

The First Jurisdiction of Illinois' Women's Department 13th Annual Retreat

The New Generation, the Leadership Board, and event planner Marsha Sokolow, recently worked under the Direction of our Jurisdictional Supervisor Mother Charlotte Eades to bring the women of 1st Jurisdiction together for our 13th Annual Retreat and Conference. The beautiful and luxurious Westin Hotel and Resorts in Lombard Illinois was the venue chosen for this year. It took place on the weekend of February 3rd - 5th. The Conference opened after registration with a meet and greets session, followed by testimony prayer and praise on Friday night. Facilitator Evangelist Felicia Sanders allowed room for three testimonies where the women of God shared victorious testimonies of the overcoming power of the Lords healing and deliverance. After a life threatening accident that resulted in a broken neck, the medical doctors gave up hope of the 1st speaker having any chance of walking or having any normal range of motion in the neck, but God! The Evangelist shared and demonstrated that not only could she walk, but her head and neck worked just fine as she moved it rapidly back and forth!

The second young lady shared how 'something told her' to be watchful before deciding to travel a certain route but she went ahead with the trip... after a traffic accident (on the expressway) that could have proved fatal, she was able to walk away with no serious physical injuries, (though the car was totaled) and was able to take and pass her exams in college shortly thereafter. Assistant Supervisor Mother Harrington stood and admonished the young lady that the "something" she referred to was the Holy Ghost, and the Lords leading, and he was the one who spared her on that evening!

The final miracle testimony was from New Generation member 1st Lady Melissa Peel who shared of being blessed with a miracle child after 7 previous attempts (miscarriages) and 20 years of marriage! She held little lady Aria Peel up for all to see and rejoice with her and Pastor Peels' blessing from the Lord! After a panel discussion that included Assistant Supervisors Mother Eleanor Harrington, and Pastor Shirley Hughes, a powerfully anointed prayer and praise session followed that served as the perfect pre cursor for the theme of the Conference Advancing in Victory.

On Saturday morning the presence of the Lord was ushered in by District Missionary Maggie Booker with the Morning glory 7:00 am prayer session. The women prayed, got breakthroughs and were blessed to have hands laid by the District Missionary and the elect women of the Jurisdiction present. Afterward a delicious and complimentary breakfast and time of fellowship was enjoyed by all conference participants.

The Seminar session followed that afternoon facilitated by 1st Lady Peel and exceeded all expectations as it relates to blessing and spiritual renewal. There were three powerful and anointed presenters chosen by State Supervisor Mother Eades, who blessed us with words of wisdom and encouragement. The first presenter was District Missionary Debbie Harris who provided each conference member with a detailed hand out outlining her theme on Prayer & Faith – The Foundation. She shared that the Lord Jesus himself proved to be the stabilizing

force (and Rock) in her life after a life altering trial of her marriage. In a natural sense the pain and emotional turmoil that plagued her could have caused a mental breakdown if not for the presence of the Lord in her life. She further shared that “You see my glory, but you don’t know my story” Because after everything that the enemy had come against her with expecting her to be overwhelmed and quit; because of the public humiliation, the hurt that followed and the fortitude to remain not only saved but in the same Church and weather the storm...she found out for herself that if the Lord Jesus is your Rock, and prayer and faith is a constant, it becomes an impenetrable force that neither win, storm tornadoes, and being tossed and put upon by circumstances of this life can change or hinder! She closed by letting us know that there are many things that you can do to a rock but it will yet stand! And if we build our hopes on the Rock of our Salvation, Jesus Christ, the enemy will never be able to blow us down!

The second presenter was First Lady Iris Reed, her theme was Seize the Moment: A Call to Action. She cited several examples of how we could effectively go about seizing the moments of opportunity in our lives. In a moment of decision one has to not only think about what needs to be done but take the necessary steps to see it through and carry it out till the end. She shared that God never consults or past to determine or future, and we should not find ourselves doing such things. It is easy to live in the memory of the past and just allow the future to be frivolously dreamed away, and make excuses for our behavior because of negative circumstances from our various childhoods. We must be careful to surround ourselves with individuals who will up lift and encourage, rather than those who have little or no faith and end up making us feel defeated and discouraged. She further shared that there is a tremendous amount of power in our attitude towards life...”it is 10% of what happens and 90% of how we respond to it. “

In one visual demonstration she shared that if you take 1000 pennies and begin to subtract from them on a regular basis the amount you started with becomes less, and less. So it is then with our days numbered in this lifetime. She told us that the average span of life is around 75 years...if you multiply that by 52 (weeks) in a year, it equates to about 3,200 days we have on the planet. So what are we doing with this time? How much of it is managed effectively and who have we shared things with and helped? We must make sure that we are making the most of all this time that we have been blessed with and help others, especially the widows and less fortunate. We should not keep putting off things that we have said we wanted to do like visiting someone that we have been promising to and never ever actually do it. She explained that because we live in a society that wants everything right now, we cannot expect our God to be an instamatic God in our circumstances. We must allow God to have his way in our lives, and referenced Ephesians 5:17 “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is”. No matter who may try to discourage you the Lords purpose can still be manifested in your life if we have the patience to allow him to have his way.

One of my favorite demonstrations was called “The Price is Right” she placed several designer bags from various high end retailers across a table and selected several audience

members to select a bag. The shinier more expensive ones would seemingly have the best inside...however, the plain bag with no frills and no name behind it was the very one that contained a "gift" or blessing for the conference member who chose it. The message then was man looks on the outside but God does not always send your blessing packaged the way you may want him to. When we think this way we may miss God because of our own perceptions and expectations. He has to be able to see his reflection in us we can't let distractions or anti reflectors cause us to be blinded from the "Son" and not seize the moment thereby receiving his blessings in our lives!

Finally we were told of a Saint of God who knew that the days of her life here on this earth had come to an end, she had three requests, to wear a white dress, place a bible turned to Psalms 23, and a fork in her right hand. When asked why the fork she responded that at any well prepared banquet setting you are told to "keep your fork" in lieu of the main course coming up...consequently over in Glory on the other side the best for her was yet to come...so her fork was preparedness to seize the moment and be ready because the best(in terms of her Eternal reward) was yet to come!

The third and final presenter for the Seminar session was Sister Antoinette Brown. Her theme was; More than Conquerors, we once again received a detailed outline of what it actually means to be able to conquer our problems, stresses, adversities, and trials of this life. Sister Brown opened with a wonderful video montage that included pictures of all of this year's conference participants and officials! We found ourselves being shown on screen with wonderful inspirational music accompanying each slide. It was an exciting and unexpected treat for most of the audience who had been photographed from the Friday night prayer session, the morning glory prayer, and the breakfast. Her message? "We" are all conquerors through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who affords all who believe on him that right and privilege. We have the ability to conquer demonic forces in the Kingdom of this world and in this life. She then defined the term conquer as to defeat or subdue a force, to gain secure control of, and to be victorious and win. To be more than a conqueror than is to even greater than the aforementioned definition and surpass all expectations. She exhorted us that just as God's chosen apostle Paul had to be prepared for his journey to Rome, so will he then prepare us for whatever assignment we are called to do. She referenced Paul's writings taken from the book of Romans which spoke to her theme, More than conquerors Romans 8 – 37-39 Nay, in all things we are **more than conquerors** through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, or things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul could write of these things because of the perils and adversities he experienced before arriving in Rome to carry out the assignment that God had for him to do. His security as ours is in God and is absolute.

To further illustrate how women have to learn to trust the Lord, Sister Brown used shoes in the various ways to bring her point home. Comfortable shoes were parallel to finding comfort in the Lord no matter how dire the situation. She said that "things will literally try to overtake you but on my WAY to the victorious level, I have to be comfortable in

God. You have to have an oasis in him, refresh yourself, spend time alone with him Ps. 34:8 and reap the benefits at the completion.” House shoes were next, when you wear them inside you can’t hear someone walking up on you in house shoes because they are quiet. “I have to be real quiet to hear God’s direction, sit and imagine myself at his feet. Sometimes you kick, scream and cry...and other times it’s so bad that all you can do is moan. In my quiet space I can get some confidence and know that I can do all things! It starts in your mind. I was diagnosed with a life altering illness of sugar diabetes, and multiple sclerosis refused to except the doctors report, he told me to accept it cause these things happened at my age. I refused to believe this was for me! I got busy and changed my eating habits, prayed and got me a picture of the Mother Eades and kept it in my room where I prayed, later went back to the doctor and the blood sugar was normal I could use the muscles affected by the sclerosis and walk unassisted!

The heavier shoes came next Timberland boots, house shoes can’t be worn outside the house. When you get some devastating news you gotta be prepared. She shared the incident of finding out that her husband had passed away suddenly. She stressed that she would have loved it if someone else could have gone to identify his body, she would have loved if they could pick out his clothes, make the necessary phone calls and arrangements but this call was for her! She had to have on the right shoes of preparedness to be able to weather that particular storm! She said “God builds your character can’t hit a hick up and you fall out.” Running shoes are for times when you have to exercise courage. You get a running in your spirit and remain faithful to the Lord. The high heeled shoes are worn when you are at a place where things have an assurance of the Lords presence. Reference scriptures: Deut 31-6, Jer 32:27, Ps. 46:1 Ps55:18, John 15:7 and Luke 10:39. As women, when we have those on our walk changes, there is an air of confidence and we strut to and fro...”Aint nothin you can do with me now! I am MORE than a conqueror!” Sisters Browns’ presentation closed out with shoes for success with several conference participants being chosen to act out scenarios that are difficult and stressful, yet as conquerors in the end we win! Mother Eades was well pleased with the proceedings and briefly greeted us. After thanking the Lord for being there and his presence throughout the conference thus far she quoted Mother Payton who had exclaimed “Oooooooh Weeeeeee”! in regards to all she’d seen and heard. After which her comment was “I just wanna say WOW”! She encouraged and acknowledged each presenter letting them know that they had exceeded her expectations. I am inclined to agree, we were all being spiritually well fed, yet we all had our fork ready for the keynote message to come!

The Retreat culminated with well attended a banquet facilitated by District Missionary Virgie Hodges. Our own resident songbird Sister Christine Jones rendered a wonderful musical selection “Let the Church say Amen” that further blessed the already spirit filled program and set the tone for those that followed.

After fellowshiping and enjoying our meal we heard remarks from the First Lady of the Jurisdiction Mother Jean Booker, and our won Jurisdictional Supervisor had words of expression. She acknowledged all of her guest on panel and exclaimed how pleased she was with all that had transpired thus far. The President of New Generation in the person of

Missionary Gayle Reed blessed us with the sermonic solo, His eye is on the sparrow. After which Assist Supervisor Shirley Hughes presented the keynote speaker for the hour Mother, Dr. Lu Vonia Whittley, Jurisdictional Supervisor for the Midwest Jurisdiction. In her opening she admonished that the reason you come to a conference such as this is to go up. She gave us the back ground of New Generation and how the Lord had dealt with Mother Eades who'd had the vision years ago to recognize the younger women the new and capable generation to further build kingdom work. National Supervisor Mother Rivers was invited to the New Generation conference and was pleased with what she saw. There is now a similar auxiliary nationally for 39 and under women that was born from this idea.

Her message was timely and inspiring entitled "It's Time to come Out from under the palm tree". Taken from the book of Judges she explained how the only female Judge in Israel (Deborah) had been conducting business as usual from underneath the shade and protection of a palm tree. However the nation of Israel had suffered defeat after defeat for their inability to remain obedient to God. So he raised up this female Judge and she had to leave the "comfort" provided by the palm tree and lead the people of God (though a woman) to victory. She spoke of Sisera having thousands of men and many chariots, but "It's not what you got, it's who you got!" Deborah had to leave her comfort zone under the palm tree and become a prophetic military giant. As God raised her up and caused her to have to go into battle, so the women of the Kingdom of God who have become reticent and complacent, or comfortable in their various spiritual lives have to be willing to move up higher and advance towards victory in our kingdom work! What a timely word and so in line with the overall theme of the conference as well as the earlier speakers who instructed: Prayer and Faith have to be your foundation, so that then we Can Seize the Moment, understanding that we ARE more than conquerors, therefore Advancing in Victory! And in the words of our Jurisdictional Supervisor Mother Eades, having implemented all of the above the women of 1st Jurisdiction will be well equipped to excel in 2012!

Viveca G. Williams