The Religious Society of Friends, a Christian Church, was founded in the mid-17th century. The founder, George Fox, believed that each person could experience communion with God for themselves, without a need for mediation by clergy or others. The *Christian Bible* is the key holy book of the movement, which shares the principal beliefs of other traditions of Christianity (described on page 16).

The term Quaker, now commonly used and accepted by the movement, was originally a nickname, referring to George Fox’s guidance to ‘tremble at the name of the Lord’. Members are referred to as *Friends* within the community.

The Religious Society of Friends has a worldwide membership of 370,000, with much diversity in religious opinion and practice.
Profile of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland:

Census 2006 registered 882 Friends in the Irish State who meet in large urban areas and other places throughout Ireland. Most members are of Irish origin. Members are referred to as Friends within the community while the term Quakers is also acceptable.

Religious contacts and religious practices:

Friends do not have formal clergy. The name of an elder or community member that the person may wish to visit them should be sourced from the person. In emergency situations an elder can be contacted, as necessary, through the numbers at the end of the section.

Death-related religious rituals:

There are no special rituals or practices for the dying. An elder will be happy to assist if the person or family so request.

Cleaning and touching the body:

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out on a deceased Friend.

Initiation ritual/infant baptism:

Baptism is not necessary even if there is a threat to life for a newborn infant.
Profile of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland

The Religious Society of Friends has had a presence in Ireland since 1654. Since its establishment the movement has been active in humanitarian activity in Irish society and many Friends have owned businesses renowned for positive employee well-being practices.

Essential Practice Point

Census 2006 registered 882 Friends in the Irish State. Most members are of Irish origin. There are four communities (referred to as meetings) of Friends in Dublin with others in Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford and other places in Ireland.

Members are referred to as Friends within the community while the term Quakers is also acceptable.

Care of the ill

Religious contacts and religious practices

Essential Practice Point

- Friends do not have formal clergy. Each meeting (community) of Friends has elders and overseers, who try to visit members who are ill or in distress. The person may wish to be visited by a specific elder or community member and hence the name of a religious contact should be sourced from the person. In emergency situations an elder can be contacted through the numbers at the end of the section.

- Religious practices are free of outward rituals, ceremonies, symbols and icons. Friends worship in silence with occasional spoken ministry.

Blood Transfusion and Organ Transplantation

There is no religious objection to these procedures.

Care of the Dying

Death-related religious rituals

Essential Practice Point

There are no special rituals or practices for the dying. There is no particular need to call an elder if death is imminent, although they will be happy to assist if the person or family so request. Friends are appointed by the community to support and advise families after a death and to assist with practical arrangements.

Cleaning and touching the body

Essential Practice Point

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out.
Postmortem requirements

There is no religious objection to postmortem.

Interment ritual

- The wishes of the deceased are respected. These may include cremation or donation of body or organs for medical purposes.
- A funeral takes the form of a silent meeting for worship. Spoken messages may offer thanks for the grace of God as seen in the life of the departed or prayer that the bereaved will be comforted.

Religious Icons and Symbols

Personal and religious items

There are no items of religious significance in the faith. A Friend admitted voluntarily to a healthcare setting may have a copy of the Christian Bible for personal use; in an emergency a Bible might be requested.

Use of religious symbols

Friends do not use religious symbols. Contributors have indicated that there is no need to remove the crucifix, cross, candles or images of saints if they are present in the mortuary area.

Additional Notes on Maternity and Paediatric Care

Initiation ritual/infant baptism

Essential Practice Point

Friends do not practise baptism for either children or adults. Infant baptism is not necessary if there is a threat to life for a newborn infant.

Foetal, infant and child death

Stillborn children, infants and children are buried in the same way as adults and the same guidelines apply.

Memento of a deceased child

There is no restriction on giving of mementos of a deceased child.

Developing a Contact for the Religious Society of Friends

During office hours an elder can be contacted through the main office:
The Recording Clerk, Quaker House, Stocking Lane, Dublin 16.
Tel: (01) 4956888/9

Out of office hours:
The Clerk of Elders for the Dublin Monthly Meeting has agreed to be liaison person for the whole of the Republic. Please use this number strictly for religious support and services for Friends.
Tel: 087 294 0550
Contributors

The Dublin Monthly Meeting of Elders contributed to the development of this section and approved the final content.