

Great Plains Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

To Friends Everywhere,

Greetings in the love of Christ. Great Plains Yearly Meeting Friends gathered in Wichita, KS, at University Friends Meetinghouse for our 116th sessions, June 1-3, 2023. Yearly Meeting is a joyful reunion for us, especially since our eight fellowships are scattered across great distances in Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas. We are a diverse group theologically, culturally, in worship style and in other ways. Despite the challenges, we find that the Spirit gathers us into one fellowship, the body of Christ.

In addition to our normal positive expectations, this year there was a perceptible difference. A sense of excitement and optimism was sensed as we looked forward to working and worshipping together as Friends of Christ. Prior to our coming together, God had been moving in the hearts of Friends regarding ways to revitalize our Yearly Meeting and our local meetings. This preparation and God's presence with us enabled us to work together creatively and tenderly.

One example was easy approval of loans to provide the remaining funds required for installation of a solar array this summer by Wichita Friends School. All of the monies for this project have been raised from Quaker sources. In addition, we were able to identify funds to enable gifts to each of our worship fellowships. We are hoping these gifts will serve to "prime the pump" by lifting our spirits and reducing the stresses which inevitably beset us. We have also committed to other measures designed to revitalize life in our local meetings, including a coordinated plan for intervisitation.

Robin Mohr, Executive Secretary of FWCC-Section of the Americas, challenged us by posing the question, "Why are you here?" As she shared with us each day, we found the leadings and promptings of the Spirit which have been rising up, clarified and reinforced.

As part of preparation for Yearly Meeting, our Presiding Clerk shared Revelation 3:2: "Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God." We are a people of hope. We live in abiding hope that, "He who has begun the good work in you will carry it through to completion" (Phil. 1:6). We people of hope have been commissioned by God to share in the responsibility for carrying that work to completion. "My prayer is that you may learn to value the things that really matter, that your love may more and more abound" (Phil. 1:9,10).

It is clear to us that we can trust in God to find ways to strengthen what remains, that our work is indeed unfinished in the eyes of God and we need to redouble our efforts. We do value the things which really matter. We will not give up, for our hurting world desperately needs us to share the love and peace which God offers.

We tried out a new roundtable panel format moderated by our Assistant Presiding Clerk in lieu of normal reports from various Quaker entities. Friends found this approach refreshing and

informative. Cooperative efforts between groups were highlighted as we learned of the work of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR), Wichita Friends School, and Friends United Meeting (FUM). Outside of this presentation, we learned more about the work of Everence and Quaker Earthcare Witness. Another highlight for us was the FCNL workshop presented by Bobby Trice.

The hymns *Be Thou My Vision* and *Showers of Blessings* spoke to our condition. A musical offering by our youth orchestra elicited deep gratitude and appreciation of our younger Friends. We value their presence, contributions and spirit, and sharing with them brings us special joy. Singing *We Are the Boat, A Day of Peace*, and *I Know Not What the Future Has* to the accompaniment of the orchestra (which included several older Friends) helped build unity of purpose as we felt God's love over us. This covering continued as Robin Mohr shared her closing remarks: "The purpose of worship is to bring us into alignment with God's will. The purpose of the monthly and yearly meeting is to help us get into that alignment and then to do what is necessary. You could even say that is formation in the vocation of being the Quakers the world needs."

As we go our separate ways, we will continue asking ourselves how we can be the Quakers that our world needs. How can we align our lives with the Will of God? Seeing others as God sees them is a key component. We must allow the presence of Christ to take centerstage in our lives, individually and collectively. Just as we have been blessed in our time together, we pray that you, too, will experience the blessings of our Creator whenever you gather.

On behalf of Great Plains Yearly Meeting,

Sara Scribner, Presiding Clerk