

MAGNOLIA MINDS: BMCU celebrates 150 years of God's faithfulness

By Laura Leathers

Over 600 women across northeast Mississippi, southern Tennessee, and northwest Alabama gathered early Saturday morning, April 20, to attend the first-ever "Women of Faith, Celebrating God's Faithfulness" conference at Blue Mountain Christian University (BMCU).



McMillin and Kingsbury (Photo credit: BMCU Facebook)

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When the committee began praying, brainstorming, and planning the details for the 150th Celebration, they knew there needed to be a special event for women. After all, the founder, Brigadier-General Mark Perrin Lowrey, founded the college specifically for women.

The conference began with a time of worship led by the BMCU student praise band, "Exalt." Then, Dr. Barbara McMillin, BMCU President, extended a warm welcome. She enthusiastically shared that this has been an exciting year celebrating the existence of Blue Mountain Christian University, 1873 – 2023.

Dr. McMillin said, "We have focused on God's faithfulness this year. The testimony of this institution is that God has been

faithful to us since day one. There aren't many places left like this. We realize every day that we are here by the grace of our God. We are here to do whatever He has called us to do, ensuring that young men and women, whatever their calling, are well-prepared."

Rita Sweatt, Women's Ministry speaker and performer, appeared on stage dressed as a woman from the Bible, but we didn't know who she represented. We had to wait for the story to unfold.

I asked her to share how she created and developed the monologue. "When I was invited to come, it was suggested that I do a new girl. I began to pray about it, as I do with all the girls' writings I've done. The Lord began to speak to me in multiple ways. In a very short time, I knew I was to do the woman with the issue of blood. 'Miracles Happen' is what I've named it."

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Rita Sweatt performs a monologue of the women with the issue of blood. (Photo credit: BMCU Facebook)

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What has this event meant to you personally? “I’ve been very honored to be a part of it. Because Blue Mountain is a special place, the impact of so many lives on this campus can’t be numbered or measured because of the Kingdom work that’s been done here; it’s a special place. We want to celebrate the great legacy and history of BMCU. I’m very humbled and honored to participate in this conference.”

During the intermission, I approached a lady sitting behind me and asked why she had attended this conference. Lashunda Buggs from Houlka, Mississippi, told me she had read over fifty books Karen Kingsbury had written. The addiction began when a co-worker shared her starter collection with her about five years ago.

When asked what drew her to Kingsbury's books, Lashunda responded, "First of all, it's her Christian standpoint. Her books are biblically based. They are real life for the times we're living in. They don't hide the challenges of life, but they do point to the grace of God. And that is what draws me to her books."

Karen Kingsbury, the keynote speaker, was an absolute delight. Throughout her talk, she wove personal and family stories, the experiences of writing books, and producing the movie *Someone Like You*. She also shared about the inception and the movement of "You Were Seen."

Her main presentation centered on how people must intentionally write their best seller – *The Days of Your Life*. The outline, "Love Well, Laugh Often, Look for the Miracles, and Live for Jesus."



Karen Kingsbury signs books for attendees of the women's conference. (Photo credit: BMCU Facebook)

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“There is a joy among my Mississippi readers that is different from other places. In Mississippi, I find myself smiling all day long and meeting people who are filled with happiness because of their faith. I have met many people in Mississippi,

especially during my time at BMCU, and one day, they will all be my best friends in heaven. I have no doubt about that!

“It was an honor to be asked to speak at the 150th anniversary celebration of Blue Mountain Christian University. I imagine all the people who gave devoted service to Jesus to see that this school would continue year after year to raise up young people in the ways of the Lord. I had not heard of BMCU before being asked to speak at this event, but the Spirit of God moves through the campus and buildings. I could sense that during my time there. BMCU has a legacy of faith that must be continued, especially in these times.”

As of this writing, *Someone Like You* will be in the theaters until May 2. If you want to show the movie for groups, go through Faith Content Network starting May 1. There is a 7-part Bible study to accompany the film.

When the conference was over, I approached Dr. Ronald Meeks and asked if it was true that he was the brainchild behind putting this women’s conference together. He replied, “That is true. I was a part of the 150th anniversary committee. We wanted to recapture our heritage as a women’s institution, to reach back and say we’re still a great place for women to be nurtured spiritually.”

Read more about the 150th Celebration at Founders Day Chapel.

Leathers is a member of First Church, Lexington.