

ARISE! GLBC 2013 Women's Conference

Praise, Prayer, and Powerful Proclamation permeated the weekend of October 4-5, 2013, when nearly 350 women gathered for the Greater Louisiana Baptist Convention (GLBC) inaugural Women's Conference! Under the leadership of Gloria D. Crayton, President of the Women's Auxiliary of the GLBC, the Conference, held in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was hosted by the Greater King David Baptist Church, Dr. John E. Montgomery II, Pastor, and 2nd Vice President-At-Large of the GLBC and Janice Vick Southeast Region Vice President.

The theme of the Conference was "Arise," with the Scripture reference coming from Isaiah 60: 1-3, which states,

"Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.
²See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the LORD rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.
³Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn."

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The Conference theme arose out of a desire to see all Christian women 'arise' and be active for Christ wherever they are, not shying away from sharing Christ in a culture that often does not believe or follow the truth of Scripture. It was the intent of the organizers of the Conference to challenge the women of GLBC to move and awake to action, to live as lights that shine and penetrate a spiritually dark world with the truth of the Savior's love and mercy.

The Conference began on Friday evening, October 4th, with the Worship Experience, which was open for all to attend. Prior to Worship, a 'Meet and Greet' fellowship was held, where conference attendees enjoyed mingling and partaking delectable refreshments. With Southwest Region Vice President, Hilda DeBose, presiding, the Worship Experience began with praise through singing from the seventy-five sanctified-voice GLBC Women's Conference Choir, led by musicians, Ernest Bowman and Christopher Chad Patton, who provided the music for Worship. They exalted the Name of the Lord with a spiritually uplifting rendition of "Let the Glory of the Lord Rise Among Us," which could very well be called the Conference 'theme song.'

Toni Rochelle of Baton Rouge delivered an inspirational meditation, which set the stage for the Conference by reminding the congregation that we live in a dark world that continues to get darker, but with Jesus, we can have light. She ended with a powerful petition to heaven, while Latrina Stone of Baton Rouge greeted the congregation and conference delegates, and Southeast Region Vice President, Janice Vick, delivered the Theme Interpretation – "Arise," laying the foundation by providing a Biblical exegesis of Isaiah 60:1-3, with an explanation of how we should apply it to our lives now. Nettey Johnson of Baton Rouge addressed the congregation on "Temple Care," admonishing the women and men to take better care of their

bodies, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Along with challenging those in attendance to get involved, get well nourished, and get healthy, she provided a plethora of information on Breast Cancer Awareness, along with other health related issues to help us with temple care. To reinforce the speaking points, the sisters received in their conference grab bags a 32 page Women's Good Health Journal.

The highlight of the evening was the powerful message delivered by Alicia Cyrus of Lafayette, Louisiana. She was introduced by Lora Beckham, of Baton Rouge. Speaker Cyrus used several familiar situations as analogies to further illuminate the theme and the Scripture. She likened the Scripture to a court room action, where the bailiff (Isaiah), orders those in the courtroom to 'rise,' announcing the arrival of the Judge (Jesus Christ). Using as an analogy, police car visor lights that are used to warn travelers of imposing danger, or expose those that get caught, serves as a reminder that our purpose is to 'shine.' We are supposed to stand up and do the work that Christ left for us to do. She concluded her message by challenging us to inventory our spirituality – look for the *warning signs* that determine whether we are spiritually asleep. We know that we are still spiritually asleep (1) If we have not forsaken the foolishness, and still fellowship with darkness – conformers instead of transformers; (2) If we still act like children – unsteady and unstable; (3) If we are still easy prey for deceivers; (4) If we are still carnal – under the control of our flesh – envy, strife, division; (5) If we still seek to have a following instead of following Jesus; (6) If we lack understanding; (7) If we still lack discernment. If we can be honest and say yes to any of these signs, then it's time for a wake-up call. It's time to come out of our spiritual closets and purpose in our hearts to "Arise" and shine.

Following such a powerful message, the delegates and guests were still riding such a spiritual high, seemingly not wanting to leave the arena where all had been so tremendously blessed, that fellowship continued in the church's reception area, where they enjoyed a late night snack.

Bright and early Saturday morning, conference attendees gathered for a continental breakfast prior to preparing for the conference breakout sessions. GLBC Women's Auxiliary President, Gloria D. Crayton presided over the session. Patricia Morris of Monroe delivered the meditation, Carlita Gordon of Baton Rouge petitioned the Throne of Grace, Taretta Wilson of Baton Rouge welcomed the delegates, and Marva Coleman of Baton Rouge presented a sermonette on "Women in Crisis." To prepare and encourage us along the journey, appropriate topics were prayerfully selected for the breakout sessions. Because of the remarkable response to the 'call to conference', two (2) facilitators were assigned to each breakout session. Delegates were given color coded name tags to navigate them through each of the sessions: "Hurting – Where's God When It Hurts" was facilitated by Gail Creecy of Metairie and Irma Johnson of Baton Rouge; "Life in a Fish Bowl" was presented by Martha Tribble of Monroe and Marie Hood of Baton Rouge; "Get Out of the Boat" was instructed by Debra Martin and Carolyn Foster, both of Baton Rouge.

The culminating activity of the Conference was indeed a joy to behold! The elegant setting was the Fellowship Hall of the Greater King David Baptist Church (GKD), the host church. The Greater King David Culinary Ministry prepared a deliciously, tasty meal, that was served by the

Greater King David Greeters Ministry along with members from New Hope Baptist church. The highlight of the Conference, however, was the message from the President of the Women's Auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., Dr. Hugu Dell Gatewood, of Houston, Texas. After being introduced by General Secretary of the NBC, USA, Inc., Congress of Christian Education and Conference Chair, Dr. Doretha Johnson, of Baton Rouge, Dr. Hugh Dell Gatewood, in her usual, spiritually classy custom, challenged the delegates to arise – get up, and shine – do something. Using a familiar saying, 'get up you sleepy heads,' Dr. Gatewood admonished us to stop making excuses; quite doing like Israel – hitting the snooze button and going back to sleep – being complacent, enjoying living in darkness. The more we snooze, the further away from God we get, forgetting to do the things He told us to do. Rise up in our thinking, our attitudes, and our actions. Arise, and give God the Glory. Keep our eyes on Jesus, and Shine, Shine, Shine!!! The delegates helped to conclude the message by joining in a chorus of "This Little Light of Mine, I'm Going to let it Shine." In closing the Conference, President Crayton reminded us that we had been informed, inspired, challenged to be strong, to stand up and shine.

The First Annual Conference of the GLBC Women's Auxiliary can adequately be described as a spiritual victory, delegates left excited, uplifted, inspired, and ready for action! Organizing and planning the event was led by Conference Chairlady, Doretha Johnson, who was assisted by Co-Chair, Debra Martin, and committee members, Lora Beckham, Jerri Booker, Verna Bradley-Jackson, Barbara Davis, and Irma Johnson. Dr. Willie Maynard, Jr., is President of the Greater Louisiana Baptist Convention.

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