

In March 2020 Fayetteville Friends began meeting on Zoom because of the threat of Covid-19. Though we began in uncertainty and some anxiety, we continued to wait expectantly upon Spirit and we were blessed by being joined by folks outside our region and by local Friends who weren't able to travel. We found we were strengthened by meeting on Zoom and will try to use it in the future.

We very much miss Betty Blanch, who moved to Knoxville, but we welcomed two transfers, Nan Fogel and Fran Pearson, into the meeting. We lost a dear Friend, Michael Buonaiuto, whose loving kindness remains with us. With his family we held a memorial service and will remember Michael with a birdhouse in the meeting garden. The meeting was also saddened by the loss of Marianne Lockard who worked faithfully in SCYM and Arkansas/Oklahoma Quarterly Meeting. In her memory a tree will be planted in the garden among the wildflowers that Earthcare Witness cultivated so successfully. Richard Tiffany was instrumental in constructing behind the meeting house a patio and a door leading to it where we can eventually meet in person and where children can gather when we once more have First Day School. The library remained open for checking out books, and Jane Purtle kept us aware of new books and Pendle Hill Pamphlets. Meeting for Healing continued.

We supported our refugees, giving Stephanie financial help as she prepares to become a nurse and Manfred with car repair. When Papi, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, was brought to Fayetteville through Canopy NWA, a refugee resettlement agency, we furnished the bathroom in his apartment; Friends have been very supportive of him and gave him a party on his birthday.

Our Second Hours were greatly appreciated during this time of lockdown. These included presentations on the Quaker Testimonies, a study of labyrinths, book reviews, poetry sharing, Quaker 101, water quality in the Illinois River watershed and we were pleased to join with Olympia Friends Meeting to learn about the Friends Ugandan Safe Transport Fund carrying LGBTQ people to safety.

2020 was a year of disasters, and Friends responded by supporting local Hispanics, Marshallese, the Cooperative Emergency Outreach, St. James Missionary Baptist Church food pantry, and the MayDay Community Kitchen feeding hungry people in the area. We extended our help to include disaster relief to Oregon, Louisiana, the Navajo and Hopi Nations, Central America and Africa. The meeting supported social concerns with letters to federal and local elected officials dealing with immigrant abuse, incarceration reform, budget and voting rights. Individuals stepped in where they saw a need with Karen Takemoto distributing hymnals to Friends during lockdown, Sherron Hays making masks for the Navajo Nation, Leslie Coston and Karen solving problems we had in meeting on Zoom.

The Meeting is well aware of the challenges posed by climate change and political upheaval as well as the struggle we have in caring for those we perceive to be opposed to our values, but we enter 2021 with hope, striving to go wherever Spirit leads us.

Respectfully submitted,
Leslie Coston, Clerk, March 13th 2021