



# IRELAND YEARLY MEETING RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

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## Guidance for Quaker Meetings in relation to the Covid-19 Virus

In the current situation, where many public buildings are closed and people are strongly encouraged to refrain from coming in close contact with each other, this raises the question of whether Quakers should be closing their Meeting Houses.

We are not a "top-down" organisation, and it is the responsibility of each Monthly Meeting to decide whether it wishes to partially or fully close its own Meeting Houses. This decision should be made in consultation with its constituent Preparative Meetings. However, in view of the still escalating situation with regard to the Covid-19 virus, Meetings should strongly consider the possibility of closing their Meeting Houses temporarily.

A number of Meetings have already decided to close their Meeting Houses, whilst others for the moment are planning on continuing to hold Meeting for Worship on Sunday mornings, even though access may be restricted the rest of the week. When Meeting Houses do remain open, it is important to ensure that guidelines about social distancing are followed (keeping about two meters between individuals).

Individuals who are elderly and/or have prior health conditions (heart problems, respiratory problems, suppressed immune systems, etc.) should be encouraged to stay away from Meeting until the threat of infection has receded. Elders and Overseers will bear in mind the importance of keeping in contact with any Members and Attenders who may feel isolated, to reassure them at this stressful time, and to help them feel a continuing connection with their Meetings. When Meeting Houses have been closed, older Members and Attenders may miss the comfort of Meeting for Worship especially keenly.

We encourage Meetings to consider holding their Meetings for Worship online, through Zoom or another video-conferencing programme - this was done very successfully by Cork Meeting last Sunday, with 24 Friends participating. The Office and I will be very happy to help you get started with this if you wish.

Friends can also participate in the online Meetings for Worship run by Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre. You can get more information about this, and register to participate, at the site

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/about/online-mfw/>

Similarly, Business Meetings and Committee Meetings can be held online, and in fact, Yearly Meeting's Committee will be meeting this way on Saturday 21st March. I encourage you to try this out. It can work surprisingly well! Please let the Office ([office@quakers.ie](mailto:office@quakers.ie)) or myself ([d.gabuzda@ucc.ie](mailto:d.gabuzda@ucc.ie)) know if you'd like more information about how to do this, or tips about how to make it work most effectively.

We will continue to hold all those impacted by this virus in the Light and hope that all in our community will remain safe.

In warm Friendship,

Denise Gabuzda  
Clerk, Ireland Yearly Meeting