

"Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples— when they see the love you have for each other." John 13:34-35

Greeting dear friends near and far,

The above scripture from John prompts the query, do we demonstrate the love of God to others through our lives and our work? Looking back over the past year you can see that our small but faithful congregation strives to serve God and our fellow humankind.

We continue to offer Sunday morning worship both in person and on Zoom. We enjoy meeting new friends and maintaining old ties. Gifts of ministry, music, stewardship of our resources, and hospitality enrich our community. Open worship continues to be our vital communion in the manner of Friends. Our Pastor, Chris Humrichouse, and her backup, Sue McCracken, bring very inspiring and challenging messages for us! Tom Long of West Branch United Methodist Church also shared a sermon with us. Chris's recording in the New Association of Friends as a minister of Friends was officially recognized in Richmond, Indiana this fall. Chris also leads devotions and worship monthly at Crestview Care Center. Engaging children's messages, brought by various members and attenders of the Meeting, appeal to the young and young at heart. We give thanks for our faithful musicians Gwen Senio and Julie Tallman and those who provided special music this year including Mary Denmead, Nina Torkelson, Elaine and Ben Wedeking, Lucas McCracken, Ray Blue, Jim Glasson and Hilda Bowers. Our voice and bell choirs have shared wonderful music, both in worship and in our community, working with Humans for Racial Justice to present a well-attended MLK Day Celebration at the Town Hall.

Our Prayer Group meets faithfully in praise and love for the joys and concerns raised during worship as well as individually. We all strive as well to make a difference in our wider community, including events such as the Everything Sale, Peace Sunday recognizing Alexandria Poppen, our Peace Scholarship recipient in 2023, the James Thompson Scholarship presented to graduating senior, Si'iva Senio, the Hymn Sing/Pie and Ice Cream Social held during Hoover's Hometown Days, proceeds of which benefited the Domestic Violence Intervention Program, and the Free Breakfast offered to the community during the Christmas Past weekend in West Branch. We hosted worship on World Quaker Day, October 1st, in the historic Friends Meetinghouse in Herbert Hoover National Park. Friends from Scattergood, West Branch Conservative Friends, and Iowa City Conservative Friends joined together for this gathering. We learned about local Friends history from Ken Fawcett of West Branch Conservative Friends, and heard Margaret Fell Fox (aka Kathleen Darling) speak about a lively faith before we shared open worship and a potluck picnic in the park.

We are enjoying an extensive facelift that our venerable building and sanctuary received over the summer including repairs to plaster, paint, refinished floors, windows, and new carpet. All of this work was coordinated by Allan Winder with our devoted trustees with volunteers pitching in to help. The meetinghouse looks wonderful and we hope you can come see it for yourself if you haven't joined us since the renovations!

We strive to be good stewards of the financial gifts we have received. In addition to many Friends organizations, we donate to CommUnity in Iowa City which provides services in crisis intervention as well as a food bank, our Love Fund, the West Branch Food Pantry, Summer Feeding/Backpack Program, and the Domestic Violence Intervention Program.

In a world that has grown increasingly more war torn and divided, our prayer is that West Branch Friends Church will continue to offer a welcoming place of comfort, hope and God's love. And it is in that Love that we send our best wishes to you and yours this Christmas season and throughout the new year! Let us know how God has been active in your life or simply stay in touch!

In Love and Light,

Gwen Senio, Presiding Clerk

Maxine Koepp, Ministry and Counsel Clerk

Mark Your Calendar for our annual **Christmas Program: Sunday, December 17, 5:00 pm**. Join us for a time of celebration of Jesus' birth, with music and our traditional candle lighting circle. Have a candle ready if you Zoom in from home! A soup supper and fellowship will follow.

Contact Maxine Koepp at maxine.nash@gmail.com for the Zoom link if you want to worship with us remotely.



West Branch Friends Church

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