

Introducing the 2012–2013 *Horizons* Bible study

Dispatches to God's Household: The General Epistles

By Nancy Benson-Nicol

With Suggestions for Leaders by Magdalena I. García



The six books of the New Testament explored in this study—1 and 2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude—teach us what it means to live in community, what it means to belong to the household of God. A subset of New Testament letters known as the General Epistles, these letters were written to be shared and read aloud in early Christian communities.

During the time in which the authors of these letters lived, believers regarded one another as members of God's family. Thus, a guiding and powerful metaphor in these epistles is the understanding of family—what it means in the world of the Roman Empire as contrasted with the more expansive idea of being a member of

God's household through the Holy Spirit.

These letters were meant to inspire and comfort the faithful in first-century Asia Minor, and they continue to speak to us today as we grapple with how to live in community as disciples of Christ.

While often comforting, they also are challenging. Nancy Benson-Nicol invites us to “walk into the breach” as we embrace the ultimately hopeful and transformative message of these dispatches to God's people—through Jesus Christ, God calls us to live as sisters and brothers, serving one another in truthfulness and love as members of God's household.



About the Author

Nancy Benson-Nicol is a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). She has served as chaplain at University of the Ozarks for the past six years. Prior to that, Nancy served congregations in Arkansas and Michigan. A native of Pennsylvania, Nancy holds a bachelor of arts degree from Swarthmore College with

majors in sociology, anthropology and religion. She holds a master of divinity degree from Harvard Divinity School. While at Harvard, Nancy served in The Memorial Church under the direction of the late Peter J. Gomes. Nancy was featured in the July 2004 issue of *Presbyterians Today* in “40 Under 40: Ones to Watch.”



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