

Sisters author hopes to draw hearts home

By Kit Tosello
Correspondent

Our homes are more than the sum of their square footage. And they're more than a place to hang our hats.

With her latest book, "The Unexpected Power of Home: Why We Need It More Than Ever," local author Nancie Carmichael hopes to remind us that our dwelling places overflow with powerful, life-shaping potential.

Carmichael will give a free holiday-themed presentation and sign copies of her newest book at Suttle Tea on November 5, at 6:30 p.m.

"Home is such a powerful metaphor for who we are, and it instructs us," she says. "There are so many layers to home. It's a practical place. A spiritual place. A place of celebration. A place to let down your hair. It's a place to be fully human and to share that with others."

While the tendency is to focus on externals — furnishings, aesthetics, the neighborhood — Carmichael suggests, "That's not what it's about. Actually, we are the ones who make home for ourselves and others. It starts at ground-level, with us.

"I think of my grandmother in the Depression," Carmichael remembers. "She never owned a home. Her biggest thrill was when she finally got a one-bedroom apartment. That's where she'd make her pear conserve and put it on the windowsill, and you could see the jewel fruit in there. And her big chair, where she read the Bible. So that was home for her."

Home is sacred, as a place of safety and respect, a place to think and a place to grow. Carmichael, who spent her early years on a farm in Montana, finds that how we experienced home as a child influences how we, in turn, make a home for ourselves and our families.

Not all of us have warm fuzzies when we think about home. In her book, Carmichael shares the story of a woman with a difficult childhood who has chosen to incorporate the positive things she learned from her mother — recipes she now makes for her son.

"Home allows us to take the pain and turn it into a place of joy and new beginnings. Ask, 'How can this be a place of love, restoration, redemption?'"

Beyond the philosophical, she's not suggesting we overlook practicality or comfort. "Home is our base of operations, and it needs to be effective. It's where children

get rest and nourishment so they can do well. It's where we grow people, people who grow up to be presidents and teachers and lawmakers and leaders in the community."

Hospitality isn't entertaining.

"Hospitality is making room for people in this world. It's welcoming, noticing people. Maya Angelou said that people will forget what you said and did, but they'll never forget how you made them feel."

She suggests walking into your home with objective eyes. "What does my house say? Do people feel comfortable here?"

There's power in extending hospitality to ourselves, too, for being replenished.

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Carmichael wrote the book during a time of uprooting from the Camp Sherman home she shared with her husband, Bill, for 15 years after raising their five children in Black Butte Ranch. Settling into a smaller home in town, she again carved out her personal spot, a favorite chair next to her most beloved books.

Home is a place for celebrating seasons.

"The seasons are markers of our lives," Carmichael says. "In them, we remember."

Included in her book is a recipe for her grandmother's pear conserve, which she made with her daughter.

"In going through the motions—the act of peeling the pears, chopping them, and then seeing all those jars. It was so much work! But we remember my mother, my grandmother, in fall.

"Doing these things gives us that continuity, that sense of home. Getting kids involved strengthens them."

Households evolve, family dynamics change.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Nancie Carmichael of Sisters has written a book about the power and importance of home.

"What's important is the way we do things where we are," she says.

"My dream with this book was to inspire people to see what they have that is so accessible to them, to make a difference in the world. God doesn't ask us, 'What big thing can you do for me?' but 'What do you have?' And our reply often is, 'I have very little.' But I truly believe that's where God starts with every one of us.

"We look at others' lives, at their advantages, their

background, their income. But that's not where it's at. Every life is powerful. Every home is powerful. Start there."

The Unexpected Power of Home is Carmichael's 12th book, including two she co-authored with Bill. An eight-week study guide for small groups is available.

On Tuesday, November 5 at 6:30 p.m. at Suttle Tea, Carmichael will sign copies of her book and offer a free presentation, "Making Holidays Fun Again."

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