

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

September 2026

Summer With Friends



Although the lazy days of summer are about to fade into fall, First Friends was anything but lazy this past summer. Summer Worship in Fellowship Hall began in July with meeting members bringing messages

while Loletta finished up her sabbatical. We were also blessed to have Friends United Meeting staff members Kelly Kellum, General Secretary, and Michael Sherman, North American and Caribbean Ministries Coordinator, bring messages on Zoom about encouraging others in love and creating relationships with a pure heart.

We enjoyed a couple of in-person visits as well. Quaker author J. Brent Bill came to Whittier and spent time with the Sunday Morning Adult Study Group to talk about the inspiration for his books, two of which the group have been discussing, *Life Lessons from a Bad Quaker* and *Holy Silence*. Later, in Meeting for Worship, he spoke about spiritual silence as renewal. We were also visited by Emma Condori-Mamami, a Bolivian Friend, whose message in Meeting for Worship encouraged us to “allow the love of God to work through us to help the stranger, the one in need.” After worship, Friends gathered for a luncheon where Emma



shared about her work with young adult Friends from the Friends International Bilingual Center in La Paz whose Food Security Project helps Indigenous communities in the highlands with food and seeds when their crops fail due to the effects of global warming such as drought, frost, and floods. (You can read more about this in the April 2025 issue of Friends Journal: [An Experience of Love](#))

Another memorable Meeting for Worship was Heritage Sunday on August 9, when several members in their tenth decade of life (or close to it) were honored and celebrated. Each had been interviewed and allowed us to share a glimpse into their lives and service with First Friends Church.



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Friendly Fare by Lea Wright

Dear Friends, It's been a very hot summer. At this time, all I can say is that It has been very hot: 90 degrees and more all summer, with a couple of 87 degree days (and a couple of 100+ last week!)

Friends Celebrate: In July we celebrated **Elinore Petoletti's** 98th birthday. Here she is with 3 of her great-grandkids,

Landon, Avalon & Hudson.

Friends About Town: **Loletta Barrett** and **Francoise Dutil** attended and supported the 8TPS concert of Nick Webster Salsman at the Los Angeles LGBT center in August where original works of transgender artists were featured.

Friends Visit: Whittier College's new Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty, **Keith Dunn**, attended FF Meeting for Worship on August 23.

School and Work News: We are so excited for **Dane**



Perczak as he started his new job at Biola University to become a Communications and Emergency Response Coordinator. This job will allow him to be much closer to home, saving a two-hour commute. **Jasmine Sturr**, was honored by The Oley Foundation with the

2026 Enteral Feeding HERO of the Year Award. Congratulations, Jasmine!

Friends Travel: **Judy Browning** and her friend, **Marilyn Neece**, spent the first two weeks of June in London. The trip was mainly to visit an old friend and his family, but they did see a few sights. They also got to spend some time with **Emlyn Torres**, who met them at the airport and got them settled



into their hotel before sharing a Sunday pot roast dinner at the neighborhood pub. Emyln also spent most of one day showing them around Kew Gardens and later using her computer skills and knowledge of train schedules (and bargains) to set up trips to the historic market town of Leighton Buzzard, as well as Cambridge, and Bath. **Bob & Lou Secord** did much sightseeing over the summer, including seeing 7 out of 9 grandkids. Highlights included a wedding, anniversary, and graduation, oh my! **Loletta Barrett** traveled to Scotland, England, and more. I sense an AFFN coming soon.

JoNita Beede and her brother **Norm** took a little roadtrip to visit friends up in Flagstaff, Arizona. The



Caringella

Family (Cassie, Steven, and kids Landon, Avalon, and Hudson) enjoyed their trip to visit family in Springfield, Ohio. Major highlights included staying in Aunt Debbie and Uncle Brent Goode's Bed and Breakfast, The Colonial Manor, and enjoying Aunt Debbie's fantastic breakfasts.

Landon especially enjoyed helping her in the kitchen to cook an authentic Italian feast. There was also lots of "cousin time" with Steven's cousin's 5 kids, with board games, yard sale shopping, and



visiting 12 ice cream shops in one day! Steven & Cassie Caringella also enjoyed traveling to Utah for Steven's cousin's wedding. While in Utah, they made sure to stop at Promontory Point to see Golden Spike Historical Park (where the east and

Friendly Fare continued on page 3

Loletta's Lines

Seasons come and go and things change, but Spirit is present loving and luring us into relationship. It is an amazing blessing that God yearns to be our Companion in joy, adventure, challenge and sorrow. Scripture tells us we are always



in the Presence. Walking in the Light and shining our Light, we have guidance, reassurance, rest, joy, courage, comfort, strength, and peace in every season.

Now as autumn rushes toward us, I want to take time to remember and celebrate what the summer brought. While I was on sabbatical traveling, doing "honey-do projects," and resting, the Friends were busy learning, growing, serving, and fellowshiping. We will be reflecting on what brought us rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation at our All Friends retreat October 9-11. Hopefully you can join us!

In the meantime, I feel the excitement and the busy-ness from the things of the fall. Friends finishing up summer vacations and picnics, and students, teachers, and staff returning to school. We look forward to our choir returning and to moving back to the meetinghouse. We are welcoming new facility partners, and planning our retreat, World Quaker Day, the Peace Walk, and events for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Busy fun!

But let us stop, breathe and listen. What is Spirit saying? Where do you see God's Presence? As a Friend and I recently reflected, if we struggle to make space in our schedule for God and don't have time for reflection on what is Truly Important, we probably are busy doing things that are not Significant. Stop, breathe and listen. Wherever we are, whatever time we are in, The Companion is here.



All Church Retreat

It's not too late to sign up for the All Church Retreat at the Dana Point Marina Inn, October 9 to 11. This will be an important time for fellowship, community building, and reflection, and all are encouraged to attend. Partial funding has been provided by the grant that helped fund Loletta's sabbatical (the total cost for the weekend per participant is only \$95 - double occupancy), and further financial support is available for individuals. Carpooling can also be arranged. So, if you haven't already signed up, contact the church office at (562)698-9805 or email at firstfriendswhittier@verizon.net to reserve your spot now.

Friendly Fare continued from page 2

west transcontinental railroads met up), and they saw Wizard of Oz at the Sphere in Las Vegas. While they did all that, Landon, Avalon, and Hudson enjoyed almost a week of overnights and fun activities with grandpa **Dan** & grandma **Lea Wright**.

Friends Remember: This summer we received the sad news that **Audine (Coffin) Votaw** passed away. We continue our prayers for her sister, **Carrin Bouchard**, and Audine's kids **Christopher** and **Stephanie (Votaw) Murillo**.

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!

Russ' Reflections

Friends Choir

Do you like to sing and want to contribute to the life of your meeting? Join the Friends Choir!

We will begin rehearsals on Sunday, September 6th, at 9 am in the Music Room. Initially, we will prepare music for our September 27th fun(d)raiser (more below), our first Sunday back in the Meeting House on September 20th, and Music Sunday on November 1st, when we will commemorate and re-dedicate our Harris Organ after fifty years of service. Our regular pattern is to rehearse from 9 to 10:40 am, starting in the Music Room and moving to the Meeting House for that week's music. We take a break until 11 am, when we sing during Meeting for Worship. It is about a three hour per week commitment that enhances our worship together. Please email Russ Litchfield musicffc@verizon.net if you are interested so materials may be prepared.



Tiki Time Fun(d)raiser

In order to raise some funds for our Music Ministry, the Friends Choir will raise some FUN at a fun(d)raiser lunch on Sunday, September 27, starting at 12:42 pm (rise of meeting). Our theme will be Tiki Time, and we will provide a tropical lunch amidst palms, birds, and faces, followed by an entertainment consisting of island-ic music. Suggested donation will be \$25 per adult, \$15 per youth/child. Please look for a sign-up sheet or link to an online RSVP to indicate you will attend. This is important so we have sufficient food for those attending (Mindy Van Dorn and others will prepare a tasty, tropical lunch). Wear a Hawaiian shirt or other colorful clothes, and have fun with us to support our Music Ministry!

Hymnal Cart

You may have noticed a rolling cart containing copies of our hymnal, *The Worshiping Church*, and a supplement book, *With One Voice*. There are a few pew Bibles there, too. Though we are providing the words to the hymns for worship in the bulletin (primarily for those attending online), if you would

like to see musical notes, please pick up a copy of the hymnals on your way into Meeting for Worship, and return them to the cart at the end of meeting. We will try to sing from only one book most Sundays, and the bulletin will indicate what is needed that Sunday. *With One Voice* (blue cover) contains many of the more contemporary songs we have been using in recent years and, due to a generous donation of additional copies by Woven in Faith, we have ample copies for those attending worship in person.

Make a joyful noise and sing unto the Lord a new song, for God has done marvelous things!

Can't wait to see and hear you in church!

Summer With Friends continued from page 1



Music Director, Russ Litchfield, offered a series of organ concerts on Tuesday evenings in July, and Friends gathered on Wednesday evenings in July and August for picnics at Michigan Park. Several Friends also joined two Mission Collaborative

Events, "Pride and Purpose" on June 26, at La Mirada United Methodist Church and "Christmas in July" on July 26, at East Whittier United Methodist Church. Additionally, Friends celebrated with the Harmony Center for Spiritual Living on August 7, for the dedication of their new meeting and office space on the upper floor of our Christian Education Building.

Upcoming events include return to worship in the Meeting House on September 20, the Choir Fundraiser, "Tiki Time," on September 27, after worship, and the World Quaker Day Peace Walk, at 3 pm on October 4. (Mark your calendar now!) And, it is not too late to sign up for the All Church Retreat, October 9, 10, & 11 in Dana Point. (financial aid and carpooling are available - contact the church office to reserve your spot!)



News from Whittier Friends School

Whittier Friends School has hit the ground running, starting our 53rd year with our largest Elementary Class in over 20 years! We are excited to have a variety of unique learning opportunities for our children ranging in ages from three to 13 years old, including French instruction, a Dance



Class elective, and even a skills-bridge group for children moving into Kindergarten. Our individualized curriculum offers chances for each child to learn and thrive at their

unique pace, while also working on collaborative and leadership skills. Learning themes this year include American History, with an emphasis on the truly multicultural aspect of our country. Stay tuned this year to read about the many field trips we will take that will help us emphasize the vitality of diversity in our country - whether it's diversity of language, culture, religion, gender, or even ability! You might even see an invitation to join us in the weekly First Friends Church e-news newsletter.

Before returning to classes - elementary on August 26 and preschool on September 1 - we had 4 days of parent volunteers helping spruce up our campus, including 40 bags of new play sand - that's 2,000 pounds of sand! - and a sorely needed paint job in our preschool room, which has been serving children for over 20 years and was ready for a new wall color. The total number of volunteers working on our campus for new school year beautification was 58, including ten that helped paint our preschool classroom. It is a truly magical experience to see the camaraderie build when people work together to help their children's school.

Summer never slowed down at Whittier Friends School with 6 weeks of Elementary Enrichment.



Participants ranged in age from four years to 13 years old, with as many as 26 kids in two classrooms (not including the preschool class, which was also in full-swing). Some enjoyable themes this year were "Robots" and "Camp Greece and Rome". Along with some brushing up on math and reading skills, kids learned new skills in computer coding and got exposed to the story of the Odyssey through the music of Jorge Rivera-Herrans (*EPIC: the Musical*).

Our school continues to rely on fundraising to support our budget. During the next few weeks, invitations will go out to support our Annual Giving Campaign. Please consider adding us to your regular giving. There are other ways you can support us, as well. Scrip virtual gift cards can be purchased anytime. Email Lea at lea.wfs@gmail.com for information on scrip. These are gift cards where you receive the face value that you pay for, while the company donates a portion of your purchase to us. It is a great way to budget your monthly spending or purchase gifts and gift cards. You can also buy scrip and then donate it to our school to help with classroom expenses. We especially appreciate amazon.com and Petco scrip. Visit our Amazon wishlist at amzn.to/2QK8Yp8, or, if you prefer not to shop at Amazon, looking at our wishlist can give you ideas for the types of items we can use.

We thank our First Friends Church community for your ceaseless support, and we look forward to sharing with you all of the exciting things we do this year. Remember to refer us to local families seeking a school that promotes our Quaker values and unique individualized learning model.

-Cassie Caringella

Friendly Neighbors Peace Camp

"All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir," and also a place at Friendly Neighbors' Peace Camp at First Friends Church! This past July, we had a fantastic group of 21 children taking part: 14 kids ranging from 1st grade to 5th grade, 6 middle school CITs (Counselors in Training), plus one high school helper. Together, they explored the theme "Unity in Diversity," with stories, crafts, cooking, games, and, of course, songs, ("All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir" was a favorite song of the campers this summer).

Each of the five days at Peace Camp highlighted one of the many types of diversity. For example, diversity of age was experienced when the children walked over to Brookdale to sing songs to the residents of the retirement community. Diversity of ability came up when the children took turns using different kinds of mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, walkers, and crutches. Even diversity of access to education came up, when the children learned about First Friends' FUM Summer Mission Project to support Girl-Child Education and

Shepherd Boy Scholarships in the Samburu and Turkana regions of northern Kenya. Campers also got to experience the diversity of culture and food that day, when they got to cook and taste the traditional Kenyan food, *ugali*. There was even enough *ugali* left to share with the Picnics in the Park group at Michigan Park that week!

Most important of all, friendships were forged and deepened between the youth. Though this was the first year for many of the young people, it truly feels like it will not be the last!

Notably, of the 21 kids who attended over the course of the week, only FIVE are actually children of our Meeting. It is truly an honor to share our Quaker values and missions with the children of the Whittier community. A big thank you goes to the adults involved who supported this year's Peace Camp Director, Cassie Caringella, in this important First Friends Church ministry: Candice Ryder, Russ Litchfield, Aaron Espinosa, Marilyn Fant, Elisabeth Elliot, Tammy Van Dorn, Lea Wright, and others! And thank you to our entire First Friends faith community for your ongoing support of this ministry through the years.



Summer Mission Project Supports Education in Kenya

**Friends
United
Meeting**



Each year, the Christian Education and Outreach Committee (CEO) chooses one of Friends United Meeting's (FUM)

field mission projects for First Friends to support. This year, they were led to uplift the Girl-Child Education and the Shepherd Boy Scholarship Missions, two life-changing programs that help children escape poverty, banditry, early marriage, and lack of schooling in Kenya.

In the North Rift Region of Kenya, severe poverty, water scarcity, climate change, and systemic resource deficits force young people to take on adult burdens at an early age, routinely depriving them of an education. Girls spend their days fetching water, cooking, cleaning, and caring for siblings, which leaves them illiterate and unable to pursue better opportunities despite government mandates supporting universal schooling.

Meanwhile, boys are often pulled away from school to herd livestock or assist with basic family survival amid ongoing localized conflicts over land and resources. Lacking educational access and stability, boys between the ages of 12 and 25 become especially vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups, which promise food, money, or protection but ultimately drag

them into cycles of violence and danger.

While this is heartbreaking, there is hope! To support children facing conflict and hardship, dedicated scholarship programs have been



established to provide comprehensive assistance, including school fees, uniforms, supplies, and mentorship rooted in values of peace and faith. In addition to general learning, young men receive practical training in fields like mechanics, farming, and technology to earn a safe living. By investing in children through education, these programs plant the seeds for self-sufficiency, hope, and lasting community transformation.

Educating children strengthens entire communities by fostering long-term development, stability, and peace. When girls attend school, they grow into women who can support their families, maintain health, and uplift their villages. Similarly, education provides boys with critical thinking, vocational skills, and peaceful conflict resolution, offering them constructive alternatives to violence. Beyond basic literacy, schooling helps both girls and boys discover their talents, build cross-community friendships, and gain the confidence needed to become effective future leaders.

The goal for this year's Summer Mission project at First Friends Church is to raise \$1,000 to help support these students. And if all that wasn't enough to inspire you, we have created a "game" to remind you of the blessings of our own education and those who supported us on our journey. You are encouraged to cross off a square or two each week (or all at once!) and bring donations in person to church or donate via Zelle on our website. (be sure to notate "Summer Mission Project.") Pick up a copy at church or [click here for a copy: FUM Summer Mission Project](#)



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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!



**All Friends Fellowship Night
(AFFN)**

September 9th at 6:00 pm

With the close of Summer Picnics,
we get to gather for AFFN again! The
presenter will be our friend, Becky
Overmyer-Velazquez, Coordinator
of the Clean Air Coalition speaking
about their work for environmental
justice on projects happening in our
area.

Bring a dish to share at the
potluck and come to enjoy a nice
evening of community and learning!