Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting
FRIENDLY LINE
September 2026



The meaning of life – a report from a Friend after a humanitarian trip

-- by David Drake

"So, how was your trip?"

Not wanting to just give a quick response here, like "Good" - here is a short version still -

Most of you know I was deployed with the Red Cross in disaster mental health response following Typhoon Bavi (preceded just a few months earlier by a more violent typhoon Sinlaku). I was first on the island of Guam and then Saipan. (I definitely had to look at our globe to find where this is in the Western Pacific.)

I was there close to 3 weeks, after 4 flights -- Guam - Tokyo-Denver - Des Moines, and arrived the same day with a 15-hour time difference.

It was interesting, challenging, frustrating, and satisfying, as our teams worked to support the local population.

I'm told the Red Cross is basically run like the military. You hear words like 'deployment' and 'mission'. You can 'hurry up and wait' and expect a change of plans frequently. Through it all it is clear that islanders in the territory of Guam, and the commonwealth of Saipan (a capitol of a chain of 14 islands) were very appreciative of our work.

And the Red Cross as a whole there: It is amazing how the organization can bring together so many resources and people from across the continental US and several territories - providing food, resources like tarps, mosquito nets, clean-up kits, warehouse staff, transportation, media connections, transportation, and so many other components - all of which are necessary and interconnected to make such care happen. Mental health, spiritual care, and health resources are also offered. Housing repair funds are offered to the many who qualify. Through it all, the Red Cross mantra of 'compassionate presence' is encouraged by all.

Prior to departure we were all told to expect no electricity, no AC and no hot water. I came prepared for all that but it ended up affecting just one of the islands we staffed - in Rota. I would have naively volunteered if needed to have gone there and imagine I would have been miserable.

I was comfortable throughout save for the heat and humidity, which we felt as we stopped to check on families to see how they were coping -- often in tandem with volunteers who were passing out supplies. One day I was embraced by two women, one who was in tears from her losses and discomfort. Some had had no power over the last four months.

Here is a short official summary of our time here - I was among the first wave of mental health responders to this disaster:

"Super typhoon Bavi brought catastophic destruction across the Mariana Islands, including Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), with destructive Category 5 winds, torrential rainfall, widespread power outages, damaged homes and infrastructure, and significant disruptions to daily life.

Communities are still navigating the physical and emotional impacts of recovery while rebuilding homes, restoring services, and coping with prolonged displacement and uncertainty. The challenges have been compounded by the recent passage of Typhoon Sinlaku, which brought additional heavy rain and flooding to already vulnerable communities, further increasing stress and fatigue among residents."

I was glad to be back.

I found this quote recently: "The meaning of life is to give life meaning," by Victor Frankl

This kind of humanitarian work is part of what does that for me.

-- slightly revised from a Des Moines Register column by David

Quaker Meeting for Worship with attention to Business, 8/09/2026

Attending: Charlie Brown - Co-Clerk; Dorothy Lifka - Co-Clerk Forrest Determann - Recording Clerk; Jim Dietz-Kilen, Catherine Dietz-Kilen, Katie Jacoby, Deborah Fisch, Andrea Holveck, Jack Holveck, Claire Cumbie-Drake, David Drake Billie Wade, Brock Wommack

Meeting opened with a moment of silence

Minutes from the June Meeting were reviewed and approved as written with appreciation for the work of both the recording clerk and the alternate recording clerk.

The Clerk also noted appreciation for the work of the meeting.

Finance Committee Report

Presented by Katie Jacoby.

Minute: Meeting approves the report and expresses appreciation for the work of the treasurer and the Finance Committee including their spiritual work.

Ministry and Council Committee Report

Presented by Jim Dietz-Kilen. The committee has two action item:

1. Requesting approval for Billie's continued service for Ministry and Counsel for Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative). She has completed her term of leadership on the committee but will continue her work.

Minute: Approved with appreciation and enthusiasm.

2. Requesting approval to publish a proposal for Requests for Marriage Under the Care of Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting. A friend wanted to seek to clarify the processes for considering membership and marriage under care of the meeting. An article was drafted and approved now serving as guidance for the committee. Clerk expressed enthusiasm for the document as written. Jim noted appreciation for work done drafting the document they worked from on this.

The committee requested to approve a final draft be published in September's Friendly Line for comment from and approval by DMVF Meeting. It was clarified that this is specific to Requests for Marriage Under the Care of Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting and does not apply to someone who happens to reserve the meeting house for events related to marriage outside of care of the meeting.

Minutes: The sense of the meeting is to move this forward with the proposal for Requests for Marriage Under the Care of Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting to be published in Friendly Line (starting on page 4), with a request that Friends send comments to Jim D-K as Convener of M&C with further comments to be consider

We express appreciation of the work of the committee in clarifying both the practical considerations and the spiritual bases of marriage under the care of the meeting. Comments will then be brought back again for final review at the next Ministry and Council meeting.

Library Committee Report

Presented by Deborah Fisch.

No questions or comments regarding the report. Deborah added a comment about replacing glass on bottom shelves of bookshelves with plexiglass for safety concerns with children in the meeting.

There was discussion of reports on books added to the library to be written by those on the committee or others in the meeting.

Minute: We express appreciation to the Library Committee for their work. We appreciate the work of the convener of this committee on writing an excellent report that was submitted to the yearly meeting.

DMARC Report

Presented by Andrea Holveck

The meeting discussed organizing a one-time donation to be provided by DMVF Meeting to DMARC. Billie will take this back to Peace and Social Concerns committee for further consideration.

Minute: We appreciate the work of our representatives and their report. We are asking the Peace and Social Concerns Committee to help us discern in what ways we can we can reasonably help with the food needs of our community, beyond just donating funds as we've done in past. Working with the community to determine what they could most use may be more effective than donations of food the communities are less likely to use.

Outreach Committees Report: Presented by Katie Jacoby

Correction to Clerks notes re. Ingersoll Live, This is August 29th not the 28th.

New Business

Discussion of grounds behind meeting house. The Friends House Board is comfortable with changes especially if meeting pays for the work. No specific plan for the work but are considering ideas.

The overgrown section in back is growing back up again, meeting discussed hiring this out to be taken care of, with the Meeting paying 1/3 of costs, as this is more of a grounds concern and not something specific to Friends Meeting. It was suggested once cleared, applying a treatment to keep stumps from going back or putting down a weed mat to be covered in mulch or pea gravel. Bamboo fencing was also suggested if any fences are considered.

The Clerk suggested someone one from Friends House or other tenants be involved with caring for this as well. The Friends House Board has already approved the general concept of improving this area.

A Friend proposed:

- Get professional help to turn up the pace.
- Install a fence.
- Decide how to improve the space once fence is installed.
- Funds are available for this work.

Minute: Katie Jacoby, Religious Education Committee, and others involved will work with the Building and Grounds Committee on this and would like to move forward soon on this so there is a safe place for children outside this fall.

A friend asked for any messages and cards to be sent to Pam who appreciates the communications.

The Meeting ended with a moment of silence.



Susan Myers and Deborah Fisch at Ingersoll Live in late August. Thanks to all who helped at the DMVF table during the weekend! Photo by Katie Jacoby.

DMVF book group continues Sept. 20

All Friends are invited share in the DMVF discussion of "Fit for Freedom Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice" by Donna McDaniel and Vanessa Julye.

The second meeting will be held Sunday, Sept. 20, at 1:30 p.m., on Zoom and in person at the DMVF Meeting House. Books may still be available through the DMVF's library or can be ordered through Friends General Conference QuakerBooks.

The proposed plan for reading/discussion is designed to cover the first two chapters over five sessions.

- Session 2—pp. 14 (The Sensitive Few …)-42 (End of Chapter 1)
- Session 3—pp. 44-56 (Friends and Formal Antislavery Affiliations)
- Session 4—pp. 56-67 (end of Chapter 2)

News of Our Friends

Welcome home to **Peter Clay**, who has returned to Des Moines after caring for his dear friend Larry Traiman, who passed away recently in Massachusetts. Thanks to those who cared for Peter's home in his absence.

Many remember Whittier Friend **Roy Howard Hampton,** most recently of Indianola and Cedar Rapids, who recently passed away at the age of 98.

A memorial will be held for Roy on Saturday, Oct. 24, at the Whittier Friends Meetinghouse: Visitation at 1:00 p.m., and a Meeting for Remembrance at 2:00, with a light meal to follow. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Scattergood Friends School. His obituary is posted at the Yearly Meeting website https://www.iymc.org/memorials

Many also remember **Tom Erickson**, a past attender at DMVF, who passed away recently. A celebration of Life for Tom will be held Oct. 3, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., at 1248 39th Street Des Moines. Read Tom's obituary.

Upcoming Events

Bearing Witness 25 Years after 9/11 from Friends Committee for National Legislation
Tuesday, Sept. 15, 3:00-4:00 p.m. CDT, Online

As our nation approaches the 25th anniversary of the tragic 9/11 attacks, we continue to work against the forces that have locked our world into a cycle of vengeance. Instead, this event will uplift reflections and stories from those who refused to accept the march to war. Register at https://www.fcnl.org/events/still-bearing-witness.

Pendle Hill Cary Lecture: Love Crosses Borders
September 14, 7:30 pm - 8:00 pm

A free, hybrid lecture by Anton Flores-Maisonet, Love Crosses Borders, will weave stories from a 25-year journey alongside immigrant communities. Registration is required. Learn more and register at the Pendle Hill website.

International Day of Peace Celebration
Theme: Invest in Peace for Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day. Sunday, Sept. 21, 5:30 p.m., Cowles Commons Peace Garden, 221 Walnut St., downtown Des Moines; (Rain location: Capitol Hill Lutheran Church, 511 Des Moines Street)

The keynote speaker will be Rev. John Tyson, Pastor at Plymouth UCC. Music will be provided by "Songs of Resistance." The event is organized by the Des Moines Faith Committee for Peace with many cosponsors including the Iowa Peace Network.

Hosting Schedule

Sept. 13 – Ted & Cheryl
Sept. 20 – Charlie & Andrea
Sept. 27 – Deborah & Katie
Oct. 4 – Claire & David
Oct. 11 – Jim & Catherine
Oct. 18 – Steve & Kari

You can view the hosting schedule at the DMVF web calendar for hosting **here**. If you feel led to serve the meeting as a host, contact co-clerk Charlie Brown at 515-689-6470.

Requests for Marriage Under the Care of Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting

"A Quaker marriage is a form of marriage available to members and those who, while not being in formal membership, are in unity with the religious nature and witness of Friends. It is usually expected that the couple have an ongoing relationship with Friends."—p.64, Faith and Practice: the Book of Discipline of Iowa Yearly Friends (Conservative), 2011, Publications Committee of the Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative).

How Friends View Marriage

When two people find their lives drawn together as intimate partners and feel called to be life-long companions, they often want to make a public declaration of their love before God, family, and Friends.

(*continued after page 4*)

Des Moines Valley Friends

Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting for Worship: Sundays at 10 a.m., at the Meeting House and by Zoom via email invitation from co-clerks, Charlie Brown and Dorothy Lifka, at clerk@desmoinesvalleyfriends.org

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business: Held on the second First Day each month at 11:45 a.m.

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

Upcoming Second Hours:
9-20 – Potluck

Child Care: If you have a child who would like to be included in childcare or first day school for older youth, contact Andrea at aandjholveck@gmail.com.

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

Friendly Line: Send info for the September FL by Fri, Oct. 2, to anny.robinson1@gmail.com

Find us online at: https://www.desmoinesvalleyfriends.org/.

Check out our Facebook group at Des Moines Valley Friends (Quakers) and our (separate) **Facebook page** at Des Moines Valley Friends – Quakers

Requests for Marriage Under the Care of DMVF

(continued from page 4)

When Quakers marry, they promise, with God's[1] assistance, to love, nurture, and care for one another for the rest of their lives. As their relationship grows, they may discover a richness of shared life across many dimensions of partnership—physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual.

When a couple asks that their marriage be taken under the care of a meeting[2], they are asking to be held in the love and care of that community. "By taking a marriage under its care, the meeting and members of the meeting community accept the dual privilege and responsibility of prayerfully supporting, upholding, and sharing with the family in times of joy, growth, difficulty, and loss." Discussion of the desired nature of this support and of what can be expected of the meeting, should be part of the pre-marriage Clearness Committee process.

Quaker Marriage Procedure

More than 350 years ago, the people called Friends (Quakers) came to the revolutionary understanding that "Christ has come to teach his people himself."[3] Because of this belief, Friends found no need for clergy to act as intermediaries between people and God.

When early Friends wanted to marry, they believed that only Divine Love could unite them in marriage—not a minister or officiant. This understanding is one of the things that continues to set Conservative Friends apart from other Christian traditions.

Over time, Friends developed guidelines to help couples and meetings discern whether they were called into the holy union of marriage, along with procedures to hold a wedding "under the care of the meeting." Although some details have changed through continuing revelation[4] the basic process remains much the same today.

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[1] The term, "God" is used here to represent each person's concept of their higher power or spiritual center.

[2] **Under the care of the meeting** – This phrase describes what happens when a couple is married in a Quaker ceremony. When a couple marries under the care of the meeting they ask the meeting to continue to give care to the spiritual growth of their marriage.

[3] **Christ has come to teach his people himself** – This is a part of a well-known and oft quoted statement by George Fox. Fox is often called the founder of the Religious Society of Friends. The quote was a part of a divine revelation that helped Fox realize that people don't need priest, minister or any other religious authority to be able to turn to Christ within for spiritual guidance.

First Step: Making the Desire to Marry Known

When one or both partners are members of a Quaker meeting and want to be married under the care of the meeting, the first step is to write a joint letter expressing their intention to marry and requesting the meeting's care. The letter is usually sent to the meeting clerk or to the clerk of Ministry and Counsel (M&C). [5]

Today, established attenders[6] may also request marriage under the care of the meeting. In some cases, couples who are neither members nor attenders, but who are drawn to some of practices of Friends, may ask to hold their wedding in the meetinghouse.

A meeting may allow use of the space and the traditional vows of Friends, but in such cases the couple will still need to obtain a marriage license and, either have a legal officiant present for the marriage, or hold a civil ceremony at another time for the marriage to be legally recognized.

Second Step: Marriage Clearness Committee

When a meeting receives a request for marriage, it is usually referred to its Ministry and Counsel Committee which appoints a clearness committee to meet with the couple. The committee offers guidance and helps to discern whether any obstacles exist to the permanence and well-being of the marriage. Sometimes more than one meeting is

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4 **Continuing revelation** – Friends believe that God did not stop teaching with the writing of the Christian Bible, but continues to teach and speak to people, bringing forward new and enlightened messages. Sometimes this is through a growing ability to translate ancient text written in Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew more accurately. Sometimes it is through revelation such as experienced by George Fox on Pendle Hill and other Quakers through the centuries, and sometimes through direct revelation as experienced today by Friends and others of faith.

needed before the committee and couple reach clearness. The Clearness Committee members often use questions to facilitate this process.

Topics explored frequently include the couple's relationship, their leading to marriage, their spiritual life together, plans for work and family, relationships with extended family, financial or prior obligations, and their reasons for seeking marriage under the care of the meeting. These questions can be found on p. 66 of *Faith & Practice, the Discipline of Iowa Yearly Meeting, Conservative*

Once the couple and the committee are in unity about the proposed marriage, the committee reports their recommendation to Ministry & Counsel. That recommendation is then forwarded to the next business meeting of the monthly meeting. Couples are encouraged to be present when the meeting considers the report. If the meeting approves, the marriage may be held in a regular or a specially-called meeting for worship at a time and place agreed upon by the couple and the meeting.

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[5] **Ministry & Counsel Committee (M&C)** – One of many committees appointed to serve the life of the meeting community, this committee considers the spiritual condition of the meeting and any special needs that might arise among the membership. New membership and care of marriage requests, etc. are a part of the committee's work.

[6] **Members/attenders** – *A member is someone* who has let the meeting know in writing that they are feeling led to join the meeting (and thereby the Religious Society of Friends) and why. The request is sent to the clerk of the Ministry & Counsel Committee that appoints a small committee to discern with them whether now is the right time for them to seek membership. The committee will try to discern if the person has a good understanding of the Quaker faith and the *Faith & Practice, the Discipline of IYMC* and what kind of commitment to the meeting comes with membership. When both the person and the clearness committee are clear that it is rightly ordered the committee makes a recommendation to the Ministry & Counsel Committee, which passes it on to the next meeting for worship with attention to business for final approval.

An attender is a person who participates in worship and the life of the meeting, even likely serving on various committees. They are welcome to attend business meetings and to participate in discussions, but they have not asked to join the meeting. Technically an attender can participate in the life of the meeting in all but a few ways. An attender is not supposed to weigh in when a clerk asks for approval during a meeting for worship for business and cannot stop something from moving forward. An attender cannot serve as an officer of the meeting because the officers are the legal representatives of the meeting and it is not in right order for someone who does not belong to a meeting to have the authority to legally represent them. However, in many meetings, especially small ones, these practices are not observed.

Third Step: Wedding Committee

Once the marriage is approved, the meeting appoints a Wedding Committee to assist the couple with planning and to help ensure that both meeting and legal requirements are met.

The Wedding Committee helps the couple plan a wedding marked by simplicity, reverence, and dignity. It also ensures that the marriage is properly recorded in meeting records and, when applicable, in county records.

In some states—including Iowa—special legislation allows marriages under the care of a Quaker meeting to be legally recognized without a marriage license or legal officiant present. In these cases, the wedding certificate itself serves as the legal document. Some couples still choose to obtain state licenses because it is easier to carry and present when proof of marriage is needed. It is important that members of the marriage committee know the marriage laws in their state.

The wedding committee reports back to the meeting after the marriage has taken place so it is officially recorded in the minutes of the meeting, and it also makes sure all meeting and legal documents are recorded properly after the wedding.

Fourth Step: Solemnization of Promises (The Marriage Ceremony)

Quaker weddings are traditionally simple and grounded in worship. Early Friends often rose and married one another during a regular meeting for worship. Today, many meetings hold special meetings for worship for marriage on separate days Like all meetings for worship, meeting for worship with attention to marriage are open to anyone wanting to attend, though the couple almost always sends out invitations to families and F/friends they hope will join them.

After family and Friends are seated in silent worship, the couple enters and sits facing the body of the meeting, often with close family, chosen witnesses, and/or members of the Wedding Committee seated nearby.

Following a period of worship, the couple rises when they feel led and, facing one another, make their promises of marriage. Some couples use the traditional vows spoken by Friends for centuries.[7] Others write their own vows. Rings or another token of commitment may be exchanged.

After the vows, the marriage certificate[8] is brought forward and signed by the couple. It is then read aloud to the meeting and placed where all present may sign as witnesses after the ceremony.

The meeting then returns to worship. As in any meeting for worship, Friends and family may offer ministry if they feel led—sharing memories, blessings, songs, or loving counsel. When the couple feels the meeting has reached its close, they shake hands, signaling the end of worship. As with most weddings, all are usually invited to remain afterward (or move to a special venue) for the reception and refreshments or a meal.

Marriage under the care of the meeting is both a personal commitment and a covenant made within a community of faith. In asking the meeting to take their marriage under its care, a couple invites the prayerful support, guidance, and loving oversight of the meeting. In turn, the meeting holds the couple in its care, seeking to nurture their life together as they grow in love, faithfulness, and mutual support.

For fuller guidance regarding marriage under the care of the meeting, Friends are

encouraged to consult the section on marriage in *Faith & Practice: The Discipline of Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative*, pp. 64–69, also available online at https://www.iymc.org/iymcfaithpractice/#_MARRIAGE_PROCEDURE.[9]

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[7]**Quaker Wedding Vows –** Traditional Quaker marriage vows – "In the presence of God and these our family and F/friends, I XX choose thee XX to be my wife/husband/companion in marriage, promising with Divine assistance to be a loving and faithful wife/husband/companion to thee until death should separate us." And then the other person switching names repeats the same promise.

[8]**Marriage Certificate** – The wording for a traditional Quaker marriage certificate is on pp. 68 & 69 of *Faith & Practice, the Discipline of IYMC.*

[9] ***Faith & Practice, the Discipline of IYMC* –** This book contains a brief history of the Religious Society of Friends, a history of IYMC and its monthly meetings, and agreed upon guidelines for its meetings, Yearly Meeting committees, and the governance and guidelines for Yearly Meeting. (*Faith & Practice, the Discipline of IYMC* is available online at https://www.iymc.org/iymcfaithpractice/.)