

## *South Midwest Region*

On the weekend of April 30, members from the South Midwest region came together in St. Louis for their very first regional event. Our region was honored to have Sadr Sahiba come especially to meet the members from this area. Members came from as far as Kentucky and Kansas to join with their sisters in St. Louis for two days of reflection, games, and companionship.

The event started on Friday with Juma prayer, followed by an informal session of reciting nazms. Sisters Ayesha and Sumrah made a spirited attempt to teach the rest of the sisters so that we could join in with their singing, but many of us proved to be tone deaf. By the end of this first session, members had jumped up to parade in an impromptu march past, reliving the spirit from when march pasts were performed in Lajna functions in Rabwah, Pakistan.

After Asr prayers, the Lajna members gathered together and introductions were made. Afterwards, members were invited to play board games, set up by Sister Tamara. Members from the different Majaalis sat down together to play, with women of different nationalities and ages forming a bond of friendship amongst themselves. The room resounded with laughter and squeals when a member won the game; with exclamations when someone's piece was moved back to the starting position. The games continued till Isha prayers. By the end of the night, a spirit of companionship and levity abounded amongst the sisters and all looked forward to the next day's session.

The next morning, the members gathered together again at Bait-ul-Hafeez. Tilawat of the Holy Quran opened the session. As a surprise, Sadr Sahiba invited members to take a handful of candies from a passing bowl and then invited the members to come up one by one and offer a handful of facts from their personal lives. What could have been a series of one-line statements turned into moving and emotional accounts as sisters came up to talk of their own struggles of converting to Ahmadiyyat, the obstacles their parents faced when becoming Ahmadis, or their own personal anecdotes of trying to become better Muslims. Daughters thanked their mothers for bringing them into the fold of Ahmadiyyat and wives thanked their husbands. By the end, we came to realize that it is Islam which is our true bond, no matter whether one comes from Ghana, Peshawar, India, or rural America.

After lunch, the afternoon session was opened by the recitation of the Holy Quran and the recital of a nazm. Various facts of the South Midwest region were then presented to the members. Members from the representing Majaalis came

up to give a brief history of their regions. A history was also presented, specifically of the St. Louis Jamaat. It was eye-opening to hear of sisters who battled many struggles to meet with each other for Jamaat meetings in the 1930's and whose only desire was that a masjid be built in their beloved city. Afterwards, Sadr Sahiba gave the concluding address and the session was called to an end by silent prayer.

And what could have been a sweeter end to our very first meeting than the blessing which Allah bestowed in the guise of Sister Khadija, who performed ba'ait from the regional missionary, Azhar Haneef. Sahib. The members were fortunate enough to say Ba'ait along with their new sister. This first regional meeting brought together sisters who live hundreds of miles apart, but who share a love and passion for Islam. For two days, we came together and forgot our differences and shared our similarities. May Allah bless all the members of this Jamaat and may we grow more energized and active in our efforts to promote and practice Ahmadiyyat-the true Islam.