Peace and Social Concerns Committee Report 2021
Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)

This has been a year of great upheaval locally, nationally, and globally. The work of our monthly meetings has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet we have found ways to continue our peace and justice work. And had more time for prayer and reflection.

Global chaos from rapidly accelerating environmental devastation is highly likely to occur, breaking down our economic, social, and political systems. As air and water temperatures increase, water supplies are drying up. Widening areas and severity of drought are decreasing crop production and forcing people to flee. Rising oceans are creating more climate refugees. The trend of increasing numbers of more ferocious wildfires, hurricanes and other storms are expected to accelerate. All kinds of infrastructure will likely be destroyed, creating more climate refugees, many migrating to the Midwest. How can we prepare our own communities for these disasters, and plan for the arrival of climate refugees?

Justice work by White Friends has changed in recent years. An important concept of justice work is to follow the leadership of oppressed communities, who are working tirelessly for their liberation. Those who consider themselves White Friends are learning how to step back. Be supporters and allies.

Many injustices today trace their roots to the arrival of white Europeans on this continent. These include a whole history of enslavement as well as genocide of Indigenous peoples. It is important for white Quakers to know we are not expected to feel guilt or blame for injustices that occurred in the past. But knowing what we know now, it is up to us to learn more about those wrongs, and work toward repair and healing. This will be a primary focus of this committee’s work in the coming year.

As a society we have been forced to face systemic racism. For example, public murders by police have generated sustained protests regarding police brutality, with calls to limit police powers and change or abolish prisons.

Also dating back to the arrival of white Europeans is the genocide of Indigenous peoples. The theft of Native lands. And the atrocities of Native children taken from their families to institutions of forced assimilation, often far away. Places where attempts were made to the erase their culture. Many subjected to physical or sexual abuse. Thousands of Native children died. This intentional cruelty broke the resistance of Native peoples who were trying to hold onto their lands.
The recent validation of the remains of Native children on the grounds of those institutions is having devastating effects in Native communities and those who care about them. Searching the grounds of the institutions in this country is about to begin. Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland, has launched a federal investigation into these institutions of forced assimilation in the US.

A number of Catholic churches, who ran those institutions in Canada, have been burned or vandalized.

There are renewed calls for truth and reconciliation. Canadian Yearly Meeting has done a great deal of work on this.

These injustices are some of the effects of systems of white supremacy. The concept of Mutual Aid is becoming an increasingly used model for communities working for justice. The idea is to have a horizontal hierarchy, where everyone has a voice. And work to ensure a vertical hierarchy does not develop. Without a vertical hierarchy, there can, by definition, be no superiority. Several of our meetings are supporting existing Mutual Aid communities or considering creating their own. These are opportunities to begin to disengage from the colonial capitalist system and white supremacy. Ways we can model justice in our own meetings and communities.

We can show up for Black Lives Matter and other racial justice events. We can support those who meet with local, state, and Federal government officials. We can show up in the streets to support agitation for change, train in nonviolent civil disobedience, or accompany arrested activists through the justice system.

We can show up, when appropriate, at events of Native peoples, such as the Prairie Awakening ceremony. We can share Indigenous news on social media platforms, so others are aware of these things.

Indigenous leaders in the Midwest have asked us to learn about and find ways to engage in the concepts of Land Back. The website LANDBack Friends has been created and will be updated as our work continues. [https://landbackfriends.com/](https://landbackfriends.com/)

We pray for guidance for how our committee might work together at the intersection of our responsibilities and those of Ministry and Counsel.

We will continue to seek spiritual guidance, both for what we are called to do, and ways to offer spiritual support for those who are not Friends. There is great spiritual poverty in many communities. Spiritual support will be needed by those who suffer the consequences of environmental and other disasters. And those responding to these disasters.
It is important to understand this work depends on us all working together, in the community. Outside our meetinghouses. Developing friendships in the local community. We encourage more engagement with our youth. They can teach us about justice. We and our meetings will be revitalized.

Many monthly meetings are adapting to these changing ways of doing peace and justice work. Building relationships with communities of black, Indigenous, and other people of color. Exploring ways to be in right relationship with these communities. All of us learning from each other. Sharing our stories. Deepening spiritual connections.

Jeff Kisling, clerk
Peace and Social Concerns Committee

Peace and Social Concerns Committee budget

There are ongoing discussions about how we use our budget. So, we are not designating how our budget will be distributed at this time.