

Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting

FRIENDLY LINE

October 2020



Clerks Closing Minute from Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) 143rd Annual Session, 7/25/2020

"I don't preach a social gospel; I preach the gospel, period. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned with the whole person. When people were hungry, Jesus didn't say, 'Now is that political or social?' He said, 'I feed you.' Because the good news to a hungry person is bread." - Desmond Tutu

In recent years past, we have held our annual gathering on the campus of Scattergood School and Farm. This year, because of the pandemic Covid 19, we met for a much shorter session of only 2 1/2 days. For the very first time, we also met not in person, but completely online.

The theme of our gathering was *Finding Hope in Troubled Times*. Our program schedule recreated online many of our favorite activities and practices. The very first opening worship was deeply settled and rich in its vocal ministry. There was early morning Bible Study to feed our spiritual lives. The two evening presentations were designed to challenge and encourage us. In the first one we learned how to do worship sharing and discovered a joy that occurs when we listen to each

other without the need to respond. There is community to be found inside the silences between us. The second evening was set aside to introduce us to our new Head of Scattergood School and Farm, John Zimmerman. We join with school faculty, staff and students to enter a new stage of many exciting changes including a newly added middle school, headed by Jamie Newton.

We had times to visit and catch up with old Friends and meet new ones, only now it was all scheduled and done online instead of sitting on the benches in front of the Main.

We washed our own dishes at home instead of together after sharing a meal of food harvested from the Scattergood Farm.

Our committees met online and finished most of their reports before sessions began, instead of sitting together and sweltering in small hot rooms while they hashed out details. There was no late night singing in the meeting house, and also missed, perhaps most of all, were the voices of children playing outside our windows while we labored to find the words that spoke for all of us.

We found that in all our monthly meetings across the large geographic area that is IYMC, Friends grapple with how

best to join the work of healing the pain of violence, racism, greed and the economic exploitation so prevalent in our country.

These are uncertain times, and yet the discovery of many gifts this turbulence also offers came up over and over during our time together:

- the pleasure of welcoming so many new Friends to our monthly meetings and this gathering.
- the opportunity to stretch ourselves and adapt to new ways of doing that we never knew existed.
- the opportunity to reflect on what we miss, what is good, what we can let go and what we need to hold onto.

In this year 2020, Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) held its 143rd annual sessions, which means we have been gathering (at least) since the year 1877, or even earlier.

It doesn't take a historian to realize that some of those annual sessions were held in times of rejoicing and gratitude for prosperity, good harvests and good health. In other years, *(continued on page 5, along with the Fall Message to Monthly Meetings from Outgoing IYMC Clerk Deb Dakin, Whittier Meeting)*

Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business Sept. 12, 2020

Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business 09/13/2020.

Those attending Included:

Dorothy Lifka, clerk; Deborah Fisch, recording clerk; Steven Belknap, Pam Blackburn, Peter Clay, Claire Cumbie-Drake, David Drake, Dick Douglass, Bob Henderson, Andrea Holveck, Jack Holveck, Fred Nelson, Ann Robinson, Billie Wade

Meeting for worship with attention to business met on 09/13/2020 via Zoom. After a time of silence, the clerk opened the meeting for business a portion of a poem by Rumi from “A Community of Spirit” *There is a community of the Spirit. Join it, and feel the delight of walking in the noisy street, and being the noise.*

Minutes from Previous Month– Minutes from 08//2020, which were approved from the last Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business and printed in the August Friendly Line, were reviewed. The clerk asks that F/friends contact the clerk and/assistant clerk in the next few days if they find an error or omission.

Reports

Treasurer’s Report (Pam Blackburn): We are two months (17%) into the 2020/2021 fiscal year. Revenues of \$4600 are 12% of budget. Expenses of \$4900 are 13% of budget. We have a \$313.28 deficit.

Two months payments to Iowa Yearly Meeting (C) and payments to the Property Management Fund have been booked, but not paid out until our cash flow catches up.

The Meeting has received \$2060 in memory of Owen Newlin, which has been distributed to the General Fund (\$705) and the Property Management Fund (\$1355) per the family's instructions. \$400 in specific donations were received for the Property Management Fund. The General Fund made its monthly \$10 contribution to the Sharing Fund. \$400 in specific donations received for Property Management. We have received an additional \$1,760 in gifts in memory of Owen Newlin. These memorials were transferred to the General Fund & Property Management Fund per the family's instructions

Pam Blackburn, treasurer, reviewed the spreadsheets for the month of August as well as year to date. Friends had received the report from the treasurer prior to this day’s Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

It was pointed out that some received checks have not been cashed in a timely manner. The clerk asks that if F/friends have made a donation and their checks have not been cashed to please email Ann Robinson, Cindy Winchell, and Pam Blackburn. We accept the report.

Finance Committee Report (Ann Robinson, convener): The Finance Committee met August 18 and August 26 by Zoom. Attendees: Dick Douglass, Kelsea Gillespie, Ann Robinson, Pam Blackburn/treasurer, Cindy Winchell/assistant treasurer.

Each time, after a moment of silence, we started with briefly sharing recent bright spots for which we have been thankful during challenging weeks.

We reviewed the revised draft policy for use of a Des Moines Valley Friends debit card prepared by Kelsea Gillespie and Cindy Winchell. A few suggestions were offered. Cindy agreed to seek a legal review from a Meeting member/attender. After that, we will plan to bring our decision to have a debit card and the fact that we have a written policy for its use to a meeting for business and ask for a minute of approval (and will share the complete policy with anyone who wants to see it). We will develop a file with paperwork about the debit card use that will be kept at the meetinghouse. [Since the committee meeting, attorney Catherine Dietz-Kilen provided a legal review of the credit card policy, with only a minor change, which has been made.]

We made progress reviewing budget line items, with the guidance of the treasurer and considered budget requests from committees that we have received so far as we prepare a proposed 2020-2021 budget.

We agreed that it is better to take this slowly, do a good job and educate ourselves in the process. We also appreciate Pam’s patient explanations of the committees’ line items, practices over time, etc. We agreed it is important to remind committees and individuals within the meeting to submit requests for reimbursement for Meeting-related costs (that have been approved within their budgets) so

we will have a better sense of the real costs of meetings and so members are making their contributions to Meeting in ways that allow tax deductions.

We will work with Randy Adams, an Enrolled Agent and owner of Rotation Management Corp., a Des Moines tax preparation and accounting business, to conduct a compilation review of the Meeting's finances in the next few months. Ann will coordinate with Randy and other committee members as needed. Getting this "audit" and his input on the Meeting's financial procedures is an important step. We anticipate that this will set the stage for "friendly audits" internally most years.

We scheduled a time for our meetings in the upcoming months: the fourth Wednesdays, 7 p.m. Our next meeting will be September 23.

Ministry & Counsel Committee Report –There was no written report, but since several committee members were present the clerk asked if the following statement summarized the work of the committee this past month and committee members agreed it did.

Members of Ministry & Counsel considered Spiritual and other needs of Meeting members. Minute: Friends received the report of the Ministry & Counsel Committee.

Peace & Social Concerns Committee (Patty Wengert, convener): Our committee met on 09/11/2020. Jack Holveck, Peter Clay, and I were present. We took action on the Right relationships with Native

indigenous people. We reviewed our meeting's previous activities of education regarding this issue. We agreed an ad hoc sub-committee may help us discern what if any action our meeting might want to take, including a plaque or a notice of some kind.

We discussed our status as a sanctuary assistance member but decided there was no action required at this time.

We discussed Black Lives Matter.

We made three donations -- 1) DMARC 2) the Diaper Fund and 3) Creative Visions. The Committee approved giving \$100 to each group.

I have a written report to send also to Pam with addresses for the donations.

Peter Clay read the Peace & Social Concerns Committee prepared by Patty Wengert, convener. After reading the report, he commented on how important it is that Meeting continues to educate itself and seek ways to support Native Indigenous peoples' rights. Billy Wade and David Drake volunteered to participate with Peter on an ad hoc subcommittee to help Meeting discern what if any action our meeting might want to take. Peter will take the names of these two F/friends back to P&SC so the committee can formally name the ad hoc committee and its members. The ad hoc committee will be under the care of P&SC and will report to that committee. The clerk will send a reminder to the convener of P&SC to set the amount the committee wants to give to the International Day of Peace.

Re-Opening Ad Hoc Committee Report (Dorothy Lifka, convener): The committee met on September 2, 2020. Present were Dorothy Lifka, David Drake, Deborah Fisch and Andrea Holveck. There may be times when individual Friends need to use the meeting house (for example, access to the Internet or to pick up mail or other materials) even though it is officially closed. If you need a key, please contact Dorothy or David. Because of the possible need for contact tracing, we ask Friends to sign in on the clipboard located on the triangle cupboard and follow directions on the door about sanitizing.

We recommend that DMVF continue to not host special occasions at the meeting house such as weddings or memorial services at this time. Ministry and Counsel and Hospitality will continue to be available to help Friends and families as needed.

Reopening plans: Due to the current rates of COVID-19 in Iowa and specifically in Polk County, we recommend that the meeting house remain closed at least through September 30th. The committee will meet in one month to consider plans for fall and winter. The outside meeting for worship will continue to meet, as weather permits.

Cleaning of the meeting house will be reduced to once a month Minute: The clerk reviewed the written report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Re-Opening the Meetinghouse which Friends had received via email prior to this business meeting. The report was approved.

Old Business

Second Hour on AFSC's move – Sunday, September 20, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. on the meeting for worship zoom link.

International Day of Peace – Monday, September 21, 2020 – virtually. The clerk will send out the link.

Advice & Queries - When the pandemic started, Friends were invited to submit written thoughts to be considered for a proposed response to each month's queries. However, there has not been a good response to this. Friends considered whether Meeting should continue as it has, not trying to make a response to the Queries if the pandemic prevents us from meeting in person on our old regular schedule.

There was unity that it is important for us to find a way to continue to consider the Advice and Queries. It was suggested that Friends follow their pre-pandemic practice of considering the month's Queries during separate worship with attention to considering and sharing thoughts concerning the month's Advice & Queries. Wednesday evening seemed to be a time that most F/friends could be available provided it is not on the first or third Wednesday as several members are in a Yearly Meeting Spiritual Sharing group that meets then. It was decided the F/friends will meet the fourth Wednesday of September at 7:00 p.m. at the same Zoom address used for First Day worship. Deborah Fisch will serve as convener of the first meeting and the clerk will send out a reminder to Friends. Finding a time for regularly considering Advice and

Queries will be taken up at the next business meeting as the Fourth Wednesday will conflict with the Finance Committee Meeting and that is not desirable on an ongoing basis. Meeting approves. (Find the next advice/query on page 6 of this newsletter.)

Meeting Concludes - There being no new business, we concluded with a brief time of worshipful silence. The next meeting for worship with attention to business is scheduled for 10/11/2020.



Monarch caterpillar feasting on milkweed in late summer outside the Friends Meeting House. Photo by Fred Nelson.

NEWS OF OUR FRIENDS

Jan Falb has announced the joyful arrival of her grandson, **Andrew (Drew) James Meadows** September 24, in Canada, to **Sara Meadows**. Welcome, Drew, and congratulations to your family.

Jonah Kruse is now working for Shutterfly (which now owns Lifetouch photography). He travels around the state in his new (to him) black Dodge Caravan full of camera equipment to take photos of kids from kindergarten through high school. (The company does practice social distancing.) Often Jonah has to drive to a small Iowa town and spend the night in a hotel and then be at the school by 6 a.m. Other times, he is out of the house by 5 a.m. to get to the school on time. He only gets 30 seconds with each subject, including entering their name into the computer system and taking their payment. He has learned a lot of adulting and professionalism so far! We send condolences to **Michael Luick Thrams** and his family upon the passing of his “gentle, loving” mother, Phyllis A. Phyllis A. (Thrums) Luick, 84, of Mason City. Read her full [obituary](#).

Long-time member **David Drake** has expanded his psychiatry practice now that he is back in Iowa full-time. He will be serving clients for both individual and couples psychotherapy and medication management where appropriate, with the convenience and privacy of televideo. Interested folks can text their name, phone and email to David at 515-229-5085.

(continued from page 1)

Friends met during times of war, drought, civil unrest, and pandemics. And many of those years, like this one, were times of uncertainty.

Our theme was *Finding Hope in Troubled Times*, and we spent these days together exploring how to do this. Being together reminded us that in both good times and bad, what we are called to never changes: to Love God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds and all our strength; and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

This love gives us seeds to sow in the world... and so doing we join others in good work that started long before we were born, and will continue long after we are gone as we accompany each other along the way.

We will continue to work in our uncertain times, our troubled times, finding comfort in the words of poet Czeslaw Milosz, *"Early we receive a call, yet it remains incomprehensible, and only late do we discover how obedient we were."*

We now conclude our 2020 annual session, planning to meet again, God willing, at Scattergood Friends School and Farm, near West Branch, Iowa, from 7th month 21 to 7th month 25, 2021.

-- Deborah Dakin, clerk, and Carol Gilbert, assistant clerk

IYMC Outgoing Clerk Deb Dakin's Fall Clerk's Message 9/18/20

Dear Friends,

Moving into autumn signals the time for our annual "Fall Clerk's Letter" with memories and news from our recently concluded 2020 business sessions. Along with several reports, you will find the closing minute, a simple way to share a general overview of our gathering. This year, the body requested our closing minute also serve be our epistle sent to Absent Friends, Friends Everywhere, and Conservative Friends in North Carolina and Ohio.

Exciting things are happening at Scattergood School and Farm! How wonderful to have members of the staff, faculty and School Committee join us at yearly meeting from the Hickory Grove Meeting House. We enjoyed meeting new Scattergood Head, John Zimmerman and hearing of his plans for the school. We were also introduced to other incoming staff and faculty, including Jamie Newton, the first director of our new Middle School. As in the past, the reports from Scattergood School and Farm were thoughtful and moving. The energy, vision and investment of love by so many Friends speaks of the dream that Scattergood be our witness of faith to the world. All are welcome to roll up their sleeves and join in this vision.

Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee continues to mirror the ongoing work of Friends across IYMC who continue working for a more just world on many different fronts and in many different ways. In their report you'll find a minute on racism that Friends can use in any way they are led: incorporated into letters to the editor or elected representatives or shared with others who would find it helpful to promoting awareness on this issue.

As most already know, we are glad to welcome Carol Gilbert as new IYMC clerk and Bob Winkleblack as assistant clerk. There is now a new address to contact Carol: clerk@iymc.org

I am grateful for your patience as I grew into clerking over the past decade. I've been stretched and learned a lot. Most of all, I have deeply appreciated the opportunity to meet and work with so many remarkable people across our yearly meeting. You have truly enriched my life, and I hope to continue to build on all you have taught me.

Thank you.

Love, Deb Dakin

**QUERY #3: HARMONY
WITHIN THE MEETING**

This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.

John 15:1

ADVICE: It is sometimes difficult to remember that love is a gift of the Divine Spirit and not simply a human emotion. As imperfect human beings, it is not always possible for us to feel loving toward one another, but by opening ourselves to the Light Within, we can receive and give love beyond our human abilities.

Relationships among meeting members take time to evolve. Sometimes misunderstandings develop. When differences arise, they should not be ignored for the sake of superficial unity. We believe disagreements which might divide or disrupt a meeting can be resolved through human effort and divine grace, and may result in a stronger and more creative meeting. True harmony depends upon each person's deep respect of and faithful attention to the Divine Spirit within us all. We endeavor to practice humility, attempting to understand positions of others and being aware of the possibility that we may be mistaken.

It is the responsibility of the ministry and counsel committee to be sensitive to needs which may arise. Others in the meeting may be equally concerned, and because of greater understanding in certain cases, be able to give counsel. In reconciliation of differences, a position not previously considered may prove mutually beneficial. At times it may be necessary to confront individuals whose behavior is disruptive. A clearness

committee or professional help may be suggested in some situations. We must always remember the power of holding one another in the Light, and the healing that comes from forgiving ourselves as well as others.

QUERIES: What can we do to deepen our relationships with one another? How does gender affect the way we relate to each other? How does our meeting balance the needs for honesty and kindness? What topics do we avoid for the sake of "unity"? When in conflict with others, do we cultivate a forgiving spirit? Do we look to that of God in ourselves and seek to address that of God in those with whom we disagree?

Meeting Hosts:

SUSPENDED DUE TO
CORONA VIRUS

Child Care:

SUSPENDED AT MEETING
HOUSE DUE TO CORONA
VIRUS. If you have a child who would like to be included in Zoom child care or first day school for older youth, please contact Dorothy at dmlifka@yahoo.com.

Building & Grounds:

Any question about the building or grounds of the Meetinghouse can be directed to Building & Grounds Committee Convener, Charlie Brown, 515-689-6470.

Hospitality Committee:

If you see a housekeeping problem that needs attention, please contact the Hospitality Committee Conveners Cindy Winchell, 515-720-5516

Meeting for Worship: First days at 10 a.m. by Zoom via email invitation from clerk, in-person meetings temporarily suspended due to corona virus.

Meeting for Worship/Business: Regularly held on the second First Day each month at 1 p.m.

Second Hours: October 25 - IYMC & DMVF's Support through Apportionments – DMVFriends & Guest, Rebecca Bergus, IYMC Treasurer.

Friendly Line:

Please send info for next Friendly Line to Ann Robinson and Sandie Nelson no later than October 30, 2020, the last Friday of the month. Send to:

sandiebnelson4416@gmail.com

anny@mediacombb.net

Find us online at:

www.desmoinesvalleyfriends.org

Check out our Facebook group for members/attenders.

To be added, email Jan Falb, at jfalb0326@yahoo.com