

## 2019 GEMS CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

**Jenn Amo** is an author, speaker, missionary, and the founder of Warning Lights ministry. As a missionary, Jenn serves as a bold voice for those who have been silenced. Her passion is for audiences of all ages to recognize the Warning Lights of human trafficking. Jenn is married and lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

**Workshop:** Who Are The Victims? Can You See The Real Me? | What in the World? Growing Up in Today's Culture

**Web:** [jennatwar.com](http://jennatwar.com)

**Facebook:** [@jennatwar](https://www.facebook.com/jennatwar)

**Instagram:** [@jennatwar](https://www.instagram.com/jennatwar)

**Twitter:** [@jennatwar](https://twitter.com/jennatwar)

**Deborah Pryor-Bayard** is a veteran teacher of the Grand Rapids Public Schools and currently serves on the GEMS Executive Board. She previously taught students with Emotional Impairments in both Categorical and Center Based programs. She has also worked as a Behavior Intervention Specialist and Teacher Consultant. Her current position is Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Restorative Practices, and Social Emotional Learning Consultant for the Grand Rapids Public Schools. Additionally, she has spoken at conferences and other venues locally and around the country. Her message is one of hope and healing. Deborah is married and a proud momma.

**Workshop:** Developing Culturally Conscious Leaders | Healthy Relationships | Understanding Implicit Bias

**Web:** [deborahpbayard.com](http://deborahpbayard.com)

**Dana Beerens** is a GEMS craft counselor at Cottonwood Church in Jenison, Michigan, and has been involved with GEMS crafts for 5 years. Dana enjoys leading crafts because it offers the unique opportunity to use her hobby as a ministry and connect with the girls in a fun and engaging way. Some of her favorite memories from Calvinettes, as a girl, are from craft time. Dana hopes to extend that nostalgia to the girls in her GEMS Club as well.

**Workshop:** Holiday Crafts: *LOVED*. in Every Season!

**Jessica Benson** is the Club Coordinator and worship leader at the Denver First Christian Reformed GEMS Club in Denver, Colorado. She's been involved with GEMS for 19 years. She currently serves as a GEMS Ambassador in Colorado. Jessica is a teacher, going to school, and has two high-school aged children.

**Workshop:** Creative Movement in Club

**Teresa Bierenga** is a counselor at Brookside CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she has served for 10 years. From an early age Teresa has enjoyed the diversity and unlimited possibilities of the creative arts. She is inspired by the weekly interactions with her GEMS and seeks to honor the legacy of her grandma, who served as a leader in her church in South Dakota. Teresa is married to Brian and they have two children.

**Workshop:** FUN-filled, Budget-Friendly Crafts for GEMS Craft Leaders

**Carol Bremer-Bennett** is World Renew's U.S. Executive Director. She is born to the To'ahcedliinii (Waters Flow Together) Clan and born for the Todich'iinii (Bitter Water) Clan of the Navajo Nation. Bremer-Bennett is an educator by training, with a B.A. from Calvin College and M.A. from Western New Mexico University. Her extensive experience in Christian ministry spans more than 25 years of organizational leadership, leadership development, and administration. She is humbled to be a beloved and adopted daughter of God; adoptions have played an ongoing role in her story. Five of her six children are adopted. She and husband Theo Bremer-Bennett have three children of Navajo descent and three of Ethiopian descent. Their family motto is: *the African bus is never full!*

**Workshop:** Girl Power: How Women Can Change the World

**Amy Brooks** is a born and bred Jersey girl who loves Jesus, her family, and an afternoon down the shore with a good book and a great playlist. She's served GEMS in a variety of ways over the last 20-plus years and is currently a member of the GEMS Executive Board. She is a passionate prayer warrior who loves to encourage others.

**Workshop:** Spiritual Pathways

**Sally Brown** is the Director of Inclusive Education at South Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Previously, she had the pleasure of coordinating the Special Needs Ministry at a local church for 10 years. Sally has been married to Tom for 25 years and they have three children Tyler, Macy and Ryne. She loves animals, especially her little dogs. Sally also enjoys being outside and active.

**Workshop:** Everyone Belongs! Setting Girls with Special Needs Up For Success | Chaos Coordinator: You Can Do It!

**Cindy Bultema** is the Executive Director of GEMS Girls' Clubs. She loves the Lord, loves life, loves her family, and loves to celebrate! With over 20 years of ministry experience, Cindy is also a popular women's speaker, Bible teacher, and communications coach. Prior to coming to GEMS, Cindy was the Children's Director for a West Michigan megachurch, wrote children's curriculum for an international publishing house, served as a Compassion International ambassador, and participated as a Grief Share seminar expert. Cindy lives in West Michigan with her husband and their four children.

**Workshop:** Communicating with Confidence

**Keynote:** Saturday Afternoon: Understanding Girls Today | Sunday Morning: Living *LOVED. Period.*

**Web:** [cindybultema.com](http://cindybultema.com)

**Facebook:** @CindyBultemaspeaker

**Twitter:** @CindyBultema

**Lenae Bulthuis** counts it grace to serve as Training & Club Development Manager for GEMS Girls' Clubs. For fifteen years her work has given encouragement and hope to counselors and girls across North America through her writing and speaking. In addition to her work for GEMS, Lenae writes for blogs and magazines and speaks to women about the life-changing truth that God didn't just save us by grace, He invites us to live by grace. She lives with her husband, Mike, on a grain and livestock farm in west-central Minnesota where she reads, writes, and wraps her arms around their grandlittles.

**Workshop:** Threading the Theme | Prayers for One Another

**Keynote:** Saturday Morning: *LOVED. Period. That is what we are!*

**Terri DeBoer** is a local meteorologist at West Michigan's WOOD TV8 where she also serves as a co-host of local TV show eightWest. As a married mother of three, she loves sharing her journey through life, by connecting with other women. Terri is excited to speak at the GEMS Conference and connect with women about the challenges of serving in club as well as raising children, balancing a career, and impacting the community. Terri's daughters were involved in GEMS so she has a deep appreciation for the women who have served within this ministry.

**Workshop:** Making the Connection to Christ

**Web:** [terrideboer.com](http://terrideboer.com)

**Karyn Dekker** is a Club Coordinator, GEMS Executive Board member, and GEMS Ambassador from southern Florida. She has been involved with GEMS for 11 years. She has previously served as a Discovery Level counselor in her club and as well as a Leadership Trainer. Karyn is a wife and a mom of two grown children. She passionately loves Jesus and treasures the privilege of "praying down the tracks" for the GEMS ministry.

**Workshop:** War Prayers

**Trish Dorsman** is a GEMS counselor at the Georgetown GEMS Club in Georgetown, Ontario. She has been teaching Discovery and Advanced Level GEMS for ten years and has taught the Theme Crafts workshop at GEMS Conference for many years. She loves having conversations with girls about God, life, and faith.

**Workshop:** Theme Crafts

**Robyn Dykstra** is a captivating national speaker and best-selling author. For decades, she has helped thousands of women on their journey to trust God and follow Jesus. Through in-depth Biblical teaching and hilarious personal illustrations, she will have you laughing one minute and crying the next as you discover fresh truth from God's Word.

**Workshop:** Chasing Contentment: When it Doesn't Feel Like God is Enough | Discerning the Voice of God | Sitting with Jesus—for CITs | The Woman in the Mirror

**Web:** [robyndykstra.com](http://robyndykstra.com)

**Facebook:** @robyndykstraspeaks

**Jen Ferguson** is passionate about helping couples thrive in their marriages and keeping kids safe from pornography. She and her husband, Craig, have shared their own hard story in their book, *Pure Eyes, Clean Heart: A Couple's Journey to Freedom from Pornography* and help keep couples connected at The Knot Project. Jen also freelances regularly for Protect Young Minds and Covenant Eyes.

**Workshop:** The Knot Project: Keeping Your Marriage Knot Tied Tight | Girls & Porn: It's Not Just a Man's World Anymore

**Web:** [knotproject.org](http://knotproject.org)

**Facebook:** @Theknotproject

**Twitter:** @jenfergie2000

**Instagram:** @theknotproject\_2000

**Lora Grabow** is a Christian counselor who partners with medical providers to empower patients to holistically change their lives. Her approach to wellness focuses on something missing in most methodologies—a piece she calls "headwork." Holding a Masters in Social Work, Lora has owned her own counseling practice for 20 years. Lora has built her expertise through serving clients, teaching countless individuals and groups, continuing studies, and professional speaking. By sharing knowledge, asking questions, challenging perceptions, and delivering truth Lora empowers clients and equips practitioners. She desires that all may be healthy in body, mind, and spirit.

**Workshop:** Setting Limits, Self-Care, and Soul Care:

Improving Your Capacity to Serve

**Web:** [loragrabow.com](http://loragrabow.com)

**Anneke Gretton** is thrilled to join the Unity Worship Team on guitar. In her ministry as a Christian school teacher, she introduces her students to the incredible workings of God's Universe in her physics, chemistry, and math classes. Anneke loves singing with her baby daughter, who she hopes will someday join GEMS!

**Jenn Hand** is Executive Director and Founder of Coming Alive Ministries. Coming Alive Ministries launched in 2012, providing an invitation to come alive in Christ through conferences, retreats, and overseas missions. Jenn loves to invite others to come alive and sip strong, black coffee while doing so! Jenn loves to share Jesus around the world and had been to 30 countries—only getting lost a few times. She is excited to speak at the GEMS Conference.

**Workshop:** Beauty in a Bathing Suit, Lord, Are You Sure? | Coming Alive in Waiting, Wishing, Wondering (All the Single Ladies) | Ministry and Life: A Marathon Not a Sprint

**Web:** [comingaliveministries.com](http://comingaliveministries.com)

**Facebook:** @comingaliveministries

**Instagram:** @comingalivejenn

**Twitter:** @comingalivejenn

**Kim Hofstra** serves as the Club Coordinator at the Seymour GEMS Club in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She has taught GEMS for 27 years and has loved the experiences it has given her. Kim is an education professor at Cornerstone University and is going to school full-time for her doctorate in education. Kim is married to Brian and they have college aged triplets; two daughters and a son.

**Workshop:** What Every New Club Coordinator Should Know

**Doug Hoogsteen** is a member of the Unity Worship Team and plays bass and sings as backup vocals. He has lived in the Toronto area for the last 18 years with his wife and four boys. He works as the IT manager for Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada for the last five years and enjoys the hands-on experience of building the Kingdom of God. When not working, Doug enjoys family outings and outdoor activities.

**Jeri Howe** enjoys speaking at a variety of events. She has written Bible studies and self-published a short Christian novel, *Kamea*. She was also the executive producer and co-moderator of a radio show called Survival Skills for Everyday Living. She is currently serving on the pastoral team at Lakeshore Vineyard Church and leading a Bible study in the county jail.

**Workshop:** A Mind of Life and Peace

**Web:** [jerihowe.com](http://jerihowe.com)

**Maggie John** is a Senior Executive Producer and host of 100 Huntley Street, Canada's longest running daily television show. Maggie has interviewed a variety of guests in her career. She considers it a privilege to listen and be encouraged by people who continue to make a difference in their community and actively live out their faith. Maggie is a wife, mom, and founder of a ministry called The Baby Depot, which helps families in need in the Hamilton, Ontario area.

**Workshop:** Who Am I: The Identity Crisis

**Keynote:** Saturday afternoon: Understanding Girls Today

**Web:** [100Huntley.com](http://100Huntley.com)

**Facebook:** @magdalene.mccallajohn

**Louise Johnston** is a counselor at Meadowvale GEMS in Mississauga, Ontario, and has served for 20 years. She is currently a GEMS Ambassador in Ontario and served on the 2018 Local Conference Committee as Decoration Coordinator. By His grace, God has prepared Louise for this ministry and she is honored to share His love with the girls she encounters each week.

**Workshop:** *LOVED*. Challenge Crafts

**Carol Kent** is a best-selling author, popular international speaker, former radio show co-host, president of Speak Up Speaker Services, and founder and director of the Speak Up Conference. She and her husband, Gene, have founded the non-profit organization, Speak Up for Hope which benefits inmates and their families. Carol is passionate about teaching the Bible because she understands the innate need that people have to discover what God's Word teaches about how to live in the middle of relationship struggles, difficult choices, and hidden fears. She understands women are longing for authenticity and practical strategies for living out their faith. Carol and her husband Gene live in Florida.

**Workshop:** Making the Bible Come Alive

**Keynote:** Friday Evening: Why Mentoring Matters

**Web:** [CarolKent.org](http://CarolKent.org)

**Facebook:** @carol.kent.31

**Twitter:** @CarolKentSpeaks

**Dr. Munyiva Kitavi** is the GEMS Africa Regional Manager in Kenya and oversees clubs in this region. Munyiva was born and raised in Kenya and is married to Dr. Mwaya Wa Kitavi, they have four adult children. She moved to the US in the mid-eighties to pursue education and later returned to Kenya where they now live. Munyiva holds a Doctorate degree in Education from NOVA Southeastern University, Florida. Dr. Munyiva has served in various educational, training, and social work capacities in both Kenya and US. She is passionate to empower all children, especially the under privileged.

**Workshop:** Praying Bold Prayers About Issues Affecting Girls and Women Around the World

**Laurie Krieg** is the Executive Director of Hole in My Heart Ministries—a teaching, writing, and podcasting ministry which equips the church to walk well at the intersection between the gospel and sexuality. Laurie speaks nationally including at Wheaton College, the Q Conference, and in person or on her podcast with people like Preston Sprinkle, Gabe Lyons, and Ann Voskamp. She and her husband, Matt, a licensed therapist, are currently writing a book on marriage.

**Workshop:** Walking Well Alongside Sexuality and Gender Questions

**Web:** [Himhministries.com](http://Himhministries.com)

**Twitter:** @laurie\_krieg

**Facebook:** @holeinmyheartministries

**Darlene Larson** knows well what causes women to STOP living: abuse, bankruptcy, betrayal, cruelty, deaths, disappointments, divorce, and more. She is founder of Hearts with a Purpose, where she coaches women stuck in toxicity to freedom to discover their life purpose. Darlene is author of a series of 31 day devotionals for women, *Enable me, Lord, to Shift*. She is a Professional Certified Life Coach, Life Purpose Coach®, Recovery Coach, Grief-loss Coach, and Strategic 2-Day LifePlan Coach. She also is a Coach Instructor for Life Purpose Coaching Centers International. To refuel her heart, Darlene soaks up the Son and the sun, reads, run, and/or sips on a tasty cup of coffee!

**Workshop:** Kindness and Confronting Toxicity While Guarding Your Heart | How to Confront the Truth in Love

**Web:** [heartswithapurpose.com](http://heartswithapurpose.com)

**Facebook:** @LifeCoachDarleneLarson

**Stacey Locey** is a GEMS Club Coordinator and GEMS Ambassador in Michigan. She loves all things fun including confetti, glitter, any craft projects, decorating, and hosting parties. She's a wife and mom and works in public school administration. She was blessed to grow up a Calvinette and learn early on as a young girl that she is *LOVED*.

**Workshop:** The Hangout! Crafts & More

**Bruce Martin** is a pastor, counselor, speaker, author, and outdoor adventure guide. Bruce writes and speaks extensively on hope, mission, the Gospel in culture, marriage, and how to invest our lives in what matters most. He's the author of *Desperate For Hope* and has been married to Marlina for 35 years.

**Workshop:** Fearless: Overcoming Fears and Walking Confidently into God's Purpose | Living and Loving Well When You (or Someone You Know) has Depression | Ministry and Marriage—How to do Both Well

**Keynote:** Saturday Evening: The Scars of Suffering

**Web:** [brucewmartin.com](http://brucewmartin.com)

**Facebook:** @brucewmartin.investyourlife

Chris McKenna is the Founder and CEO of Protect Young Eyes. After a 12-year career in business advertising with Ernst & Young, and six years in full-time student ministry, Chris manages educational content for Covenant Eyes and is the founder and CEO of [protectyoungeyes.com](http://protectyoungeyes.com). In a world where technology is native to our kids, Chris and the PYE team have done hundreds of hours of research in order to level the playing field for parents and to inform teens of the risks of recklessly using the Internet.

**Workshop:** Digital Trends 2019 - Protecting Kids in an Increasingly Hostile Online World, Teen Girls Look at Porn, Too. Why our Silence is Screaming the Wrong Things.

**Web:** [protectyoungeyes.com](http://protectyoungeyes.com)

**Grace Moes** is no stranger to the GEMS ministry. She has been involved in her local club for 23 years, serves on the GEMS Executive Board, and has been involved with Colleen Reinders in many GEMS music ventures throughout the last 23 years. She also enjoys leading Coffee Break, spending time with her husband, Andy, doing anything with their family (including two adorable grandsons), and gardening. Getting to participate at Conference with Colleen and the band continues to be a huge blessing in her life.

**Workshop:** Leading Worship in Club

**Andrea Mulder** is an Advanced Level counselor at her club in Woodstock, Ontario. Andrea has served for 19 years in a variety of roles and has also served on the GEMS Executive Board. Andrea lives in Norwich, Ontario, with her husband. They have two grown daughters, and a son and daughter-in-law.

**Workshop:** Grades 7-8 (Advanced Level) Counselors

**Lee Nienhuis**, author of *Brave Moms, Brave Kids*, is a passionate Bible teacher whose love for the Lord and the Word is contagious. She is the host of the Moms in Prayer Podcast for Moms in Prayer International and a global speaker who shares a dynamic vision for the next generation. Lee and her farmer-husband, Mike, have four great kids and live on four acres of grass in West Michigan.

**Workshop:** Gospel Appreciation for Girls Who Don't "Need" Jesus | Raising Heroes: Cultivating Your Family While Leading Others

**Keynote:** Saturday morning: Praying Bold Prayers for Girls Today

**Web:** [leenienhuis.com](http://leenienhuis.com)

**Facebook:** @leenienhuis

**Twitter:** @LeeNienhuis

**Pat Panza** plays drums for the Unity Worship Team and lives in Oakville, Ontario, with his wife Betty. They have been married for 27 years and have three kids, all currently at University. Music and drumming has been in the forefront of his life for fifty years. He has played internationally, (Australia and USA) and has enjoyed playing praise and worship music for 30+ years. He also enjoys photography, reading, writing, physical fitness, travel, and GEMS Conferences!

**Arlene Pellicane** is a speaker and author of several books including *Parents Rising* and *31 Days to a Happy Husband*. She is also the co-author of *Growing Up Social: Raising Relational Kids in a Screen-Driven World* (with Dr. Gary Chapman). Arlene has been a guest on the Today Show, Fox & Friends, and Focus on the Family. Arlene lives in San Diego with her husband, James, and their three children.

**Workshop:** It is Well with My Phone | Parents Rising

**Keynote:** Saturday afternoon: Understanding Girls Today

**Web:** [arlenepellicane.com](http://arlenepellicane.com)

**Facebook:** @ArlenePellicaneAuthor

**Twitter:** @ArlenePellicane

**Shannon Popkin** is a best-selling author and speaker and loves to blend her gifts for storytelling and humor with her passion for God's Word. Shannon is the author of *Control Girl: Lessons on Surrendering Your Burden of Control from Seven Women in the Bible*, and is a contributing blogger at Revive Our Hearts. Shannon is happy to be sharing life with Ken, who makes her laugh every single day. Together, they live the fast-paced life of parenting three college-aged aged and high school kids.

**Workshop:** Comparison Girl | Control Girls in Ministry

**Web:** shannonpopkin.com

**Facebook:** @shanpopkin

**Twitter:** @ShannonPopkin

**Heather Putnam** is a GEMS Awareness Level counselor from Florida. She is a wife, homeschooling mom, and has taught GEMS for 8 years. She is a GEMS Ambassador in Florida. Heather and her husband, Brian, have two daughters and a son-in-law. Both their daughters were active in GEMS and loved the ministry.

**Workshop:** Grades 1-3 (Awareness Level) Counselors

**Katie M. Reid** is a national speaker, singer/songwriter, and author of *Made Like Martha*. She holds a Masters Degree in Secondary Education and has been published on Focus on the Family, TODAY's Parenting Team Blog, and For Every Mom. Katie is a fan of musicals and cut-to-the-chase conversations over tea. Katie lives with her husband and five children in mid-Michigan.

**Workshop:** A Beloved Daughter's Mentality | Feasting on God's Word | I Dare You to Connect!

**Web:** katiemreid.com

**Twitter:** @katie\_m\_reid

**Facebook:** @KatieMReidWriter

**Colleen Reinders** loves being a part of The Unity Worship Team. She grew up planning to pursue classical piano performance at University but found herself preferring to worship the Lord. She then met Grace Moes and they began leading worship together. Thirty-seven years later, she still loves it! Colleen has served as a GEMS leader for 27 years and lives in Ontario with her husband, Mike. They have four children and six grandchildren.

**Amelia Rhodes** is the Senior Editor/Program Manager for GEMS Girls' Clubs. She is also the author of *Pray A to Z: A Practical Guide to Pray for Your Community*. As a speaker and storyteller she has a passion for encouraging women to discover who they are in Christ and to deepen their relationships with each other. Her favorite activities include coffee breaks and pizza parties with friends and family. Amelia lives in Michigan with her husband and two children.

**Workshop:** Prayers of Lament

**Web:** ameliarhodes.com

**Twitter:** @amrhodes

**Facebook:** @ameliarhodeswriter

**Instagram:** @ameliamrhodes

**Carrie Roer** is a Club Coordinator at her church in Belding, Michigan. Carrie has served for 14 years within club and is a current GEMS Ambassador in Michigan. Carrie is a wife and mom to three daughters. She loves music, coffee, and anything she can read! Carrie also loves reflecting on life and encouraging others through her writing.

**Workshop:** Hideaway Worship, Understanding the Enneagram

**Web:** carrieroer.com

**Tina Rooks** is a Club Coordinator at LaGrave GEMS Club. She has served in her club for 29 years and recently ended her term as GEMS Executive Board Member. Tina is married and lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She loves to paint, tent camp, cook, and be outdoors. Her true joy in life are treasured relationships, especially with her granddaughters! She considers teaching in GEMS a true privilege to be a part of bringing girls closer to Jesus or meeting Him for the first time.

**Workshop:** Worship Through Art

**Jen Rozema** lives in Holland, Michigan, with her husband and four children. She loves Jesus and is passionate about life-long discipleship, especially in the context of the local church. When she's not working at church as the Pastor of Discipleship, spending time with her family, or studying for seminary, you'll find Jen running with her Vizsla or cooking up a new recipe.

**Workshop:** Authentic Discipleship, Practicing the Presence of Jesus | Encouragement for CITs

**Racyheen Sims** is a pastor, speaker, professional life coach, mother, wife, Founder and CEO of Dare to Dream Ministries, and Co-Founder of Dream Builder International Ministries along with her husband Pastor Robert Sims. Pastor Raycheen dedicates her ministry expertise to assisting women of all ages, cultures, economic levels, and professions. Pastor Raycheen believes God has given every person a life of substance and purpose. She also believes by daring to dream, in spite of life's challenges, each person can realize their God given purpose and destiny. She and her husband have two children and live in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

**Workshop:** Believe it! God Says You are Amazing!

**Web:** dbichurch.org

**Facebook:** @dbichurch

**Robert Sims Jr.** is a speaker who is a revolutionary thinker and transformational leader. He is seasoned with humor, compassion, insight, and personal candor. Pastor Sims has pursued ministry for years and received his call to ministry in 1986. Pastor Sims translates hard-hitting spiritual insights into everyday language that empower individuals to transform their lives. Pastor Robert Sims Jr. pastors Dream Builders church. He resides in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with his lovely wife Pastor Raycheen Sims, son Robert Isaiah Sims III and daughter Nicochia S. Sims.

**Workshop:** The Atmosphere of Heaven

**Web:** dbichurch.org

**Facebook:** @dbichurch

**Paulette Stamper** is passionate about bringing the Word of God to the hearts of women. Paulette holds a Masters Degree from Liberty University in Professional Counseling and has authored multiple Bible studies and one book. With down-home humor, timeless biblical truths, and an effervescent, contagious passion for Jesus, Paulette inspires her audience to take an action step toward fresh faith and a renewed commitment toward Christ. She lives in Indianapolis, Indiana, with her husband Jake, Maggie and Lia, their adorable Goldendoodles, and Monica, the crazy outside cat.

**Workshop:** MindShift—Embracing an Eternal Perspective | What Are You Thinking? Taking Rogue Thoughts Captive

**Web:** PauletteStamper.com

**Twitter:** @PauletteStamper

**Facebook:** @paulette.staffordstamper

**Renee Swope** is the best-selling author of *A Confident Heart* and a familiar voice from Proverbs 31 Ministries' where she served for over 20 years as a writer, executive director, and Radio Show co-host of Everyday Life with Lysa & Renee. She's also a wife and mom of three: Josh (23), Andrew (20), and Aster (10), who their family adopted from Ethiopia when she was 10 months old.

**Workshop:** Giving Your GEMS a Confident Heart

**Keynote:** Saturday afternoon: Understanding Girls Today,

**Web:** reneeswope.com

**Facebook:** @aconfidentheart

**Twitter:** @reneeswope

**Jody VanKoevering** is the Club Coordinator for First Reformed Church in Zeeland, Michigan. Jody has been involved in GEMS for 16 years in various roles including craft counselor, Area Coordinator, Leadership Trainer, Ambassador in Michigan, and currently serves on the GEMS Executive Board. Jody lives in Michigan with her husband Kraig and their three grown children. Jody is passionate about serving the Lord and desperately desires to follow wherever He leads.

**Workshop:** Gratitude Journaling: How Living a Life a Gratitude Can Change Your Attitude

**Pam VanPutten** is the Coordinator of Mentoring & Internships for the Studies in Ministry Minor at Hope College. She is delighted to share with CITs at the GEMS Conference as she values relationships in life and ministry. Pam recently served at Central Wesleyan Church in Holland where she was the Director of Discipleship for Student Ministries. Pam has abundant experience in many ministry settings in the Holland area, including a previous stint as Associate Chaplain at Hope College. She and her husband, Mitch have been actively involved in Young Life, as well as worked at Christ Memorial Church in Youth Ministry. Pam loves to sing and has led worship at various events in the area. She and Mitch, have a son, a daughter and a daughter-in-law.

**Workshop:** Listening and Sharing Our Stories

**Mary Jo Vis** is a Discovery Level counselor from Riverside, California. Mary Jo has served in GEMS for 24 years within her local club. She's also served as an Area Coordinator in Southern California, a Local Conference Committee member, and as an Executive Board member. Mary Jo and her husband have four grown, married children and 19 grandchildren.

**Workshop:** Game Changing Scripture Saturation

**Mitch Whatford** has been playing saxophone, penny whistle, flute, and various woodwinds since he was 16 years old. He hails from Stoney Creek, has four children, and has been married 30 years. Working as a Plant Manager now, he has travelled as a full-time musician, been the Principal of a Christian School, and spent a year as a Bible smuggler before the Iron Curtain fell. He always looks forward to the GEMS Conference because it is flawlessly organized, a lot of fun, and the Spirit is powerfully felt!

**Brenda Yoder** is an award-winning teacher, national speaker, author, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, and life coach whose passion is encouraging others when life doesn't fit the storybook image. She has a Master's Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and a B.A. in Education. She's a Licensed Mental Health Counselor, life coach, former high school teacher, elementary school counselor, and stay at home mom. Brenda is a wife of twenty-nine years, a mom to four children, ages teens to adults. She lives in Indiana with her family.

**Workshop:** 10 Ways to be Real in an Artificial World | That Girl | Launching Your Kids Without Losing Your Mind

**Web:** Brendayoder.com

**Twitter:** @BrendaYoderLMHC

**Facebook:** @brendayoderspeaker

**Carissa Yoder** spends most of her time chasing her seven kids and raising them to love Jesus. Her experiences as a missionary have given her a global heart and she loves to travel with her family. She believes kids are powerful enough to change the world.

**Workshop:** The Girl that Changed the World | Healthy Mentors

**Web:** carissayoder.com

**Facebook:** @thisismycrazylaugh



GEMS Girls' Clubs, a division of Dynamic Youth Ministries  
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