

Charlottesville Friends Meeting - Suspension of in-person Meeting for Worship



Dear Friends,

Charlottesville Friends Meeting Ministry & Worship Committee sat this evening (3/12) with the question of how we should conduct meeting for worship in this moment. We discussed the very different ways the coronavirus affects people depending on age and underlying health conditions, and how outcomes vary widely; the majority of those who contract the virus experience only minor symptoms, while in the older population the mortality rate is quite high. We considered the very latest news that the virus can transmit via air as well as by droplets of moisture, remaining present in the air for up to three hours, as well as the up to 14-day incubation period. Finally, we looked at protection advice including hand washing, cleaning of surfaces, avoiding physical contact, spatial distancing and alternative greeting methods.

We discussed the possibility of holding meeting outside on the deck, and considered the vagaries of weather, the logistics of moving chairs and the potential of spreading contagion by doing so, and the challenges some Friends face with allergies at this time of year. We considered the conflicts that Risers might experience, weighing personal health concerns against their commitment in service of the meeting. We explored the potentially devastating experience of someone who comes to meeting only to later discover they have tested positive for the virus and might have infected others.

The importance of meeting in providing spiritual refreshment and community to our members and attenders was discussed at length. In prayerful discernment, we believe it is in the best interests of our community to suspend in-person meeting for worship for the time being. Bearing in mind the value of worship practice, however, we offer two suggestions. First, Friends are invited to simply spend their normal worship hour in silence at home. M&W members attested to their own positive experiences of having joined meeting intentionally from afar. The second option is to provide a virtual meeting for worship. M&W will open a Zoom meeting for the period from 8:45 AM to 12:15 PM on First Days. Friends are invited to join from their

computers or phones. We will close meeting and have announcements as usual, and the Zoom meeting will also be available for Connections should Program Committee so choose. Instructions on joining the meeting will be provided on Saturday -- please watch for an email.

As we move forward, M&W will meet weekly to discern whether to continue this practice for the coming week. In the meantime, we recommend that CFM activities (including the SPICES gathering planned for next Friday, 3/20) be postponed or held in a different format. Individual committees may discern for themselves how and where they will meet.

Friends, we look forward to continuing to be with you in community.

Ministry & Worship: Annie Becker, Melissa Elliott, Michele Mattioli, Laura Lockledge

