

# NOTES FROM FRIENDS

The monthly newsletter of West Branch Friends Church



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I am currently reading a glorious book by Morgan Harper Nichols called “You Are Only Just Beginning”. Each chapter explores a lesson we can learn from a specific part of creation. I would like to share these words from Chapter One, “*Beginning a New Adventure: Lessons from Sunlight.*”

## 8 Signs You're Ready For an Adventure of Discovery

1. The prospect of discovering what that looks like excites you more than it scares you.
2. You're beginning to surround yourself with people who share in your joy of using your childlike imagination to foster hope in the now and in the future.
3. You're open to taking unexpected turns, and you're ready to learn.
4. You're starting to embrace that everyone is at differing points of the circular journey of life, and you are worth no less if you are in a different place than someone you look up to.
5. You recognize there are parts of life that are out of your control, and your fear of not being good enough won't stop you from carrying on.
6. You're learning how to work through fear one breath at a time.
7. You're starting to be less afraid of trying new things. You are becoming less attached to worrying about what the outcome will be.
8. You're becoming open to the idea that even though you feel stuck where you are at times, as sure as the sun continues to rise and set, you are free to wake up to life. Pace yourself on a path flooded with radiant Light.

*In Riotous Joy, Chris*



## *Query for the Month*

Take time to learn about other people's experiences of the Light. Remember the importance of the Bible, the writings of Friends, and all writings which reveal the ways of God.

**While respecting the experiences and opinions of others, do not be afraid to say what you have found and what you value.** Appreciate that doubt and questioning can also lead to spiritual growth and to a greater awareness of the Light that is in us all.

**As you learn from others, can you in turn give freely from what you have gained?**



# Meeting for Worship



*Join us in meeting for worship Sundays at 10:30.*

This month we are exploring the differences between - and the impact of - faith *in* Jesus or faith *like* Jesus

## Worship Servants

February 2

Greeter: Maureen Arensdorf

Zoom Host: Dick Hinkhouse

Children's Message:

Special Music:

Piano: Julie Tallman

February 23

Greeter: Gordon Edgar

Zoom: Teresa Winder

Children's Message:

Special Music:

Piano: Gwen Senio

February 9

Greeter: Gordon Edgar

Zoom Host: Maxine Koepp

Children's Message: Joan Blundall

Special Music:

Piano: Gwen Senio

February 16

Greeter: Gordon Edgar

Zoom Host: Jim Glasson

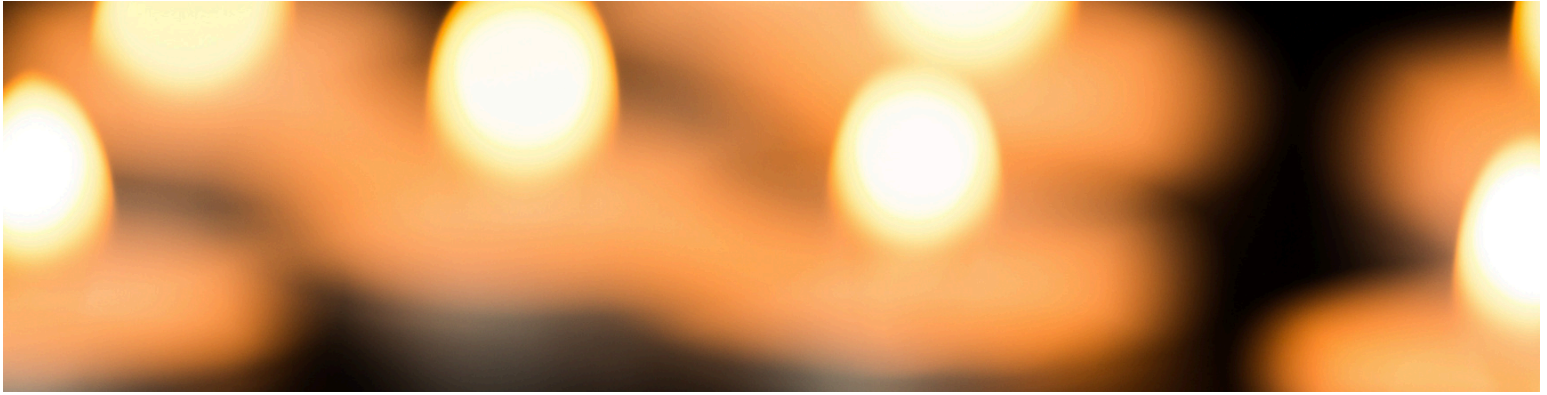
Children's Message: Sue McCracken

Special Music:

Piano: Julie Tallman



# Time for Prayer



## Pray for Our Elders

Darlene Baum  
Pat Bradley  
Maria Denmead  
Fran Fritz  
Mary Humrichouse  
Pat Langrehr  
Donna Mortenson  
Larry Reiner  
Lois Semotan  
Nancy Stacks  
Mildred Torkelson

## Joys & Concerns

- *Celebrating one year since Eddie's kidney transplant and Jim's gift of a kidney*
- *Prayer for Mary D. on her mission trip to Kenya*
- *Elaine's godson Kevin*
- *Erin's upcoming surgery*
- *Fires in California and all first responders and volunteers*

## Ecumenical Prayer Cycle for February

Jan. 26-Feb. 1: Cyprus, Greece, Turkiye

Feb 2 - Feb 8: Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Western Sahara, Tunisia

Feb. 9-Feb. 15: Andorra, Italy, Malta, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Vatican City

Feb. 16-Feb. 22: Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland

Feb. 23-Mar. 1: France, Germany, Monaco

## Draw Me to Your Heart -- a prayer by Joyce Rupp

Wise and Faithful Guide,  
keep my spirit entwined with yours. Teach me about the poor and the pained. Fill me with your mercy and compassion. Help me to find your peace in my troubled moments. Let love be the response I give to those who oppose me. Constantly draw me toward all that is good. Urge me to give my best to those who need it. Lead me to learn from my discouragement and struggles. Be the light I need to find my way in the darkness. Fill my hollowness and emptiness with your love. Most of all, continue to dwell within me, because your gracious presence is all I ever need. It is enough to bring me through the deepest canyons and the darkest crevices of my life. Divine Companion, draw me to your heart where wisdom resides and daily let me choose to follow in your way.

What is it that you seek from this Wise and Faithful Guide?

# Valentine Boxes

*Each year we send care packages to our students at various universities, colleges, vocational schools, etc. These gifts include snacks, sweets, cash, gift cards -- anything you choose to show your love for our young people.*

**This Sunday (February 2) is the LAST Sunday to bring your items to include in these packages. If you need to enter the meetinghouse during the week, please contact Chris at 319-210-4038**

## Ecumenical Women's Group Thursday, February 6, 6:30 pm

**Texts for this month:**

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7 -- Wives in Exile  
Matthew 12:33-37, 46-50 -- Mary Waits for Jesus  
Lamentations 1:1-6 -- Jerusalem as Widow  
Mark 6:14-29 -- Herodias  
Ezekiel 16:1-22 -- Unfaithful Wife  
Mark 7:24-37 -- The Syrophenician Woman  
Ezekiel 23:1-21 -- Oholah and Oholibah  
Luke 10:38-42 -- Mary and Martha  
Hosea 1:2-10 -- Gomer  
Luke 20:27-38 -- Marriage after Resurrection  
Hosea 11:1-11 -- God as Parent  
mark 5:25-34 -- Woman with Hemorrhages



## Friends of the Wild Sunday, February 9, 4:00 pm at Hoover Park Shelter

**Reflection for the Month:**

**What does your relationship to nature have to do with your spirituality?**

**What is your relationship with nature?**



# News from our Quaker Connections

## New Association of Friends Hires Field Secretary

*At the fall business meeting of the New Association of Friends, Annie Glen was approved to serve in the newly created role of field secretary. Annie currently serves as the pastor of the Dublin Friends Church in Dublin, Indiana and has been an active member of the New Association. Because the field secretary role is not full time, she will be able to continue in her role as pastor and feels the two positions will fit together nicely and compliment each other. She is excited about this new opportunity and eager to begin making connections and getting to know all of the Monthly Meetings. She enjoys the listening role and looks forward to traveling to all of the churches within the New Association to hear about their joys and challenges. Annie has already begun her visits to churches in Indiana and this summer plans to travel to the further churches including Friends of the Light in Traverse City, Michigan, Open Table Friends in Madison, Ohio and us in West Branch. She hopes to create and distribute a newsletter and will support the New Association in working and uniting the churches in learning and growing together.*

## Quakers sue to keep US immigration agents out of houses of worship By [Tom Hals](#) (Reuters)

Jan 27 (Reuters) - Quaker groups sued on Monday to prevent U.S. immigration agents from carrying arrests and searches in houses of worship, after the Trump Administration rescinded guidance that protected churches and schools from his mass deportation campaign.

Last week, President Donald Trump's acting secretary of Homeland Security rescinded a Biden Administration order that limited immigration enforcement in "protected areas," including hospitals, shelters, playgrounds or food pantries.

Trump has pledged to deport millions of people who are undocumented, and the Department of Homeland Security said the policy change would mean that undocumented people would no longer be able to stay in churches to avoid arrest.

The Department of Justice declined to comment. DHS did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The lawsuit by five Quaker groups said the policy was infringing their right to practice their religion by sowing fear among congregations and leading to the cancellation of services. It said the prior guidance of avoiding arrests and searches in protected areas had stood for 30 years. The complaint said the policy violated the Quakers' rights under the U.S. Constitution, as well as administrative law and a law that protects religious freedom.

The Quakers asked U.S. District Judge Theodore Chuang in Greenbelt, Maryland, to declare the policy unconstitutional and prevent agents from carrying out enforcement actions at places of worship.





*Dear Friends,*

*It has been a sad start to the year at FWCC, following the passing of our clerk Simon C. Lamb. We are finding strength in carrying forward the work he helped lead.*

*Last December, the Central Executive Committee approved a new Strategic Plan, based on the Future Directions document discussed at the World Plenary meeting (WPM). As part of this we have a new communications plan focused on sharing our message with those less familiar with Quakers.*

*some of this work has already started: late last year, we joined with a number of other Quaker organisations in a considered decision to withdraw from Twitter/X and move to alternative decentralised microblogging site, BlueSky.*

*This action garnered attention from several publications, including the Irish Times, the Church Times, Independent Catholic News, the Friend, Friends Journal and Premier Christian Radio.*

*Around the same time we received an invite to present the BBC Daily Service, which was recorded earlier this year and aired last week. Our General Secretary, Tim Gee, spoke on the theme of the "Still Small Voice", and you can hear me reading the Bible passages.*

*We've also heard the call to bring the World Family of Friends together online more often. Accordingly, we are glad to announce that the first of four Global Online Worshipers planned for 2025 -- each to be hosted by a different FWCC Section -- will happen Sunday 2 March.*

*In other news our Justice & Peace Secretary Hezron Masitsa spoke at and participated in a significant training led by FWCC Africa Section toward the end of last year. Held at the Africa Inland Church Farmers Training Centre in Cheptebo, the gathering focused on strengthening collaboration among five Quaker agencies in Kenya to nurture peace in the region.*

*As we step into this new year together, I feel moved by the ways Spirit continues to work through our global community, especially in difficult times. May we remain faithful to our calling to manifest universal love in all we do.*

*In Friendship,  
Ruby Cumming  
Communications Manager*