**Simple guide for online children’s meeting for worship**

Quaker Life and Woodbrooke have produced a guide to online worship here: [https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/Online-worship-advice](about:blank)​​. Here there is a helpful YouTube video guide to using zoom which could be shared with parents before your meeting. Be aware of the afeguarding guidance that follows.

**Before**

1. Send emails with the time of the meeting and the zoom link to parents. This should only be shared with the people who would ordinarily come to children’s meeting so all know who is on screen. An example of this is included on page 2.
2. State how long the meeting will last – half an hour is probably a good length of time for children.
3. Share with people what you will be doing in the meeting so people can come knowing what to expect. This is particularly helpful as meeting online is yet another thing out of the ordinary for children already faced with a lot of change.
4. *Journeys in the Spirit*, resource material for using with children in a Quaker context, has ideas that can be adjusted to suit online children’s meeting: [www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren](about:blank).
5. Have some ground rules/boundaries to send out in advance and then agree in meeting.

**Event**

1. Set up zoom meeting, host and co-host(s) to be in place before advertised start.
2. Consider using the breakout rooms feature of Zoom to enable Children's Meeting to take place in parallel, with some time joined and some time separate.
3. Welcome families as they arrive. Suggest microphones off for everybody unless they wish to say something.
4. Introduce hosts – these should be people the children are familiar with and who are used to running children’s meeting.
5. Check people’s knowledge of zoom and advise if necessary.
6. Agree simple boundaries, asking the children what they might need to happen for everyone to be able to join in.
7. Invite children to join with some sharing time. Invite everyone say their name and something they have done this week that they do not usually do.
8. Proceed with your prepared children’s meeting for worship. This should be familiar enough for the children to feel comfortable but something that works online, maybe sharing a story or colouring pictures together with a discussion. An example of a children’s meeting for worship is included on page 2.
9. Finish with some worship or rejoin the main meeting zoom if it is happening at the same time

**After**

1. Facilitators/hosts of zoom stay online or meet afterwards to debrief. For yourself reflect on how the session went. Did the children participate well? Are there things you might have done differently? Is it worth discussing these things with other volunteers and at Children’s Committee?
2. Remember to deal with any safeguarding issues as normal.
3. Email a blind copy thank you to participants with details of your next meeting.
4. Be kind to yourself. Use zoom to the best of your abilities. This will develop over time. Don’t expect yourself or others to be an instant expert!

**An example email to send to parents** *(with thanks to Leeds Carlton Hill Meeting)*

Dear Friends,

As XXXXX Meeting House is closed due to coronavirus, we are trying out a new way of holding children’s meeting this week and will be doing this by zoom.

We intend to follow a similar pattern to our normal children’s meeting, with sharing news,  having some quiet, reading some stories, maybe we could do some drawing independently /or have a discussion and then share our drawings, before finishing and maybe  you and your children can then join in the other zoom worship that has been organised for the whole meeting.

This week the theme will be on…..

If you would like to join this children's meeting, click on the link below after 10:40, ready to start at 10:45. If you are not yet familiar with zoom, just follow the instructions that follow.

Also read Zoom privacy policy before joining the meeting. The link for this is [https://zoom.us/privacy](about:blank)

By clicking on the link you are giving permission for your child/children to take part in this online meet up.

Please if you have any questions, contact: xxxxxx

**An example on line children’s meeting** *(with thanks to Edinburgh Central Meeting)*

**11.00** Sign into meeting for worship for the first 10 minutes. Move to a break out room where we will unmute ourselves. Acknowledge that this is a very new way of working (for most of us) and a bit experimental.

**11.15** Introductions so that we know who is joining us today. Ask everyone to say their name and something they have done this week that they do not usually do.

**11.25** We are now going to listen to a story about Augustus the tiger.

Well Augustus found lots of things didn’t he. I wonder what we can find this morning around the house or even the garden. We are going to do a scavenger hunt. I have a list of some things I want you to go and find.

**11.35** Go through these one at a time, wait until they all return and have time to share before sharing the next.

1. Go and find something that makes you happy.
2. Something that smells nice.
3. Something red.
4. Something shiny.
5. Something that makes you want to sing.
6. Your favourite book.
7. Something useful.
8. What do you take to bed with you at night that gives you comfort?

**11.55**. Would you like to go back into meeting? We can show everyone else our treasures after notices if you would like.

**12.00**. Re-join the main meeting by pressing the re-join button.

**Some safeguarding guidance**

**Video conferencing with under 18’s**

*Used with adaptations with the kind permission of Simon Hill, Youth Officer Diocese of Worcester, Church of England (*[*https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tsAT3h53bm9hfkmz6HoDrtrJT78RbNGz/view*](about:blank)

*accessed on 24/03/2020 at 16:27).*

There are times that you may want to consider virtual meetings with your children’s or teenage meeting, with your youth group or as an all age meeting.

Here is some advice on how to do this safely.

* You should not use Skype / Facetime – these are social media tools and as such share contact details with all users, you may inadvertently connect under 18’s up with other people as an unintended consequence.
* Instead use a video conferencing platform such as Zoom: [https://zoom.us/](about:blank) this is free to use but may have a limited chat time or a paid for account allows you to host longer sessions.

Please note the following **data protection** points in relation to **Zoom**:

* Bear in mind that Zoom keeps and accesses data from any recordings, whiteboards, chat data etc – so no sensitive data should be uploaded, discussed in chats, or recorded using Zoom.
* Link to the Zoom privacy policy whenever you send meeting invites to participants, and ask them to read before joining the meeting (for Friends and any other external visitors). The link is [https://zoom.us/privacy](about:blank)
* Do not set up an account using Google or Facebook logins.
* If hosting a meeting, try to minimise data collection through cookies opt-out in privacy settings.

**Permission**

Use of this may be beyond the normal running of your meeting or group and therefore needs explicit permission before use.

* **You must have approval of the body that oversees your group,** for example the Trustee body– speak to them to discuss and minute that this is happening – this does not need to be a complicated process.
* **You need parental consent** – set up an email which explains what you are doing, the date and time of the video conference session, who is hosting and which other adults will be there and an idea of what you will be doing. Ask for a reply as a form of consent and keep these emails in a separate folder. You might ask for consent for all future online sessions.
* **Use parents/carers email address** to send the meeting invite to, this ensures parents/carers are aware that it is happening and can set up their children or young people to access the session appropriately with any oversight if they want.

**Recruitment and safeguarding**

* ‘Normal’ rules should apply regarding to recruitment and safeguarding process[[1]](#endnote-1) – i.e. you need at least 2[[2]](#endnote-2) safely recruited adults for a children’s or teenage meeting who would normally have ‘real time’ contact with this group.
* Make sure both adults are “live” before participants arrive.
* If new members want to join the group, they should have ‘normal’ group consent forms filled in as well.
* If you are recruiting new adults to run these meetings, then your Area Meeting’s Safeguarding Recruitment process must be followed before they can participate[[3]](#endnote-3).
* Codes of conduct – appropriate behaviour for adults should be followed as you would expect in the usual children’s or teenage meeting or youth group setting, it might be worth a discussion together before the meeting happens.

**Inclusion**

* As always, be inclusive – are there any children or young people who may struggle to participate in this way, what extra support can be put in place for them?
* As well as the video interface, there is usually space to write or draw responses on the chat function or on screen share, this can help all be included.
* Be aware of and sensitive to technical difficulties. There can be issues with speakers and microphones and cameras. Use the software before the session to try and sort out any difficulties.

**Do not record**

Most video conferencing software allow for sessions to be recorded – this is an option for the host of the meeting only. Avoid doing this, as you would need separate permission for data capture and there are all sorts of issues around storage and GDPR. No pictures that could identify children should be taken. You should also ask participants to refrain from taking screenshots.

**Further Guidance**

Quaker Life and Woodbrooke have produced a guide to online worship here: [https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/Online-worship-advice](about:blank)​​.

BYM Safeguarding advice [www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/safeguarding](about:blank)

1. You should follow the safeguarding process as set out by your Area Meeting. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. In these extraordinary times you should consider having at least one additional person available at this time, should one team member be prevented due to illness or caring responsibilities. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Safely recruited refers to the ‘safer recruitment’ process, which involves an application, references and interview for volunteers. If this is not yet in place in your Area Meeting you may wish to consider this going forward. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)