

VC = Victoria Cross or Video Conferencing?

(Top tips for how to use technology in the world of lockdown)

In the world of the coronavirus most of us are having to get used to lots of time trying to talk to people online. Some of us may already be very familiar with things like zoom, webex and skype. However, for those who are finding this all new and tiring here are some tips ...

- **Mute your microphone when you are not speaking.** There is normally the symbol of a microphone that when you click it, it has a line through it. This is to stop feedback and other people hearing noises from where you are. Then click to 'unmute' when you are ready to speak. (Do not confuse this with the loudspeaker symbol which must be 'on' if you are to hear anything.)
- **Indicate before you speak.** The best way is to raise your hand (either literally or by pressing a button). The larger the group the more important this is. Large groups need a 'host' who will chair the meeting and ask people to speak. This reduces people talking over each other.
- **Be careful with security.** Zoom has had incidences with complete strangers 'crashing' the call, even sharing obscene material. This means that the 'host' needs to watch the 'waiting room' carefully and only let people into the meeting that they know.
- **Expect to find video calls tiring.** The screen freezes. You can't hear what someone said. People talk over each other. You can't pick up on non-verbal cues very easily. All of this adds to anxiety and wears us out. It's okay to limit the number of video calls a day (including church ones). If it is a meeting in which you are more listening than speaking then it is okay to switch off your video sometimes. Just listening is less demanding.
- **If you are using two devices remember to mute the device you are watching on.** Some people use two devices (e.g. watch the video on their laptop but speak on their 'phone). If you ever do that make sure the device you are not speaking into has the microphone muted all the time – to stop feedback. (Livestreaming makes this even more complicated – on Sunday John remembered to 'mute' his second device but forgot that his computer, which he was speaking into, needed to be muted too, since there was a delay of a few seconds.) Most people don't need to worry about this though.