

OLD CHATHAM MEETINGHOUSE REOPENING PLAN

APPROVED AUGUST 9, 2020

Following the coronavirus outbreak, Old Chatham Quaker Meeting closed our meetinghouse for all meetings for worship and other activities in early March 2020. As New York State began to reopen, a Meetinghouse Re-Opening Task Group was formed to explore and make recommendations to the Meeting about how and when some or all of us can gather in person in the meetinghouse for worship, following CDC and NYS guidelines.

The ROOF (Re-Opening Old Chatham Friends) Task Group was charged to develop a written COVID-19 safety plan adhering to the NYS requirements for reopening businesses and religious organizations. Once the Meeting gives approval, we will distribute the plan to all attendees, post it on our website, and post it on the bulletin board in the Greeting Room, as required.

Before reopening the meetinghouse, the Task Group will communicate the reminder that people should not come to worship if they have been exposed to someone sick with COVID-19 or if they have traveled and should be self-quarantined. The general precaution arrangements will be outlined (see below) so people will know what to expect upon arriving if they decide they are comfortable with the intended Plan and are willing to return.

Capacity: Phase 4* of NYS's reopening policy requires no more than 33% as maximum occupancy. Since the Meeting Room capacity is 81, the number allowed at one time is 27.

The Task Group is considering an online registration process to determine approximately how many Friends plan to attend the next meeting for worship. If this is implemented, registering will be encouraged but not required.

*Columbia County is part of the Capital Region, now designated to be in Phase 4 of the state's reopening.

Part I – People

For those attending Meeting for Worship at the meetinghouse, the Task Group puts forth the following procedures:

Screening (or Self-Screening)

- Self-screen before coming to the meetinghouse. We strongly emphasize that you cannot come if you have symptoms or have had contact with someone with symptoms.

- If you have any COVID-like signs or symptoms, please stay home. (These are headache, cough, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat, congestion, aches and pains, fever, chills, loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.)
- If you screen positive for COVID-19, do not come to/enter the meetinghouse until a medical provider has cleared you to leave quarantine.
- We will screen remotely (by phone or email survey) and will encourage avoidance of mingling with others after screening and before arriving at the meetinghouse.

Entering and Leaving the Meetinghouse

Entry up the porch ramp and stairs and through the Vestibule will be available for accessibility. Do not enter through the side door into the Loft Room and Fox Room, and not through the French doors into the Meeting Room. Friends are encouraged to arrive 10 to 15 minutes early to avoid congestion and to allow time for the process described below.

We will leave the Vestibule doors open for ease of entry with walkers and wheelchairs, and to minimize any touching of door surfaces. The protocol is as follows:

- Wear a mask and keep at least 6 feet apart from others at all times.
- Upon arrival, if there is a line entering the building, keep at least 6 feet apart. We will have a 6-foot tape stretching out from the door and a sign asking people to wait at that point until the entrance into the building is clear.
- If arriving as a couple or family, stick closely together and be mindful of keeping your little group distant from others. As for the others, watch out for couples/families and give them space. Guides will encourage everyone to notice the distance and when it is required or not required.
- On a table on the porch, we will provide hand sanitizer and masks for those who need one.
- A designated greeter will be at the table to encourage use of the hand sanitizer, to ensure everyone is wearing a mask, to answer questions, and to advise people as to the seating and social distancing precautions expected upon entering. The greeter will document each person's name. When there are guests, the greeter will ask for their name and phone number for contact tracing purposes.
- In the Vestibule, a designated guide will direct attenders to chairs placed at least 6 feet apart. (See "Blended Meetings" below for details on protocols for meeting for worship.)

- At the close of meeting for worship, leave through the French doors on the right (west) side of the Meeting Room, going straight out onto the lawn. Be conscious of keeping 6 feet apart and not congregating upon leaving.
- Restrooms will be open, with a sign directing use of the available cleaning/disinfecting supplies upon entering and leaving. If using the restroom after meeting for worship, leave the building through the Vestibule door.
- As there will be no “hospitality” available inside the meetinghouse, people can gather outside on the lawn. Remember to bring your own water, coffee/tea, or snacks.

Blended Meeting for Worship

After considering several options, we decided to explore having blended meetings for worship. This means that some people will be present in the Meeting Room and others who wish to can join via Zoom. Our goal is to include everyone who wishes to attend meeting for worship.

We tested the capability of a blended meeting to work and were successful in amplifying spoken messages for people to hear on Zoom and for people on Zoom to be heard in the Meeting Room.

- Upon being seated, we will gather in worship in the Meeting Room. Chairs will be spaced at least 6 feet apart, with chairs together for couples/families. The protocol is to keep 6 feet apart from non-family members. Guides will be trained to help with this.
- A microphone stand will be provided for giving messages. The microphone will have a windscreen for hygienic purposes (no touching required). Friends are encouraged to give messages at the mic stand.
- For those who do not wish to go to the stand, a “mic steward” will provide a handheld microphone that has been disinfected in between use.
- The Meeting laptop will be placed near the mic stand so that attenders on Zoom may be able to see part of the Meeting Room and possibly those giving messages at the stand.
- Those participating remotely are encouraged to join the Zoom meeting at least 10 minutes early. A host will make sure that all are muted and will review the protocol for staying muted except when speaking.
- As meeting for worship comes to a close, those attending in person will need to refrain from shaking hands.

- After announcements, the closer will remind attenders to keep at least 6 feet apart, not congregate, and leave through the designated French door.

Use of Meetinghouse by Committees or Small Groups Between Meetings for Worship

- Always check the website calendar first to make sure the meetinghouse is available for a committee meeting. Schedule the meeting on the calendar so everyone knows that the space is taken. If committees want to meet before or after meeting for worship, allow time for disinfecting. Only one committee/group should meet at one time.
- Committees need to follow all procedures. If any space is used other than the Meeting Room, be sure to disinfect surfaces after use. A checklist for disinfecting after use will be provided.
- The Loft Room can fit 4 people, and the Fox room can fit 5. Remember to stay 6 feet apart. The Greeting Room can accommodate more than 5 people if chairs are placed at a distance around the room.
- The Meeting Room should only be used for meeting for worship – not for any other kind of meeting. For larger committees, consider meeting on Zoom.

Children and Youth (C&Y)

We want to encourage families with children to participate in Meeting life even though it will be different and will require adjustments. Children over the age of 2 are encouraged to wear masks, practice social distancing, and refrain from running throughout the meetinghouse.

A 20x30 foot tent will be provided for children as an outdoor space. The Loft and Fox Rooms will be closed to C&Y for the time being. All play equipment, books, and art materials will be stored in containers on the porch.

Children can go to meeting for worship at their parents' discretion. A C&Y volunteer will remain outside to care for the children who do not go into worship.

Regarding arrival and participation in meeting for worship:

- Children will arrive with their parents onto the porch (as described above in "Entering and Leaving the Meetinghouse"). They will enter through the vestibule and stay together with their parents in the meeting room. The C&Y volunteer leading the

children's program will signal when it is time to leave and escort the children outside through the French doors.

- The other C&Y volunteer will be outside to greet these children when they leave the meeting room 10 or 15 minutes after worship begins.

C& Y volunteers should arrive at 10:45 am to be fully prepared to receive children placed in their care.

Families should bring snacks and drinks, as needed, since there will be no hospitality provided.

Parents should encourage children to use the bathroom at home before leaving for the meetinghouse. If they need to use the meetinghouse restroom, they will be accompanied by the adult who will follow the cleaning and disinfecting procedure.

Part II – Place

This section of the Reopening Plan includes “Face Coverings,” Hygiene and Cleaning,” and “Communications.” The intention is to keep the meetinghouse clean to protect all of us.

Face Coverings

- Masks are required at all times, except for children under the age of 2 and those with a health issue that makes the person unable to tolerate a face covering. If you give a message (standing at your seat or at the microphone stand) or leave to use the restroom, be sure to leave your mask on.
- We will obtain a supply of masks to have available for those who need one.
- Acceptable face coverings include cloth, surgical masks, and face shields.
- We ask that friends follow the guidance that face coverings must be cleaned or replaced after use or when damaged or soiled, may not be shared, and should be adequately stored or discarded.

Hygiene and Cleaning

To adhere to CDC and NYS DOH hygiene and sanitation requirements, we will do the following:

- Regularly clean and disinfect the meetinghouse. We will ask our cleaner to come more frequently (to be determined).
- Document the date, time, and scope of cleaning and maintain a log in a known place.

- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer containers containing at least 60% at locations throughout the meetinghouse.
- Provide greeters who will frequently clean/disinfect the porch railings and any door handles or other surfaces.
- Provide and encourage everyone to use the cleaning/disinfecting supplies before and after use of the restrooms and at other locations with frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles. Friends are encouraged to limit the sharing of objects and touching of shared surfaces; when in contact with shared objects or frequently touched areas, to wear gloves; and to sanitize or wash hands before and after contact.

Communications

To determine the level of interest in wishing to reopen the meetinghouse and to learn what measures people would like to see in order to feel safe in returning, we conducted a survey, which was well received and had a good response rate (34 responses representing 46 individuals in our Meeting community).

To communicate the safety plan so that Friends are informed of precautions and kept safe to the greatest extent possible, we will do the following:

- Before opening, email the Meeting list to remind people not to come to worship if they have symptoms, have been exposed to someone sick with COVID-19 (listing symptoms), or if they have traveled and should be self-quarantined; and remind everyone to bring a mask and any drink or food they will need. All will have a copy of the safety plan (by email and on the website) so that people will know what to expect upon arriving.
- Post sign outside asking people to self-screen for symptoms, whether they have been exposed to someone with symptoms, or have traveled, with a reminder to wear a mask. This will also state that attendance will be limited to 33% of the Meeting Room's capacity.
- Post signage throughout the meetinghouse to remind attenders to adhere to proper hygiene, social distancing rules, and cleaning and disinfecting protocols, and to wear a mask.
- Provide directional signs to indicate where to enter and leave the building and to maintain at least 6 feet between individuals.

- Establish a communication plan for attenders and guests with a consistent means to provide updated information. Methods include email, newsletter, website, Facebook, and phone calls.
- Explore implementing an opt-in/registration process, with confirmation that individuals have read the protocols and understood them.

Implementation of Reopening Plan

It is anticipated that the Plan will apply for the first two to three months after approval and most likely will need revisions with the coming of winter.

The actions in this plan can all be assigned to existing committees. We recommend establishing a small coordinating committee to support committees in identifying and carrying out their responsibilities, to ensure nothing falls through the cracks, and to make revisions to the plan for the Meeting's consideration.

Implementation of this plan comes with costs that we can not yet specify, but they will likely be related to masks, disinfecting supplies, audiovisual equipment, and materials and equipment for the Children and Youth program. We estimate spending during the remainder of 2020 could reach up to \$500 but could be as low as \$200 because of generous Friends offering much of the nondisposable items that are needed. Some committees may be able to cover costs from their 2020 budget line items while others may need additional funds.