Yearly Meeting 2022 – online   Feedback

Feedback and any learnings for another time.

Due to the Covid situation it was recommended to Standing Committee that this YM be all online. This was agreed in March 2022. Planning was already underway for an in person gathering and registrations had already been made.   The LAC liaised with the venue.

Planning for an all online YM – what was needed
- Registrations
- Zoom hosts – including some based elsewhere
- Zoom accounts to use
- Zoom familiarity sessions in advance
- Space with good internet and space for Zoom hosts as a base for clerking the meeting
- Information to send to registrants
- Technical support people
- Pastoral care during YM online
- Epistle Committee working online
- Providing Notices online

Registrations continued with some adjustments to the registration form to remove all questions about accommodation and food. Payments were refunded as needed. The venue was advised and we gave them the $200 deposit. The LAC continued to handle the registrations and monies.

We were fortunate to have Michael Searle and Ronis Chapman who offered to do the Zoom hosting and run a number of Zoom familiarity sessions. They also organised the use of a number of Zoom accounts from various Monthly Meetings.

Zoom hosting involved using a number of features in Zoom; waiting room, chat was turned off during sessions, people were set to mute as they joined, people could be muted during the session if they accidentally unmuted, presenters could be "pinned" to the front screen, breakout rooms could be set up for people to choose which one to join, breakout rooms could be labelled, people could be helped into a breakout room.....

The sessions on Zoom run be Michael and Ronis before Yearly Meeting were a great way for Friends to become comfortable with using basic functions in Zoom before Yearly Meeting. During YM it was clear that most were happy using the basic functions.

To facilitate the Zoom hosting and the clerking of the meeting it seemed best to all be in the same location. We used the Quiet Room at the Settlement as the base with accommodation at the Settlement for the Clerks. This allowed for easy communication amongst the Zoom hosts and the Clerks as things evolved during the meeting time. The Quiet Room had access to the Settlement wifi that needed to be good enough to run multiple Zoom sessions. There was also an offsite Zoom host and having this connection proved vital when the wifi at the Settlement "fell over".   The Zoom meeting continued via

the offsite host and those in the Clerking team at the Settlement reconnected via a hotspot. There is a need for a Plan B!

The Clerks worked with LAC and Zoom hosts to compose information sent to all those who registered containing key Zoom links and other useful information or contacts. Two information sheets were sent out. The second one contained contact information for the technical support helpers, for the Pastoral and Spiritual care Friends during YM and for the Epistle Committee.

Three technical support helpers were found to provide help to Friends having difficulties connecting or using Zoom. They report having little to do.

Pastoral and spiritual care people were appointed by Standing Committee in advance of YM so their contact details could be shared with those who registered before YM commenced. They had the use of a Zoom account to facilitate communications amongst themselves. They made use of breakout rooms after each session and arranged for 2 labelled breakout rooms to be set up after each session so Friends could choose to go to one of those rooms. It would have helped them to have identified a convener in advance and to be introduced to YM with more information about their role, including the Respect and Safety contacts. We had intended that some of the Pastoral Care group be able to join each session in advance (everybody else was in a waiting room)but this got lost in the final preparation rush.

The Epistle Committee was appointed by Standing Committee in advance of YM so their contact via email could be shared with those who registered before YM commenced. They had access to a personal Zoom account to facilitate their work and communication. Draft versions were placed on the YM 2022 Notices page on the website for Friends to view and provide feedback.

A public Notices page was set up on the Quaker website attached to the LAC Committee page and an email contact was provided to those who registered so notices could be sent in. Not many notices were received compared to an in person gathering, but the page provided a space for useful links, drafts of the Epistle and some photographs. We had not anticipated the level of technical knowledge needed for this role to enable links, files and photos to be added to the page, but help was available.

Timetable
Doing it all online we needed to reduce the amount of time people were spending on Zoom. Those attending also needed time to make and eat meals and generally look after themselves. We had three sessions per day, all one and half hours long, morning, afternoon and evening. After each session breakout rooms were set up for social time, or for targeted conversations e.g a breakout room for "First Timers", labelled rooms to talk to our overseas visitors, labelled rooms for those wanting to talk to a Pastoral care person, or rooms set up for just two people.

There were some extra meetings around the same time. The "Preparation Day" was held in a single morning session. The people on Spiritual and Pastoral Care committees always meet before YM and this was done in the afternoon prior to YM commencing. Other groups

took the opportunity to hold meetings around YM: Respect and Safety, Quaker Faith and Practice Revision, Website question time and a Climate Emergency workshop. Other Zoom accounts made these meetings possible.

As part of the programme we included an All age worship on the Sunday morning involving a presenter from USA. An invitation was sent to all MMs and this was open to anybody to join. Some Worship Groups arranged to gather together to join this worship session. This was an adventurous undertaking where Zoom opened up possibilities.

Zoom enabled us to have visitors from overseas to join our Yearly Meeting with a session featuring presentations from; Australia YM representative, AWPS visitors from Seoul MM, AWPS Secretary and the FWCC General Secretary.

To make the programme run smoothly from a technical perspective we needed to know in advance what presenters/facilitators were going to use e.g Power point presentation, a panel of people, a single presenter etc. All this needed to be recorded and shared with the Zoom hosts via a detailed run sheet. Note this would be needed too for an in person gathering.

Learnings
- Registrations can be done from anywhere and best done via an online form that outputs to a shared document that can be seen by a number of people.
- Zoom hosting is critical to ensure that all the functions in Zoom can be used as needed depending on the content and for setting up any breakout rooms
- Having a co-host based elsewhere gives an option if internet connection is lost or unstable
- Need for ready access to a Plan B for internet connection - via hotspot.
- Need for some technical support people – suggest 2 is enough
- Need to appoint some roles in advance so contact information can be provided in advance to those registering
- Have Pastoral Care people join each session early
- A Notices page was a good idea but needs to be looked after by somebody with skills to add links, photos and other content.
- Online creates different possibilities – consider what else/who else could be involved
- Online is a way to include others from AWPS where visas etc can be a barrier
- Online enabled more to join

Future Yearly Meetings
We have now held a YM with a few joining via Zoom and most in person (hybrid model) and an all online YM. Both have various technical issues to make the experience work well for everybody. We value meeting in person but offering an option to join online enables more people to join and be part of the gathering. We have also created an expectation that people will be able to join online so future LACs need to keep this in mind as they plan for a YM. Australia YM are trialling meeting all online with "pods" model (groups getting together to join the YM) in 2022 so we may be able to learn from their experience.

What does this mean for those doing the organising?

- Technical skills – connections, sound, Zoom hosting
- Technical stuff – internet connection, screens, microphones, computers
- Content – thinking about the experience for those joining via Zoom – how to do social interactions, what about breakout rooms in sessions