

American Friends Service Committee Corporation Meeting Report April 16-17, 2021

For the second consecutive year the annual corporation gathering was digital and conducted its meetings via Business Skype. The covid pandemic has forced us into new ways of continuing our stewardship of governance. I am happy to report that change has taught us to be creative and more inviting with digital opportunities at hand.

All the reports and background materials arrived via the internet, beginning weeks before the event and continuing up to and during the corporation meeting. (A lot of paper was saved.) It was reported that the AFSC Board of Directors in October of 2020 finally was able to unite in choosing a new presiding clerk. Nikki Vangsnes, the former assistant clerk of the Board, who also served as interim presiding clerk agreed to serve. She is a member North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) and seems well suited for the task.

Through the work of AFSC's Friends Relations Committee, for the first time, the plenary session and all five workshops, and a panel presentation were open and available to all interested Friends via Skype. It was an exciting development to communicate and educate. Titles included "*Quakers, AFSC, and Abolition: Then and Now*", "*Free Them All*", "*Pursing freedom for Palestine*", "*Global migrant justice*", "*Restorative Justice*", "*Making new worlds*" which gives a flavor of the educational engagement and analysis that AFSC offers. The weeklong events were promoted through social media and monthly meeting and yearly meeting contacts.

Our virtual meeting at times had over seventy attenders. I was pleased by the engagement and overall smoothness of our meetings, including the small breakout groups where we could dive deeper into our discussions. I remembered that this annual gathering did not include airports, train stations, or Ubers. I was thankful even as I missed the hugs and handshakes.

A dynamic ten year strategic plan was approved by the Board in June 2020 and was prominent on our agenda. At least three years of input, thrashing, and seasoning have gone into the process. The plan dramatically condenses and focuses the work of AFSC. It positions the service committee to lead in three programmatic areas; **Just Peace, Just Economies, and Just Migration**. The plan presents the Service Committee as a truly global organization. It re-commits us to confront anti-racism/anti-oppression, embrace gender justice and feminism principles, engage young people in the work and life of the AFSC at all levels, and use a **climate justice lens** in how we analyze and approach peace and justice work. It reaffirms our Quaker values. It calls us to do more and better in engaging with Friends.

The AFSC has connected with global sister Quaker organizations this past year to find opportunities for partnership and collaboration. A result of this was the *Global Quaker*

Statement on Migration by the AFSC, British Yearly Meeting, Quaker Peace and Social Witness, Quaker Council for European Affairs, Friends World Committee for Consultation, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Quaker United Nations Offices-Geneva and New York.

There has been new leadership and energy in AFSC the past few years and the organization's finances have stabilized and are improving and it was a positive year for AFSC fundraising. The organization is launching our *Moment of Truth* capital campaign. We know that social change is never easy or cheap.

One revealing remark for me was from Dr. Esther Mombo, a Kenyan Friend that led us in a programmed worship session. "When you give bread to a hungry person you are called an angel, when you ask why they are hungry you are called a rebel." We learned that of all the proposals and studies to explain and solve Africa's struggles only 2% of the cited research is by Africans. *Why is that? Does it matter?* Our program staff stand with those in trouble, in need, and in harms way across America, at our border, and the around the world. We have domestic program offices in twenty-four US cities. Globally there are currently eight program offices in Africa, four in Asia (including North Korea), three in Latin America, and Middle East offices in Jerusalem, Gaza, and Jordan.

In my opinion the AFSC is the best expression of Quaker values and best example of Friends practices I know, even with its shortcomings. It engages people in need with methods, tools, and information to empower and uplift without the need for praise or credit. It is impossible for this report to explain or even justly summarize the totality of AFSC's scope of work. So go to the web site AFSC.org, sign up for news, action alerts, upcoming workshops for individuals and monthly meetings. Ask for a visit from a staff person. Read and study the ten year strategic plan. Be amazed at what Quakers do, and how you are a part of it.

Use your phone now to go the internet website, AFSC.org, then finish reading this written report.

(Now that you are back, it was crazy good how much is being done, and how you can be involved.)

It has been a privilege to serve as your yearly meeting representative to the AFSC corporation. Thank you. I have stayed a year longer than I expected, but it has been an unexpected year for the whole world. Great Plains Yearly Meeting can appoint up to two representatives to serve on the AFSC corporation at this time. It is an opportunity to be valued. I hope a young Friend would consider serving.

Peace, Love,
Dean Young