

Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting

FRIENDLY LINE

May 2024



Conservation Agriculture and Savings for Life Support Rural Rwandans

(Part 2 of stories from Peter Clay's recent trip to Rwanda with Quaker Peace Teams)

Rural Rwandans can no longer depend upon the “Long rains” and the “Short rains” to come predictably as in the past. In Rwanda today, destructive downpours that can create catastrophic landslides may follow months of drought. Homes, fields and lives are in harm’s way. How can these climate change impacts be reduced? How can more food be grown in this beautiful hilly land at a time of enhanced food insecurity?



Celebrating the large ears of maize that grew using CA techniques.

Knowing what to plant and how and when have become crucial questions for the majority of Rwandans who depend upon small plot agriculture to survive. Friends Peace Teams is supporting effective programs to teach new techniques of Conservation Agriculture (CA) that help to mitigate climate impacts and which also extend the places where some crops, such as maize, can be grown.

In February I joined African Great Lakes Initiative Coordinator David BUCURA to visit some of the Conservation Agriculture Farmer Field School sites. The CA program works by establishing Farmer Field Schools (FFS) on rented land in each Sector where they work.

These are experimental plots where 30 local farmers participate in growing crops using the CA techniques and compare the results to the traditional ways of planting and growing maize, beans, Irish potatoes and other crops. This is

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A Quaker Minute When Friends Disagree

When Friends disagree – observations by 20th Century Quaker author John Punshon (1987).

What is required is a willingness to listen to what others have to say rather than to persuade them that one’s own point of view represents what is right and proper.

It also requires restraint. The reiteration of one point by several Friends each in their own way lends no weight to the point. What the meeting must learn to discern is its rightness, not how many people support it.

When conflict comes, as it does, and the temptation to compromise – to seek consensus – is resisted, the sense of divine guidance is unmistakably registered. New possibilities for a way forward which nobody has thought of emerge out of discussion. Postponement and delay settle minds and assist the process of coming to a united mind. Above all, those who take opposing views come to find that the discipline of waiting has mysteriously united them.

One in a series on Quaker history and practice, contributed by Pam Blackburn.



DMVFriends enjoyed a recent visit from Brian Blackmore, Director of Quaker Engagement, American Friends Service Committee. Photo by Jon Krieg.

**MEETING FOR WORSHIP
WITH ATTENTION TO
BUSINESS 04/14/2024**

Present: Carol Spaulding-Kruse, Andrea Holveck, Katie Jacoby, Dick Douglass, Catherine Dietz-Kilen, Peter Clay, Jim Dietz-Kilen, Claire Cumbie-Drake, Deborah Fisch, Dorothy Lifka, Ann Robinson, Virginia Smith, Fred Nelson

The Meeting opened with a Moment of Silence

Minutes from March 10, 2024 Meeting for Business

Minute: The Minutes were approved with the following correction and clarification.

Correction: Andrea Holveck did not volunteer to do research on the bombing of the Meetinghouse. Ann Robinson and Deborah Fisch volunteered to look for materials that Lynne Howard previously put together regarding the bombing. (Deborah found the scrapbook about the Meeting bombing in 1975. Renee at Friend's House is interested in this information. Dorothy will share this with Renee and ask what her purpose is and if she is asking for a collaboration with the Meeting.)

Clarification: Dorothy clarified that current committees will remain in place until the end of 2024, as the Meeting transitions to a calendar year cycle. The nominating committee will contact Friends about remaining on their current committees until the end of 2024. The nominating committee will select a new committee member in the fall to replace Claire who is rotating off.

Ministry & Council Committee Report (Jim Dietz-Kilen)

April 7, 2024

In attendance: Gordon Bivens, Andrea Holveck, Dorothy Lifka, Billie Wade, Deborah Fisch, Peter Clay and Jim Dietz-Kilen (convener).

With the transfer of funds from the Jean Sandstrom Memorial to the newly named "Quaker Education, Enrichment and Advocacy Fund," we decided to invite Logan to request reimbursement for expenses we were not able to help cover in advance.

We were asked to consider a possible recommendation to Business Meeting regarding a change to how Joys and Concerns are shared. There is some feeling that there is pressure for people to think about and share concerns and that this unduly extends the time "in the circle." While the committee feels that sharing after worship is an important way for us to come to know each other better, we also think we can take some steps to alleviate the concern that was brought to us. Toward this end, we recommend that the host invite members and attenders to introduce themselves and for those who have special joys or concerns to share them briefly. If Meeting agrees with this suggestion, we will draft a statement hosts can use for conveying this change.

We also discussed a possible change to announcements, in which they can be briefly shared and where the details can be posted to a white board, in the chat and to Carol for Clerk's Notes. This will hopefully avoid talking back and forth regarding

the specifics. We also want to encourage folks attending in the meetinghouse to be deliberate about being inclusive of those attending via zoom.

A suggestion was also referred to the committee that we have a basket of cards in the hallway that can be used for any member or attender to use to send a card to someone in our community who is ill, has not attended meeting in a while, is going through a tough time, etc. We suggest having stamped envelopes to go with these cards in the back of the visitor book, along with the current directory. We noted that if the meeting wishes to adopt this idea, we should adjust the budget for either M&C or Outreach to provide for the purchase of stamps.

Finally, we want to pass along to folks who know Chuck Day well that he enjoys visits at Ramsey Village.

Discussion: Friends discussed Ministry and Counsel's proposal regarding the circle time after Meeting. Friends decided to try the new format and re-evaluate in several months.

Minute: Friends approved the report with appreciation to the committee.

Finance Committee Report (Catherine Dietz-Kilen)

The finance committee will start to put together the proposed budget at our next meeting (4/17). Please let us know what your committee requests. Please remember that the next budget will be for the six months of July - December 2024 as we transition to a calendar year for our fiscal year. We encourage you to consider new projects for your

committee as the Meeting's finances are now much more stable that they were a few years ago. If there is something that your committee had wished it could do but was unsure of the availability of funds, this is the time to return to that discussion.

Treasurer's Report: (Katie Jacoby)

Katie reviewed the financial reports.

Discussion: The Clerk had a question about whether Peace and Social Concerns will be able to administer the funds for the new immigration line item. A Friend suggested that Nominating Committee proceed with discerning who might be willing to step forward to form an ad hoc committee. The primary purpose of the committee would be to determine how the Meeting can plug into the efforts of existing groups that are focused on immigration.

Nominating committee will draft a committee description for the Meeting's review and will explore Friends' interests in creating an ad hoc committee.

Minute: The Meeting approved the reports for the Finance Committee and the Treasurer, with gratitude for their on-going work.

Building & Grounds Committee
(Dick Douglass)

1. Charlie Brown has volunteered to work with Deb Fisch on fixing the bookshelves at the Meeting House.
2. Smoke detectors: The committee is coordinating with Renee Cawthorn, Friend's House (FH) manager, re repair of the

smoke detector system that we share with FH and recommendations from the recent FH facility assessment. She is awaiting the bid. Building code smoke detector requirements are also being clarified. The committee anticipates that restoring the old system will be expensive and is willing to consider lower cost alternatives like individual battery units similar to those also in use at FH.

3. Gutter guards: We continue to seek bids for repair or replacement of our gutter guards.
4. The committee has begun to review recommendations made in the Facility Assessment of March 1, 2024, commissioned by Friends House. Angelo Architectural Associates is recommending that the Meeting House replace gutters that are leaking, cap the wing walls and privacy wall and tuck point needed areas of brick wall. Friends House has received one bid so far which is slightly over \$30,000 for the work described above. The committee is scheduled to meet Wednesday April 17 to develop recommendations re these issues.
5. Please send along questions or concerns to me, Fred Nelson, Bob Henderson, or Charlie Brown.
There was additional discussion about the phone in the elevator. It no longer works because the landline was removed. The elevator will not pass inspection without a phone.

Friends House Board will explore whether a cell phone in the elevator will meet code requirements.

Friends had additional discussion about the architect's assessment report. More discussion on the assessment will be delayed until a future business meeting. The discussion should also include the issue of liability exposure.

Minute: Friends approved the report, with on-going appreciation for the work of the committee.

Religious Education Committee Report (Dorothy Lifka)

Religious education will be meeting on April 18. We have an account set up to do background checks on those interested in working with the children and teens. I will set up a laptop at the Meeting House so that those who are interested can enter their information privately.

Discussion: Following a discussion about the background checks, Dorothy said she will set up a method for Friends to enter the information for their background checks from home.

Friends House Board (Dorothy Lifka)

No report. FHB will meet April 19, 2024.

Peace & Social Concerns Committee (Patty Wengert)

Our committee met via zoom today at noon after a moment of silence and a reflection. Logan, Patty, Billie and Jack met.

We would invite Ann Robinson to speak as to her mini forest idea. Our committee is in favor of the idea of the project and

looks forward to hearing more details of this project in addition to location and shared responsibilities.

Logan gave an update of his participation at FCNL spring lobby day in DC. Five Iowans participated.

Senate file 1723 – regarding the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools. There were three Quaker schools in Iowa and Quakers oversaw 30 schools throughout the United States. There is an issue that is of concern about the subpoena power of Congress over the churches involved. There are new cosponsors. There will be another report of the Bureau of Indian affairs distributed soon. It would be good to discuss the legislation with our Congress members.

Logan advised the date of the Des Moines pride festival and parade. Logan could use his truck as a float. Would Des Moines Valley want to also display our banner in that parade? Talk with Logan or Cory or others for details.

Billie updated regarding the book club, reading [How the Word is Passed](#).

No donations were approved.

Discussion: Friends are supportive of using the Meeting banner in the Pride Parade.

Minute: Friends approved the report.

Outreach Committee Report (Ann Robinson)

Katie Jacoby prepared a proposed "internal" policy document and a document for any individual/representative of a group to read and sign regarding use of the Meeting House. Both

documents were sent to Friends by email and are clearly marked "proposed". Thank you to Katie Jacoby for preparing these documents.

Discussion: Friends discussed the specifics of the policy related to use of the Meeting House for groups who charge a fee for their event. Friends also discussed whether we should be charging more for groups who will be using the kitchen?

Katie will continue to work on the revised policy and will resubmit a revised draft based on the discussion. Friends agreed that we do not need to make any change in our policy for groups with whom we have a long-term relationship.

Library Committee (Deborah Fisch)

The Library Committee has not met but has been active.

We have been checking in returned books. It's so easy to accidentally shelve a book from the library when picking up around your house. If you check out books from the Meeting's library (and we hope you do) if it hasn't happened to you yet, it will likely at some point! So special thanks to all those who checked their shelves, found a book or two, and returned them.

Three books have been donated to the library, and we are in the process of getting them into circulation. This is the clerk's first year on the committee so please be patient as she learns the ropes. Adding books to the library takes a lot more than simply finding a place for it on the shelf. The new books are: *Don't Think Twice* by Alison Lohans; *Quaker Silence* by Irene Allen; and *Fostering Vital*

Friends Meetings – A Handbook for Working with Quaker Meetings by Jan Greene and Marty Walton. We have also received multiple copies of two pamphlets – *Deepening the Spiritual Life of the Meeting* by Edward Hoare and *The Practice of Quaker Worship* by Larry Miller.

The Library Committee clerk has recently been in touch with members of the Building and Grounds Committee to see if the cracked and/or missing panes on the glass doors of the bookshelves can be replaced and the bookshelves themselves secured to the wall.

Finally, as mentioned in last month's report, this year's used book sale went very well. Thanks again to all who donated used books, helped put out books before the sale and put them in storage after, and of course to those who gave generous donations for the books they took home. This means we have additional funds to purchase new books (and repair the bookcases). Please go to Quakerbooks at FGC to peruse any books you might like to see in the library and email the committee clerk with the title and author. If you have a title not available through Quakerbooks or a non-Quaker book that is on a topic important to the current concerns of Friends please share its title and author as well. Please send recommendations to dsf.quaker2014@gmail.com.

Minute: Friends approved the report.

Nominating Committee (Claire Cumbie-Drake)

No report. (See discussion item under the Treasurer's report.)

New/Other Business:

1. What is the status of the possible immigration co-sponsorship planned with Grace United Methodist Church? Have we staffed the proposed Immigration Committee to begin work on this? (See discussion item under the Treasurer's report.)

A concern from Peter Clay: Yesterday and today I have been spending mostly with the AFSC annual corporation meeting. I am one of four yearly meeting members of the AFSC corporation. Billie is there in person as a new member-at-large of the corporation. This afternoon I learned that AFSC is focusing on the 14 states (sadly including Iowa) where children's nutritional needs have been discarded and abandoned by our governor. Friends in our meeting can join the effort to put pressure on Reynolds to change course. More information is in the article that I share a link to (below). Perhaps this could be shared with DMVF community? I know many of us are appalled and upset by the governor's decision to NOT accept the federal monies to help our Iowa kids stay healthy this summer: <https://afsc.org/news/no-hunger-summer>

2. FCNL Priorities 2025 Report: (Carol Spaulding-Kruse) this is a record of the report the I sent in response to the request for meetings to share their priorities for upcoming legislative sessions. It was based on the survey I sent in

March 2024. I had also requested to hear from Friends via email and during previous business meetings, but I only received 12 survey results.

*Dear Carol,
Thank you for your input into FCNL's priorities process. Your insights are valuable as we discern where to focus our work with the 119th Congress (2025-2026).*

For your records:
Report submitted by: Carol Spaulding-Kruse
Submitted on behalf of: Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting
Priority A: Justice reform and gun violence
Priority B: Sustainable energy and environment
Priority C: International peace building
Priority D: Voting and elections economic justice
Priority E: U.S. wars and militarism Middle East policy nuclear proliferation pentagon spending
Additional Comments: Thank you for taking time to request our discernment on the priorities that matter to our meetings. We did remark the absence of stated priorities related to other topics of significant cultural interest including Native Americans land acknowledgement and reparations, LGBTQ rights, and women's issues & reproductive rights.

Iowa Year Meeting Business (Reps Ann Robinson, Carol Spaulding-Kruse)

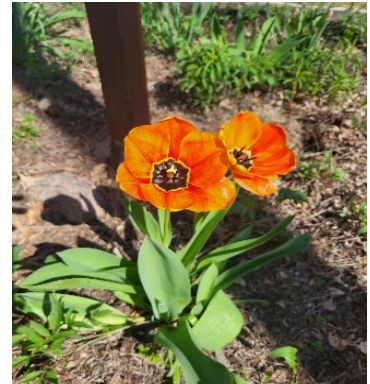
The following IYMC committees are looking for additional members:

- The Virtual Access Committee

- Jr Mid-Year Meeting
- Young Friends at Yearly Meeting

Ann volunteered to serve on the Junior Mid-Year Meeting

The Meeting closed with a Moment of Silence.



Spring tulips. Photo by Fred Nelson.

Just Breathe

a poem by Brock Wommack

It's a warm damp evening in the Ozarks.

The drumming of raindrops mimic a heartbeat.

It's like someone's knocking at the door, somebody's ringing the bell

A frog clings to the plate glass desperate to breathe in the deluge,

As are we all, yes?

We find our times, we find our places here and now.

My friend Frog, as Spiderman could wish, sleeps like an astronaut on the shuttle; Weightless and unconcerned, clinging less desperately to the window

At one with the moment. Atonement.

Try it. You just might like it. Breathe.

Conservation Agriculture in Rwanda

(continued from page 1)
a form of participatory research that allows the farmers to see quite directly the benefits of following the CA guidelines.

The three principles of conservation agriculture are minimum tillage, soil cover with either mulch or cover crops and crop rotation. One additional benefit of CA is that low to no tillage reduces substantially the time spent in cultivating the land with hoes and other hand tools. This frees up time for many other crucial family tasks and thereby reduces overall stress for many families.

One CA program that we visited was Girumurava in Nyamiyaga Sector. We met and greeted the President Mugisha Iddy. We observed the huge ears of corn now being grown where before when they planted maize here it simply did not grow in this high, cold location.

For each Farmer Field School / Conservation Agriculture group, a new Savings for Life group of thirty people is automatically created. Men and women work and learn together. These Savings for Life groups meet every week. At each meeting, each person contributes from one to five shares into the main common fund. The savings groups decide themselves how much one share will be according to their ability to contribute. Green record books provided by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) provide for detailed and meticulous documentation for each participant of how many shares they contribute at each meeting. The smallest share is

500 Rwandan francs, which is about 40 US cents. Each time a savings group meets each participant can contribute up to five shares. The second part of the green books document any loans that an individual takes from the common funds for that savings group. The loan must be paid back with interest before that individual can receive another loan. The goal is to increase the value of the entire group's savings so that more can be loaned to help participants improve their financial stability and security. The third step at each meeting is to pay back any current loans and the fourth is to take out new loans. Savings for Life group participants are allowed to borrow up to three times what they have contributed in shares and they are expected to pay a five percent interest rate on their loans. The micro loans that the Savings for Life programs make available are transformative for rural families with limited resources.

The strategy of combining Conservation Agriculture with Savings for Life groups helps families in multiple ways. Benefits include improving the quality and quantity of food that people are able to grow as well as providing opportunities to expand or start small businesses using the community-based savings groups. In a country where working together for the common good is part of the national culture these Friends Peace Teams initiatives are a good fit. One example is that on the final Saturday of each month all Rwandans gather for Umuganda, where people come together in common purpose to

advance community improvement projects. Although the lack of jobs still is a daunting challenge for many young Rwandans, for those living in rural areas these two related programs are bringing many benefits at a time of rapid changes and many challenges.

*-- Peter Clay, Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)
Representative to Friends Peace Teams Member African Great Lakes Initiative Working Group*

Query #11 Social and Economic Justice

May 5, 2024

Present: Jack Holveck, Brock Womack, Peter Clay, Andrea Holveck, Forrest Determann, Ann Robinson

The inequities within our society are unbearable to some Friends. Those of us who live with immense privilege frequently question how we should change our lives.

The current political climate in Iowa is deeply distressing. The dramatic reduction in taxes and the codification of a flat income tax and the mandate that only with a two-thirds majority could taxes be raised in the future lead some of us to be very concerned about the future of Iowa, especially as we consider how the state will be positioned to care for the most vulnerable populations.

Some Friends find great challenge in considering ways to address the dramatic societal inequities using the wealth, land and other resources that came to us through intergenerational wealth transfer.

One Friend, who took a course in "poverty law" learned how

much those of us who do not live in poverty benefit from those who do live in poverty. We reflected on the inequality structured into our meta-systems

How are we stewards of our resources for the benefit of others and of coming generations? How will our decisions impact ongoing social and economic disparities in our society? These are questions that came up today.

Even though prisons are not created and run with rehabilitation and reintegration into society as the highest priorities, some of the programs do provide meaningful assistance. We can advocate for big changes in prisons while acknowledging that some prison programs do provide benefits.

Our small discussion group seemed to feel somewhat overwhelmed as we considered this query. There is so much to consider, to unpack and to reflect upon. We were pulled out of our "comfort zones" rather quickly.

-- Recorded by Peter Clay

Help Celebrate DJ's Birthday at Open House, May 11

DMVFriends are invited to a 95th Birthday Open House for DJ Newlin, on Saturday, May 11, 2024, 2:30 pm - 4:30 pm, in the Auditorium at Wesley on Grand (formerly Wesley Acres), 3520 Grand Avenue.

Dan Knight (The Piano Man) will lead a sing-along at 3:30! No gifts, please.

For more information, please call DJ at 515-276-5673.

News of Our Friends

Fred Nelson shares an inspiring video from last summer's trek he made with Above and Beyond Cancer to Mount Kilimanjaro. He says, "This is a journey I never would have made without Sandie's encouragement plus support from Sandie's sister, Cindy, and her mom, Shirley. AND the inspiration of others dealing with cancer." Watch it at: <https://vimeo.com/930025487?share=cop>

Peter Clay looks forward to heading to Wisconsin to open up his family cabin in mid-May. He plans on being up north or heading out east to visit his friend Larry and his brother Scott and family for a good part of the summer. Peter also plans to attend FGC Summer Gathering at Haverford College and annual session of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) in July.

Ann Robinson celebrates the planting of Iowa's first mini-forest with support from many partners and friends, including DMVF Meeting and **Peter Clay, Claire Cumbie Drake, Steve Shivvers** and **Kari Noble**.

Kudos to **Carol Spaulding Kruse** for her thoughtful opinion piece on behalf of a comprehensive education in the Des Moines Register, April 25.

Upcoming Hosting List

May 12 – Logan & Corey
May 19 - Jim & Catherine
May 26 - Steve & Kari
June 2 – Charlie & Dorothy
June 9 – Ann & Virginia
June 16 – Deborah & Katie

Des Moines Valley Friends

Meeting for Worship: Sundays at 10 a.m., at the Meeting House and by Zoom via email invitation from clerk, Carol Spaulding-Kruse, at

carol.spaulding@drake.edu

Meeting for Worship/Business: Regularly held on the second First Day each month at 1 p.m.

Upcoming Second Hours & Events:

Query Discussions: First Sundays, 11:45 a.m. - Online & in person. Billie Wade, facilitator.

Child Care: If you have a child who would like to be included in Zoom childcare or first day school for older youth, contact Dorothy at dmlifka@yahoo.com.

Building & Grounds: Questions about the building or grounds of the Meeting House to Building & Grounds Committee Convenor, Dick Douglass, 515-864-1119.

Hospitality Committee: Questions about housekeeping at the Meeting House to Hospitality Committee convenor Charlie Brown, 515-689-6470.

Friendly Line: Send info for April FL to Ann Robinson at anny.robinson1@gmail.com by Friday, May 31.

Find us online at: <https://www.desmoinesvalleyfriends.org/>

Check out our Facebook group for members/attenders. To be added, email Jan Falb, at jfalb0326@yahoo.com.