Hosting a Zoom Meeting/Act of Worship/Bible Study

Simple Advice from Jim Lyon

Our goal was to have a meeting which had significant content and also a sense of coming together as a fellowship. I used Zoom because others were doing the same thing and the licensed modelling involved a very low financial commitment for the requirements I envisaged.

My general approach has been to put the structured part of our meeting into a Powerpoint which I can use in Slideshow mode via Screenshare.

All readings and song video are included in that Powerpoint, but the message and link pieces have been live.

The first week I did this I found songs on Youtube and then downloaded them using a free tool (4k Video Downloader). This eliminates the risk of adverts etc if Youtube pops up life and other risks associated with using on line material live.

I have attached the Powerpoint from our first service (**not included here**). The songs/hymns are on slides 2 and 13. After inserting a song video onto the slide, I changed the animation for the video item to Start 'with Previous' so that the video starts immediately I page down to that slide.

I started with everyone unmuted and people said hello to each other as others joined and there were a few side conversations. The person currently speaking usually pops up. When I started the meeting 'proper' I muted everyone apart from myself. (On Windows, the Zoom Shortcut **Alt-M** is really handy to mute and unmute participants other than the host.) I left everyone muted through the song, reading and message. On the first week my wife did the reading sitting with me to keep things simple. I learned that I should also mute myself during the singing so people just hear the recording. (**Alt-A** mutes and unmutes yourself). Communal singing doesn't work because of timing delays through the infrastructure.

For the message, I stopped the screen share so I was in view talking to people.

When we came to the prayers I resumed screenshare and unmuted everyone so we could here each other say Amen, where precise synchronisation is not an issue.

I then muted everyone again until the end of the service. For The Grace, I ended the screen share but left everyone muted. This allowed people to have a sense of saying The Grace to one another as they could see each other on the screen.

The 2nd service I tried to make a bit more home produced, so my wife and I sang and videoed one of the songs and our son who lives in York and is a very good musician and well known in the chapel, videoed the other. I then added the lyrics using a video editor (Shotcut). I was pretty familiar with the tool already although I had not previously added text so a bit of a learning curve. I also asked someone else to do the reading. This worked fine, but I had to individually unmute them and remute them. I made the mistake of trying to get ahead of myself and doing this as the song video was finishing, which took the focus from the Powerpoint and paused the song. **Alt-U** brings up and hides the participant panel where actions such as mute and unmute can be taken for individual participants.

For next week, I am going to try with my wife running the Powerpoint on a separate laptop so I control the call and she manages the Powerpoint, which I hope will avoid the possibility of call

management activity disrupting the Powerpoint itself. Any participant can share a screen (depending on the options you choose). If somebody were disruptive, the host could simply remove them from the participant panel.

Although I am pretty techie, it has been quite a steep learning curve, but people have really appreciated the sense of fellowship of being able to see and hear each other and little mishaps are part of live life.

Those without technology can join by telephone, but would obviously only hear and not see. People with PCs without cameras and microphones could join from a PC and separately by telephone, so they could still join in conversations.

We provided a couple of ladies with tablets and they have managed to join with some coaching. I am fortunate that my wife Jan has been able to provide some technical support for people trying to get in. I would suggest that having a helper available by phone (other than yourself) is a good idea if you can do it. Also, encourage those not familiar with IT to try to join early so there is time to help them by phone if they need it.

There is an option from the participant menu to ask individuals to start video. I used this with a lot of the people as they joined because they found it had to see the start video icon in Zoom, although people managed much better 2nd time round.