

Kathy Hillman: Arise, Shine ... When We Rise Up, He Shines Through

October 31, 2015

A large glittering star adorned with “Arise, Shine” hung suspended in the baptistery. Nervous girls dressed in Sunday best slowly processed into the candlelit sanctuary.



Kathy Hillman Finally, those to be crowned queens and receive scepters and capes entered. As GA recognition began, the Woman’s Missionary Union director asked the youngest girl to recite and explain her first required Scripture verse. Shyly but confidently, she stepped forward. “Arise, shine; for thy light is come!” Isaiah 60:1 means God sent his Son to be the light of the world. I must shine with Christ’s light because he saved me.”

The 2015 Baptist Women’s World Day of Prayer theme, “Arise, Shine ... When We Rise Up, He Shines Through,” reminds me of that long-ago Sunday and the first time I spoke in a worship service. Each year on the first Monday in November, the Baptist World Alliance Women’s Department leads women across the world to observe a day of prayer. We hear moving stories of those who shine in spite of difficult circumstances. We pray, we

give and we depart inspired to reflect Christ's light wherever we go.



A GA coronation service at First Baptist Church in Tyler, 1968-69. Several future missionaries and Texas WMU executive board members participated in the service as girls. (Image courtesy of Mary Love Berryman) But our responsibility to arise, shine isn't limited to one day. The psalmist wrote, "For thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness" (Psalm 18:28). God calls us to share Christ's light not only in our hometowns but also throughout Texas and beyond. S.A. Chambers said, "We must not wait until every church is lighted with an elegant chandelier before we send the lamp of God's word to the nations that sit in darkness."

For more than 5,000 years, candles have illuminated homes and lit paths. Just as chandlers carefully braided wicks, melted wax and worked carefully to dip candles, so must we allow the heavenly Father to ready our lights to shine in the world.



Baylor graduates Holly Tucker, a contestant on The Voice, and Bryan Watt, an American Idol contestant, sing “The Prayer” at Columbus Avenue Baptist Church in Waco. (Kathy Hillman Photo)The wick offers structure to the candle, conveys fuel to the flame and influences how the taper burns. For us as Christians, the wick represents the Great Commission and offers structure through churches, WMU, other entities and Texas Baptists.

The wax provides fuel, vaporizing and losing itself in the process. The fuel of missions wax comes as we lose ourselves in praying, giving, educating, creating an environment for hearing God’s call, and nurturing and supporting those who go.

Making candles requires work, dipping the wick first into hot wax, then into cold water and repeating the process over and over again. Only then can the light transform the world’s darkness. We work to light the world not only by serving, but also by communicating God’s perspective, developing skills and passionately responding.



Waco Regional Baptist Association Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer observance in 2014. (Kathy Hillman Photo) Within a few months, the candles of hundreds of international missionaries we have long nurtured and supported will flicker, dim and finally darken in the countries where they serve. In September 2015, the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board announced sizeable revenue shortfalls and retirement incentives to those age 50 or over with five or more years of service.

Many have agonized over the decision with children in college, no house or down-payment money, no vehicle, no job or way to search long-distance, and no health insurance coverage beyond one year. E-mails fill my inbox and those of WMU friends requesting prayer and expressing uncertainty. Ironically, or perhaps divinely, decision day falls on the 2015 Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer.



Kathy Hillman's husband, John, participates in a candlelight service. (Kathy Hillman Photo) The candles of 200 or more of these returning missionaries will once again shine in our state. Texas Baptists and Texas Baptist churches have the privilege of praying, supporting and assisting during the transition. The Baptist General Convention of Texas and Texas WMU are partnering to create a task force to help those who accept the voluntary incentive. Specifics will be forthcoming as these families prepare to retire about Dec. 31, and we develop ways to help lift their lights to new lampstands.

As a fifth-grader, I learned a poem that comforts and reminds us of God's mandate to "Arise, shine; for thy light is come!" (Isaiah 60:1).

A candle's but a simple thing.

It starts with just a piece of string.

But dipped and dipped with patient hand,

It gathers wax upon its strand,

Until complete and snowy white,

It gives at last a lovely light.

Life seems so like that bit of string.

Each deed we do's a simple thing.

But day by day if on life's strand



We dip with patient heart and hand,

We gather joy, make dark days bright,

And give at last God's lovely light.

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