

# Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting

## FRIENDLY LINE

### December 2021



#### Book Review: *These Walls Between Us: A Memoir of Friendship Across Race and Class* by Wendy Sanford

Following a leading to write this book that continued over decades, Sanford tells the story of her friendship with Mary Norman, who came at the age of 15 from southwest Virginia to work for Wendy's upper-class/owning class family at a summer cottage on Nantucket.

Wendy was 12. They have now been friends now for 65 years. My strong sense as I read the book was of being accompanied by and accompanying the author. Her candor and vulnerability is an invitation to the reader for deeper introspection. The writing is engaging and enjoyable. Wendy is an excellent storyteller and this book is really a collection of stories. A copy of "These Walls Between Us" is now in our library. Wendy is one of the original group that wrote "Our Bodies, Ourselves" and has continued to work on revisions over the years.

You can learn more here: <https://www.wendysanford-thesewallsbetweenus.com>

-- contributed by Peter Clay

**Note:** Have you read a book recently you think others in our community would appreciate? Consider contributing a short book review to share in "Friendly Line."

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

##### **AFSC Human Rights Events**

Join AFSC and partners from Dec. 10 (International Human Rights Day) through Dec. 18 (International Day of the Migrant) for a national week of action. Visit AFSC's [#FreeThemAll webpage](#) to find upcoming events, including online events and webinars.

##### **Iowa Peace Network Annual Holiday Open House, Dec. 11**

Enjoy fellowship and fair trade and alternative shopping at the Annual IPN Open House! The open house will be held Dec. 11 from 1:30-4:00 p.m. at the Des Moines Mennonite Church, 4001 56th Street. At 2:30, Jeffrey Weiss will speak on "Human Rights and the State of the World 2021." For more details, email [iowapeacenetwork@gmail.com](mailto:iowapeacenetwork@gmail.com)

##### **Feast of the Holy Innocents: 'Wailing for Children Who Are No More,' Dec. 28**

This annual event sponsored by Des Moines Faith Committee for Peace will be held in person and virtually, Tuesday, Dec. 28, at 6:30 p.m. at the Capital Hill Lutheran Church, 511 Des Moines Street, Des Moines. Connect virtually at: <https://fb.me/e/3TkxZtVEs>

#### A Quaker Minute

The Religious Society of Friends formed in the 17th Century during the religious turmoil of the Protestant Reformation. Like the Lutherans, the Methodists, the Presbyterians, and other dissidents from Catholicism the Quakers had to choose what aspects of Catholic Christian practice they would preserve.

With their rejection of formal clergy and emphasis on individual discernment, the Quakers developed the practice of silent Meetings for Worship, where members were encouraged to calm the mind and listen for the promptings of their own inner guide. Any member – man or woman - who discerned a message for the group was encouraged to speak. Members were encouraged to study the Bible – accessible thanks to the "new" technology of the printing press - and in translations in the local language.

Early members compared their Meetings for Worship to the early Christian assemblies described in the New Testament book of Acts.

- *This is one in a new series of short items on Quaker history and practice, contributed by Pam Blackburn and Jan Falb.*

**DMVF Meeting for Worship  
with Attention to Business  
November 14, 2021**

**Present:** Peter Clay, Claire Cumbie-Drake, Catherine Dietz-Kilen, Deborah Fisch, Kelsea Gillespie, Bob Henderson, Andrea Holveck, Jack Holveck, D.J. Newlin Brock Womack, Billie Wade.

Assistant & recording clerk, Deborah Fisch served as clerk since Dorothy was unable to attend. Assistant recording clerk, Claire Cumbie-Drake recorded minutes since Deborah was clerking.

Meeting began near the appointed time with a period of worshipful Silence.

The clerk read from ***Open for Transformation, Being Quaker***, the 2014 Swarthmore Lecture by Ben Pink Dandelion of Britain Yearly Meeting. *In the last 150 years, in a context very different from the 17th century, our Quaker landscape has been recast, and our version of Quakerism has been reinvented in fresh and modern ways. We have prioritized experience over doctrine, have wanted Quakerism to be ever open to new Light and new ideas, and have emphasized innovation over tradition. We participate and believe in ways very different from our forebears... We have also shown signs of losing passion and energy for Quakerism and joy in all we do. At times, pragmatism has trumped prophecy in our desires to rework Quakerism for a modern and over-busy age.*

*..... We know things, as George Fox did, experientially. However, in other ways we have misled ourselves by trying to incorporate all points of view*

*including, from time to time, ideas which conflict with the basic tenets of our faith experience, our core insights..... We need to be honest with ourselves..... We have become collectively confused about the heart of our Quaker way, unable to articulate it clearly to newcomers and unable to know what is and what is not a part of it... These confusions have led us to become introspective and anxious about our future – a symptom of the head alone taking over from the heart, of logic supplanting faith. It has been easy to see our Quakerism in terms of challenges to be overcome, tasks to be completed, and agendas to be finished, rather than as an adventure in faith... However none of these need be a source of despair. The future is in our faith.*

**Minutes for October 2021**

Friends approved the November minutes as published in October's *Friendly Line*. However, Friends are encouraged to contact the recording clerk (Deborah Fisch) if they find an error or typo within the next week. Any major error will be brought before the next business meeting for reapproval. Typos will be corrected, but they do not require approval.

**Minute** – The minutes for the 10/2021 business meeting were reviewed and approved.

**Treasurer's Report** (Kelsea Gillespie) At the end of September, we were 25% of the way through the fiscal year, and had received 23% of our anticipated donations, and accrued 18% of our expected expenses.

**Minute** – Kelsea reviewed the monthly statements for August and September. The treasurer's reports for August and September were approved with appreciation for the Treasurer's careful work.

**Finance Committee Report** (Catherine Dietz-Kilen, convener) Report from meeting 10/26/2021. Attendees: Catherine Dietz-Kilen, Kelsea Gillespie, Dick Douglass, Cindy Winchell.

The committee reviewed the financial reports for August and September 2021. There is nothing unusual in either of the reports. The Meeting's financial situation continues to slowly improve. Donations in honor of the Dietz-Kilen 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary have been transferred to the Sharing Fund. Donations made in memory of Owen Newlin have been transferred to the General Fund.

**Committee Donation form** – Kelsea Gillespie and Cindy Winchell are developing a form that can be used by the Peace and Social Concerns Committee for donations to organizations outside our meeting and by the Ministry and Counsel Committee for donations from the Sharing Fund and any other committee who would be directing its budgeted funds to another cause or person. The intent of drafting this form is to make sure the treasurer will have the information necessary to direct disbursements. Kelsea and Cindy will have a draft for the Finance Committee to review at the next meeting.

**Memorial Fund** – The Finance Committee discussed use of the funds in the Jean Sandstrom Memorial Fund. Catherine has

been in contact with the family regarding their interests. There were many ideas regarding those concerns and issues that were important to Jean. One of the ideas that has always been to create a physical place outdoors for children and adults. The Committee felt that it would not be appropriate to spend funds on any physical investment at this time. The Committee decided not to make any recommendation to Meeting as a whole for use of the funds in the memorial designated account at this time and will plan to discuss the matter again in approximately six months.

**Zoom Account** – The Finance Committee discussed getting a Zoom account specifically for the Meeting. The Committee recognizes there is no financial issue. The cost for a Zoom account for the Meeting has been budgeted. Catherine will contact Ann Robinson and Katie Jacoby of the Outreach Committee and ask them to work out the logistics of who would have access to such an account, when and where and to get the account set up. In the event that the account will make use of the debit card for the Meeting, Cindy Winchell has the form for the request for using the debit card that will be made available.

**Friendly Audit** – The Finance Committee decided that it was time to conduct our first Friendly Audit and we will be looking for two volunteers from the Meeting to make an approximately two-hour commitment to it. A knowledge of Quick Books would be helpful, but not required. Kelsea will provide copies of any financial statements from Quick Books

that any member of the Audit Committee requires. Cindy recently worked with another organization to do an internal audit of the organization's Quick Book accounts. Those individuals doing that audit asked for specific reports. Kelsea will have those reports ready. Members of the Finance Committee at the time of the audit will also participate to be able to discuss at a future meeting any changes that may be made to future Friendly Audits.

**Minute** – Meeting listened with appreciation to the report of the Finance Committee. Billie Wade has volunteered to serve on the Friendly Audit Ad Hoc Committee. Catherine will ask the Meeting clerk to send out an email to Meeting active members and attenders to see if someone else would be willing to join the Friendly Audit Ad Hoc Committee. The Finance Committee would like the audit to be completed soon after the beginning of the year.

**Library Committee Report** – (Virginia Smith, convener of the Library Committee, was not able to be present at this meeting. There was no written report.)

Peter Clay reported that he has donated the book, *These Walls Between Us*, by Wendy Sandford. He hopes to write a book report for *Friendly Line* and convene a book discussion after some F/friends have had the opportunity to read the book.

We were reminded that Virginia had shared after meeting for worship that the 2022 *Friends Motto Calendars* are in, and she will hand them out next week after worship.

**Ministry & Counsel Committee Report** – (Gordon Bivens, convener) The committee met via Zoom on 11/07/2021. One item on the agenda was consideration of a date for the annual Day of Remembrance. It was decided that, pending approval by Carol Spaulding-Kruse, (who plans Second Hour events) such a remembrance be on a Sunday in January, hopefully with harp music by Elaine Wedeking.

Gordon will contact a member we have not heard from for awhile.

Letters of application for membership from the Gillespie's were received with pleasure. Separate clearness and welcoming committees for the adults and children will be asked to serve.

Meeting has been asked to appropriately locate the cremains of Marjorie Parris. Deborah Fisch volunteered to explore the possibility of them being at the cemetery across the road from the Hickory Grove Meetinghouse at Scattergood Friends School and Farm near West Branch since she was a faithful Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions attender as long as her health permitted.

**Minute** – The meeting listened to and approved the report from Ministry & Counsel.

**Peace & Social Concerns Committee Report** – (Patty Wengert, convener) All members were present on for the meeting on 11/03/2021. We exchanged ideas for areas each committee member hopes to continue supporting.

We look forward to continuing our soup lunches.

Members expressed concern about how to support local peace events without a plan for fundraising.

There are approximately six annual events that our meeting usually co-sponsors. The next one is the end of December.

**Minute** – Appreciation for P&SC committee members continuing the work of peace and social concerns was expressed.

**Outreach Committee Report** – (Katie Jacoby, convener) Billie Wade, Katie Jacoby and Ann Robinson met 10/29/2021. (The Hospitality Committee was invited to join us to discuss hosting, but no one was able to participate.)

Items Discussed included:

**Hosting** – We would like to reintroduce our tradition of having Friends welcome people at the front door as they arrive. This is especially important for welcoming newcomers/guests. For now, Ann and Katie are taking turns as hosts to arrive 15 minutes before worship, to try to make sure the door is unlocked and the computer is turned on, and then to stay at the door to greet people during the beginning of meeting for worship. We hope that members of the Hospitality Committee or others will join us in taking turns. This is something we can put on the Google calendar on the website so people can see when they have signed up. For now, hosting would not include providing any food.

**Second Hour** – We would like to have a second hour on welcoming newcomers at some point in the near future, using materials from Friends General Conference (FGC).

**Resources/Children's Coloring Pages** – Thanks to Katie for the nice welcoming resources she has modified from FGC materials. Please check out the half-page, short pamphlets/placards giving information about Friends and meeting for worship and a four-page booklet about Quakers and Friends' worship in unprogrammed meetings on the counter near the door. She also put together a three-ring binder with coloring pages/crayons for children, which are on the table under the bulletin board in the entryway. A page or two from the binder can be easily removed and placed on one of the provided clipboards.

Two sizes of colors are available from which children can choose.

**Email Follow-up to Newcomers** – Ann has started doing this. We have a brief message that the host who met the newcomer can use and tailor appropriately.

**Banner/Signage** – Ann contacted the City Public Works Department and learned that, unfortunately, banners are no longer allowed. Signs (if approved) now have to be made by licensed and bonded sign makers and affixed to a building or put on posts. The Meeting cannot have a larger sign unless we pursue a different zoning designation. Changes in zoning were made in 2019, and our spot may have been wrongly designated as residential, when it should have been P1 or P2 for churches/places of worship. Our current signs are probably grandfathered in. There would be a cost to apply for rezoning and several steps. If approved, at that time, we could apply for a sign

permit, which would depend on the sign size.

**Chair & Computer Screen Arrangement for Worship** – We continue to fine-tune the arrangement for worship that would allow people on screen to see people in the meetinghouse and also allow those in the meetinghouse to see attenders on the screen (if desired). Katie and Deborah Fisch have made a semi-circular arrangement that we will try for a little while. We have already had some good feedback on this, especially from on-line attenders. Ann will draft a sign and get input to ask people to put chairs back if they are moved when others use the meetinghouse. (This has been done and posted.)

**Zoom Entry Screen** - Billie crafted several nice drafts to use as entry screens prior to worship for those attending on Zoom. It is meant especially to welcome newcomers and give them an idea of what to expect. Some input was offered on the wording and arrangement. When the clerk and the Finance Committee get a separate Zoom account for the meeting, we will plan to use.  
**DMVF Google Calendar** – Katie has started a Google calendar that is linked to our website. We need to test this out.

A regular meeting time for the committee is still to be determined.

**Minute** – The Outreach Committee report was read. It was noted that Friends House (FH) Board discussed the zoning classification for the property at their last meeting. Meeting recommended that the Outreach Committee coordinate with FH Board regarding this matter

before moving forward. A suggestion was made to use an electronic sign so the message could be changed from time to time and could be used by Friends House as well as DMVFM. We approved the report.

**EGMA Report** – (Deborah Fisch reporting) I communicated via email with Arianna Calleja of Edna Griffin Mutual Aid (EGMA) earlier this fall. At the time Arianna didn't have a phone, thus the need to rely on email.

Things have been going well overall. Earlier this fall despite having several members gone for about a month. During that time they had to do barebones work which meant not having free stores and other projects. They have now been able to pick up speed again.

Arianna and fellow workers have been preparing for winter months since early September. One top priority has been finding heating supplies and developing a consistent schedule for getting those supplies to the homeless/houseless in the Des Moines area. Having consistent access to heating supplies can become a life-or-death matter if something happens to prevent EGMA from being able to get those supplies out.

Arianna said in September that she has met a handful of folks who had recently moved to this area. It is not clear if they had just become houseless. She also reported they had lost track of a large number of the people they previously served. This was because those folks had been a part of a major eviction along the Des Moines River and people

went where they could find shelter and safety.

I asked if she had seen the sign reporting Meeting's decision to continue to require masks for those using meetinghouse. She said that EGMA volunteers have agreed they will continue to wear masks whether or not Meeting requires it. Arianna has studied infectious diseases, and considers the risk of breakthrough infections and of mutation of new viruses even more dangerous than the original one.

I mentioned that they had been about a year since they began using our kitchen area, and we wondered if they were wanting to continue our arrangement. Her reply was first a thanks to Friends for making our kitchen available, and second that they do indeed hope to continue to use our kitchen area. Since we'd considered this at the October business meeting and there was agreement that we were willing to continue providing kitchen and prep space for EGMA if they wanted it, I indicated that we would be happy to continue the relationship. However, Arianna also said that EGMA is looking for a space they can move to that would 1. Give EGMA office space; 2. Provide a kitchen and a place to store their pots, pans, and other food prep items; 3. Provide space to hold supplies for their many other projects. They are hoping it will only be a matter of months until they can move, but they had not yet found a space. She will let us know if and when they find suitable office/kitchen space for EGMA.

We also talked about needs other than nutritious meals that people living in houseless

communities will need to survive the cold Iowa winter. Arianna said they would welcome donations of good used clothing (layering helps stave off cold), warm coats and jackets, sweaters, warm socks, sweatshirts, mittens, gloves, hats, scarves, boots, sleeping bags and blankets, and also tents (including the tie down stakes etc.) and heaters and fuel for the heaters. (Electric heaters are not helpful; they need heaters that use fuel.) If you have such items to donate. please put them in boxes and place them in the basement near the kitchen. Please clearly label the boxes "For EGMA" so it is clear the donation is for them. If you don't have a key to the meetinghouse, please contact me (Deborah Fisch) to arrange a time when we can meet there so I can let you in. Of course, a prime time for bringing donations would be on First Day, when you can drop off donations and attend meeting for worship and the Second Hour program!

**Minute** – Friends approved EGMA continuing to use the kitchen for the foreseeable future. Several F/friends indicated that they have winter clothing and perhaps other items that can be donated to EGMA to share with those who are houseless and facing the bitter Iowa winter weather. The report was approved.

**Old Business** – No old business was brought forward.

**New Business** No new business was brought forward.

Worship with attention to business ended with a period of silent worship.

## News of our Friends

**Claire Cumbie Drake** and **David Drake** have announced the birth of their first grandchild, **Patrick Jonathan Hennessee**, born November 27, to **Emily and Zachary Hennessee** who currently live in Mt Ranier, MD, just outside Washington D.C.

**Brock Wommack** was surprised to be honored by his local fire station at their annual holiday event for his and his family's generous support over the decades. Brock says, "It is an all-volunteer organization, and I've seen them entering burning buildings, putting their lives on the line. And saving flood victims and so much more. So I accepted the honor with profound humility while pondering their courage and service. I was presented with a massive basket of chocolates and a bottle of Johnny Black."



Brock at the Fire Station

## **Query #3 Discussion from October: Meeting for Business**

Present: Billy Wade, facilitator; Brock Wommack, recorder; Andrea and Jack Holveck, DJ Newlin, David Drake, and Deborah Fisch.

The meeting began with silence.

Query: How can we hold our meetings for business in the spirit of love, understanding and patient search for unity without becoming frustrated by differences of opinion or the pressures of time?

Wait upon the divine spirit.

One Friend thought of a member from several decades ago who was often quite disruptive. It took time, but there came the realization that the member was simply speaking truth. This realization opened the way to see past the behavior and witness the truth as being presented.

It was noted that with our busy lives, we each try to protect our use of it. Another Friend noted that while we do not want to restrict ministry, there is a happy balance with ministry while considering the time.

Friends speak their mind, and it can be disconcerting. Another Friend spoke of patience with each other, for while God speaks to us in many ways, the act of speaking often takes great courage—even if you think others agree with you. Then a Friend reminded us that love covers a lot of things.

One Friend spoke about the importance of blocking out a period of time, for often during business meeting what may be perceived as trivial may actually turn out to take hours for clarity. It is important to

come back to the source, making a time for listening as spoken differences are an essential part of any meeting.

Then one member spoke of a meeting for business some 35 years ago when abortion was discussed in business meeting. After thinking that the meeting was progressive and liberal, it astounded the member when the meeting was actually divided on the issue 50/50. A profound opening occurred to this member about not being so assumptive about points of view within the meeting.

How do we respond when no one else in the meeting seems to hold the views that we do on an issue?

It was noted to voice one's perspective and to be open to what came after that. One needs to feel safe enough to speak up.

Another reminded us that sometimes another gathering is needed to bring more knowledge to the discussion. Another spoke of sometimes finding a different leading and that the realization of "Oh, I hadn't thought of that!" rings true.

There sometimes is the feeling of being pushed off the bench. Sharing passions completes the unity of the meeting while not unfreezing one's heart.

You just have to trust. How do we respond to a dissenting minority?

A Friend asked do we need to respond? Just waiting for the spirit is an answer.

Another Friend told a story of a gigantic electronic billboard on the express way that often will have disturbing

political messages displayed while not offering information of the product of the company which owns the billboard. There is still no clarity for this Friend on how to respond to this type of public bullying.

Then it was noted to wait for others to respond.

Divine intervention is to put down one's pen, being faithful to God's leading with the courage to stand forth, feeling the spirit in each other's heart.

Another remarked that outrage is an act of searching for justice and there are three aspects. First is Love. Second is sharing/listening. Third is to then share only if one is led to do so.

How do we share responsibilities among Friends in our meeting?

One said, "committees!" Another noted that the ability to respond to the meeting may sometimes come as a surprise.

Then a Friend reminded us of the need to have a demonstration of service, however it manifests.

The recorder of these minutes shared his email to the clerk requesting being the one to record Query discussions and how it surprised one of how powerful the calling was emotionally. (The spirit of Sherry Hutchinson was present and remembered. To which a Friend responded that, in keeping with this calling, it will be important to use tiny writing without much margins!)

How do we serve our meetings?

A Friend noted a concern in Yearly meeting may at times be the need to consider whether or not a certain committee is now needed?

There can be other projects outside committees that enable things to be taken off the lists of committee concerns.

There is a long tradition among Friends that once a need has been accomplished, such as founding a school or academy, the meeting dissolves their role in its maintenance and passes it on to those others to continue the project. Christian to secular organization is an illustration of Christianity.

The meeting ended with brief silence.

### **Query #5 for January: Mutual Care**

#### **ADVICE:**

Friends consider the meeting to be a family in which the welfare of each individual is of utmost concern. For some, the meeting may be their only family in the community. In mutual caring we seek greater wisdom than our own. We listen to the silence within ourselves and to one another with openness of heart. Sharing our pain as well as our joy can bring us closer together, making it easier to ask for help when we need it. Each of us is both giver and receiver, ready to help and to accept help.

Friends try to be aware of those who require special attention within the meeting community. We believe friendly interaction benefits both adults and children. It is the responsibility of adults to recognize and give voice to the needs of children in the meeting.

Inactive and absent members require the care of the meeting; those who do not currently attend meeting may be contacted by

mail or by personal visit. We need also to minister with sensitivity to those in transition and to support caregivers and those requiring care within the meeting community.

It is important to be responsive to the needs and gifts of newcomers and seekers who may attend our meetings for a short time.

We endeavor to be conscious of how differing gender role expectations may affect the quality of our relationships and influence how we empower ourselves in the home, meeting, community, school, workplace and government.

We envision a society that provides opportunities for all people to reach their potentials, share similar expectations, reap comparable rewards and contribute equally to society.

#### **QUERIES:**

How do we respond to each other's personal needs and difficulties in sensitive and useful ways?

Do we encourage both men and women to share in caregiving?

What are we doing to welcome and draw members and attenders of all ages into the fellowship of the meeting?

How do we help our children feel the loving care of the meeting?

What do the children contribute to the meeting?

How do we keep in touch with inactive and distant members and attenders?

**--- This Still Room ---**

*a poem of the Quaker Silent Meeting*

And so, I find it well to come  
For deeper rest to this still room,  
For here the habit of the soul  
Feels less the outer world's  
control.  
The strength of mutual purpose  
pleads more earnestly our common  
needs.  
And from the silence multiplied  
By these still forms on either side,  
The world that time and sense  
have known  
Falls off and leaves us God alone.  
- by John Greenleaf Whittier,  
19th Century Quaker, Abolitionist  
and American Poet.  
Contributed by Pam Blackburn

**Des Moines Valley Friends**

**Meeting for Worship:** First days at 10 a.m., at the Meeting House and by Zoom via email invitation from clerk, Dorothy Lifka, at [dmlifka@yahoo.com](mailto:dmlifka@yahoo.com)

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

**Second Hours Coming Soon:** Sunday, Dec. 19: Peter will read "A Child's Christmas in Wales" as a special holiday treat, with caroling in person and on zoom to follow.

**Query Discussions:** First Sundays at 1:30 Online & in person. Billie Wade, facilitator

**Child Care:** Temporarily suspended at the Meeting House. 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](mailto:dmlifka@yahoo.com).

**Building & Grounds:**

Questions 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 by Friday, Dec.31. 2021, to Ann at [anny@mediacombb.net](mailto:anny@mediacombb.net)

**Find us online at:**

[www.desmoinesvalleyfriends.org](http://www.desmoinesvalleyfriends.org)

**Check out our Facebook** group for members/attenders. To be added, email Jan Falb, at [jfalb0326@yahoo.com](mailto:jfalb0326@yahoo.com)