ep GROUPS

A SPACE TO MEET WITH
THE LIVING GOD FOR
**RELATIONSHIP•HEALING
TRANSFORMATION**

Encounter Groups can be led online or in person – either for a small group or a larger gathering in church – and much of the information provided applies to both settings. The difference, of course, is the need to consider the technical aspects of working online. Fortunately, these are fairly straightforward and do not require any great computer expertise! The main thing that we would recommend is that the leader does not try to lead and also do the technical bits and pieces at the same time. It is far easier to have one person leading and another overseeing the computer!

Which internet programme works well?
There are many ways of meeting people online, including **Skype, Facetime, WhatsApp, Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams** and so on. Feel free to use whichever method you prefer. However, if you wish to divide your participants into small groups you will need to find a means of doing this.

We find that Zoom works well for us. You may decide to purchase a Zoom account but if you prefer to use the free version, we have discovered that this works just as well so long as the Encounter Group does not exceed the permitted 40 minutes.

There is one very important first step that is easy to overlook: after purchasing a Zoom account or setting up a free one, you will need to go to Settings and enable breakout rooms before you do anything else. (This is found under general Settings: In Meeting (Advanced)).

Using Zoom
Setting up the meeting
When you schedule the meeting you will be given a link which should be sent to people in advance, both guests and facilitators. You may like to send this the day before the Group Encounter so that it serves as a reminder.

Co-host
If you wish to appoint someone as your co-leader or assistant, Zoom gives you the opportunity to make them a co-host. This means that they will have the same full access as the leader in case it proves necessary.

Mute participants
Mute all the participants. This is not to deter them from speaking at an inappropriate moment, but rather to limit any possible background sounds, such a telephones ringing, sneezes etc. This can make it hard for other participants to hear.

How do breakout rooms operate on Zoom?
A key part of the session is helping people reflect on their experience, so during the meeting quickly assign them to breakout rooms, each led by a facilitator. Either do this whilst participants are writing brief notes about their experience, or preferably ask the co-host to do it for you whilst the meeting is in progress.

Allocating people to breakout rooms
- Click on the button at the bottom of the screen entitled 'breakout rooms'.
- Enter the required number of rooms, plus one extra.
- You will be asked if you want to allocate people manually or automatically. Select manually as this is the only way to ensure that you get a facilitator in each room.
- You will then be invited to assign each participant to a room. Try to get roughly the same number in each room and vary the mix from session to session to avoid any dependency developing. It may not always possible to put men with a male facilitator, and vice versa, but generally try to ensure that no-one will feel uncomfortable. Try to avoid one-to-one in breakout rooms.
- If you are not sure which group will suit someone best, put them into the extra room temporarily while you finish allocating people, and then return to move them into whichever room seems best. This extra room also works well if you are putting the same number of people in each group but then you realise that the numbers do not divide equally and you have two or three people remaining. Assign them to the extra room, and then you can take your time moving each of them in turn to whichever room you wish.

Before people go into breakout rooms
- Explain what is going to happen in the small groups.
- Ensure that the facilitators know how long they will have with their group (this will depend on the number taking part but 15 minutes seems to work well for a facilitator and 2 or 3 guests).
- Tell everyone that in a moment they will see on their screen an invitation to join the breakout room, which they need to accept.
- Open the breakout rooms.

If anyone needs help
If someone needs assistance, there is an option in each breakout room to 'Ask for Help'. They can click on this and the Zoom host will receive an invitation to join the room to help.

Ending the session
- After the allotted time, close the breakout rooms and people will start appearing back on the main screen. (Note that the default setting is for the rooms to close within 60 seconds (but this can be changed if you wish), so the facilitators need to be good timekeepers).
- After a final prayer of thanksgiving and blessing, close the meeting.

Afterwards
It is good practice to hold another short meeting straight afterwards for those involved in leading the session to debrief. The same Zoom link can be used for this.