

## How Watford Quaker Meeting is re-opening for worship with COVID-19

Here is how we are going to start in August, before other groups use the meeting house in September. There will be quite a few outward changes. Inwards and essentials stay the same.

### Our meeting for worship

We will continue meeting online, blended into a single meeting for worship with people in the main meeting room and the combined front and east rooms.

When someone ministers, this will be heard simultaneously in each room and online. We will be using two laptops, speakers and microphones, and people online can be seen on a TV or projector at the meeting house. As we experiment there will probably be some glitches and adjustments, and we hope it will be “good enough” for being together. You can also join us outdoors on the patio, without the sound connection, or sit out of view of the camera. Some people may continue joining us by independently sitting quietly at home without technology.

Our children and young people will continue meeting online for the moment, and we will review once we see how it goes in August. While we are not making provision for children at the meeting house, children are welcome to sit with their parents there.

Our Wednesday 12.15 meeting will continue online.

### Changes in the building

We will be observing 2m social distancing wherever possible, which changes how we use the building and limits the seating. We will have a one-way system and use different doors. This is to avoid infection from proximity in the lobbies, and to manage any queue for the toilets. A welcomer will greet you outside, and explain the routes.

In wet weather, to avoid queuing in the rain, the new main entrance is through the glass door of the front room (mind the step). Then you walk around the tables and the second welcomer, and out through the left door for toilets, or through the right door (east room) for the main meeting room. See the diagram. In dry weather, and for step-free access, come in through the normal front door – you may need to queue outside, 2m apart. For the patio, go around the left side of the building. Everyone is asked to keep your coat with you. Do come early, to avoid a queue forming or a rush.

**Please sit on a bench where there is a picture of a dove, or on a chair**, starting furthest from the entrance. To keep 2m apart, after some careful measurement there is just space for 16 places in the main meeting room, and 12 in the front & east rooms. There is space for up to 8 more people where there are pairs of doves or pairs of chairs for people from the same household/bubble. Outside on the patio we have 9 chairs (if dry!), and more in the garden.

Many people will choose to stay at home, looking after themselves or others, or to leave space for those who need to worship in person more than they do. We think this will be sufficient, without needing a booking system. When the doorkeeper sees the main room is full they will come into the lobby and indicate to start using the east room then the front room. Ultimately, 2 people can sit in the inner lobby, 3 stand in the outer lobby, then we have to say the inside is full.

### Safety

Now for the less exciting parts. Everyone needs to use the hand sanitisers on the way in and out. The toilets will become unisex with some sections closed, so one person at a time. Please go before you come!

The two welcomers have some extra jobs to do, to help us all keep safe. So they will smile and ask whether you have a high temperature, a new continuous cough or loss or change to your sense of

smell or taste, or been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 symptoms? They will smile again and ask whether you are at high risk from COVID-19, or is someone at home? They will ask if you are happy for them to record your attendance for the purposes of NHS Test and Trace, and either tick you off our printed list of regulars or ask for just your name and phone number. You don't have to give this consent, and the paper sheets will be disposed of after 21 days. In the meantime they will be kept in the locked walk-in cupboard. They will point out the routes to the unisex toilets or the meeting room, and hopefully you will smile back.

Government guidance is *"Certain groups of people may be at increased risk of severe disease from COVID-19, including people who are aged 70 or older, regardless of medical conditions. Individuals who fall within this group are advised to stay at home as much as possible and, if they do go out, to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside of their household."* No-one will stop you coming into Quaker meeting for this reason – it is your decision and your own risk – though we encourage you to think carefully about this.

Please wear a face covering if you can, in line with the Government's regulations for places of worship. Speak slowly and clearly and you will be heard. Remember some people are less able to wear a face covering and not expected to.

### **Practicalities**

We have removed fabric cushions, fabric chairs and books. Doors and windows will be open for ventilation. There won't be drinks or biscuits (sorry!). Collections will be online only.

**What to bring with you?** Think about bringing:

- Books - or set up links on your phone to these: [Quaker faith & practice](#), [Living our beliefs](#), [Quaker meeting and me](#), [Let's explore the Quaker way](#), and [Bible Gateway](#).
- A water bottle
- A cushion for your back
- A face covering
- A blanket if you like one
- A rubbish bag to remove your own waste

### **After meeting**

After notices, and hearing joys and concerns, we will exit the building via the side patio doors, or the new front entrance door, leaving the lobby for toilets and a step-free route. Let's keep conversations for outdoors, and socially distanced, in the lovely gardens.

### **Is all of this rather over the top?**

We are being careful and cautious, to reassure everyone about their safety, so more people can join in with worship, particularly those who cannot join online. We have to meet some specific [Government guidance on re-opening places of worship \(link\)](#), and satisfy our area meeting trustees who hold responsibility for our health and safety. Our risk assessment will be on our website. Our entrance arrangements are designed to avoid people queueing outside in the rain, while there are necessary conversations with the welcomers or queues to use the reduced number of toilets.

We will review things when we see how they go, and how many people come. If you have feedback, comments, or suggestions, do email Jonathan Carmichael ([jonathan.carmichael@ntlworld.com](mailto:jonathan.carmichael@ntlworld.com)), one of our trustees. Our cleaning will increase again in September when groups begin to use the meeting house.

### **Finally**

We do hope that you will be able to join us, whether online or in person. Come joyfully to meeting "with heart and mind prepared".