



# STUDY 2

Recent Women's Missionary Society Staff

Reflections from Wilma Welsh, Joy Randall, and Eleanor (Knott) Crabtree

*Mission is service, a call to help people in need and to permeate all of life with the compassion of God.*

*Living Faith, 9.1.3*

## Opening Prayer:

Loving God, you are a powerful and mighty God and you call us to make a difference in this world. As we learn about the work of our past WMS staff, remind us that we were involved in their journey. You sent them and we encouraged them. Help us to consider the ways in which we continue to serve and how we empower others to serve. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**Hymn:** # 769 – Lord of Light whose name and splendour

## Reflections:

**Wilma Welsh**

*“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

*Micah 6:6–8, NRSV*

What comes to mind when I think of “my mission journey” is that I have always attempted to discern God’s call. My many experiences have influenced my life style and in many ways, my reason for being!

When did mission become a part of my life—a part of me? It began early as I went to Mission Band when I was only about 8 or 9 years old. When I was a teenager, I participated in Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) from 12 to 17 years of age, and then I became a leader. I was an ardent camper, loving every minute that I spent at camp, as a camper, a leader, and later a director.

My life became more grounded in The Presbyterian Church in Canada when I became active in the Presbyterian Young People’s Society (PYPS). It gave me opportunities for leadership and getting to know my church. It was a marvelous time for me with great fellowship and learning.

During my PYPS days I felt the call to serve the church—how, I did not know. In 1960, I received a phone call from a friend in PYPS who was working in the church offices. During the call, she asked me if I would consider moving to Toronto to work at the church offices, too. Was this God calling me? I struggled with this—Toronto seemed so

far away. I sat with my parents discussing whether I should even go for an interview. My father was always very wise and encouraged me not to close any doors until I had looked very closely at the opportunities behind the door.

I decided to proceed with an interview. The train I travelled on had an accident at a railroad crossing. I recall arriving very late at the office with the smell of diesel oil on me. (We had to walk through spilled oil when we got off the train.) It was a Saturday, and the person who was to interview me came to the office especially for our meeting. He waited even though I was delayed.

Here I am 60 years later, a retiree of the PCC!

My first encounter with the WMS was around 1963 when I received a letter from Mary Whale on behalf of the WMS. She wrote saying that she'd heard about me and wondered if I had ever considered overseas service. I was surprised to receive the letter and did nothing about it, didn't even acknowledge it! Not that I wasn't interested—but me, why would God ever want me overseas. What could I do? I was trained in business administration. This letter is still in my files—it haunted me for years, and I mean haunted me—partly because I felt guilty that I had not responded and I guess I was fighting God!

Later, when I was about 30-years-old, Mary Whale came to my home one evening and again asked the same question. I don't know if she had remembered the letter, but again she asked, "Would I consider going overseas?" Formosa was asking for someone with my skills.

She told me she was leaving for India in the morning for a three week visit. She would stop in Formosa on her way back to Canada. She made me promise to write to her while she was in India to let her know what I was thinking. I wrote but all I said was, "I am thinking." I still have her postcard that from Taiwan that said, "Start packing your bags, they are expecting you." WOW!

In August 1969, I went to Taiwan, and it was a time that changed my life. The Rev. M. C. Chong was the General Secretary for my first year. He was followed by the Rev. Dr. C. M. Kao. Dr. Kao was a very courageous and godly man. In the 1970s, the government was constantly watching the church; the walls had ears. There were many walks around the block with my colleagues who shared with me what was happening. Our trips for ice cream meant we could talk reasonably freely. It was also the beginning of my 'smuggling' days. I had a close friend in Hong Kong who I spent a few vacations with. Each time I went, I brought our mail that could not go through the Taiwan postal system.

The most important smuggled mail was when the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) issued its first statement on its national fate in 1971. We knew very well that these letters would not be allowed through the mail system as it was very closely monitored. My luggage was searched thoroughly, but I had confidently put the letters in my purse—too obvious for the security police to find them. I was taking a risk but a risk that I felt was very important. Plus, I was willing to take it for the Church that I loved dearly. I knew what could happen to my colleagues if they tried to do this, but the worst that could happen to me was that Taiwan would deport me.

During my last few years in Taiwan, I spent one afternoon a week working at the Taiwan Bible Society. Just one day prior to returning to Canada, the General Secretary came to me and advised me that the police were downstairs confiscating all of the new red Taiwanese Romanized New Testaments. He asked me to wait twenty minutes, and then go downstairs so that they could save some. He knew that as soon as the police saw a foreigner they would leave. I was rather nervous, but boldly went down and as was expected they immediately left. This meant that they were not all lost. The Bible Society's General Secretary, Rev. J. L. Tsai gave me two copies to take back to Canada so that the manuscript would not be lost. I was taking my cat home, so she had two red New Testaments in her cage under the red pad. Ming-li did the smuggling for me.

I spent over 50 years following what I believed to be my calling—to serve the church as a lay person—to share the good news of Jesus Christ and the mission mandate of our denomination. When I returned to Canada I was first a Senior Administrator with the Board of Congregational Life and then at the time of restructuring, became the Personnel Administrator for International Ministries. I officially retired in 2002, but believed that retirement did not end my calling.

In 2006, I was elected Moderator of the 132<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and in 2010 I was honoured by Knox College with a Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) D.D.

### **Joy Randall**

*Joy served as a missionary nurse with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan from 1969–2004. On July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Joy Randall passed away in Peterborough, Ont., to be with God whom she served well.*

*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

*Philippians 4:13, NRSV*

From the time I arrived in Taiwan and throughout my service there, I always remembered

how important partnership was to me. As a missionary and especially in my position in the medical and nursing team in our Changhua Christian Hospital, this became very important.

Partnership was a new way of thinking in those days. Our Canadian Presbyterian Church previously was known as the “mother church” then the “sister” church, but during my time, it became “partner church.” We walked side by side through joys and sorrows. We walked with Taiwan when they were under martial law (KMT). Today, we continue to walk beside them with their democratic government. Certainly, there is more freedom today, but there is still the great underlying concern regarding China and the future of Taiwan.

I was thankful over the years knowing that the WMS and the PCC were partners with me in mission. Their prayer partnership and notes were most helpful, encouraging, and reassuring.

Philippians 4:13 has been my leading verse my whole life—“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” This verse has truly been present with me all these years. When in difficult times we have Christ’s strength that allows us to face any task or situation in our lives and in our living. When we are willing to reach out in love, we find ourselves in places and with people we never expected. By God’s grace we step into a whole new world, a world that we never expected to enter.

Changhua Christian Hospital was started by the English Presbyterian Mission in central Taiwan in 1896. During my time there from 1971 to 2004, it grew greatly and the nursing department developed accordingly. For over 30 years, Changhua Hospital was in the top ten medical centres in Taiwan. Our standard was up to the American Accreditation both in service and quality assurance. Our hospital grew from 100 beds in 1971 with about the same number of staff to 1,500 beds, including all medical departments (psychiatric, cancer centre, paediatrics, long-term care, palliative care, etc.) and with a staff of over 6,000. There were also six branch hospitals.

As Director of the nursing department, I always felt we needed to be a team working together for a common goal. There were times when we could talk together about our goals, our patients, our concerns, and our problems. Meetings regarding our nursing care and patient/family needs were a priority. We had devotions each day at our nursing units and department. In my later years, finding someone to replace me took nearly ten years. Finally, Susan Chang, a Taiwanese with her MA from The University of Michigan returned and prepared for this. We worked closely together over 4-5 years before she became the Director of Nursing two years before I left.

We really supported each other as partners when we were under stress and when the SARS pandemic hit. We made more time for devotions and to pray together as a nursing department and as individuals. We learned to keep staff and others safe with all the special precautions we put in place. In administration we tried to help our staff cope with all the increased pressure and worry.

Over the years we planted the seed of the Gospel and waited for God to work in and through us. When I visited five years ago, more members within the nursing department were able to lead devotions and worship. They usually spoke Mandarin but when I visited, they tried to use their Taiwanese for my sake, and they did really well. I was amazed at how much it showed that they had grown in their faith. Since I retired, many of the head nurses and supervisors that I worked closely with have become Christian. I thank God that I was able to plant some seeds and see them become fruitful. I am also thankful for God's partnership with me, and for those who have partnered with me in this ministry.

### **Eleanor (Knott) Crabtree**

*You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. John 15:16, NRSV*

Most of my first two years in India were spent learning the Hindi language, including a new alphabet. There were many adjustments: different culture, different food, different customs, and different people. I was appointed to the Helen Macdonald Higher Secondary School, a boarding school with mainly Christian children (many from poor homes). There was also a prep school to prepare students for classes beginning in Class 6. I taught some English and Crafts.

In the prep school, I worked with the Home Science teachers, who taught in Hindi. The curriculum was also different from what I was used to. I helped with some of the practical things. We had a large garden maintained by our gardener, with some assistance. We grew many vegetables which were used by the hostel to improve their diet. The garden thrived in the winter months, but in the summer it was too hot for much to grow other than some gourds.

For a time, I was Treasurer of the school which meant paying the teachers and servants in cash each month, as well as keeping track of the income from school fees, and from the WMS groups in Canada, through the PCC. It also meant dealing with the yearly audit which was definitely a challenge.

On special occasions we enjoyed fellowship with the local teachers. They would invite us to their bungalow for dinner and we would invite them to our home for a “Canadian” meal. At Christmas time we gave gifts to the teachers.

There was a group of Tibetan girls at the school when I first arrived. They didn’t go home for Christmas so we would take them to the bungalow at Baragoan, a village outside of Jhansi. It was a sparsely furnished large bungalow. The girls would sleep on the floor on their bedding rolls, but we had a village-style bed. The girls did their own cooking, and we had a Christmas tree and gifts. We would also take the girls to the nearby dam where they could swim, wash their hair, and bathe.

I also have memories of picnics with the teachers at some of the historic sites near Jhansi. Winter in India was more like summer in Canada when the landscape bloomed with flowering trees and bushes.

During my last five years in India, I started working with the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI). During this time, I lived in Bangalore for two years and then in Nagpur when the head office moved there. I visited village nutrition programs in various Christian hospitals throughout India. I also oversaw the planning of the first national Paramedical Conference. I was secretary of the Paramedical Section of CMAI at this time. Paramedicals included pharmacists, dieticians, and various technicians. I learned so much during my time in India, and I am thankful for the opportunity God gave me to serve there.

**Hymn:** # 324 – Great is thy Faithfulness

### Questions to consider:

1. What do you think of when you hear the word missionary?
2. Do you see yourself as a missionary? Why or why not?

**Read Micah 6:6–8, Philippians 4:13, and John 15:16.**

1. What do these verses say about mission?
2. What do these verses say to you today?

**Hymn:** #726 – May the God of hope go with us every day

## Closing Prayer:

O God, we are thankful that you called us to be your partners in sharing in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We remember those who have served you faithfully. We remember our partnerships around the world, both historic and continuing.

As we plant the seeds of your love we pray that the Holy Spirit will water and nourish them to bear fruit for you.

As we continue to be partners in mission, we pray that our love may abound more and more, through the love of Jesus Christ, with all praise and glory to God. Amen.