

Thoughts on a more Settled Meeting

Over the years, Quakers have come up with practices that are most conducive to a settled meeting. We enter in silence and try to maintain silence throughout the meeting. Part of this is to minimize moving about and fidgeting, although sometimes moving around is unavoidable.

These same principles apply to a virtual meeting but with some differences. Silence means keeping your audio muted except for times when you actually need to talk. Being at home means that some noises are unpredictable - phones ring and dogs bark. Staying muted means that these noises will not disturb the overall meeting. (Note that when you are muted, you will still be able to hear others.)

Being physically still is also important but, being at home, means that sometimes motion cannot be avoided. If you have to move about, you should stop your video until you are again settled. This will avoid the visual disturbance.

In a virtual meeting, moving your device can lead to the appearance of motion. If at all possible, find a support for your device. If your device has a stand, please use it. You may also be able to devise a makeshift support. I have a small easel (for photographs) that I use with my tablet.

Also, take a moment to look at how your video will look to others. Sitting in front of a bright window will make you into a silhouette. You may want to adjust the angle of your device so we can see more of your face and less of the ceiling. And, for those using phones, holding your phone sideways gives a less constricted view.

We are in a new era of unknown duration and this means that we have to adapt what we, as Quakers, have learned over the years about having a settled meeting. It is hoped that these thoughts and suggestions will help to improve our virtual experience. As mentioned before, Quakers are very good at knowing how to settle in even when the “usual” surroundings are different.