What has changed in your Meeting since the onset of the Covid-19?

This pandemic has given all of us a unique time to reflect on Jesus’ mission for us. It’s given us space, or permission to slow down. It has presented opportunities to prioritize our soul care, which translates to our spiritual practices.

And yet, there are elements of fear, anxiousness, and uncertainty. Someone that we know may have passed away or is going to die.

We have so many opportunities to be a non-anxious presence. And we are reminded that we are called to be the presence of Jesus. This time of pandemic can help us refocus on our mission to love Jesus and disciple into His likeness.

This is uncharted territory for each one of our Meetings and for each one of us. We are faced with new opportunities and new adventures. The “old rules” no longer apply in “how we do church.”

What will it look like when we embrace this new opportunity? There is a possibility that every church will find new and innovative ways to “do” church, traditions, and recreate our ministries.

Continued on page 2
Continued from page 1: COVID-19

This special edition of Western Work features articles from pastors about the changes they see and have made in the midst of COVID-19. Here are the questions that they were invited to respond to:

- What has changed in your Meeting since the onset of the COVID-19?
- In what ways have you stayed in touch with the members in your Meeting?
- What is happening in your neighborhood? Outreach?

I really like the phrase: *The church isn’t closed; the church has been deployed.*

—Sue Whitesel

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Jon Newton......

KOKOMO FRIENDS

Clearing the Weeds

Have you ever had a difficult time seeing the blessings of God all around you? I have. Sure, I have moments where I am filled with gratitude, but to be aware of the many blessings surrounding me more than 2 times per day, I struggle. Or, at least I did struggle. Ever since COVID-19, I’m starting to see more blessings each day. So what changed? And, how can you see more blessings in your life?

This quarantine has me working from home. On our property we have a small shed that has been converted to a little work space. In the back of this small space there is a giant picture window that overlooks a part of the walking trail and the Wildcat Creek. I am looking out that window now as I write this.

The studio is up on a hill and, until last week, on that hill there were weeds and small, baby trees springing up all over the place. I was able to see some wildlife but my view was severely blocked by those pesky weeds.

With this quarantine has brought extra time to work in the yard. And so my wife and I took the opportunity to clear out the weeds and little tree sprouts from the hill. And now, I can see! I can see so much more clearly. What do I see? I see runners and bikers routinely utilizing the trail every morning, people walking their dogs, families getting some much needed time away from their homes.

Continued on page 3
The Coronavirus Blues

There’s panic in the papers
and contagion in the air.

I must stock up on essentials
but the market shelves are bare.

My conference is canceled
and my meetings now can’t meet.

I’m not allowed to travel
and my friends I cannot greet.

I’m told I can’t shake hands or touch my face,
my eyes, my mouth.

My retirement fund has sickened,
the economy’s gone south.

I have no-refund tickets
that are worthless now to use.

Oh no, oh yes, feelin’ down I guess;
I’ve got those coronavirus...
... blues.

by Bob Carter used by permission
Bob & Hope Carter are medical missionaries and serve in Kenya with SIM Ministries

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And the wildlife! I’ve witnessed squirrels playing,
sparrows, a male and female cardinal helping each
other find food, a bright blue bird (not a blue jay) that
I see daily, robins, geese and ducks swimming in the
creek, chipmunks, muskrats, and I even saw a red
fox!

And to think, before we cleared the brush, I was miss-
ing out on all of that wildlife and people watching. It
was happening right in front of me, but I couldn’t see
it!

There are many things I was pursuing and spending time on
pre-quarantine that I now realize were not important.

I also have had many other ‘weeds’ cleared from my
life. There are many things I was pursuing and spend-
ing time on pre-quarantine that I now realize were
not important. They were actually preventing me
from enjoying all of the blessings around me. Things
like, obsessing over the daily news, attempting to get
my body ready for the beach, scrolling through social
media or Netflix for the best content for wasting time.

It is the quarantine that placed me in this chair look-
ing out this giant window, and it is the quarantine
that allowed us the time to clear the weeds from the
hill. And it is the quarantine that forced me to stop
wasting my energy on the things that are not im-
portant and to clear the weeds from my own life so
that I could see more clearly what God was doing in,
through and around me.

This time stuck at home is tough, and there are many
negative things happening in our world right now.
But even in these tough times, there are good things
that are happening. Are there weeds in your life that
are preventing you from seeing the blessings all
around you? If so, perhaps it’s time to get out the
hedge trimmers and go to work.

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all
circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ
Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Grace and Peace,
Jon Newton Pastor, First Friends of Kokomo
JonThePastor.com
In addition, the doctor informed us that he had cancer which had been undetected prior to his hospital stay. He passed on April 23, devastating our meeting as he was our one original member, the only one who pre-dates me as pastor.

Sam was as faithful as they come, never missing a meeting unless forced to by occasional hospitalizations which was only in the last few years. Sam represented a living link to the vibrant Quaker community that once inhabited Orange County. His lineage was as pure North Carolina Quaker - Farlows, Osborns, Copelands, Lindleys, Carters - with the typical crossing of lines we see in old Quaker genealogies. Sam and I were related at least three ways, maybe four ways.

As if this was not enough loss, our member Todd Copeland lost his father Phillip Copeland, also to Covid-19, on April 27 after a week-long battle. Phillip was 84 and a third cousin to Sam. He occasionally attended our meeting before he became a resident of the nursing home three years.

As a school-teacher I have struggled to maintain my sense of equilibrium since the school was shut down in March. I am very hands-on as a teacher and miss the

We have laid hold of the hope set before us, a hope we have as an anchor of the soul, because Jesus has gone before us and we now have access to the Presence behind the veil. Hebrews 6: 18-20

On Easter Sunday we did gather at the meeting-house parking lot for a tailgate meeting so we could actually be together physically on that great day and see one another while maintaining social distancing. This went so well that we have done it three times since, two Sundays and one Wednesday evening. At each of these we were missing our oldest member, Sam Farlow, who had gone to the hospital on April 7 with pain in his hip and was admitted to the nursing home for therapy due to some abnormalities that concerned the doctors. Sam has no family, and so Michelle and I were his caretakers. When I say that Sam had no family, people always look incredulous, but it is true. Sam was born unexpectedly when his parents were middle-aged and believed they would not have children, having married late in life. He had no siblings and his father was an only child. His mother was the youngest of a brood of six, but all her siblings’ children’s were 20 years older than Sam. Therefore, all his cousins were deceased as well, leaving a few second cousins as his nearest relatives. Sam developed Covid-19.

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As a school-teacher I have struggled to maintain my sense of equilibrium since the school was shut down in March. I am very hands-on as a teacher and miss the
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daily relationship with my students. The on-line learning we are doing is not particularly satisfying. I realized after we were told we would not return this school year that I was grieving and then the loss of Sam and Phillip has added to our grief. When we experience changes, even ones we consider blessings, we often encounter grief. I told my colleagues and church that we must name our grief and allow God to help us process it. We do not, as the Apostle Paul said, sorrow as others who have no hope (1 Thes. 4:13). We have laid hold of the hope set before us, a hope we have as an anchor of the soul, because Jesus has gone before us and we now have access to the Presence behind the veil (Heb. 6:18-20).

Quaker Life’s last issue could not have been more prophetic with its theme of hope, something that had been chosen long before this pandemic. We are the people of hope who must hold onto that hope even in the face of what appear to be adverse circumstances. God was not caught off guard by this or any other conflict, plague, natural disaster, etc. that has hit our world.

These are the consequences of a world that is out of balance with God. “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope, because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now” (Rom. 8:20-22). These things, as Scripture teaches us, are not only the results of sin but also stand as signs of the redemption that God has planned for us and the creation. As the people of hope, we are to eagerly anticipate this and to participate in that redemptive process by our prayer, praise, worship, and service in the name of the One who has already redeemed us and begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3).

With that in view, I decided to take on my grief at the loss of our traditional Holy Week meetings by a spiritual discipline of preparing a five-minute devotional for each day from Palm Sunday to Easter. Michelle then videoed these and uploaded them to her Facebook account where we learned that they went far afield and apparently were a blessing to many who watched daily.

We now have plans to create another series of devotions based on hymns. As my chickens are in full production, I have been able to bless many, including our local food pantry, with dozens of fresh eggs. In hope I enlarged my garden this year with the goal of continuing the blessing of sharing produce with my church and community.

The pandemic has, as you mentioned, not closed the church but deployed it. We have been offered the possibility to see ourselves as the people of God without the traditional trappings of religious rituals. We have the opportunity to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, to be rooted and grounded in love and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge (see Paul’s prayer Eph. 3:14-22). “Rise up, O Church of God! Have done with lesser things; Give heart and mind and soul and strength, To serve the King of kings.”
“Surviving” is the word that jumped out at me when Susan sent me an email to talk about “Being Good Stewards of What God Has Given Us.” I have witnessed many things during this time of Covid-19. First is that as a church we are called to GO and make disciples and now we can’t “GO” in the normal way of things. My question to many is, “Were we Going before this all happened?” And also, “Were we being good stewards with what God has given us, or have we just been maintaining?” When I came to Bloomingdale Friends a year ago, the key words I heard from the leadership here was, “We are all in.” I believe that’s how we need to tackle this season of our lives. Being good Stewards is more than just taking care of the financial part of the church. We must be trusting that GOD will take care of this area of the church if we are being good stewards with HIS church, finances, and people. Matthew 25:14-30 talks about this very strongly and tells us not to get to the point of holding on to what we have by just maintaining and not be all in. So with that in mind, how do we attack this time of the church?

We at Bloomingdale have had to stop what was normal in worship, outreach and serving. We had a big mission trip planned in March that was canceled because of this pandemic. This not only impacted our group but the people we were going to serve, like Nikki Holland and the Belize school and ministry center. They, too, have had to figure out new things. But we have closed the doors to worshippers and now are streaming our services online with Facebook.

But I do believe that because we have been good stewards in advancing our technology even before this time, transitioning to this new way was easy. We had upgraded our equipment (helped in part by a grant from WYM MD&N Board) and were already streaming our services and using technology. And where we were averaging about 30 people doing worship the normal way, we now have over 400 that view our service throughout the week. We are also able to bless some of the smaller Friends churches in our area who don’t have the technology because their members can watch our services. Additionally, we are renewing connections with some former members and non-resident members.

Our church has done well I feel by just keeping in contact with one another. I have called each member to keep in touch with one another, and we text and send emails to those who have that capability. Our clerk sends weekly emails with the bulletin and other news. We had a called monthly meeting by email to approve a time sensitive matter. And we are trying a monthly meeting by Zoom this week. More importantly our people care for one another, so again they were doing many of these things before the virus. The hardest part of this is missing the personal contact and face to face that we enjoy. For instance, we had been doing an outreach each month that included a meal and worship that has come to a stop for now. Also, we are missing coffee and fellowship time before worship and Sunday school and bible studies. We will need to think about some other ways in the future to meet these needs.

As we try to continue to reach people for Christ, we need to think outside the box. We built a

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Blessing Box this last year and installed it on our property on Main Street. Because of the effects of the virus, this outreach has become more important to our community than I had thought it would. We are reaching people who are in physical need with the Love of JESUS, shown through providing everyday household and hygiene products and food. Our people have stepped up and are stocking it each day. We are helped by another church in town and various community members, too.

Before all of this happened, I was also doing daily video devotions. So this is something else that we had begun with our technology and had ready to go as a resource for our people and the community.

The phrase The Church isn’t closed; the church has been deployed is a wonderful phrase, but what does that truly mean? I believe if we go back to the way things were as “THE CHURCH,” we have failed that thought. We must stop being keepers of the Aquarium and start being fishers of men again the way Jesus intended us to be. That is the best way we can become great stewards with what God has blessed us instead of just trying to hang on to what we have for that rainy day. Because, to be honest, there’s a downpour out there.

I pray many things will be different, but I also believe that if we are doing and being about GOD’s business in the “normal,” we will be ready in the abnormal times. I believe we will see an increase in numbers after all this, if we are ready to make the church look different than it did before. People are looking for answers and seeking hope; we need to be that place of answers.

So with that said, I don’t think we just “survive,” but we “thrive” because we have a BIG GOD with a BIG plan.

Blessings, Pastor Scott Miller
Greetings to all.

How different our lives have been for the last month or so. We at Mooresville have stayed in touch but not in the normal ways because of COVID 19. I really do not think we will know for some time how this whole ordeal has changed our lives. The spiritual church is immune to the virus but we have this treasure in earthen vessels so we must take care of the physical body. Romans 8:38-39 seems relevant for these times. “38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, nor the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

So, as I said in the opening, the “Spirit of God” and the goal of the Kingdom, eternal life, will not be affected by anything.

I have been on the phone more now than before because we cannot have personal contact. Our congregation is small and fairly split on levels of technology, so I am not streaming sermons but, instead, emailing messages to some and using US Postal Service for others. One phrase we have heard from the President’s team regarding opening back up is “One size doesn’t fit all” and I agree. I also thought about how that statement needs to be applied to other areas of life. How churches react to this forced change of life is also a matter of one size does not fit all. Congregations that have mostly elderly will make different choices than those who have most young families. One size does not fit all is experienced at the personal level which could be broken down between introverts and extroverts. I heard someone on TV say their sister who was an introvert was asked how she is faring by being confined to home and she said it really wasn’t that much of a change from the way she lived anyway.

As pastors I think we need to make sure we are not projecting our personality on to our people or working too hard to find things for people to do and excessive ways to connect. I really think some are getting detoxed from busyness during this time and I do not want to interfere because I see that as a real need for humanity in general in the Western World.

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The song ‘Even in the Valley God is Good’, has been a blessing and a great reminder to the Hazel Dell Family. We are a very small church which in these days has sometimes been helpful. We can all pray for EACH one because we know where everyone sits so we don’t forget anyone. We are very low tech so we have an Email set up with every household on it. We use this to send out prayer requests, answers, and sometimes just to stay connected with an encouraging word.

Each Sunday at 9:45 word goes out that the church bell will be ringing in 15 minutes. During the week a mailing has been sent to each home with scripture, a devotional message, and at Easter a CD was included with Easter music. In

Jesus tells us not to worry about what most are worrying about right now, jobs. In Matt. 6:33-34 

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things (what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear) will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

He isn’t asking us to choose between living for the Kingdom and seeking basic needs. He is telling us not to be consumed with the material in a way that misses all teaching of the Spirit about simplicity, priorities, commitments and contentment. Testing produces....? Yes, what is the Spirit saying during this time to the individual and to the local church?

Is it well with your soul?
Gary Jones – Mooresville Friends.

God Bless.
Dave Freelan

Dave Freelan......HAZEL DELL FRIENDS

The good things I am hearing are about relationships. Families are eating meals around the table and saving money on eating out. Parents and children are talking more. It is a time when we have been forced to think about what is really important in life and also to consider how much of me is defined by busyness or lifestyle rather than how much of me is like our Gentle Shepherd.

Jesus tells us not to worry about what most are worrying about right now, jobs. In Matt. 6:33-34 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things (what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear) will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

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Gary Jones – Mooresville Friends.

God Bless.

Dave Freelan

Our homes. Some of our feedback is too personal to share but it has been awesome. The song that our friend, Carolyn Adkins, wrote many years ago, FEAR NOT TOMORROW, GOD IS ALREADY THERE, is our message to WYM.

‘Even in the Valley God is Good’, has been a blessing and a great reminder to the Hazel Dell Family.

God Bless. Dave Freelan
The Pandemic Shift

Nearly two years ago, I spent the entire fall teaching about the idea of Slow Church. Some people thought Quakers were already doing it, while others began to see the deeper meaning and its importance to our ministry and lives. I based the teaching on my friends John Pattison and Chris Smith’s book, Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus. Melding my own ministry experiences and the chapters of their book I wanted First Friends to focus on what stability, patience, wholeness, work, sabbath, abundance, gratitude and hospitality looked like in today’s busy world. Never would I have thought, what I was doing was preparing us for a pandemic. I have gone back many times and reviewed those teachings in these last 6 weeks and found the thoughts almost prophetic in nature for us at First Friends.

I don’t consider the pandemic’s influence as much a change as more of a shift in ministry. The onset of Covid-19 has quickly shifted us to focus more on our priorities and best practices. Doing that had us patiently and with thoughtful consideration making the shift to different ministry platforms. Instead of being reactionary or quick to make assumptions about the best way forward, we took time to figure out which platforms would be best for our population.

Even though we have had a large internet/social media presence in the past three years, we realized quickly broadcasting live videos or trying to produce in-house recordings was going to have a learning curve. We began by creating a plan of action intentionally taking about 2-3 weeks to prepare ourselves. In the meantime, I chose to take this time as a teaching opportunity and prepare weekly Self-Led Worship Guides for our people. For those 2-3 weeks we worshiped by Self-Led Guides while the staff educated ourselves on the best ways to record and present our worship through online means.

By the time the three weeks passed, we were becoming Zoom experts for business meetings, two Unprogrammed Worship opportunities, Sunday School, Youth Group, and even small groups. It is so great seeing our children Zoom together, share their talents, and learn Bible lessons at home. Our youth directors even went as far as mailing questions for our youth to play Pictionary together through Zoom. One small group recreated famous paintings utilizing what they had around their home and shared them when they gathered. The creativity has been contagious!

A member of our meeting helped us create a new safe and secure social media platform called quakr.org to help keep our clerks, members, and now, even the greater Quaker community across the country connected. Our Administrative Assistant and Finance Committee helped our members move their financial giving online through their banks while also creating ways to give through texting. I have boosted our presence on our two Facebook pages...

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pages, Instagram site, and Twitter feed which are growing followers daily. We found our Administrative Assistant is also an amateur videographer and video editor, and on Palm Sunday, she helped us premier our first virtual Meeting for Worship on YouTube – while also creating our own channel (First Friends) for people to connect with each week.

We deemed it essential for the First Friends staff to meet every Wednesday at the Meetinghouse to care for the business of the Meeting. It is also on that day we do our video recording for Sundays. Our music director and our organist come in and record music for Meeting for Worship and to accompany our Self-Led Guides. We also record fun songs for our kids which fill the role of Sunday children’s messages.

As pastors, Beth and I have shifted from face-to-face interactions, coffee meetings, and luncheons to utilizing our phones - for their original use of making phone calls. Every two weeks, Beth and I split our membership list in half and contact everyone in our meeting. Our first priority is to keep in contact with our “vulnerable populations,” especially those shut-in or living in assisted living or nursing care situations. These phone calls have become vital ways for us to keep connected and also know the needs of our people. We have grocery shopped, picked up prescriptions, and even taken socially distanced walks with our people.

To help meet the physical and financial needs of those suffering during the pandemic, we quickly set apart funds in our Material Aid Fund to specifically care for those experiencing job loss, layoffs, or a variety of needs created by the pandemic. To continue to care for people, we have been taking donations to help boost our Material Aid Fund.

Since we have a beautiful campus at First Friends, we have encouraged the use of our meditational woods for nature walks, birding, and walking the dog, our parking lot for basketball and roller skating, and since it is the season, we have added more plots to our community garden. The shift from utilizing the inside of the Meetinghouse to socially distanced opportunities outside (when whether permits) is a beautiful way for us to provide for our neighbors and members alike.

Overall, we are continuing to learn and shift. It is not easy, but we believe it is doable. We are already seeing the need to continue some of these new practices as our reach has grown from our neighborhood and local communities to a more global impact. Even though we are desperately missing our opportunity to connect face-to-face, we have learned to slow our lives, re-engage creation, and focus again on our priorities. The silence of the world and the lack of busyness is good for our soul. Just maybe some of the shifts we have made, are for the better!

Grace and peace,
Pastor Bob Henry, Indianapolis First Friends
What has changed in your Meeting since the onset of the Covid-19? In what ways have you stayed in touch with the members in your Meeting?
- Emails, our website and our church Facebook page give me an opportunity to keep in touch with everybody. Phone calls, texts and Facebook messaging are the more personal ways I keep in touch.

What is happening in your neighborhood? Outreach?
- Our neighborhood is currently virtual and we have an online service/meeting for worship on Sunday mornings at 10:30.

(YouTube, type in Hadley Friends Live Stream) At 9:30 our regular Adult Sunday School class meets on Zoom in a rather Brady Bunch format, visually speaking. Everyone can see and hear one another which is great since it’s a discussion group. Tim Whicker has been leading the class. Tim is also our YouTube technician to keep camera and equipment working while I lead the worship. Also, Tim plays pre-recorded background music for our hymns during worship; we’ve been singing along with the likes of Elvis and Alan Jackson, so our music has been pretty good.

I have been reading books (Shameless by Nadia Bolz-Weber, The Powers that Be by Walter Wink, The New Christians by Tony Jones). LeAnn and I have been having Bible Study together most weeknights using Charles Stanley’s 30 Life Principles.

I really like the phrase: The church isn’t closed; the church has been deployed. In what ways has your church been deployed?

What’s different now? We're deployed online and by those who check on one another. Some are in essential industries so they’re on duty at work and some are working from home. Many are retired and don't get out much.

Will you/your members be the same when you come back to “gathered worship”?
- I suspect that in the main, Christians will have a new appreciation for gathered worship and hopefully will be more faithful in their witness to the church.

There are so many on-line free classes around the topic of surviving COVID-19. Have you had the opportunity to participate; and if so, share some of the insights that have helped you? Or maybe the conversation with a colleague has been helpful. Please share your story!
- I watched a Brian McLaren seminar one day on YouTube which I found encouraging as regards the emergent church and changes happening everywhere. Mostly,
What has changed in your Meeting since the onset of the COVID-19?

The major change in Paoli Friends Meeting is that the Lord has blessed us with a new family that has helped us set up live streaming capacity and we are broadcasting our Sunday morning services and also a live mid-week check-in.

In what ways have you stayed in touch with the members in your Meeting?

Three ways: First, the office is open every day and I am available to every need they may have. Second, I make a phone call, text message or Email to every member and attender. Third, we have our live streaming so they can tune in and continue to be part of the life of the meeting.

What is happening in your neighborhood? Outreach? Have you had the opportunity to participate in any COVID-19 related online classes.

I have not tuned to any on-line free classes. However, the Yearly Meeting and Supt. Sisters have kept in touch so that I know we are connected.

In what ways has your church been deployed?

Of course everything is different! I would say that we are connecting more with each other during the week and attentive to everyone’s needs. Are we going to be different? I think we are going to be more appreciative of each other and that we will not take our every-day blessings for granted.

I guess the best thing you could do is tune to one of our online services and make that judgment for yourself.

I really appreciate the concern that WYM has shown to us as a Meeting and me as a pastor. Thank you so much...we are in this together!
It’s been an interesting experience here at Russiaville Friends Church since the Covid-19 quarantine. March 15, seemed more like a snow day without the snow. Most of us stayed home and few ventured out. We didn’t have a plan on how we were going to respond to what would eventually be seen as a crisis.

By the second week, we were providing ministry on Facebook Live and running hard copies of the morning bulletin and Sunday Morning message to those who don’t have access to internet services at home or don’t have computer access. The traditional ways of reaching out seemed to be coming back in style, using the telephone and cell phones, sending out cards by U. S. mail, and dropping by for a quick visit from the safety of the car.

Easter was coming and many were hoping to get back together by then, but that didn’t happen either. Good Friday was another Facebook Live message and then the Church offered our community a drive-by Candlelight experience with over 100 luminaries along the highway and up the street next to the church. In the middle of the East lot, we had a large illuminated cross and encouraged individuals to come out and offer a prayer or park nearby for a moment of reflection. Friends are visiting at a distance over meals. Enjoying Parking lot conversations, Facetime visits, and doing random acts of kindness for one another as well as providing grocery deliveries in their neighborhoods, sewing masks, and offering Facebook Live music on Sundays and Wednesdays.

Phil Baisley’s book sums it up for us well, Same but Different! Most of the Ministry and Counsel group are keeping in touch via Messenger, and the local pastors in town are meeting regularly via Zoom. Our membership attendance is small enough that when we do come back there will be plenty of room and some to spare for others hearing the
FACEBOOK LIVE WOW! I never would have seen that coming for a million years! If anyone would have told me that I would be sharing Sunday morning messages live on social media, I would have laughed! I’m just too old fashioned when it comes to daily living. I credit that to my folks for teaching my brother and I to enjoy the simple things in life early on. The first message recorded live on March 22, has been watched 595 times with 8 people sharing it! Since that time we’ve provided 5 more messages being watched 2,048 times! I literally weep each time I finish a recording when I see the number of people that are viewing the message! My mind goes back to Glorietta, New Mexico, when God placed Habakkuk 1:5 in my heart. “Look at the nations! Watch and be utterly amazed. For I AM going to do something in your life time that you would not believe even though it be told to you!” That scripture saturates my life and I find it returning to my memory whenever God does something more than I could have imagined myself. There’s no way 300 people would fit in our sanctuary at Russiaville Friends Church, as hard as we would work to accommodate everyone! Each of you has blessed me more in these days than my whole life combined! It has truly been a humbling experience! Even if each person watched the messages 3 times, that leaves a little over 682 people tuning in! Then there’s the music ministry from Ann Carter and Peggy Hollingsworth who meet me at the church to share their talents and gifts of worship! Their music has been viewed over 525 times, blessing so many people! What a challenge this has been, but what a rewarding and blessed experience God has provided for us. God bless your journey this Easter Sunday! Put Him first in your day! Put Him first in your life! Pastor, Jamie Lyon

Because He Lives!-James A. (Jamie) Lyon

Taken from one of Jamie Lyon’s Sunday Bulletins
Historically speaking, I am a byproduct of a religious (church) war. My Irish immigrant heritage in America came about pursuant to the invasion and genocide of Ireland. The Crown and the Church Of England were not responsible for the virus that destroyed the potato crops in 1836-38 but it was used with the confiscation of land and the shipment of grain and livestock to England, leaving millions to starve. Due to starvation and related diseases, one third of the population of Ireland died or emigrated in a three year period. One of the few jobs a Catholic could get was the disposal of bodies.

It was during this time, that all my grandparents, came to the United States or were born here of Irish immigrants. I heard the stories of religious atrocities and Christian love and valor.

There were stories of family who were buried without caskets and those who had stained green lips and teeth from eating grass. However, I was also told about Quakers who built small churches and schools. I was told of nondiscriminatory Quakers who, with their “Soup Pots” fed over a million starving souls in Dublin alone. My childhood exposure to the church was from the receiving end. Attending church in Montana during the depression was difficult. It was 15 miles from the ranch to a church in Lewistown and transportation was always questionable.

Our ethnic population was very diverse. Immigrants from Europe, Ireland, Russia and China. Most of the Indians lived on the reservation. They didn’t have to, but it was a livelihood.

Growing up in Montana I didn’t learn much about discrimination; religious, racial, ethnic or otherwise. My mother’s Irish brogue would flare up when she was excited. She was embarrassed by it and she would apologize for “talking funny”.

The largest church was a Catholic Church and school. There was also a Methodist and Lutheran Church.

Our German, polish or Irish neighbor may be five miles away but we all needed one another. We may have sheep to shear, wheat to harvest or be sick or hurt— we needed one another.

The only hospital for 100 miles was St. Joseph’s Catholic Hospital. That hospital served all of us on several occasions. My family and I were blessed by their loving and nondiscriminatory care. They received no federal or local funds.

When my dad lay dying, lapsed in a coma, a little nun sat by his bed, massaging his back with a soothing lotion. I asked her if she thought he felt that. She looked at me, smiled and said: “We will never know, will we?”

For the most part, when the church and I met—I was the recipient of its labor and love. In 1937 (I was 7), dad was recovering from broken back. There was no workman’s compensation, no unemployment benefits, no Medicare/Medicaid, no welfare, no aid for dependent children—we needed family, neighbors and the church.

The week before Thanksgiving, a group of men and women from the Methodist church came to our door with boxes of food and all the things for a Thanksgiving dinner, including a huge baked turkey.

I didn’t know what Methodism stood for but for the rest of my life I knew I was the recipient and benefactor of the fruits of labor by some Christians called Methodists. The church and I had met again.

In the Air Force we had religious services and facilities to accommodate Protestant, Catholic

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and Jewish services. I attended the Protestant services because I didn’t know how or what to do in the Catholic Mass. The Chaplains were Rabbis, Priests and ordained Protestant clergy. The church and I met again.

In college, the local Methodist pastor asked me to help him start a college age fellowship called the Wesley Foundation. The church and I met again.

While in prayer, beside my bed, in the YMCA in Oklahoma City, in 1955, I asked the Lord to use me. I have since told people not to ask God to do that unless they are serious—He will do it.

So here I am 50 years later, I just know the church is where the branches bear fruit when attached to the vine. I know it is meaningless to build a golden calf in the wilderness and ignore the nearby bush that burns but isn’t consumed. It is folly, of the first order, to take for granted the water from the rocks in the desert or the mountain springs of Montana.

I have touched the water in the Jordan in Galilee—it isn’t magic. In a few days it will reach its destiny—evaporating under the Negev desert sun, in the mineral laden Dead Sea.

In seminary, I studied the history, the theology and Discipline of the church. I learned to treasure the rich, inspiring study of the Word Of God. The church and I met again at the banquet of His grace. The church and I met again. I was ordained at the First Methodist church in Wichita where Dr. Ron Merideth was pastor. He told me of a visit to Atlanta to hear a renowned preacher, Dr. Charlie Allen. He said he sat in a pew next to an Atlanta attorney. He asked him why he came to hear Charlie Allen preach. The attorney said, “I come to hear Charlie Allen because I believe Charlie Allen knows God.” As a novice clergy, we met again.

Although the KJV serves me for most scriptural reference, with at least five other versions plus Thompson’s Concordance, the use of Elizabethan English, religious garb and titles of rank is an essence of the church for many. For some; seven sacraments, for others none. The importance of the details of sacramental procedure—sprinkling, pouring, or immersion (face up or face down) is kept. The Quaker Queries serve as a beautiful didactic Catechism. We met again.

The grandeur of the great cathedrals has stirred the hearts of millions for centuries. The magnificent Cathedral of Notre Dame, was built on the ruins of three other churches. It survived the French Revolution, Napoleon and WW1. When dry timbers and beams succumbed to an errant spark, we know this is not THE CHURCH. It is now just a windowless, hollow skeleton; a soot drenched shadow against a star lit Paris sky.

While serving at Bentley Kansas and Marshall, Indiana, my churches burned. The church at Coloma burned prior to my pastorate. The church and I met again. The buildings have been rebuilt and the living church, of the living Lord Jesus; with His disciples and saints continue there to bear fruit in His name.

After 91 years, the saga of “the church and I” reveals that being a member of the church is different than being the church. It reveals that the church is not just a church in the Wildwood, a Meeting House, a Cathedral or a Temple to be decorated like a truncated dead Christmas tree. The First Person Pronoun Church is irrelevant in this world of sin and death. On this day April 24, 2020 an estimated 2,000 American babies will be murdered in their mother’s womb. The sixth commandment has not been cancelled. Satan holds the deed to any church which embraces the killing of God’s most innocent and helpless children.

We are the Branches — connected to the Vine—called by the living Lord Jesus to bear fruit and love one another. As Forrest Gump May have said, “That’s all I have to say about that”. —The Church and I.

May the Lord bless you. and His countenance shine upon you.

Bill Flannigan

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P pastors often lament that the things they most needed to learn were never taught at seminary. I did my graduate studies at Christian Theology Seminary and the Earlham School of Religion. Both institutions were top-notch, but neglected to teach me how to pastor during a pandemic. If I ever teach seminary, I’ll have one piece of advice for my students—find a meeting filled with wise and loving people and ask to be their pastor.

When it became clear we’d have to do church differently, our committees immediately shifted their priorities. The Trustees closed our buildings to minimize expenses. The Outreach Committee began collecting food and money to ramp up our support of food pantries. When a lack of personal protective equipment became obvious, Friends began sewing masks. The Quaker Men Wednesday Lunch group collected money each week to help support the waitress who served them meals. Others delivered groceries to more vulnerable persons. Still others helped with yard work, drove people to doctor’s appointments, and phoned those living alone, reaching out, keeping connected. When a nearby home was damaged in a storm, our meetinghouse office was opened to permit the homeowner to continue her job via the Meeting’s internet connection.

The technologically-gifted among us began organizing an electronic meeting for worship, which is regularly viewed by four times as many people that attend our meeting, while the rest of us have learned to use Zoom.

Sadly, a cherished Friend, Dawn Sheets, passed away after contracting the coronavirus in her assisted-living center. She passed alone, her family and pastor unable to visit her. This grieved us deeply. Still, we know firsthand the Blessed Connection that transcends our physical presence. While we could not be with her in body, we stood with her in Spirit.

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Friends continue to be faithful in their support of the meeting. Funds continue to be used to help the least of these, and though we miss one another terribly, and long for the embrace of Friends, we are determined to bring good from this tragedy. We pray the best for our sister Quaker meetings throughout the world and are confident they, like us, are bringing Light in this shadowed time.
What has changed, obviously, is that we have not been meeting in person – either for worship or other activities (including monthly meeting for business). We have begun meeting for worship via Zoom. The lowest number we’ve had is 12 and the highest was 25. Friends from other meetings and geographical areas sometimes join in. The Zoom meetings for worship are shorter – thirty minutes. While they are different than our in person meetings for worship, I have often felt a sense of being gathered. The Spirit is not bound by place, as Friends have often said. In these days, we are finding the Spirit of God can use technology in new ways to keep the beloved community together. It will be nice to be back together face-to-face, but a question I think we need to address is whether we continue using Zoom as part of those gatherings so others at a distance can participate.

While we have always used email for contact with meeting members (including non-resident members) and attendees, we are using it more frequently. I usually send out something 3 times a week with information about prayer requests, our Zoom meetings, an inspirational thought. Other Friends have used our email list to distribute information or inspirational thoughts.

We have not been very engaged with the neighborhood our meeting is located in at present as many of us live outside that community. However, we have advertised our meetings for worship via Zoom through Facebook ads inviting others to join us.

If you are not receiving the WYM Weekly Updates and WYM For This Time Updates via email and would like to, please sign-up here: https://www.westernyearlymeeting.org/newsletter. If you do not have email/internet access and would like to receive a summary via postal mail of the WYM updates, please send a note to WYM, Attn: Summary Updates, PO Box 70, Plainfield IN 46168 with your name and full address.
Greetings from Valley Mills

Like all of you, life has definitely changed for us at Valley Mills Friends. When the pandemic first came, we cancelled meeting, and hoped it would just be temporary. But after a few weeks passed, we decided we needed to adapt to the situation and find new ways to meet our spiritual needs.

Instead of meeting for worship at the meetinghouse, we follow a written order of worship at our leisure. The order of worship varies a bit with a mix of poems, quotes, prayers, and music, but always includes scripture and a message. We send this out via email Sunday mornings, and sometimes post it on our Facebook page. If you would like to be added to our worship email list, please email me at cedarho@earlham.edu

Recently Eric and Chris Morrison have been studying and practicing the HeartMath method of meditation, inviting us to explore its benefits. HeartMath is helpful in calming our minds and bodies through strategies like “heart focused breathing.” This past Sunday we decided to mediate/wait in the silence together, at the same time, hoping for a sense of group connection. (During this time of COVID-19, HeartMath is giving free access to its contents of videos and teachings. If you are interested in exploring HeartMath, you can find more information at heartmath.com.) Participants said it helped them to feel connected to our community.

We also updated our phone tree, and have been using it to call one another to check-in. This allows everyone in meeting an opportunity to hear each other’s voices, and keeps us abreast of any special needs amongst our community members.

We at Valley Mills know that growing into God’s love and evolving into better human beings is never easy. We are trying to be prayerful and reflective during this time, and remain hopeful that many good things can come from our deep, inner search to be transformed. There might be some things that are lacking, but we try to remember that with Christ—and one another—we are never alone.

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QUARANTINE DIARY

Day 1: I have stocked up on enough non-perishable food and supplies to last me for months, maybe years, so that I can remain in isolation for as long as it takes to see out this pandemic.

Day 1 + 45 minutes: I am in the supermarket because I wanted a Twix.
From Mikey’s Funnies

**Introvert View:**
Finally, introverts experience a world that is suited for us. All events cancelled; we don't even have to go through the trouble of flaking out. No one is making random small talk or physical contact. Everybody minding their business.

**Extrovert view:**
Once this is all over with, I'm hugging everybody. Get ready for long, awkward hugs. I'm gonna make it weird.

**today'sThot**
Introverts, check in on your extrovert friends. They have no idea how this works.

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**WYM is offering two new ways for you to keep encouraged and connected during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Check out the new page on our website [https://www.westernyearlymeeting.org/for-this-time](https://www.westernyearlymeeting.org/for-this-time), with new information frequently added and the **WYM For This Time Update**, which is sent to our email list every Tuesday.

As we are living through THIS TIME of pandemic, we, as Friends, know and trust God is present with us and speaking to us -- aware of our conditions. As our regular routines and schedules have changed, we can still encourage one another and stay connected as we live as faithfully as we can in this time.

Both the **For This Time** webpage and the weekly **WYM For This Time Update** provide you with pertinent information, relevant opportunities and good resources to help tend your spiritual life as well as to help us corporately (as Meetings/churches and as Western Yearly Meeting) navigate THIS TIME.
OFFICE HOURS
(Until further notice)
9 a.m. – 12 noon
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Monday - Della
Tuesday - Haley
Wednesday - Matthew
Thursday - Sylvia
Friday - Haley

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COVID-19 HYMNS

COVID 19 PANDEMIC EDITION
Breathe on Me, Breath of God..............................NOPE
Precious Lord, Take my Hand...............................NOPE
Just a Closer Walk with Thee.................................NOPE
Gather Us In..........................................................NOPE
Close to Thee..........................................................NOPE

COULD WORK
Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters
Jesus Walked this Lonesome Valley
I Came to the Garden Alone
Trust and Obey