

Clerking business meetings online (using Zoom)

Before the meeting

Aim to have a Friend acting as facilitator (technical help for Friends), and an elder. Some clerks like to take on the role of *host*. If several clerks, then *co-hosting* is possible. Hosts have access to useful tools.

Schedule the date and time of the meeting and invite all those who should be invited.

Have ready all previously circulated documents, and be prepared to show them again during the meeting via 'share screen'. This includes the draft agenda.

The lead-up to the start of the meeting

Recommend that Friends arrive up to 10 minutes before the advertised start. This is a good time to welcome Friends, check with each one that their video and mic are working. Either invite each Friend to greet the meeting, either by the mic or the chat function (if the meeting is a small one) or offer a general welcome if there is a large number present.

Learning to function together in an online MfW for business

An online sheet (document) explaining the procedures for muting/unmuting the mic, how the meeting will be steered. Friends must expect more silences than usual when conducting business online. It is often more comfortable if all Friends mute their mic apart from when they wish to speak to the meeting, through the clerk. Friends can signal a wish to make spoken contributions by raising their hand visible to their camera and waiting to be called. The clerk(s) may wish to have frequent brief stretch breaks as sitting concentrating in front of a screen is very tiring.

Clerks should be mindful of those with partial sight or technical IT difficulties. Good to read aloud as well any advice or text that is appearing on screen. Some Friends may be joining the meeting by phone, so will not see *chat* messages either.

Clerks (or whoever is responsible for the muting/unmuting of mics) will frequently need to remind Friends to unmute when speaking, and to mute again afterwards. Other than in small meetings it is usually more comfortable for all Friends to be muted – *hosts* have that override function available.

Launching the meeting

Ask Friends to approve the agenda, then settle into initial period of worship. From then on the conduct of the meeting is no different from face to face meetings, however ...

Clerks should make it clear when they have moved into drafting a minute (as distinct from jotting down notes). It is good practice to name the stages of the item ('ready for further contributions'; 'we are now drafting a minute', etc). This might be otherwise unclear to Friends watching their screens.

Some clerks like their draft minutes to be visible onscreen, including when the meeting is offering advice for modification. Others find it distracting and that Friends focus too much on the surface level act of watching the typing rather than listening to the content.

Clerks will not find it easy to consult quietly together 'at the table' during the meeting. They may wish to resort to messaging each other away from the online platform if such conversations are essential. This function might be extended to the elder(s).

Meetings must decide how much/little to use the *chat* function. It does not disturb the audible parts of the meeting but not everyone wants to keep an eye on it, preferring to focus fully on how the Spirit is leading the meeting in other ways. It can be a distraction.

Ending the meeting

Woodbrooke has a picture of two people shaking hands; otherwise the clerks can audibly thank people and declare the meeting to be concluded. Signing the minutes at the close may no longer be appropriate although a signed hard copy will be needed for the archives.

Clerks can ask for notices to be given, as usual. Sometimes Friends want to chat informally to everyone after the close of the business, but while the scheduled meeting is still open.

