

Friends Meeting of San Antonio

Threshing Session regarding Returning to Worship in the Meetinghouse, April 18, 2021

Present: Laura Claghorn, clerking, Bill & Pat Sweet, Julie Crum, George Feden, Joni & James Mize, James Goslin, Val Liveoak, Paige Dyer, Kathryn Melton, Karen Ball, Peggy & Stephen Shearer, Pam Spurgeon, Rebecca & Suzanne, Greg Koehler, Oliver Gerken, Irving Cedilla, Donna Dickerson, Gretchen Haynes, note taker; Jim Spickard, electronic technician.

Laura introduced: this is to look at the when and how of reopening, the logistics. We are asked to listen and to go beyond to the essence, what concerns we have. She reminded us of the hymn: Blessed be the ties that bind.

What follows are my notes of what was said, but not who said it.

Native peoples had a way similar to that of George Fox in how to come to agreement after hearing every person.

This is an email from Greg Casillas.

Good Morning Friends.

Our emergency shelter staff is not able to work today, so I will be covering for them and unable to attend Meeting,

I wanted to voice my support for returning to in person Meeting with a few guidelines currently in place at other venues I am aware of.

- temperature upon entry to property - temps read to each individual and any person in excess of 100.4 would be recommended not to attend Meeting
- masks required
- several hand sanitizing stations throughout Meeting house
- encourage 6 feet distance for anyone not in the same household
- expanding the distance between benches
- limit seating per bench unless in same household
- utilize the air filtration system
- after Rise every person must immediately exit to the outdoors
- hybrid options available

In addition, I think there is an opportunity to encourage attendance at one of two Meetings for Worship during the week. Could we use a mid-week Meeting as a Meeting for Worship? I am happy to assist on Wednesday's late afternoon / early evening (4:30-7)

I believe we are in a position to listen to the needs of Friends and manage actions of Meeting. We must also speak to the personal responsibility necessary for participation and the importance of following the Friends consensus with regard to the guidelines established.

I hope this helps and I apologize for my absence this morning, but did want to share my thoughts.

Be well and I am in support of any decision that will allow for more in person, in proximity in the Light meeting space.

All my best., Greg

We appreciate the zoom option because of its inclusivity.

I appreciate zoom because of mobility issues. I'm glad it is available.

I have a concern about ways to stay together as one community. Any problems to install the technology are not serious problems. We have ideas that will work, particularly help for the hard of hearing and how important it is for the community to stay connected, now that we reach Friends far away.

Would it be the same way as now?

Concern about ableism – do not ask more of Friends – who are we placing in embarrassment? Are we excluding those with chronic health problems by asking them to disclose their health needs? People don't always look sick.

The Friends speaks my mind. To facilitate spacing for everyone, Zoom gives that opportunity. No one is in harm's way. We have the richness of community. Chairs on the porch comparable to inside for one's comfort level. Safety and participation.

I agree with the comments above about help for the hard-of-hearing. But I have a problem with the screen & camera. When I center for worship, I close eyes. I hear a message and recognize who is speaking. If I don't recognize, I still focus on the message.

Could one arrange the seating so as not to see the screen?

No one is required to reveal medical issues although some things are obvious. The porch or meetinghouse give us the opportunity to meet with no medical history. One can explain medical issues of they want to.

Taking the temperature is unreliable re being infectious, but it is another layer of security. Re the two hvacs: both should be run at maximum with On not Auto settings. What community parameters will trigger moving inside or to rescind inside worship?

[Long and thoughtful ideas about what connects us.] I feel lines are developing, so I remember places without TV screen, but now they are commonplace. Our health and safety are important so consider a measured return. For 4 weeks, everyone who wishes can be inside without any changes. Then add mikes and speakers, then add the camera and screen. The transition together will incorporate changes. People will be the same, the screen will display the openness and access to nature.

Contact is important – inclusive of everyone equally. All are diverse, formed by our community. There is intimacy in seeing people. We never want to put our choices on others.

We have the money to do whatever we want, for example, now there are much better cameras. This is an engineering problem. 2nd element: look at the burden on people to do the tech managing during worship. Someone must be able to stop zoom bombers. The speaker can't do it all. Also a good design will produce good technology with video easy to use, unobtrusive as possible. We need a committee to help design the work. Begin now for whatever we need to go inside.

For me, preparation – the drive, greeting people – helps me to center. Yet that is a burden. It is different for different people. Wifi was controversial at one time. We can, but should we?

I agree with those words.

I would like to know what is meant by “should we” for a better understanding of the question?

For those on Zoom, do we have to see and hear those in Meeting? We came to the technology out of necessity, and sustain it and depend on it. Many purposes. Is this the new normal to be seen? Measured approach to each stage. To go forward all at once turns Meeting into a beautiful conference room. If technology causes us to question, how are we to be together? Go slow.

There is a program that translates speech into text.

The sense of the ministry to our community, our connections, need to belong. The areas where we disagree seem to be a matter of degree. It is important to allow silence between messages.

Hope to continue with zoom for several months or more.

Eventually, I don't need to be seen, but to see the Meetingroom; not necessary to see zoom people because the screen is not big enough.

Early on, I said not worship in Meetinghouse. Now considering what we know, I would go in. Now I am averse to a screen and would seek where to go for worship without a screen. I don't mind the camera. Consider porch as well as inside if not too complicated. I want to commit to the essentials: for hearing and zoom. Vaccinations? Masks. Timelines?

The way now reverses in Meetingroom, without display – can see people on zoom. But on porch, can't see who is there, even who is speaking. Valuable to see people's faces – hold them in the Light. Experiment, but hard not see zoom people when in Meetingroom.

Just to see porch is enough, but I don't need to be seen. [Atlanta experience] if I was in S A, I would be on the porch, not sure about inside. Children are not able to be vaccinated.

Re video, two sides. Some don't need to see or some need to see. A value in seeing those far away.

The clerk spoke of the need for a planning group. Will Friends offer now?

Those wishing to join the planning group can contact Val or Jim. This is M&O issue.

I don't feel strongly, but if there were a Friend in Residence tasks would be covered. Now it is all down to Jim and M&O. Leave room for Spirit to work and not be afraid of new ways. Trust.

This is a time for listening for caring for each other. Give it time. No decisions now, but being open.