

JANUARY 2026

NOTES FROM FRIENDS

The monthly newsletter of West Branch Friends Church



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Love Big, Be Well

These words have really spoken to my heart this year. My spirit, as well. So simple (or so it appears) yet so profound. They are words from a fictional pastor to his fictional congregation in a book of the same title. Gwen gave me this book after spotting it at an event she was attending. I cannot thank her enough for that. It has been a guide for me. These two phrases not only describe how I hope to live, but how I hope to live with you as your pastor. It is also how I hope we live together as a meeting. Which brings me to...

Sunday, December 28, 2025. The title of the message was: "When the Saints Go Hobbling In". We talked about the fatigue that we feel as we contemplate the end of a year and the beginning of another. How, if we're honest with ourselves, we completely feel the "dings" of the past year and the profound hope that the new year is better... We also talked about the great cloud of witnesses that inhabits our meetinghouse. We shared fond remembrances and stories of those who inhabited these seats before us. We also acknowledged that – like it or not – WE are the "saints" of "before" for the next generations who will inhabit this place.

All of this has prompted me to sit with the following thoughts and I would like you to contemplate them too. What does it look like to love big? What does it feel like? What does it look like to be well? What does it feel like? I want us to consider these questions both of ourselves as individuals, and for our meeting as a community. *Continued on next page....*

I am asking each of us to consider our own spiritual wellbeing and growth. I am asking each of us to consider the tangible ways in which we “love God and love our neighbors as ourselves” – and the possibilities of new ways of loving that may present themselves to us. I am asking each of us to consider the Query of the Month presented on the next page of this newsletter.

And then I want to talk about it. I plan to be in contact with each person who has presence in and with our meeting for some spiritual discussion. This can happen through email, on the phone, or an in-person cup of tea. These conversations, for me, are the beginnings of this year’s attempt to Love Big and Be Well. I hope you will feel comfortable sharing with me your hopes for this in your own life, and be willing to share your hopes and dreams for our meeting in 2026 and beyond.

I am truly looking forward to another year as part of this wonderful community that we call West Branch Friends. Together, I hope we can be a tangible, visible, contributing, peace-filled spiritual presence in our world.

Love Big, Be Well
Chris





Query of the Month

**What stories will future generations tell about
you and your spiritual life?**

**What stories will these generations tell about
our meeting?**



Need Info?
Check out our Website!

**This newsletter appears monthly
on the 1st of the month
Bulletin announcements happen weekly
But the website is 24/7, 365 days a year!
For all your calendar/event/topical
info about WBFC
Check it out here:
www.westbranchfriendschurch.com**

Join us for a book discussion on Zoom!

**We will be reading and chatting about
The “Tears of Things: Prophetic Wisdom For an Age of Outrage” by Richard Rohr
We will decide our meeting time when folks have registered.
Sign up now for input on the schedule ~ deadline is Jan. 18
Contact Chris at christine@homeforthewildsoul.com
319-210-4038; or catch her on Sunday!**

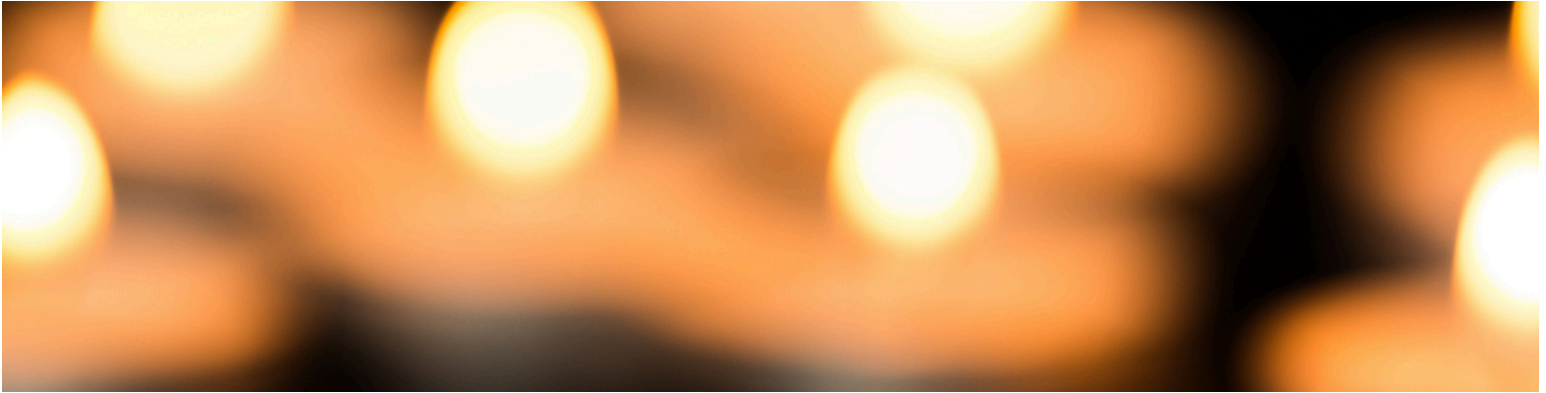
Here’s a synopsis of the book:

How do we live compassionately in a time of violence and despair? What can we do with our private disappointments and the anger we feel in such an unjust world? In his most personal book yet, Richard Rohr turns to the writings of the Jewish prophets, revealing how some of the lesser-read books of the Bible offer us a crucial path forward today.

The prophets’ writings reflect the full spectrum of human maturity. In almost every case, their initial rage and their accusatory words evolve into a profound pathos and lamentation about our shared human condition and the world’s suffering. Through astute critiques of culture and institutions, and their journey from anger to sadness, and ultimately compassion, the prophets exemplify what Rohr calls “sacred criticism”—a distinct approach to confronting evil and injustice that acknowledges the wholeness of history, the interconnectedness of every living being, and the reality of a divine and universal love. In this, they set the stage for Jesus, who follows this identical pattern.

Drawing on a century of biblical scholarship and written in the warm, pastoral voice that has endeared Rohr to millions, *The Tears of Things* breathes new life into ancient wisdom. It paves a path of enlightenment for anyone seeking a compassionate way of living in a hurting world.

Time for Prayer



Joys & Concerns

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

- *Eddie recovering from a fall*
- *Maureen recovering from a fall*
- *Allan and Teresa as Allan continues with treatment*
- *Jonny's mom Nancy as she recovers from back surgery*
- *Allan's brother Robert in hospice care*
- *Anita's cousin Carl awaiting test results and unable to eat*
- *The Meren and Fuchtman families going through a tough time*
- *The family of Kathleen's friend Anne upon Anne's death this past week*
- *Joan's neighbor Betty and grandson Jacob as they navigate all of the issues associated with Jacob's mental health*
- *Regina and family upon the death of Regina's grandfather in El Salvador*

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle for January

Dec. 28-Jan. 3: *Japan, North Korea, South Korea*

Jan. 4-Jan. 10: *Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine*

Jan. 11-Jan. 17: *Iran, Iraq, Syria*

Jan. 18-Jan. 24: *Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen*

Jan. 25-Jan. 31: *Cyprus, Greece, Turkiye*

Renewal Prayer for a New Year

Gracious God, we come before you seeking renewal in the new year. Renew our minds, our hearts, and our spirits. May we be transformed by the power of your Holy Spirit, leaving behind the old and embracing the new that you have in store for us.