

***He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8***

Warm greetings to our church family near and far! The prophet Micah described very simply how we might each live to be the church in this world. As we once again approach the holiday season we look back upon the life of our meeting and are happy to share some of the ways we have endeavored to be the church. Moving through this second year of the pandemic we have been challenged to adapt and change in many ways. We have seen how change can be good and how challenge can lead to growth.

### **The Life of the Meeting**

We began the year with our worship services solely on Zoom and while this presented challenges, it also enabled church family to join us from Wyoming all the way to the east coast. We got acquainted with new friends and are beginning to meet some of them in person. We look forward to being able to enjoy fellowship together. We worked hard to get the meetinghouse ready to reopen in time to celebrate the life of Roscoe Millett on May 29<sup>th</sup>, and since that time our worship services have been available either in person or by Zoom. Our pastor, Chris Humrichouse, continues to share her gifts of ministry and pastoral care with us. When a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday occurs in a month, Chris has the Sunday off. This offers opportunities for other voices in our Meeting to share God's messages with us. A weekly prayer group gathers to lift our joys and concerns in corporate prayer. Perhaps the biggest change for West Branch Friends came in moving our affiliation from Iowa Yearly Meeting to the New Association of Friends where we have sensed the warmth of community in love of God and neighbor. We have also sought opportunities to be more involved with friends of Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative.

### **Engaging with Children and Youth**

Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee offers a Peace Scholarship to area high school seniors. This year we awarded a \$1500 scholarship to each of two West Branch High School students, Olivia Poppen and Savannah Sexton. The applications included essays and interviews, and the recipients shared their essays with us in worship on a designated Peace Sunday. It is always inspiring to recognize these leaders of tomorrow. Our Christian Education committee paired up members of the congregation as prayer pals for our children and youth, and recently we have begun offering children's church via Zoom for those who can't join us in person.

### **Beyond Our Walls**

We recognize that the church is not the building itself, but rather the members who reach out in ministry and service to be the church beyond the four walls of the meeting house. A small group known as Humans for Racial Justice meets with other members in the West Branch community to explore ways to support those for whom justice is a challenge. This group sponsored a celebration of diversity during the annual Hoover Hometown Days weekend. Due

to continued concerns with the pandemic, we also offered the community a modified version of our annual hymn sing and pie and ice cream social on the church lawn. Recently a number of our members helped to package meals for the hungry in Haiti and Iowa communities as part of the Hoover Hunger Project. We continue to support a number of wider Friends organizations and missions as well as local charities.

### **Moving Forward in the Meetinghouse**

We are grateful for the work of our new Technology Committee as they continue to give a lot of time researching and installing equipment to improve the quality of our online presence. We marvel at the many musical gifts that are shared by members of our congregation and are grateful to be able to share this music beyond our walls. The Endowment Committee has had a busy year overseeing the endowment funds which are being used to support our audiovisual upgrades and needed repairs to the elevator and air conditioning, helping to keep the meetinghouse accessible and comfortable.

As members of the Society of Friends we continue to work to be living examples of the historic Quaker testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship. We enjoy hearing from Friends far and wide and hope that if you are in the area, you will join us for Sunday worship. You are also welcomed to join us via Zoom and you can find this information on our website at [www.westbranchfriendschurch.com](http://www.westbranchfriendschurch.com) or on our Facebook page. We close with the words of Paul, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Gwen Senio, Clerk of the Meeting

Jim Glasson, Clerk of Ministry and Counsel

Chris Humrichouse, Pastor

Mark your calendars!

Bell Choir Christmas Concert, Friday, December 3, 7PM

Christmas Program: Sunday, December 19, 5:00 pm, via Zoomonly

Please join us for a time of celebration of Jesus' birth and music. Have a candle ready!

Christmas Eve service, December 24, 7:00 pm, in person or via Zoom

Join us for a time of Worship to reflect and celebrate on the eve of Jesus' birth

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

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