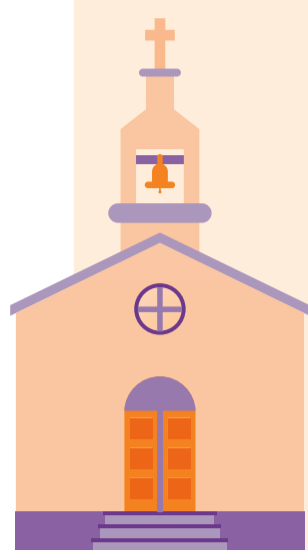


JUSTICE AND EQUITY IN THE ERA OF ZOOM



*But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an everflowing stream.*

AMOS 5:24 (NRSV)



When the world was rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic, all facets of our lives were suddenly forced online – the ways we communicate and connect, the ways we learn and work, the ways we worship and minister. Churches, many for the first time, began holding services, meetings, and events online.

As we step into a future of ministry that will continue to include virtual gatherings, it is essential we hold to the commitment of bringing forth God's justice and righteousness, even as our modes of ministry change and evolve.



The prophet Amos reminds us we are called to **prioritize justice, equity, and righteousness**, that God's Beloved Community is present now and forever.

TIPS FOR GREATER JUSTICE AND EQUITY IN ONLINE ENGAGEMENT



While it is important to offer grace to ourselves and others as we learn how to live into God's preferred future, here are some tips on how your virtual gathering can move towards greater justice and equity.



JOSEPH



RENAMING ... As your gatherings begin, **give participants the opportunity to share who they are and how they prefer to be called** (example: *Joseph vs. Joe*) by renaming themselves. Get permission in offering to rename them as the host of the call. Encourage participants to include their pronouns.

TO MUTE OR NOT TO MUTE ... Be intentional about asking people to stay muted or unmuted. The voices of Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, and other marginalized groups are often silenced while those with privileged identities are permitted to dominate a conversation. Such disparities of voice may be exacerbated when persons with more privileged identities feel empowered to stay unmuted and speak at any time, while persons with more marginalized identities stay muted while seeking ways to fit into the conversation.



THESE DISPARITIES CAN BE MITIGATED BY ASKING EVERYONE TO MUTE THEMSELVES WHEN NOT SPEAKING SO ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE MINDFUL OF EACH OTHER.



INVITING OTHERS ... Mutual invitation (having each person invite the next person to speak after they finish) can be a very helpful facilitation tool, especially on Zoom. However, it risks people feeling excluded if they are routinely invited last. So if you want participants to invite each other, set a standard for inviting the next person by choosing persons based on their location on the Zoom screen (example: *Next, I'll invite Nica because she is to my right on my screen*).

AS HOST, YOU CAN ALSO INVITE EACH PERSON, CLEARLY STATING YOU ARE FOLLOWING THE ORDER OF FACES AS THEY APPEAR ON YOUR SCREEN.

For any gathering, the goal is for everyone to feel welcome and empowered to participate fully in the amazing ministries your church and community have to offer. Everyone brings their own stories to the online table. Continue to ask yourself: *How could a person's marginalized or privileged identity be showing up in this space? How can I help mitigate its negative impact?*

Some aspects of online worship, study, and meeting are here to stay. So as our technology moves ahead, we must ensure that equity and justice are priorities for every gathering!

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