and preparation for each type of meeting, will help ensure a good experience for members and leaders.

Hardware

Under the direction of area leadership, members may volunteer the use of personal technology and areas may allow stakes and districts to use member-owned technology to avoid purchasing laptops, high-end cameras, and other expensive technology. For events, including sacrament meetings, a member's mobile device can originate the broadcast. All of the meeting platforms described below, including the Church's Webcast platform, support a mobile phone as the source of the event. Using a mobile phone mounted on a tripod or microphone boom near the podium and directly connected to the building's audio system can provide a high-quality viewing experience.

Meeting Platforms

There are multiple meeting platforms available for non-interactive and interactive events. Local units are encouraged to use whatever platform is most familiar in their area. Several of these platforms help minimize the risk of accidental or intentional meeting interruptions by those participating remotely. These are best suited for non-interactive events such as sacrament meetings and similar meetings. These platforms include:

Webcast is a Church-provided platform that offers an easy-to-view experience for members. Webcast uses technology similar to that used for general conference and can accommodate many viewers. Free software is available in the market to allow a member's mobile phone to originate the Webcast.

YouTube Live is free and offers a familiar experience that will likely be available on members' phones, TVs, and devices. YouTube Live events should be

unpublished and deleted after the meeting. In some areas of the world, live streams have restrictions on showing youth. Care should be taken to abide by all terms of use. Members who have configured YouTube's Restricted Mode to limit content available in their homes will need to temporarily disable this restriction to view YouTube Live events.

Facebook Live is also free and familiar. Members can view events without having Facebook accounts. Viewers will have the ability to comment during the meeting. Encouraging viewers not to use this capability beforehand will limit distractions to others. With this option, leaders are encouraged to announce that this broadcast is for the benefit of ward members and interested friends of the broadcasting ward.

There are many options for interactive events. In most cases these meetings can be supported by free options that have time and participant limits. Two of these platforms well suited for interactive events include:

Zoom is a generally familiar platform well-suited for interactive meetings. The free version has a 40-minute meeting time limit and would be adequate for meetings of 40 minutes or less. To comply with Zoom licensing, paid Zoom accounts should not be shared by multiple individuals.

Google Meet is free and is used by many schools, providing a familiar use experience for youth participants. It is well-suited for interactive meetings.

Other options are available for non-interactive and interactive events. When considering among all available, reputable options pay attention to how familiar they are to members, simplicity, restrictions, and cost.

Testing, Setup, and Preparation

Thorough testing and preparation will greatly improve the quality of experience for remote viewers. These details will be most consistently managed if there is at least one trained assistant technology specialist assigned to each unit. They will typically focus on supporting sacrament meetings, but also can be a resource to teachers and learners who will use technology for second-hour meetings. The Church's technology forum at https://tech.churchofjesuschrist.org/forum will serve as a resource to Assistant Technology Specialists and Stake Technology Specialists, providing a place to ask questions, share ideas, and get additional details on recommended solutions.