

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

February, 2026

Support for Neighbors in Need



"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
Matthew 22:39.

Quakers have a long history of service in support of those in need as a way to answer "that of God" in each person. Over the past couple of months, members of First Friends have answered the call to be God's "hands and feet" locally.

The Winter Mission Project's "Tree of Christmas Peace" was a great success. In response to the request for winter scarves, gloves, caps, and socks for our neighbors in need, Friends donated 180 winter caps, 8 pairs of gloves, 16 scarves, and 27 pairs of socks. A special shout-out goes to Pam Laswell for knitting 165 of the caps! Half of the knitted hats and all of the other items were donated to The Loving Thing (formerly the Soup Hour) at St. Matthias Episcopal Church in Whittier. The remainder of the caps went to the Greater Whittier LGBTQ Center. A total of \$550 monetary donations were also ac-

cepted and divided among The Loving Thing, the Interfaith Food Center, and Hope Housing, a ministry of Whittier First Methodist Church.

On Sat., January 24, over 45 Mission Collaborative volunteers met in Fellowship Hall to assemble items for hygiene kits. The work involved cleaning, filling, and labeling empty prescription bottles with shampoo, lotion, and laundry detergent. Additionally, personal notes of encouragement were attached to over 200 pairs of donated socks. Other items that were collected included deodorant, toothbrushes and paste, and first aid, grooming, and feminine hygiene items. All items were taken to The Loving Thing, a ministry which supplies hygiene kits to over a hundred clients throughout the year (in addition to providing meals, mail service, and human connection.)

That same day, a clothing drive was held for the Greater Whittier LGBTQ Center who asked us to share the donations with Alice's House which serves women and their children. A heartfelt thanks goes to all who donated and participated.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. . . Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."
—Matthew 25:35,40

Friendly Fare by Lea Wright

Dear Friends, Welcome to 2026 times two. Okay, I don't know where that came from. Second Month is what I meant. January was such a busy month that I haven't even put away our Christmas mugs. And yet, the coffee is always delicious, especially when I get to drink it in bed every morning.

Friends Travel: What a way to spend Christmas and your birthday! **Becky & Ron Memmelaar** were in Athens. Behind them is the Parthenon and the Acropolis. This is the last day of their cruise that started in Istanbul. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! They sent greetings that included "Much love to you all."



Here they are with the Living Light continuing our tradition: "The Living Light Travels." (Remember, your submissions are welcome and needed.)

Friends About Town: A vacation doesn't have to be far away. **Dan & Lea Wright** spent a wonderful week at Laguna Beach enjoying sunrises and sunsets. They also enjoyed walking and eating gelato every day. Entertaining **Cassie, Steven, Landon, Avalon and Hudson Caringella** was especially fun.



Have you ever been to Browns' Park? It's a totally enjoyable place with a great spot for a "Living Light Travels" picture.

School and Work News: **Melissa (Nelson) Martinez** has applied to begin her PhD in the fall at a university in Portland. **Avalon Caringella** finished out her first semester of 7th grade with an

A+ in all 8 of her classes, as well as outstanding citizenship in all of her classes. Way to go, Avalon! She is looking forward to performing in her school's production of Disney's Mary Poppins Jr. in March. **Landon Caringella** earned Student of the Month from his PE teacher for having a great attitude and effort. And **Hudson Caringella** totally enjoyed seeing his picture in the "newspaper," AKA the "Living Light." The **Woirhaye** family felt blessed to have all the children home for the holidays. Now that winter break is over, they have returned to their respective schools (**Anathea** to Oxford, **Elyse** to Cal Poly Humboldt, and **Cedric** to Cal Poly Pomona). On the ride back to Humboldt, however, the Woirhaye's truck tire nearly fell off on the highway (due to what may have been ill tightened lug nuts) leaving them stranded in Manteca, CA, for a bit. Thankfully, no one was hurt, and the family is grateful for being able to navigate the accident unharmed. The incident was reported to have been pretty scary, though. "Many hoops had to be jumped through to deliver Elyse and navigate back home." Meanwhile, the broken vehicle remains in Manteca waiting to be repaired in a week or two. (Editor's note: We are grateful that they made it safely home.)

Friends Celebrate: **Sharon, Jenna, & Jasmine Sturr**



traveled to Hawaii for a family wedding.

Bella Sturr visited Whittier with her fiancé,

Brandon Waterbury for "Christmas in January".

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, or deliver to me at church on Sunday. See you next month!

Loletta's Lines

"Let us explore together the secret of a deeper devotion, a more subterranean sanctuary of the soul, where Light Within never fades, but burns, a perpetual Flame, where the wells of living water of divine revelation rise up continuously, day by day and hour by hour, steady and transfiguring..."



This is a quote from "A Light Within", the first chapter of A Testament of Devotion by Thomas Kelly. His words are so eloquent and encouraging. He has just discussed how many of us experience the Light and feel it warming us from within. We yearn to keep it burning and share it. Yet, we cannot seem to sustain this ecstatic and enlightening experience. Especially as we meet the challenges of our daily life and world.

Thomas advises, "We can achieve a steady light within, if we are dead in earnest in our dedication to the Light..." It requires that we be "willing to pass out of first stages of religious living..." He advocates "unceasing orientation" to the Inward Light while we are busy in our daily lives. He believes it can be done by anyone in any tradition. From his description, it is ordering our mental life on more than one level, with thinking and discussing and external affairs on one level. Behind the scenes, at the same time, at a profounder level we are in prayer and adoration, receptive to the Divine breathings.

For me, it means making the conscious choice to be in a heightened awareness of the Light within and all around me. When I read a distressing piece of news or interact with others who are "not having a good day," I have to be aware of, listen for, and attend to external life, but remind myself to reach within and stay grounded in the Internal Light. I have

to remind myself that, if I look, I can see Light flowing around me in my environment, burning within, and flowing out of me.

It also means taking time to tend the Light - to spend time in quiet devotion listening to Spirit, absorbing the beauty of nature, reading encouraging devotional words from Weighty Friends. Finally, it means joining in Meeting for Worship, fellowshiping, and listening to Friends who also seek to live in the Light. Friends who are struggling, Friends who are rejoicing, Friends I need and Friends who need me, as we are called to be the Light together.

Whittier's FCNL Advocacy Team is Hard at Work



On Monday, Jan. 26, a group from Whittier's FCNL Advocacy Team met in person with Rep. Linda Sanchez to strengthen our relationship and champion the cause of peace and justice. "As always, it was a team effort as we engaged in democracy!" said Darrell Warren. (more details on the visit in next month's issue).

The National Call with FCNL staff in Washington D.C. occurs on the first Wednesday each month at 5:00 p.m. followed by Whittier's monthly planning meeting. We meet in Fellowship Hall, or you can join by Zoom. And, on Sunday, March 15, the Whittier Advocacy Team and the Santa Monica / L.A. Teams are planning to meet in Whittier for a picnic in the park.

If you need more information or want to participate in democracy in a meaningful, supportive, and impactful way, contact Darrell Warren or the church office. We would love to have you join us.

Russ' Reflections

Organ and Hymns in February

Fat Tuesday (Mardi Gras) falls on Tuesday, February 17th this year, and I will be offering another Organ and Hymns evening to celebrate. Fat Tuesday gets its name from the practice of finishing up meat and fat the night before Ash Wednesday and the fasting that traditionally occurs during the season of Lent. In some places it is known as Carnival and some churches mark this with a pancake supper. I will be playing some pieces that reflect the spirit of the day, and we will sing some appropriate hymns as a hinge into the season before Easter.

While Friends do not observe the traditional Lenten disciplines, the occasion presents a fun opportunity to share a meal together and some conversation so we are planning to have a Pancake Supper at 6 pm, before the concert which begins at 7:30 pm. The suggested donation is \$10, Please let Russ or the Church Office know if you will attend so we can prepare enough food. Wear some colorful clothing, tell friends and family, and join us!

Music Sunday on March 1st

Our next Music Sunday will be on March 1st, when the Friends Choir will offer works by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847). "Hear My Prayer", an extended anthem for soprano solo and choir based on verses of Psalm 55, is a plea to God to hear our prayer as we experience disturbing and difficult times. "As the Hart [sic] Longs" is a setting of Psalm 42:1-2, expressing the longing of our soul for God. "Lord God of Abraham" and "Cast Thy Burden Upon the Lord" offer Elijah's prayer for the people (1 Kings 18:36-37) and the assurance that God will sustain us.

Organ Update

I am pleased that a couple of organ technicians (new to us) have completed repairs to our organ on some dead notes that have been out of service for months, even years. There are a couple more items to finish, and all will be working properly again soon. Thanks to Gabriel Montes and Matthew



Morrison of the Herman Organ Company for your diligence. Perhaps we will be able to work on some other projects this year, the 50th anniversary of our Harris Organ.

Welcome Even Johnson

Please welcome Even Johnson as our new alto section leader. Even steps into the position that was held by Nick Webster. Nick will continue to sing with the Friends Choir as a tenor voice.

Red Cross Blood Drive

On Friday, February 27, Whittier Friends School is hosting a Red Cross blood drive in Fellowship Hall from 11 am to 5 pm. Go to [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org) and enter WhittierFriends to schedule an appointment, or contact the Whittier Friends School office. As an added bonus, the Red Cross is offering a \$20 e-gift card to any merchant of your choice for all who donate so spread the word. Give from the heart; donate blood to help save lives!

A Night to Shine

The Mission Collaborative congregations are again invited to participate in "Night to Shine" on Friday February 13th at Whittier Area Community Church from 4-9 pm. This event offers a prom-like event for teens and young adults with special needs. Last year, La Mirada UMC provided entertainment for the respite room where caregivers had an evening of rest and relaxation. The program was mostly music last year, but this year the format has been expanded to more of an open-ended variety show. If you are available to sing, play an instrument, read poetry, tell a story, tell jokes, dance, or even juggle, let the church office know and mark your calendar to support this event.

Recording Clerk Needed for Monthly Meeting

Monthly Meeting is currently in need of a recording clerk. The duties involve taking minutes at Monthly Meeting (which meets the second Sunday of each month at 1:15 pm), transcribing, and distributing them in a timely manner. If you are interested or would consider sharing the job, or simply want more information, please let Elisabeth Elliot or the church office know.



News from Whittier Friends School



Whittier Friends School had an exciting visit to the Discovery Cube on January 12, (our traditional "back to school field trip" which was pushed back a week). At this interactive children's museum, we had 56 people from our community attend!

This included 24 students and 30 parents or grandparents, plus two teachers. Some of the more popular exhibits were the "Shake Shack" that felt like an earthquake and the car racetrack where kids could build their own pinewood derby-style car and race each other. "I really liked the trip because I got to hang out with my friend and have fun the whole day," said one student, 12 years old. "I would go there again," said another student, 9 years old.

January has also been a special month for WFS because of another guest speaker. Gerald "Mr.B" "Rocketman" Blackburn, an engineer who was in the field for 50 years, came to



share some of his favorite stories with our preschool and elementary children. One of the children's favorites was *The Stuff of Stars* by Marion Dane Bauer. The book puts into perspective that each individual is one tiny part of the cosmos, and that we are made of the same material as stars. Mr. B was a patient, engaging story-teller and connected with all of our students. For more information on Mr. Blackburn, go to blackbga.wixsite.com/speaker

Coming up this month on Friday, February 27, from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm, WFS is hosting a Red Cross Blood Drive in First Friends Church's Fellowship Hall. If you are available and physically able, consider donating blood! Donors will be given snacks (tempting?) and an amazing gift card (extra tempting!). If you have not signed up yet, and would like more information, you can email Cassie at Cassie.wfs@gmail.com or scan the QR code below or go to redcrossblood.org/give.html/drive-results?zipSponsor=WhittierFriends to schedule your time. If you're not physically able



to donate, but would like to volunteer for the day to greet people and help with odd jobs, they would appreciate the help.

And as always, you can follow Whittier Friends

School's adventures on Facebook at:

facebook.com/whittierfriendsschool/

and on Instagram at:

instagram.com/whittierfriendsschool/

-Cassie Caringella



Kathy Marin Shares Her Silk Road Adventures at January AFFN



This past October, Kathy Marin had the opportunity to spend a month in Central Asia with her favorite travel company, Overseas Adventures (OA). She

said she has always been fascinated with this area which is home to part of the ancient Silk Road. At the January All Friends Fellowship Night, she shared her photos and observations with us.

We probably all remember from history class that the Silk Road was an important trade route named after the unique, colorful, and highly sought-after textiles that travelled from China to the West. Rather than a single road, however, it was actually a unified trade network connecting ancient China with Europe which was widely used from the first through the 15th century. Besides the exchange of goods, it facilitated the diffusion of cultures, religions, and innovations, not only through Europe and China, but also India, Ancient Persia, and Egypt. Kathy's tour focused on three modern-day countries in the heart of Silk Road country: Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kurdistan.

Tajikistan is a mountainous, landlocked country rich in Persian-influenced culture with unique music, crafts, and food, that attracts tourists for its stunning landscapes, ancient history, and vibrant bazaars. Free of Soviet control since the 1990s, its current president has brought stability to the country, and despite his strict authoritarian rule, is highly revered. While there, Kathy visited a mosque that holds 100,000 worshippers, the Museum of Antiquities, and a palace with intricate gold leaf and elaborate tile and wood work. She noted that the colorful mosaic displays stick to abstract, intricate geometric designs rather than scenes with humans

or animals in compliance with Islamic tradition.

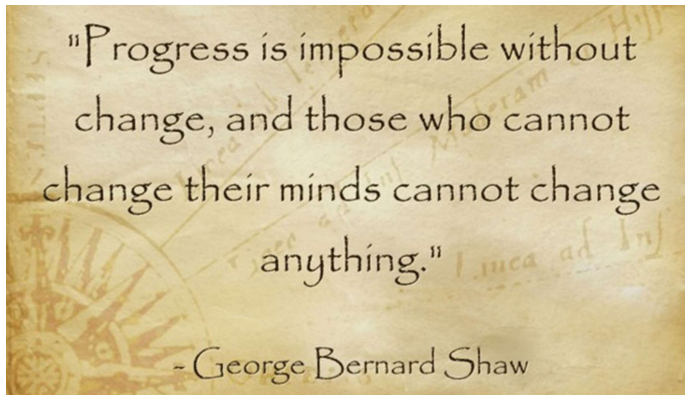
Her week-long stay also included a time in the populous capital city of Dunshanbe with its many monuments, parks, and murals. Additionally, her group travelled the narrow, treacherous Palmyra Highway, in the Pamir Mountains - known as the "Roof of the World" - where they met with master mosaic and woodwork craftsmen.

Her next two weeks were spent primarily in Ubekestan, the most populous country in Central Asia, rich in natural gas and minerals. Its bustling capital boasts universities, modern buildings, and an Independence Square commemorating the end of Soviet occupation. Kathy described it as clean, safe, and culturally sophisticated. Her group visited mosques, a textile museum, an observatory, and a mausoleum. They had an opportunity to attend an opera as well as dine in the homes of local families. They also took a train to Bukhara, a historic cultural center and UNESCO World Heritage Site where the group shopped at a bazaar, visited an ancient bath house, and picked cotton with a local grower. Other highlights included a visit to the ancient walled city of Khiva and the barren salt flats of the Independent Republic of Karakalpakstan, an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan.

Kathy's final destination of the tour was Kurdistan, a mostly mountainous region where modern-day Kurds live in yurts and herd sheep and goats. There, the group attended events at the annual Nomad Games, including rabbit hunting with eagles (no animals were harmed), a horsemanship demonstration, horse wrestling (no weapons involved), and polo. Other activities included biking, learning about felt making, and visiting a Muslim grave site and a rock garden with pictographs and 1,000 year-old carved statues. Kathy says, this country was her favorite citing their culture of hospitality and emphasis on democracy and family values.

Be sure to join us for the next AFFN on Feb. 11, at 6 pm, when Deanna Woirhaye will present travel photos as well. And if you have a hobby, a trip, or any special interest that you would be willing to share, (or know someone), we are setting up the schedule for fall and would love to have you. Let the office know, or contact Candice Ryder.

Michael Sherman's Message of Trust and Growth



What does it mean to sink into the light and power of Christ Jesus? Michael Sherman, Coordinator for North American and Caribbean Ministries for Friends United Meeting, posed this query when he brought the message in Meeting for Worship on Jan. 11. With quotes from the book, *Art and Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking*, by David Bayles and Ted Orland, and photos of his own unique creations from natural wood, his message used artmaking as a metaphor for living our lives.

Life, like creating art, takes courage. Trusting in God can feel like taking a chance, a risk. But Proverbs 3:5-6 is a call to put our ultimate trust in God: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, In all ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths." Living with complete trust in God does take patience, acceptance, and courage, but practicing it leads us out of fear and anxiety to a place of inner peace.

We are reminded that, when things don't work out as we planned, we have an opportunity to learn. Each of us has our own understanding of reality and how things should be, based on our environment and experiences. It is human nature to want to hold on to our understandings, but Isaiah 55:8 reminds us that our knowledge and certainties do not transcend the ways of God. "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord." As humans, we can't always see the "big picture."

Living our lives is actually a creative process in

itself, whether through making connections, maintaining relationships, caring for others, or simply learning to accept ourselves. "Creativity belongs to the artist in each of us. To create means to relate. The root meaning of the word art is 'to fit together,' and we do this every day." (Sister Corita Kent). God loves us as we are. and wants us to use our gifts. We are to listen to the voice of the Spirit, ground ourselves in God's word, and act on it.

As in art, so in life, there is always a gap between intention and delivery. We must "learn to work on our work." Michael says, "The lessons we are meant to learn are in our challenges, . . . the seeds of our next work are in the imperfections of our current work." Drawing attention to his own creations in wood, he reflects, "Imperfections make it beautiful."

In our lives, each new interaction gives us a chance for change, for improvement. The value of being in a relationship, whether with family, friends, community, or God, is in the process. We cannot stay "fixed" and still be free. The artist has a choice to hold back on creativity or embrace it, to be lazy or commit. Like the artist, we have an infinite number of choices daily on this journey in life. We must ask ourselves, do we choose certainty or uncertainty? Do we hold back or commit? How are we called to create?

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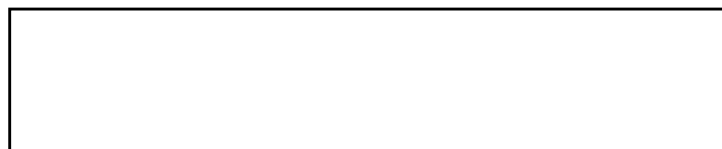
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Candice Ryder and Mel Sturr, Editors
Loletta Barrett, Pastor
Russell Litchfield, Dir of Music Ministries and
Organist
Lorenzo Mora, Custodian
Telephone 562-698-9805

www.firstfriendswhittier.org

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



Danielle Bald	Melissa Sue Kinnaman
Ward Bates	Mary Marshburn
Cory Benjamin	Margarita Ryder
Crystal Cush-Weitkamp	Laura Torres
Keri Cush-Livingston	Elyse Woirhaye
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Vikki Kendrick	Karlene Wright

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!



**Mark you calendars for this
month's All Friends Fellowship
Night (AFFN) - Feb. 11th.**

A potluck dinner at 6 pm will be followed by a presentation from our very own, Deanna Woirhaye. Please join us and invite your friends and family for an evening of food and fellowship. Bring a main dish, side dish, salad, or dessert to share and your own plates and utensils. We look forward to seeing you then!