

Moments of restoration recalled at WMU annual meeting

June 17, 2017

PHOENIX (BP)—Speakers recounted “Defining Moments”—dramatic, life-changing experiences that make an eternal difference in the hearts and minds of a Christian— during the Woman’s Missionary Union missions celebration and annual meeting.

Defining moments that shape and change

Participants at the two-day meeting explored defining moments in the Bible and in the lives of missionaries, national WMU leaders, Acteens panelists and Southern Baptist leaders.



Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director and treasurer of the Woman’s Missionary Union, addresses the group’s annual meeting June 11 in Phoenix. (BP Photo/Van Payne) “Every moment has a series of defining moments—moments that shape us and change and make us the person we are today,” WMU Executive Director Sandy Wisdom-Martin said.

Brandi Parrish, a native Texan, described when God called her and husband, Kelly, out of their comfort zones to serve as North American Mission Board church planters in Colorado.

“A defining moment in our lives was when we discovered, even though where we lived was good, and life was great, we had a holy discontent inside of us,” she said. “We could not sleep peacefully at night knowing that there was something more that God had for us.

“Not knowing what that was, we began to pray, ‘Yes, Lord.’ We didn’t know what we were praying yes to.”

They prayed 12 months and saw God begin to lay a foundation for them to become church planters in Fort Collins, Colo. The community where they live has a population of more than 300,000, and more than 70 percent of the people have no religious affiliation whatsoever, the couple reported.

“We were scared to death,” he said. “We do know that God doesn’t always call the equipped, but he equips the called. When he called us, we stepped into the ‘Yes, Lord.’ ... We believe that when we live in the ‘Yes, Lord,’ we see miracles with our eyes that we would never see if we did not live in the ‘Yes, Lord.’”

The couple saw the fruits of their labor as their Bible study group grew to around 80 in attendance, overflowing their home, and becoming a church.

“God has continued to bless. God has continued to do the miracle of bringing the dead to life and we get to be a part of that. You get to be a part of that,” he said.

‘God revealed a lost world to me’

In the annual president’s Address, Linda Cooper, a member of Forest Park Baptist Church in Bowling Green, Ky., said the first of many defining moments in her life occurred when as a 12-year-old in a revival service in a small country church she accepted Jesus as Savior.



Linda Cooper, national president of Woman's Missionary Union, addressed the group's annual meeting, with the theme "Defining Moments." Cooper talked about defining moments from her own life, including accepting Jesus as a 12-year-old in a revival service. (BP Photo/ Van Payne) These moments continued throughout her life as "God revealed a lost world to me and led me to today where I represent an organization that is literally changing the world," she said.

Cooper recalled meeting Skeeter, a kitchen manager at a Nashville mission. The formerly homeless man had been beaten and thrown over a bridge. At the mission, he "learned about grace and experienced God's saving grace," she said.

She also recounted the story of a Rwandan woman who came to know Christ after she was freed from the bonds of sex trafficking by producing crafts through WMU's WorldCrafts fair-trade initiative to earn a sustainable living.

Cooper, who was elected to her third term as WMU president, reminded the women they, too, are providing defining moments in the lives of men, women, boys and girls in WMU.

'God is still at work around the world'

Ross and Dena Frierson told the missions celebration participants they have seen God's redemptive hand through history while ministering to the

Udmurt people of Russia.

God's plan for this previously unreached and unengaged people group can be traced back to a 2007 prayer emphasis—the 2007 Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization that focused on the Udmurt people group, said the Friersons, who began serving in Russia in 2009. The couple helped plant churches in Udmurtia, located about 700 miles east of Moscow.

“God is still at work around the world to accomplish his redemptive purpose for all of the people groups on the earth,” Dena Frierson said. The family soon will serve in Wales.

North American Mission Board appointees Jacob and Jessica Dahl serve as church planters in Ellensburg, Wash., home to 11,000 college students at Central Washington University. In their church plant, the missionary couple has seen more than 103 persons baptized, 98 salvations and their core group of believers grow to 250.

As an International Mission Board worker in Thailand since 1992, Cheryl Derbyshire directs Thai Country Trim, a ministry that provides income for more than 200 rural village women who use their talents and gifts to produce WorldCraft products. As their handiwork is sold across the world, the women are being led to Christ and become leaders in their local churches.

Gordon Fort, senior ambassador for the president of the International Mission Board, delivered a sermon based on Luke 14:16-24, saying the spiritually lost are waiting for invitations to join the feast and sit at the right hand of the Master.

“The invitation to this wedding feast is in your hand,” Fort said. “This is not just ‘a defining moment.’ This is ‘the defining moment.’”

WMU presented the 2017 Dellanna West O'Brien Award to Becky Sumrall,

executive director of Begin Anew, Christian Women's Job Corps of Middle Tennessee, in recognition of her work with CWJC as well as investment of her time in developing outstanding leadership skills in the women she works with.

The next WMU annual meeting is set for June 10-11, 2018, in Dallas.