

Notes:

Migrant Justice Action

Western Friend Connect – Workshop Meeting Room – 8/21/2019

Participants:

- Peter Ford – Multnomah Monthly Meeting (Portland, OR)
- Kathy French – Multnomah Monthly Meeting (Portland, OR)
- Mary Klein – Palo Alto Friends Meeting (Palo Alto, CA)
- Mary Richards – San Jose Meeting (San Jose, CA)
- Barbara Segal – Multnomah Monthly Meeting (Portland, OR)
- Donna Smith – Redwood Forest Meeting (Sant Rosa, CA)
- Jim Summers – La Jolla Friends Meeting (La Jolla, CA)
- Several people tried to join the call, but were unable do so due to technical problems with the online application that night.

Query: What are some of the most important things your meeting has learned about how to be good allies to migrants?

- This is such a large issue that having community allies is helpful; otherwise, the work can seem overwhelming
- It has amazed me how much support the whole meeting has for immigration activism; this is an issue that has united us in a way that is unusual; we're able to come to unity about actions as a meeting, and many people are also taking individual actions, which the meeting supports
- This issue is a real example of thinking globally and acting locally. We are working on city ordinances and helping individual migrants, while at the same time we are joining in public protests about federal policies
- The issue of unaccompanied child migrants really drew together the faith community in our county a few years ago; many of us have been trained to accompany migrants through court hearings; some local churches are still providing sanctuary; we are supporting a pro bono legal service agency for migrants; we are working with FCNL to get trained to work with our legislators more effectively
- My meeting is right on the border, and I find it discouraging that we are not more involved; individual Friends in our meeting has been involved, but it never becomes an issue throughout the meeting; this might be changing a little bit recently because our meeting has supported the activism of some young Friends learning about border issues; we do make sure to let newcomers to our meeting know that we have Spanish-speakers among us.

Query: How is work with migrants affecting our meeting communities? How is it affecting us spiritually, on an individual level?

- Personally, I have felt a deepening spirituality; I know I can never do as much as needs to be done; so I feel a sense of spirituality emerging from a place of great sadness and moving into a sense of great joy that we are coming together
- In my previous meeting, even though it was generally conservative and reluctant to take action, when Friends saw the injustices escalating over the last few years, then over slow time, the meeting came around and its willingness to act accelerated over time; we put a Migrant Action Committee together, which pushed the meeting to make decisions quicker. There's a lot you can do, and you can make changes that are gradual, if you don't give up
- I've been doing work with immigrants for forty years, and it's especially upsetting to see our government abusing children. On the other hand, I have felt encouraged by working with the Guatemala scholarship program for twenty years, which is long enough to see the fruits of our labor; you give education to poor, rural people, and they organize their communities and make them better places for people to stay and live.
- Last year, our meeting had a galvanizing event – a lawyer in our meeting won the release of an immigrant from the local prison. Our meeting has organized support for this person and that support work keeps going on, even after the exciting event has passed. We're trying to figure out how to establish systems in our meeting – and in our broader community – to be able to provide support on a longer-term basis.
- I would like to provide Friends with more education about why so many migrants are coming here; School of the Americas Watch is a good event for this kind of education.
- The conversation explored a number of ideas for possible convenings or caravans or demonstrations that Friends might organize or join on the border in the year ahead.
- One important action for Friends to take is to support the National Bail Fund Network. Helping parents get out of detention is one of the most impactful positive actions that Friends can take.

The conversation closed with silent worship.

