

# THE SOUNDING MEGAPHONE

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Johanna Veenstra was another brave young missionary who carried the Gospel to Africa. Read of her life, I love to tell the story. God bless you.

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# THE LIFE OF JOHANNA VEENSTRA AND HER MISSIONARY FRIENDS

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong  
and of a good courage;  
be not afraid, neither be thou  
dismayed: for the LORD thy God is  
with thee whithersoever thou goest.  
Joshua 1.9 (KJV)

The life motto of Johanna Veenstra.  
While others around her dreamed of  
starting a family, pursuing a career,  
or advancing themselves in the  
bustling, exciting urban America  
which had just entered the twentieth  
century, Johanna Veenstra dreamed  
of being a missionary. It was a dream  
that would become a concrete reality  
on the cold, drizzly day of October 2,  
1919 as Johanna stood on the deck of  
the Mauretania in New York harbour.

With tearful eyes, she said goodbye  
to a crowd of friends and family,  
some who she would never see  
again. Young prospective  
missionaries were warned of the  
dangers of Africa. Africa was known  
for its tribal warfare, malaria and  
sleeping sickness. It was a land  
teeming with wild animals, snakes  
and scorpions. Medical care was  
virtually non-existent. However,  
none of these fears could outweigh  
the faith that burned within  
Johanna. She had a love for God  
and for her fellow man that had to  
be expressed; she had an important  
mission to accomplish; she had a  
sacred commission to fulfill. The  
faith, love and courage that she  
showed was also found in six other  
young women who followed her  
example.

Johanna was born on April 19, 1894. She was the third-oldest of six children born to William and Cornelia Veenstra. The family lived in Patterson, New Jersey and William worked as a carpenter. Believing that God had called him to the ministry, William began training for pastoral work and accepted a position in the state of Michigan. Only eight months after launching into pastoral ministry, William contracted typhoid fever and died. Cornelia, now a widow, moved herself and her children back to New Jersey where she opened a store. Johanna found herself having to make the difficult adjustments of living without a father and of relocation. At twelve years of age, she entered Philip's Business College where she gained a reputation for being disruptive and unruly. When she was fourteen, she began working as a stenographer in New York City. She loved city life, took dancing

lessons and attended movies.

However, the young Johanna began to feel guilty that she was not living right. She began searching for God and for peace for her troubled soul. She began her search by regularly visiting a minister, Reverend K. Van Goor, who was kind to her and would pray with her. Her desperate search ended one Sunday evening as Johanna attended a worship service with a friend. The minister called seekers to come forward and make a commitment to Christ. Johanna responded and had a wonderful conversion experience that evening. Sometime later, she stood before her own church and publicly testified to what God had done in her life.

God had only begun working in Johanna's life. In the coming months, Johanna began working in the Star of Hope Mission. She

visited jails, attended mission meetings and continued her secular work as a stenographer. One day in 1913, acting on impulse, she enrolled at the Union Missionary Training Institute in Brooklyn, New York. She was not sure why she was there and for the first three weeks left her suitcases packed. However, in the following months she began to feel more and more at home, and those months turned into three years as she continued her studies there. 1

While studying at the Union Missionary Training Institute, Johanna attended a conference where she heard a visiting speaker, Dr. Karl Kumm. Kumm was a seasoned missionary who had a special burden for Africa. As Kumm spoke, she was moved deeply. She chose to spend three days in prayer. 2 Her mind was made up; she would be a missionary in Africa.

Johanna excitedly told Kumm of her decision to be a missionary in Africa. However, the mission organization that Kumm worked for would not accept her at this time. She was too young. The beginning age for acceptance was twenty-five and Johanna was only twenty-two.<sup>3</sup> The next three years slowly passed as Johanna served in other ministry, all the while dreaming of Africa.

In 1919, the dream became reality as Johanna left New York harbour for England, on route to Africa. She had raised the needed one hundred and fifty dollars for the trip and now her journey had begun. It would not be without discomfort and setbacks. After a few days at sea, the Mauretania encountered a bad storm. As the huge waves tossed and rocked the ship, Johanna endured the distressing

conditions and seasickness. Upon arriving in England, Johanna discovered that her mission organization had been trying to get a message to her to postpone the trip. It was October, and the passage from England to Africa had been delayed until February. Arrangements were made for her to board with an English family. In the end, she was able to catch a ship leaving for Africa in December. After another long, rough sea voyage, Johanna arrived in Lagos on January 18, 1920. <sup>4</sup>

After arriving in Lagos, Johanna was made aware of disturbing news. The previous day a woman missionary from Canada had been killed by a poisonous snake. Only a few days earlier, another woman missionary had died from malaria.<sup>5</sup> There was no turning back for Johanna; she had made her choice; she had planted her feet in Africa, the missionary

graveyard of the world. After staying a night with a missionary couple, she boarded a train which would carry her for the next thirty hours to the inland region of the Nigerian protectorate. The train would take her to Lokaja. The next leg of her journey would require much courage. From there, she was headed to Ibi, which could only be reached by a two-week boat trip downriver. She was the first white woman to make this trip, and she did it without a single English-speaking person to accompany her.<sup>6</sup> On the journey, she suffered from heatstroke and from the stress of having a knife fight break out between crew members. She was glad to disembark the boat at Ibi. From Ibi, she traveled to Wukari where she spent a year in language training. From there, she moved to Takum and began working with other missionaries serving the

Hausa natives. She busied herself learning missionary skills and providing basic medical care. At this time she worked closely with another missionary couple, Mr. and Mrs. Whitman. After a year in Takum, Johanna launched out on a bold new mission. Together with the Whitmans, she journeyed to the village of Lupwe to establish a missionary station. The remote village of Lupwe consisted of only a few huts. Its inhabitants, the Kuteb tribe, were feared by all their surrounding tribesmen. They had been nicknamed the “Dzompere,” which means “to eat a man.”<sup>7</sup> The Kuteb were believed to practice witchcraft, spirit-worship, polygamy and cannibalism. They were considered so dangerous that previously the government had not allowed missionaries into their area.<sup>8</sup> The fierceness of the Kuteb people was not the only danger that Johanna

and the Whitmans faced. Other dangers were malaria, commonly contracted through mosquitoes, and the sometimes-fatal sleeping sickness, spread by the tsetse fly. There were also rats. After only a few months, Johanna had caught over forty of them in her hut. Traveling was made hazardous by aggressive cape buffaloes and hippopotami, and bathing in the river was dangerous because of crocodiles.<sup>9</sup> Johanna made light of her trials and on one occasion wrote:

*We are now in the thick of the rainy season, pools everywhere. Just now there is a lovely shower. It is so cozy under a grass roof – by a kerosene lamp – heaps of insects flying about for company – crickets singing and frogs croaking – dear Africa.*<sup>10</sup>

Johanna and the Whitmans continued their work under these conditions for one year. The Benue Valley was known for its tornado storms, wild beasts and insects.<sup>11</sup> However, the difficult experiences that Johanna encountered in Lupwe were invaluable in preparing her for what would be many more years of missionary work.

After the year at Lupwe, Johanna and the Whitmans were ready to take a furlough. While on furlough, she was informed that the Whitmans would not be returning to Lupwe, and Johanna asked for another missionary couple to accompany her back into the dangerous region. Instead of a missionary couple, Johanna was given the only available helper, a lone English woman, Miss Clara Haigh. The two women courageously returned to Lupwe and

zealously engaged in their work. They erected buildings, repaired huts, kept records, provided basic medical care and traveled from village to village, teaching, preaching and leading prayer services. They received finances to construct a boarding school where they taught young men to read the Scriptures. In less than three years, more than forty male students had attended the school. Their medical treatment involved caring for natives who suffered from eye infections, ulcers, leprosy and sleeping sickness. They also worked as midwives, trying to reduce infant mortality which was running at over fifty percent. <sup>12</sup>

Johanna and Clara trekked from village to village, preaching and teaching an uncompromised gospel message. Johanna writes, “The missionary has to probe, rebuke,



admonish, and convincingly urge these who have offended God's law to repent and make public confession."13 Eva Stuart Watt describes Johanna's preaching one evening when Johanna was ministering in Donga:

The first meeting after her arrival was the Wednesday prayer meeting. It was a Flat failure. The behavior was frivolous, the atmosphere was depressing. She decided on the spot to call a special meeting of all the Christians and have it out with them. An hour was fixed. When the time came, most of them turned out. She read to them, "[...] I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Then she let loose on them, with fire and sword, unsparingly exposing their sins. With tears she pleaded, warning them that unless God saw them broken in penitence, He would remove their candlestick out of

its place and give them over to their own corruption. She reminded them of their treatment of different missionaries and held up their secret sins in the glaring light of God's holiness. She told them that she was willing that they hate her for speaking the truth. 14

Her exhortation was followed by a prayer meeting in which men and women rose and confessed sins of idolatry, lying, stealing and polygamy. On another occasion, Johanna tells of a meeting held at Kwambai: "At Kwambai we had also had special days for heart searching and prayer. Over thirty of the Christians arose to confess some sin of which God convicted them. These meetings were full of spiritual power." 15

While seeing positive results in their ministry as they trekked from village to village, the strains of

missionary life were wearing on Clara. She found the climate hard to adjust to and Johanna comments on her condition: “We get on fine and we have real and blessed fellowship together, but our station does not agree with her physical makeup. It is too shut in with hills. She suffers too much from heat and mentally from isolation, as we are cut off from other white people.”<sup>16</sup> Clara worked with Johanna for three years. Again, Johanna knew that she needed more helpers.

In search of helpers and support, Johanna furloughed in America, drawing large crowds to hear of her exciting experiences. One young couple who became interested in Johanna’s work were John and Henrietta Bierenga. John had taken medical training at Valparaiso University in Indiana. Then, his interest in missions led him to attend

the same Union Mission Training Institute in New York where Johanna had studied. It was there that he met Henrietta. Together, they decided to join Johanna in her work. Johanna was overjoyed at the news and welcomed them gladly. On August 13, 1927, the couple left New York harbour, beginning what would be a five-month journey by steamship, train, riverboat, motorcycle and foot to reach the remote village of Donga, where Johanna was at this time.<sup>17</sup> Would this young couple be the helpers that Johanna needed to continue her work? John quickly began working in the boarding school, and Henrietta started teaching Bible study courses to women. Together, they traveled through towns and villages sharing their faith. They began making friendships with chiefs and also started writing down their

experiences to be passed on to a missionary magazine. Johanna felt that this young couple would make excellent long-term co-workers. However, tragedy was about to strike. In July of 1928, Henrietta contracted malaria. Her condition deteriorated rapidly and, in a desperate effort to get her to better facilities, John and Johanna placed her in a hunting net and carried her for eight miles to Ibi. Henrietta did not survive for long and died on September 5, 1928. <sup>18</sup> Her body was wrapped for burial and placed in a wooden coffin. A white cloth, with flowers upon it, was laid over the top of the coffin and at sundown a group of native men carried her body to a small cemetery where she was laid to rest. <sup>19</sup>

The loss of Henrietta shook both John and Johanna to their very core. They had heard numerous stories of missionaries dying in service, but

none were close to them like Henrietta. She was John's wife. In the year that Henrietta had been with Johanna they had become dear friends. John and Johanna now had to make a decision of where to go from here. Johanna decided to take another furlough; John decided to continue in the field for a time. <sup>20</sup> Although shaken, Johanna rebounded from the grief of this experience and returned to the field. In 1929, she received the happy news that a friend of hers from America had decided to join her on the field. Johanna had first met Nelle Breen in 1926 at a Bible conference in Indiana. Nelle was drawn to Johanna and every night of the conference met with her for devotions and prayer. Johanna very much wanted Nelle to join her on the field but Nelle had other plans. She was a young, single, elementary school teacher with her whole life

ahead of her. Her future seemed bright here in America. She knew that the African mission field was difficult, dangerous and demanding. Serving there meant accepting new duties, responsibilities and pressures. While Johanna pressed Nelle for a decision, Nelle says that she, “kept putting the thought as far away as possible.”<sup>21</sup> However, the more she tried to dismiss the idea of going, the more she felt that she was supposed to go. She was deeply troubled. Did anyone understand her feelings and fears? She relates that while standing in front of her class, “Often I would look at my class and they would seem to fade and I would see the faces of African children in their places.”<sup>22</sup> One night, while reciting the Lord’s Prayer, Nelle came to the words “Thy kingdom come”. She says that immediately she was stopped mid-sentence and that the Lord spoke to her, saying, “Stop! I am telling you

to go to Nigeria to help My kingdom come, and you won’t go.”<sup>23</sup> This experience brought things to a head, and Nelle knew that she could not resist God’s call on her life. She decided to go and wrote to Johanna.<sup>24</sup>

After informing Johanna of her decision, Nelle chose to undergo some missionary training and applied to the organization that Johanna worked for. Upon applying, the missionary organization rejected her application. Some medical tests revealed that Nelle had a heart murmur. This immediately disqualified her from continuing the application process. Nelle informed Johanna about the problem and Johanna responded, “Don’t worry. You’re coming!”<sup>25</sup> The problem with Nelle’s heart still had to be cleared

up. That year two prayer meetings were held at which prayer was offered to the Lord concerning Nelle's physical condition. At the end of that year Nelle had another physical. The results came back; Nelle's heart was perfectly normal.

With the change in her condition, Nelle was accepted and on June 19, 1930, left New York harbour on the S. S. Samaria. In early October, the two women were united in Ibi. Nelle spent several months in Takum learning the Hausa language. In her first year, she began teaching Bible, math and reading. She trekked with Johanna across the bush country and met local chiefs and their tribespeople.<sup>26</sup> The two women became like sisters, and so they were, sisters in the Lord. It would not be long before others would join Johanna and Nelle in their work. In 1931, Johanna took another furlough on which she began

recruiting workers. Miss Clara Haigh decided to come back to the field and work with her old friend once again. Johanna had been praying for both a teacher and a doctor or nurse. Her prayers for a teacher were answered in Jennie Stielstra. Jennie was a grade school teacher in Illinois who already had had two years of Bible College. She knew Nelle personally and was familiar with Johanna's ministry. She had listened to Johanna speak at a women's meeting in Illinois and, after the meeting was over, expressed to Johanna her desire to join with her in the work. Again, Johanna was overjoyed and welcomed her gladly. Another woman, Bertha Zagers, desired to be included in the work as well. Bertha had worked in Chicago for five years as a nurse. Her medical skills were so needed in Johanna's work. In the summer of 1932,

Jennie and Bertha boarded a ship to England, where they would meet with Johanna and all continue together to Nigeria. 27

Meanwhile in Nigeria, Nelle and Clara had been working exhaustively. For relief, they would take short vacations. One trip that they took was to the Jos Plateau. To get there, they first needed a ride between Lupwe and Ibi. Another young, single missionary, Edgar Smith, answered the request to drive them. They would travel the eighty-mile distance, together on Edgar's motorcycle. During this trip, Edgar fell in love with Nelle. Several months later, when his vacation time came up, he traveled to Lupwe to spend time with her. Sometime during the three weeks that he was there, he proposed to her. However, Nelle was undecided about what she should do. She told Edgar that she was going to take a six-

month furlough and that he would have to wait for a response at her return. She also told him that during her furlough he was not to write to her more than three times. After six weeks, Edgar had already written his three letters, and was dismayed that he could not write further.<sup>28</sup> News of this reached Johanna and she wrote to Nelle, saying, "You silly girl, let that man write!"<sup>29</sup> After Nelle returned from her furlough, Edgar proposed to her again and a wedding date was arranged for October 10, 1933. The minister, Dr. Barnden, together with his wife, traveled for approximately three hundred miles on a motorcycle to get to Lupwe, where Edgar and Nelle were. On the journey they were struck by lightning, survived the experience, and continued on to perform the wedding ceremony.<sup>30</sup>

After also working exhaustively, Johanna decided to take a short vacation as well. No one knew just how much she needed it, no one, except perhaps, Henry Beets. For years, Beets had been monitoring Johanna and had expressed concern over how much she extended herself in her difficult work. In a letter to her in 1925, he said, "I am afraid that you are sometimes overexerting yourself." <sup>31</sup> Again, in 1927, he wrote to her, "Be careful about your energy. You must not overdo. I think I told you that before."<sup>32</sup> Again in 1929, he warned Johanna with strong words and good advice that "You must not overdo it. I want to warn you against it. Train others to undertake some of the work that you yourself have done in the past and would like to continue doing in the future."<sup>33</sup> It was true; Johanna just would not stop. On one occasion, she pushed a bicycle twenty-three miles, part of the trip

over a steep mountain pass and in heavy rain.<sup>34</sup> On another occasion, she spent five days cycling the eighty miles from Ibi to Lupwe. The journey was over rugged footpaths, twisted tree roots, patches of deep sand and hidden stumps. The hot African sun beat upon her as she peddled uphill and downhill, across streams and miles of lonely, unpopulated country. <sup>35</sup> Even though she took furloughs from time to time, these furloughs were spent rushing from church to church, giving reports and recruiting workers. In one address, Beets expressed that Johanna was "burning out for Christ."<sup>36</sup> Other friends were worried about her, too. Jennie expressed that while trekking with Johanna over rough terrain, Johanna often stopped to rest, and that her lips would sometimes turn blue, an indication of circulation and heart problems.

In 1932, Johanna expressed in a letter to a friend that she “[h]ad a lot of headaches and sleeplessness the first two months [back from furlough]. Don’t tell anybody, because it all gets so shockingly exaggerated as the rumors go around.”<sup>37</sup> Before Nelle left on her furlough, Johanna had said to her, “You know, I’m not going to be here very long ... I’m sure of it. My health has not been kind ... I just know that the Lord is going to call me home.”<sup>38</sup> In March of 1933, Johanna found herself at a field council meeting in Ibi. While there, she mentioned to a physician, Dr. Barnden, that she was experiencing pain in her thighs. He made an appointment for her to come to the hospital in Vom, three hundred miles away. As she was preparing to go, Jennie gave her what would be a final goodbye. Jennie writes, “We kissed three times then. Was there some premonition? She looked at me so

lovingly but in a deep searching way, hugged me and went off.”<sup>39</sup> At Vom, it was discovered that Johanna had appendicitis. She was operated upon and came through the surgery. However, she began vomiting frequently and for the first two days of her recovery, could not sleep. Dr. and Mrs. Barnden stayed with Johanna through the days and nights. One Saturday night, as Dr. Barnden entered Johanna’s room, he heard her say, “I’m sinking.” It was found that her pulse was rapid and her heart was failing. For fourteen years, Johanna had been using the drug, quinine. For years it was the only known drug to effectively combat malaria. She had been taking five grains daily and sometimes twice that amount when suffering from malaria. One side affect of quinine is that it can weaken the heart.<sup>40</sup> Years of strenuous service, along with the



effects of the drug, had taken their toll on Johanna. On April 9, 1933, Johanna died.<sup>41</sup>

Edgar Smith made arrangements for Johanna's coffin. A simple funeral was held in the presence of a small group of friends and she was buried in a graveyard close to Vom chapel on the Jos Plateau. A small cross marks the spot and upon it is written the words, "Till the Day dawns."<sup>43</sup>

In another sense, a new day was dawning for the missionary women at Lupwe. At the time of Johanna's passing, Nelle was still away on furlough. She returned in the summer of 1933, accepted the leadership of the mission, and married Edgar Smith in October. Even though the loss of Johanna was painfully felt by Nelle, Nelle seemed to have gained, from the Lord, added strength for what lay ahead of them. She writes these stirring words:

In our own strength this would be impossible, for none of us have had very much experience, but we do know that, '[And God] is able to make all grace abound toward [you;...]' and He will never forsake us. May the home-going of this valiant soldier of the Cross cause us all to buckle on the armor of the Lord more securely, and as faithful soldiers of the King of kings occupy until He comes to call us to join the host of the redeemed. <sup>44</sup>

This new-found strength was inspiring and Jennie and Bertha, who had only been in Africa for nine months, rallied behind Nellie. With the Lord's grace and armour, the three women and Edgar banded together and worked harder than ever. Jennie worked in the boarding school while Bertha cared for medical needs. Without modern equipment or facilities, she worked under the shade of a tree. Her

equipment was a wobbly card table and some instruments. For sanitation, instruments were sterilized by boiling them in a cooking pot over an open fire. In time, a proper treatment clinic was constructed in Lupwe and she treated patients from inside its walls. On one occasion, a medicine man brought two of his six children to Bertha. Sadly, the children's health did not improve and in several days they died. Even though he had lost his children, the medicine man converted to Christian faith. After being asked what had turned him to Christ, he answered that it was because of the sympathy and love which Bertha had shown to his children as she cared for them.<sup>45</sup> Jenny and Bertha also trekked into the bush areas, as did Edgar and Nelle, preaching and holding services. In 1935, Nelle became pregnant and had to return briefly to England. There, she gave

birth to Alyce Jean and together they returned to the Nigerian protectorate. The tribes-people who they were working with had never seen a white baby, and this was to them a shocking sight.<sup>46</sup> After seeing the child, one native woman threw her arms around Nelle and said, "Thank you, thank you for having this baby. You are just the same as we. Now your God can be our God too." <sup>47</sup>

While Nigerians were shocked over a white baby, there were more shocks in store, this time for the tightly-bonded missionary team. From the beginning, the mission board had questioned Bertha's suitability for the work. It is unclear what their issues were, but her acceptance was not a smooth procedure. Her acceptance might not have happened at all, if not for Dr. Beets speaking to them on her

behalf. In 1935, she told Beets that further complaints had been raised over medicine that she had brought, and over articles which she had written, without having those articles sent in for approval. She expressed that she hadn't realized that she had done anything wrong. Not everyone in the team interpreted Bertha's situation the same way, and she decided to leave the field. 48

With Bertha's leaving, the missionary team was now without their most qualified medical personnel. In time, her spot was filled by another nurse who was eager to serve on the Nigerian protectorate mission field. Tena Huizenga was born in Chicago, in 1907, and at a young age, she made a profession of faith. In 1925, she enrolled in the Chicago Mission Training School, which she attended for three years. She was trained to be a nurse at Garfield Park Community Hospital. She received further

training at Moody Bible Institute and, after being accepted by the mission organization, she left New York harbour on February 28, 1937. 49 She tells of her desire to go to the African mission field in the following words:

It was while at the Institute that I felt definitely led of the Lord to apply for a foreign mission board which worked in Africa. Having inquired about the different boards, I felt constrained to apply to the SUM to labor in darkest Africa to minister to the needs of both body and soul. It was my own mother's prayer that one of her children might go out as a missionary. She did not live to see it, nor did my father who died last year very suddenly, but I owe them much for their prayers and their Christian life, for they influenced me much. Through all this, I can see the Lord behind it all and I am confident that as the Lord leads me forth into His

vineyard, He will give me the strength and wisdom to carry out this tremendous, great task. My strength is alone in the Lord.<sup>50</sup>

The strength of the Lord is precisely what Tena needed for the work that was before her.

The medical work ahead of Tena involved giving dozens of malaria shots daily, setting broken bones, treating lepers, delivering babies, treating snake bites and scorpion stings. Natives also came to her with burns, boils, skin diseases, abscesses, and elephantiasis. She pulled teeth and treated diseases such as syphilis, gonorrhoea and yaws.<sup>51</sup> Sometimes patients had gone to medicine men before coming to her, and their conditions had worsened as a result of the harmful effects of the medicine men's treatments.<sup>52</sup> She administered smallpox vaccinations

as well. To many natives, vaccinations were new and frightening. Many Muslim patients refused the vaccinations because of a rumour that the scar disqualified them from the Islamic hereafter.

The missionaries showed themselves vaccinating each other for the sake of on-looking natives.<sup>53</sup> Tena cared for her patients in a tender, loving way. She began her morning by attending an early prayer meeting and spent the remainder of the day administering medical care. As well, she trekked to neighbouring stations and led Bible studies.<sup>54</sup>

The years of Bible studies, gospel presentations, prayer meetings and medical services had a positive impacting effect upon many tribes-people. It is impossible to know just how many natives came to Christ through the ministry of Johanna

and the other missionaries. Many did. On one occasion, Edgar Smith, along with a Siman Atajeri, presented the gospel to an elderly Gindin Dutse chief named Nyita. He was so captivated by the gospel of Christ that he insisted it be told to him repeatedly. Within a few months, Nyita encouraged the people of his tribe to turn to Christ. He did not live long after his conversion but, before his death, left orders that he should not be buried according to the customs of his forefathers, but rather, in a Christian way. His witness had influence upon the tribe and, in time, a community of new Christians sprung up in his tribe. 55

The faith that moved Johanna Veenstra to step aboard the Mauritania on that cold drizzly day in October 1919 became like a mustard seed, sprouting into an ever-growing tree. None of the pleasant enticements of twentieth-century

America could blur the vision of this young Christian, who was seeing beyond them with the eyes of faith. How much of her future did she foresee and understand as she left New York harbour, on route to Africa? In her wildest dreams, did she foresee the obstacles and hardships that she would overcome, the victories that she would experience and the wonderful friendships that she would make? Her father had only eight months of pastoral ministry, but he fathered a child who would have years of fruitful missionary ministry in the remote and unknown villages of the Nigerian protectorate. Once engaged in the work, there was no turning back. The trials that she faced, seasickness, bad reports, malaria, loneliness, heat stroke, language learning, tsetse flies, rats in her hut, wild animals, exhaustion, conflicts, long bike

journeys, and even the death of Henrietta, did not throw her from her course. These did not constitute a wall on her path, but rather, a stepping stone raising her to greater heights in God. It was the Lord's presence in her life that made the difference. When others were weakened, she became strong. When others were fearful, she was courageous. When others were distraught, she was not dismayed, knowing by faith that the Lord was with her wherever she went. The impact and the influence of her living faith stretched far beyond her immediate friends. It touched the lives of native Africans. It encouraged fellow missionaries who had entered the field before her. It reached back into America and drew out other Christian workers who would continue the work after her passing. Together in His service, Johanna Veenstra, Clara Haigh, John and

Henrietta Bierenga, Nelle and Edgar Smith, Jennie Stielstra, Bertha Zagers and Tena Huizenga laid down their lives for Christ and for His gospel. The light of their faith and their love shone into the hearts of many, and was proven by their caring works and self-sacrificing commitment. To this day, their testimonies stand as noble examples of living Christianity.

## ENDNOTES

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3. Gerald L. Zandstra, *Daughters Who Dared: Answering God's Call to Nigeria*, 20.
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5. *Ibid.*, 32.
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7. *Ibid.*, 34.
8. *Ibid.*, 34.
9. *Ibid.*, 34.
10. Johanna Veenstra, *Private Letters*, June 10, 1925. Quoted in Edgar H. Smith, *Nigerian Harvest* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 36.
11. Johanna Veenstra, *Pioneering for Christ in the Sudan*, 123.
12. *Ibid.*, 35-36.
13. Johanna Veenstra, *Pioneering for Christ in the Sudan*, 125.
14. Eva Stuart Watt, *Aflame For God* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott Ltd., 1937), 93-94.
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16. Johanna Veenstra, Letter to "My Precious Friend and Sister," June 9, 1924. Quoted in Gerald L. Zandstra, *Daughters Who Dared: Answering God's Call to Nigeria*(Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1992), 40.
17. Gerald L. Zandstra, *Daughters Who Dared: Answering God's Call to Nigeria*, 41-43.
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19. Johanna Veenstra, Letter to Henry Beets, September 12, 1928.

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21. Nelle Breen Smith quoted in Joan Huyser-Honig, "Nelle Breen Smith: 'Dear Baturiya'", *The Banner*, February 8, 1982: 11.

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33. Henry Beets, letter to Johanna Veenstra, January 29, 1929. Quoted in Gerald L. Zandstra, *Daughters*



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36. Henry Beets, "Why I am Glad Miss Breen Goes to Africa," Missionary Monthly, September 1930, 461.

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44. Nelle Breen, "Other Fields," Missionary Monthly, June to July, 1933, 170. Quoted in Gerald L. Zandstra, Daughters Who Dared: Answering God's Call to Nigeria, 70.

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47. Edgar H. Smith, Nigerian Harvest, 65.

48. Gerald L. Zandstra, Daughters Who Dared: Answering God's Call to Nigeria, 79-82.
49. Ibid., 85-86.
50. Tena Huizenga, "Other Fields," Missionary Monthly, May, 1937, 113. Quoted in Gerald L. Zandstra, Daughters Who Dared: Answering God's Call to Nigeria, 86.
51. Gerald L. Zandstra, Daughters Who Dared: Answering God's Call to Nigeria, 86.
52. Ibid., 86-87.
53. Edgar H. Smith, Nigerian Harvest, 59.
54. Gerald L. Zandstra, Daughters Who Dared: Answering God's Call to Nigeria, 87.
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Art by Ramona Stevens

I was inspired to paint this piece of art by a photograph that I found of Johanna Veenstra that I found at the following address.

[http://www.google.ca/search?q=picture+of+johanna+veenstra&client=safari&rls=en&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=ywFuUf2DB-KligL274DwAw&ved=0CC0QsAQ&biw=1075&bih=832#imgrc=olm4Jd04qr1s-M%3A%3BNVImtx6ULTthQM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252F2.bp.blogspot.com%252F\\_ipPtTgCP6O4%252FTO8bIXeLSU%252FAAAAAAABZ8%252FqZspZe5MdqE%252FS350%252FVeenstra.jpg%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwomenmissionaries.blogspot.com%252Fp%252Fjohanna-veenstra.html%3B200%3B251](http://www.google.ca/search?q=picture+of+johanna+veenstra&client=safari&rls=en&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=ywFuUf2DB-KligL274DwAw&ved=0CC0QsAQ&biw=1075&bih=832#imgrc=olm4Jd04qr1s-M%3A%3BNVImtx6ULTthQM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252F2.bp.blogspot.com%252F_ipPtTgCP6O4%252FTO8bIXeLSU%252FAAAAAAABZ8%252FqZspZe5MdqE%252FS350%252FVeenstra.jpg%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwomenmissionaries.blogspot.com%252Fp%252Fjohanna-veenstra.html%3B200%3B251)

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