

North Seattle Friends Meeting message to Friends Meeting of Washington

Debby,

We are encouraging folks to stay at home and not gather in our public space. However, we knew that we wanted to maintain a sense of community. Fortunately we have access to Zoom technology, so today we gathered in an online Meeting through Zoom. There were 17 of us gathered and it went very well. Some other churches in the Seattle area published their Zoom login information publicly. However, we chose to limit the announcement to our regular people. Since our worship is so participatory, I didn't want people to be put off by having strangers in on the Zoom call. We did our regular basic format for worship. I introduced it and explained that silence was ok on Zoom just like it is in worship. People seemed to get it and we were gathered in worship. Afterwards, I had some positive responses from people who really appreciated it. We will continue with this method until the coronavirus abates in our area.

I had participated in some book discussion groups and a FGC e-group on anti-racism so I was familiar with using Zoom. I'd also done a few committee meetings, although they didn't have the same spacious quaker flavor. Particularly the FGC e-group showed me how silence and group listening could work. That was helpful.

A Quaker from Whidbey Island Worship Group uses Zoom in Way of the Spirit and she gladly hosted us with her Zoom login. Her expertise helped as well. We invited folks to come on the call 15 minutes before worship so that we could get everyone connected. We just took as long as it needed to figure it out. I had to text with one woman to help her figure it out. Ahead of time I told the requirements for Zoom and what they would need.

I've encouraged folks to reach out to one another and check in.

A week ago when it was all getting started, we asked people not to shake hands or hug. Prior to worship we used Clorox wipes to wipe down all door knobs, railings, the back of the pews, and any hard surface that is frequently touched. I also put a large hand sanitizer in the entry way and made sure there was plenty of soap at all of the sinks.

*Hope that helps.
Lorraine*