

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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Friends Connected in Faith and Service



September was a busy month at First Friends. Lee Riley brought the message remotely in Meeting for Worship on September 6, based on Philippians 1:21, "To live is Christ, to die is gain." He reminded us that living gives us the opportunity to serve God, and dying brings us into God's presence. Lee grew up on the grounds of the Meeting and now resides in South Carolina. It was a blessing to have him back with us.

On September 20, we returned to the Meeting House following summer worship in Fellowship Hall. This day also marked the

return of the First Friends Choir season with the added richness of their voices and musical gifts in worship. The following Sunday, a "Tiki" themed choir fun(d)raiser was held in the afternoon, complete with Polynesian inspired food, decorations, and, of course, music.

All Friends Fellowship Nights (AFFN) also resumed in September with a presentation by Rebecca Overmyer-Velazquez of the Clean Air Coalition of North Whittier and Avocado Heights. She spoke about how their mobilization of community volunteers to gather information in their neighborhoods near a secondary lead smelting plant revealed gaps in government regulations. This has led to an accumulation of different types of environmental pollution (air, water, soils) with profound effects for the surrounding areas.

Our Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) Advocacy Group has been hard at work this month. In addition to joining with the other advocacy groups nationwide for their regularly scheduled call with the national staff in Washington D.C., they joined the California FCNL Advocacy group on a call with staff from Senator Adam Schiff's office to

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Friendly Fare by Lea Wright

Dear Friends, You know, I always recognize, and even sort of, celebrate Summer Solstice and Winter Solstice, but I don't usually pay much attention to Autumn or Spring Equinox. This year I am totally hoping that the Autumn Equinox means that summer is over, and hopefully cooler weather is on its way.

Friends Travel and Celebrate: Mel & Sharon Sturr, and the rest of the family, **Jasmine &**



Jenna, traveled to Maryland for **Bella's** wedding to **Brandon Waterbury.** "It was an amazing day that just couldn't have been more

perfect!!" In

September, **Candice & Bill Ryder** visited Bill's family in Iowa and Illinois where they attended their

granddaughter's wedding reception.

The newlyweds were married in June in an outdoor ceremony in Colorado which Candice and Bill



also attended. They enjoyed the local sights as well as spending time with family on both trips.

Friends About Town: Kudos to **Tom Van Dorn** as he has reached another amazing milestone with the American Red Cross. Last month Tom donated his 1600th unit of platelets passing the 201 gallon mark. He is 6th in the nation

among current donors and continues to donate regularly. Lots of news from the **Woirhaye** family. Deanna recently was deeply honored to learn that 3 of her photo submissions at the "Here... Kitty Kitty" Cat Themed Art Show at the Whittier Art Gallery earned 1st, 3rd, and Honorable Mention. She could not have imagined all those awards at once.

School and Work News: More news from the **Woirhaye** children: **Cedric** graduated in August with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Environmental Science with a minor in Agribusiness from Cal Poly Pomona. **Anathea** has completed her studies at Oxford University in England earning her Master's of Science degree in Visual Material and Museum Anthropology. The family will travel back to Oxford next May to attend her graduation ceremony. In the meantime, **Elyse** is back in the beautiful Redwood forest continuing their education at Cal Poly Humboldt toward a degree in Native American Studies.

Friends Remember: Wanda Margaret (Root) Caldwell passed away in April 2026, and her husband, **Thomas**, recently shared information about their wedding. They were the first couple to be married in the newly built Whittier College chapel back in August 1961. **Ezra Ellis**, then minister of First Friends Church, officiated. Tom sent a collection of ink drawings of First Friends Church and other buildings in Whittier by **Fred Bewley**. Tom was sure that Friends would appreciate receiving them from Wanda and her mother, **Margaret Lucretia (Hadley) Root.**

Friends Sharing News: I know there is more news waiting to be shared. 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

The leaves are falling from the trees in the front yard. I fear it is more from the heat than the autumnal waning hours of sunlight. But I am teased by (slightly) cooler weather implying fall might be around the corner. It is a busy season for God's Creation, working to complete the harvest of blossoming and growth. It is a time of abundance, not a time for slowing down or resting.

So, too, is it a busy time for our meeting and our lives. This month our meeting has World Quaker Day, our Peace Walk, our retreat, AFFN, Whittier Friends School Sunday, Batch Cooking, a Mission Collaborative movie event, and is hosting concerts. Plus all our usual committee work and planning for November and December. Our lives are filled with school events, concerts and plays, family time, fall fun, and chores. Activities that create joy and a good exhaustion.

And there are also not-so-good things happening that we all need to attend to. It can be overwhelming to keep all the balls in the air. But if we just keep moving and looking forward, we miss the Light breaking into our lives today, the every moment of God's Presence, and the Spirit's loving assurance and support.

I am reminded of a song I learned in a meditation group. "Happiness is here and now, I have dropped my worries. Nowhere to go, nothing to do, no longer in a hurry. Happiness is here and now, I have dropped my worries. Somewhere to go, something to do, but I don't need to hurry."

Let us slow our hurry and take time to stop and breathe in the fresh air of Presence. Let it flow from the top of our heads to the tip of our toes, swirling love throughout our being. Then let it permeate our thoughts, words, and actions, bringing us peace and emanating outward to all that surrounds us. Walking the Path of the One who came before us, "all is well and all things shall be well" with God.



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continue advocating for accountability in the U.S. government. They also had a table at the Whittier Pride Festival at Whittier College on September 26, continuing their work encouraging people to contact their representatives to make their voices heard.



This year's Summer Mission Project ended by exceeding our initial goal of \$1000 with a total of over \$2000 raised. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our newest campus partner, Harmony Center for Spiritual Living, which generously donated \$500 to the project, as well as each and every supporter. Every amount counts! All proceeds will go to the Girl Child Education Fund and Shepherd Boys Scholarship through Friends United Meeting to provide safe access to school, mentorship, and hope for vulnerable children in Kenya.

October holds much in store for us as well. World Quaker Day is Sunday, October 4, and Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) is hosting an online worldwide Meeting for Worship across international time zones. The Section of the Americas worship will be from 4 am to 10 am Pacific Daylight Time, and First Friends will be joining the session as a





News from Whittier Friends School

Whittier Friends School is back at it for the start of our 52nd school year. This year we are excited to study where we come from. Since we started with learning how Whittier was founded, a group of students visited the Whittier Museum on September 8, where they learned about what life was like during those years. It was really interesting to see the large photographs of early Whittier. Cassie's class is learning about the difference between primary and secondary sources this year, so those students especially enjoyed seeing the interior of the original Bailey House with all the old "primary source" artifacts, as well as the oil pump model. The children also loved having the opportunity to climb into the full-size trolley car, and they all got to take turns ringing the bell!

Our Grand-Pals Day theme this year was "Hand in Hand Through Time," and children got to have a guest (grandparent or older relative) shadow them at school, take part in activities, and then have lunch together - which was catered by one of our school families. Upper elementary students got to partner up with their Grand-Pal for the "Slang Game" where teams had to guess the meaning of current

and historical slang terms, such as "far out," "gag me with a spoon," "chopped," and the infamous "6-7." Lower elementary students played board games with their guests,



and preschool children made a special art project. The next step will be the children mailing thank you cards to their guests, including a picture from the day.

Back to School Sunday, also known as Whittier Friends School Sunday, will occur on Sunday, October 18. School Director and upper elementary teacher Cassie Caringella will give a message in conjunction with the students entitled "Body, Mind, and Spirit." The children will also be singing and sharing meaningful quotes. After Meeting for Worship, an Open House will be held on our school campus. Come see our classrooms!

We thank our First Friends Community for keeping us in your hearts. We are always inspired by our Quaker roots, and we are proud to be your school for over 50 years now!

For enrollment information, send an email to cassie.wfs@gmail.com. We also appreciate financial support in the form of checks mailed to Whittier Friends School or First Friends Church (memo line: Whittier Friends School). We also can accept donations through Zelle at finance@whittierfriendsschool.org. Or you can visit our school's Amazon Wishlist at <https://amzn.to/2QK8Yp8>



Russ' Reflections

Tongo! Thank you to those who were able to attend our Friends Choir TIKI TIME Fun(d)raiser! We had a tasty lunch (thank you, Mindy!) and a lot of fun. We appreciate your support! Let's all sing like the birdies sing: tweet, tweet!

It is great to have the Friends Choir back from our summer hiatus and to be in the Meeting House again. We have a new alto, Brigitta Weger, who is not new to music in Whittier; she is president of New Century Singers and sings in Chorale Bel Canto. Be sure to say hello and welcome to her! We have two Music Sundays coming up, on November 1st and on December 20th. The Friends Choir is now twelve strong. There is room for more singers, especially basses, if you feel the call to sing with us!

Our Harris Organ was dedicated on October 31, 1976, in Meeting for Worship. On November 1, we will commemorate its 50 years of service and will offer some of the music that was offered at the dedication, particularly "Rejoice In the Lamb" by Benjamin Britten. The choir will also sing "Justorum animae" (The souls of the righteous) by C.V. Stanford, and we will remember our departed from the past year. We will offer some prayers and hymns to re-dedicate the organ for the future and some festive organ music to send us out.

The text of "Rejoice In the Lamb" comes from a long poem, "Jubilate Agno," by English poet, Christopher Smart (1722-1771), who was deeply religious, but of a strange and unbalanced mind. The poem was written when Smart was in an asylum. The main theme is the worship of God, by all created beings and things, each in its own way, and reflects the personal experience of Christopher Smart.



Benjamin Britten wrote a spectacular musical setting using sections of Smart's poem for the 50th anniversary of a Northampton church in 1943. It is inventive in expressing praise from Old Testament figures, Smart's cat, a mouse, flowers, letters and language, and musical instruments. Hallelujah!

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group in the church library from 8 to 10 am. You are invited to join us there for all or part of that time. For more information on how to register to attend remotely, If you can't meet at First Friends in person, you can visit fwcc.world/event/worldquakerday2026/

This year's World Quaker Day theme is Let Peace Be Among Us with the supporting Bible passage of Hebrews 12:14, "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy." Elisabeth Elliot will bring the message in Meeting for Worship that morning. Later in the day, First Friends will host a Peace Walk from 3 to 5 pm. We will meet in Fellowship Hall, move to the Meeting House for inspiration and centering, then head out on a one-mile walk to Whittier City Hall and back. Friends, family, and community members are all invited to join us as we prayerfully focus on inner calm, compassion, and nonviolence, and offer a visible, shared reminder of goodwill in our community, our country, and the world.

And, don't forget our All Church Retreat, October 9 to 11, at the Dana Point Marina Inn. This will be a very special time to connect outside of worship and our "church work" to reflect on what brings us spiritual, emotional, and physical rest as well as restoration and rejuvenation. Please note: Meeting for Worship on Sunday, Oct. 11, will only be held at the retreat site (not in the Meeting House) with regular Zoom access as well.

Be sure to check the newsletter sent to your inbox each week for updates and other upcoming events.

Remembering Audine Coffin Votaw (1954 - 2026)

Audine EllaMae (Coffin) Votaw was born in



Whittier, California, in 1954, the third child of Joseph and E. Audine Coffin. She grew up in a loving home alongside her brother, Jerry Coffin, and her sisters, Janice Lindsay and Carrin Bouchard.



Throughout her childhood, the family faithfully attended Whittier First Friends. Her early years were filled with laughter, family adventures, church gatherings, and treasured memories—especially the journeys they took across the United States in the family's El Camino "slide-in" camper.

Audine married shortly after her high school graduation. Although the marriage did not last, she remained deeply grateful for its greatest blessings: her two beautiful children, Christopher L. Votaw and Stephanie Mae Murillo. Being an aunt to her nieces and nephews was also always a treasured part of her life.

Holidays brought all the family members especially close, attending the beloved "Coffin Christmas" at her parents' home in La Verne. It was a celebration she held dear to her heart.

Inspired by those loving family memories, Audine moved to La Verne with her children when they began high school. Their home was warm, lively, and inviting, with a constant

stream of friends stopping by, staying overnight, and sometimes even living with them. Chris and Stephanie's friends knew they could always count on Audine for a warm hug, a safe place to be themselves, and thoughtful advice whenever they needed it. They loved being in her home—even when being a guest came with a household chore or two!

For nearly 30 years, Audine served as a paraprofessional with Los Angeles County, providing classroom support to students with moderate to severe disabilities. Her compassionate heart found purpose in this work, and she took great joy in caring for and encouraging her students. Audine was a cherished friend to many and a steady source of compassion, understanding, and emotional support to all who knew her. She also loved crafting, and her family and friends are grateful to have the beautiful gifts she made by hand—lasting reminders of her creativity, generosity, and love.

Audine passed away on July 18, 2016 under hospice care with her children by her side. On Wednesday, July 15th the family gathered together around her to honor her life with us. We each shared a special memory, story, and laughter with her while enjoying her favorite ice cream – drumstick.

~Carrin Bouchard

September AFFN with Becky Overmyer-Velazquez

All Friends Fellowship Night returned from summer break on September 9, with a presentation from Becky Overmyer-Velazquez of the Clean Air Coalition of North Whittier and Avocado Heights (CAC). Her presentation, entitled "Ground Truthing for The People: A Proof of Concept for Environmental Regulation" focused on the CAC's efforts to involve their local community in gathering information about the cumulative effects of the various sources of local pollution in their neighborhoods.

The CAC grew out of collaborative efforts by community groups in North Whittier and Avocado Heights that were concerned about the impact that the Puente Hills Materials Recovery Facility (MRC) would have on the surrounding area in 2004. Over the years, this continuing work has helped to earn them recognition as trustworthy, dedicated advocates for community concerns.

Their current major campaign is focused on the regulation and expansion of the only lead-acid battery recycling facility west of the Rocky Mountains. Ecobat (formerly known as Quemetco) is located in the City of Industry. The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD), and the Water Board are tasked by law to work together to regulate Ecobat, which has a long history of permit violations. AQMD is currently processing Ecobat's application for expansion while the DTSC is processing a renewal of its hazardous waste permit - which does NOT mention their application with the DTSC. CAC's ultimate goal is denial of Ecobat's permit renewals.

In 2015, California Senate Bill 673 was passed requiring the DTSC to consider how multiple sources of pollution impact the health of environmentally overburdened or vulnerable communities, ensuring cumulative impacts are factored into hazardous waste decisions. Since then, implementation has faced significant delays

and ongoing scrutiny regarding cumulative impact evaluations.

A year ago CAC members wanted to see if it was possible to establish a reliable model for data collection of the cumulative effects of various sources of pollution in the communities near Ecobat using GIS software on their phones to map these sources. The area within a mile radius of the plant was divided into 10 zones, and community members trained in use of the data collection software were assigned to the zones. These volunteers conducted visual surveys looking for sources of air, water, light, heat, and sound pollution known as "stressors" (ie. manufacturing plants, auto mechanic shops, construction sites, railways, refineries) and "receptors" (gathering places such as hospitals, schools, churches, parks, restaurants, day care centers, libraries). Data was also collected on residents, workers, and the environment. The results of this comprehensive effort ultimately yielded a map which shows "hotspots" or concentrations of pollutants. It also shows that the average person in the area is exposed to between 137 and 104 chemicals - which we know have synergistic effects on the human nervous and respiratory systems. 99% of the area has some exposure to toxins, and not surprisingly, lower income and minority neighborhoods were the most impacted.

These results and the data collection method have been shared with DTSC to show that it is possible to scientifically evaluate cumulative effects of pollution. CAC also hopes to make this empowering process available to other vulnerable communities as they continue their advocacy efforts. For more information on the CAC, visit cleanaircoalition.org.



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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!

First Friends Church A Quaker Meeting
13205 Philadelphia Ave. Whittier, CA

PEACE WALK



October 4, 2026
3pm - 5pm

(Program and 1 mile walk)

Come walk with Quakers to promote inner
calm, compassion, and non-violence. A visible
shared reminder of goodwill, not a protest.