

## Ministry & Worship Committee

April 2022

### Summary of Ratings, Comments and Observations about Trials of Blended Meetings for Worship

Ministry & Worship Committee (M&W) has been listening to Friends to learn about our experiences with blending in-person worship with online (Zoom) worship. We have been exploring: what have we experienced, what do we value about worship in CHFM, and what is our vision?

#### A. Experience

M&W issued a brief questionnaire after the second of two trial blended meetings for worship, to those in person in the meeting room and those online via Zoom. There were three questions with ratings of 1 to 5. The results:

#### Chapel Hill Friends Meeting, Survey About a Blended Meeting for Worship, 3/13/2022

1. Please rate your worship experience today. Choose a number between 1-5, with 5 = excellent and 1 = poor.

Friends on Zoom		Friends in Meeting Room	
Average rating		4.6	Average rating 4.3
Rating	Count	Rating	Count
1	1	1	0
2	0	2	1
3	1	3	2
4	4	4	8
5	19	5	10
Total	25	Total	21

2. What effect did having a blended meeting have on your worship experience? Choose a number between 1-5, with 5 = greatly enhanced, 3 = no effect, and 1 = interfered.

Friends on Zoom		Friends in Meeting Room	
Average rating		4.0	Average rating 3.7
Rating	Count	Rating	Count
1	1	1	3
2	0	2	1
3	5	3	3
4	11	4	7
5	8	5	7
Total	25		21

3. Would you be in favor of CHFM offering blended worship? Choose a number between 1-5, with 5 = yes, definitely every Sunday, and 1 = no, never.

Friends on Zoom		Friends in Meeting Room	
Average rating		4.4	Average rating 4.3
Rating	Count	Rating	Count
1	1	1	0
2	0	2	2
3	3	3	2
4	5	4	4
5	16	5	13
Total	25		21

Most Friends attending the blended meeting for worship on March 13 rated their experience as very good (4 or 5 on a 1 to 5 scale) and selected ratings to indicate that the blending enhanced worship. A few Friends had a poor to middling worship experience (1 to 3) and found that the setup interfered with worship.

Comments about experiences were welcomed in the survey. In addition, M&W hosted an online listening session on March 16, attended by 18, to hear more comments.

### **Experiences:**

The comments about experience in the survey and the listening session may be summarized as the following:

There was joy in being all together, and gratitude to worship with more members and attenders. A wonderful alternative.

The blended experience in person was better than expected. It went smoothly, with thanks to Quaker Harmon who operated Zoom in the meeting room.

The quality of worship is different in person and online, evident in the trials. Vocal ministry was more frequent in the blended setting than the usual in-person alone experience. Messages need time to settle.

The quality of blended worship is not at the same level as in-person worship. Worship relies on presence, which is not the same with remote participation. Zoom can interrupt worship in a way that feels intrusive.

Worship is so sacred and deep that I do not want to be on camera when I am meditating, praying, in the most sacred moment. Worship includes trust with the presence of those in the room, and at times a powerful connection of the spirit when someone in the room speaks to one's own mind.

It was a bit challenging to navigate between the meeting room and remote participants.

The monitor could be larger for those in the meeting room wanting to see the online faces.

Audio from Zoom was clear. With or without Zoom, hearing voices inside the meeting room is difficult given masking and window fans.

From the online perspective, not all participants in the meeting room were visible on the camera, and it was hard to identify people in meeting room, masked and small on the screen. The monitor could be placed so that it is visible to more people in the room.

## **B. Values**

The opportunity for bringing all members and attenders together in worship has high value for worship and community.

Inclusion of Friends from afar in worship via Zoom. It is a gift to members and attenders to provide blended participation.

For newcomers with Internet facility, online access to meeting for worship may be more welcoming and/or easier to discover and try.

Emphasis on the simplicity of the meeting room, the room as a sacred space, as an environment conducive to worship, without technical equipment. Online access disturbs the intimate setting of the meeting room.

The quality of worship is highly valued.

### **C. Vision**

Most Friends attending the trials indicated support for CHFM offering blended worship for connections, inclusivity, accessibility, and community.

Some Friends are not able to attend meeting for worship in person; they rely on Zoom to participate in worship.

“We have been blessed by the addition of these new people into our community. I think this is the future. We need to be as accommodating as we can be to people who can’t come but want to worship with us.”

Some prefer blending until most members and attenders feel safe to return to in-person worship.

Some prefer worship free of audio/visual components not already in place; no blending.

Blended meetings for worship could be held less than weekly.

Blended meetings could be held at a different hour, preserving in-person meetings without technology.

Zoom meetings should be continued indefinitely in any case.

We could add worshipers at Carol Woods to join a blended meeting at some time as this evolves.

### **More Observations**

Finally, M&W members and the Zoom Subcommittee have shared observations about testing, operating, obtaining and sustaining equipment, as well as observations from other Friends meetings who have experience with blended meetings for worship.

Cost of equipment could be \$3,000-4,000, one-time, good for several years.

Hiring a part-time person (or contracting) to set up, operate, and put away the equipment would have a cost. Note, if not a contractor, there could be implications for workers compensation (regulations for 3 or more employees).

Other Quaker meetings are sharing experiences and helping each other. The practice of blending in-person and Zoom worship continues to evolve. It may be different in a few months as we learn from other meetings or get better technology.

Other meetings in the PFYM are conducting blended meetings, large and small.

The use of a hand-held microphone for audio on Zoom was necessitated by the noise of the window fans. Without the fans operating, the four ceiling mics installed for audio devices were adequate for sending audio to Zoom, making the hand-held mic unnecessary.

A blended meeting is challenging for the closer, particularly if there is a hand-held microphone, and when there are announcements coming from the remote participants. Keeping track of many things, for the closer and the Zoom operator, distracts them from a worship experience.

In recent weeks, vocal ministry tended to differ in person and online. The messages among remote participants tended to be focused on the monthly query in a worship sharing manner. The messages in the meeting room tended to be less frequent and perhaps more spirit-led.

A blended meeting setup has options. Some Friends may sit out of the view of the camera. Some may sit outside a line of sight to the monitor. Practices and components are evolving.

M&W needs to look into ways to make worship on Zoom more like in-person worship. For example, not announcing names to start vocal ministry and not to end a message with a thank you.

M&W recognizes that the fellowship opportunity through Zoom break out rooms at the rise of meeting is a popular feature that is not available in the same way in the meeting room.

### **Next Steps**

The Ministry & Worship Committee recommends two more blended meeting occurrences to gain more experience with the quality of worship in the blended setting. The planned meetings are April 24 and May 22, 11:00 PM.

Small group worship options continue, including 11:00 worship outside around the right side of the school building. In the meeting room and outside, Friends are invited to try mask lowering when speaking to improve hearing in the room.