

Touchstones for doing mission

It may start with spaghetti dinners



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Rev. Jill Weber is the founder of the Greater Ontario House of Prayer (GOHOP). She recently moved to the United Kingdom to serve on the global leadership team of 24-7 Prayer Network, a role in which she connects with Houses of Prayer around the world.

live magazine sat down with Jill to talk about what it takes to prepare the way of the Lord; to obey His call to mission. In that conversation, she emphasized the connection between authentic experience of God and mission.

"And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people'" (Matthew 4:19 NRSV).

"Jesus continues to be the goal. He is the Destination, the Way and the Companion on the Way. Mission is not the goal," Jill affirms. Encounter (authentic experience of God) and mission are not two separate things. The place of encounter *is* the place of mission (Acts 3).

She also recognizes that Jesus does the making . . . not us. He is the element, literally between encounter and mission. In Him, and as we follow Him, we are literally being made into fishers of people.

It takes discipline though, to hold encounter and mission in balance and to discern where God is at work while one is in the messy middle of doing mission. Jill suggests some key touchstones for any woman who wants to do mission from that place of encounter.

Learn how to pay attention

Can we actually be where we are or do we step into mission already preoccupied? How can we live in the moment in mission and where God is present?

Before doing any mission outreach, Jill strongly advocates for our need to know how to quiet our hearts and minds and make space. “Practice spiritual journaling, silence and solitude. These are all great ways to de-clutter our hearts and minds so that there’s room to let someone in . . . to our prayers and into our hearts.”

We make space within us for God and for people. For Jill, the question becomes: “Can we enter into that space with the expectation that we’ll find God there?”

Practice wonder

One of the great benefits when we de-clutter is that we realize God is omnipresent. In some places we may find His image is distorted but He is present.

Practice hospitality

Do we receive others who are not like us; those who are “other?” So often we are scared of others. We judge people and we project our own inadequacies and fears onto them. Mission is about practicing hospitality.

Choose community

Practicing hospitality underlines the importance of community. Spiritual practices are always easier to do in community. That’s the way God designed it. “In Hamilton [with GOHOP] we built a community of shared practice. We gathered a group of people who wanted to explore a variety of spiritual practices,” says Jill. “To go on

mission, create community first—a group of co-conspirators—and build shared practices.”

As Jill and the GOHOP ministry moved outward and forward, she didn’t start doing mission on her own. “There were perfectly great ministries already at work in Hamilton,” she remembers, so they connected with them.

Understand the importance of relocation

When Jill and her family moved forward into mission, they physically moved themselves (and GOHOP) into one of the most fragile yet resilient neighbourhoods in Hamilton. And she changed her schedule to be mentored by Rev. Sue Carr, a CBOQ chaplain in the Barton Street community. For three years, Jill shadowed Rev. Sue Carr. As Jill puts it, “I hid behind the coffee table, set up chairs, and watched.” Jill learned how Sue did ministry; how she created a safe space for all the vulnerable she served.

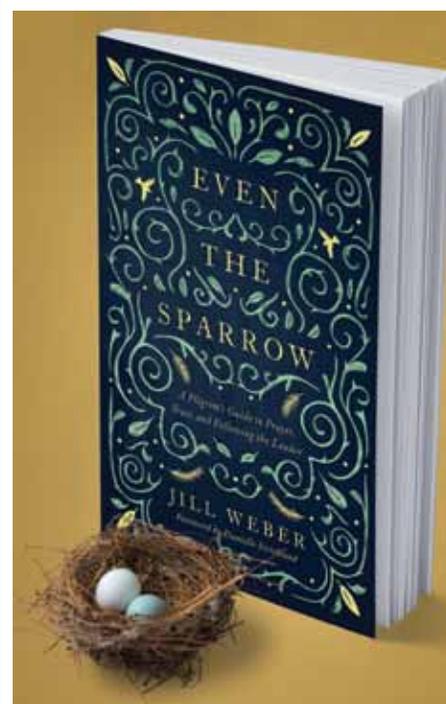
Jill admits that her mentorship by Sue wasn’t your typical mentorship. “Mentoring is not what we think it is. We’ve made mentoring consumerist; not what Jesus modelled it to be. ‘Come and follow me,’ He says. People wandered around with Him.”

She cautions that while you do need to relocate, you don’t need to relocate your family. You simply need to find the poor and be with them. This is the dance of invitation and challenge that women

who want to grow in mission will ultimately face: not only to find those co-conspirators with whom to build shared practices, but to also search out those women and groups already serving the poor. “Go and help them; learn from them,” says Jill, “and don’t underestimate the power of presence.”

Explore and experiment

Another life-giving touchstone Jill never underestimates is the



EVEN THE SPARROW

For those interested in gathering women to form intercessory prayer groups in their churches, Baptist Women will host a training session in late March using questions, insights and lessons learned from Jill’s book, *Even The Sparrow*. Contact Renée James at 416-651-8967 if you’re interested in being part of this group.

language of exploration and experimentation. “We’re scared of doing it wrong and we all suffer from the need to do mission right . . . the first time. Frame your activities as experiments—we all know that experiments may fail,” she admits.

Jill’s expansion of GOHOP’s ministry to relocate into that resilient Hamilton neighbourhood; to practice communal living; to do spaghetti suppers for everyone who showed up at their kitchen table every Tuesday night without fail “except Christmas and New Year’s;” to run the prayer room in the basement of 541 Eatery and Exchange on Barton Street; to host Hamilton’s only prayer truck in the alley at the side of a youth centre . . . these ministries have in essence

been answers to her question: *Can we be people of prayer right in the middle of it all in this tough neighbourhood? Can we incarnate the presence of Jesus?* This is the question for all of us as we move outward and forward in mission.

“I’m not fussing about what works or what doesn’t. I’m just trying.” Heady words indeed from a woman whose ministry has taken her from local church youth group leadership to starting a regional House of Prayer to becoming part of 24-7 Prayer’s global leadership team.

Untangle yourself from outcomes

Jill admits that she didn’t have a clue 18 years ago when she began ministry . . . and she still doesn’t.

She’s the first to say that the only thing she knows how to do as a leader is to listen to God with the intent to obey. “I actually don’t know what people need; my brain isn’t big enough,” she laughs. “I just have to get over myself and pay attention to what God is doing. That’s the outcome.”

Today her *modus operandi*, even though her church is 1,200 people strong, is simply to be fully present and fully loving. “What’s God building in this conversation?” she asks. “We underestimate the power of the catalytic moment; the moment of encounter.”

Authentic experience of God and intimate connection to mission. Both begin and end, it seems, with encounter. ■

A HISTORY MOMENT

In 1974, women celebrate 100 years of mission in India

To celebrate the centennial of Canadian Baptist foreign missions, three guests from India addressed the 1974 BWMS convention at Queen’s University. Veteran missionary Jessie Rosser presents the issues facing India then—too much or too little leadership in some churches, and continual crises of flood, drought, unrest, over-population and lack of health education.

From *Our Heritage Becomes Our Challenge*, by Esther Barnes (2013), page 272.

WE REMEMBER

Each generation has the opportunity to fuel mission for the next. We are thankful for the following gifts:

IN MEMORY OF

Agnes (Nancy) Fox, London
Kathleen Pritchard, Hamilton
Elaine Slewelling-Jones,
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