

Keep On Zooming!

A few years ago Zoom was something which I had only vaguely heard of; I had certainly never used it. However, from March 2020 onwards, that changed and, like many millions of others around the world, I found myself on a steep learning curve to find out how it worked. Churches and charities, schools and colleges, workplaces and leisure organisations, families and friends, were soon all using Zoom as a matter of course, often on a daily basis. It has doubtless been a great help in keeping people – whether individuals or groups – in touch with each other.

Thankfully things have now changed once more, with people meeting up again in person. Offices have reopened, as have schools, colleges and churches – something for which we can all be very thankful. However, I would like to make a plea on behalf of those of us who are housebound due to long-term illness and disability: please don't stop using Zoom, live streaming, and making meetings and webinars available to listen to, watch and download.

Please don't misunderstand me. I am not suggesting that anyone should go back to doing things **only** online; not at all. In a Christian context, we read in Hebrews, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10 v 24 – 25). For Christians, meeting together is not an option; it is a necessity. What I am talking about is those who are physically unable to meet up with others and are therefore unable to attend a church.

I have been ill with the neuroimmune disorder ME (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) for over three decades and I think that the last time I was well enough to attend a church service was in 2004 i.e. 18 years ago! As a Christian, this is not something I am happy about, but at the same time, I don't have any choice in the matter. Over the last 18 years, however, the number of churches making their services available online, either live or for listening to / watching / downloading afterwards, has greatly increased – and in the last couple of years, exponentially so. As a result, I have "attended" more services without leaving my bed in the last two years than in the previous twenty! I have been able to "join" some prayer meetings online, hear live about missionary work in various parts of the world, and learn from highly qualified scientists about various aspects of Creation. I have also been able to watch live a number of ME / medical meetings, broadcast from both the UK and abroad. When watching things on Zoom, I usually just stay in the background with my microphone and camera firmly switched off, as I don't have the energy to actually join in – but just being able to do that is a great help and blessing.

So my plea is this: with in-person meetings happily having resumed, please don't forget those of us who are physically unable to attend church services and other meetings. The technology to enable people to join in from their homes is now out there, with most churches having used it to a greater or lesser extent over the past couple of years – so please don't switch it off now! Of course, ideally we should all be meeting together in person – and all those who are fit and well enough should no doubt be doing so – but for those of us who cannot, watching online, live streaming, and using Zoom, come in a very good second best!

© Hazel Stapleton, May 2022.

A Christian Perspective on ME – www.oneagleswings.me.uk