



Letter from the
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What we're all about

Reach Out, Columbia is committed to presenting the heart and works of Jesus Christ in clarity and purity. We strive to encourage a deeper, more steadfast love toward others as well as provide a vehicle for the body of Christ to come together as one voice in corporate agreement and expression of faith.

Ten years ago my husband and I discovered something terribly exciting—our daughters were finally old enough to stay home for an evening without burning the house down. Or killing themselves. Or each other.

Our friends were making similar discoveries. Like giddy sixteen-year-olds with new driver's licenses, we began to visualize what this new era of freedom could mean for us. No more paying babysitters. Or canceling plans because we couldn't afford dinner, a movie, *and* a babysitter. Opportunities to date our spouses. An occasional night out *without* the kids. Getting together with others without having to plan activities suitable for all ages. Uninterrupted after-dinner conversation.

I don't remember who proposed the idea of a supper club, but before long we had four enthusiastic couples hungry for food, fellowship, and fun. Each month we'd rotate homes, with the hostess choosing the theme and providing the main dish. One month's theme was Italian, the next was German. Soup and salad night preceded an all-American burger and apple pie evening.

We tried new recipes, shared old ones, and experimented with cuisine we'd never eaten or cooked before. Most dishes were home runs, but a few, like the rice pudding only my husband liked, struck out. Looking back, I don't remember many of the home run recipes, but our group still laughs about the rice pudding debacle and how we unanimously agreed to swap the gummy concoction for the carton of ice cream in my freezer.

The night we realized we could play grown up board games after more than a decade of *Candy Land* and *Chutes and Ladders* was a glorious one. Now the host couple not only chose the theme, but also the game. *Yahtzee*, *Taboo*, *Bananagrams*, *Spades*, and *Pictionary* were some of our favorites. There were a few rice pudding games, too, like *The Worst Case Scenario*, where we lost points for not knowing that the best way to escape from a bear is to run downhill in a zig-zag fashion clanging pans and yelling "Nay! Nay!" Imagine that.

Month after month, year after year, we've met. Our recipe collection has grown, and so have our friendships. We've laughed a lot, cried occasionally, and encouraged each other to press on in faith. One couple dropped out, another moved away, but new friends stepped in, and our supper club continues.

Like Jesus breaking bread with his closest friends, we've experienced the sweet camaraderie of sharing food and fellowship with dear ones. Jean Wilund, in our cover story this month, writes about a group of friends who have surpassed our club and shared more than 300 dinners over the course of 30 years. Also in this issue, Marilyn Nutter explores the puzzling path of grief, and Pastor Mike Turner asks the question, "Mission trips,—why bother?"

On the surface these topics seem to have little connection, but when you peel back the layers, you'll find it. Each article celebrates people—people we love, people we've lost, and people we hope to love to Christ.

I hope you enjoy this combined issue. Have a great summer, and I'll see you back in the fall.

Lori