

A Profile of First Friends Church

*“A Christian people, called to listen, gathered to seek peace, and sent forth to serve.”
(First Friend’s mission statement)*

First Friends Church identifies itself as a Christian community. “Members describe a commitment to the Christian faith in a manner that draws the circle widely and seeks to include as many as possible.” (Jay Marshall, Dean of Earham School of Religion) The meeting is comfortable with questions and is encouraging of those who continue on their faith journey, wherever they are. We look for the light of God within all persons.

We are a diverse group of people in terms of spiritual perspective and theology, as well as age, education, material assets, interests and physical proximity to the meetinghouse, but we do not reflect the changing demographic of Whittier. We have experienced a decrease in membership over time and we struggle with learning how to be a small church when we have been a large church in the past. We rely on the earnings from our reserves to substantially supplement the annual meeting budget. We have an under-representation of 25-50 year olds and a significant number of our members live outside Whittier. We are more than anything, a warm, caring family, friendly and welcoming to newcomers in our midst.

We are in a continuing cycle of finding clearness of vision and purpose as a Quaker community. The meeting has spent considerable time and energy discerning its mission and purpose. Translating discernment into action has been elusive. We are hopeful for the future and yearn for change that will move us forward as people of God. We seek a servant leader who will work with us to discern and remain faithful to our vision and facilitate necessary change, while having sensitivity for shared ministry with leaders of the meeting.

First Friends Church is a member of the Western Association of the Religious Society of Friends (WARSF), which is a member of Friends United Meeting. First Friends participates in the ecumenical endeavors of our local community including Interfaith Council, Intercommunity Counseling Center and Interfaith Food Center. Through WARSF, we have representation in AFSC, FCNL, FUM, and FWCC. We also send a representative to Friends Committee on Legislation. Individual members participate in a prison ministry, the Whittier Peace and Justice Coalition, and local Great Decisions discussions.

We enjoy and appreciate fellowship through Bible studies, spiritual growth groups, a writing group, fellowship groups, youth groups, monthly dinners, special dinners and host musical events. We go on field trips, share the fruit of our gardens and enjoy one another’s vacation slides. We are a caring community, with an active prayer chain. Calls, cards, and care are never lacking when there is a need among our Friends family.

We are a people dedicated to Christian education, blessed with talented individuals who give of their time and energy in this endeavor. We offer classes for all ages.

In obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we work with others in the community to lend a hand to those less fortunate, feeding the hungry and housing the homeless. We attempt to give a modern voice to the traditional peace testimony and, as part of this effort, hold a “peace camp” each summer. Through our wider association in the Religious Society of Friends, our outreach extends around the world.

Worship is our most significant activity together. Our Meetings for Worship are varied, combining good preaching, inspiring music and widespread participation with traditional Quaker silent openness to the leading of the Spirit. Our music program is versatile and alive, with an adult choir and children’s program.

First Friends has an elementary school and pre-school, Whittier Friends School, on the property which provides quality education infused with Quaker principles. The pre-school is thriving, but the elementary school struggles to maintain its enrollment. Alumni of the school have gone on to higher education, done well, and have found ways to be of service in their various life pursuits.

The meetinghouse is located in the historic Uptown district. In the changing demographic of Whittier, there are many opportunities for ministry. First Friends fully owns wonderful facilities consisting of a spacious meetinghouse, a chapel, library, fellowship hall, other large meeting rooms, classrooms, offices, play yard, and parsonage. We also make our facilities available to 12 step groups, Boy Scouts and other organizations.