

LEYM AFSC Liaisons

Bill Warters, Claire Cohen, Kathleen Helbling, Paul Helbling

July 19, 2020

# AFSC Liaison Report to LEYM

## After Reviewing Their Legacy, AFSC is Charting a Path Forward

This year the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) completed their 2020-2030 strategic plan, the creation of which was a multi-year effort. The plan was approved June 20th at their annual meeting held virtually by Zoom due to the Pandemic. LEYM Liaisons attended the annual sessions virtually this year, so no travel funds were expended. The strategic plan looks forward thoughtfully, while acting courageously in the present to address immediate concerns. AFSC's updated vision, mission and core values were articulated as follows:

**VISION:** A just, peaceful, and sustainable world free of violence, inequality, and oppression

**MISSION:** Guided by the Quaker belief in the divine light of each person, AFSC works with communities and partners worldwide to challenge unjust systems and promote lasting peace.

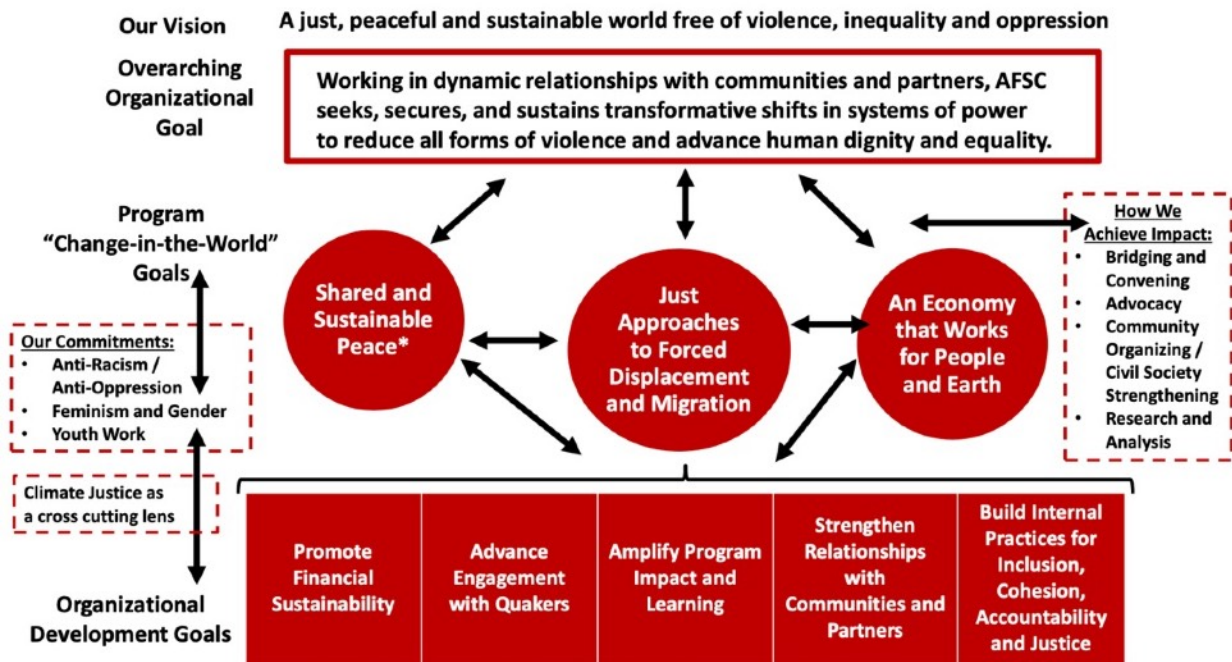
**VALUES:**

- We respect the equality, worth, and dignity of all people and regard no one as our enemy.
- We seek right relationship with all life on a sustainable Earth.
- We accept that our understanding of truth is incomplete and seek ever deeper insights from lived experience.
- We trust the Spirit to guide discernment of our collective actions.
- We assert the transforming power of love and active nonviolence as a force for justice and reconciliation.

## Structural Changes Ahead

This past year AFSC engaged in a broad search for a new Presiding Clerk to replace Phil Lord who has served since 2014. The search committee, after deep deliberation, was unable to bring forward a recommendation for an individual they felt was a good match for the needs of the organization. Phil Lord was asked to stay on through June 2020, at which time Assistant Clerk Nikki Vangsnes agreed to take on the role of Interim Presiding Clerk.

Based on the strategic planning deliberations, AFSC has decided to focus efforts on three strategic programs over the next 10 years, namely: **Shared and Sustainable Peace, An Economy that Works for People and Earth, and Just Approaches to Forced Displacement and Migration.** By pursuing strategic objectives within these three programs, AFSC will be able to contribute toward an overarching organizational goal of transformative shifts in systems of power. This new direction, while making room for most of AFSC existing programming, will still result in some structural changes in how AFSC conducts its work, with specific implementation details to be worked out over the coming year. The following graphic provides a broad overview of the vision and underlying organizational development goals.



## A SAMPLING of RECENT ACTIVITIES

### **Protecting people in prisons, jails, and detention centers from COVID-19**

As the pandemic took hold, AFSC was among the first to urge immediate action to protect those in U.S. prisons, jails, and detention centers — from making soap available for hand-washing to granting immediate release. More than 10,000 AFSC supporters sent messages to governors and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) directors while our legal team supported several successful petitions for release.

### **Moving produce from farm to food bank in New Mexico**

When farmers found themselves without customers and food banks fell short on donations, AFSC's sustainable farming program in New Mexico made an innovative arrangement, helping farmers buy seed and supplies in exchange for donating crops. The program became a national model and continues to attract new partners.

### **Delivering hygiene kits to Palestinian elders**

People living under Israeli occupation have difficulty accessing health care and essential supplies — especially dangerous in this time of COVID-19. AFSC's decades-long history in the region positioned us to work with partners to distribute hundreds of sanitation kits to seniors in Gaza and the West Bank — while continuing to advocate for the Gaza blockade to be lifted and for all Palestinians to have the freedom to meet basic human needs.

### **Providing health care workers with protective equipment in both Zimbabwe and Jordan**

In Zimbabwe and in Jordan (especially in densely populated areas where Syrian refugees tend to live) health care workers lacked adequate supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE). Working with partners like the Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights and the Jordan Paramedic Society, AFSC has been able to get items such as reusable N95 and medical/surgical masks, goggles, gowns, hand sanitizer, medical gloves, and infrared thermometers to doctors, nurses, paramedics, and pharmacists.

## **Building a community network in West Virginia**

Through the years, AFSC has played a key role in expanding free school breakfast and lunch to children statewide in West Virginia. But when schools closed and stay-at-home orders were put in place, many children, seniors, and other West Virginians were in danger of going hungry. AFSC mobilized to form Rapid Response WV, a network of organizations and more than 300 volunteers working together to purchase and deliver food and hygienic supplies to people in need.

As the above examples illustrate, Service remains an important component of the work. Going forward, AFSC will continue to be centered in communities. They will also align their work around the three strategic, organization-wide programs focused on peace, economic justice, and migration. This will enable them to respond comprehensively and nimbly to today's and tomorrow's challenges. The goal is to become an even stronger voice for peace and justice, working in greater unity among ourselves and alongside communities, partners, coalitions, and networks to achieve transformative change.