# Fewer seats for worship than people wanting to come?

# 5 August

With the need for social distancing and other COVID-Secure measures, many Quaker meetings are facing having fewer seats than people who want to come to worship in person. Here are different responses meetings are using or discussing, gathered from conversations with Friends across Britain.

## More meetings

Having two meetings to double capacity, eg 9.30am and 11.30am on a Sunday.

Having another meeting during the week (or three!).

Having several small meetings in Friends’ gardens/homes – connected in a single meeting with or without technology.

## Using the space differently

Changing the layout or furniture, so seats spread out to use all the space.

Sitting people from the same household/bubble together, by allocating pairs or sets of seats 2m from the next seats.

Having people join a longer meeting for shorter periods, at staggered times.

## Using different spaces

Using more rooms – connected in a single meeting with or without technology.

Having an overflow space – like a corridor, or another room.

Using outdoor spaces – for the whole meeting, or as an extension of the space (with a plan for wet weather!).

Hiring another bigger room elsewhere instead. Or as well.

Changing the time, to be able to use a larger space, like a large church hall.

Finding another local meeting which has space for your Friends.

## Fewer people needing seats

Continuing with online worship and other ways of meeting while at home.

Blending online and in-person worship in a single meeting for worship.

Asking people who can join online to carry on unless they have a high need to meet in person.

Helping people to join online worship by ordinary telephone. They can dial into the meeting. Alternatively, you can ring them up and put your phone on speakerphone, then they can hear and be heard via your computer’s speaker and mic.

Visiting people, bringing your laptop/smartphone to connect online together.

## Organising who comes

Timeshares:

* Weeks – People are given certain weeks they can attend, perhaps using groups already established for pastoral care, or by surname initials (eg A-G, H-O, P-Z), or mixing people up.
* Seats – Groups of two or three people are allocated one seat, and each group agrees who will use their group's seat each week.

Having a booking system:

* by email,
* or an internet app like Eventbrite,
* with the option to email or phone someone who will book for you.

Using a combination of:

* First come first served booking,
* Saving some places for people with higher need, or giving priority booking,
* Having two lists: people with higher and lower need, and filling up each,
* Assuming some higher need people come every week unless they say not,
* Saving a few seats for newcomers or people not in regular contact or less able to book.

## Try then adapt

Try one system for a few weeks, then see what people are actually choosing, and adapt.

Do share more ideas with [supportmeetings@quaker.org.uk](mailto:supportmeetings@quaker.org.uk).