

Good Morning, Bishop Lee, members of the Annual Conference.

We have come to this annual conference with the Theme ONE BREAD, ONE BODY; we are ONE, in Jesus Christ. Yes we are made up of many parts, yet we are ONE BODY. Our foundation has been built, on THE SOLID ROCK OF JESUS CHRIST. CHRIST is our foundation. AMEN!!!

This has been a year of transformation. We have seen and heard about some new and exciting ministries; we have embraced opportunities to build new relationships and renew old relationships between the laity and clergy in the same city or town, neighboring communities or across many miles and we need to continue to build new relationships and renew old relationships. We have worked TOGETHER, laity and laity, clergy and clergy, and laity and clergy, to seek out the needs of our communities around us, we need to continue and begin to work together! It's exciting to hear about the plans that the circuits are working on, laity and clergy together, the passion, the spirit that is about when we live out our mission. New faith communities are being developed; new leadership training is being developed. We are learning more about the needs in our communities than we have ever learned before, we are learning more about each other than we have ever learned before. We have heard and seen the way in which we have reached out in our communities. It's exciting to hear the ways we have supported each other, in our prayers, and with our partnerships. We need to continue to work together, we need to continue to reach out to our communities and we need to continue to support each other. This year has been filled with all of these things and more....we are learning to listen to each other, really listen; we are learning to care, really care for each other; we are learning to share ideas with each other; we are finding common ministries. We are discovering when we come together as ONE BODY, with CHRIST as our foundation, Anything is possible...we can do ministry together.

Butterfly Story,

A man found the cocoon of a butterfly just as the butterfly was appearing, so he decided to sit down and watch as the butterfly struggled to force its body out of the tiny hole in the cocoon. Then it seemed the butterfly stopped making any progress, it had gone as far as it could. The man decided to help the butterfly by getting a scissors and snipping off the end of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. The butterfly was small and had shriveled up wings. The man thought in time that the wings would enlarge and expand and the butterfly would be able to fly. That didn't happen; in fact the butterfly spent its life crawling around unable to fly...you see the butterfly needed to struggle through that tiny hole, the tiny hole forces fluid from the body of the butterfly so when the butterfly emerges, its ready to fly...

The butterfly is the symbol of Transformation...That butterfly was once a caterpillar, fuzzy, able to curl up in a ball when danger is near to protect itself. Sometimes I wish I had that ability. A caterpillar is not able to FLY, it has to spin a cocoon, work, and work, and work, and work, to transform itself into the butterfly. The work that is going on is not visible to the human eye. We cannot see what is going on, yet hard work is being done.

When we see butterflies fly with their beautiful colors and splendor, as they glide across the air, do we see the struggles they had to go through to be able to FLY??

We have seen and experienced struggles this year, there have been fears, and hurts and many, many questions. We are like the butterfly, we are in a time of transformation in the way we do ministry in this conference....the butterfly didn't fly without struggles!

I had an opportunity recently to visit with a woman who was telling me a story about a ministry she is involved in. As I listened to her talk about how she spent three months in Cambodia, each summer, in the small villages. She said she takes medical supplies and vegetable seeds, and water wells are drilled. As I watched her tell her story, she had such passion in her face, such love in her voice. She said "I stay for three months because I want to see how the medicine is helping." As she told the story about bringing water and how that changed the lives of the people who live in the villages, I noticed tears in her eyes. She said "When they have water, then we bring them vegetable seeds, so they can grow their own food, and become self sufficient." I could see what spirit she had and I said "You are very passionate about this ministry, what a wonderful ministry. Three months is a long time, you're doing a great job." I was praising her for the wonderful ministry she was doing and she replied, "It's NOT ABOUT ME!"

Doug Anderson reminded us in the laity session that this ministry is NOT about US...It's about doing ministry OUT!!! It's about those in our communities who have not yet met God!!!! Doug called for us to step out of comfort zone.

The Board of Lay Ministry team has been working on ways to communicate better, with each other, with the circuits, with the districts and across the conference. We are working on developing leadership training along with other agencies. We are working on developing new opportunities to discover and develop the gifts that God has blessed us with. There is 3000 laity in this conference who have gone beyond the local churches and done additional education or training. They are equipped to be doing ministry. That's just in ONE YEAR!!!

I'd like to have those who are members of the Board of Lay Ministry Team to stand so you can get familiar with who they are.

Thank you, Bishop Lee, for your spiritual guidance and support of the work of the laity in this conference. We look forward to working in ministry together.

I'd like us to DREAM together. Close your eyes....No snoring....Let's IMAGINE, and let's dream and imagine in color, what would it be like to do circuit ministry together with all of our hurts healed, without any fear, without any anger, without any frustration, IMAGINE what it would be like to have ALL the resources you needed, all the gifts, all the talents, passion. Imagine if laity prayed for our pastors, and pastors prayed for our laity, if we all prayed for our Bishop and her assistant, for our superintendents, the staff at the annual conference... remember God calls for us to pray without ceasing... Nothing is

impossible when our foundation has been built ON THE SOLID ROCK OF JESUS CHRIST. What do our circuit ministries look like???

The Wisconsin Annual Conference is making history; we are the pioneers for this circuit ministry. We can do all that you IMAGINED and MORE, if we ALL WORK TOGETHER, laity with laity, clergy with clergy, laity and clergy. As we go from this Annual Conference, let us pray without ceasing, LET US REMEMBER, WE ARE ONE BREAD, ONE BODY, THAT OUR FOUNDATION HAS BEEN BUILT ON THE SOLID ROCK OF JESUS CHRIST.

CHRIST as our foundation. AMEN!!!