

To Friends Everywhere

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) Report to Yearly Meetings

April, 2021

“My conviction led me to adhere to the sufficiency of the light within us, resting on truth for authority, not on authority for truth.” – Lucretia Mott

Greetings! We at AFSC hope this report finds you well and lending your hands to the huge transformations emerging in our midst! At this critical juncture, when there is so much pain in the world, we continue to believe, as Mariame Kaba so eloquently says, “that hope is a discipline and... we have to practice it every single day.” At AFSC in the communities in which we work we practice hope as a discipline walking alongside folks facing injustice and creating with them small pockets of sanctuary, peace, love, and justice right where they are.

In the past year, we have pivoted to address core needs arising from the pandemic. We are working in communities to help them address immediate problems as we work with them to shift the systems of power (corporate power, international institutions, movements, and government policies at many levels) to move from injustice to systems that promote justice and peace. Amidst COVID-19, the dangers of incarceration continue to multiply exponentially, making every cell and cage a potential death chamber, so in response we launched our #FreeThemAll campaign working for the immediate release of people from behind bars as we continue to work for a future without incarceration. In January AFSC launched an initiative called “Under the Mask,” an effort that documents ways that governments around the world are using the COVID crisis to restrict civil liberties.

AFSC just completed a new 10-year strategic plan that challenges us to take bold action. You can [read the plan in its entirety here](#). In that plan we articulate a global vision of work on the intertwining issues of economic justice, just responses to migration and displacement, and just and sustainable peace. These have long been AFSC and Friends’ concerns and we are poised to do so much together over the next decade. This plan was informed by deep listening – to Friends, to partners, and especially to the affected communities in which we work. The strategic plan deeply reflects the Quaker testimonies which serves as the foundation for the organization and arises from the belief in that of God in everyone, that communities can lead their quest for liberation, and that spiritual and directional insights can come from many sources. We will be sharing the Strategic Plan with Friends and Quaker meetings/churches in the coming months so see how Friends can best engage with us in the coming years. We want to continue to deepen our roots with Friends so we can help renew the world we live in and together shift systems of power to bend toward justice

We are excited in the next ten years to build on recent work to invigorate our ties to Quaker meetings and churches, other Quaker organizations including FCNL, and Quakers and Quaker organizations around the world. Over recent years we have built and supported the Quaker Palestine Israel Network, developed and distributed the Quaker social change ministry model of relational organizing, offered myriad e-courses and in person opportunities for Friends and AFSC to work together including at the FGC Gathering, yearly meetings, and via the popular Changing Systems, Changing Ourselves e-course. We plan to deepen our engagement with Friends in the next ten years by creating a stronger web of AFSC meeting/church liaisons, creating pathways for Friends to more deeply participate in our campaign

and program work, and developing a pilot for a new Quaker youth initiative in 2022. We also invite Friends to sign on to the joint Quaker statement on migrant justice and to work with us on extending migrant rights worldwide.

There are many ways to engage and we hope you will take a look at our [Friends Engage](#) web section for opportunities including a self-study version of the breakthrough [Radical Acting in Faith for White People](#) e-course, [a page of AFSC workshops](#) that your meeting/church can invite AFSC staff or volunteers to present (via zoom during the pandemic), and a webinar series on building community safety beyond policing. To stay informed please sign up for our Weekend Reading email which compiles news and resources most current to world events and our most recent work and please extend an invitation to all Quaker meetings and churches to appoint a meeting/church liaison to receive messages and opportunities for Quakers and to stay involved in myriad ways.

If you have questions, concerns, ideas, or want to offer a shout out, please reach out to Lucy Duncan, Director of Friends Relations at lduncan@afsc.org. She is happy to be a resource, to hear about your work for social change, and to connect with you.

Now, more than ever, our spiritual insights and work for social transformation are deeply needed in this hurting world. We look forward to working with you in the coming years and seeing what emerges from our shared light and labors.