

Memorial Minute for Betty Reid Ford (1924 – Aug 6, 2015)

Betty Reid Ford, 91, beloved member of Grand Rapids Friends Meeting for more than 50 years, died in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on August 6, 2015. After a lifetime of advocating for peace, Betty found Eternal Peace.

A Detroit-area native, Betty and her husband, Steve Ford, became involved with the Friends Meeting in Ann Arbor while Steve studied at the University of Michigan. The couple moved to Grand Rapids in 1962, just as a group of Friends was organizing a Meeting there. The Fords took part in its first meeting for worship that September; over the next few years Betty helped the Grand Rapids Friends become a fully recognized Monthly Meeting.

She was to serve the Meeting in every capacity during her long life. Betty was at various times clerk, recording clerk, treasurer, newsletter editor, First Day School teacher, and convener of many committees. She had a passion for maintaining the Meeting's records, and, in 2006, wrote a synopsis of its history, a document that was used to guide a 50th anniversary celebration in 2012. Betty was also actively involved with Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting, Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, Friends General Conference, and the wider Society of Friends. She encouraged the formation of Quaker Worship Groups in Holland, Fremont, and Traverse City, Michigan.

Betty was widely known as a lifelong witness for the peace testimony. The *Grand Rapids Press* profiled her in 2008 in an article that began, "Standing at a busy intersection in the heart of downtown, Betty Ford braced her 83-year-old frame against the blustery whirl of rush hour traffic. In her hands was a sign: 'Violence is Never Justified.' As she did during the Vietnam War and the first Gulf War, she stood simply as a conduit of the Inner Light. 'It's just something I have to do,' Ford said." She was a tireless advocate and supporter of the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). She helped bring an AFSC office to Grand Rapids. When the office was closed, she helped found the Institute for Global Education (IGE) to keep up an institutional peace presence in the city. She was an organizer for Creative Response to Conflict Resolution, Circles of Peace, an annual Children's Peace Fair and many Hiroshima-Nagasaki memorial gatherings. An elementary school teacher, Betty authored *Educating for Peace: Curriculum Planning with a Global Perspective*, published by IGE in 1997. During her 20-year public school teaching career, she taught her elementary students about peace and justice, conflict resolution, and global understanding.

Betty made all who attended Grand Rapids Friends Meeting feel personally welcomed, appreciated, and loved. A memorial meeting was held on September 12, 2015, at Aldersgate United Methodist Church under the care of Grand Rapids Friends Meeting.