

## WALKING THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR

**PAULETTE ELLISON.** Proud mother of a daughter and two sons, who excel in their work; Caregiver, Church ministry leader; CEO and President of The Christian Childcare Agency, LLC in Arlington Virginia

**Q: What, in your early years, has a bearing on your present abilities?**

**A:** My mother was a marketer, a salesperson. I got my entrepreneurial spirit from her. When I was younger, in Jamaica, I recited poems for money and was always at the front of the stage in school.

*I always had an independent spirit and dreamed of being my own boss. And I care about people. It's natural for me.*

**Q: What made you decide to become an entrepreneur?**

**A:** My boss was impossible: a goliath, a monster, toxic. Instead of being afraid, I faced my boss head on—through the power of the Holy Spirit. I began to see the power of God working through me.

*I fired myself from a going-no-place job.*

*After losing my job, I was at this crossroads. I talked with a friend in New York, who said I should go into child care, because of my 20 years of experience as a Nannie.*

*So, I went online. I had no experience in running a business. Wasn't sure this was what I should be doing. . . one morning, I really felt like God was leading me. The business was going to be real.*

**Q: Most startups stumble early. What stumbles has your agency experienced?**

**A:** As I started, I ran into bumps in the road. Still, I met people who would help me. The lawyer, the bank manager, helped me set up my account. My son Alex helped me set up the computer.



**When you can see that "open door," created for you by God, walk through.**

*I prayed. Lots of prayer. And I did much talking to my pastor, who encouraged me to continue. I believed there was an "open door" to success.*

**Q: What made you go forward?**

**A:** I believe the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Q: You appear to have here a dual ministry. How did you decide to "marry" your childcare agency's vision with that of the Greenbrier @the Table Saturday luncheons?**

**A:** I spent months asking God, searching. I believe this business is a ministry. Not just a childcare agency. It will make a profit, and part of the profits will be used for building the kingdom.

*The agency was started in my apartment. But I was led to ask for space in the church, because I believed the agency's vision should be dedicated to the church.*

*I wanted to make the church stronger, bring diverse people closer together. The Greenbrier @ the Table luncheons was a natural answer to accomplish that goal.*

**Q: What has been an important leadership lesson for you?**

**A:** Early on, I did an open house for Nannies and families. But the timing was not right; few people showed up. I believed that God had a different plan: I needed to get to know Him first. So I put a pause on the business.

*The refinement of me became intense. It turned out my faith became much bigger than I could have imagined. Bigger in scope. Deep!*

**Q: What key methods have you developed to promote your childcare agency and @the Table luncheons?**

**A:** First, the rainbow logo and name came from God's promise to protect His faithful people. It was a natural choice for the Agency, because it symbolizes inclusiveness—openness to all in our community is part of our vision. I tell people about it. Next, at every opportunity I do outreach, to invite people in and to promote the ministry. I learn their needs (and that of their friends) for childcare.

**Q: What kinds of people do you hire?**

**A:** The Agency seeks persons who are invested in a child's well-being (not only looking for a paycheck). Applicants should have leadership qualities (makes a great Nannie); and they must be authentic, comfortable about themselves.

**Q: What upsets you most in others?**

**A:** Deception.