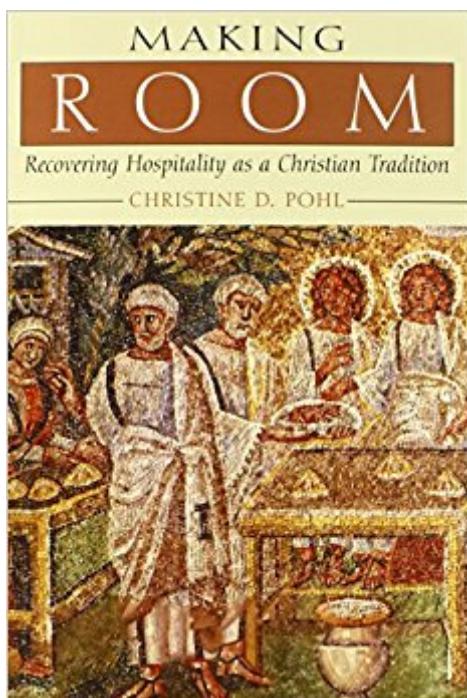


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# Making Room: Recovering Hospitality As A Christian Tradition



## **Synopsis**

Although hospitality was central to Christian identity and practice in earlier centuries, our generation knows little about its life-giving character. *Making Room* revisits the Christian foundations of welcoming strangers and explores the necessity, difficulty, and blessing of hospitality today. Combining rich biblical and historical research with extensive exposure to contemporary Christian communities -- the Catholic Worker, L'Abri, L'Arche, and others -- this book shows how understanding the key features of hospitality can better equip us to faithfully carry out the practical call of the gospel.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Sisters Today" In her beautiful book *Making Room*, Christine Pohl . . . illustrates both in content and in format the profound meaning of hospitality in Christian life. . . . Using her own pastoral experience and that of others, Pohl deals realistically with the fragility of hospitality in its limits, boundaries, and temptations. . . . Pohl encourages readers to engage in thoughtful reflection on how important it is to adopt the attitude of the early Christians toward all people in our world." *Booklist* Pohl elegantly, accessibly introduces the history of Christian hospitality and its potential for transforming contemporary Christian practice. . . . The book appeals not only to readers interested in contemporary Christianity and its historical development but also to those interested more generally in the margins of society and the commercialization of hospitality and welfare." *Books & Culture* Casual readers beware: *Making Room* is guaranteed to challenge even the most

complacent Christian. You are not likely to walk away from this book unchanged."CBA Marketplace"[Pohl] effectively weaves biblical insight, historical precedent, and practical wisdom, exploring how concern for strangers has been normative from ancient times. To revitalize this 'moral dimension,' Pohl challenges readers to move beyond their safety of hosting people within their familiar social or economic world. While contemporary examples focus on intentional Christian communities -- such as L'Abri or the Catholic Worker -- the book has rich implications for house- or church-based ministry. Ultimately, readers from any church background will learn that as they make room for others in their homes, more room will become available to them to receive God's blessings."Christian Retailing"Making Room is a welcome reminder that as God's people we are all called to be hospitable to others, whether or not we have what some call 'the gift of hospitality.' The book would most appeal to those desiring to make a difference in the lives of others through hospitality."Publishers Weekly"Christine Pohl addresses a surprisingly undiscovered topic in Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition. Far from a Martha Stewart handbook for Christians, Pohl's work focuses on the nitty-gritty of forging community hospitality, as evidenced in such organizations as The Catholic Worker, L'Abri and The Open Door. Hospitality, she writes, should be more about welcoming strangers than friends and family."

Christine D. Pohl is associate provost and professor of Christian social ethics at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky.

Hospitality is often used to describe entertaining in one's home or as a reference to the hospitality industry. Pohl asserted, "Hospitality is a way of life fundamental to Christian identity" (p. x). To write this, Pohl interviewed over 50 practitioners and explored 8 communities of hospitality: L'Abri Fellowship, Annunciation House, L'Arche, The Catholic Worker, Good Works Inc., Jubilee Partners, The Open Door Community, and St. John's and St. Benedict's Monasteries. There are 3 sections:1. Remembering our Heritage2. Reconsidering the Tradition3. Recovering the PracticeIn Part 1, Pohl noted that "for the most part, the term 'hospitality' has lost its moral dimension" (p. 4). In essence, "hospitality was a qualification for leadership in the early Christian communities" (p. 5). Pohl lists some critical and poignant questions (see pp. 14, 15) such as how did hospitality get lost, what makes it potentially subversive, why is it easily distorted, etc. Part 2 was my favorite and was very thought provoking especially Ch4 Hospitality, Dignity, and the Power of Recognition. "Especially when the larger society disregards or dishonors certain persons, small acts of respect and welcome are potent far beyond themselves. . . . Recognition involves respecting the dignity and equal worth

of every person and valuing their contributions" (p. 61). Pohl goes on to explore what it means to 'recognize' someone who is a stranger. She explored the notion of being a stranger, the roles of host/guest, risks associated with being a host, 'welcome' as a construct and the connection between marginality and hospitality. Part 3 describes limits, boundaries, and temptations - topics often not discussed in relation to hospitality. Discussed are things like practical limits (resources, energy, people, etc.), the intersection of identity, openness, and the connection to a physical place. Pohl noted, "The community will be transformed by the people it welcomes" (p. 141). I wanted to read more of her thinking. Pohl discussed a potential dark side of hospitality - the host using hospitality to gain advantage, the guest abusing the host's generosity. A favorite part of this section was Characteristics of Hospitable Places. I was reminded of placemaking [...] and Oldenburg's (2001) discussion of the importance of place. Who might be interested in this? People who are interested in:<sup>\*</sup> Food, food practices (Pohl emphasizes the centrality of food)<sup>\*</sup> Hospitality as a practice<sup>\*</sup> Ethic of care - Pohl posits hospitality as a 'way of being' an orientation towards the other reminiscent of care ethics<sup>\*</sup> Christian planners, community developers<sup>\*</sup> Placemaking - the importance of physical space in creating a welcoming environment<sup>\*</sup> Those interested in applied ethics<sup>\*</sup> Those simply tired of a rhetoric that posits 'difference' against some ideal and are seeking alternative, more respectful ways of being together Oldenburg, R. (2001). *Celebrating the third place: Inspiring stories about the "great good places" at the heart of our communities*. New York: Marlowe & Co.

This book is a treasure and I believe is a worthwhile read for any Christian wanting to understand and grow in the practice of hospitality. The author lays out the case for hospitality in the Old and New Testaments, and in church history. She also has studied various ministries of hospitality in the current age to glean what wisdom modern practitioners have to share. Perhaps the most enlightening and instructive part for me was learning about the practice of hospitality in the early church, and reading the wisdom shared by the church fathers. This book is extremely well researched, and it is impossible not to learn from it. I put it down for a while after getting about 20% of the way through, afraid that it was just loading up the guilt over a standard that I couldn't live up to. But, after picking it up once again, I was able to see how she adeptly wrestled with how the ideal meets our finite resources. I have come away from this book with a much deeper understanding of the application of Biblical hospitality in modern times, with how to deal with the difficulties involved in the practice, and a deeper realization of what it means to serve as a finite human being.

In her book, "Making Room", author Christine Pohl considers the practice of true Christian hospitality from historical, theological and cultural perspectives with an eye to application in a modern context. With numerous quotations from figures throughout the history of the Christian faith (including Chrysostom, Luther, Calvin and Wesley), Pohl builds a compelling case for recovering what may be a mostly lost practice for the modern church. Pohl doesn't just make a statement regarding the recovery of hospitality but she also points out the difficulties, tensions and pitfalls that may await a practitioner. Her explanations of how hospitality has changed over time and how it must be practiced in both individual/family and congregational/community settings are simultaneously challenging and encouraging. I found this book to be real eye-opening work that has forced me to reconsider many of the ways I interact with those I come in contact with. As a college professor I have begun to look at my students as "aliens and strangers" within the culture of higher education and to think about what hospitality might look like in that context. This is the power the book has for the reader in my mind. It points out what true hospitality is and the power it has in a disconnected and disillusioned world and then challenges the faithful reader to examine how to live out the potential it has. I strongly recommend this book for those seeking to live an intentional or missional faith.

A wonderful explanation and narrative portrait of classical, Christian hospitality throughout the ages. This book reclaims and resurrects the lost Christian practice of welcoming and caring for the needs of the stranger, the marginalized, and the needy. It is both a profoundly eye-opening and profoundly inspiring read!

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