

## **Anglican Diocese of Calgary Guidance for Online Annual Meetings of Parishioners**

This document provides general guidance on how parishes might conduct online Annual Meetings of Parishioners (AMP) during the Covid-19 pandemic. As parishes differ from 1 another, no 1 solution will ideal for all parishes. As such, this document provides information. AMP organizers must think about their parish's requirements and find the best solution for their parish.

1. Canon 13, sections 45 to 54 set out the requirements for AMPs and this document does not summarize all these requirement. AMP organizers should review the canon.
2. Canon 13, section 54 specifies that votes at an AMP will be determined by the majority of parishioners "present" at the AMP. As such, a parishioner must participate in the online AMP in order for his or her vote to count.

### **Online conference service**

3. Parishes can use a variety of online conference services ("OCS") to hold online meetings. Zoom is likely the most widely used. However, parishes may use other OCS provided that the service is easy to access and does not require parishioners to pay a fee.
4. AMP organizers should ensure that they chose an appropriate OCS and appropriate account with that OCS to suit parish needs.
  - Maximum meeting duration – some OCS accounts restrict meetings to a certain duration; for instance, a Zoom Basic account will only allow 40 minute meetings.
  - Maximum participants – Zoom Basic and Zoom Pro account will allow up to 100 participants.
  - Voting feature – some OCS will include voting of polling features; Zoom Pro includes a polling feature. Use of this type of feature presents other concerns, discussed in paragraph 9 below.
  - Participant admission by host – it is recommended that AMP organizer chose an OCSs that allows a host to either permit or decline entry of each individual.

### **Parishioners without Devices or Internet**

5. Some parishioners will not have a device (computer, tablet or smart phone). If the parishioner cannot borrow a device, he or she could be accommodated as follows:
  - joining with another parishioner who has a device (eg. spouse or cohort member);
  - calling into the conference by telephone; or

- attending, along with a small number of other parishioners (below current AHS and diocesan guidelines for gathering sizes), at the church building or other location.
6. If a voting feature is used and parishioners are attending through 1 of the methods set out in paragraph 5, voting accommodations will need to be made as discussed in paragraph 9 and clear instructions must be communicated to accommodated parishioners.

## **Voting**

7. AMP organizers should consider if any votes will be contentious and how best to handle them. AMP organizers should enlist 2 independent people (ie. not someone seeking or related to someone seeking a parish office and ideally not someone who is currently holding a parish office) to be scrutineers. Arrangements should be made so that the chairperson can confidentially consult with scrutineers (text messages? telephone call? breakout room?) before announcing the results of each vote.
8. Raised hands — votes can be conducted by scanning raised hands. This method is likely best if the AMP will not have any contentious votes. If this method is used, the chairperson should:
- Plan to include votes of accommodated parishioners in vote count
  - At the time of the vote, make clear requests to voters to keep their hands raised until the chairperson and scrutineers have had time to observe all votes
  - After observing votes in favour, ask for and observe votes in the negative.
9. Voting feature — As mentioned above, some OCS have a voting or polling feature. This is likely the best way to handle any contentious votes. However, these features will likely only count 1 vote per device. So, for instance, a husband and wife would need to join the online AMP on separate devices in order to have both votes count through the voting feature. Votes of parishioners who do not have devices could be received by:
- OCS chat message (in order that the chairperson and scrutineers can see it, this would likely need to be a public chat message)
  - A text message to the chairperson and scrutineers or
  - Verbally within the conference.

Once voting is completed and if the chosen OCS allows, the results of the poll should be shared to all conference participants through the conference feature. Any changes in the official result, because of accommodated voters, should be explained as best as possible without drawing unnecessary attention to the voting preference of the accommodated parishioners.

10. Mail-in voting — This method may be used if contentious votes are anticipated and a parish does not wish to use a voting feature. Such a process must be planned far in advance of the AMP.

**Notice of AMP**

11. In order to hold an online meeting that meets the requirements of the canon, a parish should provide written notice of the AMP at least 10 days (including 2 Sundays) before the day of the meeting. The written notice should follow the form required by Canon 13, section 50 modified to give notice of an online AMP:

NOTICE is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of Parishioners will be held online on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock \_\_\_\_, at which time all baptized persons regularly attending Services of worship in this Parish and receiving communion or otherwise regularly receiving the administrations of the clergy of this Parish are entitled to attend. In order to attend the online meeting, parishioners must complete the following declaration and sending the declaration below to [parish contact] at [email address] by [deadline]. Once a parishioner is pre-registered, login details will be provided.

If you wish to attend the meeting, but do not have a device that would allow you to join an online conference, please contacted [parish contact] at [phone number].

DATED this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20 \_\_\_\_

Signature of Incumbent or Wardens:

\_\_\_\_\_

Posting notice on the church premises or in Sunday bulletins is likely not an effective means of notice during the Covid pandemic. AMP organizers should provide notice by email to all parishioners who have email and through other means (mail? delivery?) to parishioners who do not. Notice can also be made by posting it on the parish website and including a notice in weekly emails to parishioners.

12. In addition to the written notice discussed above, Canon 13, section 49 requires that notice of the AMP be given at Sunday worship on the 2 Sundays preceding the AMP. If online services are being conducted or pre-recorded, then notice of the AMP should be given verbally at the online services during those 2 Sundays.

13. As referred to in the above draft notice, Canon 13, section 52 requires a parishioner to make a declaration. It is highly recommended that AMP organizers require parishioners to

complete this declaration as part of pre-registration and before they receive the login link. There is no practical alternative to obtain the declarations on the day of the AMP.

### **Conference Hosting and Recording Secretary**

14. The individual or individuals who control an online conference are called, by most OCS, the 'host'. It is highly recommended that the person chairing the AMP is not the host. It is recommended that, during them AMP, the host and the chairperson are at the same location.
15. While the chairperson will complete the duties normally performed by a chairperson, the host will:
  - Allow participants to join the online conference (further discussion below)
  - Commence recording of the conference call (further discussion below)
  - Share on-screen documents, if any, with conference participants (eg. agenda, budget, nomination slate)
  - If a voting feature is being used, initiate the voting or polling and provide the results
  - Create any breakout rooms.
16. As with in-person AMPs, a recording secretary should be appointed at the outset of an online AMP to take the minutes of the meeting. It is recommended that the person appointed is not also the chairperson, the host or a scrutineer.

### **Attendance**

17. Attendance is important for an AMP, as it will determine whether there is quorum (Canon 19, section 54) and to ensure that only eligible parishioners are able to vote. It may take some time to take attendance; everyone should be prepared to wait for half an hour or more, while this is done.
18. As mentioned above, the host should ensure that attendance is taken. If only those people admitted by the host can join the conference and if AMP organizers have required parishioners to pre-register for the online AMP, the host can easily take attendance by only permitting pre-registered parishioners in as participants and checking their names off a list of pre-registered parishioners as they are admitted.
19. If the AMP online conference is set up to allow anyone with the conference link to join, before the AMP the host should likely enlist the help of 1 or 2 people to help take attendance (scrutineers could fill this role), by scanning through the list of participants (most OCS will have a list of participants, available for all to see) and checking names off a list of pre-registered parishioners or a parish list.
20. AMP organizers should make plans in advance to take attendance of accommodated parishioners (discussed in paragraph 5).

## **Recording of the Conference**

21. Most OCS will allow the host to record a conference. The recording can assist the recording secretary in creating minutes and may help resolve other problems.
22. There are privacy concerns regarding creating a record. Every step should be taken to maintain the confidentiality after the AMP. If AMP organizers intend to record the conference, announcements should be included in both the notice of the AMP and at the beginning of the AMP that i) the conference will be recorded, ii) that the recording will be kept confidentially and iii) who will have control of the recording and how long before he or she will delete it. If AMP organizers anticipate that a recording will cause concern among parishioners, they can: i) forego recording it or ii) hold a vote on whether it will be recorded.
23. Once attendance is finalized and just before the AMP is called to order, the host could begin the recording of the conference.

## **Practice Online Conferences**

24. AMP organizers should consider holding 1 or more practice online conferences, so that parishioners unfamiliar with the chosen OCS can practice joining and participating in a conference before the AMP.

For further guidance, please contact Diocese Office at [diocese@calgary.anglican.ca](mailto:diocese@calgary.anglican.ca).

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