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Ages of Grace

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AGES OF GRACE
August 3, 2017 / by Monica

The view from the middle (part 2)

LEAH FARISH

Ages of Grace

Thou hast a house on high erect
Fram’d by that mighty Architect...
No Candle here shall shine in Thee,
Nor things recounted done of old.

The first talk began as the retreatants were settled on a Friday evening at a retreat lodge about 10 miles from our church. Candles were lit, and some recorded music suggesting the chants of the early church ushered in one of our members, wearing a Jong white robe. She spoke as Monica, the mother of Augustine. Her message related to the years of prayer she offered for both men. Monica’s prayers for both men were gloriously answered, but she told us with wit and gentle humor how to persevere no matter what. We closed singing the first verse of singing prayer song that our music director found to represent early congregational song.

The next morning, our speaker was not a literal historical figure, but a figure who would be a typical 10th century Christian in Ireland, named Caitlin. Wearing a simple rough tunic, she told of the importance of hiding God’s Word in our hearts—for her, a necessity, since few women could study the Bible in medieval Europe. This character shared an ancient (to her, current!) version of the hymn “Be Thou My Vision; which we then sang. Afterward, we had a craft activity making “celtic crosses” of straw, and the option of a solitary “prayer walk” outdoors. Two of our teen girls even demonstrated Celtic dances for us!

The world no longer Jet me Jove;
Then straight I begin my heart to chide:
My sorrowing eyes aside did cast
Farewell, my wealth, farewell my store.

After lunch, Anne Bradstreet, Puritan poet, spoke to us about how her family and faith survived disease, eight childbirths, and the option of a solitary “prayer walk” outdoors. Two of our teen girls even demonstrated Celtic dances for us!

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Last, a lively speaker from the 1800’s addressed our group—an African-American character named Lucy Craft Laney, who came to us with costume and music of their era.

If your church would like to create a similar retreat or to read the speeches of these wonderful women, please contact me at Leahfarish@gmail.com for copies of the scripts, which our women wrote under supervision of an elder of our church. This retreat was a true “communion of saints” experience!