

Q & A



Becoming a Person of Welcome *The Spiritual Practice of Hospitality*

October 14, 2025 | \$18.99, 144 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-1194-2

Hospitality Begins with the Person and Expands into Places

When people think about hospitality, they often imagine tables of food, a clean bathroom, open spaces. How is this a different kind of book on hospitality?

Laura Baghdassarian Murray: Hospitality begins in people rather than places. It is a posture we choose and practice that we can provide wherever we go. I love food, open spaces, and clean bathrooms yet hospitality is not limited to those things. This book invites the reader to consider that hospitality begins with the person and expands into places and that can be wherever they go or in a place.

What experience or idea prompted the idea for you to write *Becoming a Person of Welcome*?

Laura: During the COVID-19 pandemic I was having a hard time connecting with God. I thought others might be as well, so I decided to provide a retreat of solitude and silence for people via Zoom. The last hour of the retreat included a time of sharing about their experience in the solitude and silence. The participants' time with God was rich and the time in sharing surprised me in its richness. People would share their brokenness and confusion, their heartbreak and courage, and in authenticity and vulnerability. Strangers from across the country were opening themselves up to God and others and building each other up. I thought to myself, "This is amazing! What is happening?" I realized that one of the ways each participant was able to open themselves up to God and one another was because of the practice of welcome and hospitality. Welcome and hospitality were bearing fruit in the digital space. And then I thought, if welcome, warmth, hospitality, and belonging can be felt across the country and on a screen, then I want to do a deeper dive into hospitality, help give ways of expanding one's view of hospitality and welcome so they can do the same in whatever context they are in.

How has your view of "hospitality" and welcome changed over the years?

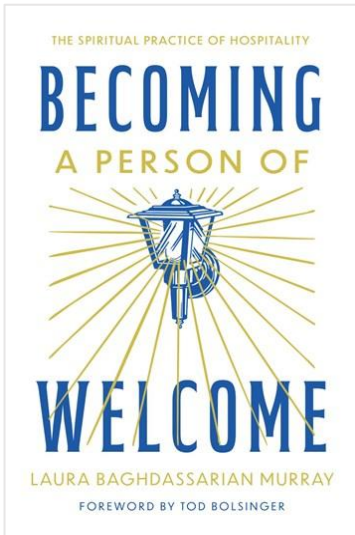
Laura: It has evolved in so many ways but there are two primary ways it has changed. One is an expansion of what it is. This expansion allows me to see that it is something I can offer, I don't have to always have a beautiful physical space, and that moments of welcome add up rather than having to have a big event for someone to feel welcomed. Second is that it requires me to be transformed so I can offer it freely. That transformation involves receiving God's welcome first and regularly, practicing gratitude for whatever I can offer and for those God has in front of me, and that transformation is for my deep restoration and that of others. In a world of comparison, it is easy to minimize what we can give to another. This change of view has allowed comparison to decrease, gratitude to increase, and for me to offer whatever I can with joy and freedom.



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What are three to five ways we can become people of welcome?

Laura: So much of becoming a person of welcome is preparing yourself so the following ways are primarily ones of preparation:

- Prepare yourself by remembering God's welcome of you through Scripture reflection on passages of God's welcome of others. Express gratitude as you do this.
- Another practice for preparation is slowing down and creating margin in your life. This allows you to pause in the moments of the day when a welcome to another would be a great gift to them. Allow people to interrupt you. When you do this, you are practicing the release of control which builds patience, allows you to see God at work, and grows in you the ability to respond with welcome.
- Pray for those you will encounter in your day. Some may be on your calendar or already right in front of you, and some might be surprises. Imagine your day with curiosity and wonder as to who God will bring up. This opens up your posture towards receiving whoever may come.

How do you hope this book impacts readers, and beyond?

Laura: Our world is in desperate need of bridge builders, especially relational ones. My hope is that restoration and reconciliation come about through this book. I hope that the book will help the readers create places of welcome, great and small, deepening our connection to one another in our humanity. I hope that God's welcome is seen and felt throughout the world because the reader opened themselves up to God's love and transformation and shared these gifts with others through their love and welcome. My prayer is that God would take this book as an offering of fish and loaves and multiply it for all who need it.



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BIO



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"This book is a conversation. As a warm and wise spiritual guide, Laura Baghdassarian Murray sits next to us, sharing her stories and inviting us to share ours. Through stories and insights, she brings us gently into a dialogue with ourselves and with the Spirit as we consider what a life of hospitality and welcome might look like for us. Her writing is easy to read and practical to apply but reflects the depth of someone who lives a life that is both hospitable and contemplative."

—Trisha Taylor, coauthor of *The Leader's Journey*

Laura Baghdassarian Murray, A Person of Welcome

I grew up in a communal culture and home. You often find me using "we" where you might expect "I." The home I was raised in vastly differed from the culture outside my front door. I often felt strange and pulled between these two cultures. I wasn't quite sure what home was supposed to be. Through years of searching to know what and where home was, I began to learn that home can be many places and can also be a variety of people. As an adult, I found home in unexpected places and welcome from unexpected people, and it was up to me to receive their welcome. I also learned that some people and places did not receive me, which was hard yet necessary to learn.

For years, I have created places of welcome, whether as a pastor in large and small spaces, as a spiritual director with individuals and a few people, or on retreat in the digital space or in person.

I'd love for you to learn and grow in welcome. To know and receive God's welcome, that you might take welcome into the world. Our world needs us, and we need them.

Laura Baghdassarian Murray is an ordained pastor in the ECO Presbyterian denomination, Director of Spiritual Engagement and Innovation at Fuller Seminary's Center for Spiritual Formation, retreat creator and facilitator, and spiritual director. She was born to first generation Armenian immigrants who adventured from Tehran to Houston just before she was born.

Vocationally, Laura has spent twenty years working closely with individuals and groups in the areas of leader development and spiritual formation. During COVID-19 she creatively began the ministry of Digital Silent Retreats and has hosted these spaces monthly as a way of formation and hospitality in the digital space.

As the Pastor of Spiritual Formation at Highland Park Pres, she wrote Lent devotion guides, curated Advent guides, developed Bible studies, and led worship services.

Laura holds a doctor of ministry in Leading Change from Fuller Seminary alongside a master's degree in theology and is a certified spiritual director.

Laura is married to Craig and has two incredible children, a dog that is more like a cat, and a dog that is a dog. She lives with her family in the Dallas area. She believes dessert is only dessert if it involves chocolate.

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