

# 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, 2025

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## Peace Camp Returns

For the first time since 2019, a week-long Peace Camp was offered this summer with the theme of "Peace is My Superpower." During the pandemic lockdown, Peace Camp was offered online enabling worldwide participants. From 2022 through 2024, we hosted "Peace Day Family Festival" on a Saturday which allowed all ages of children to visit our campus for a day of fun, peace informed activities. This past July, we were able to return to our full week Peace Camp in Fellowship Hall which allowed deeper connections and contemplations with thirteen elementary aged campers, four junior counselors, and five First Friends volunteers. Throughout the week we explored peace, kindness, friendship, making good choices, stewardship, patience, persistence, and acceptance.

Each day featured a peace-related "superpower" with supporting crafts, songs, games, stories, and activities. And on a few of the days, we welcomed special guests. Tuesday's theme of Making Good Choices was enhanced by a visit from the Whittier Police Department Community Relations officer. After speaking with the campers about resisting peer pressure and the importance of making good decisions, campers were delighted to experience sitting in the driver seat of her official police car. To accompany Wednesday's theme of caring and stewardship, campers were mesmerized by an hour-long pre-



sentation by The Reptile Zoo, Fountain Valley to learn about all sorts of reptiles and amphibians. They even got to safely examine (and touch if they desired) these interesting creatures. On Friday, local children's author, Rita Torres, appeared in costume as "Queen Bee" to read her book about how each bee has a role in the hive and the hive is a family that operates through cooperation. This was followed by our own beekeepers, the Woirhaye family, who brought bee keeping equipment and explained the workings and importance of raising and managing bees.

On Thursday, we took a walking field trip to visit our neighbors at Brookdale Senior Living Community to share our Peace Camp songs and hand-made tissue paper flowers. We performed our songs again on Friday afternoon for the parents.

## Friendly Fare by Lea Wright

**Dear Friends,** I don't know about you, but it's been a busy, fast summer full of traveling for many people and always family time. By the time you read this, it will be September, and everyone pretty much will have gone back to school.

### Friends Celebrate: Jenna & Jasmine Sturr



celebrated their 5th wedding anniversary and **Bella Sturr**, who is studying nursing in Baltimore, announced her engagement to Brandon Waterbury.

### Candice & Bill Ryder

celebrated their 25th

anniversary at Bolsa Chica Wetlands.

**Friends Visit (& travel):** **Cassie, Steven, Landon, Avalon,** and **Hudson Caringella** went to Ohio to visit Steven's Aunt & Uncle and a whole bunch of cousins. **Carrin & George Bouchard** and their kids and grandkids went on an Alaskan cruise together.

In June, siblings **Lyn Gruber** and her son, **Jeffrey** (who was visiting from Washington DC), **Tina & Jerry Post,** **Norm Beede** with **Marsha**



**Wright,** and **Jo Nita Beede** gathered at the family cottage in Laguna Beach, for some sweet time together and a delicious meal at the local Thai food restaurant. Cherished

moments.

**Friends About Town:** It's car season again. **Milton Wright** drove his 1921 Studebaker to a display of old cars at Oakmont. He and son, **Dan,** drove to Brea for the 4th of July Celebration, and most recently, Dan and Milt drove the 1914 Model T to a car show in La Habra. **Russ Litchfield** commissioned **Dan**

**Wright** to make a stained glass panel of his first car, a Citroen ID19. Here is the result, hanging in a window amidst the clutter of Russ' abode. Pretty



spectacular!

**School and Work News (& Travel):** Now's the time to say goodbye...**Elisabeth Elliot** retired from The Walt Disney Company. She sends all her love to the wonderful and courageous educators who've brought their students into her world, to most of her colleagues, past and present and most of all, to the students whose lives she's been able to touch. She figures in a 31-year career - that's over one million kids - and she sure hopes many of them carry the affectionate memory of a crazy, funny, and inspiring lady at Disneyland who shared their insane passion for the performing arts. **ABCDE Woirhaye** packed up the youngest Woirhaye, **Elyse** (aka Pigeon), and travelled nearly 700



miles one way to Cal Poly Humboldt to help them begin this new season of their life studying all things wildlife. **Cedric** starts back at Cal Poly Pomona soon, followed

by **Anathea** who is heading out in mid-September to get her Master's of Science Degree in Visual, Material and Museum Anthropology in Oxford, England.

**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](mailto:lealouw@gmail.com), or deliver to me at church on Sunday. See you next month!



## Loletta's Lines

There are so many things on our plates and in our news feeds. Finding time to stay informed and absorb it all is difficult. Finding the emotional space to process it can be even more challenging. Yet we know that as fellow travelers on the planet



with God's children and creation, being aware and being involved is important. After all, as I heard someone say today, "If we aren't here to work together or to make things better, what is the purpose?" Indeed, what is the purpose? For me, it boils down to learning to love God, love my neighbor, and love myself in better ways, in more moments, and deeper and deeper. And I always remind myself, my neighbor includes the people I don't like, all the creatures, and creation.

We can turn to our faith in the Divine to ground us when things are difficult and praise when things are going well. It is not that God's people haven't been here before. Look at the Hebrew Testament and you will find a history of ups and downs. The Psalms run from despair, desolation, and angry challenges of God, to thanksgiving and praise. For me, in difficult situations it is not God who is being tested or challenged. It is the faith, thoughts, words, and actions of the people. They knew what was right to do. They also knew life can throw challenges of weather, drought, illness, accidents, bad leaders, and violence. The Presence accompanied them in the past, abided with them in the present, and called them to faithfulness for the future.

Just like us. So what advice can we glean? From a Psalm, Proverbs and Isaiah: Listen for God's voice, and wait patiently for the leading of the Spirit. Do not fret over those who engage in evil schemes or appear to succeed in wickedness. Trust in God with your whole heart and not in your own power; give your whole life to God, and the Spirit will show you the path. Rejoice and

hope in the One who will renew your strength; you will soar on wings like eagles, run and not grow weary, walk and not be faint. And thanks be to God for the community we have in which to do it all together!

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## "A Taste of Belize"

As part of our ongoing effort to support the worldwide ministries of Friends United Meeting,



this year's fundraiser, "A Taste of Belize" (also known as The Summer Mission Project) continues

through the end of September. On Sunday, August 17, at Rise of Meeting, Friends sampled Belizean cuisine for the third

time this summer. August's appetizers included ceviche with chips and conch fritters, a very popular appetizer in Belize. The suggested donation of \$1.00 per snack goes toward our goal of donating \$1000 to support Belize Friends School's meal program that provides students with nutritious food that children need to help them focus on their learning throughout the day.

Friends also signed cards to send best wishes to FUM-Belize's Director, Oscar Mmbali, and his wife Miriam, (who also serves on Belize's FUM field staff.) Last March, the Mmbalis announced they will be retiring in January of 2026 in order to focus on their family's health.

Help us reach our goal! Look for the display table at the entrance to Meeting for Worship in Fellowship Hall where you can drop your donations. (or contribute by mail or online - be sure to designate for "Summer Mission Project").

## Russ's Reflections

"Sing a new song to the Lord! Sing to the Lord, all the world! Sing to the Lord, and praise him! Proclaim every day the good news that he has saved us. Proclaim his glory to the nations, his mighty deeds to all peoples" - Psalm 95:1-3.



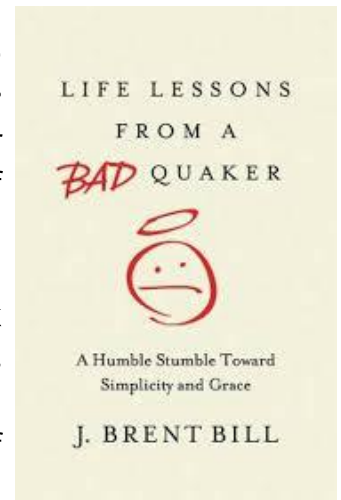
The year progresses, the seasons change, the great mandala turns, and we circle again into a familiar pattern. We are approaching the time when the Friends Choir begins its forty weeks of musical leadership in Meeting for Worship. Study and listening has occurred, plans have been made, materials assembled. What's left is to gather voices together to prepare and present the word of God as made manifest in singing together. What will be your part?

The Friends Choir will again meet on Sundays at 9 am in the Music Room to rehearse, break, and offer music in Meeting for Worship at 11 am. We rehearse music ahead a few weeks so there is time to get comfortable with the music we present. Our section leaders will be returning along with Friends, and there is room for others to join the choir (another bass or two would be especially welcome!). We will begin on Sunday, September 14th, the day we return to the Meeting House for worship. Do you feel led to sing with us? Do you know someone who would enjoy singing in the choir? If you would like to join us, please let Russ know so we can have a folder of music prepared for you. Message him at: [musicffc@verizon.net](mailto:musicffc@verizon.net)

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and sacred songs: sing hymns and psalms to the Lord with praise in your hearts." - Ephesians 5:19 (TEV) I look forward to praising God in song with you on September 14th!

## Sunday Morning Adult Meeting Returns September 14

On Sunday, Sept. 14, the Sunday Morning Adult Meeting will reconvene at 9:30 am in the church library and also on Zoom. We will continue our discussion of *Life Lessons from a Bad Quaker* by J. Brent Bill. A copy of the book will be provided if you don't have one. In addition to the book study, Loletta continues to facilitate a discussion on the fourth Sunday of each month focusing on seeking the meaning and



relevance to our lives today of stories from the Bible. Don't miss these opportunities to connect more deeply with Friends in the Meeting and learn more about Quaker practices and the Bible

About the book, *Life Lessons from a Bad Quaker*: "On quick observation, the Quaker lifestyle boasts peace, solitude, and simplicity, qualities that are attractive to any believer of any denomination or religion. Yet living a life of faith is not as simple as it may look. In fact, it's often characterized more by the stumbles than the grace. 'When someone asks me what kind of Christian I am,' says Quaker author J. Brent Bill, 'I say I'm a bad one. I've got the belief part down pretty well, I think. It's in the practice of my belief in everyday life where I often miss the mark.' In *Life Lessons from a Bad Quaker*, a self-professed non-expert on faith invites readers on a joyful exploration of the faith journey; perfection not required. With whimsy, humor, and wisdom, Bill shows readers how to put faith into practice to achieve a life that is soulfully still, yet active; simple yet satisfying; peaceful yet strong."



## News from Whittier Friends School

Whittier Friends School has been seeing many new faces recently, and we are excited to begin our 52nd year as First Friends Church's school!

Summer was full of fun in both our preschool class and our elementary "Summer Enrichment" program. Over the course of the summer, 34 different children attended our elementary program – double our regular school enrollment and 4 more than last summer! Many of the kids that attend are regular attenders from our school, but some are former students who look forward to coming back every summer. It's truly a gift to be able to keep in touch with these former students and see them year after year, summer after summer. Some of our more popular themes this year were "Exploring the Outback" and "World of Wizardry." We look forward to summer and the opportunities to do lots of crafts, games, and skill building. The program lasted for 6 weeks, Monday through Thursday, 10:30 am to 3:00 pm.

As we gear up for the new school year, we have had several beautification projects. One staff member reorganized our "Room of Requirement" (aka, the storage room) to prepare for an increase in enrollment. We also had many volunteers helping at our Family Work Day doing such tasks as spreading out new wood chips, building new picnic tables, and deep cleaning. Following the Parent Work Day, we also had parent volunteers working on sanding and repainting our elementary bathrooms. In all, over 40 volunteers gave their time and energy over the course of a week making improvements on our campus.

Our return to campus officially started Wednesday, August 27, with 17 elementary children, and on Tuesday, September 2, 16



preschool children officially begin the school year. This is ELEVEN more than a year ago. We are truly excited about our growth and energized for our future.

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](mailto: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 Petsmart scrip. Visit our Amazon wishlist at [amzn.to/2QK8Yp8](https://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 the 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.

-Cassie Caringella



## Kelly Kellum's Visit in July

"How are Friends called in these difficult times?" On July 6, 2025, Kelly Kellum, General



Secretary of Friends United Meeting, visited First Friends in person and brought the message in Meeting for Worship based on this

query, He called to mind Quaker founder George Fox's vision on Pendle Hill during the English Civil War in 1652 of, a "great people to be gathered." While we know a lot has changed over the past 375 years, much has stayed the same - wars, political upheaval, power struggles, social injustice, scapegoating. (Sound familiar?) And we, as Friends, are still gathered to be a people of God. When Fox was later offered a commission in the army, he stated that he "... lived in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars." He believed that living a life guided by God's divine light naturally leads to peace and rejection of conflict and violence.

How can we, today, live into that peaceful reality that we long and pray for, a life that we believe shapes a better world? Kelley's answer lies in the spiritual disciplines that deepen our faith as "Publishers of Truth" - a name early Quakers called themselves. What are some of these practices? His list included peaceful advocacy, joyful celebration of connection, guarding our souls, and working toward inner peace. He urged us to not become reconciled to hopelessness, to align with the most vulnerable, and do what nurtures life. We can give courageously to what matters and practice compassion, courage, and connection. And he

asks us, what can we add to this list?

Kelly Kellum has served as General Secretary of Friends United Meeting since July, 2018. Though based out of the FUM office in Richmond, Kelly spends much of his time traveling among Friends. He sees his primary work as strengthening relationships within our global community, coordinating the overall work of FUM, and building partnerships to advance the ministry of Friends wherever we are called to serve.

The Friends United Meeting community stretches far and wide across the globe, a collection of Christ-centered Quakers, embracing thirty-seven Yearly Meetings and Associations, thousands of local gatherings and hundreds of thousands of individuals. Joined together through our shared experience of God and united in common ministries, we form a beloved fellowship that is powerfully at work in our local areas and through cross-cultural service. For more information, visit: <https://www.friendsunitedmeeting.org>

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## AFFN Returns Wed., Sept. 10

Do you miss the Wednesday Picnics in the Park already? If so, don't despair; All Friends Fellowship Night returns to Fellowship Hall on the second Wednesday each month starting in September. You may remember that a while back we heard from **Karen Frey on the topic of Women in the Civil War**. We are pleased to host her return on Wed. Sept. 10, to present Part 2. We will begin the evening with a potluck dinner at 6 pm, followed by her presentation at 7 pm. All are invited and welcome to join, so mark your calendar now and plan to attend this enjoyable and informative evening with

## Friends Celebrate Christmas in July



While the balmy days of mid-summer are not usually associated with Christmas festivities, on July 27, Friends took time to reflect on the nativity story. The message in Meeting for Worship by Rev. Diego Salazar-Galviz, pastor of University Christian Church in San Diego, was entitled “The Stories We Tell are Sacred.” It was based on Luke 2:1-20, and portions of the book of Matthew, both narratives of the birth of Jesus. Although the story is as ancient as it is familiar, he asked to look for modern-day parallels by focusing on certain key concepts.

It begins with the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus's decree (law) requiring Joseph to leave his home in Nazareth to register for the census in Bethlehem. Joseph and his pregnant fiancée followed this law and made the journey (migration) despite the hardships. Upon arrival, they found themselves unhoused due to so many others arriving in the town. Mary gives birth with the animals and wraps the child in rags.

The story continues in Matthew with another government official, Herod, the Judean king, who learned from men of knowledge of the fulfilled prophecy of an infant born as a new Jewish King. Herod sent the men to Bethlehem to find the child and return with confirmation in order to have the babe killed. The story tells of the travelers' dreams not to return to Herod and Joseph's dream to flee to Egypt to save the child's life. When Herod

realized the identity of the infant was not to be confirmed, he ordered all children under the age of two in the region to be executed.

At Christmas, we don't commonly associate these harsh geopolitical realities with the holy birth in a manger on a silent night with shepherds tending to their flocks: An unexpected pregnancy, being required to make an arduous journey, being poor, searching for accommodations, and giving birth without family, friends, and familiar surroundings. Later fleeing with a small child under the threat of death. Mass infanticide ordered by the government. Raising a child in a foreign land. It is not difficult to recognize parallels in today's world.

Diego's congregation in San Diego is very close to the U.S./Mexico border. They frequently hear stories of persecution, fleeing of homelands, and the associated hardships. Diego brought photos, artwork, and posters as reminders of these stories asking us to prayerfully reflect on how we can use our time, talents, and resources to love our neighbors, help the vulnerable, and resist cruelty.

Diego shared that he and his congregation support Casa de Luz (House of Light) a border ministry in Tijuana that provides housing, meals, workshops, legal services, safety, and community to vulnerable migrants particularly LGBTQ+ individuals. (To learn more, visit their website at [casadeluz.com](https://casadeluz.com).)

Later, that same afternoon, a number of Friends joined Diego to participate in the Mission Collaborative's annual Christmas in July event for an expanded version of his display along with a few lighthearted activities such as crafts, carols, and a no-rehearsal nativity pageant. The FCNL Advocacy team even offered the opportunity to write to legislators (on Christmas cards, of course!) As the lazy days of summer fade away, let us continue to ask ourselves, “What is ours to do?”

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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!

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