

Keith's thoughts on Christine

June 9, 2023

--

Perhaps no one has had a greater influence on the paradigm of Good Works than Christine Pohl. God used Christine to shift the way we think about the people we are serving (the widow, the fatherless and the stranger), and the way we look at the ministry God has trusted us with.

I first met Christine in the fall of 1989 when I sat in on her class **Servant as Liberator**. It was her first semester teaching at Asbury Theological Seminary and my third semester there as a student. I began as a student in 1983 taking classes during a sabbatical every few years while continuing to lead and develop the community of Good Works in Athens, Ohio. This is year # 43 for me.

Christine introduced me to the idea that hospitality was something important in the kingdom economy. Prior to that, this vision and value had not made it to any list in my life. Prior to meeting her, I did not see, understand nor value the ethic or history of hospitality. She showed me that so much of what we were already doing (welcoming strangers) was indeed biblical hospitality.

And so began what would be a mentoring friendship which lasted 34 years. Darlene and I were included in family times with the Pohl's over many years and for this gift, we are grateful.

In every generation, God raises up men and women who 'recover' truth which has been marred or lost, or hidden, or even forgotten. Our dear sister, because of her willing, receptive, and teachable spirit recovered the vision and practice of hospitality and along with it the practice of truth telling, promise keeping and gratitude!

She may be remembered by her insightful writings and teachings, but I will always remember her friendship; her gentle insightful kindness and her personal help to me as I grew up. I met Christine when I was only 31. I am now 65.

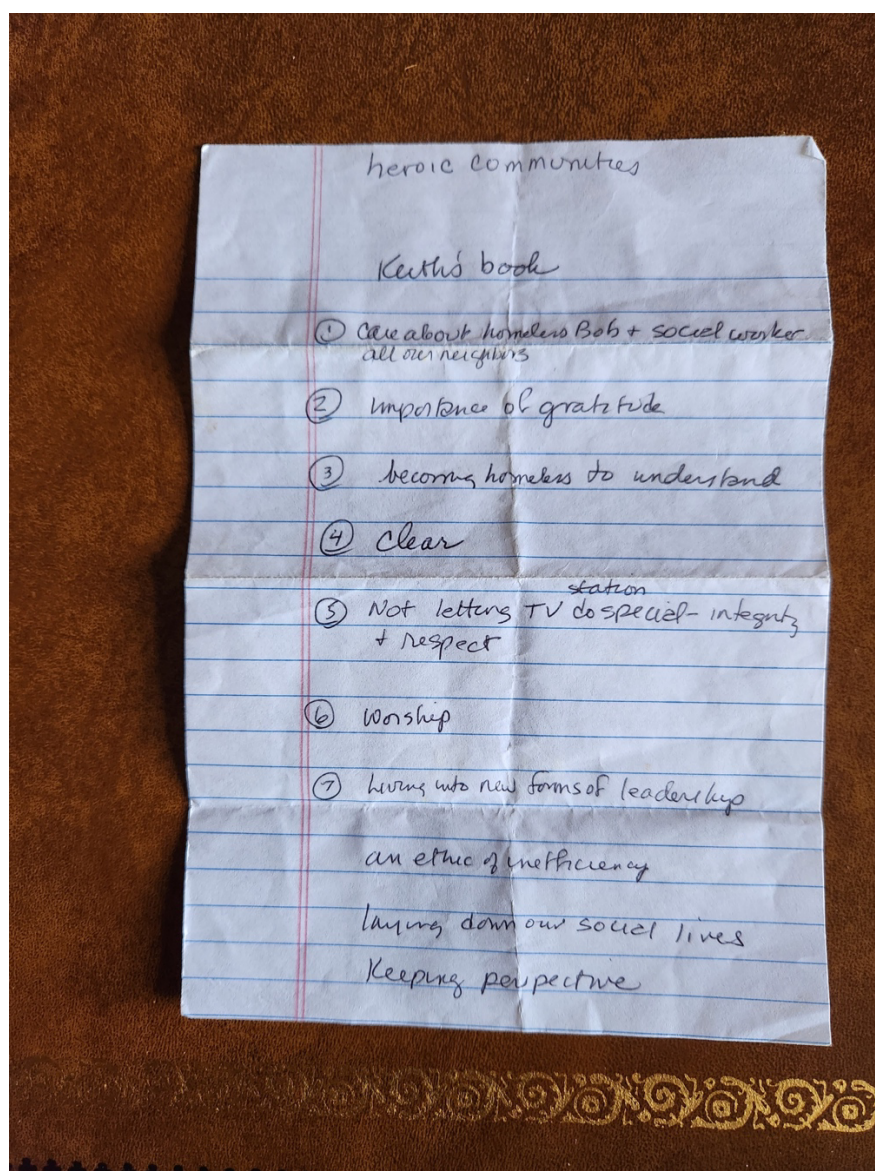
Our friendship continued over the years. Christine first came to Athens and visited Good Works prior to finishing Making Room and then returned several times to get to know people in our community over many years. She always came to learn, listen, teach us and become our friend. We are measurably better at loving our neighbors now. Thank you, Christine.

Dash between the dates

Ours was a unique friendship. She was a teacher; a mentor and we were friends. I sat in on her Christian Ethics class at least six (6) times over the years because I liked listening to her both as she presented and how she responded and interacted with students. I was in her last class in 2018.



Christine started asking me to speak in her classes in the early 1990s. And I did. And this continued during all the years I visited and spent semesters at Asbury. She took notes and she used these notes to later formulate chapters which eventually became the book we wrote together: *Good Works: Hospitality and Faithful Discipleship*. Here are the early notes she wrote down for us to start the book:



Being used by God

What we all have received from her teaching is an *infrastructure, a framework* for navigating the most important parts of the ministry: loving our neighbors as ourselves. I continue to be guided by what I have learned from her long obedience in the same direction.

I have also had the privilege of listening to Christine teach on hospitality in many different settings over many different years. Her voice is both strong and unique. She calls the body of Christ to be our “best self” by laying out practical aspects of love for the stranger. Christine has helped so many of us **see hospitality as doable** with people who feel excluded. More importantly, the way she addresses the hard subjects of inclusion not only invite people listening to her to feel comfortable sharing from their vulnerability without feeling judged, but she also invited and allowed the Holy Spirit to breathe new life into the thoughts and comments of others around the subjects she was speaking to in a way that guides everyone into continuing education.

Years before *Living into Community* was published, Christine helped us “live into community” and establish the practices that now sustain the Good Works Community: Promise Keeping, Truth Telling, Hospitality and Gratitude. These structures became essential for our sustainability. Indeed, I don’t think I considered the matter of sustainability for our Christian Community until the hard work of Christine revealed it.

Soon after I started Good Works, God gave me the gift of naivety. This was illustrated in the first paragraph of chapter one in *Making Room* as she reflects on her interview with me.

“WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR MINISTRY AS OFFERING hospitality to strangers?” I asked the founder of a community for rural homeless people.

“No, not really,” he responded.

Surprised, I pressed him further, “Well, then, how would you describe what you are doing?”

“We welcome needy strangers into a home environment; we give them a safe place. I think of hospitality as entertaining family and friends; that’s not what we’re doing.” His response echoed Henri Nouwen’s observation that, for most of us, hospitality conjures up images of “tea parties, bland conversation, and a general atmosphere of coziness.”²

And so... WE give thanks for the enormous gift that Christine has been and still is to all of us!

We have been guided with wisdom and courage over these many years to grow deeper and deeper in our vision of ‘welcome’. Much of what we have become in our Community of HOPE has resulted from the mentoring and life-giving love of Christine Pohl.

In 2012, Christine (along with several others) was instrumental in persuading Asbury Theological Seminary to recognize me with an Honorary Doctorate. I received the Honorary Doctorate at the spring commencement of the Seminary. Here is a link to what I shared with the Asbury Community.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qH5DMkeior4&t=4s>