

Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting

FRIENDLY LINE

May 2022



Message from the DMVF Nominating Committee - 'Where do you feel Called?'

The Nominating Committee for Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting has recently reconvened to start the process of formulating committees and filling leadership roles for the Meeting. In the next few weeks, a member of the nominating committee (Carol Spaulding-Kruse; Dick Douglas; and Claire Cumbie-Drake) will be contacting you by phone or email.

Committees play a vital role in the life of the Meeting community. Please consider how you can best serve the Meeting. Attached is a list of committees/positions for your consideration.

We look forward to being in touch with each of you.

-- Email to DMVF Members & Attenders from Claire Cumbie-Drake, on behalf of Nominating Committee

List of DMVF Committees & Positions

Clerk
Co-Clerk/Assistant Clerk
Recording Clerk
Treasurer
Assistant Treasurer
2nd Hour Scheduler
Query Facilitation
Query Recorder:
Finance Committee:
Ministry and Counsel

Peace and Social Concerns
Hospitality
Religious Education:
Building and Grounds
Library
Friendly Line
Property Management
DMARC Representatives
FH Board Representatives
Outreach Committee
Audit Committee
Phone messages
House scheduler

Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) Committees

Thank you to all who serve or who have served our Meeting community in so many ways!

Save the Date: Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) July 27-31

Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) will be held this year as a hybrid gathering for its 145th annual session.

This will be the first-ever annual gathering held with hybrid options. Those who feel led and are able will meet in person at Scattergood Friends School near West Branch, Iowa, with business sessions and collections also offered online, with virtual and in-person opportunities to worship and socialize.

Watch for more information in the June issue of Friendly Line and online at iymc.org.

A Quaker Minute

Quaker Testimony of Stewardship.

Friends strive to use God's gifts wisely, with gifts conceived in the broadest of terms. These gifts include our talents and our possessions, as well as our natural environment. Friends believe that such gifts are not ours alone.

To Friends, good stewardship means taking care of what has been given, not just for ourselves, but for the people around us and for future generations as well. Friends strive to use their gifts in accordance with their beliefs.

Quaker Testimonies, American Friends Service Committee -- *One in a series on Quaker history and practice, contributed by Pam Blackburn and Jan Falb. This month, adapted from Quaker Testimonies, American Friends Service Committee*

Hosting List for Upcoming First Days

May 8 – Jim & Catherine
May 15 – Ann Robinson
May 22 – Charlie Brown
May 29 – Deborah & Katie
June 5 – David & Claire
June 12 – Jim & Catherine

**Des Moines Valley
Friends Meeting
Meeting for Worship with
Attention to Business
4/10/2022**

The following F/friends were present – Claire Cumbie-Drake, Kelsea Gillespie, Andrea Holveck, Jack Holveck, Fred Nelson, DJ Newlin, Ann Robinson, Billie Wade, Julia Walker (Dylan & Daisy), Dorothy Lifka, Clerk Deborah Fisch, Recording Clerk

The clerk opened the meeting near the appointed hour with a quote from the Hebrew Scriptures, Psalm 96 11:12: Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice.

She then invited F/friends to unmute and make whatever kind of “joyful noise” they wanted to share with everyone. This proved to be a fun way to express being in community together and the beautiful springlike day we were being given!

The clerk then invited F/friends to settle into a brief time of Silent waiting worship before taking up the business.

Review of 03/2022 Minutes – Friends reviewed the March 2022 minutes as published in the most recent issue of *Friendly Line*. If a F/friend finds a typo or other correction in the minutes within the next week, the minutes will be amended by the recording clerk (Deborah Fisch) so they can be corrected for the official Minutebook. Any major error will be brought before the next business meeting for reapproval.

Minute– The minutes for the 03/2022 business meeting were reviewed and approved.
Treasurer’s Report (Kelsea Gillespie) At the end of February, we were 67% of the way through our fiscal year, with 76% of anticipated revenue received, and 51% of budgeted expenses accrued.

Kelsea reminded us that financial reports lag behind the calendar month because she needs time to enter month-end donations and write her report; reports are then reviewed by the Finance Committee before being brought to the meeting for business.

Minute – The January and February financial reports were reviewed by Kelsie Gillespie, Meeting treasurer. We continue to appreciate the careful work of the treasurer and her clear reports. We approve the report.

Finance Committee Report (Catherine Dietz-Kilen, convener) There was no report from the committee. The treasurer reported that the financial statements for January 2022 and February 2022 were reviewed by the committee members by email.

Ministry & Counsel Committee Report (Gordon Bivens, convener) – 04/03/2022 We received with delight the clearness committee report concerning Billie Wade’s membership request. We were delighted to approve the clearness committee’s strong recommendation in favor of her application and M&C’s strong recommendation for approval of Billie’s request to the meeting for business.

Jim Dietz-Kilen updated us on Leo Hassain's family situation in their attempt to get out of Afghanistan, hopefully, to immigrate via Pakistan to Canada. Friends who feel called to help Leo with his family’s expenses are welcome to send donations to Shirley Scritchfield, treasurer, Penn Valley Friends Meeting, 813 E 120th St., Kansas City, MO 64146. Please put “donation for helping Leo’s family,” or something to that effect, in the memo line of the check so it is clear to Shirley where the donation should go. It will eventually be sent either directly to Leo’s family (now safely in Pakistan) or to the Ottawa Friends Meeting for use in support of the family's move.
Minute – Friends enthusiastically approved the recommendation from Ministry & Counsel that Billie Wade be given membership in Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting. The clerk will complete the necessary paperwork and forward a copy to Billie. It was noted that Billie has been so active in Meeting activities that it already feels like she was a member and it is a joy to now make it official!

Friends were also overjoyed to learn that Leo’s family has been able to get to Pakistan safely. Leo is proceeding with filing the necessary paperwork to bring his family to be with him and his brother in Ottawa. If Friends feel led to help with the large cost of this endeavor they are welcome to send a donation to the Penn Valley treasurer where the US donations are being collected. Information is in the report.

Peace & Social Concerns

Committee Report (Patty Wengert, convener) – Zoom meeting 04/05/2022 – Attending: Billie Wade, Patty Wengert, Peter Clay, Jack Holveck. Kelsea Gillespie, and Jon Krieg also joined the meeting. Jon is willing to share his knowledge of peace work in Iowa over the years as we go forward.

The committee meeting started with a moment of Silence and a quote from Thomas Kelly which encouraged unhurried peace and power.

We had a robust discussion of our committee's work. We want to remember to keep in touch with the organizations we partner with and their missions. This includes being involved with other faith groups that provide food, shelter, and clothing to others that stand against injustice, war, and violence, and also that provide mental health services.

We exchanged ideas about making a request for committee funding.

We are trying to design our monthly meetings so that we support our local peace partners who are consistent with our faith testimony. Our donations every year could total as much as \$2,400 including our affiliated obligations. Kelsea, the Meeting's treasurer, joined our committee meeting to discuss a new form to be used when the committee has a donation to send from P&SC funds. We thank her for joining us to share that information.

Last month we noted that we have at least nine annual events that local peace organizations hold, including Annual Tax

Protest Day, Bishop Dingman Award Dinner, Palm Sunday Peace Procession, Hiroshima & Nagasaki Commemoration Ceremony, Earth Day, Women's International Peace Day, Feast of the Holy Innocents, Alternative Holiday Gift Sale, and Backpack Distribution by Hope Ministries. These are all events that we have co-sponsored over the years. Of course, being a co-sponsor usually means that we will participate, our name will be listed as a co-sponsor, and we help with expenses.

The Des Moines Faith Committee for Peace of which we are members, sponsors and plans three major events a year: 1) the International Day of Peace; 2) the Palm Sunday Procession for Peace; and 3) the Feast of the Holy Innocents musical celebration, commemorating all of the innocent people suffering at the hands of governments and wars. (This feast dates back to the time of the birth of Jesus when King Herod ordered the rounding up and killing of all male babies under the age of three living in and around Bethlehem in an attempt to kill the baby who, it was prophesied was the Christ, the king of the Jews, thus the annual remembering of the innocents.) Over time it has also come to be a time to remember all the many, many more innocent people who have died at the hands of those seeking to stay in power over people. There are expenses associated with these events. It is our responsibility to help support these events. COVID-19 interrupted these events but only interrupted.

The convener reported on the mail our committee had received. We authorized two donations – Right Sharing of World Resources of Indiana and The Fellowship Of Friends of African Descent of Philadelphia. for \$50.00 each, in light of current funds available.

We plan to meet again on 05/03/2022 at noon via Zoom. Thank you, everyone.

Minute – We appreciate the work of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee.

EGMA – No written report. Deborah Fisch, one of two DMVF liaisons with EGMA, shared that she learned from her contact person at Edna Griffin Mutual Aid that the group has not moved to a new location even though they stopped using the meetinghouse's kitchen around the beginning of the new year. Instead, they are using members' kitchens to prepare their weekly hot meals for the houseless.

EGMA or Des Moines Mutual Aid volunteers are willing to continue to pick up good used clothing and camping equipment donations. Please leave donations on the counter directly across from the doors into the dining room/kitchen area and text or email Deborah so she can arrange for pickup. Deborah is also working on getting the meetinghouse key back from the EGMA volunteers.

The person who has been our contact for EGMA notified Deborah she is moving to the West coast, so Deborah is in the process of getting a new contact person for the organization. She will follow up to see if she can get more info before the

05/08/2022 meeting for worship with attention to business.

Buildings & Grounds

Committee Report – No report Hospitality Committee Report

(Charlie Brown, convener) No written report. Next Saturday, 04/16, will be the annual spring clean-up morning. Friends should plan to gather with rakes and other yard work tools. *[Thanks to the small group that was able to volunteer time to help clean up the meeting kitchen and grounds.]*

The spring talent show will be held on 05/15 both in-person at the meetinghouse and on Zoom.

New Business

Bringing Friends Back to Meetinghouse for Worship and Attending Meeting for

Worship with Attention to

Business – A Friend raised a concern that there are many fewer people attending meetings for worship with attention to business since the pandemic. She wondered if this was due in part because it is starting at 1:00 instead of right after snacks following worship on First Day morning. Another Friend pointed out that even prior to the pandemic our business sessions were not well attended. It was suggested that each person present could ask one other person who attends meetings for worship but hasn't been attending business meetings what time would work best for them. It feels like in the last few years fewer people have had to do more of the work.

Friends also raised a concern that people are not coming back to worship together at the meetinghouse. We realize that

some Friends are unable to attend meetings for worship in person due to geographic location, medical concerns, and/or other considerations.

We were challenged with the question: Do we as a meeting really welcome visitors and attenders? One F/friend volunteered to make cookies with the First Day School children to serve between meeting for worship and Second Hour.

It was suggested that an ad hoc committee be appointed to look at how we as a meeting have been doing things, how things have changed due to the pandemic, and what changes might be made to help Friends become more active in the Meeting. We also wonder how we in the Meeting community can be more welcoming to visitors and seekers. We could also explore how we are doing in meeting for worship with attention to business. One immediate suggestion was that we read fewer reports. The clerk suggested we hold a dedicated Second Hour on these concerns before appointing a committee.

The clerk will talk to Carol Spaulding-Kruse about scheduling a Second Hour on the topic of “restructuring meeting” to address the following questions:

- 1) What is working well?
- 2) What is not working?
- 3) What could be changed to work better?

She will ask Carol to lead the discussion, with two people acting as recorders. It was also suggested that since the Second Hour will be hybrid, we could record the session.

Minute – After a thoughtful discussion on the concern that meetings for worship with attention to business (as well as Advice & Queries attendance) have been declining in attendance, Friends would like to consider if there are things we can do to be more welcoming to visitors and attenders, and whether we need to make changes in some of our practices.

Priorities for Friends

Committee on National

Legislation – Friends agreed with the discernment of the clerk that because the discussion of attendance at meetings for worship with attention to business took so long, Friends could share their priorities for FCNL directly with FCNL rather than sending a message as a Meeting.

Meeting Closes – With no additional business, meeting for worship with attention to business ended with a period of silent worship.

The next meeting for worship with attention to business is scheduled for 05/8/2022.

NEWS of OUR FRIENDS

Peter Clay left for Chicago on May 1st to visit his 97-year old friend Joan and other friends in his hometown. He will continue his travels on May 4th to the Wisconsin Northwoods to open up the family cabin after being away since last October. He'll be considering the work required to re-create a trail system on the landscape that was devastated by the July 2019 derecho that left much of forest around the cabin destroyed and which is now a modified clear-cut. However, the

naturally regenerating landscape has been inspiring to behold even though it will never be the same in his lifetime. Peter expects to be back in Iowa by May 16th. He hopes that the work of rebuilding his home, badly damaged by the March 5th tornado, will begin soon. If the work goes well, Peter hopes to be able to return to his home before the winter snows arrive in Iowa.

Congrats to **David Drake** for his [April 24 op-ed](#) in the Sunday Des Moines Register, “Our decision makers should reflect what Iowa looks like.”

UPCOMING EVENT

Academy-Award-nominated film, “The Present” May 15

The Middle East Peace Education Committee (MEPEC) invites F(f)riends to a showing “The Present, 7:00 p.m., at the DMVF Meeting House.

This special film is the story of a father and his daughter's journey in the West Bank to buy a gift for his wife/her mother.

Query Discussion #8: Personal Responsibility

Present: DJ Newlin, Andrea Holveck, Michael Luick-Thrams, Virginia Smith, guests Emma and Julia

Convener, Billie Wade

Recorder, Brock Wommack

ADVICE: We focused on the call to honesty, simplicity, essentially freeing ourselves from abstractions and addictions. We examined our personal lives and our life within the Meeting.

We entered worship with silence.

DISCUSSION: It seems that simplicity is not the stuff of

modern life. Outside Meeting there are many complexities that command our attention.

Drugs and other forms of personal pleasure remove one from their social network, thus complicating the act of removing oneself from distraction in order to recognize the simplicity around us. They remove one from the ability to act in cohesion with other Friends.

Friends present who have wealth or have experienced great wealth spoke of the gated communities in which they have lived and visited. There is a social divide between the staff/help and the hosts (owners within the community). There is an obvious difference when management makes an effort to create a family of staff and owners for all to appreciate each other as cogs in the machine, so to speak. It simply fosters a joyful reason to get out of bed and get to work, rather than a sense of dread to do so. Big hotels and corporate offices are most guilty of treating staff as cattle rather than people, yet the same may be said about how an individual treats his/her/their staff. One Friend told of telling his staff that he is working with them, they are not working for him. It may seem a small effort, but there are results in friendship that cannot be denied. A family loyalty is formed for all.

Simplicity is often found within a family context.

There were some present who voiced the lifestyle of not having any wealth and possessions beyond necessities, clothing and the Bible. They have never been near wealth save as domestics (sometimes for generations) and

find more often than not to be house slaves. No closet, no home, cold and hungry; they take the chance to relieve themselves of the indecencies for having never to have been invited to that table, and just don't miss it.

Another spoke about living in poverty has its own threats and complications. There are gangs that endanger themselves and everyone else. Also, the background checks for employment are a gamble for the outcome depends on who is making the check and their response to the individual in question. The Friend spoke of how they would love not to have to keep secrets. It can be hard not to use drugs.

Often, we live Quaker values when we're surrounded by the world, and having this space within Meeting to talk about it is very helpful.

Then another Friend reminded us that the uncluttered life may not be a very rich life.

Query advice has taken a real hit in recent years, so it is important to seek the truth oneself, said another.

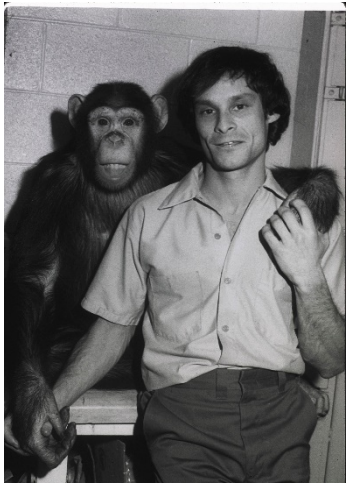
And again, regarding house slaves—everyone in a shelter should be a family, whether paid or not.

The cluttered desk—trying to keep everything handy is quite a chore. Yet living on a fixed income, whatever kind, means one cannot afford to employ a secretary to aid in having the office be a simple construct.

Also, paying attention to how one is speaking, and using simpler word phrases can contribute to bringing one closer to a simple life.

And lastly, outside forces often prevent success in living a simple life. Living homeless as a simple life choice often comes directly opposed to a community's law enforcement. By being often illegal, police will many times clear and burn down homeless communities, leaving people without their basic shelters, complicating a homeless community's strength of friendship and loving concern. Outside sources prevent its community's strength and resolve.

We closed in silence.



Peter Clay and friend
Richard, Lincoln Park
Zoo, 1980s

Why My Work Nurtures my Heart and Spirit

Contributed by Peter Clay, Retired Zookeeper and Conservation Practitioner (Originally shared in the November 2006 issue of *The Friendly Line*, I share these reflections again now, when many new Friends have joined our community. I discovered this sorting through papers following the recent tornado that hit my home.)

I was invited to share the spiritual basis for my work with the Meeting. At this time I am still feeling a huge and painful loss in my family, and in my life. The death of my dog Patches at the hands of a hit and run driver still seems too big to fully take in. Little by little, each day I try to move on, to accept and most of all to be mindful and grateful for the joy that my Patchy-boy brought into my life. Awake often now in the middle of the night, I wander outside to look at the stars or the lights twinkling on the distant horizon. A gentle wind strums the wind chimes and the leaves of the two giant elms that watch over our home rustle softly. I mourn over and over the loss of my companion, my friend. His life was a gift from the Great Spirit and now I am comforted to believe that he is again one with that Great Spirit, the life force that animates our fragile planet.

Throughout my life the natural world has been my touchstone, my refuge from human artifice and hubris. I am indebted to each of my parents, in different ways, for fostering in me an affinity and love for nature. Once, as a boy, I sat for what seemed like forever on the forest floor in northern Wisconsin as a Scarlet Tanager explored a tree mere feet away. The brilliant crimson color against the coal-black wings mesmerized me. I felt I could not leave, although it was time to join my family for the drive back home to Chicago. Years later, I spent literally hours hypnotized by the spectacle of Yosemite Falls in January. This 1,400 foot waterfall had little water then, but what water there was, was

turning to snow in the cold air. Underneath the falls an enormous snow cone was building. Periodically, dramatic crashes of ice would fall off the sheer rocks beneath the falls. As the hours passed, I wondered why I still stayed. Throughout my life I have felt this drawing towards, and comfort in, the company of other animals and in nature. Today, wandering the North woods of Wisconsin or in my own backyard, the presence of a chickadee means a friend is with me.

Through great luck I was able to spend many hours wandering the montane rainforests of east central Africa amidst families of mountain gorillas. That was following seven years of caring for gorillas at Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago. The experience of being amongst gorillas in their world was more compelling and beautiful than I could have ever imagined, and the gorillas themselves were, in the words of my good friend Dr. David Watts, "wonderful beyond description."

Perhaps the best way to share some of the meaning for me of that time in my life is to share a journal entry from Feb. 24, 1985: *"I have been out two days now with the gorillas. In some respects, I felt immediately at home. Gorillas have been part of my life for over seven years now. Their sounds and gestures and the overall impact of their presence are not strange to me. Yet it is completely new to sit among free-ranging, wild gorillas.*

It is easy to delight in the rough games of the juveniles, arms flailing, racing around trees. Their soft laughter and carefree

ways are a pleasure to behold. The innocent and earnest faces, which approached me to peer so gently into my face, will be impossible to forget. Black hair framing trusting brown eyes, hands reaching out to touch so carefully. How can we measure the value of these lives and of this forest? Could we learn something of importance from these, our fellow voyagers on this fragile planet? With our hearts open, we surely can be touched by the simple beauty of their lives. I sense I can learn a great deal here, and I am eager to begin.”

Stewardship of the Earth takes many forms. For me, each day I arise to go to Great Ape Trust to fulfill a sacred bond. The great apes are those on Earth most like us. The wild places where they have lived for many thousands of years are now severely threatened by the impact of humans on planet Earth over the last 100 years. The cumulative, devastating negative impact on shared global environments is almost inconceivable, particularly in such a flicker of geologic time. These ARE shared environments though, and that is what speaks to me.

My colleague Dr. Duane Rumbaugh says that if we cannot save the great apes then we will not be able to save ourselves. This is probably true in both a literal sense and even more profoundly in a spiritual sense. If our ties to the Earth are so broken that we cannot recognize our own kin then we really cannot even recognize ourselves. Lost and confused, with our big, powerful brains serving to alienate us from nature rather

than confirming we are a part of the whole, we continue to make war on one another and devastate the finite resources of the Earth. In my own work I have the satisfaction of nurturing, caring for, respecting and honoring individuals who have much to teach us. Here, at least, great apes live with dignity and those who care for them count them as true friends. Azy, Knobi and Allie (orangutans that I cared for at Great Ape Trust) are each wonderful in unique ways. As in any relationship, over time, the friendships deepen and grow. In opening myself up to them, I open my heart to myself as well, while reconfirming my fundamental connections to the Earth, which is our home.

I miss touching my Patches; his soft fur and dog smell were wonderful to me. We would put our heads together and I would look into his dark eyes, and we would touch souls. This, above all, seems most important to me. We are all companions on a Great Journey that is both inner and outer. Each morning when we greet one another to welcome another day the first thing we confirm is that we are still here, together. That is essential, elemental, primary. The rest follows. First is this deep recognition of common kinship, kinship with all life and with the Earth herself. Life is sacred. It is a mystery beyond our understanding. The best and truest meaning of our existence seems to me to come from being mindful of the deep unity of all life. Along the way there is also both great joy and great sorrow. It is good to be grateful for both.

– Peter Clay

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

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

Second Hours Coming Soon:

May 15 – Talent Show (Charlie)

May 22 – Michael, on Ukraine (Carol)

May 29 - Frank Cordaro? (pending)

Query Discussions: First Sundays - 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.

Building & Grounds: Questions about the building or grounds of the Meetinghouse 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 Charlie Brown, 515-689-6470.

Friendly Line: Send info for next Friendly Line to Ann at anny@mediacombb.net by Friday, May 27, 2022.

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