



## American Friends Service Committee

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American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) Report to Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting & Association

*“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*

March 30, 2021

Greetings Friends! 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, we endeavor to build a new world together. We have a chance to build new structures and systems that more deeply reflect our shared commitments to community, equality, peace, integrity, environmental stewardship, and simplicity while centering the experience and leadership of those most impacted as we labor for a transformed world.

In the past year, we have pivoted to address core needs arising from the global pandemic. We are working with communities to help them address immediate problems, as we work with them to shift the systems of power from injustice to systems that promote justice and peace. In this pandemic, 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. Also, in January 2021, 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.

Our work in the U.S. South and around the world has been incredibly important in this time as COVID laid bare oppression and inequality that is tearing our communities apart. Our staff across the region shifted their work to mutual aid projects that helped meet basic needs, while rapid response organizing moved to create and support community and policy based solutions to keep our families and loved ones safe. The work of the North Carolina Immigrants Rights program and our community partners Siembra NC has provided safety and critical ongoing support to North Carolina immigrant communities organizing for freedom and justice. Our staff thanks Friends and our allies in North Carolina for the care and support they have shown in the past year and look forward to our continued and growing work together.

In addition, 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’s 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 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 a myriad of 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 facilitate (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 on current 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 multiple 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](mailto: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.

In Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jacob Flowers', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jacob Flowers  
regional director, U.S. South