

## **YM 2021 LAC report (Notes)**

### ***Things that worked well:***

Accommodation, food, willing helpers from Kapiti MM and from the people at Yearly Meeting, venue people were very helpful, Kauri Hall looked great for Quaker Lecture with arrangements on the stage, great outside signage, plus some laminated A4 signs (being sent to you) , plus WN Quaker banners. Good to do as a shared Committee as too much for one of our meetings and we worked well as a team. Good to have set roles/jobs for clarity and sharing the work load. Site visit was essential – and we went with a list of items to check.

Very good to have central hub away from the main meeting hall with Registration Desk, displays and cups of tea all in the same place. This made for a good social space. It also meant the main meeting space was quiet between sessions so the YM Clerk could work on minutes.

Had a list of jobs/tasks to be done during Yearly Meeting time and who was responsible which was kept at the Registration Desk – very helpful. We had gaps and asked for helpers from those attending Yearly Meeting – people were willing.

Used the detailed spreadsheet of all tasks to organised to keep track of what was sorted and what still needed attention as we held our LAC meetings over the months before YM (based on one used by Wellington). Found this very helpful.

Concerns about COVID and changes to levels – we went ahead “in faith” but did investigate with venue as to how they would treat us if there were changes to levels in different parts of NZ.

QLC raised a concern regarding security issues for the Quaker Lecture as the speaker had received “hate speech” via social media. We had a plan of what to do: advised local police, advised venue and had people prepared to take anybody aside. Nothing happened but good to have a plan.

All the LAC being present before the start of the Prep Day helped us to get organised.

### ***Not so good/what we could have done better***

*Sound* . Elm Hall echoing and with aging group sound quality is an issue, both within the room and in providing good sound for those connecting by Zoom (see Alistair’s Appendix). There was a request from someone hard of hearing that people speaking go to the front and speak facing the room rather than the clerk, so that lip-reading was possible.

*Registrations*. We used paper based form, most people scanned and emailed but a few posted. We did not have expertise to use Google forms and this may have been better. On the plus side, we were able to provide targeted responses to confirm registrations and payment (simple to check via internet banking). Late registrations created extra work. Names etc., need to be with YM Clerk in advance so adding names later is a hassle for lots of people. In future perhaps have a final deadline date (might be when venue needs final numbers for catering) and stick to it!

*Zoom attendees.* If offering Zoom options be prepared to have overseas people wanting to register. Make sure they know there is a deadline. They may need some background on our YM – Linley Gregory helped with this. Buddies/social time for all those connecting via Zoom? Need to find a way to make this happen. We tried after a session to talk to those on Zoom but way too much background noise, so needs another option. Have a separate registration form for Zoom attendees as need less information. We made a charge as there were real costs for wifi and data (may depend on the venue) and the charge we made did not cover those costs.

*Quaker Lecture speaker.* Our lecturer needed a quiet space after she arrived and before the evening meal. We had not planned for this, but turned out we had a space where she could have a rest. Suggest keep in touch with QLC as to requirements

*Presenters facilitators and technology.* More clarification in advance needed with facilitators/presenters both in person and via Zoom as to their precise technology needs and what features of Zoom they wanted to use, so could be prepared in advance.

*Other tech issues. See Alistair's Appendix.* At times used 3 computers, extra screen, 2 wireless microphones, 1 fixed microphone, 2 cameras for Zoom, data projector and screen, and venue sound system.

*Transport.* Suggest make this simple and offer pick ups and drop offs only at set times. We had a sign up sheet for drop offs on the final day and put it up on the day before but would have been better to put it up on the first day of Yearly Meeting and have a notice, plus a reminder the next day. Another possibility would be to include transport drop offs as part of the Registration form.

*LAC at YM.* It would be helpful to have most of the LAC members staying on site, including for the Preparation Day. This helps with continuity and sharing the work load. Would have been good to gather as LAC at end of YM to make sure all jobs had been done/help with final jobs. Suggest you make a time/place to do this.

*Accessibility.* Check all this out, especially on site visit for accommodation, access to main meeting space and dining space. Our venue was able to place small ramps to get over doorways. They also had a wheelchair on site that we made use of.

*First Aid people.* We had designated first aid people but would have helped if some were staying on site and we were clear as to how to contact them at short notice. We had a couple of smaller incidents that also needed to be reported to the venue for their health and safety reporting.

*Recycling.* Friends are concerned about recycling, so think about what is possible at the venue e.g. we had a box for paper recycling. Any food related recycling was outside of our control.

## **Other things/comments:**

### **Background:**

LAC had 6 members from both PNMM and KMM. We met via Zoom about 10 times and had one “in person” site visit. We also communicated via email. We created an “Event” on the website and included here all the relevant information with links to registration form and printable information sheet. The LAC also has a space on the website (need to login) and we used this to store useful documents, including from 2017 when YM held at same venue.

### **LAC roles**

Very good to have one person as the liaison with the venue all the way through. This enabled developing a relationship with the venue.

Suggest having designated people to liaise with; Prep Day person, Quaker Lecture Committee, YM Clerk, any groups requiring display space, person to do all the transport arrangements and person to liaise with any presenters/facilitators (including by Zoom) as to their precise technology requirements/what type of session are they doing.

If offering a “hybrid” in person plus zoom option – you will need some designated people (suggest 2) to look after the zoom, sound and presenters/facilitators technology requirements. Remember, speakers/presenters can be via Zoom.

Registrations is a big job – needs a person to look after and set up so can extract info as to numbers for beds per day, meals per day for the venue, plus other info e.g email addresses for all attending, how many for Prep Day ... It is helpful to provide tailored responses to those registering as to what they have registered for and what had been paid/needs to be paid. Same person to look after the finances/able to easily see the bank account, incoming payments and make any refunds.

The LAC need to be wary of being overcommitted – don’t try to do too much. Best if do not have any other roles at YM. Ask for help.

Do as much preparation as you can before you get to the venue e.g have all signs made, have lists to pin up of who is staying in what room, have name badges all made plus any registration information all prepared, have outline for housekeeping notices needed during Prep Day and YM.

### **Food.**

Meals at El Rancho were very good. They had special separate space for gluten free (gluten free bread and designated toaster) to reduce risk of contamination. Non – dairy milks in a separate fridge. Also, good with labelling

Essential to have a designated food liaison person during YM so that any food queries are directed to this person and not to venue staff.

Clarify well in advance with venue as to meals being vegetarian plus there will be some special diets/people with allergies. On registration form encourage people to indicate their food allergies/special diet needs in detail and not to make assumptions as to what might be provided.

## **LAC organizational stuff**

We did all our meetings via Zoom with one site visit. We also exchanged a lot of emails.

We made use of material set up by Wellington MM when they organised YM at the same venue in 2017. This was very helpful. They had a detailed check list (noted above) set out with what needed to be done, how far out from YM, who responsible and space for extra notes as to progress. We made good use of this and added notes as we went along plus flagging things that still needed to be sorted.

LAC has a page on the Quaker website (need to login) and minutes and other documents can be stored here. We have left various documents here that you may find useful.

During YM we set up a “run sheet” called “Jobs/Tasks during YM” (noted above) - of all the things that needed doing by the LAC or any helpers during the time of the Prep Day and YM. This made it very clear who was doing what and served as a checklist of jobs to be done. It also helped us to identify where we had “gaps” so we could ask for helpers in a targeted way. We kept this at the Registration Desk.

## **Help with tasks at YM**

Don't be shy to ask for help if needed. This is especially the case for the Quaker Lecture and possibly for any morning/afternoon teas – depends on venue. People were very willing to help.

## **Spaces**

Other meetings spaces are needed for Friday afternoon committee people: allow for Pastoral and Spiritual Care, Standing Committee (these two will be at different times but good if there are separate spaces) also need a space for Trust Board to meet (about 6 people) and this year the “Faith and Practice” group (about 6 or 7 people) also needed a space.

Display space. Have more available than has been asked for !! people always turn up with extra material to display/last minute requests.

## **Registrations**

Get information out in good time. Set up an Event on the website and link to however you are doing registrations, plus have relevant information.

Make sure there are reminders in the YM Clerks letters leading up to YM. Set a close off time that meets requirements for venue to know final numbers. We waived late fee for people, except those who were really, really late. Every late registration involves considerable extra work. Stick to your deadline. If offering a Zoom option also have a close off date, so there is time to process their registration, send them the Zoom link, email them Gold Papers and add them to the list for YM Clerk of visitors to our YM (if overseas) – well before the last rush to be ready for the whole event to start.

Cancellations – we had some due to sickness. Some chose to join via Zoom instead. We refunded all those that cancelled due to sickness.

Overseas people asking to join by Zoom – this might happen. We liaised with the Yearly Meeting Clerk over this, and Linley Gregory helped by providing information to overseas people about how our YM works. We allowed some overseas registrations and asked them to register but no payment as this is too complicated from overseas. We suggested they may donate to support any work of their own Yearly Meeting instead. Some asked much too late. There is an expectation that asking to join via zoom is so simple they do not need to register in advance. Be clear about any cut off date and be prepared to say “no”. We said “no” to late people from overseas but sent them the zoom link for the Quaker Lecture.

**Encouraging YF and JYFs to attend some or all of YM.** Find ways to enable this to happen/help with costs? Perhaps ask their MM if they can help with funding, instead of person needing to ask. We hope there will be better options for 2022. Encourage them to join via Zoom if they are unable to join in person due to time pressures/cost.

### **Preparation Day**

QLSD arrange a facilitator. LAC needs to liaise with the facilitator about times (meals, tea breaks, session times) and what they require – whiteboards, art materials etc. As the Preparation Day is now seen as part of the whole Yearly Meeting event we hope that the timings for the Prep Day will in future be printed in Gold Papers.

### **Friday afternoon meetings**

We had 4 meetings on Friday afternoon – see above. Need to check with those running the meetings as to their requirements e.g Pastoral and Spiritual Care people may need whiteboards, flip chart paper etc.

Pastoral and Spiritual Care Committees meeting. QLSD arrange who will run this session. We also had people join this meeting via zoom so held it in the main meeting space to reduce moving zoom equipment about and extra set up time.

Standing Committee. Just needed a meeting space for about 20 people.

## **Quaker Lecture**

Work out if you can hold the lecture at the same venue as this is much easier/cheaper than transporting 80 – 90 Friends to another location.

## **Finances**

YM paid the deposit for the venue booking.

We set up a bank account (connected to PNMM bank account) with internet banking that was just used for YM.

Our budget was based on one used by Wellington MM in 2017 at the same venue. We checked with YM Treasurer that YM would cover any loss, especially as uncertainty with COVID 19. The venue was willing to negotiate on a case by case basis if COVID levels changed so that we could not meet in person. The venue had some minimum charges for all the accommodation. There were extra charges for “special diets”.

## **COVID 19 impacts**

Lots of unknowns. Talk to the venue as to how they will handle your booking if there are changes in COVID Levels that may impact for people coming. Talk to YM Treasurer about financial support from YM to cover costs if Levels suddenly change. Have a plan.

It was great to see everybody connecting and being able to meet in person.

## **Appendix: Technology Use and Requirements**

YM 2021 was the first Yearly Meeting held in NZ where people were able to attend either in person or via the internet (using Zoom). This “Hybrid” approach (in-person + Zoom) presents many challenges, it’s not at all like an “all-Zoom” meeting. We charged \$10 per day to connect via Zoom, as a contribution to venue cost and to cover direct costs of providing the Zoom connection, such as data and additional equipment needed.

Below are some comments firstly on technology needs even for an “in-person” meeting, then additional issues associated with people connecting remotely.

### **(1) A certain amount of technology is needed even just for an “in-person” YM:**

#### **(1A) A good sound system. We used one provided by the venue which worked well.**

- At least one “fixed” microphone for use by the clerk.

- At least 2 wireless microphones to be available for speakers from the floor. However there may be alternatives:
  - If a second “fixed” microphone is available for use by those presenting from the front, then a single wireless microphone may be sufficient
  - One person (hard of hearing) at YM 2021 asked that people when speaking move to the front and face the room (rather than the clerk) when speaking, so lip-reading was possible. Some people did this at YM 2021. If everyone did it then there may be no need for wireless microphones. However that would be a change from tradition which may need wider discussion.

### **(1B) A data projector or large screen which for can be used for presentations**

- Needs to be big enough and clear enough so that text can be read from the back of the room.
- A computer and connecting cables to the data projector or large screen, for when people bring along a data stick with their presentation on. Possibly two such computers (Mac and Windows) in case there are compatibility issues (we had some!)
- Expertise (and cables) for when people bring their own computer which they wish to plug in. (Note some modern computers rely on wireless communication (e.g. Bluetooth) so can’t be “plugged in”.)

### **(2) Additional equipment needed when some are connecting remotely (e.g. by Zoom)**

Note we used two computers, one hosting the Zoom session which used the “chat” and “hands up” features of Zoom to communicate with Zoom attendees, and the other which could show a screen devoid of those features in order to minimise distractions. The person hosting was at the Clerk’s table and able to alert the Clerk when someone at home wished to speak.

### **(2A) Providing good sound for those at home**

- Option (i) a multi-directional microphone placed centrally in the room (or any other suitable place) to pick up the sound
  - We used this approach for the Spiritual and Pastoral Care Committees meeting prior to YM
  - We used a BOYA BY-MC2 Conference Microphone with 5m “active” USB extension cord which seemed to work well for this purpose
- Option (ii) taking a feed from the sound system to feed into the computer and hence to those at home
  - We used this approach for YM proper, where a sound system was in use and Friends were asked to always use microphones. [An initial test of the multi-directional microphone did not seem to give such good sound when used in conjunction with the sound system, but in the light of difficulties experienced with the feed from the sound system (see comments below) this approach deserves more investigation]
  - We connected output from the sound system to the microphone socket of an older computer which had separate microphone and headphone speaker sockets. [Note

we found we could not connect to a more recent computers which had combined mic / speaker headphone sockets: as soon as the sound system was plugged in these computers reverted to the on-board microphone]. One difficulty using this approach was the computer then offered a choice of two microphones, both with the same name as the built-in one, which made it very hard to know which was being used.

- We'd therefore suggest that if this approach is used then an audio-to-USB connector be purchased, which would hopefully avoid these difficulties.
- The sound provided at home using this approach seemed to be good at times, but was variable. We are unsure to what degree this poor sound was due to confusion over microphone names and connections, or to what degree it could be put down to poor microphone use.
- However it was apparent that the sound was poor at times, so further testing & investigation of alternatives is needed.

#### **(2B) Providing pictures for those at home**

- We used a Logitech C920 camera, which produced a good picture, along with a 10m "active" USB extension cord, which allowed us to position the camera a long way from the computer giving a good overview of the room
- Note because we had two of these cameras available, and two computers connected to Zoom, we were able to show the overview of the room throughout, and also a closer-up view of the Clerk's table and the area people were using for presenting.

#### **(2C) Providing good sound in the room from those speaking at home**

- We took the "simple" approach of connecting the computer to a flat-screen TV with a good volume and good speakers. This seemed to work well so we did not investigate alternatives.
- An alternative would have been to connect the computer's speaker output to the sound system. This worked well when tested at home, but was not tried at the venue.

#### **(2D) Providing picture in the room of those at home**

- We were very conscious of the Clerk's desire that the technology (including pictures of those at home) should not be a distraction to the meeting!
- Hence for most of YM we simply showed images of those attending by Zoom in "gallery view" on the flat-screen TV mentioned in (2C). We placed this screen on a small table at the end of a row on to the side, visible therefore to the Clerk's table and to some in the room but not others. When someone spoke from at home we put the screen in "current speaker" mode sometimes turned the screen so it was visible to more of the room.
- Note that despite an email sent out to all Zoom attendees to "ensure that you are in a quiet place which minimises audio and video disturbance" and also "once you have joined the session you remain for the duration of that session, just as you would if you were attending

YM in person”, we had a number of people walking in and out during sessions, and others walking around in the background. It would have been very distracting if these had been on a “big screen” at the front visible to everyone.

## **(2E) Ensuring Zoom attendees see big-screen presentations**

### **(i) If someone is presenting “in person” at the gathering**

- On one occasion when there had been problems setting up the computer, we showed the presentation simply by moving one of the cameras to take in both the screen and the speaker. This was not very clear, but better than nothing
- A better solution, which we used for most presentations, was to link the computer being used to make the presentation to Zoom, and got them to “share screen” on Zoom
- Note that this means if anyone brings their own computer to make a presentation, they need to both connect to the wi-fi, and be able to connect to the Zoom meeting (which requires internet access and the link or codes to connect to the Zoom meeting).

### **(ii) If someone is presenting from Home**

- We just needed to do this once, for our Australian visitor
- One of our computers connected to Zoom was plugged into the data projector to make it work – check this out beforehand (we didn’t and had aspect ratio / size problems initially!)
- The person at home then shares their screen

## **(2F) Wifi and Data Requirements**

- Make sure your data and wifi needs are made clear to the venue and discussed with someone who knows about it! [We told the venue that we wanted to be able to link to wifi, but didn’t really spell out our requirements – it turned out it would have helped if we’d chased down the right person]
- The meeting room needs a reliable way to link to the internet (probably wi-fi).
- You also need a LOT of data to provide Zoom links for all sessions over the entire weekend.
- We had issues because the wifi strength in the room we were using was weak, and also because we used the venue’s “standard” approach of buying data in 5 GB vouchers. Unfortunately their voucher system is provided by a third party, and over the weekend we didn’t have access to their IT person, and there was no way of knowing at any time how much data we had left or to start using a new voucher before the old one ran out, so we ended up both having the zoom link drop out during sessions, and spending lots on mobile phone hotspots to keep things going.
- Data requirements: We estimated data use as about 0.8 GB per hour per computer linked to Zoom (with both audio and video). Could be more with better equipment and faster internet. YM has about 13 sessions of about 1.5 hours each. Each Zoom session has to be a bit longer than that, say 2 hours. 13 sessions x 2 hours x 2 computers x 0.8 GB/h/computer = about 42 GB of data needed, plus whatever is needed for computers making presentations, so call it about 50 GB.

- So: check out wifi strength, and how you'll be charged for data.

### **(2G) Communication with Zoom participants**

- We didn't get this right!
- Note we needed two computers connected all the time to Zoom, so one could be using chat and hands-up features without these being a distraction to those in the room
- It would be good for those who want to were able to talk with those on Zoom before or after sessions to make them feel more part of the gathering. However the room is usually so noisy after a session that it's not possible to simply stand in front of a computer and chat. We didn't think of this beforehand but did try a couple of things:
  - Having a headset to plug in to one of the computers for use after sessions
  - Moving a camera to beside the TV screen and letting people talk into that (the camera has an inbuilt mic) and using the TV sound for the voices of those on Zoom also sort-of worked
  - Neither completely satisfactory!
- Periods when the group at YM are talking in small groups were a little problematic – we used the “breakout groups” feature of Zoom, but not everyone understood that they needed to accept the invitation to join, and it was tricky co-ordinating with the facilitator over timing and when they should come back to the full group. One time when people were asked to regroup into “interest groups” we just gave up on, and left all those on Zoom as a single group.

### **(2H) monitoring the Zoom feed**

- Note all computers connected to Zoom in the room had to have both mic and speakers muted, expect for the computer providing the sound to and from those Zooming in, or you got echos and/or feedback
- In retrospect, we should really have had someone with headphones monitoring the sound, receiving the Zoom link all the time, so we would be alerted if the sound quality was poor and try to do something about it.

### **(2I) Equipment**

The following equipment is held at the Settlement and may be available for loan:

- Logitech C920 camera and stand
- BOYA BY-MC2 Conference Microphone
- 5m and 10m “active” USB extension cords
- Data projector

Some other Friends could be asked about connector cords etc.: for example Alistair Hall has a 5m HDMI cable which could mean the data projector or screen does not need to be so close to the computer; Rick Kooperberg has a fine knowledge of Zoom technology and may have other useful connectors etc.; CHMM has a BOYA microphone