



Basel's Fasnacht Celebration



friendship force
INTERNATIONAL



Hiking at Whistler

Join your FFGS buddies for two great upcoming social events!

Pizza/Game Night on Monday, April 13th

Mariner's Game on Monday, June 18th

The Friendship Force of Greater Seattle Newsletter #64

March 6, 2026

FFGS Upcoming Events

***FFGS Board Meeting
Wednesday, March 18, 2026
Noon at Lake City Library***

***Social: Pizza/Game Night!
Monday, April 13, 2026
Covenant Shores, 4:30 pm***

***FFGS General Meeting,
Sunday, April 19, 2026 2 pm
(3rd Sunday) location TBD***

***May 14 – May 27, 2026 to
Gifu and Nara, Japan;
Pura & Bob coordinators***

***Mariner's Game Social
Monday, June 18th, 1:10pm
Family/friends welcome***

***August 19-26, 2026,
Cincinnati Inbound,
Karen/Joyce Coordinators***

***Oct 22–Oct 29 Richmond, VA
Oct 31–Nov 6th Orlando, FL
Ilene & Sue N coordinators***

President's Letter:

It looks like spring is here early. As I write this, our almond tree is blooming and there is a new bird checking out the bird house. I may have jinxed it, but I hope not.

Our next board meeting is **March 18th at 12:00** at the Lake City Library. Everyone is welcome. Board meetings are the 3rd Wednesday of every other month. General meetings are the 3rd Sunday of the alternate month unless we have a conflict with a holiday or club journey.

We have a couple of social activities coming up. On Monday April 13th we are planning a game night at Covenant Shores on Mercer Island at 4:30 pm. Pizza will be provided. Mark F is coordinating. Dave is coordinating a group outing to a Mariners game. The game is June 18th at 1:10 pm. We have about 20 people going. We have reserved a few extra tickets so let Dave know if you want to join us. Family and friends are welcome. Tickets are \$15.

Most members have been able to pay their dues in the new online system, but we still have a few issues to clear up. Thanks for your patience!

The journey to Japan is coming up May 14th. Bob and Pura have been working hard to keep everything on track for a fantastic trip.

Be sure to let Karen know if you are able to host Cincinnati in August. Ilene & Sue N are working on the outbound journeys to Virginia & Florida. Let them know if you can join for one or both of these journeys and if you can help with planning, etc. - all offers are appreciated and add to the fun. In friendship

- - - ***Judi, FFGS President***

What is Friendship Force? *Founded in 1977 by visionary Wayne Smith and supported by the late President Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, Friendship force International is a nonprofit cultural organization focused on promoting understanding, cultural education, and citizen diplomacy through homestay journeys and personal friendships. Through these exciting personal encounters, strangers become friends – and we know that by experiencing different views, you can discover common ground.*

2026 FFGS Journey Assignments – Let's travel!

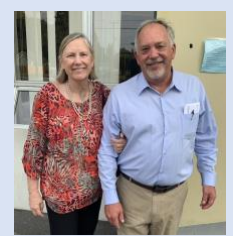
Inbound: **August 19 – 26, 2026** - Greater Cincinnati, USA to Greater Seattle FF
Karen and Joyce are co-coordinators for this inbound exchange. We are so looking forward to hosting Cincinnati who hosted us September 2024. Let Karen and Joyce know that you want to host!

Outbound: May 2026: GSFF to **Gifu and Nara, Japan**; **Pura & Bob** co-coordinators
Our outbound to Japan is from May 14-21 (Gifu) and May 21-27 (Nara).

Oct 22 – 29th: **Richmond, VA** & Oct 31–Nov 6, 2026: **Greater Orlando, FL**
Ilene and Sue N are the co-coordinators. Ilene & Sue N need to know that you want to go!

Coordinators:

*Joyce, Karen,
 Bob, Pura, Ilene,
 Sue N*



Change to annual dues structure

Friendship Force International is rolling out a new dues plan for 2026 and beyond. Previously, members from all countries paid the same \$30 annual dues in US dollars. Varying exchange rates and economic situations made the dues more of a burden for some countries. Also, the national organization is struggling to cover their shoestring budget. The new dues plan will roll out over three years. The goal is to stabilize the budget and create an equitable plan across all countries. As of January 1, 2026 dues in the US are now **\$100 per year**. Each member will pay their dues on-line, either \$100 annually or \$8.33 per month. The new system went on-line on January 1st. The website is also a wonderful resource for additional information and travel opportunities outside of our club journeys.

I recognize that this is a big increase from the \$50 we paid for 2025 (\$30 FFI + \$20 GSFF). For 2026 the board has voted to waive the \$20 GSFF dues to ease the transition. FFI provides a great value for \$100. Coordinating journeys with clubs around the world is a huge task.

The other way to view the dues is as a \$100 donation to the mission of World peace. In these times we need to support organizations that encourage and maintain our friendships around the world. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me or any of the board members. I know that the initial reaction is "what the Heck!" but on further review I think we all want this organization to continue as a strong and vibrant source for world friendship.

In Friendship, Judi Dellino, President FFGS

*Nur wer an wunder glaubt. Wird auch welche erleben. Erich Kästner
 (Only those who believe in miracles will experience them.)*

Toasting Jeri after her Jan 11th memorial



[Rolling Blackouts, Hospital Shortages: How the U.S. Oil Blockade Is Impacting Cuba](#)

By Philip Wang, Times Magazine

A United States-imposed blockade on oil to [Cuba](#) is causing a severe energy crisis on the island that has resulted in rolling blackouts, a strain on hospitals and the grounding of jets. It comes after President Donald Trump signed an executive order last month announcing that he would impose tariffs on any country that sells or provides oil to Cuba, which is run by a communist government that the Trump Administration would [like to](#) replace. The island's economy was already struggling due to decades of U.S. sanctions, but things rapidly deteriorated in January when shipments were halted from its main supplier, Venezuela, following a U.S. military operation to depose President Nicolas Maduro.

February 22, 2026 FFGS General Meeting: **Travel writer Mindy Stern**

Pura's friend, Mindy Stern, was our guest speaker for our February 22nd FFGS General meeting held at Ilene and Don's fellowship hall at Covent Shores on Mercer Island.

Mindy had a long, varied, and happy career in social work, which is how she and Pura met, in a family medicine clinic in the Central District. The clinic was a special place, not only because of the patients they served, but because it was a teaching clinic, where family medicine doctors come for three years of residency training. Mindy and Pura led groups for their patients, and Mindy also taught the residents "behavioral medicine," which broadly speaking is the art of bedside manner. After more than ten years in this role, Mindy went to the UW, where she directed the Wellness Service for all the residents and fellows who train there. After being immersed in the world of medical training for 22 years, Mindy retired with the idea of writing a book about the lives of residents and fellows. That book never happened, but she did become a writer, with a regular column called **Meanderings**. Her column appears in print and online for the Mercer Island Reporter and other regional Sound Publishing newspapers. Last year, she won an award for her story, Train Travel in the US, UK, and Germany. Mindy has two sons, two granddaughters, and a 14-month-old Border Terrier named Muddle, who is a very good traveler. In addition to writing, she and her husband are training Muddle to find truffles in the forests of the Pacific Northwest.

Pura introduced our speaker, Mindy Stern, who is a long-time friend of Pura. Mindy is a retired Social Worker and is now a travel writer. Mindy said she has been in an organization called "Service International" for over 50 years, and it has some similarities to Friendship Force, in that it promotes peace through meeting people around the globe. She took her first international trip at age 10 to visit relatives in Jerusalem along with other travel in her early years. She got her start in Social Work by working at a work camp in Jerusalem one summer as a teenager. She asked us to think about our own experiences – what did we feel, what inspired us, what made us curious on our travels. Mindy said she usually writes her travel thoughts down in notebooks which helps keep the memory fresh. Her retirement goal was to write a book on residents and fellows in the medical field. She found that she likes to write and took classes from Hugo House. She has started writing travel articles for various papers. She gave us an exercise to help us learn to write an interesting way to write a travel story, which will capture a reader's interest. She spoke briefly about Margot Kravatte, a travel photographer who has photographed many interesting Washington locations and has posted them online in 'Inspired Journeys'. Pura thanked Mindy for her presentation. (notes from Karen)

Basel, Switzerland: Fasnacht

Basel Fasnacht, the city's UNESCO-recognized "drey scheenschte Dääg" (three best days), ran from February 23 to 25, 2026. It began with **Morgenstraich at 4:00 am** on Monday, February 23 (streets lit only by lanterns).

The history of Basel Fasnacht

Fasnacht is Switzerland's largest "carnival" and the main Protestant one in the world. However, its history is lost in the mists of time as all the relevant documents were lost in the devastating earthquake of 1356. The oldest document about the Carnival in Basel dates back to 1376. Like with most carnival customs, the roots of the Basel Fasnacht trace back to ancient Celtic and Germanic origins and practices relating to an ancestor worship, fertility rites, and expulsion of winter. Later it was also influenced by such events as medieval jousts, military musters organized by the city's guilds, and religious festivals before Lent. When, during the age of Reformation, merrymaking and feasting were increasingly restricted, even banned at times, the Basel Fasnacht gradually developed into a display of resistance against the city's authorities.

In the years after the Second World War, many new cliques were established, the quality of piping and drumming rose to new levels, while the costumes and head-masks (Larve) took on their typical Basel touch. New traditions and rituals sprang up which are still celebrated today as if they had existed for centuries.

4:00 AM Morgenstraich



The **Liestal Chienbäse** (pinewood broom) is a dramatic, historic fire parade held annually in Liestal, Switzerland, on the Sunday evening following Ash Wednesday, marking the start of the regional carnival season. **Participants carry large, flaming pine branches and drag massive wagons filled with bonfires through the medieval city center.** (This was one of the most memorable and crazy parades I have ever witnessed.)



Standing on both sides of the narrow street, some onlookers toasted sausages while others braced from the heat.



“The Traveler, the Bishop, American Democracy, and Christian Nationalism”

(click this link for a 3 minute summary of this talk)

During the last few seconds – you’ll see Joe’s head in the front row!

On January 30, from 7 – 9 pm, Karen, Pat, Joe, and Joyce attended Rick Steves and Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee’s talk at the Edmonds Center for the Arts.

You can listen to this 40 minute talk at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E20u5y7CJZQ&t=32s>

Khun Chan – host from our 2017 Thailand Journey

For those of you who went on the January 2017 journey to Thailand, you will remember Khun Chan very fondly. He and his wife hosted six of our group at their family compound. Karen shared that it was posted on Facebook that Khun Chan passed away December 21, 2025.



The Price Sculpture Forest is east of Coupeville on Whidbey Island.

In a Facebook post by “Secret Seattle”, [Price Sculpture Forest](#) is recommended for its “century-old trees, rhododendrons, and native understory plants, offering a peaceful backdrop for the artwork. Once at the forest, guests can use their phones for a self-guided tour and enjoy a free, daily Augmented Reality exhibition created by artists from around the country.”



Pictures shared by FFGS members



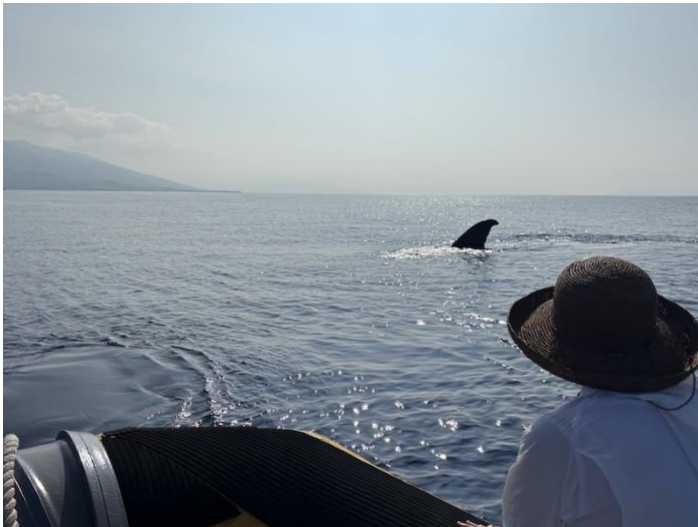
Celebrating Bob's birthday at Japan info meeting.



Bob, his brother, and a friend.



Troll



Denise Whale Watching in Hawaii



Lake Wenatchee Rainbow



Hiking in Eastern Washington

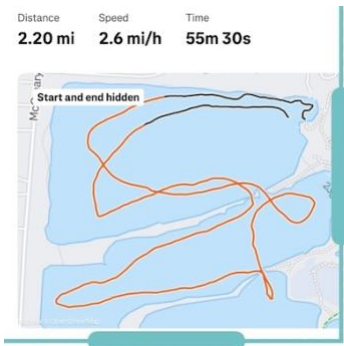


Hiking at Whistler with FF friends from Germany/Austria



*Es muss nicht immer sinn machen, es reicht schon wenn es spass macht.
(It doesn't always have to make sense; it's enough if it's fun.)*

Remembering past journeys with fondness ...



Dave's free day kayaking in Manitoba.

Judi exploring the waterfront with Winnipeg guests



Checking out the trolls with our Montreal guests



Montreal to Seattle, May 2024



Visiting Snoqualmie Falls



Toasting a great trip!

Seahawks win the Super Bowl! (enjoy this collage from Dave)



Why do WA bakers love flour from Cairnspring Mills?

Let them tell you By Jackie Varriano, Seattle Times food writer

In the U.S., [21 big companies account for over 96%](#) of the flour milled daily, creating a lot of fine, sifted white stuff that tastes unimaginatively the same, available at any grocery store for as little as \$3.50 for a 5-pound bag. That flour is colorless, tasteless, easy to work with and it gets the job done. But Morse, a lifelong Skagit Valley resident and farmer, had seen better options out there and knew he could create one locally using Washington wheat.

Cairnspring's lineup boasts half a dozen flour blends, each crafted from a different strain of wheat and specialized for different baked goods. Stone milled, each flour variety is sifted to different specifications and milled to keep the germ, bran and endosperm of the wheatberry for increased flavor and nutrition. It's this level of specificity that has attracted bakers both big and small to take a chance on a small miller.

Now you can find Cairnspring on the shelves at PCC (sold in bulk for \$1.79/pound), but also in almost every baked good PCC creates in-house.

Home projects this winter ...



Friendship Force Pledge

As a member of the Friendship Force
 I recognize that I can make a
 difference
 I recognize that I have a mission
 That mission is to be a friend of the
 people of the world.
 As I embark on this adventure,
 I know that others will be watching
 me
 I know that through my example
 to my fellow citizens
 And the people of other nations
 The cause of friendship, love,
 and peace will be furthered
I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

More Travel Photos!



Apfel Tarte in Amsterdam



Open faced beautiful sandwiches in France.



Design Museum futuristic house



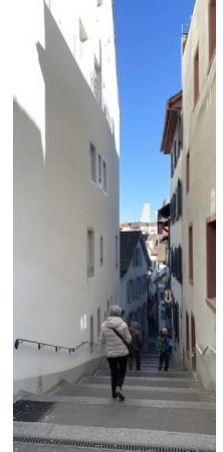
2 franc ferry across Rhein



Tree sculpture in Germany



Beatles Mural in Basel.



Steep alley in Basel