

Queries for Monthly Meetings to Discern Use of Hybrid Meetings

Ad Hoc Technology Group – March, 2021

Membership issues

Have you been able to include members who are not using zoom in discussion about zoom?

Do you have members unable to attend meeting for worship in person?

Do you have distant members who would like to attend hybrid meeting for worship?

What goals do you hope to accomplish by using hybrid meetings?

What are your expectations for hybrid meetings?

Does your meeting have people who are not comfortable being on camera?

Would you like remote participants to see the Meeting room?

Would you like in-person participants to see those who are remote (projected)?

Have you considered virtual meetings as a form of outreach?

Physical Space issues

Are you up to date on your state's rules regarding the maximum number of people in a gathering?

What will you do if the number of members wanting to participate in person exceeds that number?

How will you deal with masks, social distance requirements, and vaccination status?

Have you considered what if any extra cleaning procedures would need to be put in place?

Have you considered the air flow and air filtration system in your meetinghouse?

Does your meeting have WiFi? Does your meeting want WiFi?

What is your meeting's comfort level with technology being used in the worship space?

What are the benefits of having technology in the worship space?

What are the arguments against technology in the worship space?

Funding issues

What is your budget for technology?

If using Zoom or some equivalent software and would the Meeting purchase the license?

Would the meeting consider purchasing any of the following: a suitable laptop-type device, a projector, a screen, or a video monitor?

Does the meeting have the funding to pay for the technology?

Would the meeting be interested in finding grants to cover the costs for hybrid meetings?

Expertise issues

Does your meeting have people who would participate in a virtual meeting for worship if they had help with the technology?

Would it be helpful to your meeting to have a technology resource person whom you could consult with?

Does your meeting have someone willing and able to provide the technical support with regard to setting up and running a hybrid meeting for worship every week? If not, do you have someone willing to learn?

Three Alternatives for Hybrid Meetings

Bare Essentials

Setup:

Webcam focused on Facing bench. Laptop nearby. Hearing assist radio patched to microphone of laptop. Zoom runs on laptop as a “participant” (not as host).

Zoom Attenders’ Experience.

Zoom attenders see only those seated on the facing bench but hear all that is said in the room. Zoom attenders who share are heard but not seen by those present in person. Host duties are handled by a “Zoom Clerk” (not present in-person) who can mute and unmute the sound (microphone) coming from the meetinghouse to the Zoom session. The “Zoom Clerk” also mutes the microphones of Zoom attenders unless they are intentionally sharing.

In-Person Attenders’ Experience

Upon Joining the Zoom Meeting, one sees the facing bench which has been “spotlighted” by the Zoom Clerk. One hears the ambient sounds of the meeting room. One hears those who shareⁱ but does not see them. If a Zoom attender wishes to speak, they unmute and speak as is usual for Zoom meetings. The voice is heard from the laptop, but no screen is visible to see the person speaking. If a Zoom attender shares, the experience is the normal Zoom experience for others attending via Zoom.

In person attenders who do not wish to be seen on Zoom seat themselves off-camera by avoiding the facing bench. No screen is provided to see Zoom Attenders

Mid-Level Tech

Setup:

Two or more wireless cameras are placed to cover all front-facing benches and the facing bench. Laptop is situated on a back bench and operated by the Zoom Clerk. Hearing assist radio patched to microphone of laptop. Zoom Clerk is the Zoom Host. Laptop speakers are amplified.

Zoom Attenders’ Experience

In the mid-level setting, Zoom participants can see as well as hear the in-person attenders seated as a group, but not as head-and-shoulder closeups. The Zoom Clerk uses the laptop to choose the active camera, and to mute the microphone(s) of Zoom participants as needed. Otherwise, the experience is as described in the Bare Bones version.

In-person Attenders Experience

The Zoom cameras can be small and unobtrusive, but like security cameras, they will be a visible tech presence even though they remain stationary. No screen is provided to see Zoom participants, so apart from the presence of the Zoom Clerk and the cameras, the experience is like the bare bones scenario with amplified sound and no screen or screens to view the Zoom participants.

Full Featured Tech

Setupⁱⁱ:

Two or more [PTZ remotely controlled cameras](#) with pan, tilt, and zoom features are situated to cover the entire meeting room and zoom in on Friends seated anywhere in the meeting room. The Zoom clerk is seated at a table with a clear view of the room. A second person, the camera operator, is also seated at the table. A wide-screen TVⁱⁱⁱ or a projector^{iv} and screen are placed behind the facing benches mirroring the screen seen by Zoom attenders. A soundbar type speaker is below the TV screen projecting the sound from the Zoom meeting participants. Two laptops are in use. One is the Zoom host, the second is the camera control and switcher which controls the video that is seen by Zoom attenders.

Zoom Participant Experience

The visual focus of the Zoom host's camera is moderated by the camera operator. In periods of silence it would be wide-angle views of those seated in the benches including the facing bench. When someone speaks, the nearest camera would align on the speaker and zoom to a close-up. In this way, Zoom attenders would both see and hear those in the benches.

When a Zoom participant speaks, the experience would be the same as any Zoom meeting.


In-person Attenders' Experience

Seated in the benches, friends would see each other and view the gallery of Zoom participants on the screen. The Zoom Clerk would, if necessary, page through gallery screens during silent periods so that those on the benches may feel the presence of all who are on the Zoom call. The technology would be highly visible. The big screen being most obvious, one will also be aware of camera movements, and the key tapping and movements of the Zoom clerk and the camera operator. The Zoom participants would not be visible to those on the facing bench unless they turn in their seat to view the screen.

One can expect that the amplified sound from the loudspeakers will not have the same personal affect as the in-person voices of friends.

Comparison of the Three Scenarios (thanks Peter Vari)

	Bare Essentials	Mid-Level Tech	Full Featured Tech
Facing bench is visible for remote participants on their ZOOM			
Facing bench and front-facing benches are visible for remote participants on their ZOOM			
All benches are visible for remote participants on their ZOOM			
There are no cameras or monitors in the Meeting room.			
There are cameras in the Meeting room			
There are Cameras and Monitor(s) or Screen(s) in the Meeting room			
Voice of a remote ZOOM participant is heard through only a laptop speaker in the Meeting room			
Voice of a remote ZOOM participant is heard through an amplified speaker in the Meeting room			
No ZOOM host must be present in the Meeting room			
One ZOOM host must be present in the Meeting room			
Two ZOOM hosts must be present in the Meeting room			
Remote ZOOM participants can see a			

group of people and hear the speaker in the Meeting room. The speaker is not highlighted.			
Remote ZOOM participants can see a close-up and hear the person who is speaking in the Meeting room			

ⁱ Friends who wish to be seen as well as heard could rise and come forward into the field of view of the laptop camera.

ⁱⁱ This multi-camera setup can be seen at Middletown Borough Hall and other local governments. It's used to record and televise meetings. Usually someone seated at the facing table moderates which cameras and images are televised.

ⁱⁱⁱ As an alternative to a large screen, several smaller monitor screens might be placed throughout the meeting room and styled to blend in.

^{iv} The projector could be situated in a balcony classroom behind the glass so as to be silent, or perhaps in a sound-deadening box attached to the balcony.

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