

Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting

FRIENDLY LINE

May 2025



Friends Can Help Feed Hungry Neighbors

The food pantry at Monroe Elementary School is open for one hour a week all year round to anyone in need of food assistance, although the emphasis is on families of children who attend Monroe. Food comes from the Iowa Food Bank and donations from several Des Moines churches; two churches also provide volunteers.

I have been volunteering weekly. Kiersten Cooley, the community service coordinator at Monroe and Samuelson, is in charge of the food pantries at both schools. The last week in April the food pantry served 46 families, primarily migrants or refugees, and by the end of the hour we were open, we had run out of rice.

The Committee for Migrant and Refugee Concerns approved having a donation bin in the foyer of the meeting house. We invite Friends to consider contributing, as you can.

While other packaged foods are welcomed, below is a list of preferred foods that were recommended for this pantry:

- bags of jasmine or basmati rice
- dry beans (black or pinto)
- pasta (Ramen noodles (chicken), spaghetti noodles, macaroni and cheese)

- spaghetti sauce
- cereal (Frosted Flakes or Honey Nut Cheerios or similar preferred by the kids) or oatmeal
- canned corn
- canned fruit
- Spices (small bottles of cinnamon, turmeric, chili powder, (regular) salt, pepper, garlic powder, or cumin powder)

-- contributed by Dorothy Lifka

Plan to attend DMVF Picnic Potluck, June 15

The Hospitality Committee is planning the DMVF annual potluck! It will be held outdoors at the Meeting House – or inside in case of bad weather! Did you get the signup sheet from Charlie Brown? If not, contact him at 515-689-6470. However, all are welcome (even without a dish)!



FGC Invites Young Adult Friends to Special Gathering

Friends General Conference (FGC) is hosting a Young Adult

and Youth (YAY) gathering July 2-6, 2025, in Clarkston, Michigan for children, teens and their family members; young adults 18-35, and volunteers of all ages by application. This is being held instead of the usual all-ages summer gathering. Registration closes June 1. Find more information at <https://www.fgcquaker.org/fgcprograms/the-gathering/yay/>

YAY Invitation From Scattergood

Join us for a road trip to YAY! Through the generosity of IYMC, we are able to subsidize \$500 for the registration, lodging, and meals for this event as well as cover travel costs for 8 high school students or young adults.

There are four additional seats available in the van for Friends who pay their own fees but would like to carpool with us. The yearly meeting has other funds that could be used, and monthly meeting also might help defray the costs.

The preliminary plan is for the Scattergood van to leave the morning of Wednesday, July 2nd, to arrive in Clarkston for dinner, and to depart after lunch on Sunday, July 6th. Find more details about Scattergood's FGC/YAY trip and a form to indicate interest at:

<https://www.scattergood.org/yay-roadtrip/>

-- contributed by Carol Gilbert, IYMC, and Sonja Spohnheim



Quaker youth and Friends at MidYear Meeting in April created their own mini-tent decorated with pictures of olive trees and helping hands. As did the rest of the gathering, they discussed Middle East life and concerns over war and peace and social justice there. The Arabic word "sumud" represents Palestinian perseverance, resilience and steadfastness, particularly in the face of adversity and oppression. Photo by Bill Deutsch, Decorah.

Notes from Query #11 Discussion: Social and Economic Justice

For when I was hungry you gave me food, when thirsty you gave me drink, when I was a stranger you took me into your home, when naked you clothed me, when in prison you visited me.
Matthew 25:35-36

ADVICE

We are part of an economic system characterized by inequality and exploitation. Such a society is defended and perpetuated by entrenched power.

Friends can help relieve social and economic oppression and injustice by first seeking spiritual guidance in our own lives. We envision a system of social and economic justice that ensures the right of every individual to be loved and cared for; to receive a sound education; to find useful employment; to receive appropriate health care; to secure adequate housing; to obtain redress through the legal system; and to live and die in dignity.

Friends maintain historic concern for the fair and humane treatment of persons in penal and mental institutions.

Wide disparities in economic and social conditions exist among groups in our society and among nations of the world. While most of us are able to be responsible for our own economic circumstances, we must not overlook the effects of unequal opportunities among people. Friends' belief in the Divine within everyone leads us to support institutions which meet human needs and to seek to change institutions which fail to meet human needs. We strengthen community when we work with others to help promote justice for all.

QUERIES

- How are we beneficiaries of inequity and exploitation?
- How are we victims of inequity and exploitation?
- In what ways can we address these problems?
- What can we do to improve the conditions in our correctional institutions and to address the mental and

social problems of those confined there?

- How can we improve our understanding of those who are driven to violence by subjection to racial, economic or political injustice?
- In what ways do we oppose prejudice and injustice based on gender, sexual orientation, class, race, age, and physical, mental and emotional conditions?
- How would individuals benefit from a society that values everyone? How would society benefit?

Responses:

Friends benefit from inequities that give us access to inexpensive products that are made in countries where wages are lower and working conditions are worse. Solutions are complicated: it may not be realistic to make some things in the United States and it would deny jobs to people in other countries who need them.

How would individuals benefit from a society that values everyone? How would society benefit?

Results of the happiness index show that people in the U.S are getting less happy compared to people in other countries. Using GDP or how much is produced as measure of success doesn't measure the complexity of what makes us happy and there may even be an inverse relationship: greater emphasis on "things" makes us less happy. There is a need for greater equity: "We all do better when we all do better." How do we define what it means to be happy?

Concern was expressed about how reliant we have become on government to provide for needs. Government has never done this well: The system has always been broken. The current administration's focus is on removing financial supports from those in need and on perpetuating a culture that doesn't support people supporting each other but blames those with needs for their situations. If we shift from governmental responsibility to having private corporations take responsibility for social needs, it leaves us at the mercy of the whims of whoever is the head of the corporation. Several Friends expressed that we are not involved enough with each other, especially with those who are struggling.

A Friend offered a historical perspective: in 1932 FDR in a case of executive fiat not unlike what is going on now ended tariffs. However, FDR also had personal experiences with others like himself with disabilities which led to his intention to have government help others. His programs created a governmental top-down system that worked during the depression and WWII but has morphed into a bureaucratic system removed from real people and their needs. We have also returned to the attitude that it's the fault of poor people that they're poor. We were encouraged to hold in the Light reaching out with help to those we will never meet or better yet get to know them. "Turn off the TV and go downtown and mingle with others."

A Friend shared the following meditation:

From the point of light within the mind of god, let light stream forth into the minds of men

From the point of love within the heart of god, let love stream forth into the hearts of men, may Christ return to earth

From the center where the will of god is known, let purpose guide the little wills of men; the purpose which the masters know and serve

From the center which we call the race of men, let the plan of love and light work out; and may it seal the door where evil dwells

Let Light, and Love and Power restore the plan on Earth. Aum Aum Aum (Om)

A Friend said that for most of their life, they have been immersed in communities. A challenge is to stay engaged whether times are good or not. This Friend shared a personal story of seeing a man who was bleeding and lying in street and others just walked over him.

The words "systemic racism" get tossed around a lot and some people use the concept as an excuse: I can't do anything, it's the system. Systems are made up of individuals who may use the system to perpetuate and protect their own privilege. Those with privilege may deny basic needs to others and then blame those others for their condition. Solutions are complicated and difficult.

Racism is a primary bias because it is what people see first, then gender. When someone of color gets or achieves

something, it is assumed by those who are biased that they didn't earn it. A recent one-day boycott of big box stores had a negative economic effect on these stores; this is an example that we do have power and we need to work together to use that power.

The advice states "We are part of an economic system characterized by inequality and exploitation" A Friend said that the version of the advice and queries that we use was written in the 80s and since then the situation has gotten much worse. What is our part in this system and what can we do to make a difference? If we can't make a big difference, we think it doesn't matter instead of persevering with small things we can do that will accumulate to make a bigger effect. Where can I make changes in my own life? How can I be willing to do something even if it's not fun. We can get together as a group to do things. We can focus on building relationships with others we may not agree with. People are hungry for connection and change comes through connection.

Young people and others who have not learned financial skills in their families are at a disadvantage. Could we offer financial education for free to give everyone an opportunity to learn these skills?

In reference to the judicial system and economics, people in the system are fined for everything which weighs them down further.

We need to recognize the power we do have. "Power" isn't a dirty word; there is a difference

between entrenched power and community power. The latter creates connections among people for "good power," transforming the idea of power into a working, tangible force.

A Friend noted the changes that have occurred as the result of the Supreme Court deciding that corporations have the same rights as individuals. This has affected every aspect of our lives including the financing of elections. National legislators now have to fly back frequently to their home states to fund raise to get reelected instead of staying in Washington, D.C. spending time with other legislators socializing and working together. This Friend stated that greed is the issue behind each of the queries.

A concern was raised that in this time of book bannings and the removal of material deemed "DEI," it will be a challenge to preserve what we've learned about racism, sexism, etc. so that we can share it with future generations. Children from other countries may continue to have access to that knowledge and our kids won't and won't be able to function as well in the world.

Suggested Changes to Query 11 for IYMC's consideration:

- Flesh out how Friends' beliefs would lead to a more enlightened social and economic system.
- Expand the quotation from Matthew to include "Truly, I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

- Provide more information about what groups, businesses to support because of their policies.
- In understanding of those driven to violence, ask how will we Friends respond if/when this increases.

Recorded by Dorothy Lifka

News of Our Friends

Ann Robinson is happy to share the news that her daughter **Julia Robinson-Frantsvog** will graduate with a Masters in Social Work from the University of Minnesota on May 16.

Upcoming Events

Palestinian Nakba Observance: Remember the Children

Saturday, May 17, 1:00-5:00 p.m., Gray's Lake, southeast lawn

This event at Gray's Lake will honor, commemorate and share information about ethnic cleansing and the lives lost in Palestine. Displays include pinwheels with the names of some of the children killed since October 2023, keys which are symbols of return since the 1948 forced displacement through occupation and signage to explain the Nakba and international law.

Nakba, the Arabic word for catastrophe, refers to the initial forced displacement of 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and lands for the purpose of creating the state of Israel in 1948.

Goodbye to DMV Friend Virginia Smith

Virginia Ellen Smith, born August 20, 1945, passed away peacefully at WesleyLife in Des Moines, April 17, 2025, after fighting cancer for many years. A memorial service was held for her at the DMVF Meeting House on April 24.

Virginia was a long-time member of Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting, and before that, First Friends Church in Des Moines. She served the DMVF Meeting and its members in many ways over the decades, including heading the Library Committee for many years. She also assisted as copy editor for Friendly Line and coordinated its mailing before the newsletter went digital during the pandemic. She often played piano to accompany the meeting on many singing mornings. Fittingly, during her last few days of life, a number of Friends sat with Virginia and her family members and sang to her as they said goodbye.

Virginia attended William Penn University in Oskaloosa, Iowa, where she received her bachelor's degree in home economics and music. She worked in advertising sales at the Des Moines Register for 35 years, retiring in 2009. She was known as a musician, an avid reader and a lover of cats. Her quiet, faithful presence will be sorely missed.

Find Virginia's obituary at:
<https://www.desmoinescremation.com/obituaries/Virginia-E->

Upcoming Events **Continued**

Des Moines PrideFest, June 6-8,
Attend and visit DMVF' table!
Wear your DMVF t-shirt -- and if
you'd like to participate in
tabling or the parade, contact
Katie Jacoby, at Katie Jacoby
kajaco.account@gmail.com. Find
details at
<https://capitalcitypride.org/pridefest/>

SAVE THE DATE

Iowa Yearly Meeting
Conservative Annual Sessions,
July 23-27

Support IMMJ and Migrants and Immigrants

Read the Resistance Update
from [Iowa Migrant Movement
for Justice](#) website to stay
informed of opportunities to
support friends and neighbors in
our communities who are
especially vulnerable to
deportation or other actions
based on their perceived ethnic
group and often without any just
legal process.

Here is one of the action steps
IMMJ lists that is easy for any of
us to do:

Write a statement of support
for Iowa MMJ and immigrants
and refugees in Iowa! Iowa MMJ
is collecting statements of
support as we face political
threats from Iowa legislators.
Statements can be sent to
info@iowammj.org.

Upcoming Hosting List

May 18 – Peter & Andrea
May 25 – Charlie & Dorothy
June 1 – Deborah & Katie
June 8 – David & Claire
June 15 – Petra & Tyler
June 22 – Jim & Catherine

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,

carol.spaulding@drake.edu

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

Query Discussions: First
Sundays, Noon - Online & in
person. Billie Wade, facilitator.

Upcoming Second Hours:

May 25 - Presentation &
conversation with OneIowa
June 15 - DMVF Picnic

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.

Building & Grounds: For
questions about the building or
grounds of the Meeting House,
contact Building & Grounds
Committee Convenor, Charlie
Brown, 515-689-6470.

Hospitality Committee: For
questions about housekeeping at
Hospitality Committee
convenor Charlie Brown,
515-689-6470.

Friendly Line: Send info for the
April FL to Ann Robinson at
anny.robinson1@gmail.com by
Friday, May 30.

Find us online at:

<https://www.desmoinesvalleyfriends.org/>

Check out our Facebook group
for members/attenders. To be
added, email Jan Falb, at
jfalb0326@yahoo.com.