

Reflections on Christine from a few of her family and friends

I feel so grateful to have known and been taught by [Christine Pohl](#). She profoundly shaped my life and ministry. Though she has never been physically in attendance, her fingerprints are all over my church. I've thought of her even more in this last year as I walk the halls of Mel Trotter Ministries, the homeless shelter I serve.

Attending her classes, was like eating a well-balanced meal, delicious and nourishing. She was masterful at leading us into rich discussion. She seemed completely at home in the rigors of academia, in the company of the poor, and in her own skin.

She taught me to pay attention to the edges, the liminal spaces, the special space between in and out. She helped me to see corporate worship as a gathering of guests and a Host—communion a meal, baptism a bath, and a funeral...a last act of hospitality. Having tasted its appetizers in this life, she is now seated at the Table, the one she taught us to love.

Knowing that she is now experiencing that welcome in all its glory, her own words are even more meaningful than when I first read them.

“As a way of life, an act of love, an expression of faith, our hospitality reflects and anticipates God's welcome. Simultaneously costly and wonderfully rewarding, hospitality often involves small deaths and little resurrections. By God's grace we can grow more willing, more eager, to open the door to a needy neighbor, a weary sister or brother, a stranger in distress. Perhaps as we open that door more regularly, we will grow increasingly sensitive to the quiet knock of angels. In the midst of a life-giving practice, we too might catch glimpses of Jesus who asks for our welcome and welcomes us home.” (Making Room)

Adam Lipscomb

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My dear aunt, Dr. [Christine Pohl](#) passed on and went to be with the Lord this morning. She was a wonderful woman whose life in some way, or another touched I'd say somewhere in the thousands. She was always working or serving in some capacity, even after retiring so I know that number is up there. I knew her only as my sweet aunt, but I can't count the number of times I ran into one of her students, colleagues, friends, etc. who discovered we were related and went on to tell me how good of a person she was.

There is no greater comfort knowing you are at peace with our Heavenly father. We love you always and we will miss you.

Jessie Michael

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Since hearing the news of Dr. Christine Pohl's passing earlier this week, tears of gratitude for her teaching, writing, hospitality, and encouragement have mixed with tears of sadness. Christine Pohl's wise, academic yet deeply practical impact upon me is profound and indelible.

After years of resisting a call to vocational ministry, the too long suppressed inner voice to return to seminary led me to visit Asbury Theological seminary as a prospective transfer student. After being warmly greeted in the admissions office, I was guided to Estes Chapel. The chapel was full, beaming with student life and that particular day, the pulpit was filled by none other than Dr. [Christine Pohl](#). My heart raced with pentecost like enthusiasm as she eloquently spoke of "social holiness" in the life and teaching of John Wesley. As she exhorted the chapel audience to address the "complicated misery of human souls" through acts of "social holiness," I knew I had found my people and my place to complete my theological education. My campus tour continued after lunch with a visit to a class. Yes, the class was taught by Christine Pohl. I was still so stunned by the events of the day, that I could hardly introduce myself in class.

As the years went by, I was a frequent student in her classes and a few years after graduation, an excited and humbled participant in the Lilly Grant Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Project that led to her award-winning book, "Living into Community." Christine was so brilliant, articulate, compassionate, scholarly, and highly regarded in theological circles. Yet because of the way she humbly embodied hospitality, you always felt she was genuinely glad to see you.

I am abundantly grateful that Christine sustained the practice of "making room" and that she made room for this transfer student as I "joined back up" with the call to vocational ministry.

It is simply truth telling to say that so many of us are exceedingly grateful for Christine's fidelity to Jesus and hospitality to all of us.

Tiger Pennington

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There are people who leave an indelible fingerprint on your life. [Christine Pohl](#) was one of mine. We once spent three hours in her back yard drinking tea, eating sweet treats,

and discussing intergenerational community, Moltmann and Volf, gardening and family, and a myriad of other things all while chasing off a very determined bee that was insistent on being part of our conversation.

It was not the only time we chatted, but it was a special one. I had asked her to consider being my mentor for my doctorate. She had to decline due to her health and other pressing obligations. But she was so genuine in her regret in not being able to take that journey with me. We talked in depth about my paper and my research, where it would lead and what my hopes for it were. I updated her frequently to let her know my progress. The last time I saw her was at the airport, where we happened to bump into each other in the midst of travel. The last time we texted was when I told her I had passed my defense, presented my colloquium, and was graduating that Saturday. The next time we see each other will be in the sweet embrace of perfect community in eternity.

I am sad. I am sad that our paths won't cross again, and I won't be able to message with updates and questions and general hellos. I am sad that our afternoon tea will be the only afternoon tea we got to share. I am sad I won't be there for her funeral.

But, I am also happy. I am happy that I got to meet Christine, to glean from her wisdom, to share our heart for Christ-centered community, to laugh and to cry together. I am happy for the brief moments we had together that have formed me in lasting ways. And I know that my experience mirrors those of so many others, many who were much closer to her than I was, but nonetheless, covered in her fingerprints.

Above the sadness and happiness, I mostly just feel blessed that I got to meet Christine. And she met me in the sweetest of places with the best of who she was.

Christina Embree

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A dear seminary professor passed away early this morning from pancreatic cancer. I think that [Christine Pohl](#) must have inspired every student she ever taught. Dr. Pohl was a professor at Asbury Theological Seminary for 30 years, and is best known as the author of the book, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition.*

She was my primary academic influencer on the subject of women in leadership and women in ministry. She has influenced ALL of Adam's & my work with the poor, marginalized, and refugee.

She absolutely changed my life. In one of my most recent messages to her, I wrote her about our upcoming church service that was focusing on our Immigrant Connection

ministry. She was the first to teach me about a theology of refugees and immigrants. I wrote:

"I'm going to be preaching on the topic, including talking about biblical hospitality. Your legacy lives on through Adam and me and thousands of others like us who have been disciplined by your teaching. And now we are discipling others."

And then today...

Today I was in the church lobby talking with someone, when in walks Catalina, one of the immigrants who we featured on our Immigrant Connection story. Catalina and I spoke at length, and she said, "I loved what you preached about in that service! I had never thought about Moses and the people of Egypt as refugees! I never realized that Jesus was a refugee when he was a baby and they had to flee to Egypt! God knows my story!"

Christine Pohl-----Adam & Christy-----Catalina....

Christy Hontz Lipcomb

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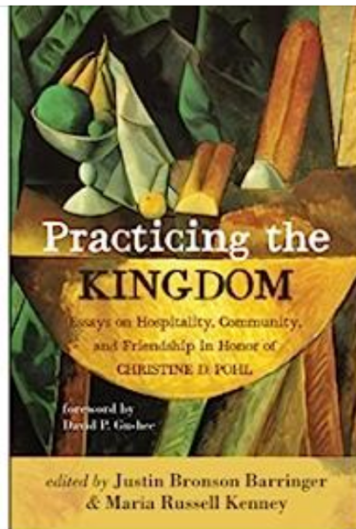
I join the many and varied folk grieving the loss of Dr [Christine Pohl](#) this week. My advisor in seminary, she soon became a conversation partner in the early days of Community, a trusted mentor, and the first person to encourage me to consider writing as part of my vocation. A person who seamlessly integrated her area of academic interest and expertise - hospitality - into her life and fostered that in so many of those who knew her, students or otherwise. I have a draft of a book on that theme in my writing projects folder, dedicated to her life, and now memory. Rest in peace, and rise in joy, Dr. Pohl.

Sean Gladding

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It feels weird to share this right now, but [Maria Russell Kenney](#) and I put this book together not to make money (we're not expecting a check anytime soon) or get another CV line. It was and is intended to honor our friend [Christine Pohl](#), and I know that she deeply appreciated it and thought that it took her work in new directions. So, given that we want to continue honoring her even as she is now with Jesus, I put it out there for folks who knew and loved her as well as those who are interested in her key areas of scholarship like hospitality, community, and friendship. Christine, thank you for living a life and producing scholarship worthy of much more than this little book

Justin Bronson Barringer



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Practicing the Kingdom: Essays on Hospitality, Community, and Friendship in Honor of Christine D...

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My sweet aunt, Dr. [Christine Pohl](#) , went to be with Jesus yesterday after her long fight with pancreatic cancer. She was always there for us when it counted. She usually had one of our babies in her arms. So many around the world were touched by her sermons, lectures, and books. She will be so very missed. We love you so much, Aunt Chris.

Chelsea Pohl Nobel





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Dylan's Aunt [Christine](#) went to be with Jesus early this week.

She was a beloved professor, a talented speaker, and a gifted author. I always thought of her as a real-life J. B. Fletcher: a bit of a celebrity but yet always poised, and always humble.

But despite all of her academic achievements, I never once felt out of place talking to her. She had a way about her that made you feel at ease. Sometimes lighter, even as though you'd just spent an hour with a therapist unloading all of your troubles. She was also an amazing cook. We often talked about baking and recipes, and I remember one time in particular: I'd mentioned I wanted to make a pie one Sunday for the whole family, which was significant because this was my first time making pie for people other than just Dylan and the girls. And I'm telling you, she raved about it- and I *know* my pie was not that delicious. The crust was a frozen pie crust for Pete's sake, but she knew how much it meant to me. She knew. And that's just a glimmer of the kind of person she was.

She will be greatly missed. But we know she's in Heaven now, and no longer in any pain and that's an assurance we can always hold on to.

Ashley Lauren Pohl

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Remembering a Beloved ATS Professor

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When I registered for the required Christian Ethics course, I intentionally chose Dr. Pohl. While I had heard good things about the other ethics professors, I was swayed by the recommendations of other seminarians to register for Dr. Pohl's class. Now, their recommendations stemmed primarily from the course she taught on the ethics of Christian hospitality, but that didn't matter. I trusted their judge of character. So, Dr. Pohl it was.

The classroom was full. Every seat taken. Looking around at the students present, one would assume the semester would be full of deep, intellectual, and challenging theological discussions. If one surveyed the classroom it would appear to be guaranteed each class would be exciting, a class one wouldn't want to miss.

Dr. Pohl was fully invested in serving as a conduit for learning and transformation, empowering and commissioning those in the classroom to live out our faith in Jesus Christ while struggling with the ethics arising in the world around us as compared to the ethic we are called to as disciples of Jesus Christ. In fact, she invited students to join her for lunch on Thursdays so classroom discussions could continue and evolve more fully. You see, the course had changed from a three-credit course to only two credits, decreasing the classroom hours.

However, this assumption could not have been further from the truth. Every time we gathered, there was a certain deadness, disinterest, and dread. Questions raised by Dr. Pohl would go unanswered, and students were not signing up or showing up for lunch with her. Every tactic she would try to engage us seemed to fail. The frustration, exasperation, and sadness beginning to show in her body language and her words. It got to the point of being uncomfortable, at least to me.

Not to be prideful, but I was one of the few, sometimes the only one, to participate in class. Though there were days I too was silent. It was after one class, a class particularly silent and miserable, Dr. Pohl asked me if I had completed the reading for the day. I had to confess I was behind in the reading. We know lying is unacceptable, but lying in a Christian ethics class must be a whole other level of wrong. She was trying

to problem solve, trying to figure out what was wrong with this class, trying find some way to reach us. Dr. Pohl would later apologize to me about having been a part of that class, one of the two worst classes she has ever had over the course of her illustrious teaching career. We've laughed and lamented over that fact for years! How about that!?

At the outset, there was many a Thursday when I was the only student at the table with Dr. Pohl. She did require every student to show up at least once meaning the table was full for two weeks, though there was much of the same silence and disinterest present during class. I thought the lunches would discontinue, but they didn't. So, I continued to show up and sit down at the table with Dr. Pohl, and honestly (Christian ethics at play once again), at the beginning it was more out of pity (seems too strong a word) than desire. After all, Thursdays were the day I could meet a friend, who was a commuter, for lunch. But my friend would join us, and we looked forward to the time together, all of us. My friend would later have Dr. Pohl as her professor, including an independent study. I have no idea the content of our conversations. It doesn't matter. I suppose that plays into the theology of the ethics of Christian community, the ethics of Christian hospitality.

During the course of my time at Asbury Theological Seminary, Dr. Pohl suffered an injury (or was it two) -an ankle? – a wrist? -a hip? Definitely an ankle. Yes, I think there was definitely an ankle injury (or was it her hip) forcing Dr. Pohl to teach from a tall chair. She asked me to stay after class one day. I was a little nervous as to why the request. I was humbled (and privileged) when this fiercely independent, dignified woman asked me to assist her to get to her office because she couldn't get there on her own. Dr. Pohl is a woman of great stature -figuratively and literally. While I am not short, I am not tall either, so it was an interesting walk down the hall from the classroom to her office.

I would have Dr. Pohl once again for the Ethics of Christian Community. I was blessed to take this course (was it a new course offering?) my last semester. Tucked towards the back of one of the books on the reading list, *Grace Matters*, was a story which changed my understanding of my call, my understanding of God's primary call for each of us -to be loved by God. Dr. Pohl introduced me to the works of Keith Wasserman; she introduced me to Keith Wasserman, a man whose work and advice (not advice I had to search for in my notes but offered by email and phone call) were invaluable in working with the unhoused situation at a church I serve(d). She also allowed herself to

be vulnerable enough to share her journey, including the singleness part. She allowed us to pray for her aging mom. She stood tall, singing boldly, “And Can it Be,” with no need for a hymnal, and she sang the hymn as if she believed the words to be true. Dr. Pohl had a dignified softness, a signature smile, a distinct voice, a sparkle in her eyes, and a humility unmatched. At least this is the Dr. Pohl I experienced.

I was so very blessed my relationship with Dr. Pohl didn't cease to exist at graduation. She was available and willing to help me answer the Christian ethics question for the Board of Ordained Ministry of the United Methodist Church as I was pursuing that goal. In fact, she sent me the outline she used one of those first days in the Christian ethics class. Praise God! I didn't have to go searching through notebooks. Beyond sending me the notes, she read my answer and offered feedback. Gracious and kind. I would learn Dr. Pohl was sitting next to Dr. Minger at a staff meeting “discussing” another one of my written answers to questions for the Board of Ordained Ministry of the United Methodist Church, both sympathetic to the challenges I was facing as I pastored two churches in Baltimore, MD.

Dr. Pohl was one of those professors I would continue to seek out when I visited Wilmore. It may have been lunch in the dining hall, dinner at Ramsey's, or sharing a pew at Wilmore United Methodist as we worshiped together. It was during one of those meals she shared about being behind on writing deadlines. Do you know what a relief it was to hear someone needed to ask for extensions? And how cool was it to have the opportunity to discuss the contents of the (yet to be written) book!

I was sitting with fellow Asbury alums around a table in a Washington, D.C., hotel when the news of her diagnosis stilled the room. The news of her pancreatic cancer diagnosis was shocking and saddening. Even so, Dr. Pohl faced the diagnosis, faced the cancer, head on. Was there ever any doubt? It is my understanding she would undergo experimental treatment for the cancer, not because she was clinging to this life, but so another may one day find healing from this dreadful disease. Agape love, right?! I thought of her often. Prayed for her. And sometimes even sent an email to check in on her. Not enough.

I last saw Dr. Pohl in September 2022. We sat together in worship at Wilmore UMC. We worshiped together at Wilmore UMC. Beautiful and strong as ever. God had just begun to speak to me about my next steps. She listened, smiled, encouraged, and asked questions. She is God's beloved daughter, a disciple who denied herself, took up her cross, and followed Christ. Dr. Pohl's faithfulness in all things, her willingness to count the cost and go all in for Jesus, made an impact on my life and the ways I live out my faith, and I know the same is true for many others. Yes, there are many others who could speak to the impact Dr. Pohl has had on their lives.

One parting thought. Outside of Estes Chapel, on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary, stands a statue of Charles Wesley (in 2014, this was the only statue of Charles Wesley in North America.) Charles Wesley stands tall with a quill in one hand and a journal in the other. It was at some sort of official thing, maybe his unveiling, when I found myself standing next to Dr. Pohl (and I think Dr. Minger was there as well) when she made a comment about the statue, a very observant, astute, and factual observation. The poor guy would be forever immortalized with cankles. What a shame. Us women could only shake our heads and chuckle under our breath. Poor Charles.

- Katie Grover

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If you would like to add your words to these reflections honoring Christine, send me an email with your thoughts to keith@good-works.net

- Keith Wasserman