

# THE LIVING LIGHT

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

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Whittier First Friends Church

January, 2025

## Family Christmas Dinner Potluck



Where can you find Quakers feasting, fellowshiping, and letting their creative juices flow in December? At the First Friends Family Christmas Dinner Potluck, of

to a holiday song and provided with a Christmas tin of simple supplies as well as access to boxes of random items around the room



course! The theme for this year's event, which was held on Sunday evening, December 15, was "I Love to Tell the Story." Attendees arrived to find tables in Fellowship Hall decked with beautifully illustrated holiday themed children's storybook centerpieces enhanced with matching toys and fairy lights. Friends brought a variety of delicious dishes to create an abundant

spread for dinner and dessert. After an enjoyable meal, the creative juices began to flow. Each table was given the lyrics

that could be used to create a presentation to "tell the story" of their song. One group used the items as props to create a skit for "The Little Drummer Boy." The other groups fashioned miniature scenes incorporating elements of their lyrics, and some even performed the songs.

This activity was followed by the opportunity to make holiday themed crafts including ornaments, bracelets, snowflakes, and cards for Loletta's card ministry. The festivities concluded with a group singalong of some favorite carols. Thank you to all who helped plan, set up, and clean up, as well as all who participated to make this a festive and amazing event.



## Friendly Fare by Lea Wright

**Dear Friends,** Our family enjoyed a busy December with visitors from Minnesota, Washington DC, Hume Lake, Moreno Valley, and Denmark. I especially enjoyed meeting my (grand?) nephew and niece twins, now 10 years old, that I had not previously met.

**Friends Celebrate: Carrin Bouchard** reports that in memory of the **Joe & Audine**



**Coffin** Family Christmas past gatherings, many family members gathered. **Stephanie & Dave Murillo** were the hosts this year. The family members drove in from Arizona, Riverside, Apple Valley, Laguna Niguel, and La Verne. There was much reminiscing of the Coffin family Christmases in the past full of fun and laughter.

**Friends Travel: Michael & Elisabeth Elliot** spent Thanksgiving with Michael's family in the Bay Area. Elisabeth was pleased with her first attempt at a charcuterie board. They then drove to Las Vegas for the annual Live Design International trade show, stopping along the way to visit friends in the Central Valley. **Kathy Marin** sent *Living Light* Greetings from Sicily. Last month, her sister-in-law and she went with Overseas Adventure Tours to Sicily. They experienced what their guide called 'the Lasagna of Sicily' which means that the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Germans, French, Spanish, who conquered it, left parts of their cultures in the architecture and food.

They loved the hill towns, the interactions with locals, conversations with people about the mafia and local politics, hiking on Etna, and



visiting agri-tourism locals. They found it to be such an interesting place! Here she is with the Living Light continuing our tradition: "The Living Light Travels." (Remember, your submissions are welcome and needed.) **Frank**

& **Lyn Gruber**

traveled to DC to spend Christmas with their son **Jeff**. They had a great time there.



They visited Annapolis, the Botanic Garden, the National Gallery of Art, and Jeff took them on a night time tour of the monuments and some holiday decorations. They enjoyed their Christmas together!

**Friends Correspond:** We were so happy to receive greetings from **Gloria Rice**: "Merry Christmas to everyone at church." She says she's slowing down, but she's still able to get around with her walker.

**Friends Sharing News:** Help to keep the Friendly Fare going. Email me a quick note and tell me your news. Or what are your New Year's resolutions? What can you share with us? 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

I encourage you to stop in this moment and listen to Louis Armstrong sing "What a Wonderful World." I can never listen to it without tearing up. It is filled with gratitude, hope, and joy. If I sing along, it fills my heart, expands my lungs, and lifts weight from my shoulders. The song celebrates the colorful, beautiful images of nature and people, from babies to neighbors. It concludes, "I think to myself, what a wonderful world."



## The Mission Collaborative in the Community

The Mission Collaborative extends a huge thank you to all who participated in decorating, riding on, and marching with our "float" in the 70th Annual Uptown Whittier Christmas Parade with a special shout-out to CJ Conklin from First United Methodist Church of Whittier for making the magic happen. All of the congregations were represented, and it was a fun and fantastic way to share our outreach.

One participant shared this story from the day: "We covered the sides of our flatbed truck with posters from each of the congregations and from the different missions we support. We were paused along the route when someone from the crowd yelled, 'Hey, he's a Veteran, he needs resources!' and pointed to his friend. The man who called out, and his friend, were actually in a group of about seven veterans who saw the poster for the Veterans Resources Center on the side of the Truck. Since we were stopped, I went up to them and explained where it is and when it's open, and before I left to meet back up with the float, one veteran was looking it up on her phone and said, 'Thanks, I'll check it out!' This is what we hope to do: move the needle a little bit in our community towards ways of love, support, and compassion. It was a great day!"

**The next Mission Collaborative event will be hosted by First Friends. On Saturday, January 18, we will assemble hygiene kits in Fellowship Hall from 1 to 4 pm.** These will be distributed by The Loving Thing, (formerly known as the Soup Hour), a ministry of Saint Matthias Episcopal Church in Whittier. All are invited to participate by volunteering that day, donating items (large bottles of shampoo, conditioner, hand lotion, hand/body soap, detergent, and toothbrushes, socks, Rx bottles), or doing both. For more information, contact Marilyn Fant, and be sure to visit the Collaborative's Instagram account

[instagram.com/whittier.la.mirada.hope](https://www.instagram.com/whittier.la.mirada.hope)

Last month, when I was writing my personal Christmas letter, I had to go back and review my calendar. Initially, I could not remember one thing really worth sharing that I had done during the year. I knew there were plenty, and I was a little worried - was it my memory?! Then I realized, the fact is, it all rushed by so fast. Now we are into the New Year and planning more things to do and enjoy in ministry together. So, I am glad I took some time to pause and remember all the joyful moments. You know, they were not big extravaganza moments. They were small, little, sometimes surprising joys. Some of them kept me going when the days were busy, tiring, boring, sad, depressing, or overwhelming. There were plenty of them. Joyful moments and deep legacies of the heart from those who went on before us. They are worth remembering and writing about, but even more, cherishing them in my heart.

Before we rush into the next year, let's take some time to enjoy the wonderful world around us. As we engage in appreciation, we experience gratitude. We breathe more fully and deeply, and our tension and anxiety dissipates. Our minds relax, creativity is engaged, our hearts are opened, our souls soar with God's Spirit, and our very being is expanded to experience joy. It is a wonderful world with you, and I am shaking your hand, Friend, and saying, "I love you."



## Whittier Friends School Celebrates 50th Anniversary

Friends, family, and former students of Whittier Friends School gathered at the school on Saturday afternoon, December 28, for a reunion reception to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the school's founding. Guests toured the classrooms, lunchroom, and school library, and reminisced about the happy times they spent there. Plenty of past photos were on hand to spark memories and lively conversation.



*Jeff Robin, Philip Wright, Christy Tavernelli (circa mid-90s)*

play structure and slid down the slide, as they had many (many) years ago. More recent graduates gathered including Anatheia Woirhaye, Elyse Woirhaye, Cedric Woirhaye, Shreeya Duval, Jane Tucker, Ashley Ryder, Landon Caringella, and Avalon Caringella. Current student, Hudson Caringella was also among the attendees.

Whittier Friends School was founded in 1974 by Gwen Woirhaye and two members of First Friends. A pre-school was added in 2005. Her sons Brendon and Loren were among the first students to attend. Over the years, the Woirhayes were well-represented with Gwen's grand-children attending the school and Brendon serving as a member of the WFS School Committee. Sadly, Gwen passed away last year, and is sorely missed by church and school. Other events to celebrate the school's 50th will be held throughout the rest of this anniversary year, so watch for information and plan to see old friends and join the fun.

*Vikki Kendrick*



*Jeff Robin, Tammy Van Dorn, and Christy Tavernelli reunited*

Three members of the kindergarten class which entered in 1996 and "graduated" in 2003 were reunited at the event. Jeffrey Robin and Christy Tavernelli were both home for the holidays (Jeff from Houston and Christy from Philadelphia), and were joined by Tammy Van Dorn, who lives in Riverside. After visiting their classrooms, Christy and Tammy climbed the



## News from Whittier Friends School



For the first time since before the pandemic, Whittier Friends School was able to bring back, not just one service project tradition, but two! Though Whittier Friends School has been collecting coins for the Interfaith Food Center for the past several years with their November “Count Your Blessings” activity, this year the upper elementary children were able to take the money that was collected and purchase groceries from the IFC suggested items list. Eight children visited Smart and Final on Wednesday, December 11, with a budget of \$120. Then, Elementary and Preschool children walked over to Brookdale retirement home on Thursday, December 12, and presented the songs they were preparing for their holiday performance. They sang for an audience of dozens of residents in the dining hall, and then the children walked amongst the audience and wished them happy holidays. The children wrote about these experiences in their school journals, and it was unanimous that helping people brought joy to themselves. “I felt happy singing to the retired people,” said one 3rd grader. “I saw all of the people smile with joy,”



reflected a 6th grader. “It feels good to help people,” added a 4th grader. We hope this will be the first of many hands-on service activities for our students.

Whittier Friends School students also brought joy to their families with their performance of “A Charlie Brown Christmas” on Wednesday, December 18. The story explored the experiences of Charlie Brown, who feels down because of all the busy-ness and commercialism of the season. He tries to find meaning in activities like directing a Christmas play and getting a Christmas tree, but it isn’t until his friend Linus reminds him of the story of Bethlehem, and his friends all work together, that he finds joy in the true meaning of Christmas. Songs in this play included “Jingle Bells,” “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” and the youngest students singing, “Christmas, Don’t Be Late,” originally sung by the Chipmunks. Even kindergartners had lines in this complicated show, and the children pulled off an entertaining start to the holiday season!

To round out the busy month, we hosted our 50th Anniversary Reunion Party on December 28 (see story on page 4). Happy New Year to all!

And as always, you can follow Whittier Friends School’s adventures on Facebook at [facebook.com/whittierfriendsschool/](https://facebook.com/whittierfriendsschool/) and on Instagram at [instagram.com/whittierfriendsschool/](https://instagram.com/whittierfriendsschool/)



## Gretchen Castle, Dean of Earlham School of Religion to Visit



What better time to visit sunny Southern California from the Midwest than in the middle of winter? On Sunday, January 26, Gretchen Castle, Dean of

Earlham School of Religion in Richmond Indiana, continues the tradition of doing just that when she visits Whittier and brings the message in Meeting for Worship.

Gretchen, a global Quaker leader, joined ESR in 2021 as the school's first female dean. Prior to that she served as the General Secretary of the Friends World Committee for Consultation in the Quaker World Office in London, traveling extensively to bring greater unity to Quakers worldwide. She has served at the Quaker United Nations Offices in New York and Geneva, and participates in the Christian World Communions Annual Meeting of the General Secretaries, where she was appointed the first woman chair and the first Quaker chair. As part of the Christian World Communions, she attended the inauguration of Pope Francis in Rome in 2013. She has been presiding clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Director of Leadership Development for several Quaker retirement communities, and a board development consultant for over 20 years.

Her connection to Earlham and Richmond goes way back to when she attended nursery school at Stout Meetinghouse on Earlham's campus. She earned her undergraduate degree in human development and social relations from the College in 1979, and her father, David

Castle, was a former pastor at First Friends Meeting in Richmond. Additionally, she holds a Master's Degree in organizational development and adult learning from Temple University in Philadelphia.

Don't miss this opportunity to hear her speak, and be sure to join us after Meeting for Worship for a time of fellowship and food when we gather for a potluck style light lunch and a chance to hear more from Gretchen about ESR's mission and direction in the upcoming year.

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## Friends Committee on National Legislation Advocacy Teams Prepare for 2025

As the 119th U.S. Congress commences in 2025, Whittier's Advocacy Team will join 135 FCNL grassroots lobby teams in 48 states and D.C. to urge Congress to address the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The campaign entitled *Aid, Not Arms: Opening the Way to Peace in the Middle East* will guide local teams in their advocacy for restoration of humanitarian aid to millions of Palestinians through the United Nations Relief and Works Agenda (UNRWA). Under the direction of Tim Heishman, Senior Advocacy Teams Manager, teams will be supported in their call for a ceasefire, de-escalation, and humanitarian aid in Gaza.

Made up of more than 1,500 Quakers and friends from communities across the country who use their power as constituents to seek policy change at the federal level, the Advocacy Teams Network is now in its 10th year. Its success is based on commitment to building relationships with Congressional members and staff grounded in mutual respect and listening.

Want to be a part of the team or simply learn more? Contact Darrell Warren or visit

6 <https://www.fcnl.org/act/join-advocacy-team>

# Upcoming Events

## **Sunday, Jan. 12 - Winter Mission Project** **Ends - Extended One Week!**

Last day to donate to our "Giving Tree" in the foyer. Bring winter gloves, hats, scarves, and socks to be distributed to those in need by Doing the Loving Thing, a ministry of St. Matthias Church, Whittier. Also accepted are monetary contributions (mail a check or visit our website - be sure to note "Winter Mission" on the memo line) which will be used to purchase gift cards for the Interfaith Food Center and Doing the Loving Thing ministry.

## **Wednesday, Jan. 8, 6 pm - All Friends** **Fellowship Night**

Join us in Fellowship Hall for a potluck dinner followed by speaker Cassie Caringella, Director of Whittier Friends School, who will share her trip to Philadelphia last fall for the Friends Council on Education school leadership conference. Bring a main or side dish or dessert and plates/utensils.

## **Saturday, Jan. 18, 1 - 4 pm - Mission** **Collaborative Hygiene Kit Assembly Day**

Join members of the Mission Collaborative congregations in Fellowship Hall to assemble hygiene kits to be distributed by Doing the Loving Thing, a ministry of St. Matthias Church, Whittier. We will fill clean screw-top prescription bottles with shampoo, liquid soap, lotion, and detergent. Kits will also include travel-size items (toothpaste, toothbrush), women's personal hygiene items, razors, basic first aid (band aids, antiseptic), and new socks. Donations can be dropped off in the foyer or on assembly day.

## **Saturday, Jan. 25, 1 pm, - Bill Peterson** **Celebration of Life**

Rev. Dr. William (Bill) M. Peterson was our interim pastor from 2008 to 2010. The family has invited everyone to attend this joyful celebration of Bill's life at Claremont United Church of Christ, 233 Harrison Ave., Claremont, CA, 91711. Contact Pastor Loletta at (562)781-1457 or [pastorffc@verizon.net](mailto:pastorffc@verizon.net) if you are interested in carpooling or if you have a memory to share.

## **Sunday, Jan. 26 - Gretchen Castle, Dean of** **the Earlham School of Religion**

Join us in Meeting for Worship at 11 am, in person or online, when Gretchen brings the message, and stay afterward for a time of fellowship and food to visit with Gretchen and learn about Earlham's mission and direction in the new year.



A red and white poster for a Red Cross Blood Drive. At the top, it says "+ HELP US SCHEDULE A + RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE". Below that is a QR code and the text "PRE-REGISTER YOUR INTEREST SO WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN!". The main graphic shows a blood bag with a tube and a drop of blood. To the right, it says "+ Thursday 20th February 1pm-7pm 2025 by appt". At the bottom, it says "Whittier Friends School, First Friends Church Fellowship Hall, 15205 Philadelphia Street, Whittier CA 90601".

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

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Kathy Hood

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!**