



e-Java Moments

An e-newsletter of the North American Baptist Conference Women's Ministry

May/June 2015

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SHARE A CUP WITH JEAN...

WMLT 2015 Share Your Blessings Project First Gift Ministry

BY JEAN EWING



Do you remember the joy and excitement of receiving and opening

gifts for that new baby? A group of women from Bethany Baptist Church in Richmond, British Columbia, Canada is bringing that same joy to new mothers who are recovering from drug and alcohol addiction. Their ministry, First Gift, was started over eight years ago when a Bethany church member delivered at BC Women's Hospital and was put in an overflow bed in Fir ward, a lockdown ward for recovering addicts (read Elsje Hannah's story on page 2).

The women in this ward are coming from a life that has been impacted by poverty, abuse, neglect, and a lack of self-worth. They voluntarily check themselves into this ward



A ministry to support new mothers and their babies as they recover from drug and alcohol addiction

because they want to be free from addiction and hope that they will be able to raise their growing babies and bring some love into their lives.

Elsje identified a need, and a small group of women from Bethany started visiting Fir ward monthly, bringing laundry baskets filled with items for the new babies. Included in the baskets are gifts for the new moms too: a New Testament, a journal, a pen, and now a DVD of the recently released movie *God's Not Dead*. Over 60 baskets are delivered each year.

The team of women who visit Fir ward love holding the new babies and spending time getting to know more about the

young women, quietly praying and encouraging them along the way.

Trina Ojo, ministry coordinator, shares:

"Over the years we've helped so many women in need. I must admit that we don't always see the results of these visits, as many of the women meet us only once or twice. We have seen a few women, however, go on to a faith in God, and we have even been invited to a couple of baptisms!"

The Women's Ministry Leadership Team is inviting you to become involved in this outreach project not only with your finances, but also with your prayers. Your offering, which will be used to purchase the supplies for the laundry baskets, can be sent through July 31, 2015.

Please check our website, www.nabconference.org/ministries/womens-ministry/share-your-blessings, for additional mailing information.





First Gift Ministry Prayer Requests

YOU CAN PRAY:

that the volunteers are able to impact the women in Fir Ward.

for the emotional and physical well-being of the women and their babies as they become drug free and move into a life together.

for the emotional health of the women whose babies are placed in the custody of Child Services.

that the DVD God's Not Dead will reach the hearts of women and show them the reality of God.

that the visits and gifts will reflect God's love to each woman's heart.

for a continued strong connection with the ward through their activities coordinator.

STIR THE HEART

First Gift Ministry Beginnings

BY ELSJA HANNAH & HEATHER SENGES



My name is Elsjahannah and I am the founder of First Gift, a ministry which began on December 22, 2005 at BC Women's Hospital. Our mission statement is:

- To support pregnant women and new mothers who are recovering from drug and alcohol abuse and addiction.
- To show these amazing women that someone cares about them.
- To connect with these women who may not have heard of the wonderful love of Jesus and to pass along this great message.

I've been asked to document how it all got started. It started with God, of course! On April 22, 2005, at the ripe old age of 39, God blessed me with the birth of my daughter, Rachel. Because my pregnancy was considered high risk and because Rachel was a breach baby, the doctors made the decision for her to come into

the world via C-section. She arrived at 8:11 a.m. with no complications other than that she was very small, a mere 4 lbs, 11 oz. As we were being wheeled up to the room we would call home for a day or two, the nurse said, "You do know where you're going, right?" As far as I knew, we were going to a private room as requested. Well, we were, but the ward we were going to was Fir Ward, the lockdown unit. This unit was built for pregnant women addicted to drugs and for prisoners expecting babies. I felt very out of place, to say the least! As we settled in and became acquainted with our new precious miracle, we began to learn more about Fir Ward and the women who spent time there.

On that first day we heard these scraping sounds going down the hall at fairly regular intervals. I was still in bed, so I asked my husband to see what was going on. He reported that there was a prisoner with chains on her ankles and with her hand cuffed to a guard. She and her guard were going out to the terrace so that she could have a smoke. Those first days





were truly mind-boggling as we began to understand the breadth of the issues surrounding these women detoxing from drug addictions, facing prison sentences, homeless, abandonment, and pregnancy, alone and so desperately needing Jesus.

After we returned home, those days on the ward continued to come back to my mind. That summer I prayed a lot and wondered what my response could possibly be. I called my sister in the fall of that year and poured out my heart to her. I wanted to do something for these women but didn't quite know how I could manage. You see, they needed so much. How could I possibly supply anything? Little did I know that God had been tugging on my mom and sister's heartstrings too, and they had also been praying. We got together and decided that we would do something, and we began the mission to find out what these women needed most.

We made a trip back to the ward to visit the nurses, and we were connected with a staff person who let us know that most women had nothing, not even a toothbrush or proper clothing. My family and I prepared Christmas baskets

filled with basic hygiene items, essentials for a new baby, some things to help the moms feel special, a journal, bible, and baby book. We knew that there were twelve rooms on the ward, so we prepared twelve baskets. Our visit was successful and we know immediately that we needed to continue this outreach. I went to my church, Bethany Baptist Church, and made my pitch. They caught the vision and First Gift was born!

I shared the following testimony at a church in 2006.

"On December 22 of last year, 2005, my sister, mom, and I walked into BC Women's Hospital to deliver baskets for the first time. We were filled with trepidation and anxiety. We had been warned by staff that some patients could be hostile and rude. But God was faithful to us and we were met with a warm welcome. The pregnant moms and new moms seemed genuinely happy to meet us. It was a moving experience for all of us. Since

that time we have been delivering baskets once a month and we have been able to help a number of women with their specific concerns. We stepped out in faith believing that this is what God wanted us to do, and He has been faithful in return by opening doors . . . literally. The ward we visit is a lockdown ward which serves drug addicts as well as prisoners. Normally we would need clearance, criminal record checks, hospital forms to be filled out, etc. We have never been asked to do any of this and are allowed entry whenever we visit. They are very open to the fact that we are Christian and this is a Christian ministry, and we have never been asked to censor our faith. God has indeed blessed us in this work."

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We will be celebrating our tenth anniversary this year, and that means that for the last ten years First Gift has been visiting the ward once a month with baskets for new moms. We often combine our visits with coffee and snacks or a meal, always taking opportunities to make connections with these new moms, establishing new friendships and sharing Jesus with everyone, patients and staff alike.

Thank you for caring for this ministry through your prayers and offerings. Glory be to God the Father, who loves us so.



Flavorings...

BY KAREN BIEBER-GUILLORY



How did your Seven gathering turn out?

Although we were only five, the Spirit

was with us! We agreed on gathering together again in the coming month to begin a bible study that focuses on relationships. We are hoping that others will join us.



May/June Challenge: Spend time with children!

Get involved in children's ministries or at pediatric wards, volunteer to read a story, help plan a VBS program, or help out at schools. You will be a great blessing and bless yourself as well!



God at work... Maintaining an accessible heart

BY AMBER DOWD



Sometimes things fall apart. One week last February I started out with my list of personal plans and goals all ready to go. But a call from school quickly dissolved my week into one of crisis management for one of my children. I scrambled to find childcare for the baby and canceled appointments and errands until further notice. The problem continued on for weeks, unfolding in a public setting for all to see. I became a sparkling example of frustration, impatience, and helplessness, all played out before friends, acquaintances, school workers, and neighbors. There was no hiding. The Dowds were a spectacle. It was a humbling experience.

Time has allowed us a chance to finally get a grip. And it affords me a moment to reflect on what God has done during this struggle.

On good days it's easy to say that since I'm a follower Jesus, I have a "sent" purpose to the world. I can follow a rough set of goals where I seek to relate to other moms at our public school on a heart level, looking for ways to connect, pray, and offer acts of service. It's all rather neat and concise. But this past season has reminded me that there are also bad days. And God has shown me that He is at work on the bad days, too. On these days, my soul is messy and my emotions slip and slide. On these days, it seems like my sentness somehow takes form in how willing I am to receive from others; that is, how willing I am to let others be "sent" to me.

In our state of spectacle I was deeply moved by who emerged

from the shadows on our behalf. One morning I was at my wits' end with everything. A fellow mom saw me struggling and quickly came to hold the baby so I could focus. Soon after, I began getting multiple texts from her, just checking in on how we were doing. This woman has since offered play dates, babysitting, encouraging words, and plain and simple friendship to me. My utter state of helplessness opened up an opportunity to forge a bond that hadn't been there before. In a way, God "sent" her to me, even though she is not a believer, and I've been able to open up to her about my faith—not so much by my efforts to share it, but simply because I've had no choice but to bear my soul.

She is one example of several such stories. Interestingly, our crisis has opened deeper interactions with the principal of our school, teachers, and other families. Fellow Christian friends at school have been praying for us, and our faith bond has been strengthened as a result. I trust that God will use this as He unfolds His story at our school.

So when I consider being "sent" or having a "mission" to my place, I'm challenged to consider not only what I have to give in terms of pastoral care, but also what it looks like to maintain an accessible heart and readiness to live out my real-time story with God before others. Allowing people space to walk with me in my struggles (whether or not they follow Christ) opens up friendships and allows space for God to move. It expands my notion of mission beyond a mentality of what I "bring" to people to a perspective that God is at work all around us and my life can bear witness to His very real presence on the good days and the bad days.

A GOOD READ

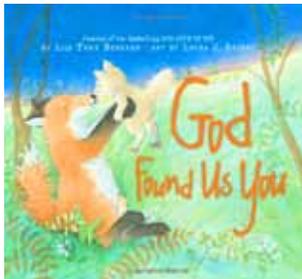
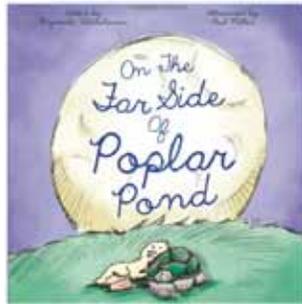
Adoption picture books for kids

BY JAN KOGER



Picture books may possibly be the perfect vehicle to explore meaningful, yet complex topics with children (of all ages).

God Found Us You by Lisa Tawn Bergren and *On the Far Side of Poplar Pond* by Anjanette Walchshausser are two books that beautifully and tenderly present the subject of adoption. Animal families are given children to love and care for. Their children look different than they look, but are children who desperately need kisses and cuddles and forever homes. Birth mothers are compassionately integrated into both stories. No book about adoption can fit every scenario, but these two lovely picture books certainly portray adoption in a God-given framework.



"In love He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will."

– Ephesians 1:4b-5 (NIV)

Thank you for supporting the WMLT Christmas Project

Feed the Children in Guatemala

We have blessed the ministry of The Potter's House in Montreal, Quebec with **\$5,615** to continue feeding the impoverished children in Guatemala.



Answer the call to Feed the Children in Guatemala and share the love of God

All women are encouraged to attend a special luncheon at the Sheraton Grand Hotel.

With a program centered on the theme "Life Interrupted," we'll explore, as women, how God stops our self-planned journeys and inserts His transformative power into His Spirit-guided directions. Enjoy connecting with new and old friends. You can anticipate times of joy, laughter, care, and learning. Hear how other women throughout the conference are living missionally—being sent by God and relating to their neighbors and communities in refreshing ways.

The NAB Women's Ministry Leadership Team will host and inspire you with news about new opportunities for women within NAB churches.

Join the NAB family at Triennial 2015 July 1-5 — Sacramento, California

SENT →
North American Baptist Conference
TRIENNIAL 2015
July 1-5, 2015 • Sacramento, California
"As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." John 20:21

Speakers
Dr. Mark Buchanan Pastor David Johnson Dr. Reggie McNeal
Location
Sacramento Convention Center
Hotel
Hyatt Regency, Sacramento

Plan to attend the Women's Luncheon
Friday, July 3 • 12:15-2:00pm • Sheraton Grand Hotel