



STUDY 1

Amazing Women of Mission

By Colleen Wood

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us...

Hebrew 12:1

Opening Prayer:

Dear God, we thank you for this time to remember those who have served God through their work with the Women's Missionary Society. We thank you for their sacrifice and their service. We thank you for their courage and the courage of the WMS to send them.

As we hear their stories, let us reflect on our own service and be inspired. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Hymn: #635 – Brother, sister, let me serve you

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1–3

Reflection:

Hebrews 12:1–3 is a favourite scripture of many. If you think back, you can name many amazing people who have inspired, encouraged, and helped you 'run this race.' Today we will learn about a few of the early women who served God as WMS staff. Let their stories inspire you to continue to serve God.

Dr. Margaret O'Hara

Dr. Margaret O'Hara practiced medicine when few women did. She was born in Port Elmsley, Ontario on April 11, 1855. She received her early education there and graduated from the Women's Medical College in 1891.

She began her work in 1895 with the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in Dhar, India before the formation of the WMS in 1914.

She accomplished many things while in India. She ran a home for children orphaned by famine, tested treatments for leprosy, and operated on patients without the help of trained assistants or medical equipment. She also ran a school for the children in her orphanage, many of whom went on to become nurses, teachers, medical students, and preachers. Dr. O'Hara showed such dedication to her work that she was known to postpone her furlough because there were not enough doctors to provide service if she left.

She spent 36 years in hospital work, chiefly at Dhar. Through her, many lives were saved. Her work did not go unnoticed; the Maharajah donated a site for her to build

a hospital. Dr. O'Hara was decorated with the Kaiser-i-Hind Medal and received the honorary degree of LL.D. from the Women's Medical College.

She was also the author of the book, *Leaf of the Lotus*, prior to her death in 1940.

Margaret Boyd

Margaret Boyd was born in Vancouver and raised in Victoria, BC. She began her career as a nurse, but the WMS 25th anniversary celebration in Toronto changed her life. While there, she felt a call to diaconal ministry.

After her training, Margaret served the WMS in Canada, first in the Okanagan Valley, and then through extension work. While she was serving in Prince Albert, she learned to drive on the Presbyterian mission van! She also did children's work at Tyndale House in Montreal and then at the Vancouver Children's Centre. She served as regional secretary for the Hamilton/London Synodical of the WMS, followed by another six years in Saskatchewan.

Margaret finally settled in Ottawa. She became a valued member of St. Timothy's Church, was ordained an elder in 1971, and served as clerk of session from 1987-1996. Margaret was always a strong supporter of the WMS, CGIT, Christian camping, and ecumenical Christian education efforts.

Jean (McLean) Rumball

While working as a teacher, Jean felt the call to begin studies at The Presbyterian and Deaconess Home in 1925. During the summer of 1927, she served as a student deaconess in Brandon.

When she graduated in 1928, she was designated as a missionary to Koreans in Japan. She was one of two women supported by the WMS for this work. She first went to Korea for eight months of language study and then began her work with women and children in Japan.

She speaks of the great influence of the Rev. Luther Young who started the work in Japan. However, the women sent by the WMS were also great leaders and the growth in the WMS groups in the churches was remarkable due to their work.

Her most challenging time was returning to Japan after WW2. Many of the Korean churches had been destroyed during the war years. Thankfully, with the help of the Board of Mission, and a lot of prayer by the Koreans, 14 new churches were built before she and her husband Paul returned to Canada in 1954.

Jean's family verse was Psalm 16:11, "You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." (NIV)

Questions to consider:

1. What are some of the characteristics that these women showed?
2. How did these characteristics help them serve?

Read Psalm 16:11.

1. How do you think this relates to the work of these women?

Hymn: #665 – Lord Jesus, you shall be my song

Closing Prayer:

Loving God, you have been with each of us along life's path. We thank you for the countless women that have served the WMS over the years. You called them and equipped them for their work within Canada and around the world.

You continue to call out to each of us. Help us to daily answer the call to serve you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

To learn more about the work of incredible women read, Certain Women Amazed Us (Klempa and Doran) or From the Bottom Up (Davis). A special thank you to the authors of these amazing books without which I would not have been able to share these stories.