

TouchPoint

The North American Baptist Conference Women's Connection Newsletter

WINTER 2021

Women's Connection will be exploring the theme **Making Room** in our TouchPoint issues throughout the coming year. We will focus on the beauty and meaning of offering hospitality not only to family and friends, but to those who can not return the favor—the poor, the needy, the stranger. We will be challenged to put others first, inviting them into our lives for meaningful connection.

We hope that our time in this topic will broaden your understanding of what it means to be hospitable and how this action of love to others is an expression of our love for Jesus.

Paul challenges us to *'pursue hospitality'* (Romans 12:13). We are all meant to be in the habit of pursuing hospitality, life-giving hospitality that blesses others and encourages ourselves.



Hospitality Is Not Lost

BY AMBER DOWD
Folsom, California
Women's Connection
Leadership Team

I would venture to guess that by and large, hospitality took a big hit this past year. If you're like me,

social gatherings like pool parties, friendly dinners, and holiday gatherings were placed on hold along with pretty much everything else. Most of our energy was given over to adapting to recommended safety measures rather than opening our lives up to friends and neighbors. But as we quickly approach the one-year mark, I'm wondering what it would look like to pause and ask ourselves, in light of our circumstances: How can we spark a revival of hospitality?

Hospitality can be understood as moments in which we offer our space and time for the express purpose of turning our focus upon others. The Gospel fills in our understanding of who is "worthy" as a guest, casting a net wide enough to reach outcasts, little children, and sinners. Hospitality is exceedingly simple, and yet expressly profound and meaningful to those who both give and receive it.

Simply put, hospitality is living with a posture of love, presence and generosity toward those God places in our lives. The dynamics created by the pandemic have caused us to turn inward and stop looking at who surrounds us. I'd like to challenge us to consider how we can position our

hearts to start looking around again, asking God who might be blessed by welcome and care. And also asking God if maybe we are living with our own ache to receive hospitality from others.

With regard to giving hospitality: What tools do you have on hand? Is it a physical space, like your home or a hiking trail? An online space, like social media or Zoom calls? A public space, like your workplace, church or school? And who dwells with you in those spaces? How do you see God aligning your lives with each other? What blessing can you offer them? With regard to receiving hospitality: My experience has been as I extend myself to others, they in turn extend themselves to me. Hospitality breeds hospitality.

As for my own answers to these questions, it involves my front yard and the kids next door. My doorbell has been ringing lately- a lot. Four neighbor kids and my 6-year-old have discovered each other. These kids are determined to socialize; masks, outdoor-only restrictions, rain, and winter temps are of no hindrance. And so for Christmas we decided to rig an epic swing from the redwood trees in our front yard. The sound of their laughter now rings out from my front yard like church bells, lasting for hours on end. This swing turned into an incredible act of hospitality, converting our front yard into a space of belonging and joy and thriving for children in need of

friendship. My heart feels glad every time I watch them play. And you can guess that I'm connecting more with their parents as a result.

This little addition to our home was an unintended act of hospitality. In fact, one of the families has since put a TV in their backyard so the kids can have fireside outdoor movies together. The joyful results spark my prayers and challenge me to think bigger. I'm sensing the Holy Spirit has some amazing ideas, if only my heart will warm up to the idea of acting on them. Maybe you're starting to feel led in this way, too. We are emerging from the dust and ashes of this past year. I believe our hearts are ready for a revival of hospitality—for the good of all our souls. I trust that God is making a way for hospitality to thrive again, even in the inhospitable climate of a pandemic.



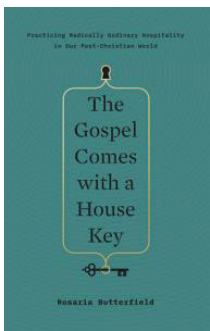
IN THIS ISSUE

I've Been Reading...	pg 2
The 28 Day Prayer Journey Video Series	pg 3
Leading & Loving It	pg 4
Triennial 2021	pg 4
Light Blue Ocean	pg 5
How to Love Your Neighbor – Updated	pg 6

I've Been Reading...

BY HEATHER SENGES
Women's Connection Leadership Team

Have you been looking for a good book to read on "radical Biblical hospitality"? Or maybe one you can use for a Bible Study with your friends? Here are a few suggestions...



The Gospel Comes with a House Key

by Rosario Butterfield

Award-winning author (The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert),

Rosario Butterfield has written a very challenging book on radical, ordinary hospitality. She encourages us to see our home as God's gift to use for the furtherance of His kingdom. It is opening doors, seeking out the needy, considering hospitality as an everyday thing, with soup simmering on the stove.

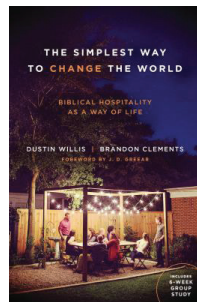
It is a book that really causes you to look into your heart and see if you are really open to serving God by serving others – not always an easy thing to do! This is sacrificial hospitality that truly pulses with the beating heart of the gospel, living simply and authentically. Many, many scriptures verses are referenced as Rosario shows how God works through people willing to practice this radical, ordinary hospitality.



Just Open the Door – How One Invitation Can Change a Generation

by Jen Schmidt

This book is personal yes-you-can guide to offering the life-giving gift of hospitality – seeing your home as the most likely place to change the world around you, one open door at a time. It is filled with humour, stories and solid scripture in an easy-to read format. Don't worry about the decor – just open the door! The book comes with a Study Guide and DVD series for a Bible Study group. And Jen's narrative on the DVD are just as fun as her writing!



The Simplest Way to Change the World – Biblical Hospitality as a Way of Life

by Dustin Willis and Brandon Clements

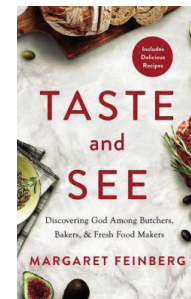
Imagine – a book on hospitality written by two men! But these two men have done a great job in providing a helpful guide on how we can impact, engage and influence our communities. With ideas like "small things can change the world" and "practical rhythms of hospitality", this short book will show you how to open up your lives to others, sharing God's character, and experiencing His joy as you witness lives changing – including your own. At the end of the book there is a 6-week Study Guide for small groups.



Bread and Wine – a Love Letter to Life Around the Table

by Shauna Niequist

"The heart of hospitality is about creating space for someone to feel seen and heard and loved. It's about declaring your table a safe zone, a place of warmth and nourishment."



Taste and See – Discovering God Among Butchers, Bakers, & Fresh Food Makers

by Margaret Feinberg

Here are two books that focus more on recipes and food. Both of them emphasize the importance of eating together – people sitting around a table, the laughing, the joy, the rituals – a time of community. They are filled with stories of how we can live in fellowship as we share a meal. Margaret Feinberg takes us around the world – to Israel, Turkey, Croatia and Texas – on a culinary and spiritual adventure. Both these books are fun to read, and contain wonderful recipes that just make you want to start cooking!

There is a 4-week book club/cooking club discussion guide at the end of "Bread and Wine". Margaret Feinberg has written a full 6-week Study Guide and DVD series to accompany her book. She also suggests some fun Tasty Activities for each session.

The 28 Day Prayer Journey

..... VIDEO SERIES PICK OF THE SEASON



Prayer is the key to conversation with the Creator of the universe. It is the key that unlocks our ability to know what the God who created us and everything we see thinks about us and the lives that we live. But, it's a key that often we don't use.

– Chrystal Evans Hurst

For anyone who longs for a consistent prayer life yet struggles with distractions, doubts, or knowing where to start, Chrystal Evans Hurst offers a simple and heartfelt method to meaningful conversations with God, just one day at a time.

The kind of intentional, fervent prayer life we'd like to experience often seems intimidating or just out of reach. Chrystal knows how that feels and shares her own relatable journey through the challenges and joys of deepening her prayer life. Showing up to pray just one day at a time, Chrystal found a simple yet powerful practice that made consistent prayer amazingly doable.

Chrystal teaches us the basic tenets of prayer practice and establishes a pattern of prayer to be applied to our daily life for 28 days with lasting effect. She dives deep into four postures of prayer that increase our communication and relationship with God:

- Prayer of thanking and praising God
- Prayer of confession and rejection
- Prayer of requesting
- Prayer of yielding and submission

In the five days leading up to each session, you will focus on one prayer posture with personal study exercises and daily prayer practices:

- **Where You Are Now**/Take Action/Character Study/Pray
- **Going to the Word**/Take Action/Character Study/Pray
- **Journal It Out**/Take Action/Character Study/Pray
- **Going With God**/Take Action/Character Study/Pray
- **Act On It**/Take Action/Character Study/Pray

After you have prayed in one posture for the week, Chrystal will break down that posture and walk through the biblical references supporting it to draw the connections between your growing relationship with God and the practice of prayer. Whether you are new or well-versed in communication with God, this hopeful and supportive experience will help you sense God's presence in ways you never have before through the practice of meaningful prayer.



Video Sessions include:

- Introduction: The Practice of Prayer (11:56)
- Offering Thanksgiving & Praise (19:51)
- Turning to God in Repentance (16:13)
- Requesting with Confidence (22:29)
- Yielding to God (19:50)

We need to receive His help, connection, and counsel. We get to enjoy Him – His presence, His love, His kindness, His friendship. Consistency is the key in any relationship, so let's start doing it!

Pray without ceasing. – 1 Thessalonians 5:1

Prayer. What I love about Chrystal's teaching in this study is her reinforcement that it's simply a conversation between you and the Father, and it is possible to build better prayer habits, or rhythms... little by little, day by day.

Series includes:

- The 28 Day Prayer Journey Book (ebook available)*
- The 28 Day Prayer Journey Study Guide (ebook available)*
- The 28 Day Prayer Journey DVD Series*
- The 28 Day Prayer Journey Audiobook*

The Women's Connection Leadership Team Recommends

LEADING & LOVING IT

EQUIPPING AND ENCOURAGING WOMEN LEADERS TO LOVE LIFE IN MINISTRY

Website to explore for women in leadership
www.leadingandlovingit.com

From the website: Every leader needs tools to equip and encourage her for the role to which God has called her. These toolboxes will strengthen you as a leader and prepare you as you step out in your purpose. They will help you lead with more confidence in your calling, move forward with more practical leadership lessons for daily life in ministry, encourage you to move beyond hurt, to forge a life-giving community, and to strive for victory in

your emotional life. As you grow in your own personal leadership, you'll be able to bring a better you to your family and ministry.

We are excited to announce our **NEW Equip and Encourage Toolboxes**. These toolboxes are created to **meet you where you are**, whether that is to strengthen **your leadership** or to provide **practical application** along with biblical truths to help you move forward as a **healthier you!**

Online Bible Study

Triennial 2021 – July 8-11

Due to the ongoing concerns over COVID-19 and the difficulties in international travel, much of which likely not be fully alleviated by July 2021, the Governing Board has decided to move Triennial to a virtual platform. Excitingly, this also means we will be able to waive all registration fees. This means the entire Triennial conference will be free. Every main session. Every breakout session. Everything.

Though we will mourn the loss of many aspects we all love from Triennials past, we are excited about the opportunities this new format will afford us and about the accessibility made possible by free Triennial.

Many of the details will continue to be worked out in the coming months, but Efrem Smith, Julie Canlis, and James Choung will still be joining us to teach on the topic of **Reimagining Hospitality**.

Watch for a special time with the Women's Connection Leadership Team!

More information at nabconference.org

Reimagine Hospitality

Triennial 2021

Save the Date July 8-11, 2021

VIRTUAL & FREE

OPEN

BLUE OCEAN

'Light' Blue Ocean

Over the last number of years, Blue Ocean has been run as a one-year introduction to mission and formation. The leaders who take part in this journey explore what it means to have a renewed theological vision of the church on mission, serving as a sign, servant, and foretaste of the Kingdom of God. It has been an immersive experience as we traveled to different locations and learned from one another's stories. It has also been a place where community is developed as our leaders take this missional and formational journey together.

As a result of travel restrictions and the ongoing Pandemic, we are not able to run Blue Ocean in the usual way, but rather than letting that stop us completely, we are going to be running an online version of Blue Ocean. It will largely cover the same content but will be trimmed down a little in order to fit better with an online format. We know it's not the same as being able to travel and meet in person but we're excited to try it and see how it goes.

Contact Sara May Cardy
scardy@nabconf.org

Why Light Blue Ocean?

The purpose of 'Light' Blue Ocean is to continue to help the Missional Movement within the NAB. Blue Ocean has typically been a one-year introduction to mission and formation. The leaders who take part on this journey explore what it means to have a renewed theological vision of the church on mission, serving as a sign, servant, and foretaste of the Kingdom of God.

As a result of travel restrictions and the ongoing Pandemic, rather than wait for it to be over, we are looking for ways to help Pastors, Leaders and Churches to move towards a more missional understanding of God and of His people, and to help churches to engage with what God is doing in their neighbourhoods.

When: Our online meetings, we'll be meeting on Tuesday evenings, 5:30-7:30pm (Pacific time)

Information Session (optional): Tuesday, February 2 at 6:00pm (Pacific time)

Module 1: Theology

It is important in this meeting to begin to form a community together. As we do this, we will explore the nature of the Missio Dei, and use topics such as Reading Scripture, the Gospel, The Trinity and others to get at the missional nature of our God.

Dates: Tuesday, February 16; Tuesday, February 23; Tuesday, March 2

Module 2: Formation

In this second module, we are wanting to focus on our leadership, and specifically being

formed into the image of Christ. This has to do with dealing with the dark side of our leadership and developing a vision for what it means for us to be formed into the image of Christ. It then pushes us to examine our own methods for making disciples and indeed for forming a missionary community.

Dates: Tuesday, April 6; Tuesday, April 13; Tuesday, April 20

Module 3: Ecclesiology

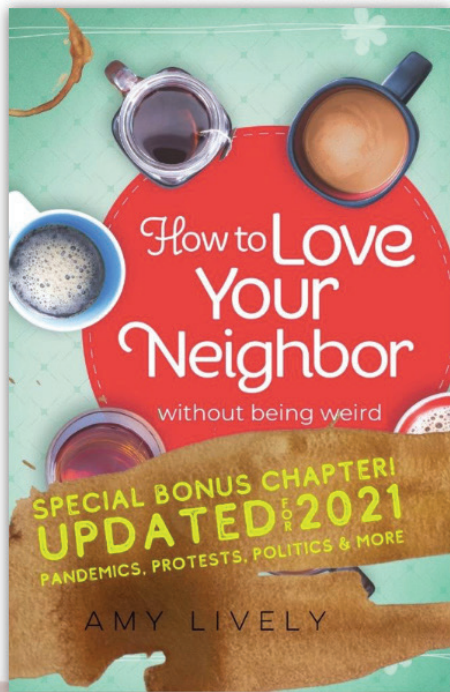
In our third module, we move towards a missional ecclesiology: What does it look like for us to be a people in a place, that creates space and bears witness to what God is doing there. In this module we will explore practices for shaping a people into a missionary people sent to that place.

Dates: Tuesday, June 1; Tuesday, June 8; Tuesday, June 15

Time Commitment: In addition to the weekly gatherings during the three modules, we anticipate that there will be light level of commitment in between modules. We'll be curating a list of additional resources to support participants as they continue to process the things that we discuss in each module.

Cost: None

Next Steps: If you would like to be part of this round of 'Light' Blue Ocean, please contact Sara-May (Director of Admin, Missional Initiatives) with questions: scardy@nabconf.org.



SPECIAL BONUS CHAPTER

UPDATED FOR 2021

PANDEMICS, PROTESTS, POLITICS & MORE

This decade is off to a rough start. So far, the 2020's are marked by a deadly global pandemic, distressing racial tensions, divisive partisan politics, and white-knuckle economic uncertainty.

When I'm stressed—and who isn't these days?—loving my neighbor is a command I admit I want to ignore. But just when we think we might get a little break, we realize this is exactly when we are needed most.

This free download is a bonus chapter for *How to Love Your Neighbor Without Being Weird*, updated with all new tips and tools to love your neighbor "in these uncertain times".

DOWNLOAD NOW

Download a free 17-page special bonus chapter for *How to Love Your Neighbor Without Being Weird* to learn:

Coronavirus Quandaries:

Can you love your neighbor from 6 feet apart? You betcha. Figure out how God made you for such a time as this.

The solution to the race problem in America: Yes, it really is as simple (and as difficult) as "love your neighbor." We'll break it down with:

- 7 areas of culture where you can make a difference 5 ways to listen
- 3 actions you can take
- 1 world-changing question

www.howtoloveyourneighbor.com/2021/

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