GPYM Friends are thankful for the abundant presence of the Holy Spirit at its annual sessions held at University Friends Meeting in June 2019. We gathered around the theme “Much good needs doing . . . Growing in peace and love.” A highlight of our time together was the adoption of a Statement of Inclusion that expresses our desire to welcome everyone who might be drawn to our community:

We of Great Plains Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends recognize there is that of God in every person, and as people of faith and followers of Christ, we know that the tapestry of humanity is woven with the varied threads of God’s beloved people.¹ Different and alike, we are all God’s creations. God calls us to love one another as God loves us.² Our views are informed by scripture and our own experience of God’s love and grace. Thus we affirm that people of any race, ethnicity, religious belief or nonbelief, nationality, socio-economic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, mental or physical capacity are welcome in our midst and are invited to fully participate in the life of Great Plains Yearly meeting. Our Quaker testimonies of equality, peace and community inspire our goal to extend grace, inclusion and love to all.

¹ John 3:16-17
² Mark 12:31; Matt. 5:43-47; John 15:12-14; I John 4:7-12; Gal. 3:28-29 & 5:5-6

We are indeed growing in peace and love. Thanks be to God!
Hominy and Council House Friends Embark on New Relationship

The longstanding ties between Hominy Friends Meeting and Council House Friends Meeting are taking on a new form. Council House Friends Meeting is now a preparative meeting under the care of Hominy, and the former Council House Monthly Meeting has been laid down. Hominy Friends Meeting has welcomed into membership those Friends who were previously members of Council House Monthly Meeting. All those involved seek to be faithful as God’s purposes for Friends in northeastern Oklahoma continue to unfold.

Topeka Friends Connect with Others

On September 1st, we were blessed with a visit by the new clerk of Ministry and Counsel, Sara Scribner. Topeka Friends Meeting has been a member of Great Plains Yearly Meeting for several years but most of our members have never attended the yearly meeting. Having an official visit by a member of the yearly meeting gave us a better sense of belonging. Topeka Friends Meeting hosted a potluck with Manhattan Friends Meeting and Oread Friends Meeting from Lawrence on October 27th. The joint potluck used to be an annual event and we have decided that we would like to revive the tradition. The memorial service for Jean Hulbert hosted by Manhattan Friends Meeting earlier this year reminded us of the importance of those connections and the need to continually renew them to keep them strong.
Heartland Friends are grateful for expanding energies and ministries. In September we welcomed three adult new members and one 4-year-old associate into our community – our third year in a row of welcoming new Friends! Our new associate member, 4-year-old Isaac, enthusiastically assists Aaron and Connie with leading singing prior to waiting worship.

Perhaps our most spectacular recent happening is that our entire community managed to keep a secret and pull off a surprise birthday celebration for Jim Perkins in July. We were as proud of ourselves as he was surprised. Other recent endeavors have included welcoming Quaker Volunteer Services representative, Claire Hannapel; hosting Melissa Stoner of American Friends Service Committee for an evening informational gathering and a morning education hour conversation; and combining energies with University Friends to host Friends from North, Central and South America for the Friends World Committee Section of the Americas Executive Board meeting. Heartland members continue to be engaged with Friends Committee on National Legislation in a Wichita Advocacy Team, working to strengthen constitutional Congressional oversight concerning war declaration so that decision does not rest with just the President and Generals.

Our life together has deepened and broadened with the addition of a twice-a-month mid-week unprogrammed Wednesday evening worship, a Friday afternoon women’s yoga group, a monthly Meeting for Healing, and providing gallery space for curated displays of art created by Friends. We look forward to welcoming GPYM Friends to yearly meeting sessions next June!
Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us, “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” Our pastor of 25 years, Cliff Loesch, announced his retirement earlier this year, and his last day of service was June 30, 2019. His tenure—from the beginning and throughout—exemplified consistent, loving care for the members of University Friends Meeting. LaVonna, Cliff’s wife, has always ministered to UFM along with Cliff—with her love, musical gifts, music ministry, and gift for hospitality, we knew we were doubly blessed! Their children, Molly and Parker, have grown up in our meeting, and having the entire Loesch family at UFM has truly enriched us.

We feel like the interim period between Cliff’s leaving and a new installed pastor is a time for us to be strengthened and renewed, and requires each of us to be connected to the true vine, which is Christ, by way of the Holy Spirit. Our individual and collective connection to the vine is the only way we can become what God has intended for us.

After two months of guest speakers, Dr. David Wolfe, a recorded minister and member of University Friends, came from his home in Virginia to serve as our Pastor in Residence in September; he will serve here through Sunday, Nov. 24.

We have to think in new ways about being the church together and move on beyond what used to be. We need a healthy urgency about finding new direction of our faith community—University Friends—but not so much as to lose sight of the
blessings we have in being together. It is out of this sense of gratitude that our spirituality is nurtured and defined.

In October David facilitated a leadership retreat initiated by Ministry and Counsel. Those present focused on identifying what the vital ministries of our meeting are and discerning our purpose, and out of this worked to develop a vision for the future of the meeting.

Dr. Catherine Griffith will be our Intentional Interim Pastor after January 1st. We are both curious and excited about how our meeting will envision itself as it moves its way into the future!
Hello From University Friends
Children’s Ministries,

UFM was excited to be host to the Yearly Meeting gathering this summer. More of our students were able to attend than in the previous years which was very exciting for them. They were able to form new friendships and we are excited to see these relationships grow.

During the rest of our year we have focused on teaching our students more about the Quaker faith including focusing on Testimonies and learning about historical Quaker figures. We have also been working on memorizing the books of the Bible and have a new memory verse each month. The kids are doing amazingly well on both fronts!

This fall we began a program for our middle school aged students. They are participating in a Bible Quiz program. They are studying Luke Chapters 13-22 and will participate in a competition style quiz bowl at the beginning of 2020. So far they have been very excited and are looking forward to trying something new.

We have had some hiccups during this time of transition at UFM. We were hoping to add programs more focused on middle school and high school students however as in all transitions some things are not possible. We hope to be able to provide programming for our older students in the future.

Children’s Ministry at UFM strives to help each and every student to feel loved and important. Last year we settled on a slogan for our program “Rooted in the Word, Growing in the Spirit”. Our goal is to always point our children to the Spirit through everything we do.

Many blessings,
Andrea Suttle,
Children’s Ministry Director UFM
Central City Monthly Meeting continued its tradition of worshipping through action in our communities in addition to our monthly meetings on the third First Day of each month. Friends continue to participate in peace activities with Nebraskans for Peace (NFP) and Central Nebraska Peace Workers (CNPW). Rich is a long time member of NFP and serves on their board. Each month CNPW meets and plans activities for the month, including the topic for its monthly peace demonstration in Grand Island, Nebraska, such as opposition to oil pipelines, anti-bullying, immigration reform, equity rights, fair taxation, universal healthcare, anti-death penalty, prison reform, etc. Rich takes a leadership role with this group.

Caring for Our Environment
Lynn joined Greta Thunberg’s wave of political action and organized the first Global Climate Strike in Nebraska on May 24, 2019. So far there have been 3 more strikes in Nebraska with the potential of one more. In August, Steve spoke as part of an Earthcare panel in Lincoln helping people to see their role as stewards of the Earth, how to be stewards, and instill a love of the Earth in their children.

Caring for Others
Steve, Lisa, William, and Louisa participated in the Martin

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Central City…cont’d

Luther King, Jr. youth rally in January. In June, Steve, Lisa and Lynn participated in the Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change at the Indian Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. This workshop traces the history and ongoing impacts of the Doctrine of Discovery. The workshop was developed by Boulder Friends and was sponsored by NFP. CCMM members followed our testimony of care for one another and our minute of inclusion by participating in our communities’ PRIDE events in Grand Island, Hastings, and Lincoln.

Lynn provided a booth for Quakers at the Hastings PRIDE event in July. She was excited to meet a Friend from Oregon, who was unaware that Quakers were in Nebraska.

Additionally in July, Lynn hosted a Lights for Liberty vigil to raise awareness of the treatment of immigrants, refugees, and migrants in our country and at our southern border. Rich provided music for the event, which was well attended with over 72 people participating.
Exciting things are happening in Great Plains Yearly Meeting! We are moving forward and growing stronger each year, connecting Quakers in the Great Plains regions to one another and to the wider world of Friends. Although we operate on a tight budget, we have seen God’s Providence at work as our needs have been met. We anticipate having a special need for funds in 2020 to send representatives to Kenya for the Friends United Meeting Triennial and to assist representatives from less-prosperous countries to attend. We are also trying to increase our small endowment fund, increase our student loan fund, and always have need for general operating funds and funds for our Home Missions activities.

If you would like to support GPYM financially, please send donations to Great Plains Yearly Meeting, c/o University Friends Meeting, 1840 W. University St., Wichita, KS 67213. If you would like to direct the funds to a specific purpose please indicate that with your payment