

November 2022 – The War in Ukraine

Concerned about the war in Ukraine? Can diplomacy lead to peace?

To take action:

1. As Quakers, we have always advocated for peaceful solutions to conflict, including war. Review Friends' Peace Testimony at [Quaker.org](https://www.quaker.org/peace-testimony)
2. Contact your local politicians to press for more diplomacy in Russia via [Friends Committee on National Legislation \(FCNL\)](https://www.friendscommittee.org/)
3. Consider a donation to [Ploughshares Fund](https://www.ploughsharesfund.org/), the largest foundation singularly focused on reducing the threat of nuclear weapons.
4. Develop your skills in conflict resolution with [Alternatives to Violence Project](https://www.alternatives-to-violence.org/)
5. Read [War and Me: A Memoir](https://www.faleehahassan.com/book-war-and-me) by Faleeha Hassan; on the experience of growing up in war-torn Iraq.

"I told [the Commonwealth Commissioners] I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars...I told them I was coming into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strife were." – George Fox, 1651

August 2022 - Election Actions

The November General Election is just three months away. We can ensure a fuller participation in our government if we spend those three months supporting both voter registration and more informed voters.

The registration deadline in New Jersey for this election is October 18, 2022.

To take action:

You can encourage family, friends, and neighbors to register online here: [The New Jersey Division of Elections Voter Information](#).

If you are interested in joining our in-person registration efforts here in Moorestown, contact Maria Esche at mbesche51@gmail.com or by phone at 856-234-0911.

Additionally, you can find and share accurate non-partisan information on NJ candidates from the League of Women Voters Education Fund's [Vote411](#) and from [VoteSmart](#).

July 2022 – Gun Violence Prevention

The Witness in the World Committee sent out an “Action Alert” on gun violence in May 2021, as incidents had increased by 64% in 2020. ***We celebrate the bipartisan gun legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by POTUS in June 2022.***

This Bipartisan Gun Reform Law includes a crucial policy to remove guns from people who are a threat to themselves or others and expands protection for victims of domestic violence. Plus, \$1 billion dollars will be allocated to mental health initiatives, as well as fund community-based violence intervention programs.

Read more [HERE](#) about this first major gun safety legislation passed by Congress in nearly 30 years. It is considered an historic win by both Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) and Moms Demand Action. But we can still do more to end gun violence in America.

To take action:

- For action at the federal level visit FCNL [***Gun Violence Prevention***](#) and click on [***Act Now***](#).
- To do more, visit [***Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America***](#); a six-million member organization that rivals the NRA in size and influence.

January 2022 – Afghan Refugee Assistance

More than 10,000 Afghan refugees live in ad hoc housing at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, just 25 miles from our meetinghouses. Thousands more are endeavoring to settle into new lives in the US, while others have still been unable to leave the country. The needs continue to be great.

To take action:

- Encourage your congressional representatives to support an **Afghan Adjustment Act** that would mandate safe pathways out of Afghanistan and offer a path to legal residency for those who assisted US programs and NGOs.
- Support refugees with warm clothes and other items. Order on their **Amazon wishlist**, or deliver to Muslim Center of Greater Princeton, 2030 Old Trenton Road, Princeton Junction.
- Investigate opportunities to support Afghan refugees through the **Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service**.
- Donate to the **International Rescue Committee's Afghanistan Fund** to help those who have been unable to leave the country.

November 2021: Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)

Moorestown Quaker, Alice Paul, helped get the vote for women in 1920?

- Alice drafted the first version of what became the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923, The Lucretia Mott Amendment, named in honor of her Quaker colleague

To take action:

- **Learn about** the history of the ERA.
- **Advocate for the ERA** using tools from the Alice Paul Institute.
- Take two minutes to **tell your senators** you support ratification.
- **Visit the Alice Paul Institute** at 182 Hooton Road in Mount Laurel, NJ
- **Donate** to support API's work on equal rights, its community and youth programs, and the Girls Leadership Council.

October 2021 – Native American Heritage

November, is Native American Heritage Month in the U.S. Quakerism in North America has long connections with native peoples, and a mixed record of living its values. At their best, our interactions witness Friends' testimonies of equality, stewardship, and peace. We can each extend that tradition by learning more about all those who have stewarded the land where we live today – our own ancestors and others.

To take action:

- **Visit the Penn Treaty Museum**, an online museum that celebrates the 1682 'Great Treaty' of Friendship between the Unami Lenni Lenape and William Penn made under an elm tree at Shackamaxon. Take virtual tours to learn more about the William Penn statue at Penn Treaty Park, the significance of turtles in Lenni Lenape culture, and more.
- **Learn about the Lenni Lenape in Burlington County** through 'Adventure to the Past' at the Lyceum of History and Natural Sciences at 307 High Street in Mount Holly on Wednesday, November 3 at 10:00 am. Learn more and register [here](#).
- Discover how **local Quakers are seeking "a more inclusive, equitable beloved community"** through intention and action in our yearly meeting's First-Contact Reconciliation Collaborative, and consider getting involved.

September 2021 – Afgan Refugees

In August, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan just as the US and its allies were pulling their troops out. The abrupt takeover has been especially problematic and dangerous for Afghans who supported the elected government and its non-Afghan allies. By one estimate, over 300,000 Afghans have been affiliated with the US military and diplomatic corps over 20 years.

Tens of thousands of Afghans have been air-lifted out of Afghanistan and are being resettled in the US, including over 9,000 in temporary quarters in NJ.

Want to help?

-Use Church World Services's tool to contact Congress to urge expanded protection for refugees, and get the word out in other ways.

-Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has opportunities to donate money, volunteer, and more.

-Refugee Council USA has this quick-and-easy sheet of ideas and links.

-To read about local Quaker involvement, see this update from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

August 2021 – Earth Stewardship

Concerned about the changing climate? In the summer edition of *Sierra*, Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club writes:

Every 30 seconds, industrialization and resource extraction consume a football field's worth of wild nature. Preserving 30 percent of wild nature by 2030... is the target that scientists say we must reach to prevent the extinction of up to a million species and safeguard the forests, grasslands, and wetlands we need in order to suck up enough carbon to slow climate change.

To take action:

- **Understand the issues.**
 - Read FCNL's view on the moral imperative to address climate change in witness to Quaker values.
 - Check out a brief overview from the Sierra Club about how protecting public lands and waters can help slow climate change.
 - Learn about the Department of the Interior's '30x30' campaign to protect and restore 30% of the USA's natural lands and waters by 2030 to help reduce the impact of climate changes.
- **Contact your legislators.**
 - Invite your governor to support the 30x30 campaign via the Sierra Club's quick-click tool.
 - Use FCNL's Action Center to ask your Congressional representatives to support carbon pricing.
- **Go deeper.**
 - Check out what the Sierra Club offers locally at their New Jersey chapter.
 - Support our wild lands and waters by visiting public parks, from the local to the national level.
 - Read 4 government agencies' preliminary report to the National Climate Task Force, ***Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful 2021***.
 - Encourage friends and family to learn about these issues, too!

July 2021 – Economic Inequality

The Friends Committee on National Legislation recently highlighted current opportunities for each of us to **support efforts to address the economic inequality that plagues our country**. We urge you to consider engaging with this important testimony of our faith and values.

To take action:

- **Understand the issues.**
 - Learn about the new, currently temporary, child tax credit, and the potential for it to cut childhood poverty by half, giving more kids the opportunity to achieve their full potential.
 - Read FCNL's call to 'fix our broken economic system' that allows many large, profitable companies to pay no taxes, among other inequities.
- **Contact your legislators.**
 - Email Rep. Andy Kim, Sen. Cory Booker, and Sen. Bob Menendez or phone their offices and tell them you support making the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit permanent as a matter of economic justice.
 - You can also use FCNL's contact system and email template.
- **Go deeper.**
 - FCNL offers tools to help you learn how to lobby Congress effectively on issues that matter to you, from your home.

June 2021 – Testify Simplicity

As our lives and communities transition to a new normal with rising vaccination rates, **F/friends may see value in testifying simplicity in the weeks ahead.**

To take action:

- **Take a walk.** Three trails we enjoy:
 - Rancocas Nature Center, 794 Rancocas Road, Westampton, NJ 08060
Wetlands, a stand of pine woods, meadows and more on three miles of gentle to moderate trails.
 - Dr. James Still Nature Trail, 211 Church Road, Medford, NJ 08055
A short, gentle trail with marked plants and points of interest, garden beds and historic properties.
 - Pendle Hill, 338 Plush Mill Road, Wallingford, PA 19086
A gentle, one-mile wood chip trail with a pond and labyrinth.
 - More trails in Burlington County: <https://www.co.burlington.nj.us/1000/Parks-System-Map>
- **Write a note.** Many people have been strained by the isolation of the pandemic, and will be delighted to hear from an old friend or a bare acquaintance. If you don't have a battered address book to search, our office administrator is happy to connect you with someone who would love to hear from a F/friend.
- **Send or drop off a gift.** Bake some cupcakes to deliver to a F/friend (bread or cookies mail better), print or tear out an article or story that might resonate with someone you know, carve or write out a favorite quote to share.
- **Read a book.** *Ellen Foster*, by Kaye Gibbons, is a beautifully-written story of a smart, brave girl navigating a challenging childhood with resilience and grit. It's widely available in libraries (and less than 150 pages!). You might also ask for suggestions during social time following meeting for worship.

May 2021 – Gun Violence Prevention

Gun violence continues to be a problem in the United States. As pandemic fears lessen, news media outlets have been reporting on mass shootings in more detail. The new administration has come out in favor of gun violence prevention by encouraging states to adopt red-flag laws and background checks. It has also drawn attention to illegal “ghost guns”. Research has shown that gun violence rose by 64% in 2020. Contrary to popular notions, less than one percent of total gun deaths come from mass shootings. About two thirds are suicides and one third homicides (Moms Demand Action).

New Jersey has strong gun laws, but 75% of our guns come from out of state. This makes it easy to cross state lines and buy guns in states like Pennsylvania where there are fewer regulations.

There is much more to be done than just strengthening gun laws. For example, NJ State Attorney General Grewal in a recent talk, described a state-wide effort to have police practice methods for de-escalating conflict. In New Jersey they are keeping track of when and why physical force is used, so as to ultimately diminish it.

To take action:

For action at the federal level, go to www.fcni.org and click on Gun Violence.

To do more, go to www.momsdemandaction.org. Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America is a six-million member organization that rivals the NRA in influence.

April 2021 – End Voter Suppression

As many F/friends know, the basic right to vote is under threat by voter suppression laws. Per the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), hundreds of laws limiting voting access have been proposed in multiple states in the few months since the 2020 election. To address these efforts, the U.S. Congress is considering a bill that would strengthen voting rights, for all Americans. H.R. 1/S.1, also known as the “For the People Act,” aims to make elections more secure and more accessible to all voters.

This Bill has three important parts: 1. improving access to voting, including by establishing automatic voter registration; 2. promoting integrity, including by restricting voter-roll purges and addressing gerrymandering inequities; and 3. enhancing security, including by increasing oversight of election systems vendors. **The Witness in the World Support Committee encourages F/friends to support the For the People Act.** Passing this legislation will help to move our society toward a safer and more just voting process.

To Take Action:

1. Learn about H.R. 1/S.1: <http://sarbanes.house.gov/issues/hr-1-the-for-the-people-act>.
2. Go to FCNL’s Action Center, <https://fcnl.quorum.us/campaign/25228>, for an easy tool to write directly to your senators and representative in support of H.R.1/S.1.

March 2021 – Prescription Drug Affordability

Prescription drug affordability is an ongoing problem in New Jersey, worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Too many citizens of the world's richest country must make hard choices between buying food and paying for prescriptions. In Maryland, state senators and churches fought the pharmaceutical industry lobby and the governor to establish a Prescription Drug Affordability Board in February, charged with addressing the costs of specific high-priced medications.

Last year, New Jersey state senator Troy Singleton introduced Senate Bill S1060, which would create a similar board in this state, overseeing pharmaceutical distribution and payment, identifying drugs that are difficult to afford and establishing payment limits on certain products. Recently this bill has been stalled in the Senate. **The Witness in the World Support Committee encourages F/friends to support this bill.** One of our legislative priorities is to make health care available for all Americans. This is an important step in that direction.

To take action:

- **Learn about S1060 here: <https://njforhealthcare.org/nj-for-affordable-drugs>.**
- **Write to your state legislators! NJ Citizen Action has a website that makes it easy: go to <https://p2a.co/ngyt4v4> to send a targeted, editable email to your representatives.**

February 2021 – Slavery Abolition Amendment

In October, our Meeting approved a minute brought forward by member, Olivia Gamber, to address a troubling clause in the 13th Amendment to the Constitution (1865). The 13th Amendment abolished slavery “except as punishment for a crime.” A proposed new amendment would eliminate that exemption, and fully abolish slavery in the United States.

This month, the meeting’s **Witness in the World Support Committee encourages each of us to write directly to our senators and representatives and ask for support of this amendment.**

You can click here for a sample letter and address links, or use the text below.

Sample text for your letter to Congress:

Dear ____:

*Since the 18th century, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has advocated for the abolishment of slavery in the United States. The **Thirteenth Amendment** to our Constitution, ratified in 1865, abolished slavery “except as a punishment for crime.” **This clause has allowed slavery to continue in the United States.***

*It is important that we complete the work of abolishing slavery through the foundational documents of our country. As adopted, the 13th amendment effectively allows the continuation of slavery through the mechanism of incarceration. We know people of color are often treated differently from white people in the US, including in our justice system. The US Census Bureau estimates, as of July 1, 2019, that African-Americans are 13% of our total population, and Hispanics 19%. According to the July 25, 2020, Federal Bureau of Prisons Inmate Statistics on Race, African-Americans make up 38% of all federally incarcerated people, while, according to the FBP Inmate Statistics on Ethnicity, Hispanics make up 31% of all federally incarcerated people. **These people may still be considered slaves under the current language of the 13th Amendment.***

We ask you to sponsor a new Amendment to the Constitution that removes the exception clause in section 1 of the 13th Amendment. The new Amendment would state:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Thank you for your conscientious attention to this invitation.

You can copy the text above and paste it into your Congresspeople’s online contact space, and edit as you see fit – or copy and paste it into a new document, print that and send via USPS.

The U.S. Senators for New Jersey residents are:
Senator Bob Menendez; contact at <https://www.menendez.senate.gov/contact/email>
Senator Cory Booker; contact at <https://www.booker.senate.gov/contact/write-to-cory>

The U.S. Representative for NJ’s Third District, which includes most of Moorestown, is Rep. Andy Kim; contact at <https://kim.house.gov/zip-code-lookup?form=/contact/email-me>

January 2021 – Stewardship of Nature

Let your life speak with one or more of these steps to **become a better steward of the natural world.**

1. **Start a compost bin or pile.** Compost food scraps and yard waste. Keep trash out of the water stream. Set up a low-maintenance compost pile in the backyard. This produces fresh, rich soil to use in the garden.
2. **Get a better bag (or several) for shopping and use it (or them).** Keep cloth or other biodegradable, multi-use bags in your car, coat pocket, or purse so you always have one handy when shopping or filling up at the library. Hang one over your doorknob as a reminder to take it with you when you leave the house. At the least, try to re-use plastic bags to minimize their harmful impact.
3. **Make your next purchase secondhand.** It takes 700 gallons of water to make one plain t-shirt. Make your next clothing purchase at a thrift or vintage store such as Moorestown Friends School Thrift Shop or Pure Couture. This allows you to add to your wardrobe without wasting resources. You can do this with children's games, appliances, and furniture, too. Many thrift shops have an online presence for shopping from home, and Ebay and Etsy offer lots of lightly-used options.
4. **Plant a pollinator-friendly, native plant.** You don't need a garden to do this; put a container with a nectar plant on your doorstep, or give one to a friend with a doorstep! Plant one (or two or three) in your yard, if you have one. Nectar plants attract butterflies. Good plants for summer nectar include budleia, lavender, perennial wallflower, oregano, and Brazilian vervain. Nectar helps butterflies to fly and find a mate and to refuel after winter hibernation.
5. **Join a Community Supported Agriculture group.** Many Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) groups are taking reservations now for the local spring-through-fall growing season. Bring home farm-fresh ingredients. Join a local CSA group like Free Haven Farm, run by a Moorestown Friends School alum family. Pick up a box of seasonal food from nearby farms. It's tasty, sustainable, affordable, and it helps local farmers, too.