

## **Memorial Minute for Joan Sampieri (Ann Arbor)** **November 23, 1943 – January 12, 2026**

Joan Sampieri followed a rich and vital spiritual journey throughout her life, devoting herself to working for justice, advocacy for the rights of all, integrity, and nonviolence. She joined the Ann Arbor Meeting in 2013 and remained a member until her death on January 12, 2026.

Joan was raised in the Episcopal Church and continued her dedication to the church by teaching Sunday School while her children were growing up. She took seriously the biblical commandment of stewardship of the earth and regularly took her Sunday School classes on field trips to clean up parks or participate in Earth Day Activities. (She was fond of saying, “I was at the very first Earth Day!”) At times, however, she found herself – a divorced single mother – in conflict with the more hierarchical concepts held by some church leaders about “man’s dominion” over the earth.

She maintained her membership in the Episcopal Church for some time but stopped attending Sunday morning services and teaching Sunday School. Instead, she started a new well-loved family tradition of buying copies of several newspapers and serving a big family brunch every Sunday morning. She and her children enjoyed the meal and read and discussed the news to a background of classical music or jazz.

In about 1987, Joan returned briefly to the church in her new town in New Jersey, but a disagreement over core values led her to leave and search for another spiritual community – one that did not have the creeds and patriarchal structure that she now recognized had always made her uncomfortable. The new town was Cinnaminson, home of the Westfield Friends Meeting and Westfield Friends School. She had lived by and taught her children the testimonies of peace, justice, and equality and a direct relationship with God, well before she came to Quakers. When she discovered the Friends Meeting, right in her own backyard, she felt she had come home to the place she belonged. She became an active part of the community and strongly embraced the community and the Quaker faith.

In the 1990s, she moved to Florida to be near her grandchildren and joined the Miami Friends Meeting in 1999. During her time there, she served as bookkeeper and later clerk of the Meeting. A Friend, recalling her service as a First Day School teacher for the older kids, remembered the “feeling of having a Meeting member commit their time and energy to be with us, . . . the respect I felt from her, . . . her candor and sense of humor most of all. . . . I grew up to care passionately about some of the same things that I know mattered to Joan.” She continued to live her faith in the community through her work with Planned Parenthood, the county Commission for Women, and other community service.

Joan moved to Michigan to be with her daughter Jennifer after Jennifer’s husband died, and she joined the Ann Arbor Meeting in 2013. She became just as active here in both Meeting and community service. Her dedication to the children of the community manifested itself once more as she joined the board of Friends School in Detroit, serving for a time as assistant clerk, and offered, in the words of a fellow board member, a “calm, reassuring, and knowledgeable presence.”

In the Ann Arbor Meeting, she and her daughter provided potted spring flowers from Jennifer’s garden store in Chelsea to all the children on Easter Sunday, as a celebration of spring and new life. When she learned, in November 2013, that the Meeting had decided to lay down the

position of representative to Pendle Hill, she stepped forward to volunteer, a role she still held at the time of her death. She served on the Peace and Social Concerns Committee from 2014 to 2018 and on Ministry and Counsel from 2016 to 2019. During this time, she also was active in Friends General Conference (FGC), joining the Central Committee as assistant treasurer in May 2017 and serving as treasurer from October 2017 through October 2024. Joan continued her community work in Michigan as well, most notably as president of the League of Women Voters (LWV), which under her leadership transformed from the LWV of Ann Arbor to the LWV of Washtenaw County.

When she was diagnosed with blood cancer, in late 2019, and underwent chemotherapy and a stem cell transplant, she remained amazingly involved and active. She attended meeting for worship online during the early days of the pandemic and protected her health by continuing this practice during her last years.

A memorial service is planned was held in Ann Arbor on May 17, 2026. Joan's ashes have been interred in the cemetery at Westfield Friends Meeting.