

## **NATIONAL SEMINAR 2007**

### **'For Christ's Sake...Turn the World Upside Down!'**

National Seminar was held at Scarritt Bennett Center in Nashville, Tennessee on August 11<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Kyung Za Yim (President of U.M.W.) along with the Women's Division staff members was there to guide and direct the participants and also explore with us God's actions in the current moment and to know how we must respond. This year's theme 'For Christ's Sake...Turn the World Upside Down!' is a statement that reflects on rich diversity of race, ethnicity and age, that reflected on the early Christians who were accused of "turning the world upside down" (Acts 17: 1-9).

Sung-ok Lee Chongmunim was in charge of introducing to the participants all about National Seminar previous to the Seminar. She had us fill out registration forms, background and biographical information, and signing of our covenant forms. We also had to turn in our own issue group preferences (mine was Immigration). During the Seminar, she was the overseer of the program. Each day she greeted and went over what we would be doing for the day.

National Seminar consisted of worship and praise, Bible study led by Rev. Janet Wolf, small group and issue group gatherings, and community visits. It was not until the third day we actually went across Nashville to see some of the real issues (immigration, homelessness, etc.).

On August 13th (Mon) we went to TIRRC (Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition) office to hear the current policy and also to hear Hispanic people's stories and experiences in Nashville. In addition to their testimonies, in order to bring a family member to America, they would have to wait over 20 years in order to finalize the document. How surprising and disappointing. Now I (we) understand why there are so many illegal immigrants.

We heard them speak out and also had conversations with them one to one. Hearing their stories and being around them actually awakened me. Media is nothing! Go and spend few hours with them and hear their voices, you can feel what they are going through in their daily lives.

The next day, August 14th (Tues), at a temperature of 105 degree we advocated for fair-wages on behalf of workers at Vanderbilt University. Then, we attended a vigil to protest neglect and violence against homeless people.

There was a memorial service on behalf of 32 year old Tara Cole who had a bipolar disorder, was murdered and tossed/rolled into the Cumberland River by young teens, which simply expressed "beat up the homeless people."

From these community visits, we need to make changes and take care of those that are in need. If not us, then who will do it? And if not now, then when?

National Seminar was an awesome experience for all the participants. By having us exposed to some real issues, our minds and our hearts opened up for them. As United Methodist Women, I believe we have to take action in order to bring equality, abundance and peace to this world. How do we take action? We are able to take action because we have faith, courage and discernment. And through our action we DO see changes in our community and our country, we do see miracles happening... We DO turn the world upside down! □