GOOGLE HANGOUTS – AN ONLINE MEETING TOOL

The 2020 COVID-19 health crisis has meant that a lot of things that didn't seem possible just a few months ago are now reality. Among those is the cancellation of all events, including Friends meetings, in state parks and forests through at least the end of April.
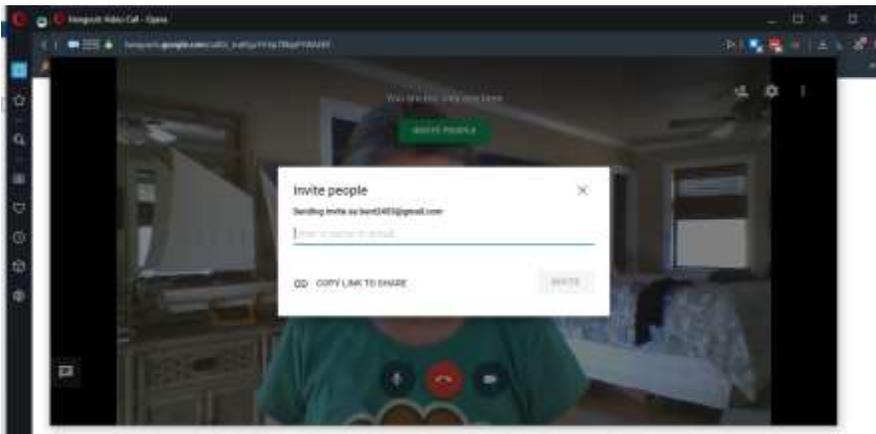
While our by-laws don't generally allow for online meetings, in circumstances such as this we need a bit of flexibility. Thus, the idea for meeting via Google Hangouts. Conference calls are certainly available as well but we discovered that Hangouts provides a good quality connection. It does require a computer or mobile device.

To set up a Google Hangout, someone in your group needs to have a Gmail account. Nearly everyone does but if you do not, you can establish one for the chapter (e.g., friendsofmypark@gmail.com).

Got to https://hangouts.google.com and log in with that account.

The first time you click in, you'll get several screens of intro stuff. Read it or skip it!

Click video call and, after allowing Hangouts to access your screen, speakers, and microphone, you'll get a screen to invite people to participate in the call.
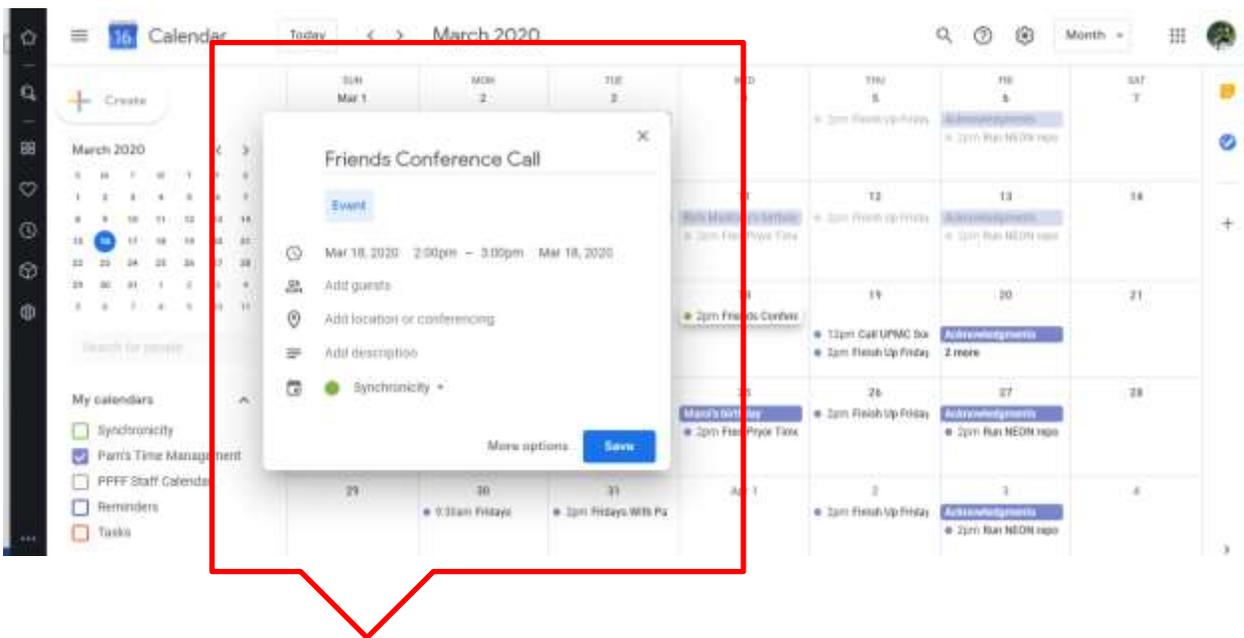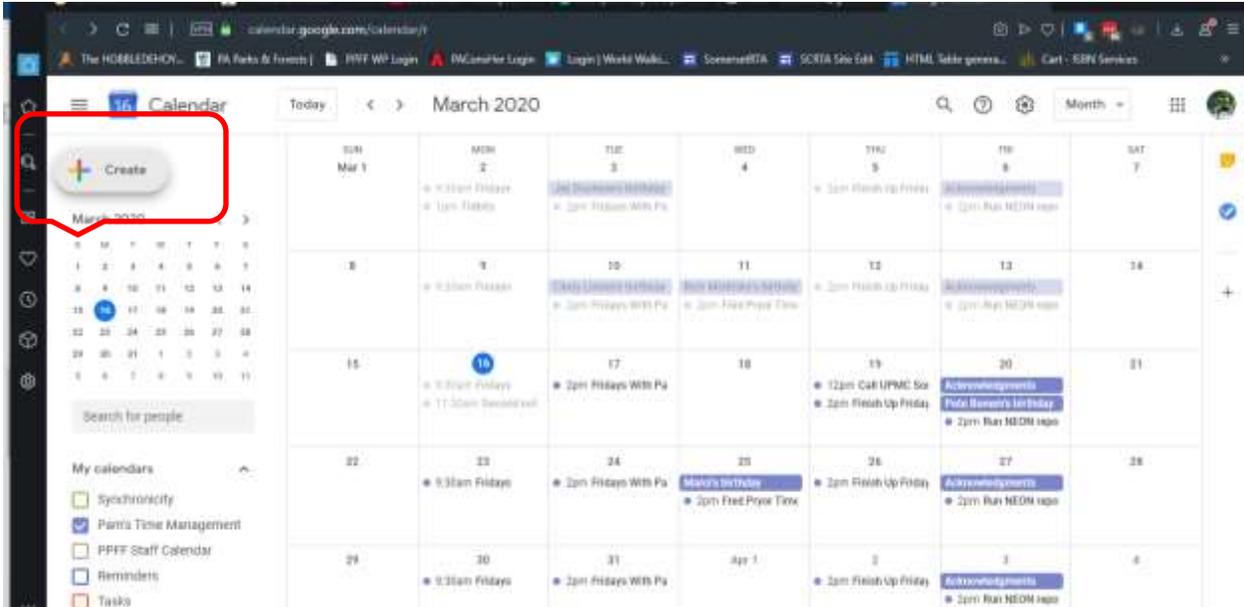

Google supposedly will send an email invitation to people to join if you use the "Invite People" space but I didn't have any success with that. Instead, I would suggest you use "Copy Link" and email it directly to the people you want to include.
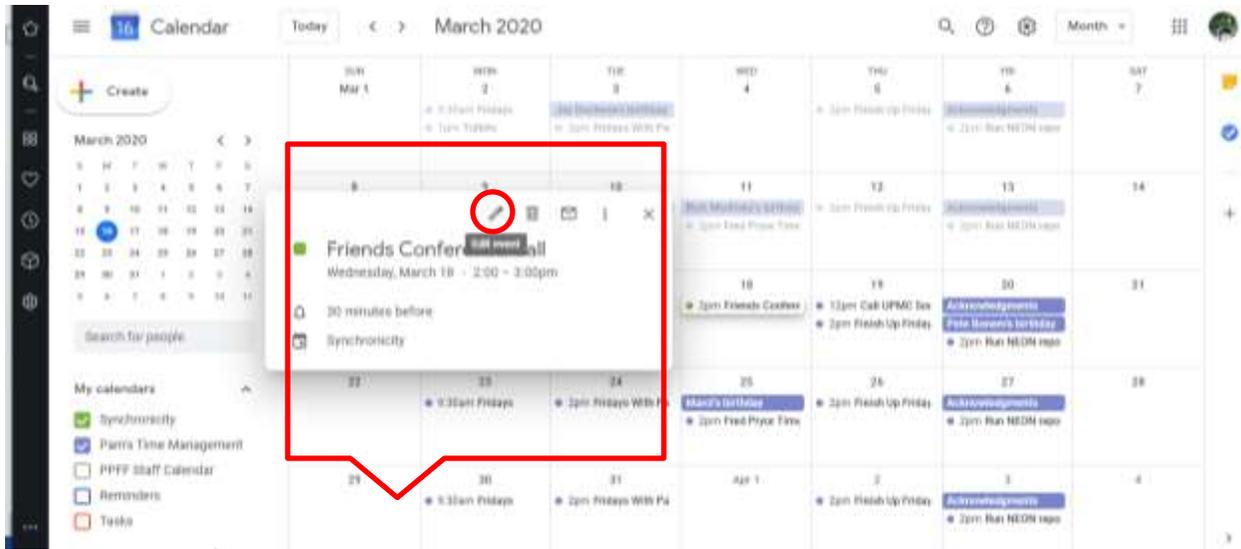
Obviously this method works best when you arrange ahead of time for people to be ready to join!

You can also schedule the Hangout to take place using Hangouts and Google Calendar. Since your free Gmail account comes with access to a calendar (let me know if you want help using it), you can put a meeting on your calendar and then invite people from there.
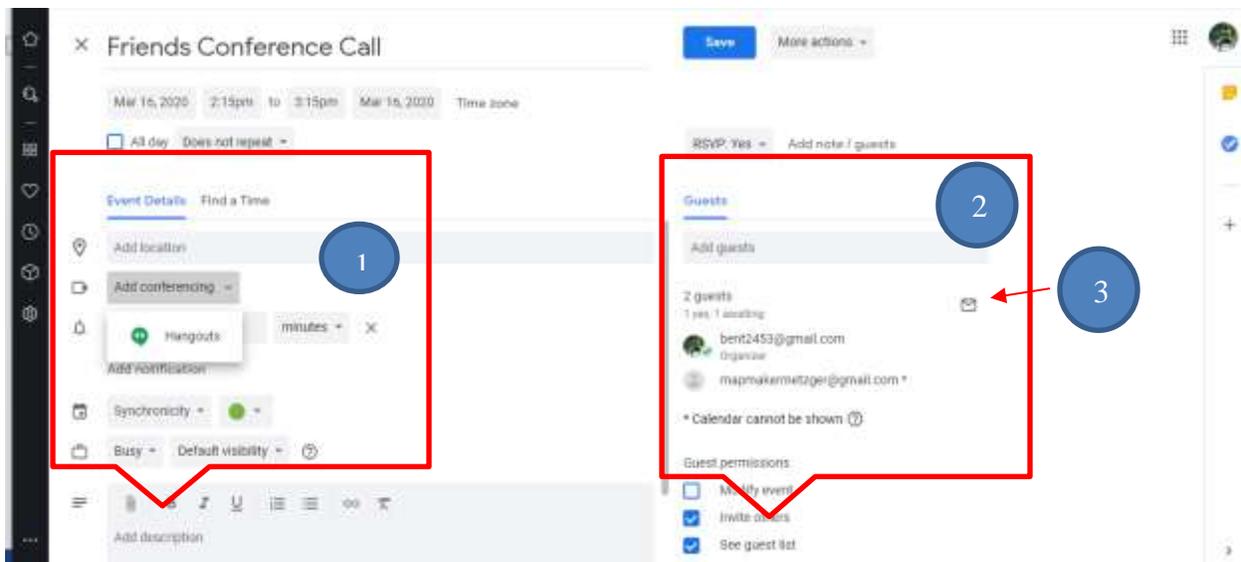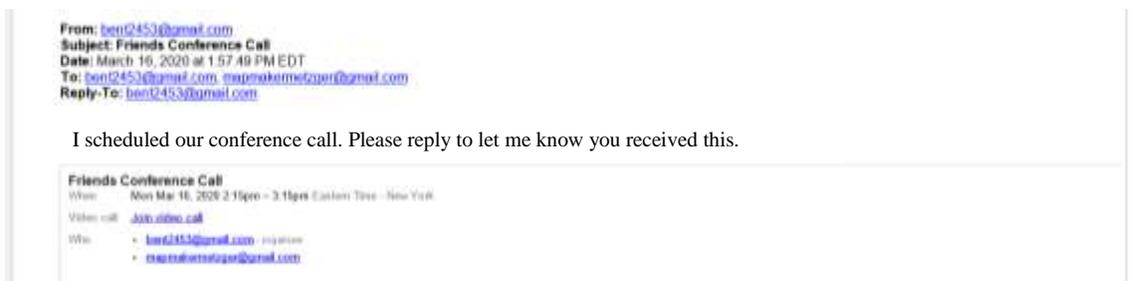
First, "Create" an event.

Once the event is created and saved, click on it to Edit (the little pencil icon):

At the "Add Conferencing" dropdown on the left, you'll see Hangouts. Click it. Then click to the right to "Add Guests" to the call with their email addresses. Finally, click the little email envelope to send them an invitation. Include a message if you like.

They SHOULD receive an email like this one:

At the appointed time, everyone clicks the link to join the call. Google Hangouts is available through the Google Play store for Android mobile devices. I can't help you with iPhones!