



WEST BRANCH FRIENDS CHURCH

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“The place of prayer is a precious habitation...I saw this habitation to be safe, to be inwardly quiet, when there were great stirrings and commotions in the world.” These words are from *The Journal of John Woolman*. Woolman was a Quaker tailor, mystic, and voice for social justice in colonial America. They are a tender reminder that even in 2022, we can turn our hearts to prayer and find peace and comfort in the Light of God’s love. It is in that Light that we send our annual greetings to you and share a bit from the life of West Branch Friends over this past year.

Early in the year, we were visited by John Zimmerman, the new Head of School at Scattergood Friends School and Ethan Huelskamp, the Development Coordinator. It was inspiring to hear about new developments at the school, the farm and the growing enrollment as they have added a middle school program. Some members of our meeting joined Scattergood staff and students on spring and fall workdays.

In late April we felt it was safe to once again host our annual Everything Sale which had been canceled during the pandemic. The aroma of Possum Holler barbeque by our own Eddie Starr drew in shoppers for household goods, clothing, plants and everything at rock bottom prices. This event is always a time of fellowship with our community as well as a service to those in need.

The Peace and Social Concerns committee continued its tradition of offering the Peace Scholarship for area high school seniors. Reviewing the essays and interviewing the applicants is always inspiring. Our winner this year was Scattergood graduate, Gillie Schmidt-Quee. Gillie shared her essay with us in worship on Peace and Justice Sunday. Also joining us that morning to share her essay was Hilda Hernandez, the winner of the scholarship given by Humans for Racial Justice. These young people encouraged us in the hope they bring for the future of our world.

Another treasured event returned this year with our Hymn Sing & Pie and Ice Cream Social which is offered to the whole community during the annual celebration of Hoover’s Hometown Days in August. This year we were able to support the work of the Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP) with the generous donations we received. A matching contribution from our Work and Witness Fund enabled us to provide a total of \$3,489 to help with the shortfall in DVIP funding.

It’s always a joy to add new members to our body and this year we welcomed both Joan Blundall and our pastor, Chris Humrichouse into membership. As a church family we also mourned and celebrated the lives of Loren Hemingway and Marvin Fritz. We continue to hold their families in our hearts.

Recognizing the gift of ministry in our pastor, Chris, a committee was appointed to prayerfully meet with her to consider this calling. This committee, recognizing her preparation, her experience in ministry and a manner of life that reflects the Quaker testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship, deemed it appropriate to record this gift of ministry in the Society of Friends. Chris’s recording was approved by the Monthly Meeting on September 18, 2022. Chris was surprised in worship on November 13 by a visit from our own incarnation of Margaret Fell, the mother of Quakerism, who presented her with a certificate of recording.

This fall's activities began with a picnic in Hoover Park following worship on the Labor Day weekend. Our Trustees were busy making upgrades to our playground with new fencing, the removal of overgrown shrubs and the planting of ten new trees. As a congregation we began a series of listening sessions to consider such questions as what brings us to meeting on Sunday morning and which of the core principles of Quakerism are important to each of us. After the holidays, we will consider what we heard during these sessions as we look ahead in the life of our meeting.

When we look back over our time together In Sunday worship, it is evident that each person contributes to the life and ministry of our meeting. A team of faithful Zoom hosts continues to make it possible for Friends both near and far to join us. A host of talented musicians share their gifts. Children's church leaders along with our puppet friends, Henry and Priscilla, share messages for children of all ages. Pastor Chris continues to challenge and inspire us with a spoken message and our time of communion after the manner of Friends is rich as we remain open to what the Spirit speaks.

As stewards of the gifts God has given us, our special offerings support our own Love Fund, local organizations including the West Branch Food Pantry, CommUnity Crisis Center, Domestic Violence Intervention Program, and Hawkeye Area Community Action Program Thanksgiving Meal. We continue to support numerous Quaker organizations both financially and spiritually. An added blessing this year has been the opportunity to join with other Quaker meetings both in the U.S. and in Canada to help raise funds in support of the immigration of the Kooshan family from Afghanistan. Another gift that we treasure is our beloved meetinghouse and the opportunities we have in opening our doors to the community for such groups as Humans for Racial Justice, yoga classes, Lions Club and our own prayer group. Our faithful trustees take good care of the building and grounds.

There have indeed been "great stirrings and commotions" in the world this year, and we are grateful for the gifts God has provided to us to nurture our own individual and collective souls, and to hopefully bring God's light and love to both those we can meet with in person and those we meet in spirit. We send our love and blessings to you for the upcoming year and thank God for you!

Maxine Koepp, Clerk of Ministry and Counsel

Gwen Senio, Clerk of the Meeting

Chris Humrichouse, Pastor

Mark your calendars!

Bell Choir Christmas Concert	Friday, December 2, 7PM, Zoom option available
Community Free Breakfast	Saturday, December 3, 8:30AM until the food is gone!
Christmas Program and Soup Supper	Sunday, December 18, 5PM, Zoom option available for program
Christmas Eve Service	December 24, 7PM, Zoom option available
Heritage Day (at Hoover Park)	October 21, 2023, details forthcoming!



Contributions can be sent to us via mail, or online at <https://givebutter.com/tjP1Jg>

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