

# The Friendly Forum

An occasional newsletter of Great Plains Yearly Meeting

FALL 2020

## Great Plains Yearly Meeting Plans Spiritual Gathering for Fellowship and Nurture

September 11 – 12, 2020

### **A Word from the Presiding Clerk:**

Friends, it has been a hard exercise of faithfulness to stay connected with each other during this time of great pause. All the feelings of isolation and loneliness are heightened by our fears and worries over health, economics and messed up routines and plans.

Let's gather online, even though it's not our favorite way, this coming September 11th and 12th. We will treat this time as our 2020 Yearly Meeting gathering. There is a registration form on our GPYM website ([greatplainsyearlymeeting.org](http://greatplainsyearlymeeting.org))

that will inform us of your desired participation. In response to your registration, you will receive a ZOOM invitation and instructions on how to join the meeting online. You are encouraged to join individually, as a family or in a small Covid-19 safe group (please indicate who I should send the invite info to). Friday evening we will spend our time connecting. We will check in with each other by sharing our State of Society reports, introducing guests, and enjoy seeing all the beautiful faces we love. Saturday will be a time of nurture.

*Continued on Pg. 2 ►*

*Front story cont'd*

Noah Merrill from Putney, Vermont will share with us a message of encouragement and hope. We will have time together to reflect and share. We also want to use some time to hear from special interest groups that may be joining us.

The schedule will look somewhat like this with breaks worked in:

**Friday, Sept 11th**

6:30pm – checking in, roll call, State of Society reports

**Saturday, Sept 12th**

10:00am – We will gather to listen and respond to a ministering message from Noah Merrill

**Lunch Break**

1:30pm – Gather for more time with Noah Merrill

**Special Interest Groups**

GPYM is trying to do our best to create a safe and enriching experience through online connection. We pray that the Spirit will enhance these efforts beyond our abilities and we will find joy in seeing each other via ZOOM and hearing the voices of Friends.



— LaVonna Loesch  
presiding clerk



# News from Our Meetings

Please join us on September 11 and 12 as we gather in the Spirit and share news of our meetings and of one another. The excerpts below are from the State of Society reports and are just a taste of what will be presented. As Central City Friends remind us, "In this time of upheaval it is a comfort to have our community of Friends, even if we haven't personally seen each other!"



## Central City Friends Meeting

New attendees have given us the opportunity to revisit our understanding of Friends' testimonies. We look forward to getting back together sometime in the not too distant future to continue reviewing our S.P.I.C.E.S. of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, Stewardship. We are a "Spicey" group!



## Council House Preparative Meeting

Hominy's minister worked with four Council House Friends to develop a letter to go out to people who had been involved with Council House in the past. While this project is still underway, nearly every response has included a financial donation for the Meeting, the Cemetery Fund, or both. The letter is sparking renewed interest in Council House which has lifted spirits.

## Heartland Friends Meeting

**W**e at Heartland Friends Meeting have been profoundly affected by the current events going on in our communities and in our world, both personally and on a corporate level. As the COVID-19 virus spread across our nation and into the state of Kansas, we mourned the loss of being able to gather in our Meetinghouse with each other for Meeting for Worship. With regular communication via technology, Friends discovered a great comfort and connecting spirit in distance worshipping while remaining in our own homes. At present, we continue to search for ways to safely gather, and we share an unshaken spirit that guides our mutual love of/for the Light and Joy that permeates our Heartland Community.



## Hominy Friends Meeting

**“C**ome to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30). These verses have reassured us as we face great challenges including caring for two preparative meetings and the COVID-19 pandemic. We find that as we leave our weariness and burdens to God, He sustains, encourages, and inspires us to greater faithfulness.

# Lubbock Friends of Christ

**T**hough the world is beset with extraordinary challenges at present, the Lord has been good to Lubbock Friends of Christ Quaker Meeting. ... We completed our study of the Gospel of Luke, finding, as always, that reflecting on scripture together strengthens our faith and knits us together in community. ... We look forward to the return of some semblance of normalcy, placing our trust in the Lord.



## Tahlequah Friends Fellowship

**T**ahlequah Friends Fellowship, a preparative meeting under the care of Hominy Friends, meets for unprogrammed worship Thursday evenings at 7:30 in the Nagle living room in Tahlequah. Last summer they invited Chesterfield Monthly Meeting of Ohio Yearly Meeting (Conservative) to share in the oversight of their venture. This request was accepted and TFF now has dual affiliation. ... With the exception of a couple of weeks, meeting has continued in some form despite the pandemic. In addition to the Nagle family, there are three others who have resumed regular attendance.



## Topeka Friends Meeting

**T**he Topeka Friends Meeting shared a joint meeting for worship on October 27, 2019, with Manhattan Friends Meeting and Oread Friends Meeting. We felt a renewed sense of community when we gathered with friends from Manhattan and Lawrence and plan to continue these types of events in the future. ... We held our first virtual meeting on March 29, 2020. Not everyone has participated in the virtual meetings but it is felt that under the current situation it is a good alternative to meeting face to face. The virtual meetings have enabled distant friends to join us.



## University Friends Meeting

**T**he word that best captures the state of our Meeting is transition. In January 2019 we learned that Cliff Loesch, our pastor of 25 years was resigning effective June 30. ...In January [2020] we were notified by Evangelical Friends Church, Mid America Yearly Meeting that we could no longer be affiliated with two yearly meetings. ...The process of disassociating with EFCMA was difficult and gut wrenching for many of us at UFM. ...Our challenge right now is to clarify our mission and ministry and to merge who we are with what we have into that ministry.





THE MINISTRY OF

# Noah Merrill

**N**oah Merrill serves as secretary of New England Yearly Meeting and travels and teaches widely among Friends. Some excerpts from his ministry in recent years are below.



*Noah Merrill*

The Religious Society of Friends is about nothing if it's not about transformation. Helping each other open to the living Christ among us, allowing ourselves to be searched by the Light at work within us, humbling ourselves to be taught by the Inward Teacher, trusting that surrendering to the Refiner's fire, we can be given new hearts. And it is and always has been through these new hearts that we are made channels for the motion of universal love. (2012)

Keep paying attention to the places where God's children are forgotten by Empire and by those of us who live closer to Empire than to God. Keep paying attention to those among us who have forgotten God as the Center of our lives—especially when “those among us” are us. Keep paying attention to the walls we put up, blocking our willingness to be in relationship, so that through our attention love can break these walls down. Keep paying attention to the way that God speaks relationship, and to the ways those we are in relationship with can be instruments for God to teach us and transform us. (2009)

*Continued on back ►*

If ever the world needed the authentic, life-giving challenge that animated our spiritual ancestors, it needs it now. If ever people needed prophets to call us home to the humble, worldtransforming power of the Love Who casts out Fear, and to this Love's availability and liberating grace in every heart, we need it today. But this Love can't just be told about in stories. This Love needs to be lived in lives. There is no other Religious Society of Friends, no other Friends Church in which we can live the message for which this prophetic People is still being gathered. The work is for each of us, for all of us, together. And we have no time but this present time in which to be faithful. (2012)

If we can rediscover, reclaim, and reinterpret the gifts our tradition offers to encourage faithfulness in the context of today's needs, Friends can make a precious contribution for the future of our planet. We have much to do to more fully take our place alongside all who are seeking and living a way of deep hope and love in a time of turmoil, separation, and fear in our world. (2017)

**May the God of hope fill you  
with all joy and peace as you  
trust in him, so that you may  
overflow with hope by the  
power of the Holy Spirit.**



## Let's keep connected!

GPYM homepage  
[greatplainsyearlymeeting.org](http://greatplainsyearlymeeting.org)

Facebook  
[Great Plains Yearly Meeting](#)