

Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting

FRIENDLY LINE

January 2021



Second Hour with a Friend on Experience Teaching at Meskwaki Settlement

Eighteen Friends from Des Moines Valley and from Bear Creek meetings, along with one member of the Des Moines Intentional Eucharistic Community gathered on November 22nd via Zoom to learn from and visit with Jean Daleske, member of New Providence Friends Church. Jean taught middle and high school students in the Meskwaki Settlement School in Tama for a decade.

We learned that there are many young people who are very proud of their culture and heritage. Inspired by their parents and elders, they are continuing to preserve their language, culture, history and traditional ways of understanding the world. Although Jean worked hard to be sensitive to working across cultural boundaries it was inevitable that sometimes there were challenges. Over time, the students and their families gained trust and respect for Jean.

One key was that she had previously worked at the Ramallah Friends School in the West Bank and was very much aware that intercultural bridge

building takes work and a commitment to learn about the people and their culture. Even with the best of intentions, sometimes outreach is misunderstood and it takes time and patience for a deeper relationship based upon trust to grow. Sadly, Jean shared with us that racism directed against Native Americans is still very much in evidence in our state. On field trips for some of the top students at the school to places such as Adventureland, they encountered overt hostility, distrust and disrespect. Iowans have much work yet to do to dismantle this disrespectful and racist treatment of Iowans who were here long before Iowans of European origins arrived.

We learned that many of Jean's students have gone on to earn college degrees and some have come back to teach at the school in Tama.

When asked about how Friends might approach building more of a connection to the Meskwaki Nation Jean suggested we might ask about joining the Mesquakie Friends Church for services. Outreach to John McDonald, Jean's brother and the Pastor of that church has been made and we shall see what comes of that.

All in attendance were grateful for the time Jean spent with us

and agreed that we learned a great deal about our neighbors living in the Tama Settlement. <https://www.facebook.com/Mesquakie-Friends-Church-1607421439496526>

-- contributed by Peter Clay

Fog on a Winter's Morning

The landscape is white
Like an inner oyster shell
Birds, dark against the white
Come in to feed.

Trees gloved in white branches
As the hearth fire glows warm.

This is a moment in time
That fills the corners
Of mortal memory.

No sight beyond the present,
Ah the mystery
Beyond the fog!

by J. Brock Wommack 1.2.21



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

Attending: Dorothy Lifka, clerk; Deborah Fisch, recording clerk; Pam Blackburn; Peter Clay; Claire Cumbie-Drake; David Drake; Bob Henderson; Fred Nelson; Dick Douglass; Ann Robinson; Andrea Holveck; Jack Holveck; Peter Clay; Billie Wade; DJ Newlin; Jim Dietz-Kilen; Catherine Dietz-Kilen; Patti McKee; Carol Spaulding-Kruse; Janice Falb; Virginia Smith; Cindy Winchell

Meeting for worship with attention to business met via Zoom due to the continuing pandemic. After a time of worship, the clerk opened the meeting with the following quote:

All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.

-- Julian of Norwich.

Approval of minutes of previous meetings –

Friends considered for approval both the 10/11/2020 and the 11/08/2020 minutes. (Approval of minutes from 10/11 was postponed because of the amount of business to consider at the November business meeting. Both sets of minutes were distributed electronically prior to this business session and will be attached to the archived minutes. They will also be posted in the password protected portion of the Meeting's website.) Contact

the clerk if you do not have the password.

Minute 12.20.01 –

Friends approved both the October and November minutes with the understanding that if when re-reading them within the next week a F/friend notices a typo or error, they will contact the clerk and recording clerk so the minutes can be amended.

Treasurer's report (Pam Blackburn) The treasurer's report was sent out via email prior to this meeting. Since the Finance Committee report would cover some of the same information and being mindful of wanting to allow time for reports requiring discernment and possible approval of "action items," the clerk asked Friends to approve the report without the treasurer giving a detailed oral explanation.

Minute 12.20.02 –

Friends approved the treasurer's report with appreciation.

Summary of treasurer's report on General Fund as of 11/30/2020 –

We are 42% of the way through our fiscal year, with expenses at 34% of annual budget and income at 54% of budget.

Fund activity – The General Fund made its monthly contribution to the Sharing Fund; \$1,000 in specific donations was not transferred to the Property Management Fund. This has been referred to Finance Committee for a recommendation. Revenues exceeded expenses for July – November. All known bills, including Meeting's Yearly Meeting apportionment are

paid, except for the usual monthly accruals paid quarterly, and the housekeeping service whose bills are under review, and an insurance dividend for \$389, a portion of which may be due to Friends House.

The Meeting receives a substantial portion of annual revenues from October to December each year. If you are able to make a year-end contribution, your donation will be appreciated.

Friends House Quarterly Board Meeting report

(Deborah Fisch, Meeting representative) – The quarterly meeting of the Friends House Board was held via Zoom on 12/11/2020. Regrets were received from Pam Blackburn and Steve Shivers.

Update by current tenants

After a brief time of Silence there was a tenants' review. Jon Krieg reported that interest has been expressed by more than one person/group in renting space at FH.

There are currently a lot of moving pieces regarding the transition of AFSC Iowa and Iowa Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON) to the new organization, Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice (IMMJ). They intend to have vacated their offices in Friends House by the end of March and it was reported that by April, AFSC and JFON staff involved with the merger will officially be employees of IMMJ. AFSC would welcome donations of any sturdy moving boxes.

It was reported that FH tenants are following protocols set up for safety during the pandemic. This includes meeting clients at the door and informing them about

safety protocol, requiring face masks be worn while in the building, having hand sanitizer readily available at the door for people entering the building, and sanitizing any surfaces they or their clients may have touched after the client leaves. Two or three tenants report they are using their office space fairly regularly.

Financial review – Randy Adams reviewed the first quarter financial report (Sept.-Nov 2020) which was emailed to Friends House Board and Transition Committee members in advance. He said that there is an adequate amount in reserve and that “Everything is looking good.” The trial balance (debits vs credits) is about \$460K.

Building update –The second-floor bathroom toilet overflowed, going unnoticed for quite awhile. This resulted in water leaking through to the floor of DMVF Meeting entryway into Friends House on the main floor. The upstairs toilet and the floor damaged from the resulting standing water have been repaired. Bricks in front of the building have been repaired and painted. A boiler maintenance kit was installed at the same time as the new furnace.

Transition committee report – The Transition Committee (TC) gave a very complete report on their work so far, their recommendations to the Board, and the work left to be done before the end of March. Claire Cumbie-Drake will give a complete report to Des Moines Valley business meeting on 12/14, so that information will not be included in this report.

The TC's next meeting is scheduled for 01/10 at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom. FH Board will have a

called meeting 01/15 at 10 a.m. to receive the TC's latest report.

Minute 12.20.03 –

Friends expressed great appreciation for the critical work being done by Meeting representatives, the TC and all of Friends House Board.

Friends House Transition committee report (Claire Cumbie-Drake) This report covers potential options for the management structure of Friends House and the relationship between Friends House and Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting after the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has fully vacated the premises.

1. Keep Friends House, Inc. Hire a professional property manager to manage the property, subject to the terms of the lease between Friend's House, Inc., and Des Moines Valley Friend's Meeting. The property manager would assume the role Jon Krieg has played in maintaining the property, recruiting tenants, collecting rent, paying bills, etc. It would shift this expense, which is now paid as part of Jon's salary through AFSC, to Friends House.

a. The Board would need to consider whether Berniece Johnson would continue to perform certain functions related to the management of the property.

b. A concern is whether Friends House, Inc. has a sufficient financial pad to weather an extended period of time until space currently occupied by AFSC is released.

c. Property Manager:
What does a professional

property manager charge?
Could a current tenant be the property manager?

d. Create a strategic marketing plan to rent out the open spaces.

2. Same as number one, except that Friends House, Inc. and Des Moines Valley Friends re-negotiate their lease agreement so that the Meetinghouse property is maintained by the professional property manager and all upkeep and maintenance become part of the Friends House budget. DMVF would pay monthly rent in lieu of maintaining the property independently. There would need to be specific agreements about which items each party is responsible for, such as utilities, routine maintenance, and property improvements.

a. Tenant preferences (current)

- i. AFSC
- ii. Current nonprofit tenants
- iii. Outside nonprofits
- iv. Current business tenants
- v. Outside businesses
- vi. A dovetailing with Quaker values is given

3. Friends House, Inc. sells the property and dissolves. Proceeds are paid to Des Moines Valley Friends per the current lease agreement to re-locate, with any balance distributed under the terms of the Articles of Incorporation.

a. Whether the property would remain as office space would depend on the buyer and/or the terms of the purchase agreement. Could part of the purchase agreement be that current

tenants can stay in their current office spaces?

b. What would be the criteria for non-profits to receive monies from the selling of the property?

4. Sell Friends House – Do not sell Des Moines Valley Friends Meetinghouse

a. Is this idea appealing to potential buyers? Would we lose money by not selling all the property?

b. Proceeds distributed to whom?

5. Sever the ownership of the meetinghouse from the office spaces, and each owns, maintains, and manages their spaces independently, with the possibility of sharing certain common spaces.

a. The general consensus was that this is not feasible. However, we did not discuss (and would need to research) the concept of a condominium- type arrangement with oversight by a Board of Directors (similar to an HOA) and agreements regarding the use of certain common areas (e.g., parking lot).

Minute 12.20.04 – Meeting minutes its appreciation for the hard work and time being given by Claire Cumbie-Drake and our meeting reps on the Transition Committee (TC). We are grateful for their careful listening to our questions and concerns, and for sharing them with the TC as it discerns options that could provide way forward for Meeting and all tenants of FH. We are aware of the hours and hours of time they and others on the TC are spending to do

research necessary so they can make the best possible recommendations to Friends House Board.

Update on use of kitchen by Edna Griffin Mutual Aid (EGMA) & receipt of email letter with a

concern (by Peter Clay and Deborah Fisch, liaisons to the EGMA project)

Edna Griffin Mutual Aid (EGMA) is continuing to use the Meeting's kitchen to prepare meals and food to distribute to houseless people living in the Des Moines metro area every Wednesday. Peter has visited them twice when they were busy making the food. They are very grateful to have the use of the kitchen. They report no issues or concerns to the liaison team. The focal/contact person for EGMA is Arianna Callejo and both of us have her contact email and cell phone number.

Our experience is that the facility is being well cared for and the EGMA volunteers are responsibly using our facility. There was a minor concern about leaves found in the front entryway due to the door being propped open. That, and all other cleaning and care concerns have now been addressed. Both of us are available to assist whenever needed to help with cleaning the kitchen and other areas needing attention because prep time has taken longer than planned. This will let EGMA volunteers get the meals distributed in a timely manner. Arianna will reach out as needed.

Permission to use the Meeting's kitchen was originally given with the understanding that both EGMA and Des Moines Valley Friends would review how all was going in November to make sure the arrangement was mutually acceptable.

At this time, we are happy to recommend that Meeting continue to make kitchen and limited storage space available to the volunteers from EGMA throughout the time that the pandemic keeps Friends and other organizations from using the meetinghouse. At that time, Friends will need to confer with the volunteers to 1) See if they are still wanting to use the kitchen and limited storage area; 2) If so, how would that mesh with Meeting and regular renters needs for the space. It might work to continue the arrangement, but it is not really possible to ascertain that at this time.

Receipt of email letter with a concern – We were both recently cc'd in an email letter from Jeff Kisling, to Bear Creek Monthly Meeting, where he is a member. It named an idea he had labored with for some time and now felt clear to share, concerning his hope that Bear Creek Friends would make a commitment to work to lay down their P&SC Committee and move to fully engaging in Mutual Aid as a way of putting Meeting leading into action, and as a way of engaging with others in social justice projects; allowing for more immediate response once they found unity in proceeding with

any particular action, as well as giving them a way to join with others in their work. We were cc'd because he knew we had been appointed liaisons by Des Moines Valley Meeting for the Edna Griffin Mutual Aid. Perhaps he was planting a seed through us because he knew DMVF were already engaged in Mutual Aid through the EGMA project in our basement. In any case, when Peter contacted Jeff, he learned that Jeff is very interested in encouraging DMVF, and in particular, in its P&SC committee, to consider if Meeting can reframe how we think about doing peace and justice work. He would like Quakers to think about reframing social justice work as part of an emerging, renewed emphasis on mutual aid – us helping us, not us helping “them.” As has been demonstrated to us through our limited experience working with EGMA, we can accomplish much more when we are willing to collaborate with other social justice organizations. And, sharing what we have in time, energy and resources with what others can bring to the table lets us all better serve those in need and/or being oppressed. This would require a willingness and commitment on the part of both P&SC and Meeting (not only a few *individuals* in the Meeting) to become actively involved in various other Mutual Aid members' calls to action. Many of those calls to action will likely turn out to be similar to those that Meeting is already seeking ways in which to

respond. By sharing, as led, both our time and physical/financial assets, we would be able to more productively address concerns laid on our collective hearts by the Spirit.

In his letter Jeff says, “In justice work it is essential to be responsive to what oppressed communities are asking of us. Midwest Indigenous organizers and Des Moines Black Lives Matter (BLM) are embracing Mutual Aid. By inference, they are asking us to do so, also. One of the concepts of Mutual Aid is that Mutual Aid communities will crop up all over.”

Jeff also sent some queries to which he invites Meeting to consider. The queries are attached at the end of these minutes.

We suggest Meeting ask P&SC to prayerfully consider the possibilities set out by Jeff in his email and bring a recommendation back to business meeting.

Minute 12.20.04 –

Friends approve continued use of the Meeting's kitchen, and a limited amount of storage space by volunteers of EGMA until the time that the pandemic no longer necessitates Friends and other regular renters refraining from using the meetinghouse for safety concerns. At that time, if EGMA is still interested in using the kitchen we will need to re-evaluate and check with the schedules and needs of our long-time renters, as well as our needs for use of meetinghouse space.

Meeting asks Peace & Social Concerns to consider the letter and suggested queries shared

by Friend Jeff Kisling and requests they bring a recommendation back to meeting for worship with attention to business.

Finance committee report

(Ann Robinson) The Finance committee met on 12/09/2020 via Zoom.

Attendees: Dick Douglass, Catherine Dietz-Kilen, Kelsea Gillespie, Ann Robinson (convener), Pam Blackburn (treasurer), Cindy Winchell (assistant treasurer)

After a moment of Silence and the sharing of something for which we are thankful/hopeful, Pam Blackburn reported on income and expenses at the end of November relative to the FY20-21 budget approved by the Meeting in November. We are doing well in most categories. Recent bills to Friends House have been paid. Committee members questioned the Hospitality line item that is primarily the cleaning service, for which we have already paid 87% of what was budgeted, even though cleaning is only happening once/month. Pam agreed to look into this to find out if there is a mistake or if their rates have gone up significantly.* Questions were also raised about when/how to pay the fee for the website. Ann will look into this.

Pam provided charts of giving over five years, showing how it fluctuates month to month, with a similar pattern whether based on fiscal or calendar years. As expected, our strongest giving occurs November through January. However, we also tend to have increased giving in June, around the end of our fiscal year. Since more people have started to give regular monthly donations through bank auto-pay, giving is

somewhat more stable. This is very helpful to better predict income for budgeting and to keep cash flow steady to pay bills.

Changing DMVF Fiscal Year? – The committee considered the possibility of changing DMVF fiscal year (FY) to a calendar year, rather than the July to June FY that we have used for years, in part to align with Iowa Yearly Meeting, Conservative. We considered pros and cons, deciding that, in terms of finances, it makes sense to keep the current fiscal year. It may encourage peaks in giving twice/year. It also would change the timing of budget development to the busier holiday season. We decided that there may be reasons that the Meeting would switch to a calendar year system, but the Finance Committee does not recommend this change at this time.

Status Update on the Financial Review – Documents were provided to Randy Adams, who is doing the financial review for the Meeting. Ann and Pam met with him by Zoom on 12/02 so he could ask questions about our processes. He plans to provide a written report in December and a verbal report so that members of the Meeting can ask questions. After some discussion, the Finance Committee members came to unity that we will plan a “called” Finance Committee Meeting for the purpose of hearing Randy’s report and invite all Meeting members and attenders to participate. Ann expressed appreciation to Pam for her work on a short timeline to collect documents for the financial review. We also appreciate Claire Cumbie-Drake’s quick review of the agreement with Randy. A draft copy of the contract was provided

to committee members for a quick review in November. As a result of comments, several changes were incorporated into the final contract before he started work (the final copy, signed by the clerk, was provided to the committee).

Friends listened with interest to the report and expressed gratitude to the committee and Meeting treasurer and assistant treasurer for their important work. Friends expressed some concern in the report about the charge for cleaning above what was budgeted in the Hospitality line item, even though the building has been closed and cleaning reduced to only once a month. The treasurer and others who communicate with the cleaning firm said that since the Finance committee meeting, they learned that costs for cleaning had increased, which had not been communicated to us; and the cleaning service said they could not reduce costs to what we estimated for once/month, so they have continued to clean twice/month.

Minute 12.20.05 – Meeting approves the recommendation of Finance committee that it continue to use the same fiscal year in the past (07/01 to 06/30) as the gains of moving to a calendar year are not enough to warrant change at this time. It also appreciates the work done by Friends to figure out why there was such a huge discrepancy in what we were being charged for cleaning the meetinghouse and what was budgeted by the Finance Committee. We approve payment of the bill and making sure there are adequate funds for continued cleaning through the fiscal year.

Peace & Social Concerns Committee report (Peter Clay presented the report because convener Patty Wengert could not be present.)

Peter and I met via Zoom on December 4, 2020. We reviewed the progress of the ad hoc group concerning Right Relationship with Native/Indigenous Peoples. Thanks to Peter work here in Des Moines we discussed the emails sent by Yearly Meeting clerk, Carol Gilbert and Jon Krieg from American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) concerning the idea of Mutual Aid for local Peace and Social Justice organizations to achieve group goals. AFSC is utilizing this concept to work with other groups to achieve AFSC-stated goals while partnering with other groups. An example of one Mutual Aid partnership currently is that the Edna Griffin Mutual Aid group is using the DMVF’s kitchen to provide meals here in Des Moines to people living in the homeless camps.

We reviewed our meeting records for 09/11/2020. Our committee had authorized contributions for Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) both the General Fund and the Diaper Fund.

Andrea Holveck had also checked in with our committee during the past month regarding the commitment our meeting has with the asylum seekers Des Moines group. The committee had agreed that we should send \$200 related to our ongoing commitment. Andrea Holveck attends those virtual

meetings on our behalf. I thought I had sent the appropriate reporting of that contribution.

At that time, we also authorized \$100 to Creative Visions. Those reports are attached here to clarify.

The American Friends Service Committee continues to do important, community-based work in the Midwest Region although they will be leaving Des Moines next year, probably by March. The Iowa Immigrant Rights program was not laid down. This vital work will continue. The Des Moines-based AFSC team will be partnering with Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON) to work on behalf of Iowa's immigrant and refugee communities as a new entity. While we feel understandable sadness in the departure of AFSC from Iowa, with an important presence here that began back in the 1930's, we can celebrate that long history and continue to remain engaged in the important work that AFSC continues to do around the Midwest. We can also remain involved in the work on behalf of immigrants and refugees that will continue here in Des Moines.

Working for prison reform and justice, the Michigan AFSC program continues to advocate for the incarcerated and their families with new and important initiatives. On 11/29/2020 AFSC hosted an interfaith service in solidarity with the Palestinian people. On 12/15/2020 there will be a *No Way to Treat a Child* webinar. In the Twin Cities, AFSC is doing important outreach to youth during these difficult times, helping them to deal with physical distancing, remote learning, and systemic racism. AFSC staff are

stepping up and helping to develop strategies and tools for new ways to create safe communities and to address white supremacy.

The use of our kitchen by Edna Griffin Mutual Aid is going very well! Every Wednesday they come to prepare meals to deliver to the houseless communities living in and around the Des Moines metro area. Des Moines Mutual Aid (DMMA), a collective of people and programs working collaboratively to provide horizontally structured mutual support to meet basic human needs is now a tenant in Friends House. Our meeting has a great opportunity to lean into this work and build a larger relationship with DMMA going forward.

Library Committee Report – (Virginia Smith) Virginia has ordered and will soon be receiving the Quaker Motto calendars for interested members/attenders.

Ministry & Counsel Report (Convener Gordon Bivens could not be present, so the clerk read the committee's report.) M&C meets regularly the first First Day of each month. At our December meeting, we were happy to hear that Michael Lueck's request for membership transfer from Twin Cities Meeting was complete. The committee shared information about member's/attender's special needs and tried to identify how the Meeting might respond.

Meeting Concludes

The clerk closed meeting for worship with attention to business after a brief time of worshipful Silence.

The next meeting for worship with attention to business is scheduled for 01/10/2021.

Queries suggested by Jeff Kisling (From *What are your answers? Quakers, social justice and revolution* (jeffkisling.com))

Quakers like to ask ourselves questions we refer to as queries. Rather than being "told" to do something, the questions invite us to focus on what we are or are not doing. I would ask these questions. You might have others.

- 1) What Mutual Aid groups are in your area?
- 2) What relationships do you see between your peace and justice work, and the concept of Mutual Aid?
- 3) What would your justice work look like if you adapted it to the Mutual Aid model?
- 4) How might faith integrate with Mutual Aid?
- 5) How could Mutual Aid expand who you do your justice work with? Bring in more Friends in your meeting, youth in your meeting, and other people in your wider community?
- 6) How can we create ways of meeting our needs, making decisions, and organizing ourselves and solving problems outside of the State structure and the capitalist system?

Jeff has blog posts written related to Mutual Aid at jeffkisling.com. He has also authored an online booklet on what he has been working on: Mutual Aid in the Midwest (designrrr.co)

**Meet New DMVF Attender:
Billie Wade**

I am a lifelong Central Iowa gregarious introvert, living in West Des Moines the past 12 years. After years of employment in corporations and nonprofit organizations, my current vocation is writer, emotional healing facilitator, and writing coach.

My lifetime of journaling experiences inspired me to create *Journaling to Heal* to help others on their journey of healing from traumatic and other disturbing life events. I enjoy a variety of reading materials—fiction, short stories, nonfiction, and spiritual perspectives and practices. I am not a fan of gory murder mysteries, horror, romance, war, wild west, true crime, or fantasy. I would love to know other writers in the Community, even if you write in a different genre than I—women’s fiction.

My long and at times arduous spiritual journey led me in several directions. I was raised in a religious tradition of a jealous, angry, punitive, vengeful, selective God. My quest for a loving, compassionate, merciful God began in preadolescence. After leaving my home church of 31 years, I visited several others and interviewed pastors. I left the church entirely at age 35, heartbroken and dismayed.

In the fall of 2019, a friend invited me to Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting. For a host of reasons, I did not attend until September 6, 2020. One evening I journaled about my admiration and respect for my friend’s ability to approach life with compassion, graciousness, and a



sense of humor. I wrote my desire to experience peace as a constant undercurrent in my life which he exemplified. Then the lightbulb came on: He had shared with me his spirituality and approach to life by the invitation to the Meeting. (Duh! Some moments are like that. It took me only a year to get here.).

Despite Zoom meetings, I at once felt comfortable. With every Meeting and every interaction, I am treated to a spiritual retreat; spirituality leads every decision. Friends have reached out and invited me into their hearts. I marvel at how sensitivity and kindness are infused into every word and gesture. I so appreciate the Quaker commitment to peace and to social justice. In only five months, I have experienced a new richness and depth to my spiritual and mental well-being. Great Mystery, the Power and Light that informs and guides my life, is beyond my comprehension, an Infinite Power of Golden White Light and Energy dwelling in all things—even rocks, scorpions, alligators, and mosquitoes. Great Mystery works through all things, even those we deem inanimate.

I look forward to joining Des Moines Valley Friends as a Member when I have had time to better understand and practice the freedom of individual spirituality within the loving embrace of the collective Community. I am home. You can contact me at via email, billiewadewriter@gmail.com, or by phone. 515-779-9469. I hope to hear from you. You can find my writing at billiewade.com, <https://dmpcc.org/billie/>, <https://www.createwritenow.com/life-matters-blog>, and <https://www.escapeintolife.com/tag/lifes-matters/>.

Namaste.
Billie

NEWS OF OUR FRIENDS

Peter Clay reports that he put up his first Christmas tree in more than a decade! Many of his ornaments are nearly 100 years old! They were from his mother’s childhood in the 1920s, in the U.P. of Michigan. He loves having the tree, especially the warm glow at night or in the early morning. Peter plans to leave it up until February to keep his home as warm and cheerful as possible through this difficult winter. He is enjoying feeding the birds (as many as ten pairs of Cardinals seen at one time!) and also loves seeing the rafters of wild turkeys in the field across the street from his home. Peter got himself a pair of modern snowshoes, which he tried out in the same big field where the turkeys gather and where he has also seen a bobcat! "Wild neighbors are keeping me company and that means so much!"

Query Discussion #12: Peace and Nonviolence

Considered December 30, 2020
(This query was mistakenly considered rather than query number 6. Charitably regarded, perhaps we were simply ahead of our time.)

“[We] seek to live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars.”

-- George Fox

Advice: We seek peace within our own lives. Sometimes there are barriers to peace within families and meetings, and among individuals. Anger and frustration may result in hurtfulness which leaves physical, sexual or emotional wounds. Healing and forgiveness are possible when our hearts are opened to the transforming love that comes from the Spirit Within. The violence we oppose is not only war, but all unloving acts. Friends seek peaceful resolution to conflicts among nations and peoples. Wars can easily erupt when nations depend upon armed forces as an option for defense and order. To oppose war is not enough if we fail to deal with the injustices and inequalities that often lead to violence. We need to address the causes of war, such as aggression, revenge, overpopulation, greed, and religious and ethnic differences.

Queries:

What are we doing to educate ourselves and others about the causes of conflict in our own lives, our families and our meetings?

Do we provide refuge and assistance, including advocacy, for spouses, children, or elderly

persons who are victims of violence or neglect?

Do we recognize that we can be perpetrators as well as victims of violence? How do we deal with this? How can we support one another so that healing may take place?

What are we doing to understand the causes of war and violence and to work toward peaceful settlement of differences locally, nationally, and internationally? How do we support institutions and organizations that promote peace? Do we faithfully maintain our testimony against preparation for and participation in war? We shared the sense that it is difficult to remember our pre-Covid19 lives. Gathered friends reflected that we are experiencing greater mutual reliance and closeness in our community. We also recognize the importance of considering the needs of members of our community who may be less inclined or able to connect via Zoom or occasional distanced visits. Who have we lost touch with? We identified some Friends with whom we would like to be more intentional about reaching out and sharing fellowship – through socially distanced visits, telephone calls, and cards or letters.

Many of our members and attenders who work in the social services – as mental health providers, teachers, providers of legal services bring our concern for assisting victims of violence or neglect to our daily work. As a meeting, we have helped transgender women who had not felt safe in their own communities. We feel fortunate to have accepted the invitation of

Edna Griffin Mutual Aid to share our kitchen, so they can better provide outreach and advocacy (including meals) to homeless individuals and families. Our discussion turned to the question of how we recognize our own individual and community participation in violence by sharing our growing awareness through experience and reading books such as *White Fragility* and *Becoming Anti-Racist*, that our language and assumptions that emerge from our majority white culture, amount to countless microaggressions against people. While unintended, this performance of majority privilege is nevertheless hurtful. We are grateful for members who have advocated locally, nationally and internationally for the end of capital punishment and to end national funding nuclear weapons and drone warfare. Members have brought concerns about many other issues, including climate change and the rights of Palestinians to our meeting community. Members have been faithful in leading the weekly Tuesday evening meditation group. Prior to pandemic limitations, members have worked to bring Alternatives to Violence programs to area prisons. Members of our meeting also work to sponsor and support specific immigrant families, often through years-long relationships. Our members have worked as influencers by writing editorials for the *Des Moines Register*. We work to promote the programs and priorities of the Friends Committee on National Legislation.

Our commitment to understand ourselves and the 'other' is often hashed out in our meeting's 2nd hour conversations. We also seek to bring openness to conversations and interactions in the larger communities in which we're embedded.

Finally, at this time of Covid-19, we seek to practice healthy self-care, making time for rest and reflection, so that we can be genuinely available to Spirit, and one another.

QUERY #7 FOR JANUARY: HOME AND FAMILY

Advice

We seek an atmosphere within our homes and within our families which nurtures the many physical, social, spiritual and emotional needs of each of us. This is true whether we live alone or with others.

A family, whatever its composition, is a unique and sometimes fragile bonding of people. At its best, it is concerned with the welfare of the whole and each of its constituents.

Children bring gifts to the families that nurture them. Our children's earliest encounters with the principles of Friends usually occur within our homes. Examples we set are often more effective than verbal guidance. The loving support of the meeting is needed as children learn to understand and practice Quaker principles in their lives.

While we try to make our homes centers of love, we sometimes feel anger and hostility. Part of the challenge of being human is to learn to constructively channel the energy

of anger, relying on the Divine Spirit for love and guidance. Worship in the home can enable us to hold ourselves and one another in the Light. Respect for truth, as each discerns it, is essential to the happiness and spiritual growth of all persons within the home. Clear communication, patience and a sense of humor are vital to family relationships.

We value setting aside time for rest, recreation and creative activities. Offering hospitality can foster mutual bonds of friendship and love and can enrich our own lives and the lives of others.

Queries

How can we make our homes places of love and hospitality? What different expectations do we hold for women and men, boys and girls?

How can we bring more equality into our relationships? How do we develop and maintain lines of communication? In what ways do we share our deepest experiences, struggles, concerns and beliefs with our children and others, yet encourage them to develop their potential as the Spirit leads them? What place do we make in our daily lives for meditation, spiritual renewal and reading of inspiring literature, such as the Bible? How does our meeting support families of all kinds?

DES MOINES VALLEY FRIENDS

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

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

Second Hours:
None scheduled at this time.

Child Care:

Suspended at Meeting House due to Corona Virus. If you have a child who would like to be included in Zoom childcare 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 Convener Cindy Winchell, 515-720-5516

Friendly Line: Please send info for next Friendly Line to Ann Robinson and Sandie Nelson by January 29, 2021, the last Friday of the month. Send to:

anny@mediacombb.net and sandiebnelson4416@gmail.com

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