

Ames Friends Meeting—State of the Meeting Report, 2022

The lingering shadow of Covid and, recently, of a new war have hung over our Ames Friends Meeting this year, just as they have for our Nation. We have returned to the Meetinghouse to worship together once again, to eat together, and to share our blessings and concerns. We also offer online connection, averaging three to five Friends per week participating virtually. This has been our Meeting's great blessing for the year.

Our small Meeting continues to average 12 to 16 people each Sunday for worship, with occasional visits from family members and visitors boosting our numbers. Our time together in worship remains truly fulfilling, whether in the silence or with the occasional vocal ministry punctuating the silence. Our First Day Meeting's worship is both healthy and uplifting. Supplementing our weekly worship is our monthly Meeting of Worship with Attention to Healing. Begun last year, this has remained an integral part of our worship and a blessing to those in need. Additionally, our Meeting has returned to a monthly query inviting members to share their deepest concerns—to draw the Meeting closer together and to provide a basis for a peace and social action committee should that committee be activated. We have heard from most in our group and, resultingly, been blessed with a deeper understanding of what calls each of us to action. Our query has also brought us closer together as F/friends and as a Meeting.

For a small Meeting of Friends, we nonetheless have remained active. Several have banded together under FCNL's guidance to form the Western Iowa advocacy team. As such, we have lobbied our congressional representatives on behalf of peace and justice issues. One very active member also serves as Clerk of the FCNL Policy Committee and therefore on the FCNL Executive Committee. Others serve on the Scattergood School Committee. Still, others have continued to advocate for the needs of refugees, undocumented immigrants, and American Indians. The activities of all these members and attenders are regularly presented and discussed during our monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Finally, our meeting space itself also serves our community as a place of weekly worship for two other groups, a Mennonite congregation and a group of mid-Iowa Soto Zen practitioners, and, at times, a consultation room for the ASIP (Ames Sanctuary and Interfaith Partners) members.

Our Meetinghouse is now 20 years old. It's skylights leaked rainwater and needed replacing. In addition, a new roof and gutters were installed. To be able to finance a major job like this without a large building campaign was another blessing for us. In contrast to hired help, Friends have continued to beautify our property with regular maintenance and care for our trees, flowers and shrubs. Our roses are luminous! Through major effort by one member our basement was brought back to life following a much needed upgrade in paint and cleaning.

As a Meeting, we are grateful to be worshipping in person again, albeit still with masks. We are again growing in Spirit together, healthy as a Meeting and sharing our grace and kindness with others. We are hoping for more of the same in the coming year.