



Using Zoom for youth ministry

Youth leader lockdown experiences and ideas

The Positives. How using Zoom has been a helpful tool for youth leaders during lockdown.

- Relationships and Community

Zoom is good for continuing and building relationships with young people in congregations and youth groups. It can be a safe way to catch up and encourage young people, to pray and foster friendship.

- Great for fun, games and hanging out

There can be a good sense of fun and engagement in video meetings by using games. It's really important to spend time socialising and having some fun during lockdown. Young people have appreciated laughing together and leaders have planned in shorter focussed devotionals and Bible study in response to this.

- A new rhythm and structure

Regular meetings have grown in attendance as young people find new routines and structure to their weeks. Video conferencing is a good way for young people to keep in touch regularly, knowing when support is available.

- Using prepared resources

Leaders have limited time to prepare and run youth programmes at the moment, with many managing more work, family commitments and other church roles. Finding and using good online resources has been key for managing time. Quality meeting plans for video conference meetings have been released online by many organisations.

- Short devotional content can be delivered well

Young people have appreciated focused spiritual input that can be delivered to groups over Zoom. Videos can be played to start conversations and the 'mute all' function can aid focus.

The Challenges. What challenges have leaders faced when using Zoom to continue youth work?

- Getting in touch

Getting in touch with young people previously connected to churches and groups has proved difficult. Leaders who are unable to directly message young people have struggled and updating consents has been challenging. This has been particularly difficult for wider networks and young people without other family connections to the church. Advertising widely (but not share meeting details publicly) and reaching out to parents/carers has been important, along with encouraging young people themselves to get in touch with peers.

- “I don’t like Zoom”

Leaders report a significant minority of young people don’t enjoy using video conference meetings to interact. Some due to shyness and being uncomfortable to be on screen for an extended time. Leaders spoke of using other ways to connect, including Instagram, to share verses and point young people to other online resources including videos and podcasts.

- Accessibility Issues

Obstacles facing some young people make attending a Zoom meeting difficult. For instance, limited WiFi, shared devices and lack of quiet space. Ensuring these young people still feel connected and remembered is important. This could be done through public social media posts or directly getting in touch if appropriate and safe.

- Zoom Fatigue

A few young people have mentioned spending too much in online meetings, with school, family and other social activities all moving online. Keeping meetings short, fun and focussed has helped with this.

- Opening Up

Leaders have also reported that it is more difficult for young people to be honest about their worries and experiences through the medium of a video meeting. ‘Deeper’ conversations have been more difficult to foster than when groups were sat together in a room. Leaders have responded by connecting to young people outside of meetings where safe and appropriate and pointing groups to wellbeing resources online. They have also encouraged young people to check-in and support each other during the week.

Keep in Mind

Importance of prayer – Making sure we still take time to pray for the young people we support is so important. Some feel more limited in what churches can offer their communities but prayer is our most powerful means of making a positive impact.

Use other ways to connect as well as Zoom – Video conferencing doesn’t suit everyone and using one method of continuing church communities is limiting. Where possible try to use a few different platforms to share with young people and encourage them, for greater connection and impact.

Young Leaders – This is a good opportunity to encourage young people to support their congregation, friends and wider community. Use their energy and creativity, encouraging them with greater responsibility and leadership.