

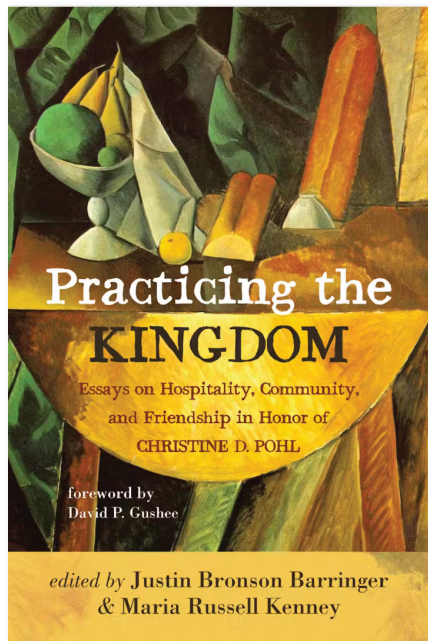
REVIEW: Practicing the Kingdom

Edited by Justin Bronson Barringer & Maria Russell Kenney

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Barringer, Justin Bronson, and Maria Russell Kenney, eds.
*Practicing the Kingdom: Essays on Hospitality,
Community, and Friendship in Honor of Christine D. Pohl.*
Eugene: Cascade, 2022. Pp 236, ISBN: 978-1-4982-1801-6
\$31.00 paperback.



Practicing the Kingdom was written as a festschrift in honor of Christian ethicist Dr. Christine D. Pohl and was published soon after she retired from Asbury Seminary. Pohl has researched and written widely on topics that, according to David P. Gushee's foreword, have also deeply characterized her daily life—notably the practices of hospitality, community building, and friendship. In this collection of essays, thirteen contributors explore and expand the themes of Pohl's work to honor her contributions and continue her legacy.

Pohl's life and work display a commitment to academic excellence alongside a "dedication to exploring, teaching, and living an ethic of applied, practical faith" (p. 2). The polar opposite of an ivory-tower academic, Pohl "never cloistered herself behind abstractions," (p. 222). Rather, even her most philosophical ideas are meant to be lived out on the street level, bringing the kingdom of God to bear on everyday life.

Part One of the book explores the topic that Pohl is most well-known for (hospitality) with three essays considering spiritual hospitality for those whose ideas about God are different than ours—the distinctives of Christian hospitality as compared with civil and market-driven hospitality, the paradoxical importance of a transforming holiness as a fundamental aspect of biblical hospitality, and the liturgical season of ordinary time as a resource and context for the cyclical practice of ordinary hospitality.

Pohl is realistic and clear-eyed when she advocates for the importance of hospitality and community—this kind of closeness with other humans, even within the church, is

often complicated and requires much wisdom. Part Two delves into the messiness of Christian community, exploring the Western pitfall of individualism, the way that vulnerability with others helps to form strong and healthy communities, and the illusion of idealism that threatens such vulnerability.

Part Three looks at friendship as integrally connected with hospitality and community, defining friendship as welcome of the other in imitation of God, considering how many modern friendships fall short in the areas of mutuality and acceptance, and reimagining friendships in light of the Kingdom of God. Part four widens the lens and considers Pohl's work on the previously discussed topics from the broader perspectives of evangelical ethics, evangelical feminism, and the love of God as the creative center of the Christian faith.

For those who want their academic study to stay integrally connected to and useful for the practices of the Christian life in community, this book will be a thought-provoking encouragement and exhortation. For those who are specifically interested in the work of Christine Pohl, this book should not be viewed as a substitute for reading her own books and articles, since the various contributors are self-admittedly taking what they have learned from her and running with it in their own unique ways. But for those who are interested in writing on the same topics Pohl emphasized while adding their own perspectives, these essays demonstrate the various ways that others are already building upon the foundation that she laid, and reading this work will perhaps spark the reader's own insights to join the ongoing conversation on hospitality, community, and friendship in the kingdom of God.

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