

# Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting

## FRIENDLY LINE

### March 2023



### Are You Going to Mid-Year Meeting?

Midyear Meeting of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) will be held 15-16 of Fourth Month (April) in a hybrid format, both online and in person at Bear Creek Meetinghouse. The theme of this year's sessions are "Meeting in the Middle."

This year's resource person, Helen Thorpe, is an author, a deep listener, and a storyteller. Helen is part of Mountain View Meeting in Denver. Her published books include, "Just Like Us" and "The Newcomers."

Helen will share stories from her personal experience, and elicit some of our own, centered on the desire to have constructive dialogue across differences -- and finding a meeting place where they can be considered.

Midyear Meeting begins after breakfast on Seventh Day (Saturday) and ends with lunch on First Day (Sunday). A short business meeting/Interim Meeting will happen on 7th day at 3:30 PM.

Watch the yearly meeting website ([www.iymc.org](http://www.iymc.org)) for details and registration information.

Children are warmly welcomed and youth activities are offered during the presentations on Saturday and Meeting for Worship on First Day.

### A Quaker Minute: Historic Friends - Rufus Jones and the Wider Quaker Fellowship

Born in the mind of Rufus M. Jones, a 20<sup>th</sup> Century Quaker author, mystic and professor at Haverford College, the Wider Quaker Fellowship came into being in 1936. It continues today as one of the programs of the Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of the Americas.

As Rufus Jones said at its inception, the Society of Friends wishes to reach out to those who have similar ideals and aspirations and who in heart and life are friends of Friends but are not led to become members of the Society.

The Fellowship periodically mailed to its members packets of selected literature reflecting Quaker thought, service, and spiritual search. There was no criteria for membership. The program was supported by the free will donations of members. While many were unable to contribute financially, the generous contributions of others enabled the work to continue.

The ideals of the Wider Quaker Fellowship -- to be part of the conversation among like-minded individuals from diverse cultures and traditions -- continues today in the work of Friendly Voices (which is an initiative of Friends General Conference) and the QuakerSpeak Youtube channel (which is an initiative of Friends Journal). Today the Wider Quaker Fellowship maintains an archive of its publications, which represent over a half century of contemporary Quaker Thought which they are in the process of digitizing to make it accessible to all via the World Wide Web.

-- *One in a series on Quaker history and practice, contributed by Pam Blackburn*

### Book Club for DMVF?

DMVF Outreach and Communications Committee is proposing a spring book club if we have interested friends who would want to meet regularly for a set period. The book we are suggesting is *In The Upper Country* by Kai Thomas, a novel

set in 1859 Canada and inspired by the true stories of Black refugee and Indigenous communities that forged alliances to protect themselves from white colonizers.

-- *continued on page 8 --*

**DMVF Meeting for  
Worship with Attention to  
Business  
February 11, 2023**

**Present:** Deb Fisch, Ann Robinson, Jim Dietz-Kilen, DJ Newlin, Peter Clay, Carol Spaulding Kruse, Dick Douglas, Andrea Holveck, Fred Nelson, Dorothy Lifka, Virginia Smith, Katie Jacoby, Jack Holveck, and Claire Cumbie-Drake

**MINUTES from January  
Meeting for Worship with  
Attention to Business:**

**Minute:** The Minutes were reviewed and approved, with appreciation to Ann Robinson for her work with the Friendly Line and to the Recording Clerk.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Ministry and Counsel:** Jim Dietz-Kilen (convener); Andrea Holveck, Gordon Bivens, Peter Clay and Deborah Fisch gathered at our usual time February 5, 2023.

**Committee Budget—**The Committee does not feel a need for operating funds to be allocated to us. We recommend this budget line remain at \$0. We currently have a Sharing Fund balance of a little over \$1,700, with \$10 to be added to that line each month. We would like to begin the year with \$2,000 and considered whether to request an increase to \$15 per month. Gordon offered to make a designated gift to bring the Fund to that balance. The Committee wants to express gratitude for this latest example of Gordon's generosity.

**Library Books—**Andrea is aware that there are some Meeting Library books checked

out to Mikel. She asked whether the Committee would endorse her contacting the family about retrieving them. We lent grateful support to her offer to do this.

**Meeting for Healing—**Deborah reported that Ames Meeting has a monthly Zoom meeting for this purpose and that all from DMVFM are invited to join. They meet the last Thursday of each month, beginning at 5:00. Anyone wishing more information can contact Deborah to be put on the mailing list for a link which changes from week to week. Thanks to Deb for her outreach about this with Ames Meeting

**Follow-Up on Billie's 2nd Hour—**We had considerable discussion about the ideas and issues raised during Billie's presentation the week before and how we, as a community, can be better anti-racist advocates. Deborah is a trained facilitator for a program called "Unpacking the Backpack" that examines white privilege. We gratefully accepted her offer to conduct a session of this program for a 2nd Hour. The Committee recommends this as a next step. If Business Meeting concurs, Jim will also share information about a podcast series called "Seeing White," that helps illuminate our often unnoticed whiteness (for those of us who are white) and the privilege that is also often unseen.

**Minute:** The Meeting received the report with appreciation for the on-going work of the Committee.

**Buildings and Grounds:** Dick Douglass (convener). Fred

reports the geothermal has been working well this month. Charlie is working on an electrical switch in the Meeting House. The committee plans on meeting in February.

**Minute:** The Meeting expressed appreciation to members of the committee for their work keeping the Meeting House maintained.

**Ad Hoc Committee on**

**Committees:** Dorothy Lifka (convener). The Committee met January 22, 2023. Present: Dorothy Lifka, Peter Clay, Billie Wade, Deborah Fisch

We began with a period of silence followed by a reminder of our committee's charge:

*In the spirit of loving care of our community of DMVF and of individual Friends, we will examine the current committee structure to identify how the committees can best serve our community and whether our expectations of committees are realistic given the size and capabilities of our community. We also plan to make suggestions to meeting for worship with attention to business.*

We also want to reiterate from our previous report that members of committees are not expected to do all of the work of the committee themselves but, as appropriate, to organize and recruit other Friends to help. One of those present reminded us that the work of the meeting is grounded in worship and community. The following comments and suggestions should be viewed through that lens.

We view as positive the following committee changes:

- The Peace and Social Concerns Committee has reached out to the meeting as a whole for guidance about what direction their work should go. Two friends have volunteered to help the committee plan a second hour (perhaps the first of several) on right relationship with indigenous peoples.
- The Friendly Line and Outreach committees have joined together to form an Outreach and Communication Committee. The new committee will write a description of their duties.

The rest of the committees expressed a desire to continue as separate committees. It is the opinion of the ad hoc committee that all of our existing committees play an important role in maintaining the meeting. Further discussion may be necessary about the number of members needed by each committee.

We welcome ideas on how to involve those who are not currently on committees. The members agreed that most members and attenders at DMVF meeting are involved in service to the meeting in some way.

We continue to be concerned about the heart of the matter: Are there enough of us to do the work that needs to be done, including maintaining our responsibilities to Yearly Meeting, without individual Friends getting burnt out? We are also concerned

about the many duties that have fallen on the clerk of the meeting. We suggest that the roles of the clerk and assistant clerk(s) be reviewed to determine if some duties could be shared with or shifted to others in the meeting.

This report is submitted to the February meeting for business with requests that a survey about committees (being written by members of the ad hoc committee) be sent out to all members and attenders of DMVF meeting and that discussion of the report and survey results be included on the agenda for the March meeting for business. The committee convener will also contact clerks of other monthly meetings that are part of Iowa Yearly Meeting to get information about how their meetings are using the committee structure.

Minutes: The Meeting received and accepted the report, with appreciation to the committee members for their work and recommendations.

**Religious Education:** Dorothy Lifka (convener). Present: Dorothy, Ann Robinson, Deborah Fisch, Andrea Holveck

We reviewed the most recent revision (January 2022) of the Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) draft document, Guidelines for the Protection of Children at Yearly Meeting Sessions and Functions (see link to document below). IYM-C sent this document to the DMVF religious education committee. We recommend that meeting for worship with attention to business approve this

document with the following changes:

1. Addition of a requirement that written permission slips with a liability waiver be signed by parents/guardians whenever children are being transported by another adult during IYM-C sessions or other functions.
2. Addition of a recommendation that parents/guardians provide health insurance information and signed permission for emergency treatment when children are participating in IYM-C sessions or other functions.
3. Posting of the document, after approval, on the IYM(C) website.

We are in unity that this draft document effectively addresses the spiritual values underlying the proposed policies, encourages and provides a structure for discussing issues of child safety within meetings, and clearly lays out specific recommendations for keeping children safe at IYM-C sessions and functions.

We ask that Friends read the draft document and suggest that because of the document's length, rather than discussing the document as a whole at meeting for business, we focus on any questions or comments Friends may have.

We also make the following recommendations for our meeting:

- To schedule a 2nd hour to discuss the queries included in the document: and
- To invite Friends who would like to update the DMVF policy on child safety to help members of the religious education committee to do so.

The document we were responding to is at:

[https://bit.ly/IYMCdraftGuidelines protection of children](https://bit.ly/IYMCdraftGuidelines%20protection%20of%20children)

The Meeting discussed putting this policy on the DMVF website under the password protected portion of the site. (Friends noted that a religious education link may be added as well.)

Minute: The Meeting received the report, with thanks to the committee for their work on this important matter.

**Finance Committee:** Catherine Dietz-Kilen (convener).  
DMVF Finance Committee Minutes, January 31, 2023  
Attendees: Catherine Dietz-Kilen, Kelsea Gillespie, Dorothy Lifka and Dick Douglass

1. Monthly Financials. The Committee reviewed the financial reports for December 2022 and found all to be in order, as usual. The reports were for the first half of the fiscal year. To date, we have received 62% of our total budgeted income and have Meeting expenses at 42% of the budget. Kelsea will pay the affiliated contributions in the budget during February. Kelsea will be stepping down as Treasurer at the end of the fiscal year. The Committee wishes to express its deep

appreciate to Kelsea for all the work she has done.

2. Phone. Deb and Katie will purchase a “pay as you go” phone and Katie will change all of our platforms to reflect the new phone number. It is noted that once the new phone is purchased and up and running, we will need to cancel our landline phone with Century Link. The Committee is looking for someone who has some time during the day to complete this task. Kelsea has account and other information that may be required to cancel the landline phone. Deb Fisch volunteered to cancel the landline.
3. There appears to have been some confusion about our mail getting mixed up at Friend’s House, so the Committee has been concerned that donations sent in during January may have been misplaced. Kelsea will contact Carol and ask her to send out a note to ask if anyone who sent a donation during January to please contact Kelsea, so that she can track and make sure all the donations have gotten to the right place.
4. Background Checks. It is the policy of the Yearly Meeting that background checks are done for the people who work with children in our Meeting. The reports obtained on the background checks contain confidential information. The Committee

thought that the best place to store these reports would be in the Meeting’s safety deposit box. There are two keys to that box. They are held by the Clerk and the Finance Committee Convener. The Committee decided that it will be the responsibility of the Finance Committee Convener to receive the background check reports, to place them in the safety deposit box and to destroy the reports when they are no longer current.

5. Fiscal Year 2023/2024. The Committee will begin its work on budget for fiscal year 2023/2024 at its next meeting. Catherine has sent an email to the conveners of each of the other committees, or to the entire committee if no convener is identified, to ask them to consider their budget requests for the next fiscal year and to get that request back to Catherine on behalf of the Finance Committee.

Minute: The Meeting received the report. Thank you to the committee for your on-going work.

**Treasurer’s report:** The Clerk shared the financial reports provided by the Treasurer on the Zoom link. There were no questions regarding the report.

Minute: The Meeting received the financial reports. Thank you to Kelsea Gillespie for her work as Treasurer and preparation of the report.

### **Outreach and Communications**

**Committee:** Attendees: Katie Jacoby, Ann Robinson, Billie Wade. As previously stated in our last report, we do not recommend merging the Hospitality Committee with Outreach. However, we do feel that it makes sense to form a new committee named Outreach and Communications, which would include Outreach, the *Friendly Line* and the website. Those of us currently on these committees have already been *de facto* meeting as one committee. There's considerable overlap and we feel it benefits us to have others to whom we can bounce off ideas and concerns, especially when it is a committee of one or two. Although the DMVF Facebook page is a "stand-alone" endeavor, the Outreach Committee should be mindful to share pertinent information on Facebook, and we invite the moderators to join us for committee meetings on occasion. We propose the following description for the Outreach and Communications Committee:  
*The Outreach and Communications Committee strives to provide information and welcome to members and potential members, attenders and the public in order to promote understanding of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and of the Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting and to offer community to like-minded seekers. When we share our spiritual home with others, we seek to embody Quaker values and bear witness to our belief that there is that of God in everyone. Such testimony is also made through written materials, social media*

*and other activities which express who we are as a beloved community. Some examples of this include our newsletter (Friendly Line), the "Quaker cards" that are in our entryway for newcomers, our Facebook page, our website, and our participation in and/or sponsorship of Quaker-related events and social justice actions/gatherings. The committee also helps lead efforts to welcome members and guests by following up with newcomers who provide their contact information and responding to inquiries received through our website. The committee may also plan second hours on topics related to outreach.*

Other discussion: The committee would like to host a book discussion and expects to have a proposal ready to present at the March business meeting. We have been contacted again to host a visit by the Westminster Presbyterian confirmation class during a tour of several different faith communities. Ann, Fred and Jean Sandstrom have hosted past groups. This year's visit is scheduled for the morning of Saturday, March 4. Deborah Fisch has volunteered to host the group this year to talk with them about Quaker worship and practice, and Billie Wade tentatively plans to join the group to listen and learn, possibly to be a host in the future.

Ann will share her notes from leading the discussion in previous years. Billie will check in with Brock on his spiritual and health journey article to let him know that we are still pleased to share it via the Friends Members/Attenders section of

the website. We now have posted several other stories there that friends (Peter Clay, Billie Wade and Charlie Brown) have shared previously in *Friendly Line*. Other Friends are invited to contribute stories, poems or artwork that relate to their own spiritual journey.

Minute: The Meeting received the report. The committee requested feedback on the new committee description, to be discussed further at the March Meeting for Business

**Peace and Social Concerns** – no report

**Hospitality** - no report

**Friends House Board** (Deb Fisch) The Friends House Board met at the Des Moines Valley Meetinghouse for this quarterly business meeting on January 20, 2023. All three DVFM Valley representatives (Billie Wade, Dorothy Lifka and Deborah Fisch) were in attendance. Cole Fuller served in his appointed role as clerk of the Board. The meeting began near the appointed hour with an opening time of Silence followed by a brief time for check-ins and introductions.

### Financial Report

Randy Adams, the Board's financial consultant/treasurer, was present to review the financial status of Friends House. All was in good order. In the past, Randy attended board meetings at the end/beginning of the fiscal year. However, at the fall board meeting members felt the need to receive financial reports with Randy present to answer any questions. Randy said the next meeting (04/21/2023) will be during his

busiest time of the year, so he will not be able to give the report in person. After he left, Billie, Dorothy and Deborah suggested that the board ask Randy to join us at our next meeting via Zoom. The clerk said he expected Randy's report would take 15 minutes or less. Board members felt that it is not unreasonable for us to expect this. The clerk will contact Randy with our request/expectation.

#### Building/Property Needs

Concern was expressed that there have been one or two times that snow removal on sidewalks and parking lot was not done in a timely manner and/or had not included clearing the sidewalks up to the door of the meetinghouse. There was a question about what the responsibilities of CD's Lawn and Snow Removal are and what are the responsibility of the Friends House Property Managers and/or DMVF. The contract says that CD's Lawn & Snow Removal will remove snow on the sidewalks and parking lot if it is over one inch. The FH property managers are responsible for its removal of sidewalk snow less than one inch during the work week. Snow is not removed from the parking lot if it is one inch or less. However, if it snows after 5 p.m. on a Friday or over the weekend and is one inch or less, members of Friends Meeting are responsible for clearing the sidewalk from the parking lot up to the door of the meetinghouse as the House Managers do not work on weekends. Staff at Friends House who work on weekends would be responsible for shoveling snow up to the FH steps.

DSM Valley reps asked the FH managers to contact CD's Lawn & Snow Removal to remind them that there is a Quaker meeting that is a part of the facilities and it would be helpful if FH could be put as a higher priority if it snows more than one inch over the weekend, so that the driveway, parking lot and sidewalk up to the meetinghouse door are cleared of snow prior to 10 a.m. Sunday mornings. This was approved. [Note: Katie Jacoby & Deborah have donated an extra snow shovel to DMV Friends since there were no snow shovels in the utility room. However, since we are not expecting to have to clear walkways unless the snow is less than one inch deep, we suggest that Meeting invest in a wide blade shovel meant for pushing snow off a sidewalk as well.]

#### Tenant/FH Manager Updates

##### Rental of Open Office Space

FH managers reported that they recently learned that the Iowa Coalition for Collective Change run by Luanna Nelson-Brown has now received its 501c3 non-profit recognition and that the group is still interested in renting the empty office suite at FH. We encouraged FH property managers to work with Luanna to see if this can happen. The office has been sitting empty for several months so we are anxious to get it rented out.

There is an office space in the basement that is being used as a storage area for supplies and clothing, and to shelve stable food by Des Moines Mutual Aid at no extra cost. The period of time the managers agreed to let the organization use the space rent-free has ended. The board

wants to support the good efforts of the organization, but it must also think of what is best for the FH organization and its potential income possibilities. It was decided that we would continue to let DSM Mutual Aid use the space at no charge, but with the understanding that if an organization is interested in renting the space, DSM Mutual Aid will need to vacate prior to the date the new tenants are to move into the space. Also, if there is a potential renter, we will give first priority rent at the same cost to DSM Mutual Aid. The clerk will inform DSM Mutual Aid of this decision.

#### List of Trusted Service Providers

The FH managers were asked at the last board meeting to prepare a list of trusted service providers and their contact information that would be posted in case an emergency situation would arise when they were not on the premises (such as a pipe bursting, etc.). The managers reported they have not done this yet. They were asked to have this completed and shared with board members prior to the next meeting.

#### Updated Tenant Directory

At the last FH board meeting managers were asked to update the Tenant Directory, including the names of tenant organizations, employees, location within FH and contact information. This has not yet been completed. Managers were asked to complete and share the updated tenant directory as soon as possible, hopefully well before the next quarterly meeting.

#### Board Updates/Discussions

##### FH Board Insurance

Concern had been expressed



about insurance for Friends House Board of Members. FH Managers were asked to look into this. Thus far they have asked two insurance companies but have found nothing available.

#### New FH Board Clerk

Cole informed the Board that his term as clerk will be coming to a close at the end of this quarter. We do not currently have an assistant clerk to rotate into that position. After some consideration, Dorothy Lifka agreed to step into the role of assistant clerk at this time. Cole will use the remaining time in his term to help Dorothy prepare for stepping into the clerking position at the end of his term.

We thank Dorothy for her willingness to serve in this way.  
Shared Online Drive Link for FH Documents

The clerk shared that he has set up an online drive for keeping all FHB/FH documents such as the FH By-laws, Office Rental Policy, Minutes, etc. It will be the responsibility of the clerk to keep the file updated. This will be a great help when clerking duties move from one board member to another and for members who want to see what current rent is for a rental unit, etc. The board members expressed gratitude to the current clerk for this extra work.

#### Review of Newly Approved Bylaws

Deborah reported that she had been in touch with Claire Cumbie Drake, who has agreed to look them over with a lawyer's eye for any red flags in language, etc. She stated that she had not yet shared the bylaws with Claire because she had not yet received the corrected bylaws, minus

editing marks, highlights, comments, etc. She asked that highlights and editing comments be removed so that Claire would not have to contend with searching that information to ascertain the final wording of the document. This will be done and the board will plan to hear a report at their next meeting.

#### Other Business: Request from DMVF Meeting

We shared that Des Moines Valley Friends have approved about ½ dozen or so Scattergood Friends School and Farm students and two staff members staying in the meetinghouse 02/05 to 02/11 while they do service projects in the greater Des Moines area and at the Bear Creek Friends Meetinghouse near Earlham. We asked if the FHB would approve the use of the shower since the meetinghouse has none. We shared that if this is not possible, we would arrange for students to take showers in the homes of Friends who live in the general area, but since there will be limited transportation available it would be ideal if the FH bathroom with a shower could be used. We said it would be understood the students would not be in Friends House other than when showering, and that a staff person would be in the Friends House portion when the shower was being used.

Members were happy to approve the request.

The next FH Board meeting is scheduled for 9/4/21 at 1:00 p.m. DSMVF Friends House Board representatives, Deborah Fisch, Dorothy Lifka, Billie Wade

#### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

1. Scattergood students and staff were very appreciative for the opportunity to stay at the Meeting House. One student expressed some discomfort with the fact that the tenants of Friends House did not seem to know they were present and would be using the showers. This serves as a reminder for the future to make sure that FH tenants are aware that student will be using the showers.
2. A Friend noted that the floor in the Meeting House restroom was very dirty. Cleaning is currently twice per month. The Clerk will reach out to the convenor Buildings and Grounds about the cleaning schedule and whether it needs to change.
3. Volunteers are needed to assist with junior yearly meeting and child care for mid-year meeting.

The Meeting ended with a moment of silence.



#### **Query Discussion # 8: Personal Responsibility Feb 5, 2023**

Present: Linaja M., Kate Thompson, DJ Newlin, Peter Clay, Debora Fisch, Pam Blackburn, Carol Spaulding-Kruse, Claire Cumbie Drake, David Drake, Dorothy Lifka; Convener Billie Wade, Recorder Brock Wommack

Advice: Honesty, simplicity, essentially freeing ourselves from abstractions. Discussion: Examine personal lives within

ourselves and within the Meeting.

Query Discussion:

#1 Centering our lives; start the day with the advice just read.

- Using breathing techniques in prayer to center oneself.
- Decentering oneself to allow the focus to come.
- Singing in the morning brings one to center on the creation of the day—also, keeping something in the pocket to touch as a talisman to remind you of the morning’s meditation.
- Holding a profound gratitude for everything & remembering to say thank you—even to a green light!

#2 Clutter: cleaning and organizing—taking time for silence and just stopping for a moment.

- Write time obligations on index cards and then remove 3 for the year.
- Step back and do not get too self-absorbed.
- Spend time thinking about the roots of clutter while clearing emails, time spent recycling. Hey, I didn’t ask for all of this plastic—think about why?
- Clutter clouds the mind and spirit. It’s as if dirty dishes and incomplete tasks follow you around like your shadow.
- Mental clutter can’t be pushed away—be aware, own them and find a place for them—step aside from clutter.
- Limit your exposure to screens, Facebook and social media. No one is telling you to live your life on a

computer so ask a friend for coffee!

- You don’t have to limit your possessions as if you’re Gandhi but be mindful as you accumulate things.
- Try taking a month off from any news on TV, radio. You’ll surprise yourself how some media is more like gossip than journalism.
- Clear your computer’s desktop so that when you turn it on, past completed tasks don’t haunt the present moment. Declutter mindfully.

#3 How does the Meeting practice simplicity?

- Consider the Queries beyond a once-a-month task and leave space for the Divine.

#4. Physical health and activities.

- Avoid movies that aren’t enhancing your life.
- Get outside and get active any way you can and want.
- Mindfulness always matters more than “should”.
- Our Meeting is bathing in spirit unprogrammed. We are a gathering of those called to Friends. Reflect on being more mindful of such circumstance.

*(Book Club continued from page 1)*

“In the Upper Country” is a far-ranging story about the Underground Railroad from Virginia to Ontario, the power of remembering and story-telling, and the strength of community.

We think this story fits well as our meeting delves more deeply into the United States’ “original sin” of slavery and our collective history of oppression of native peoples. We are considering a four-week time frame, where we would meet for one hour or so

weekly. We plan to meet in person at the meetinghouse but also have the option for friends to join via videoconference.

We will gauge interest at the next Meeting for Worship for Business. If you can’t attend and are interested in participating, contact Katie at [kajacoby@gmail.com](mailto:kajacoby@gmail.com).

**Query Discussion #9:  
Civic Responsibility  
March 5, 2023**

Friends expressed deep concerns about efforts to nullify marriage equality in the Iowa legislature that are ongoing today. We remembered that prior to 1950, marriages celebrated under the care of Quaker meetings were not recognized in Iowa. Friends meetings were even penalized and fined for conducting Quaker marriages.

Our understanding is that the marriage takes place between the couple and God and that when meetings “marry” someone under their care, they are really acknowledging the marriage. Some Friends refused to become legally married in the past in protest of this discrimination against Quaker marriages. Until the law changed some couples chose to live together without the benefits of a state sanctioned union. A “*Marriage under peculiar circumstances*” law was eventually passed to allow Quaker marriages to be “legal” under the laws of the state of Iowa.

We pondered how it was that when the state refused to recognize legal marriages for Friends the state still did recognize common-law marriages. Friends asked why



marriage equality (same sex marriages) was and still is seen as somehow threatening the marriages of other people (straight people). How can one couple's marriage have an adverse impact on other loving, committed couples?

Some of us feel powerless much or most of the time in relation to what happens under Iowa's Golden Dome (the Iowa legislature). How can we make a difference when so much formal power rests with the state, primarily our elected representatives and the executive branch. One Friend expressed how feeling that they have "agency" is a significant struggle. Other Friends resonated with this challenge. Where and how does one start to push back in following Divine Leadings?

Even when we have a leading to speak and to act do we have the courage to follow it and to do what is being asked of us? What are we willing to risk for the good of all?

One Friend said they felt better because of FCNL's advocacy. Not all of us are activists but in supporting groups such as FCNL we are being attentive to our civic responsibilities.

Having a minority perspective is not a new experience for many Friends. It matters when we have small victories, and it is important that we celebrate these. It is challenging when a majority who do not support equality in marriage or fairness and equity in many other areas surround us. How can we cultivate the skills and awareness that will support us in engaging with those with whom we profoundly disagree

without adding to the divisions in our country?

Friends expressed appreciation for both the advocacy of FCNL and for their *process* in seeking to understand where Friend's meetings are at in regard to concerns that impact every person in our society.

We miss the presence of the AFSC office here in Des Moines. The local office inspired, engaged and informed us.

One of the queries for Civic Responsibility is, "*Do we really respect and help those we seek serve?*" One Friend shared that "helping" comes from a place of imbalance in relationship. It is aligned with pity and looking down on those we would assist. Serving is a more transformative act than "helping." Friends are encouraged to reflect upon the difference between helping and serving. Compassion informed by a fundamental belief in the equal worth of all is serving. We can remember that whatever we have to offer in terms of assistance it can come out of a belief in that fundamental equality.

One Friend was heartened by the results of the 2020 election because it was surprisingly close in many areas, including for example the election for Governor in Iowa. The refusal to accept profound diminishment in how we see and support one another is inspiring. As more and more communities are standing up within themselves and saying, "No, we will not accept that dystopian future," we are encouraged!" "Equality is not a pie," said one Friend. They meant that it is not a zero-sum situation. We are cautiously

heartened by community efforts across the nation to bring a revitalized vision of how we are all connected and how that leads to mutual support in a myriad of ways.

One important and perhaps challenging question is- "*How has the political left contributed to the deepening entrenchment?*" Both sides have and continue to contribute to the division and conflict in our country. This question is not about placing "blame" on the Left. It is about the need for some soul searching in how both sides contribute to these frightening divisions? We ended with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi- "*When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible but in the end, they always fall – think of it – always.*"

Submitted by Peter Clay

### **Quaker discernment around reproductive health and abortion**

Last summer, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, ending 50 years of legal precedent. This decision prompted Friends to reopen the conversation around what position, if any, FCNL should advocate on reproductive health and abortion.

The FCNL Policy Committee is seeking guidance from Quaker communities on FCNL's policies in this area. This will guide the committee as it forms its recommendation on whether or how to change FCNL's Policy

Statement guidance on reproductive health and abortion. Responses will be due by May 1, 2023.

These are challenging, emotional topics to discuss. We encourage you to hold compassion for each other as these conversations unfold. Tools such as guides to dialogues around abortion can help your conversation honor both the complexity and the urgency surrounding this discernment. Tips include honoring stories from lived experience, taking short breaks for moments of reflection, and building cultures of trust and understanding.

The Policy Committee plans to bring a recommendation to the General Committee at its Annual Meeting in November 2023. Your community can help us find Divine will in our work. More information at FCNL, include: <https://www.fcnl.org/about/world-we-seek/legislative-priorities/request-discernment-regarding-reproductive-health-and-abortion>

### **Register for the Spiritual Sharing Small Group Shuffle.**

IYM(C) Ministry and Counsel Committee invites you to participate in a new Spiritual Sharing Small Groups program, with new groups beginning this spring. Participants will be assigned to a group of 4-5 people who will meet regularly for six months to nurture each other's spiritual lives by sharing and listening deeply. Register at: <https://www.iymc.org/spiritual-sharing-small-groups/>

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)** will hold a hybrid Section Meeting on March 23-26, 2023, in Greensboro, North Carolina, on the theme of "Becoming the Quakers the World Needs." All Friends are invited, virtually or in person. Learn more and register at:

<https://fwccamericas.regfox.com/fwcc-2023-section-meeting>.

### **Film: The Movement and the Madman**

On March 28, watch "The Movement and the Madman" on PBS, a new film that tells the little-known story of a dramatic showdown between a protest movement and a president. The film features interviews with several former AFSC staff and committee members.

### **Palm Sunday Procession and Service for Peace, April 2 Procession at 3:00 p.m., Service at 3:30 p.m.**

The procession will begin in the parking lot of the Union Park United Methodist Church, 2305 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street, and proceed to Community of Christ Church, 1645 Pennsylvania Ave. for the Service.

This year's event will offer live streaming at this Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86559124132?pwd=ajNjR2NOa0J4RzlmHZtV0pnRnZDUT09>  
Meeting ID: [865 5912 4132](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86559124132)  
Passcode: 50316

The event is organized by the Des Moines Faith Committee for Peace and co-sponsored by many organizations and churches, including the Iowa Peace Network.

**Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting for Worship:** Sundays at 10 a.m., at the Meeting House and by Zoom via email invitation from clerk, Carol Spaulding-Kruse, at [carol.spaulding@drake.edu](mailto:carol.spaulding@drake.edu)

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

March 19: Quaker discernment around reproductive health and abortion (see article on page 9)  
March 26: TBA

**Query Discussions:** First Sundays, 11:30 a.m. - Online & in person. Billie Wade, facilitator.

**Child Care:** If you have a child who would like to be included in Zoom childcare or first day school for older youth, contact Dorothy at [dmlifka@yahoo.com](mailto:dmlifka@yahoo.com).

**Building & Grounds:** Questions about the building or grounds of the Meetinghouse to Building & Grounds Committee Convenor, Dick Douglass, 515-864-1119.

**Hospitality Committee:** Questions about housekeeping at the Meeting House to Hospitality Committee convenor Charlie Brown, 515-689-6470.

**Friendly Line:** Info for next FL due to Ann by Mar 31, 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).