

General Conference 2008
Report from Judi Arnold
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This was my first time to attend General Conference. I don't know exactly what I was expecting, but I certainly did not expect the cold, impersonal, spiritual indifference that I felt permeated the entire event, from the floor of the conference, to the legislative committees and even in the prayer tent! I came away discouraged and disheartened.

The word "inclusiveness," so talked about, seemed meaningless without God's presence to draw us into unity. Where was God and His Spirit? He seemed to be the One who was not included!

I was reminded of what God had to say to the church at Thyatira (Rev. 3:18-29) as I watched the United Methodist "inclusiveness" in allowing demonstrations by the gay coalition (Soulforce, Affirmation, Reconciling Ministries, Methodist Federation for Social Action). And, I was appalled that the First United Methodist Church of Fort Worth allowed these groups to meet in the sanctuary to plan their strategy for demonstrations at the Convention Center! God help us!

Although several of the General Conference speakers had good talks and their words were worthy enough to touch the heart—yet, I felt that their uplifting words were often destroyed by the pagan-type pageantry that illustrated their sermons. Although I truly wanted to feel God's presence—I just never did.

The whole conference, to me, was *no different* from most "conventions" I attended during my career—busy talk, networking, advertising and pretense! GC2008 certainly was not my idea of "Holy Conferencing," nor was it spiritually encouraging for me!

One thing that particularly bothered me was the lack of real dialogue in the legislative committees (I observed Discipleship). It seemed that the *same people* always did the talking, and important issues such as spiritual growth and evangelism were just passed over and not really dealt with. There were not big, controversial issues—but it is important issues like evangelism and spiritual growth that, if not encouraged, will eventually die away, leaving our church spiritually dead. In many areas it is already that way!

On the positive note—the Good News/Coalition sponsored breakfasts in the morning were the highlight for me. The music and prayer drew me into God's presence and His Spirit encouraged me to keep on keeping on. Although my body was tired—my spirit was renewed each morning and I thank Good News and the Renewal and Reform Coalition for providing that wonderful worship time for the delegates and our renewal team as well. It was such a blessing to start the day praising our Lord—without pretense or pageantry.

I want to thank the RENEW Network for asking me to be a member of the team. It was a real eye-opener for me and I have already begun to inform my church of the "deadness" of that conference and the importance for us as followers of Jesus Christ to "Contend earnestly for the faith..." (Jude, Verse 3).