

November, 2025

Dear Friends both near and far,

As we enter this week of Thanksgiving, we acknowledge our many blessings. It is a time to look back over the past year to celebrate where we have been, how far we have come, and all the good ministry and community along the way. It is also a time to look forward with anticipation. What might be the needs in the coming year? What exciting ministry ideas and plans do we have for our future?

Over the past year, we have had vibrant, meaningful meetings for worship. We have received varied gifts of music and children's messages with great joy. We have cared for one another both formally and informally, including the use of our Love Fund, pastoral care, visitation and much, much more. We provide twice monthly devotions and monthly worship at Crestview, our local care facility. A faithful prayer group meets weekly to wrap our meeting, our community, and our world in prayer. We offer spiritual growth opportunities such as an Ecumenical Women's Bible Study and Friends of the Wild, an outdoor worship that helps us learn about and participate in the stewardship of our Earth.

Our Trustees have given diligent care to our facilities. New, energy-efficient windows are complete. The most recent project was to repair the broken concrete stairs and sidewalk that lead to our front entrance. New front doors and flooring for the lower level are coming next. We also have a new pre-owned organ, which will bring even more joy to our meetings for worship. Workdays in both spring and fall gave us the opportunity to work together in the care of our building and grounds. It is always a joy to work alongside one another and particularly with the grandchildren of the meeting.

Each passing year brings particular moments of joy. In March we officially recorded the public ministry of Sue McCracken, who served as pastor from 2016-2020. Sue continues to provide the children's puppet ministry and brings a message each fifth Sunday. Her recording was also recognized in September at the Annual Gathering for Nurture and Fellowship of the New Association of Friends. It was also a joy to again award a Peace Scholarship to a local High School senior. This year's recipient, Nora Ziehr of West Branch, shared her essay with us in worship and as always inspired us with hope for the future. We also enjoyed participating in the West Branch Area Religious Council's annual pulpit exchange as Rebecca Carver from the Springdale Methodist Church brought the morning message one Sunday in April.

The loss of our dear member, Bill Bowers was a tender reminder of the blessing of the tie that binds us together in Christian love. Bill lived his life as a friend to all and was honored by a meetinghouse filled to overflowing at his memorial service. He is greatly missed.

We continue to partner with various organizations and community groups to meet and share God's love with our neighbors and to help provide greatly needed gifts and services.

Some of our activities include a free Community Breakfast as part of the Christmas Past weekend in West Branch, supporting the West Branch Food Pantry and the school Backpack Program with our time, food donations, and financial contributions. We have also partnered with our local Lions Club, the schools, the public library, and West Branch Community Development in a variety of ministries through gifts of service, time, and financial support. We remain a committed member of the West Branch Area Religious Council, which provides a mechanism for all churches in West Branch to work together to feed, clothe and shelter those in need.

Several members of our meeting participate with the local group, Humans for Racial Justice. In June this group presented a week of programs celebrating the Juneteenth holiday and sharing the history of Quakers and their involvement in the Underground Railroad in this area. In late summer, some members joined with Conservative Friends in West Branch and Iowa City to revive the work of the Earthcare Working Group. These meetings have been informative and inspiring as we consider together ways to protect our environment for the sake of all humankind.

We give thanks for the many gifts shared with us over the past year along with the ministry we have been able to offer and to experience. The Quaker testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship call us to prayer, to worship, to service and to giving. May we be God's hands and heart in the world so that the Light may continue to shine through us.

Wishing you great joy and abundant blessings in this holiday season and the year ahead,

Maxine Koepp, Clerk of Ministry and Counsel
Gwen Senio, Monthly Meeting Clerk
Chris Humrichouse, Pastor

Upcoming Events

Bell Choir Christmas Concert, Friday, December 5, 7:00 PM

Christmas Program: Sunday, December 21, 5:00 PM

West Branch Friends Church, PO Box 153, West Branch, Iowa 52358

PH:319-643-5598 Email: westbranchfriendschurch@gmail.com

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