

Dec. 8, 2020



Dear Friends,

A year ago, in our annual letter to you, we mused on the lunchtime conversations we had with various friends and neighbors—a dozen on this day, eight or ten on that other day. How we took those happy moments for granted! Just a few months later, along with all of you, we entered lockdown: no more movie nights or Street Retreats. No more community meetings or Jugglers' lunch. Inside, the home of the Faithful Fools became quiet except for occasional visitors who came by for socially distanced connection, just enough to stave off the anguish of isolation.

But COVID-19 didn't quiet the sidewalks outside our door. Within days of the lockdown, the streets filled with people being released from jails and homeless shelters because those were places likely to spread the virus quickly to very vulnerable people. The non-profits that ordinarily provide emergency resources shifted gears to serve people safely: Public dining halls set up tables to distribute thousands of boxed meals, but clothing distribution had to stop while medical clinics could only accept appointments for people with critical needs. This meant that people coming out of jail cells and hospital rooms had nothing but the clothes on their backs and nowhere to go. They hunkered down on the streets, scavenging cardboard for warmth and drinking water from broken faucets. We were all just doing the best we could. As the rest of the City became eerily silent, the Tenderloin was bursting at the seams—no social distancing here because the streets were overwhelmed with people who had no place to shelter.

We spent our days distributing masks, tents, and hand sanitizer and then logging into zoom calls where we joined other organizations cajoling and pleading with Public Works to bring water and toilets to the makeshift encampments of tents and cardboard. We begged for shelter. Finally, forced by a lawsuit, the City opened 2,500 hotel rooms to the refugees from jails, shelters, and the streets. What a remarkable and truly historic moment that was. San Francisco, a City famous for unimaginable rents and unfathomable numbers of homeless people, did what it took to

Feed the hungry!

Free the imprisoned!

Shelter those living on the streets!

There is much more yet to be done, because we did not feed or free or shelter all who are hungry, imprisoned, or without housing. But no one can or will ever forget the marvel of seeing so many people coming in from the cold.

The impact of these "Shelter-in-Place" hotels has been a wonder to behold. People who were bent and pained from sleeping on cement stood up straight. Their faces became bright as daily showers washed away layers of grime. Some people put on weight and others lost a little as they ate three good meals a day. There are people we hardly recognize now for they looked 10 years younger after just a few weeks inside.

It was partnership that made this happen. We are partnered, as Faithful Fools always are, with people in organizations, large and small, people from the City, and our neighbors. We are also partnered with you. Your energy, phone calls of concern, emails of support, and dollars and cents—they all make a difference.

Without our annual spring fundraiser or the revenue from our educational programs, we've had a lean year. We know this has been a lean year all the way around, so even as we take this moment to ask you for a donation (be it large or small), we are also expressing our deep gratitude for all you do.

Who you are and what you do is important. Our shared struggle and our shared steadiness in this year of COVID-19 is what makes it possible for all of us to continue to do the work that must be done—together.

Foolishly, Faithfully, and above all *Fondly* yours,

*Carmen & SKM*