

**Blue River Quarterly  
Meeting for Business  
April 13, 2024**

**Attendance:** Beth Carpenter (clerk), Dale Gardner (recording), Margie Haworth-Davis (treasurer), Peter Lasersohn, Denise Smith, Fariba Murray, David Wixom, Anna Watson, Grayce Haworth Mesner, Judy Woliki, Mark McGinnis, Bobbi Trist, Jeff Brotmarkle, Heather Evert. Sandy Matsuda, Mary Cunningham, Erin Taylor, William Allen

1. Silent worship
2. Treasurer's report: See report below. Accepted
3. Field Secretary Mark McGinnis: Short statement about life of meetings.
4. Planning for fall/venue reservation: September 20-22, 2024 at Dubois Center. No volunteer to plan programming. Suggested topics: "Early Quaker Women" or "Conflict Resolution Among Quakers".
5. State of Society Reports

Bloomington Normal: Revived First Day school with regular attending students. Worship attendees only around 5 most weeks. Meeting for eating continues. Bloomington Normal Friends Chris Jocius memorial library. No group focused social activism but individual actions. Adult religious education initiative with a focus on our Faith & Practice.

Clear Creek: See report below.

Burlington: See report below.

Macomb: No report.

Columbia: Stability and growth. Enjoying new Meetinghouse and caretaker. Zoom worship continues linking faraway Friends. Zoom mid-week meetings. Newcomers at worship. First-day school programming revamped. Children involved in the Meeting. Rotating adults working with children. Monthly vigil. Donations to local causes. Fun nights. Long range planning. No deaths this year, but installed a memorial bench on new grounds.

St. Louis: See report below.

Southern Illinois: No report.

Spoon River: No report.

Urbana Champaign: See report below.

Springfield: No report.
6. Announcements
  - a. May 4, 2024 Work day at McNabb
  - b. No Women's Weekend

7. Motion to donate for victims of war in Palestine and Israel. Meeting empowers Treasurer, Bobbi Trist and others to identify best charities for this purpose. \$3000 of donations are authorized. We identified 3 charities: Middle East Children's Alliance, Save the Children, Muslim Aid USA, each for \$1000.
8. Silence

TREASURER'S REPORT TO BLUE RIVER QUARTERLY MEETING  
13-Apr-24

Balance on Hand Sep 15, 2023: \$ 12,448.77

DEBITS

10/13/23	DuBois Center - Fall '23	3912.60
10/13/23	DuBois Center - Fall '24 Deposit	500.00
10/13/23	Red Cross Donation	500.00
10/13/23	Doctors Without Borders Donation	500.00
3/5/24	East Bay Camp - Spring '24 Deposit	1210.00
	TOTAL DEBITS	6,622.60

CREDITS

9/17/23	Fall '23 Fees & Donations	3,491.00
8/31/23	Interest	4.77
10/2/23	Donation	400.00
9/29/23	Amazon	1.04
9/29/23	Interest	5.18
10/31/23	Interest	6.72
11/30/23	Interest	4.64
12/29/23	Interest	4.35
1/31/24	Interest	4.95
2/29/24	Interest	4.35
3/29/24	Interest	4.17
4/7/24	Spring '24 Fees & Donations	1,494.75
	TOTAL CREDITS	5,425.92

Balance on Hand April 13, 2024: \$11,252.09

Sep '23 - Apr '24 Meeting Contributions:

Rec contribution: \$8/resident adult member

10/2/23	Clear Creek ('22 & '23)	\$400
4/7/24	Columbia	\$200
4/7/24	S. Illinois	\$50
4/7/24	Bloomington-Normal	\$80

Proceeds from sale of books:

Sep '23 - Apr '24	\$1.04
Accumulated Total	\$136.72

## State of Society 2024, Bloomington-Normal Friends

We continue to rebuild the spiritual life of our meeting community after the disruptions of an attender who was asked to leave the meeting several years ago, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the past year, a few core members have also been frequently absent from our presence due to family needs out of state, leaving fewer Friends in Bloomington-Normal to give the meeting stability, vitality and leadership.

We have a shared concern within the meeting that it will be very difficult to grow a group that may not appear well-supported or vibrant to a new attender. Our core of members and attenders present at weekly worship is often less than five. We have been unsure what to do regarding a loss of participation by some former members and by adult children who grew up as part of the meeting and still live in the area. We have several individuals involved in justice actions around our area, but no ongoing sustained volunteering as a whole group in one endeavor. We have some generous donations from attenders that we will consider with care how to put to the best use to further shared goals.

One way of continued connection with area Friends has been the Women's Meeting for Eating, a monthly potluck dinner hosted at Friends' homes. The participants include local Friends who are not regular worship attenders, Clear Creek Friends who live in the Bloomington-Normal area, and a few Urbana-Champaign Friends able and willing to travel.

In the past year, our meeting has fostered a revival of First Day School. It is a joy that we have been able to offer two First Day School program days per month starting in 2024. We have a solid group of regularly-attending students who are active participants, and adults to volunteer. This is an area of spiritual nurturance that has been a long-time concern for us, and we have struggled for several years to make First Day School a living, active part of our local meeting. Children from our meeting have also been participating in activities at Blue River Quarterly and Illinois Yearly Meeting sessions.

We are grateful for the service of attender Peter Roth in leading monthly Adult Education hour. Over the past year, we have been reading and discussing sections of Illinois Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice. Newcomers and long-time Friends alike are finding passages that inspire new ways of conceiving of our faith and how we enact Quaker process.

With the donation of books and shelves from Chris Jocius of Urbana-Champaign Friends, our meeting was able to start the Bloomington-Normal Friends Jocius Library, which resides in our meeting space at Normandy Village in Normal. We have also added resources from B-N Friends' personal libraries to share them with each other more freely. The most-used sections so far have been children's books and religious education resources. The library is also available to non-Friends who work in and visit the building during the week, raising the visibility of the Friends meeting that shares their space and letting Friends share our materials with a slightly wider community.

## **Clear Creek Monthly Meeting**

State of Society Report

Approved March 17, 2024

Clear Creek continues to be a loving and deeply spiritual community. While our worship is largely silent, there is a strong sense of connectedness with each other and the Divine. Our numbers are small, particularly during the winter months, so we are always happy when Friends visit.

We mark the beginning of our year with our annual Easter celebration. That includes worship, a potluck lunch, and an egg hunt for children. We are glad to see extended families of our regular attenders and other Friends and friends we don't see often.

Spring saw the return of our snowbirds and yearly meeting activities, starting with workday in May. The work done this day helped clean up the grounds after the winter and to begin work on preparing the campus for annual sessions. Much of the work needed this past year had to do with tree damage sustained in various storms. One of our contributions to the effort of preparing for annual sessions was to wash or replace all the curtains in Clear Creek House.

In June, we welcomed back Friends from throughout the yearly meeting and enjoyed catching up with them as well as seeing and hearing children swarm across the grounds. It gets pretty quiet once they all leave. We are excited to see the planning going forward to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ILYM in 2025.

This year we continued our support of our affiliated students by providing scholarships for their college and training school educations. We are grateful to have a memorial fund designated for this purpose.

We were glad to host a Writer's Retreat in August. This experiment was led by the Property Use ad hoc committee of ILYM. It was wonderful to see the grounds being used beyond annual sessions and hope to see more such retreats when all the logistics are settled.

When former caretaker Judy Reese left, she was unable to take with her a number of her possessions. When our cleaning lady had a yard sale in August, she offered to sell those items for Judy which pleased Judy exceedingly.

The October workday brought more Friends to campus and more work was accomplished. At the recommendation of a tree expert, the two large maples east of Clear Creek House were removed later in the fall. While we miss the trees, we understand that their removal was necessary and look forward to seeing what Environmental Concerns selects to replace them.

During the winter our long-serving treasurer, Kay Drake, decided to step down. We are grateful for her many years of faithful service. Mike Murphy will assume those duties when Kay returns from Arizona in April.

We look forward to the spring and the return of activities to the campus.

### **Burlington Worship Group**

The Burlington Worship Group is seeking to reconnect with previous participants that stepped aside throughout the pandemic. With the guidance of Field Secretary Mark McGinnis, we are starting a several sessions zoom meeting, Exploring Quakerism. We hope to build our sense of this faith experience, Quakerism. We, also, seek to strengthen our relationships with each other in this process.

## Columbia Friends Meeting

### Draft State of Society Report 2023

This has been a year of stability and growth for our meeting. We had our first full year meeting in our new meeting house, seeing the seasons change. We have witnessed this growth physically in the garden we've planted in our front yard, and in the growth of our caretaker family's baby, Rose, who is now walking and talking.

We also maintained our presence on Zoom, offering hybrid worship on Sundays so that we can continue to welcome friends from afar (Seattle, WA, Jefferson City, MO, Colorado, and Minnesota). We've had visitors from other meetings, including Hilarie Hunt, representing Blue River Quarterly. We continue to have Midweek meetings on Zoom on Wednesdays. Our regular attendance has expanded to about 20 people each week, and we welcomed several regular new attendees as well as people who "drop in" now and again. We have made efforts to convey our Quaker values to newcomers by printing brochures that we place outside in a covered container, and by printing a poster of the Quaker testimonies that is displayed in our foyer.

We also have had to attend to the boundaries of our physical and virtual spaces in our effort to keep a safe space for worship. This has involved installing Ring cameras at our meeting house and developing new security settings for Zoom meetings.

We took some steps to systemize our First Day School curriculum this year, having a month devoted to each of the Quaker testimonies as well as other values that are important to us (e.g., gratitude, generosity, friendship). First Day School is lively, with 4 to 8 children from ages 0 to 11 attending each week. We have involved the children in larger projects such as the garden, intricate craft projects involving natural materials, and writing a letter to President Biden about peace. We have a solid rotation of adults regularly teaching in First Day School. The kids join the worship 5 to 10 minutes before the rise of meeting, and they love to introduce themselves and share the projects they worked on.

Our Peace and Social Justice Committee, our Meeting for Learning Committee, and our Hospitality Committee are all contributing to the life of the meeting. We continued our monthly vigil in the warmer months, and the focus shifted depending on current events. We had several new organizations (serving unhoused people, students with disabilities, and providing bail payments) present to us about their work, and decided to donate to them. We are also partnering with a local Buddhist organization, Show Me Dharma, to provide meals to unhoused people six times per year. We have also had several Fun Nights, with a potluck suppers, games, and activities. Long Range Planning Committee held a community visioning session and then created a report with goals for the future.

We were fortunate not to have deaths among our regular attendees this year, but we did install a memorial bench in our front yard for attendee Alex Metro, who passed away in 2022. This bench serves as a place to remember anyone who is no longer physically with us.

This has been a year of "nesting" in our new home. We are excited to branch out in the future.

## **St. Louis Meeting State of Society report, 2023-24**

“If we love not one another in daily communion, how can we love God, whom we have not seen?” (Shaker hymn)

By the grace of God, which gives us strength and direction, St. Louis Meeting has come through another year.

Our numbers are down since before the Covid pandemic, but we continue to welcome new attenders, both online and in person. Meeting for worship has been mostly silent, and often deep; potlucks have been noisy. We cherish the four to six young children who attend, as well as two teens. We would like to see more young adults, as our core group of members and attenders is aging. We have lost two people to death, and memorial meetings are pending. One member has moved to an assisted living facility this year; several Friends stay in touch with her.

Reading groups, Spiritual Direction, Friendly Dozens and communal lunches have all helped to build community despite the difficulties we have faced this year.

Because our numbers are down, but also because of tensions around some issues, committee functioning has become stretched, sometimes to the point of almost disappearing. Our Ministry & Caring committee began the year in September with only two members (now up to four), as did our Friends Shelter committee, which coordinates our assistance to the homeless.

Two crises arose, partly as a result of these deficits. One was the exacerbation of conflict with an attender of many years; after several anguished meetings, the Meeting agreed (with a few Friends standing aside) to ask this person not to attend Meeting activities for at least a year. We are grateful for the assistance in this of five current and former Yearly Meeting Field Secretaries.

Another conflict came as a result of an initiative by two members to help homeless people by allowing them to tent on our grounds. The neighborhood association raised concerns about this. We have augmented the Shelter committee, invited the tenters to shelter in our building while we help them seek better quarters, and are working with the neighborhood to assure them of our concern for them.

With assistance from past Field Secretary, Judy Wolicki, we have held a meeting, “Finding Joy in Community; Reflections on Healing,” to help us regain our footing after these crises, and to move into the future on the path where Divine Spirit leads us.



## **State of Society Report 2023-2024 Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting**

With pandemic protocols no longer in place, Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting has experienced rebirth. We decided at the June 2023 Business Meeting that masks weren't required and food permitted in the Meeting House. The "Ad Hoc Committee to Reopen the Meeting House" laid down its charge two years and eight months after being created by Business Meeting. Many attending immediately flung off our masks and our meeting began a steady process of regeneration. At Meeting for Worship we are blessed with rich ministry from a variety of voices, often emerging from the monthly queries. Although we mourn the loss of valued Friends through death and relocation, we have also welcomed new members and attenders and Friends who have moved from other meetings as active participants in U-C Friends activities. We have renewed our fellowship as we gather before and after meeting to sing, share in a potluck, or attend a book discussion or presentation.

On multiple occasions this year, we have welcomed members from near and far into our Meeting House and onto our grounds. Celebrations of Life for longtime Friends Mariellen Gilpin and Christopher Jocius drew crowds overflowing our worship space: from our meeting, from Urbana-Champaign; from other Illinois monthly meetings; from Illinois Yearly meeting. These included many relatives from far-flung states. We will miss Mariellen for healing those in need and for her spoken and written ministry. We will miss Chris for his spot-on book recommendations for individuals and for his long service on the library committee.

Last year we received a grant from Faith in Place which allowed us to plant 27 native shrubs and trees. In September we held "A Celebration of Trees" that included thanks to all who helped to secure and execute the grant, much catered food, and a tour of the new plantings by the expert who designed the landscape plantings. The event drew many locals. In November, a longtime member of the Peace and Service Committee celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday at the Meeting House with a potluck and a fundraiser for three local and international organizations. She invited many members of Champaign-Urbana organizations who fight for social justice. On another occasion a group went out into the community to sing Christmas carols at the County Jail. It was such a success, with detainees and guards singing carols along with us, that we have scheduled another this spring.

Our events calendar is once more full to bursting. This winter we joined together after worship to read and discuss excerpts from Thomas Kelly's *A Testament of Devotion*. We listened to talks after meeting by the Eco-Justice Collaborative and by Dawn Blackman, steward of Randolph Street Community Gardens. This year our Stone Soup Supper and Talent Show, a fundraiser sponsored by the Peace and Service Committee, took place

inside the Meeting House after two years on Zoom and last year's outdoors. In late April, we listened to a QuakerSpeak video, using it to spark discussion.

We are challenged to offer youth religious education for 8-9 children ranging in age from 3 to 16; we suffered a hiatus of almost six months. When a member felt a calling, First Day School for younger children resumed in October, using the FGC curriculum, "Sparkling Still," as a model. So far, the children's favorite lesson has been "God Created." They crayoned the Genesis story on poster board which has become the backdrop for other Bible stories. The children have gained in articulateness and poise weekly when they report back to meeting on what happened in class. This winter, First Day School for older children has resumed; they too are reading Kelly's *Testament of Devotion* during Meeting for Worship.

We are eager to maintain our connections to Friends who are distant or have not returned to the Meeting House. Members of the Ministry and Care Committee sent comic valentines to those whom we have not seen recently in meeting. During Meeting for Worship and Business Meeting, we continue to share a Zoom connection with distant and local Friends. Our problems with the audio on the Zoom connection have greatly diminished. Attendance on Zoom has dwindled to a few, but worship in person has burgeoned.

