

# TouchPoint

The North American Baptist Conference Women's Connection Newsletter

SPRING 2021

## Experiencing Radical Hospitality

BY JO

Jo is a cross-cultural worker in the Middle East. She and her husband have served among Arabs for over 7 years. She has 2 young girls, loves to garden and explore new places.

My family and I have lived in 3 countries in the Middle East over the last 7 years. I thought I was a hospitable and generous person before I moved to this part of the world. I would invite friends over on occasion and offer a beverage, maybe a snack. Once a month, my husband and I would have another couple over for a game night with snacks and cookies. I did not know how to cook very much when I was first married. I was not a tea or coffee drinker either.

Looking back, I can notice the women in my life that were examples for me when it came to hospitality in American culture. But since moving to the Middle East, my Arab Muslim friends have taught me what it means to be radical and generous with hospitality.

We get so busy with family, work,

schedules – even during this Covid 19 season. We forget to reach out with love and hospitality towards our friends, let alone people we do not know. We do not make time for it. We are not intentional about inviting others into our lives because we feel we do not have capacity for one more thing or another relationship. I am confident God has a different way for us to live.

When we invite others into our home, our daily life, our time, we are living out the good news.

In Hebrews 13:2 it says “Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”

As a stranger, a foreigner in this part of the world, this verse has come alive for me. I am shown hospitality constantly by the women in my community. I think God planted something in Arab culture from the beginning, to be an example of

radical hospitality to the world. Here are some common quotes from my friends whether over the phone, by text message or in person.

*“I don't just want to see you once; I want to see you every day!”*

*“I miss you. How are you? How is your family? How are your girls? Tell me your news? Reassure me on how you are doing.”*

*“If you need any help, I am ready. I am so happy to hear your voice.”*

*“You are welcome in my house anytime.”* And they mean it.

In the country we live in, when you have been invited to someone's home for the first time for a meal, you must bring a gift. Something like fruit, baklava or chocolate works well. Plan to stay for at least 3 hours! You will be offered juice, then fruit, then an abundant meal with way too much food. If you eat everything on your plate, you will be immediately served more. Abundance is what my friends want to offer. It brings them joy and honor when there is way too much food left over and everyone is stuffed. After the meal, you will be served tea, then dessert and you will probably have to ask for coffee. Coffee is the signal in this culture. Once you have had your Turkish coffee- a small cup of strong coffee with hints of cardamom, you can leave after 15 minutes. But you can't leave until you



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**NABTRIENNIAL.COM**

**Reimagine Hospitality**

Triennial 2021 is **FREE**

TRIENNIAL 2021  
**JULY 9-11**



**Women’s Connection has invited Jen Schmidt, author of *Just Open the Door*, to share her thoughts during a breakout session on Saturday, July 10.**

For over a decade, Jen Schmidt has been encouraging, challenging, and cheering on women to embrace both the beauty and bedlam of their everyday lives on her lifestyle blog, *Balancing Beauty and Bedlam*.

A popular speaker, worship leader and the founder/host of the annual Becoming Conference, Jen shares with humor and

authenticity as she invites others to join her on this bumpy, beautiful life journey. As the Lifeway author of “Just Open the Door: How One Invitation Can Change a Generation,” Jen believes that an open door is the launching pad for some of His most significant Kingdom work.

She lives in North Carolina with her husband, five children, a few too many animals, and an available sofa for anyone who needs it. Jen serves in ministry at her home church in Greensboro, NC.

**JUST OPEN THE DOOR**

*Change the world around you, one door at a time.*

*He has called, equipped and appointed you to do amazing things right where you are. Look for those opportunities.*

***Seize those moments. Just Open the Door.***

TRIENNIAL 2021

# Watch Parties

For many of us, one of our favorite parts of Triennial is the opportunity to connect with old friends and new as we gather together to worship, learn, and pray. By taking Triennial online, we are given some new and different opportunities for connection. One of the ways we are planning to connect as many people and churches as possible are through Watch Parties.

While we know that there is still some uncertainty for some of our churches and regions around what type of gatherings could be possible in July, we want to resource and equip our churches to host Watch Party experiences, whether they do it as their own congregation, with other

churches in their region, or in another, creative way they've found to connect as people engage from their homes.

There will be no cost to a church for hosting, and Watch Party kits will

be provided with different resources to facilitate that in-house conference experience, along with some treats and possibly giveaways.

Since the situation keeps changing in many of our locations, we will be sending out regular updates to those who are interested in being host churches. If you or your church would be interested in hosting a Triennial Watch Party July 9-11, or finding out more information, please contact Sara-May Cardy at [scardy@nabconf.org](mailto:scardy@nabconf.org).



## Experiencing Radical Hospitality ...from cover

have had coffee!

When I lived in small dusty hippy beach town I would walk down the street, and women I did not know would see me and ask me if I wanted to come into their courtyards and drink tea. This was normal. Bedouin culture is extremely hospitable. I would sit on a woven mat on soft gravel around the small campfire where the tea and coffee were kept hot on the coals for any visitor. Bedouin women make the rounds and visit family and friends twice a day. If I had not made the rounds of my neighbors

in a couple weeks, they would see me on the street and ask "Sweetheart, where have you been? We miss seeing you." I needed to adjust my priorities and make time just to visit others and drink a lot of tea and coffee. Often my friends would start to bake bread on a cast iron dome over a gas flame outside. Hot fresh bread with tea is my daughters' favorite snack.

I have learned a whole new definition of hospitality and way of life from my Arab friends. It is about abundance, openness to complete strangers, extreme generosity, offering the best, spending time together, cultivating the relationship.

Relationships are so much more important than your schedule and what you need to get done that day.

When was the last time you were a recipient of radical hospitality that was over the top generous, beyond what you expected?

When was the last time you offered that to someone you did not know?

Here are a few more verses to reflect upon:

"Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality."  
Romans 12:13

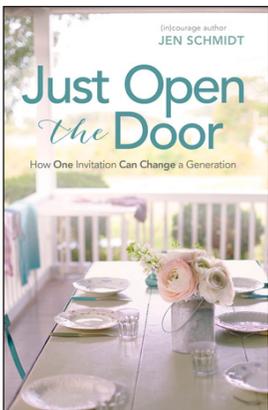
"Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." 1 Peter 4:9

# Hospitality Books

Women's Connection is offering

**1 FREE COPY  
of EITHER**

***Just Open the Door* by Jen Schmidt OR  
*Making Room* by Christine Pohl**



## ***Just Open the Door***

by Jen Schmidt

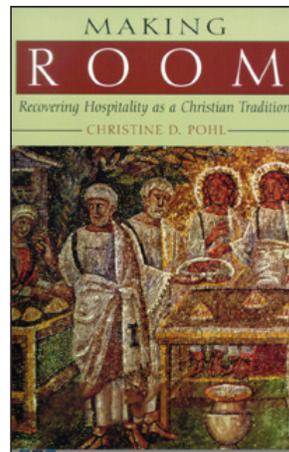
**Change a generation  
with something as simple  
as an invitation**

For many of us inviting people into our lives and homes feels more like inviting judgment on our entertaining skills and stress on our already maxed out schedules. But if you knew

that opening your front door had the power to radically change the world — make an impact and leave a legacy with everyday invitations?

Jen Schmidt has set out to reframe how we think about hospitality and to equip us to walk a road of welcome in our daily lives. Jen knows that every time we choose open-door living — whether in our homes or by taking hospitality on the road just like Jesus — those we invite in get to experience the lived-out Gospel, our kids grow up in a life-lab of generosity, and we trade insecurity for connection.

*Just Open the Door* is a personal yes-you-can guide to offering the life-changing gift of invitation. Whether you're a seasoned host looking for renewed inspiration or a nervous newbie not sure where to begin, these personal stories, practical ideas, and poignant insights will give you the confidence you need to see your home as the most likely location for changing the world around you, one open door at a time.



## ***Making Room***

by Christine Pohl

**Recovering Hospitality  
as a Christian Tradition**

Although hospitality was central to Christian identity and practice in earlier centuries, our generation knows little about its life-giving character. *Making Room* revisits the Christian foundations of welcoming

strangers and explores the necessity, difficulty, and blessing of hospitality today.

Combining rich biblical and historical research with extensive exposure to contemporary Christian communities — the Catholic Worker, L'Abri, L'Arche, and others — this book shows how understanding the key features of hospitality can better equip us to faithfully carry out the practical call of the gospel.

**In order to receive a FREE COPY of EITHER book  
you must be a woman in ministry in a  
North American Baptist Conference church.**

**Please send an email of request to:  
Heather Senges at [hsenges@telus.net](mailto:hsenges@telus.net), include  
your address and name of your church.**

# Pittsford Community Women Enjoy *Just Open the Door*

THOUGHTS FROM STEPHANIE DONOVAN WOMEN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR



We did “Just Open the Door” Bible study for our Sunday am small group. We really enjoyed it! I rented the video teachings for us to watch and the women really seemed to engage with them. We did the study guide. One of the things I appreciated the most about Jen Schmidt’s approach to hospitality was her authentic way of sharing how we tend to “box in” what we think hospitality looks like when really, God calls us to live it in the everyday. Over and over in the book and videos, she gives practical examples of what hospitality can look like. It does not have to be traditional or complicated! At the end of each chapter she gives several ideas of how to take simple steps toward others. Our group had a lot of discussion about how our pride keeps us from reaching out. I am guilty of this as well and found it very convicting!

One of my favorite quotes from the book that touched our hearts was this:

*“Sometimes we don’t understand radical hospitality until we experience it with completely empty hands. When all has been stripped away, and we’ve cried out to the only One who can fill them, He shifts our perspective. He shows us why continuing to offer what little we can bring is such a vital part of living in community, of creating opportunities for showing to others and receiving ourselves the faithfulness and generosity of God.”*

On a personal note, I’d love to tell you why I chose this study for our women a few years ago. I kept hearing comments that women felt disconnected and that no one really knew who they were aside from the limited Sunday morning or Bible study interactions. I shared with them about the power of hospitality in my own life just about a decade before.

## My story:

Back around 2007, I (Stephanie) was attending Pittsford Community Church as a newly single mother. My children were 1,3,5, and 6. While battling depression, it was all I could do to muster up the strength to get the kids ready for church and sit in the service. Each Sunday I just prayed that my kids would be safe and happy in the nursery and classes so I could

soak up some time in God’s Word alone. I enjoyed the music and the fact that I felt God’s presence at PCC. But something was missing. Most Sundays I cried and wiped away tears, feeling like an outsider with very little to give. One Sunday was particularly hard. I had just been called to get my son from the nursery, and I was spent. After I sat back down with him I cried through the whole message. I felt so not “seen.” I don’t blame anyone for that. When you are in the pit of despair, it is hard to look up and reach out. But God.

After that particular service, a woman behind me tapped me on the shoulder and asked me if I would like to join their family for lunch. My insides screamed, “NO!” but my mouth said “Yes.” I still don’t know how.

I got the kids in the van and prayed to the Lord. I told him that if this woman’s house was perfect and her kids were little angels, I was going to just shrivel. I needed some realities. I needed someone to help me feel normal again!

We entered this woman’s house and no kidding, her house looked just like I had left mine! There were scattered toys on the floor, items from breakfast still on the table, shoes piled up by the door. And then she said to her husband, “How about we make pancakes?”

It then dawned on me....they did not have this planned! They just chose me and invited me into their honest to goodness world. We sat at the table and ate pancakes and breakfast sausage

on paper plates with coffee and orange juice. Kids talked a bunch of silly talk. We looked through the Sunday ads and let the children run around until their hearts were content. It was the first time I had felt the true “Ministry of Hospitality.” The true sharing of what is most important. To have someone see me and want me to spend an afternoon with them with no need to be impressed, truly transformed my mind about Hospitality.

It turns out that one connection gave me another connection, which led me to attend Sunday School and Women’s Bible studies, and then teach and lead women just like me. God was so faithful to use ONE invite to draw me out of a perfect storm of defeat and withdrawal and set me back on my feet in community again.

I will for sure be praying this for all the NAB churches, including PCC, that we all would have the courage to get over our own hindrances and reach out to a hurting world around us. We just never know what people need, and it just may be that they need to see us in our daily mess and unfiltered realities!

“Just Open the Door” encourages women to let go of the ideal and step into a new way of living out the Gospel by inviting others. I think if women are looking for a book that is practical, realistic, and pointing to outward service to others, I would recommend it!

Hope this is helpful in some way!

Stephanie serves at Pittsford Community Church as Women’s Ministry Director. She also enjoys leading Women’s Bible Studies and Sunday School class. Her personal vision for the women at PCC is that they would sincerely grow into an intimate relationship with Jesus and His Word and bring that hope and care to the world around them.

She is grateful to be married to her husband Brian and has 4 busy children: Melody (20), Logan (18), Eva (16), and Jadon (14.) Her interests include: running, reading, listening to others over a cup of coffee, and spending time in nature.

# SOME SUMMER SUGGESTIONS

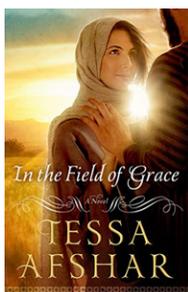
## FICTION READING



### **A Rose Blooms Twice** by Vicki Kestell

Rose Brownlee has suffered more loss than most people can endure. Now she must find a purpose and a way to move on with her life. Will she bow to conventional wisdom or will she, like Abraham of old, choose to follow where God leads her . . . even to a wild and strange land she does not know?

Set in the American prairie of the late 1800s, this story of loss, disillusionment, rebirth, and love will inspire, challenge, and encourage you. One woman's courageous journey to redemption and new love!



### **In the Field of Grace** by Tessa Afshar

Destitute, grief-stricken, and unwanted by the people of God, Ruth arrives in Israel with nothing to recommend her but Naomi's, love. Her loftiest hope is to provide enough food to save Naomi and herself from starvation.

But God has other plans for her life. While everyone considers Ruth an outcast, she is astounded to find one of the most honored men of Judah showing her favor. Long since a widower and determined to stay that way, Boaz is irresistibly drawn to the foreign woman with the haunted eyes. He tells himself he is only being

kind to his Cousin Naomi's chosen daughter when he goes out of his way to protect her from harm, but his heart knows better.

Based on the biblical account of Ruth, *In the Field of Grace* is the story of a love that ultimately changes the course of Israel's destiny and the future of the whole world.

### **Sensible Shoes Series** by Sharon Garlough Brown



In this boxed four-volume set that began with the bestselling *Sensible Shoes*, author Sharon Garlough Brown invites you to join in the journeys of Hannah, Meg,

Mara and Charissa as they and you gain a new understanding of friendship, spiritual truths, and a deeper life with God. In *Sensible Shoes*, you will meet these four women as they reluctantly arrive at a retreat center and embark together on a journey of spiritual formation. They find themselves drawn out of their separate stories of isolation and struggle and into a collective journey of spiritual practice, mutual support and personal revelation:

- Hannah, a pastor who doesn't realize how exhausted she is
- Meg, a widow and recent empty-nester who is haunted by her past
- Mara, a woman who has experienced a lifetime of rejection and is now trying to navigate a difficult marriage
- Charissa, a hard-working graduate student who wants to get things right

We continue the journey as the women face roadblocks in the

second book, *Two Steps Forward*, and in the third book, *Barefoot*, they are challenged to embrace the joy of complete surrender. In the final book, *An Extra Mile*, the women are navigating both deep joy and devastating loss. Can they find equilibrium in the midst of all that has changed? Find your own spiritual journey reflected in the lives of these women and discover the way forward as you walk the path by yourself or with a group of friends.

## ONLINE STUDY

### **Truthfilled** by Ruth Chou Simons



Join Ruth Chou Simons in this 7-session study of the Book of Colossians as she leads us through a practice of preaching gospel truth to ourselves by studying Paul's example. In every changing season of life, we can rest in God's character, rehearse our identity in Christ, respond in faith, and remember God's provision for us. In today's culture, there's no shortage of self help, easy fixes, and worldly advice, but only the truth of God's Word was meant to fill you up and satisfy you fully.

Study begins on June 10 Register at [onlinestudy@lifeway.org](mailto:onlinestudy@lifeway.org)

For more studies download the app **Smallgroup by Lifeway** on your phone, handheld device or computer.

# SOME SUMMER SUGGESTIONS



**LIFE!**  
Global Conference of Baptist Women

**July 7, 2021**

Join Baptist sisters from around the world to worship, learn, grow, and encourage one another.

- \* Ten Workshops on Today's Most Relevant Topics
- \* Engaging Global Worship with Drama and Dance
- \* Ministry Updates from the Seven Continental Unions
- \* Powerful Keynote Speakers



Karen Wilson      Asha Sanchu      Gina Stewart

Find out more or register today:  
[BWA2021.org/women](https://BWA2021.org/women)



**As you walk...Pray for your neighbors**

Become a Light for Christ in your neighborhood

You will receive:

- a free and personalized list of your own neighbors so that you can begin to know them like never before.
- daily reminder emails featuring a prayer prompt and the next 5 neighbors to pray for that day

*For the Lord has commanded us, "I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."*

– Acts 13:47

Check out *Bless Every Home* at [blesseveryhome.com](https://blesseveryhome.com)

## Outdoor Group Activity Ideas from The Creative Little Church

As you plan to meet in small, covid-friendly groups see [thecreativelittlechurch.com](https://thecreativelittlechurch.com) for the 3 summer event ideas planned in detail for you :

- an outdoor/online Book Club
- a summer walking group
- summer dessert nights

**CONNECT WITH US**

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