

# THE LIVING LIGHT

For the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.  
Ephesians 5:9

Volume 63, Number 1

Whittier First Friends Church

First Month, 2024

## A New Kind of Christmas Party This Year

An early-December Christmas Dinner Party has been a First Friends tradition for many years, until interrupted by the pandemic. Previous events included a full-course turkey dinner, carol singing, and auctioning of a Christmas-themed glass sculpture created by Dan and Philip Wright, the proceeds of which benefited the Meeting's youth. This year's scaled-down event, held on Sunday evening, Dec. 10, included a potluck supper, a carol sing-along, making of Christmas ornaments, and a highly original Parade of the Decorated Chairs. Thirty-five attendees enjoyed the dinner and activities in Fellowship Hall.

The supper included traditional items including roast turkey and (would you believe?) figgy pudding, with a California touch—persimmon slices garnishing a huge salad bowl. Friends recognized with nostalgia the carved wooden ornaments and evergreen boughs of the table decorations.

After supper and an interlude of carol singing, Friends repaired to tables outfitted with crafting materials—there were push-out Christmas cards to be decorated, snowman ornaments to be assembled, and translucent



bells to be colored. One crafts table piled high with ribbons, garlands, and plastic ornaments excited curiosity until the celebrants were called to decorate the Meeting's new wheel-bearing dining room chairs. Younger Friends were especially enthusiastic about this activity, as they created fantastic fairy-tale thrones befitting Oberon and Titania. Then began a colorful parade as the chairs were

*Continued on page 5*

## Friendly Fare by Lea Wright

**Dear Friends,** I resolve...it's a new year, and is there anything you want to add for 2024? Most of my resolutions usually start with I'm going to try. That excuses me if I don't make it.

**Friends About Town:** The 69th Uptown Whittier Christmas Parade was Saturday, December 9. Dan and Milton Wright drove and rode in Milton's 1938 Chevy truck for the Whittier



Historical Society and Museum. **Deanna Woirhaye** was very happy and honored to have earned first place and honorable mention in Photography at the Whittier Art Gallery's



Miniature and Small Works Exhibition this December. The two pieces were titled, "Portal #42" and "Winter Blues", respectively. The one she is standing near earned first place. This is such an amazing and fun show bringing to light incredible artistry from all around.

**Friends At Home:** **Iris Harris** is almost walking again since her hip operation the day before Thanksgiving, 3 weeks at PIH, and 2 weeks at home with PT and 24/7 care. It will be another month before she can start her usual activities again, but she was grateful to be here and enjoying Christmas (and the very good movies on TV this year.) Many thanks to those who have visited her, bearing gifts and food. All are appreciated. **Marina, Marc, Dave,** and **Clint** have been a wonderful help and comfort, as well as her 24/7 care. She is looking forward to seeing everyone soon. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Come by anytime, please!

**Friends Visit:** The **Wright/Bates** family were pleased to have **Megan Bates** visit for Christmas. (Megan is **Ward's** daughter, and Ward is **Elinore Petoletti's** son.)

**School and Work:** **Emlyn Torres** has accepted a permanent position with Cambridge International in London. Her title is Project Coordinator. Her masters are in Communication from Northwestern University and International Diplomacy from the University of London. She is shown here at her cousin's wedding in August 2023. Emlyn and her mom, **Laura Torres**, went to **Owen's** new home in Perris for Christmas.



**Friends Sharing News:** Help to keep the Friendly Fare going. Email me a quick note and tell me your news. Send to Lea at [lealouw@gmail.com](mailto:lealouw@gmail.com), or deliver to me at church on Sunday. See you next month!

## Loletta's Lines



Happy New Year dear Friends! The New Year brings us new possibilities. I would love to hear what your possibilities are for the New Year. Mine are continuing my 4 mile daily walks and trips to be with friends in very important times in their lives. I also have books to read, and my Spanish lessons are luring me from the shelf.

These are all good possibilities. Yet possibilities are presented to us in every moment. God is constantly luring us into love, light, hope, peace, joy, harmony, beauty, generosity, abundance, joy, and zest. Now and in the next breath. These possibilities are not focused on seeing, doing, going, or even learning, and growing. God's luring is about being and becoming.

In Genesis, Moses was commissioned to represent God. Because people believed in multiple gods, Moses had to ask what name he should use for God. Who was it that called Moses to relationship? The answer is sometimes translated, "I am who I am." This is a grand name, different from the way other gods were imagined. Most were associated with a trait like sun, fire, fertility. Instead, it is a uniquely exalted, powerful name. I remember a Christian rock song with the words, "The Great I am." Yet a more accurate translation is "I am who I am becoming," or "I am who I will become."

This name gives us a different image; a sense of flowing movement, possibilities, growth, process, journey, and transformation. It is both currents seen and invisible in streams joining a river, flowing to the sea, where all the

drops and molecules that are water are united, evaporating into clouds, raining down; filling mountains with snow and currents with fresh new becoming. It is the water of life that cushioned our birth, flows in our veins, and returns to the earth at our completion.

In the New Year, and every moment, we are called to be fruitful; not just procreative or productive. It is a call to become as God is becoming. Spiritually growing, processing, and progressing, in ways that bear sweet fruit in our relationship with God, ourselves, the ones we love, the stranger, the Creation, and the world. In the New Year may we all be who we are becoming, in and with God.

---

## Remembering Gwen Woirhaye



It is with a deep sense of loss that we let you know Gwen Woirhaye passed to new life on Christmas night. Family members were with her, she knew she was loved and appreciated by her family, friends, and Friends, and she was surrounded by the peace, love, and Light of God. She was very grateful for the blessings of her beautiful life, family, friends, and her Meeting. As we offer support to the family in their grief and recognize our own grief in the next days and weeks, we will begin planning to celebrate and honor Friend Gwen and a wonderful life lived fully. Please join in praying for those who grieve that we might all feel God's love and Light. Check future issues for more information.

## Russ' Reflections

This year has been an active year for the Music Ministry at First Friends. We have provided choral and organ/piano music each week, beginning the year with three singers, Marilyn Fant, Diane Wemmerus, and Aaron Espinosa, who, in the absence of section leaders, provided excellent and relevant music for worship. We offered a Music Sunday on Palm Sunday and a Hymn Service for Ascension.



As our order of worship has changed somewhat to accommodate Hybrid worship and to allow visiting at the end of Meeting, I haven't been able to play much organ music. I offered Organ and Hymns evenings during Holy Week, Advent, and Christmas, and in the summer I offered a series of eight Tuesday evening recitals (plus a piano recital by a colleague) that featured various styles and types of organ repertoire with three collaborations: Modern Sacred Song with Michael Fausto, tenor, Music for Piano and Organ with Linda Brown, and Music of Middle Earth with a group of singer friends. Attendance was around 25 with colleagues and friends present. Offerings for the Organ Fund were received at each event and the response was positive.

This fall, we have been able to engage four section leaders and the return of a couple of Friends to grow the Friends Choir to eight singers with a good balance. We prepared an Advent Music Sunday, and the Choir offered music for Christmas Eve. Our section leaders are excited about making music together, and we have been able to sing repertoire that we haven't done since before Covid. In 2024, we will continue to offer appropriate music for worship and hopefully a Music Sunday or two and a Hymn Service or two. I am hopeful that



## News from Whittier Friends School

Oh, what fun it was to gather and celebrate the holidays at Whittier Friends School! All 11 preschool children and all 14 elementary children were able to come and perform in our "Gift of the Magi" Christmas performance on Friday, December 15. The elementary children's play told the story of a brother and sister who wanted to give each other a special gift, and so they sold their most precious things to have



enough money. It was a story that is timeless for the audience, but new for many of our children, and meaningful to this time of year, as we try to focus on the blessing of giving rather than receiving.

There were also rousing songs added to this heartfelt play. Preschool children and younger elementary students performed "Feliz Navidad", and the elementary class gave a rendition of "Twelve Days of Christmas" that required each student to hold up a sign matching their assigned gift that they themselves colored. The opening song, "Silver Bells", set the scene for the play nicely, but it was the closing song, "We Wish You a Merry Christmas," that was sung with the most gusto. Following the show, families gathered in fellowship to enjoy cookies, brought to share by all the guests.

We have had several successful fundraisers

*Continued on page 5*

*Continued on page 5*



pushed around Fellowship Hall by their creators. This zany activity was the brainstorm of the ad hoc entertainment committee—they originally envisioned a decorated-chair race (!) but decided that would be too raucous (and perhaps a bit of a safety hazard). The more moderate activity none-the-less occasioned much hilarity. Friends expressed their great appreciation to the architects of an unusual but very enjoyable holiday event: Mary Marshburn, Carrin Bouchard and Dan Wright

for organizing the dinner; Mindy Van Dorn for outfitting the crafts tables; Marilyn Fant for the table decorations; Brendon Woirhaye for leading the group



activities; Russ Litchfield for leading and accompanying the caroling, and Loletta Barrett for overall supervision and logistics. Thanks to all for reviving a beloved First Friends tradition in a novel mode.

~ Bob Newton

in recent months, and we owe that in part to our First Friends Church community. See's Candy brought us \$791, and our Winter Gift Boutique added \$75. Our Ruby's Diner night raised \$210, and Bean Soup Mix brought us \$620. People who have linked their Ralphs club card to our school helped us earn \$56, and our fall trimester trip to the recycling center brought us \$151! Thank you so much for your support, as every little bit helps us in our efforts to provide a safe, nurturing, one-of-a-kind educational environment. And as always, you can follow Whittier Friends School's adventures on Facebook and Instagram at:

[www.facebook.com/whittierfriendsschool/](http://www.facebook.com/whittierfriendsschool/)  
[www.instagram.com/whittierfriendsschool/](http://www.instagram.com/whittierfriendsschool/)

-Cassie Caringella

---

*Russ' Reflections - Continued from page 4*

we can attract a few more singers to the Friends Choir. Our section leaders are an important component for our success, and I hope we can sustain them.

I would like to continue offering Organ and Hymn events and perhaps another recital series in the summer. Several of last summer's attendees have asked me to consider it. We have a terrific organ, and I would like to find ways for people to hear it more. Perhaps we can attract people to our Meeting and our Music Ministry. We completed a couple in 2023, but there are some more organ projects that will improve its versatility for worship that I would like to accomplish if our organ technician can schedule them, and several stops were prepared for but never added.

As always, you have a role to play: singing together in worship, supporting our extra events, and inviting others to attend, praying for our ministry, and encouraging our musicians. Thank you for your support!

## Christmas Eve Service



This year, First Friends was joined at 7 pm on Dec. 24, in the meeting house by two local faith communities, Hillcrest Congregational Church (United Church of Christ) and Woven In Faith (a joint ministry of Salem Lutheran and Whittier Presbyterian churches), for our first ever hybrid Christmas Eve worship service. Loletta Barrett's welcome and opening prayer was followed by the lighting of the Advent Candle and the reminder of its representation of hope, peace, joy, and love by Maggie Goodwin, pastor of Woven in Faith. The First Friends Choir brought forth the musical offering of "Stars are for Those Who Lift Their Eyes" (P. Delmonte Choir).

The message of the Nativity was presented in word and song, with readings from the gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, interspersed with beloved, time-honored, traditional Christmas carol hymns. Following the words and music was a time of open worship after the manner of Friends and a closing prayer by Paul Clay - pastor of Hillcrest Congregational Church - who had also accompanied "Away in a Manger" on guitar. Worshippers in the meeting house had been provided with candles (battery operated for safety), and were invited to light them and exit in prayerful silence.

Heartfelt gratitude is expressed to the FFC tech team for making remote attendance possible, the FFC choir, and all who organized, participated in, and attended both from home and in person. We hope this is the beginning of an ongoing partnership that will continue to uplift and bless us all.

## Budget Update from Business and Finance Committee



Friends, at our monthly meeting for business on Second December, your Business and Finance Committee shared the asking budget for the 2024 fiscal and calendar year. We also shared the results of the stewardship campaign, which unfortunately were not very encouraging.

As it stood the day of Monthly Meeting, only 28 plans for support had been received (down from 41 in 2023) at just under \$100k - about \$50k less than planned support in 2023. We can expect another \$100,000 of other income facility rental (including Temple Beth Shalom, parking lots, and the Crawford rental) and typical unplanned giving. The asking budget from all committees was \$364,366, about \$1700 more than this year. Although we frequently balance smaller deficits from endowment earnings, we cannot recommend approval of this budget.

The TLDR ("too long, didn't read") is that we are currently expecting about \$200k of income, about \$164k short. Monthly Meeting has cut its own budget and asked all committees to examine their budget asks. We are also asking those of you who have not yet turned in your plans for support to do so, and asking that everyone prayerfully consider whether they can increase their plan - a couple of plans have already done so. Thank you all for your support of the ministries of the meeting.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## January All Friends Fellowship Night

The next All Friends Fellowship Night will be Wed., Jan. 10 at 6 pm in Fellowship Hall. Our guest speaker this month is Marie Hegwer-Di Vita who will share her experiences in the field of genealogy. All are invited so mark your calendar now and plan to attend. Bring your appetite and either a salad, main dish, or dessert to share. We hope to see you there.

## Monthly Meeting

January monthly meeting will be Sun., Jan. 14 . All are invited to join us at rise of meeting for lunch in Fellowship Hall (\$7.00 at the door) followed by the meeting at 1:15. For those joining remotely, use the same meeting ID number as we do for morning worship. We will consider how to allot the remainder of our Significant Giving budget from 2023 as well as the overall budget for 2024.

## Hygiene Kit Packing Party

We will meet in Fellowship Hall to pack kits for our homeless neighbors on Saturday, **January 27, 10-12 noon**. Start collecting clean, screw top prescription bottles with the labels removed, regular size shampoo, laundry soap, and men's white athletic socks. Check the Enews for more details or call the office.

## Thanks For Generous Hearts

The CEO committee thanks everyone who made contributions to our Winter Mission Project! Our Christmas Tree of Peace was richly decorated with cold weather accessory items to be distributed to our homeless friends in the neighborhood. A Loving Thing at St. Matthias has the opportunity to make that happen. All the canned items that were piled high in our Red Wagon have been delivered to the Interfaith Food Center. In addition, your monetary gifts that came through our website were transformed into grocery gift cards through the Whittier Friends School scrip program and delivered for use in the new year. Friends made donations with thoughtfulness and generosity. Thank you, one and all!



## Quaker Life Magazine Subscription Time

Please let Lea Wright know by January 15th if you are interested in renewing or starting your subscription for the year. There is a discount rate of \$30 if we bundle our renewals into one order! [Lea.wffc@gmail.com](mailto:Lea.wffc@gmail.com)

Return Service Requested  
Postmaster: send address changes to:  
The Living Light  
Whittier First Friends Church  
13205 Philadelphia St  
Whittier, CA 90601-4384

Periodicals  
Postage Paid at  
Whittier, California

The Living Light  
USPS 316-320

Volume 63 Number 1

Issue Date: January 1, 2024

The Living Light is published monthly by  
Whittier First Friends Church, 13205  
Philadelphia Street, Whittier, California,  
90601-4303.

Periodical postage paid at Whittier, California.

Candice Ryder and Mel Sturr, Editors  
Loletta Barrett, Pastor  
Russell Litchfield, Dir of Music Ministries and  
Organist  
Lorenzo Mora, Custodian  
Telephone 562-698-9805

[www.firstfriendswhittier.org](http://www.firstfriendswhittier.org)

Whittier Friends School Staff  
Candice Ryder, School Committee Clerk  
562-945-1654



**Olivia Bald**

**Matthew Bouchard**

**Jared Bradley**

**Barbara Cote**

**Barbara Healy-Sprague**

**Jeanne Love**

**Meredith Marshburn**

**Norah Martinez**

**Sarah Singleton**

**Darryl Warren**

**Cedric Woirhaye**

**Alli Wright**



Please remember in  
prayer those Friends  
unable to worship  
with us regularly.

**Barbara Cote**

**Kathy Hood**

**Rose Nedrow**

**Kathy Robison**

**Ami Troedsson**

**Shirley Votaw**

If we've missed your birthday, we apologize  
(and happy birthday)! We work hard to keep our  
birthday calendar up-to-date, so please let us know  
if we're forgetting anyone. Thank you!