

# live

A BAPTIST RESOURCE FOR WOMEN ON A MISSION

## UNSHAKEN THROUGH JOY

2023 Executive Director Highlights

## A NEW THING

2024 Strategic Giving Program

## 2024 CBWOQ WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Registration Form



**(RE)CLAIM  
YOUR INTIMATE  
CONNECTION TO  
GOD'S CALLING**

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## live

**Executive Director**  
Helena Bergen

**Editor & Communications Director**  
Renée James  
416-651-8967  
rsejames@gmail.com

**Art Director**  
Jennifer Au ([jenniferau.com](mailto:jenniferau.com))

**Contributors**  
Helena Bergen, Linda Ellsworth,  
Renée James, Deborah Moriah

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5 International Blvd.,  
Etobicoke, ON M9W 6H3  
416-620-2954  
Fax 416-622-2308  
[bwoq@baptist.ca](mailto:bwoq@baptist.ca)  
[baptistwomen.com](http://baptistwomen.com)

**Circulation & Subscriptions**  
416-620-2954  
[live@baptist.ca](mailto:live@baptist.ca)

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## Women at the Cross

2024'S GREAT CANADIAN BIBLE STUDY offers a fresh perspective on Jesus' death and resurrection through the experiences of the women at the cross. What struck me as I worked on the final version of the Study was the clear-eyed courage these women displayed, not only in their bearing witness to Jesus' death, but also in their returning to His tomb. They didn't know how they'd move the stone at the tomb's mouth. They only knew they had to return with the spices they'd prepared for His body.

It seems to me that clear-eyed courage and obedience go hand in hand. I see that marriage in Dr. Cindy Westfall's decision to take stock of her life, her theology and her mission after her parents' deaths. Cindy is our 2024 Conference plenary speaker and you'll enjoy her insights on page six. Deborah Moriah displayed this courage in her obedience to leave her job and wait on the Lord. Anne Woolger, founding director of Matthew House, Toronto, had several of those decisive moments as she leaned into God's call to refugee ministry. Our interview with Anne begins on page 10.

It takes courage and obedience to press in to the mission and ministry to which God calls you. This I do know from 16 years of hearing and sharing your testimonies: Baptist women have always been women of courage and obedience. This year, may both be rooted in a deep understanding of how much God loves you. You are His Beloved.

**Renée James**  
*Editor*

# Unshaken Through Joy

**“A joyous God fills the universe. Joy is the ultimate word describing God and his world.”**

**Dallas Willard, *Life Without Lack***



I shared those words from Dallas Willard in a short reflection in our CBWOQ Facebook group the week before our Annual General Meeting in May. It was in anticipation of what we would experience as we prepared to gather at Highland Baptist Church, Kitchener, to worship, give thanks and celebrate being together again – our first time since the pandemic. We were truly visited by a deep joy that was felt even by those watching via livestream. Photos captured a beautiful radiance on women's faces that day. God also ministered comfort and encouragement to women who arrived carrying deep sorrow or brokenness. It was a beautiful time and a foretaste – I believe – of the good things to come for Baptist women.

God's presence among us is characterized by an experience of joy – one of the fruits of the

Spirit – and I stumbled upon it in many other moments in 2023. It was there in other gatherings of God's Beloved daughters that I was invited into – ARMBA's annual workshop in March, TVA's Spring Rally in May, Quebec's retreat in September, and Oxford-Brant's fall gathering in October, to name just a few. Sisters, I encourage you to continue to meet (Hebrews 10:25) and to keep a worshipful, prayerful adoration of Christ at the centre of your gathering, even if the way you gather looks different than it did in the past. You will be visited by joy!

Another highlight from 2023 was the joy of participating in mission. We were able to raise funds for 20 widows in a village in South Sudan to own their own livestock – a gift that is life-changing and life-empowering on many levels. There were many obstacles that threatened this work, some

*Top right* Some of CBWOQ's Board at their early summer retreat

*Below* Group photo from Quebec retreat



PHOTOS FROM TOP COURTESY HELENA BERGEN AND ANN-MARGRET HOVSEPIAN

due to conflict and war, and some cultural in nature, but persistence paid off and this project came to a successful completion!

We had the joy of supporting mission in Bolivia. Nineteen women who are training for ministry as seminary students in Bolivia received Baptist Women support through scholarships and prayer. And children, deeply vulnerable to being exploited, were cared for and supports were put into their lives to set their feet on a different, hope-filled path. May God bless and multiply the ministries of our sisters preparing to serve, and of those caring for the children.

Joy showed up in my visit to Friendship House in Brantford, an oasis of light, love and friendship for people living on the margins. Let us continue to bolster front-line workers in our refugee and community development programs.

Through our Dorothy McNeil New Initiatives Grant program, we had the joy of sowing into the ministries of Rev. Diane McBeth and Jacqueline Bhatti for a second year, both having an international reach. Diane's focus is on training women to lead Life Circles spiritual formation groups and Jacqueline's is on planting women-led house churches called Houses of Prayer. God opened many doors for expansion for both ministries last year.

In 2023, CBWOQ's staff and Board teams made a significant investment of time and energy into prayerful planning for the future of Baptist Women. We will take important steps to implement these plans this year, but joy bubbled up as we witnessed some early fruit in our revitalization priority and as pathways into hands-on mission began to form.

We discovered women have a longing for a deeper experience of God and for more spiritual substance in relationships with each other as we connected with women from dozens of churches through our mostly new programming – Sensible Shoes and Sensible Shoes 2, Sisters in Strength, Prayer Network, Soul Day for Women and Complete. Many of these women are taking material and learning back to their churches and sharing with the women there.

Women also came forward in a very organic way to bring leadership to two hands-on mission initiatives – prompted by the Holy Spirit, I am sure! You can read a bit about them in my Strategic Giving article in this issue, but be sure to sign up to receive our E-LINK monthly newsletter to follow along with the developments in both.



One last noteworthy mention: five young women, affirmed by their churches as emerging leaders, were selected to form our 2023/2024 cohort for Uptick, our one-year intensive leadership development program. It kicked off in September. The Uptick experience and curriculum focuses on developing leaders for long-term sustainability and it is a joy to follow the journeys of our Uptick graduates as they advance in leadership roles.

I enter 2024 encouraged. I pray we will continue to be faithful in all the ways in which God is leading us throughout this new year. May joy be our experience and a marker for God's presence with us.

With gratitude and hope,  
**Helena Bergen**  
*Executive Director, CBWOQ*



*Above left* Leaders of the central Africa Region of Baptist Women at their biannual conference in Luanda, Angola, August 2023. Women are praying for each other after one of Rev. Diane McBeth's workshops

*Left* Helena Bergen (second from right) at Friendship House, Brantford, with Rev. Shawn Erb, Executive Director, Linda Lewis and Eleanor Dutkiwich from Oxford/Brant

*Top right* Joy makes a difference – a glimpse of the South Sudan project

*Above right* Jacqueline Bhatti's ministry Women Arising For Destiny – the sewing room opens

# Belonging. Becoming. Brought Back.

3 spiritual practices to begin today as you look ahead to our May Conference



BY **RENÉE JAMES**

DR. CYNTHIA (CINDY) WESTFALL knows a thing or two about maturing well. It began when she took stock of her life after watching her parents die. Her mother had had open-heart surgery just after her father's death. "It's not supposed to be like this!" her mother had declared. "How is it supposed to be?" Cindy had responded. That was an epiphany for Cindy. "Jesus suffered every temptation, in every way, in order to become our Saviour and He says, 'Follow me.' So we follow Him in walking difficult paths," she says. For Cindy, the question became: "What do I do with the time I have allotted to me? How am I living as a new creation?"

Cindy suggests three spiritual postures and practices that will help us begin to walk in a new way (2 Corinthians 5:17–18a), no matter our circumstances, age or stage of life.

## 1. Renew our lives

First, we must renew our lives. We need to pay attention and take inventory – of our physical, mental and emotional capacities. When we take inventory, we affirm that we matter, right at that moment, regardless of any issues we face: declining mobility, time poverty, physical or mental illness, constrained finances, reduced energy levels. For Cindy this taking stock resulted in her decision that neither her physical condition nor attitudes, now or

in the future, would become chronic if they didn't need to. And she began to renew her theology as she scanned her actions in light of Scripture.

## 2. Renew our theology

"It's not what you're confessing, it's what you're acting on," says Cindy. "It's looking at your behaviour and re-generating thoughts." She noticed that things in her life were out of sync with the Bible.

She realized that her first inclination wasn't to gratitude. "How little I gave thanks," she recalls. "Imagine, one day as I prepared to teach a class on the book of John, I questioned God about whether I was living the abundant life!" That insight moved Cindy to realize that renewing her theology necessitated her acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, and the fact that He shapes and purposes her life so that whatever happens, He can use everything for His purpose.

"The question about how we live as new creations is an important one, because it's the question about becoming," says Cindy. "And we've got to have a theology that carries us" past the losses and milestones that come with maturing. How do we do this? We begin by thinking about our story and taking inventory. Then Cindy suggests some foundational questions we must ask ourselves about what we do:

- Am I surprised by what's happening in my life?
- When I look at where I am, how do I respond to suffering?
- What is the role that hope has in my life?
- What am I grateful for?

## 3. Re-envision

Re-envisioning comes at the point of understanding our mission. "Something should emerge from thinking about our lives, where we are now, and where we can detect God's hand," says Cindy. We can now ask ourselves:

- What are my resources (my assets)?
- What are my limitations?
- What's my circle of responsibility? For whom am I responsible?

Answering these questions helps lead us to our calling and to our mission. "Take seriously who we're responsible for. And let's be honest with our answers. Do we have a disability? Do we have loads of resources we don't even know about," Cindy asks. "Really narrow down what God is doing – right now."

Renew our lives. Renew our theology. Re-envision. When we do these three practices, we realize that our identity as God's Beloved, and the inevitability of our witness, are truths for us right now, right where we are, no matter our circumstances, ages or life stages. We all have the privilege of bearing witness to God's love. **1**

Read more about Dr. Westfall on page 17



# Learning to Trust

## [Re]claiming my intimate connection

BY **DEBORAH MORIAH**

THE FIRST TIME I heard clear instructions from God, I was 40 years old. They were so uncomfortable and illogical that I questioned if it was His voice. Although I'd grown up in a Christian home, having a relationship with Him was new to me. I asked friends, family members and spiritual partners for their advice. I scoured the Internet, read books, watched sermon series and did everything in my power to clear up the misunderstanding.

Surely, the Father wouldn't want me to be uncomfortable.

He'd asked me to not just extend forgiveness to an individual who had betrayed me, but to pray for that individual's success and happiness – despite the fact that their decisions had cost me mine. No matter how I tried to reason with Him, He reminded me that the prayers of a righteous person are powerful and effective and that He had called me to pray.

In a world where we fight fire with fire and take an eye for an eye, it felt off. My normal reaction to the breakdown of a relationship was to not forgive and definitely not forget. But God had other plans for me made long before I ever knew Him as intimately as I do now. So, over the next year, I obeyed. When the hurt would creep in and the pain would take over, I prayed.

At the time, I had no idea how much my life would change. I could not have

imagined how God would use that relationship – its inception and breakdown – as a catalyst to form His own deep connection with me and to place me in intentional settings for such a time as this. He knew that I would need Him, I would finally accept Him and, most of all, that I would trust Him completely – eventually.

Every year, my church collectively discerns a word or phrase God has spoken to each of us. In 2021, with those uncomfortable instructions to forgive, my word was *healing*. But He didn't heal what I had expected Him to. Relationships weren't restored and heartache didn't subside all at once. Instead, what He was healing was my perception of Him. I began to realize God isn't a harsh dictator, but a loving, doting Father who only wants good things for His children.

In 2022, He asked me to *trust and obey*. I was soon struck with the reality that seeking God and being in relationship with Him didn't mean things got easier. In fact, it seemed to mean the opposite and, as such, every step required more faith than the last.

In 2023, I felt unsure at most every turn. My word was *restoration* and sounded like a breath of fresh air. But I was quickly reminded that restoration cannot occur without demolition. There were still things He was removing from my life.

In February, God instructed me to quit a comfortable job at a Bay Street law firm in order to pursue the unknown. Not only did I love the job, He'd blessed me with it. But, as quickly as it started, I was constructively

dismissed when the managing partners became uneasy with my outside endeavours. They'd placed me in a box in which God did not want me contained and the only way out was to follow His voice. He didn't tell me what the outcome would be, just that I needed to trust Him.

There were days I felt empowered and days I felt defeated. However, when my focus became more about seeking Him and listening to His voice, things began to fall into place. My path, though at times was uncertain, became clearer. Even as He asked me to sacrifice the plans I'd made for myself, He unearthed dreams He'd placed in my heart long ago – ambitions I'd released with no intention of ever restoring. He simultaneously demolished strongholds and restored the years the locusts had eaten.

A few months after leaving that job, I was elected to serve in a prestigious role within my profession and I recently accepted a role with an advocacy organization that is a direct reflection of the challenges He walked me through before I ever really knew Him.

As I reflect on 2023 and years previous, I am grateful for God's immense blessings. He has restored and advanced a career I was tempted to leave behind, given me a new perspective on the purpose and blessing behind heartbreak and, although I don't have everything I want, I know I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be and that what He has in store for me is greater than I can imagine.

I encourage you to seek His instructions and guidance above all else. It will make a massive difference when it comes to your perspective of the world, your understanding of your true purpose, and your intimate relationship with Him. ①

Deborah is a member of Baptist Womens racial justice team. She is the only Black paralegal to sit on the Board of the Legal Aid Society of Ontario and was recently elected to the Board of Governors of the Law Society of Ontario. She consults in the field of equity, diversity and inclusion.

# 2024...UNITY, COMMUNITY, AND THE FUTURE

BY **LINDA ELLSWORTH**

As we enter 2024 in a world filled with fear, animosity, war, and uncertainty, the call to the Church remains unchanged. People still need the Lord! Our sure calling is to be the head, hands, feet, and heart of Jesus to all around us, in a spirit of unity exemplified by His love.

## What is unity?

Your *Online Dictionary* defines unity as:

- being in harmony or one in spirit.
- the quality of being one in spirit, sentiment, purpose, etc.; harmony; agreement; concord; uniformity.

The word unity is used specifically in two places in Scripture: Psalm 133 and Ephesians 4:3.

### Psalm 133

Can you find five affirming statements about unity in this passage?

*Name them and describe why and how these statements of affirmation might be a) applicable, and b) helpful in your situation.*

### Ephesians 4:1-7

Read and meditate on Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus where he called the people to have a spirit of unity.

*What circumstances prompted Paul to be so concerned? What is the calling of which Paul speaks? Have you been called and charged with the same calling?*

*What does Paul mean by his charge to the individuals in the church to "walk worthy of the calling...?"*

Paul names three fundamental attitudes of the worthy walk. *Describe what each might look like in your life:*

- lowliness
- gentleness
- longsuffering

Paul also charges the Ephesians to "bear with one another in love." *What do you think he means by this phrase? Can you think of two situations in which God might call upon you to bear with someone in love?*

Paul then challenges them to consider "Endeavor(ing) to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

*Dictionary.com* defines the verb "endeavor" as follows: "to exert oneself to do or effect something; make an effort; strive"

*Can you give three examples in your life where God might be charging you to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?" How might you go about doing that?*

### Ephesians 4: 4-7

*"For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling: One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism; One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But to each one of us grace was given, according to the measure of Christ's gift."*

Paul's use of the word "One" indicates a unity of the God-head in being and in purpose. Paul also emphasizes the fact that we have been given grace as a gift provided by Christ through salvation. We cannot, nor do we have to, "keep the unity" on our own. So how do we keep it?



## Bernice's Pick



### Grieving Room: Making Space for All the Hard Things After Death and Loss

Rev. Leanne Friesen

**\$30**

Leanne faced the death of her sister through cancer.

As a pastor giving counsel and conducting funerals, she has the experience of one who has walked through many “deaths.”

This is not another book that says *time will heal* and *get over it*. It gives us permission to make room to grieve and not rush for closure. Make room for this book. Death is a part of life for all of us.

## The Habit-Building Lifestyle

Habits are born out of belief and proven in their effectiveness.

### Ephesians 4

According to verses 2 and 3, we are called to establish the following unifying habits. *Give a description of what each habit means to you.*

- Humility
- Gentleness
- Patience – longsuffering
- Putting up with each other in love
- Striving to keep the peace

Let's pause and do a spiritual reality check. *If habits are born out of a belief system (verses 4–6), is your belief system in order?*

Without looking anything up, *state your personal knowledge and understanding of your statements of faith and belief* regarding:

- One Body (Christ and His Church)
- One Spirit (The Person and work of the Holy Spirit)
- One hope (Sin forgiven/Eternal Life in His presence)
- One Lord (The Person of Christ in the Trinity)
- One faith (No other name given under Heaven whereby one can be saved)
- One baptism (Dead to sin, alive in Christ)
- One Father God (The Godhead of the Trinity)
- All accomplished only through God's grace (verse 7)

*Would you be able to explain each of the above to an unsaved friend in such a way that they would understand and be drawn to Jesus?*

### How do I move with my church family and those around me into a united future?

1. Practice Unity Habits personally
2. Put Unity Habits into practice in your church
3. Teach others the “Unity Keys” through example and word
4. Use the “Caught and Taught” Principle: “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”

In 2024, as you seek to build those Unity Habits, putting them into practice in every area of your life, may you experience the joy of living, loving, and serving in God's family. ❶

Linda is the member-care coordinator for CCI, Canada.

5 International Blvd.  
Etobicoke, ON M9W 6H3  
tel: 416-620-2934  
fax: 416-234-8840  
e-mail: books@readon.ca

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House or  
No House,  
I Want  
You To  
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BY RENÉE JAMES

**Anne Woolger**, founding director of Matthew House, Toronto, reflects on God’s calling to refugee ministry and all that’s unfolded in her 35 years of ministering in this field.

### Tell us about how it all began.

While having a quiet time during my university days, Proverbs 31:8–9 (NIV) jumped out at me: “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

At the time, I had been writing for the Queen’s University Journal newspaper, so I naturally thought of it and wrote the words “Yes, through journalism?” in the margin. I just found this old Bible recently and I see it even had a date written next to it – December 12, 1983 – 40 years ago!

### What happened next?

Fast forward a few years from then and while at Tyndale/Ontario Theological Seminary I had a chance encounter with a refugee. Hearing his story changed the trajectory of my life. His was a heart-wrenching story of loved ones dying at sea during their escape from their homeland. I had assumed he would describe his arrival in Canada as the happy ending of his horror story, and Canada as a warm and welcoming place. But to my shock, he described his first few weeks and months in Canada as the most painful part of his journey. Why? Because he felt ostracized and alone – no one had truly “welcomed” him. Moved by his story, I wanted to volunteer somewhere to make refugees feel welcomed.

I found myself joining a church planting team with Danforth Baptist Church and landing my first job at a homeless shelter in South Riverdale (1988). The

*Top* A picture’s worth 1,000 words.

*Bottom* 2012: Anne Woolger (left) and Executive Director Jacky Tuinstra hold the welcome mat high at the Dundas West home.





I realized that my relationship with God was more important than a physical structure (house), and God could draw more people to Himself through me as His follower – if I were walking close to Him – than through a big house structure where His spirit was not present.



shelter had contracts with different levels of government to receive both government-sponsored refugees and refugee claimants (also known as asylum seekers).

### What did you learn from this first job?

My eyes were opened to the plight of claimants: They had no one to welcome or assist them upon arrival in Toronto, and they faced a huge shortage of decent and appropriate places for them to stay. Some were being forced to spend their first night in Canada in very rough City homeless shelters where they were being re-traumatized by the experience.

By this time, I began to have a vision of establishing a Christian based refugee home for asylum seekers. The need was so great.

### Of course!

I tarried with this vision for many years, but I see God was refining me in the process.

### Tell us more.

Around 1990 I approached a group of leaders at Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec (CBOQ) with the vision. This led to doors opening to run some pilot projects during the summers of 1992 and 1993, where newly arrived refugee claimants were housed in the empty bedrooms of CBOQ's Church House for each of these summers.

It was amazing to watch the refugees and CBOQ staff rubbing shoulders every day as they all shared the same dining room. Some lovely Baptist women helped out with these projects. Former CBWOQ executive director Audrey Morikawa was a real encouragement to me in the very early days and later, when Nancy Webb took up the helm at CBWOQ, she, alongside her late husband Clarence, were wonderful cheerleaders of my vision.

### Did you have funding?

I had hoped that soon the funds to open a house would drop from the sky, but they didn't. Those early years, I kept sharing the vision of a refugee house and it seemed to fall on deaf ears. No one seemed to want to support something that didn't exist.

*Top* At the 25th Anniversary celebration: supporters Barb McLeod (left) and Myra Colley (right) flank the sign that shares an artist's rendition for the laneway suite.

*Left* Anne and young guests at Matthew House 15th anniversary party.

### That must have been so discouraging.

I really wrestled with it and was getting very discouraged. Then I went on a retreat in Lakefield. I recall one morning during a quiet time asking God about my refugee house vision. I wondered if I simply needed to give it up. I sensed God respond: "Anne, house or no house, I want you to know me in it." I realized that my

relationship with God was more important than a physical structure (house), and God could draw more people to Himself through me as His follower – if I were walking close to Him – than through a big house structure where His spirit was not present.

This revelation led to a new prayer of relinquishment where I simply asked God to help me get to know Him better, house or no house. Thanks to His grace, after I prayed this prayer, amazingly, doors began to open. Within weeks we were offered a house on Dundas Street West to rent from the City!

### Wow!

There are so many stories I could tell of the miracles and tender mercies that followed our August 1998 opening day.

### Give us some updates on what's been happening since that opening day.

Well, we are celebrating 25 years of welcoming the world! We have welcomed more than 2,000 refugee claimants from 102 different nations, from all walks of life: doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, those not able to read. But, all share this reality – a fear of persecution and the need for protection.

Matthew House, Toronto, spurred the opening of more than a dozen other refugee homes (and clusters of homes) across Canada and the United States.

### God has been so good.

Yes! In Toronto, we have opened a number of longer-term transitional homes where extra vulnerable refugees like youth or pregnant/single moms can stay longer to get extra support. By God's grace, we are soon to open our seventh refugee house in Toronto. This one is "on loan" for us to freely use, from a generous owner who doesn't need it for the next few years.

We also created a groundbreaking Simulated Refugee Hearing program (Re-course) to help refugee claimants prepare well for their refugee hearings. It's been extremely helpful for claimants, and almost completely volunteer-driven supported as many retired lawyers etc. serve as volunteer adjudicators. We are in the process of making it a national program since the hearings are now done virtually.

### That rented home on Dundas West was just the beginning.

A few years ago, after years and years of serious praying and visioning we were able to buy that original reception home on Dundas West from the City – at a greatly reduced cost. We are now in the process of renovating and upgrading it.

We have now embarked on an exciting new project – building a laneway suite in the back yard, overlooking

beautiful Trinity Bellwoods Park! The old garage has just been torn down and pipes from the building site to the house have been installed. It will be a two story multipurpose building that can provide overflow sleeping space in times of need, but also excellent work/community space thereby enabling the main house itself to remain more like a home.

### How has your role changed over the years?

I have transitioned from the role of Executive Director to that of Founding Director and a wonderful young woman named Jacky Tuinstra has taken the helm of Executive Director. She is beautifully leading us through growth.

Since stepping back, I am actively engaged in more big-picture projects, especially advocacy at government levels. Through leadership roles with the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), I've been deeply involved in many government negotiations to create more effective long term solutions for refugee claimant reception at other levels of their journey in Canada including their arrival at our borders, and at their Immigration and Refugee Board hearings.

I can see now how my original "calling" of being a voice for the voiceless is playing out – not as the journalist as I had originally presumed, but through my role with refugees.

### Any final words for Baptist women?

I could not have been so successful if it hadn't been for many wonderful Baptist women who cheered me on along the way and helped this ministry to refugees get off the ground. Some wish to remain anonymous but have given huge donations toward our ministry which has had a giant impact on me and our work and to them I am forever grateful.

These are just a few names of key encouragers along the way: Audrey Morikawa; Nancy Webb; Esther Barnes; Bonnie Hartley; Betty Flowers; Sue Green; Kathy Clulow (former Matthew House Chairperson for nearly eight years); Barbara Simmonds and the helpers from Uxbridge she'd bring with her to our monthly drop-ins at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church; the women at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church who for many years regularly prepared Christmas turkey dinners for up to 200 former refugee guests and volunteers.

I am grateful that women like Barbara have continued to faithfully pray for and encourage me to this day! It really helps keep me going!

After 35 years in refugee ministry, and celebrating 25 years of Matthew House, I am so deeply grateful for the role of CBWOQ in our ministry. If it wasn't for the faithful prayers, words of encouragement, practical help and gifts of funds from CBWOQ and Baptist women, I don't know if Matthew House would be here today. ①

# A New Thing

## 2024 Strategic Giving Program

*"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."*

Isaiah 43:19

BY **HELENA BERGEN**

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW YEAR is often accompanied by a sense of anticipation and excitement. Possibilities abound in 365 calendar pages, unwritten as of yet. So, it may seem trite to enter into 2024 with a reference to the words in Isaiah in which God says he is about to do a new thing. Except, I think he is doing a new thing!

This year CBWOQ will take important steps towards fulfilling the strategic plan that we have spent the last year and a half developing. It is a plan to invite every woman to join in God's work through hands-on mission and ministry and to revitalize the ministry of Baptist women. As we once again commit ourselves to this sisterhood that reaches, woman by woman, across our provinces, I believe that we are being drawn together by God, who is about to do a new thing through our collective "yes" to him.

### Missions

**Funding goal: \$56K**

#### Partner Missions

We delight to mark 150 years of mission together with CBM ([visit-caba150.ca](http://visit-caba150.ca) for special commemorations). In 2024, we will continue to support the Emmanuel Foundation Children With a Future in Bolivia where child exploitation is rampant. Through this outreach work, children who are at risk receive holistic support and hope for a different future. We will also continue to encourage women preparing for ministry as students at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Cochabamba through the Muriel Harrington Scholarship Fund. With funds raised through the Great Canadian Bible Study, we will empower health and well-being for youth in Kenya in a mentoring program to reduce pregnancy rates and domestic violence.

We will also continue to support women leading in ministry in international settings through CBW's International Scholarship and Leadership Development funds (you can meet the current recipients at [canadianbaptistwomen.com](http://canadianbaptistwomen.com)). Lastly, we will join thousands of Baptist women for the 2024 World Day of Prayer to pray and raise funds for global ministry projects.



Above Baptist Theological Seminary in Cochabamba

#### Hands-On Mission

One of the areas we discerned as a priority in our strategic plan is Hands-On Mission. We believe in the priesthood of believers – that God has designed for *all* to take part in the work he desires to do in our world so this is our desire, also. In addition to our continued support of the Friendship House in Brantford, Oasis Dufferin Community Centre in Toronto, and Matthew Houses in Ottawa, Windsor, Toronto, and Fort Erie, here are two new doors God has opened up for mission.

## Bring Them to Safety

Last spring, I was among a small group of Baptist women who became aware of the plight of two young Christian women, Nazia and Robina. Because of their faith, they had suffered harassment, beatings, and death threats in their home country of Pakistan. Ten years ago, they fled, seeking refuge in Thailand. Since then, the only constant in their lives is the daily fear of their already fragile circumstances crumbling. The other is their prayers for sponsorship – their only hope for a different life.

Our hearts were gripped by their story. We realized that we were well-positioned to answer Nazia's and Robina's prayers. One woman in our group voiced what we were all thinking: "We must do something."

We cautiously anticipate a 2026 arrival. Over the next two years we will seek to raise \$20K (\$40K in total, approximately). These funds will provide for Nazia's and Robina's living expenses as they adjust to life in Canada in their first year here. Donations to this initiative should be clearly marked "refugee ministry".

## Towards the Flourishing of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Relations

We have been blessed this year as women have come forward to give their time and expertise to developing a CBWOQ ministry focus on Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. In response to the TRC calls to action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples and with a sense of God's calling on us, we are committed to prayerfully developing and maintaining Godly relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous women, seeking to share together with minds and hearts that are focussed on listening and learning about our past and present.

We anticipate learning opportunities this year and a "hands-on" experience later in the year in which we will build into a foundation of healthy, respectful and flourishing relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women. As we celebrate our similarities as God's people and honour our differences, we look forward to the varieties of experiences and work that will be done in His Name.

## Revitalization


### Funding goal: \$45K

The other area we discerned as a priority in our strategic plan is Revitalization. To be clear, we have seen alarming decline in our women's groups and our churches over the last several decades. Many groups are also lacking any presence of younger generations. To address this, we made a bold and prayerful decision that with God's help and blessing we would change this trajectory. Our desire is to see a community of empowered, Spirit-filled women in every church – women who know themselves to be deeply loved by God and by each other, and whose love and irresistible witness overflows and brings transformation to the world around them.

Towards this end, we want to (re)claim our young women. So, we will launch a new ministry in 2024 that is devoted to creating space for young women in their 20s and 30s where they can grow in their faith and connect with others for encouragement, support, and discipleship. In addition, in 2023 we expanded our staff team to include Tracey Bagley as a part-time Director of Leadership & Discipleship. Tracey is an experienced ministry leader and a certified spiritual director. Through her programming we are already seeing women experience renewal. In 2024,

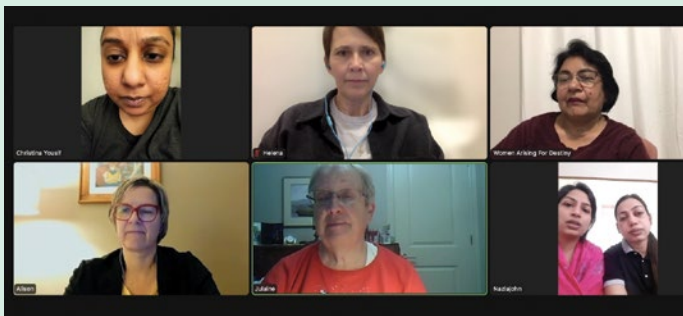
we will continue to develop this role and expand our reach to connect to more women across the regions.

## Will you join us?

The Apostle Paul tells us, "You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity" (2 Corinthians 9:11, NRSV). We can be assured of this: we will not become poorer in giving, but we will become infinitely richer as we join with, witness and experience the new things that God is doing in our midst. 



*Above left* A boy being observed in the ophthalmology clinic



*Left* A recent Zoom meeting of team members: top (left to right): Christina Yousif, Helena Bergen, Jacqueline Bhatti. Bottom (left to right): Alison Latty, Julaine Palmer, Nazia and Robina

## A HISTORY MOMENT

# Inviting Women to [Re]Claim Their Intimate Connection to God’s Calling

### Olive Diefenbaker addresses Women’s Convention

“THE TULIP FESTIVAL and the Primer Minister’s wife welcomes 400 delegates and visitors to the 1958 BWMS Convention at First Baptist Church, Ottawa. Olive Diefenbaker, a Baptist pastor’s daughter, expresses her hope that in their business the women will catch visions of broader horizons, a deeper sense of cooperation, and the courage to extend their work where the need is greatest.” ❶

— from *Our Heritage Becomes Our Challenge – A scrapbook history of the Baptist women’s movement in Ontario and Quebec* by Esther Barnes, p. 220

## We Remember

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

### IN MEMORY OF

- Lois Hickey, Tillsonburg
- Jennie Humphrys, Cornwall
- June Lowrie, Tillsonburg
- Nancy Plane, Belleville


### IN HONOUR OF

- Dorothy Lien, Whitby, 100th birthday

### 2023 CIRCLE LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

- Lola Mather-Dyer, Springford Baptist Church
- Darlene Banks, Whitby Baptist Church
- Christine DuMoulin, Whitby Baptist Church

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*Tidings ... published for you by Atlantic Baptist Women*





# Belonging. Becoming. Brought back.

[re]claim the gift

## 2024 CBWOQ Women's Conference

Friday, May 3 – Saturday, May 4, 2024

*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ.*

2 Corinthians 5:17-18a, NLT

### VENUE

#### McMaster Divinity College\*

1280 Main St W, Hamilton, ON L8S 4K1

### REGISTRATION COSTS

**Friday** \$20  
**Saturday** \$95 (meals included)

#### Students and Uptick alumni

\$95 for both Friday and Saturday

### ACCOMMODATION

#### Les Prince Hall\*

1280 Main St. W., Hamilton, ON L8S 4E8

[discover.mcmaster.ca/residences/les-prince-hall/](https://discover.mcmaster.ca/residences/les-prince-hall/)

It is a 10-minute walk from the College; you may also drive to the Hall. CBWOQ has reserved 120 beds (single and double rooms). Rooms come with sheets, towels, soap, and shampoo, while a common room on each floor boasts a fridge, microwave and stovetop. Ideal for continuing your Friday night fellowship!

<b>Single room (1 twin bed)</b>	\$85
<b>Double room (2 twin beds)</b>	\$136 (\$68/per person)
<b>Parking pass</b>	\$12 per 24 hours (pay upon arrival at venue)

**Check-in** 4 p.m.

**Check-out** 10 a.m.

**Please book by April 24, 2024** directly with Les Prince Hall using the link we will post on our website at the beginning of February.

Please note that nursery/child care will not be provided at the Conference. You will find bursary applications for childcare, travel and registration costs on our website and we encourage you to apply when registration opens in early February. \*Both the College and the Hall are fully accessible buildings.

## SCHEDULE

\*Subject to change

### Friday May 3

- 6 p.m. Registration / prayer room opens
- 7 p.m. Time of worship
- 8 p.m. Fellowship time & appetizers

### Saturday May 4

- 7:30 a.m. Registration / prayer room opens
- 7:45 a.m. Hot breakfast buffet
- 9:00 a.m. *Plenary Session 1*  
Finances – presentation by auditor  
Workshops
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch (catered)
- 2:00 p.m. *Plenary Session 2*  
Break  
Annual General Meeting  
*Plenary Session 3*
- 5:00 p.m. Conference ends



## PLENARY SPEAKER

### Dr. Cynthia (Cindy) Long Westfall

Dr. Cindy Long Westfall has spoken widely on gender and faith to academic and faith-based audiences. Her humour, clarity, knowledge, and expertise consistently engage and captivate her listeners. An accomplished academic, Cindy is assistant professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, where she teaches a variety of subjects including women in ministry, social justice and books of the Bible including John. She brings her decades of experience in urban mission, both in inner-city Denver and in the GTA, to her teaching and speaking. Among other publications, Cindy has authored the seminal work *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*.



## WORSHIP LEADER

### Rachelle Luk

Rachelle Luk (pronounced "Ra-SHELL Luke") is a Covenant Award-winning Canadian singer-songwriter and worship leader in the Greater Toronto Area. Rachelle's clear gifting in leading others into an intimate space of worship has blessed Canadian Baptists in a variety of contexts. She is no stranger to Baptist Women, having led worship and/or workshops at several CBWOQ events.

## WORKSHOPS

\*These are potential workshops – final lineup may change.

1. **[Re]Claiming Our Young Women** – making space for Millennials and Gen Z women in your women's ministries, groups and worship (a workshop for women 50+)
2. **Sustaining Your Well-Being and Building Healthy Relationships** (a workshop for women 40 and younger)
3. **Emotionally Healthy Women**
4. **Soul Day** – a mini Soul Day experience
5. **Discovering God's Call Through Understanding Your Spiritual Giftings and Personality**
6. **[Re]Claiming the Sacred Call of Singleness**
7. **Flourishing Within Complex Family Systems**
8. **What It's Like to be a Woman** – an online workshop on the experiences of women around the world (accessible to virtual attendees)
9. **How to Prep the Soil and Sow Seeds for Your Church's Mission in its Community**
10. **Sustaining Our Call to Love Our Neighbours** (Missional Living)
11. **All About Mentoring**
12. **CBM Field Report** (accessible to virtual attendees)

## SPECIAL NOTE

### For members

We will mail you a link to the audited financial statement and list of motions in preparation for the Annual General Meeting. **Members must register by Tuesday, April 23, 2024 in order to vote at the AGM.**

### At the Conference

- A Greater Ontario House of Prayer (GOHOP) member has created a prayer room to facilitate an immersive prayer experience for you. The prayer room will remain open throughout the Conference.
- Canadian Baptists: Celebrating 150 years of Together in Mission 1874–2024. CBM representatives will help us celebrate 150 years of missions.
- As *Live* magazine ends its run, Renée James and past editor Esther Barnes will lead us in a time of celebrating its legacy.

# Registration

## 2024 CBWOQ WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

To register and pay online, visit [baptistwomen.com](http://baptistwomen.com)

To register by mail, please complete all areas, detach and mail together with cheque to CBWOQ Office, 5 International Blvd., Etobicoke, ON M9W 6H3

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Church and City \_\_\_\_\_

- This is my first in-person CBWOQ event
- I wish to volunteer at this event. Please contact me with more information.

### Age

- Teen  20s  30s  40s  50s  60s  70+

### I will apply for a bursary\* to cover:

- Childcare  Travel  Registration

\*For Bursary forms visit [baptistwomen.com](http://baptistwomen.com). Your application must be received by March 15, 2024.

### Photo Release

- I agree to allow photos of me which may be taken at the event, to be used in all CBWOQ publications and social media for the sole purpose of sharing about CBWOQ with the Baptist community at large.

### PAYMENT

- Registration Fee: Friday evening (\$20)
- Registration Fee: Saturday (\$95 – meals included)
- I am an Uptick alumni or a student (\$95 – Friday and Saturday)
- My contribution to event/bursary fund\* \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed a cheque for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheque payable in full to *Canadian Baptist Women of Ontario and Quebec*. Our bank will only accept this and we will not be able to confirm your registration including workshop choices until your payment is successfully processed.

- \*Yes, I would like a receipt for my donation to the event/bursary fund. Only for donations over \$20.

### WORKSHOPS

Workshops are offered once during the Conference. Please indicate your top 4 choices by writing the workshop number as indicated. Workshops are assigned on a first come, first served basis and are capped by room capacity.

### My workshop choices:

1st choice \_\_\_\_\_

2nd choice \_\_\_\_\_

3rd choice \_\_\_\_\_

4th choice \_\_\_\_\_

### LUNCH

Any food allergies or sensitivities? Please note them here:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### VOTING

The program includes the brief transaction of annual business for Canadian Baptist Women of Ontario and Quebec (CBWOQ). Voting privileges are open to women who have identified as members of CBWOQ, are affiliated with a CBOQ church; subscribe to the CBWOQ vision of "empowered women transforming the world as God's Beloved," register at least 10 days before the conference starts (Bylaw 4:26a and 37) and sign and date below. **This means you must register by Tuesday April 23, 2024 in order to vote.**

Please sign and date below only if you fulfil these requirements. We will mail members a link to the audited financial statement and list of motions in preparation for the AGM.

If you'd like to become a member or don't know if you are, please indicate below and we will follow up with you.

- I would like to become a member of Baptist Women
- I would like to know if I'm a member

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Cancellation Policy

1. Cancellations before April 23: Refund of registration minus \$15.
2. Cancellations after April 23: No refund. Exception: In the case of accident or illness of the registrant, or a death in the family: refund minus \$15.
3. Registration forms without payment: These are not considered registered. Meals will not be ordered and workshop choices will not be held. Please know that we have a cap of 250 in the main hall so you are very welcome to register and pay at the door, but you may not be able to enter if we've reached our cap, and will need to make alternate arrangements for breakfast and lunch. Workshops will be subject to availability.

“

Everyone will be forgotten, nothing we do will make any difference, and all good endeavors, even the best, will come to naught. Unless there is God. If the God of the Bible exists, and there is a True Reality beneath and behind this one, and this life is not the only life, then every good endeavor, even the simplest ones, pursued in response to God's calling, can matter forever.”

Attributed to Tim Keller

**live**

How we connect with each other has had to change, but *Live* magazine keeps our bonds lively and strong. Let a woman in your community know about *Live* magazine. A subscription costs just \$20. Pay at [baptistwomen.com](http://baptistwomen.com) or call the editor, Renée James. Choose from three formats: print, audio (CD) or online.

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