

“Open my eyes, illumine me. . .”

words & music by Clara H. Scott
Worship in Song, 1996

Greetings to Friends in all places!

Friends in the Midwest traveled past amber waves of ripening wheat to join in community for the 110th session of Great Plains Yearly Meeting (formerly Nebraska Yearly Meeting). Convening on a sunny Kansas plain just west of Wichita, Kansas at the Heartland Friends Meetinghouse, Friends brought greetings from Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, North Carolina, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Texas and Iowa, coming with open eyes and hearts to join in fellowship these first four days of June, 2017.

As the weekend progressed, more Friends arrived, bringing our attendance to over 50, including about a dozen young Friends who played together with sun, wind and water, with older children touring the Recycling Center in Wichita. Godly Play and Faith & Play, along with music and songwriting were part of our young Friends' experience.

Adult Friends met in worship and discussion with C. Wess Daniels, Director of Friends Center and Quaker Studies at Guilford College, exploring the baffling Book of Revelation and identifying and contrasting the Religion of the Empire with the Religion of the slain Lamb. Our discussion included an understanding of Revelation in the context of the first century Roman world. We discussed how small minority faith communities today survive and resist the Religion of Empire and how we apply these concepts to our daily lives. The Religion of Empire is based on winning at all costs, while the Religion of the slain Lamb honors loss and sacrifice. During the meetings, Friends wrestled with the idea that we are both complicit with the Religion of Empire and are likewise victims of the same. We believe that it is God's plan to liberate us from this enslavement.

The presiding clerk opened the Meeting for Business with a participatory grounding exercise. Traveling minutes and reports from various Quaker agencies and committees were received and it was noted that Great Plains Yearly Meeting is hosting the Friends United Meeting Triennial in July at Friends University in Wichita.

Great Plains Yearly Meeting joyfully welcomed Topeka Friends Monthly Meeting and Lubbock Friends of Christ Quaker Meeting as new full members of Great Plains Yearly Meeting. We also expressed appreciation to Laura Dungan, released friend for her commitment to and work on the Revitalization & Leadership Development Initiative. Michael Barrett led “Jazz Bible study” on Friday and Saturday mornings. Afternoons included workshops and a tour of the Wichita Friends School which is adjacent to Heartland Friends Meeting.

Throughout the sessions, Friends enjoyed pleasant early summer weather and nourishing food from recipes in the FUM publication, *Plain & Plenty, a Quaker Cookbook*. Friends are blessed to be a part of the Yearly Meeting experience as we meet new Friends, renew friendships, share joys and losses and prepare to carry this experience of Blessed Community back to our daily lives and home meetings.

Submitted in the Light and Spirit of Christ that nourishes us all.

LaVonna Loesch
Great Plains Yearly Meeting
Presiding Clerk
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