
BEING AVAILABLE

Rebekah Larente's Call to Mission

Rebekah Larente is an Uptick Baptist Women graduate. Uptick is a discipleship and leadership development program run by CBWOQ.

In 2019, CBWOQ supported Rebekah's work on the Six Nations Reserve in southwestern Ontario through a New Initiatives grant. "It's such a privilege to work on the reserve," she says. "And it shows CBWOQ's compassion and empathy. It's incredible to have people supporting native ministry."

Read about the impact of Uptick Baptist Women on Rebekah's spiritual formation at baptistwomen.com/about.

REBEKAH LARENTE never thought she'd be good enough to do mission even though she'd earned a college diploma in community and justice services. Plus, she was the shy person in most groups. "God qualifies the called," she laughs. "That describes me."

In 2016, with that college diploma in hand, she spent two years with Operation Mobilization (OM) aboard their mission ship, sailing to Africa and Colombia, stopping at 25 countries along the way. This was Rebekah's first working mission experience and as she puts it, "God taught me so much through that ministry."

God taught her how to be patient—to understand that mission wasn't about what she thought it was to be, but rather, about what He wanted. "Mission is sometimes just about serving the people you work with versus 24/7 evangelism."

She learned humility. She worked in the department responsible for cleaning the whole ship from top to bottom every day. "Essentially I was serving the people I was working with," she recalls. Cleaning toilets, bathrooms and beyond, made her connect with women on a different level. "It was women who did the cleaning, and every day we'd start with devotionals, singing and prayer and then get to the work."



Photo courtesy Rebekah Larente

More than that, she discovered that the very act of cleaning, day in and day out, brought her to a different level of vulnerability with God. Drenched in sweat as she cleaned, she learned how to spend time Him; how to pray; how to trust. “There was a lot going on at home,” she recalls, “and I had to trust God with all of that—that He was taking care of my family while I was on the ship.”

Trust didn’t come easily to Rebekah. Growing up in a Christian home, she’d given her heart to Jesus as a child and knew the church-every-Sunday-youth-group-Friday-night schtick by heart. Yet through her public and high school years, a learning disability, constant bullying by her peers, trauma and its resulting depression and anger, had defined her sense of self and fuelled her actions. All that changed in Grade 12. The tragic death of a young man she knew made her realize that her life could be taken away in a moment. “If I died, would I be with Jesus? Could I say yes with confidence?” she asked. She made the decision to get help.

That was a major turning point for Rebekah. “I no longer cared about what people thought of me. My identity was now standing as a daughter of the King,” she remembers. And as her understanding of her new identity blossomed, Rebekah discovered a passion for ministry and for mission; a passion that could only have come from

God; a passion that her church community at First Baptist Church in Welland confirmed.

Returning home after her OM mission trip, Rebekah discovered that her calling to mission encompassed a fixed address much closer to home—the Six Nations Reserve in southwestern Ontario. Pastors Brian and Andrea Chicki at Ohsweken Baptist Church. They had had a vision of a church made stronger and healthier because it had literally opened its doors to the Indigenous communities surrounding it, inviting everyone from Indigenous elders to youth to experience Jesus through an honoring and preserving of their Indigenous heritage. Would Rebekah like to help?

Like Brian and Andrea, Rebekah reaches out on a grassroots level. For almost a year now, she has helped people with the basics: groceries, transport if they need it. She’s visited people. She’s had conversations. “This is a very hands-on and practical ministry,” she says. “We’re building trust.”

She’s immersed herself in building relationships with youth from the community. She shares the connection of Indigenous heritage with them (she is part Ojibwe). She also shares food and time. “I’m a firm believer in food ministry,” she laughs. “Kids love food and they will come out for free food.”

She meets with several girls now, spending time and listening well. A pat “if you don’t accept

REBEKAH’S PRAYER REQUESTS

- strength
- for the girls—that they will see their identity as rooted in Christ
- that God will give her continued opportunity to be with them and to share God’s truth with them

Jesus you will go to hell” message makes these girls draw the bolts tight on doors they’ve firmly closed in the face of abuse, neglect and poverty. In her very first lunch with them, Rebekah couldn’t mince her words, either about her calling or about God’s heart: “He’s called me to build relationships with you, not to judge you.”

Rebekah considers her mission and ministry long term. “A lot of people have it in their minds that things will be fixed right away, but the reality is that this is not the case. Damage has been done on the reserve.” She is learning to take this in stride. “God has taught me to trust Him through it all and to believe that if I’m praying for these girls and being there with them, only doing what I can do—then I’ve done my best for them.”

Rebekah plans to return to school to become a registered practical nurse. ■