

# THE LIVING LIGHT

*For the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.*

*Ephesians 5:9*

Volume 60, Number 4

Whittier First Friends Church

Fourth Month, 2021

## It's a Brand New Day

For our Meeting, challenges have brought growth. During the past year, we've been taking an in-depth and ongoing consideration of queries into how our shared experiences have affected our vision for building, sustaining and maintaining what is at the core of who we are called to be as a Meeting.

There's no better time than now to prayerfully consider your own answers, conclusions and continuing concerns. We encourage all members of the Meeting to make the following queries part of your regular devotional life. These queries are currently being addressed in Monthly Meeting.

*Considering what have you done in the past, and what you are doing now, in what ways is Spirit leading you, as an individual and as a member of the Meeting?*

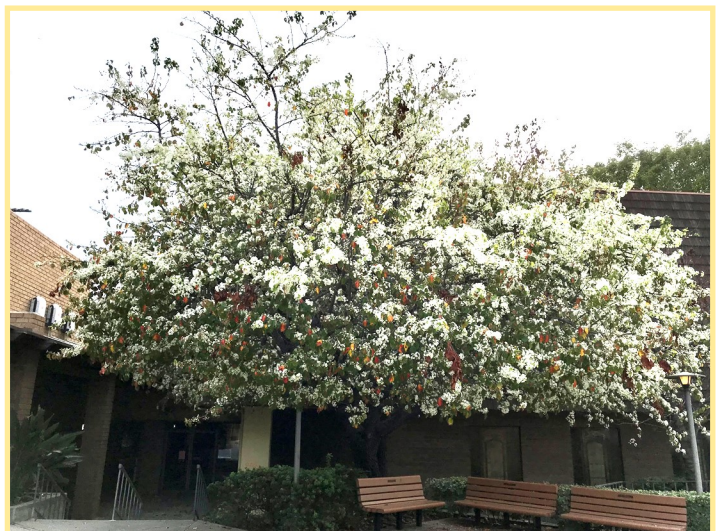
*What would Spirit like you to do now as a Friend?*

*What is Spirit leading you to do in the future?*

*What concerns do you have for yourself and for the Meeting?*

Friends have expressed leadings in many directions. We are being called to welcome not only more families into our Meeting, but people of all ages and generations just as our current membership encompasses all ages and generations. We want to reach out to our increasingly diverse communities, such as our Hispanic community. We want to coordinate closer with organizations in the wider Quaker world and to promote and participate in their missions.

We are also being called to affirm Quaker values in Whittier, and what they truly mean. We seek outreach opportunities that are multicultural and intergenerational at all levels. We seek collaboration for our youth with other meetings, including virtual meetups and projects.



***Dressed for Easter***—Founders Court is in bloom! We look forward to returning to the Meeting House sometime in the future. In the mean time, our spiritual life is blooming on Zoom. Join us on Sunday mornings at 11:00 a.m. for Meeting for Worship. Call the church office for the meeting link.

We seek Friends from other areas of the world to come into ministry with us and share educational opportunities. We want to provide space for an attorney to counsel individuals on the immigration process and other issues.

And that's just the beginning of the queries, joys and concerns that are being discussed in the Meeting. As part of a continuous, spiritual conversation, we invite all Friends to share their own leadings. What are yours?

*A CHRISTIAN PEOPLE CALLED TO LISTEN, GATHERED TO SEEK PEACE AND SENT FORTH TO SERVE*

## Friendly Fare by Lea Wright

**Dear Friends,** A year has passed since we all went on lockdown for the COVID-19 pandemic. So much has happened and so little.

**Friends Vaccinate:** **Michael Elliot** joined many Friends who are now fully vaccinated for Covid-19. He shares that he had a challenging time after his second shot (arm pain and fever), but he was back to walking in the neighborhood two days later. He likens it to the immune system's "practice scrimmage" and reports that possible side effects information on the CDC website (cdc.gov) was very helpful. **Elisabeth** registered on othena.com and got notified to make an appointment within a month. **Cassie Caringella** and **Lea Wright** made their reservations for themselves and for **Milt & Donna Wright** at Walgreens. How about you? How's your vaccination process coming?

**School and Work:** **Lyn Gruber** reports **Jonathan Gruber's** ship has docked in San Diego making it safely home!

**Friends Remember:** Prayers for **Paul, Tim, Andy**, and the rest of the family of **Jack Carlisle**, long time Friend and member who passed to new life in November 2020. Prayers for comfort and peace for the family of **Patricia Cramer**, mother of **Todd Cramer**. Patricia passed to new life on March 2.

**Friends Sharing News:** So how have you been keeping yourself busy during this long safe-at-home period? We want to hear your stories, and keep the Friendly Fare going. Email me a quick note at [lealouw@gmail.com](mailto:lealouw@gmail.com) See you next month!

## Western Association Zooms the Annual Meeting

Both the Board and general membership of the Western Association of the Religious Society of Friends met in March to review how we spend our money and serve the wider Quaker world.

At the annual meeting, WARSF approved using our travel budget, which went unused last year, to make additional contributions to Friends United Meeting and Friends World Committee for Consultation, and to go into the reserve fund.

WARSF is currently addressing a lapse in corporate status filing that has occurred with the state of California. Faith Jansen Brewer of Berkeley is overseeing this effort.

Current WARSF officers/clerks are Convening Clerk Keith Barton of Berkeley, Assistant Convening Clerk Bob Secord, Recording Clerk Dharma Galanga and Treasurer Lea Wright.

WARSF looks forward to sharing more annual meeting news in the May issue of *The Living Light*.

## Whittier Friends School has a TON of Fund-raising Fun

The current pandemic has posed many challenges for Whittier Friends School this past year, including how to hold our traditional fundraisers while maintaining Covid - 19 safety protocols. Our annual Parking Lot Sale was no exception. As a safe alternative, we had a clothing drive with the help of FUNDrive® an organization that helps local nonprofits raise money. Our job was to collect bags of unwanted clothing, linens, bedding, curtains, and other soft goods and deliver them at the appointed time to a collection site in order to be paid by the pound.

We advertised that donations would be accepted in the church parking lot on February 27 from 9 to 2 p.m. In addition to notifying our Meeting, school families, and supporters, we posted on the Next Door app as well as in several local Facebook groups (Positively Whittier; Whittier Community Self Reliance; Whittier, Norwalk, La Mirada, and Santa Fe Springs Offer Up; Whittier's Sharing Economy; The Whittier Neighborhood Watch, and Whittier, California—Our Hometown). We even had a couple donations from neighbors who had seen the sign we placed out in front of the school on collection day.

A few of our generous supporters arranged for early drop-offs and pick-ups so that by the time the big day arrived, the stage in Fellowship Hall was already full of bags. By 2:00 p.m. on collection day, we had doubled the haul!

We thank Steven Caringella for his time, hard work, for sponsoring the rental trailer, and the use of his pick-up truck to transport the bags to the acceptance site to be weighed. And, because our collection surpassed our expectations, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Milton Wright and Dan Wright for their generosity in helping transport bags on short notice. Milton even used his vintage vehicle, so our goods were definitely delivered in style! We were amazed and grateful to learn we had collected 2,637 pounds (over one ton!) of soft goods and earned over \$600 for our efforts.

Thanks to Marielle Askew, Bill Ryder, Lea Wright, and the Caringella family—Cassie, Landon, Avalon, and Hudson—for putting in the time and hard work on collection day. We could not have done it without them.

We also thank everyone who donated and participated in this effort. These funds support our mission to allow children of all ethnicities and backgrounds to share in the diverse and rich learning experience offered by our school.

—Candice Ryder

## This Month in Meeting for Worship

April 4	<b>He is Risen!</b> Loletta Barrett brings the message <i>Abundant Chances</i>  Isaiah 25:1-9
April 11	Russ Litchfield brings the message <i>Doubt, Faith, Belief, Action</i>  John 20:19-31
April 18	Elisabeth Elliot brings the message <i>Just</i>  James 2: 14-24
April 25	Loletta Barrett brings the message <i>Abiding, Abundant Love</i>  1 John 3:16-24



At March Monthly Meeting on March 14, we welcomed the news that planning for both virtual Peace Camp and a virtual Peace Café have begun.

Because of safety and anti-vandalism concerns, Trustees is recommending that the Meeting consider fencing be installed in Founders Court. This raises the concern of balancing the need for security with our desire for openness. More details and visuals will be available to review at the next Monthly Meeting on April 11. Trustees also reported that one of our rental properties needs extensive renovating and repair, and that they have been contacted by groups that use our facilities about when they can meet again. Opening for group use is being discussed and will follow county guidelines.

Our office administrator Mary Botz is currently on sick leave, with other staff covering some of her duties. Personnel reported that Mary is retiring on June 30, and discussions are underway regarding an updated job description, schedule, and compensation.

Discussion has begun on how best to allocate the recent gift from the Paul Partington estate. It was expressed that we want to make active use of these funds lest they be tucked away and forgotten as well as reluctance to earmark the entire amount at this time. Discussion of this will continue at April Monthly Meeting on April 11.



## The Facing Bench

Spring, Easter, and birthdays came together for me. The first two are imminent and I just finished addressing April birthday cards. I enjoy sending cards to family, friends, and Friends—handmade and store-bought, with new and traditional themes, whether religious or funny. But this week I realized I think of Easter as the birthday of the church. Traditionally, Pentecost—the arrival of the Holy Spirit—is considered the birthday of the church. However, the resurrection of Jesus is celebrated as the realization and recognition of the gift of New Life. It is both Life after physical death and the revelation that Life in God makes us a new creation, liberated from all death-dealing oppressions. I think of it as a birth-day that happens once a year and yet happens every moment. Everything is born anew; open to possibilities, new choices and opportunities for life.

As we look at the hope of vaccines and for the end to isolation, a clergy colleague stated what I have been thinking about church and life when they said that their concern is that when we return, it will (consciously or unconsciously) also signal a return to “business as usual.” And I, for one, am about done with the endless work of details and decisions that has come to characterize modern life and church. So very, very much of what we are so busy doing is simply to keep afloat. Continuing church (and life) as we know it simply consumes time and resources. As devastating and tragic as this pandemic has been, it has also afforded us and the Church the opportunity to step back, reassess and (it is to be hoped!) regroup. Spirit seems to be holding out her hand and inviting us all into a new day and a new life—a birthday! While everyone’s vision will differ, has anyone seen and experienced what a new day of doing and being a human being and church might look like?

One colleague replied perhaps we can focus on contemplative and quiet reflection time, inner listening, slowing down, and connecting inside. Hmm, sounds very Friendly indeed. Happy Spring, Happy Easter, and Happy birth/new life day!

**We welcome and encourage your comments as well as your contributions and photos for inclusion in *The Living Light*. Kindly send your email to Elisabeth Elliot at [communiquaker@gmail.com](mailto:communiquaker@gmail.com).**



## Russ' Reflections

If you are attending Meeting for Worship regularly, you will have heard music prepared and recorded by our four section leaders and our Choir Scholar. We meet weekly for a couple of hours on Wednesday evenings to rehearse and record music. We

take each person's temperature, keep our distance, and wear masks while we sing together.

A couple of these singers are new to us since we stopped in-person worship a year ago. Alexandra (Alex) Grabarchuk is the Director of Choral Activities at Whittier College. I approached her about helping us find a soprano, and when we were unsuccessful, she agreed to help us this choir season. Though she is a mezzo-soprano, we have chosen repertoire that is mostly not too high in pitch and suits her voice.

Alex originally comes from the Ukraine, and has graduate degrees in music from UCLA. Before coming to Whittier, she taught choral music at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. She is interested in contemporary music and the music of eastern Europe. She conducts a professional choral ensemble here in Southern California and is a member of the solo quartet at the Claremont United Church of Christ.

Malek Sammour is a graduate of the music department at Cal State Long Beach, where he majored in Vocal Performance. He is a high baritone, so he is able to sing tenor for us. He is a member of the solo quartet at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Long Beach in addition to other musical pursuits. He stepped up to help us when Axel Mejia had to move suddenly to a location that is too far away for him to continue singing with us.

We continue to appreciate the talents and musical efforts of Allison Coop, our other mezzo-soprano/alto, Lou Rosen, our baritone, and Aaron Espinosa, our bass Choir Scholar.

We hope that our music enhances your experience of worship.



## News from Whittier Friends School

Like other local schools in Whittier, Whittier Friends School has been hard at work preparing for a healthy return to full on-campus learning. By the next issue of *The Living Light*, we will have a full report on how it is going. For now, hold our teachers and learners in the Light, and pray for us as we navigate our new normal: learning while wearing masks, at a distance, with lots of cleaning!

Whittier Friends School students experienced an intimate Open House on Zoom on March 2, with friends and family members in attendance to see them present their projects. Preschool and T-K students had photos of their art projects on display. Kindergarten and First Graders were pre-recorded, sharing their projects about systems of the body, with these videos played during the Open House. The older students shared slideshows they created on Google about the U.S. state or U.S. president of their choice. It was exciting to see them engage with technology in this way. Though school is different right now, we still see growth, and it is exciting!

We are in the middle of early enrollment for the 2021-22 school year. There is a discount on tuition if paperwork and fees are received by April 30. We urge you to contact us if you are interested in knowing more about our Quaker school. Members of First Friends receive a special tuition rate! Email Cassie for more information! [cassie.wfs@gmail.com](mailto:cassie.wfs@gmail.com)

—Cassie Caringella

## Stoking the Fire Registration Now Open

Stoking the Fire, a Friends United Meeting retreat answering the call to deepen our spiritual lives and inspire faithfulness among Friends, will be held virtually May 21-23.

Activities over the weekend will include open worship, music and messages, and opportunities for service as well as break-out Ember Groups to discuss spiritual growth and concerns in smaller gatherings.

New this year is the plan to follow up this annual retreat with a monthly online Ember Group meeting. These sessions will serve as an ongoing source of inspiration and encouragement for those of us eager to kindle new life and vitality into our home communities.

Registration is now open at [fum.org](http://fum.org), where you can also find information about activities and presenters.





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 The Living Light  
 Whittier First Friends Church  
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 Whittier, CA 90601-4303

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 Postage Paid at  
 Whittier California

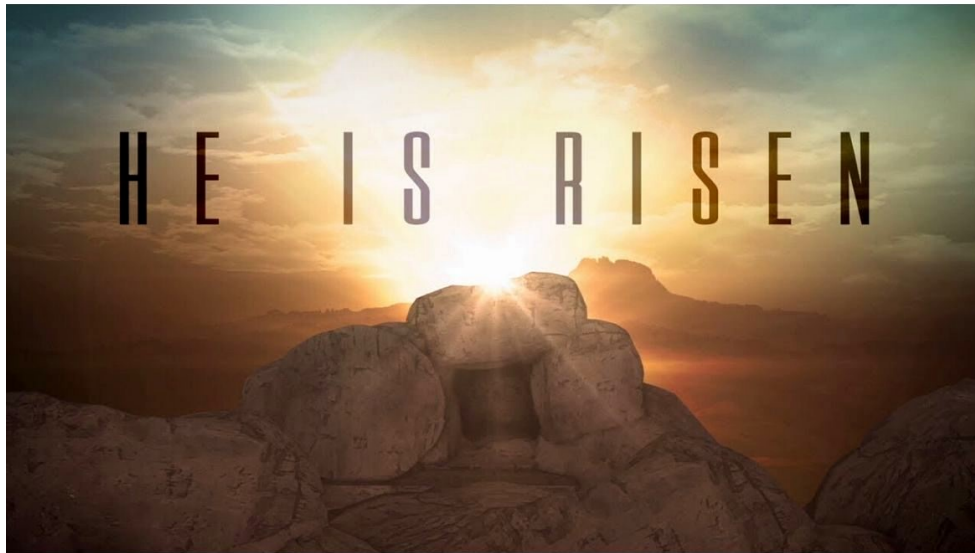
*The Living Light*  
 USPS 316-320  
 Volume 60 Number 4  
 Issue Date: April 1, 2021

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

Elisabeth Elliot.....Editor  
 Candice Ryder.....Copy Editor  
 Loletta Barrett.....Pastor  
 Russ Litchfield.....  
 .....Dir of Music Ministries & Organist  
 Mary Boltz.....Office Administrator  
 Lorenzo Mora.....Custodian

Telephone 562-698-9805  
 FAX 562-698-1127  
[www.firstfriendswhittier.org](http://www.firstfriendswhittier.org)

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



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

Peggy Anderson  
 Rose Nedrow  
 Kathy Robison  
 Ami Troedsson  
 Carol Urner  
 Gerry Wolfe