

What does it mean to welcome at HHO?

Being a welcomer at HHO is offering the gift of hospitality to all who join at our Weekly Worship space in the 15 minutes prior to the service. Much like being 'on the door' in a physical Church, welcoming digitally offers people their first taste of the space and can help them to settle in. By offering warm welcome and giving everyone a chance to engage before worship begins (if they choose to) helps to gather God's people together and begin opening up to the divine presence of the Holy Spirit as well as one another. Being such a vital ministry here are some tips to help our welcomers prepare for their role!

Welcomer tips:

Zoom on early enough to catch the first arrivals (20-15 mins before the service is good)

Rename yourself "**Welcomer - Your Name**" by clicking the three dots in the corner of your video box (or by clicking 'participants' and selecting 'more' beside your name, and choosing 'rename')

Try and welcome people by their names "welcome so-and-so, how are you going?" (it helps that most people name themselves in zoom on their devices – if they don't and you don't know their names then ask them using their device name – it's O.K. you aren't expected to know everyone!)

You will need to keep an eye on the chat bar as well as those who are joining on Zoom, so have the chat function open on your device so that you can see what some might type in reply to your welcome.

It is also a great idea to have the 'participants' function open too, as that will enable you to see who is in the space as a list as well as the 'brady bunch' view. The best 'view' to have in Zoom is 'Gallery mode' which can be found usually at the top of your screen > select 'view' and then your options will drop down in the menu.

Being the welcomer involves a bit of self-emptying (prayer below) so try and keep the focus on the person you are welcoming rather than entering into conversation (two-sided dialogue) with sharing your own 'stuff'. If they ask how you are, keep your response brief 'well', 'not the best, but good to be here' etc.

The aim is to make every person who zooms on feel seen, heard and valued. Inviting them to share briefly how they are helps to do that. That doesn't mean we shut folk down if they share something big with us, but it does mean that we try not to let just one person monopolise the before space (the after space can be used for more in-depth reflection/discussion/sharing) and try and make sure that every participant has been named and welcomed before worship begins.

If there is a need for prayer identified in the welcoming space then this can be put into the intercessions by the broadcaster before worship commences, or noted in the chat.

Be gentle with yourself – you may not be able to welcome everyone by name (especially if some come at the last moment) and that's ok!

Prayer for self-emptying:

Lord Jesus, just as you emptied yourself and put your own needs aside to care for us, so I ask your assistance as I seek to empty myself and care for others. As I welcome all your children during our gatherings, may they hear your voice and feel your presence through my ministry. Holy Spirit, please fill me with your love, warmth and compassion. Amen.

Poem for self-emptying: Steve Garnaas-Holmes Unfolding Light www.unfoldinglight.net

*Loving One,
free me from my self-enclosure,
to trust I am fully loved and heard,
so I can love and hear others.
Help me to be fully present, to be aware of myself,
my reactions, my wounds and fears and filters,
and to mindfully, lightly, hold them aside,
so I can be fully present for others,
truly listening, opening a space in me
for them to be safe, to be true, to be free.
May I be a spacious and welcoming presence,
to offer people the precious gift of being heard,
being seen, being witnessed.*