

## Consensus

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Volume 26  
Issue 2 *Apocalyptic*

Article 19

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11-1-2000

# Making room: recovering hospitality as a Christian tradition

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### Recommended Citation

Thrift, Richard A. (2000) "Making room: recovering hospitality as a Christian tradition," *Consensus*: Vol. 26 : Iss. 2 , Article 19.  
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol26/iss2/19>

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liturgies stand out with power and tenderness underscoring that meeting sisters and brothers at worship is essential stuff. 2) The material on forgiveness toward the end of the book may well be the most profound treatment of that central element of our faith that I have ever read. Thank you Dr. Carter Heyward for challenge and support in *Saving Jesus from Those Who Are Right*.

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## **Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition**

Christine Pohl

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999

205 pages, \$22.00 Softcover

While most of us image “hospitality” as quaint tea cups with shortbread, Christine Pohl, professor of Christian social ethics at Ashbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, has a different image. *Making Room* is her examination of a more basic, but essential expression of “welcoming” in the life of the church. Starting with the Hebrew tradition of hospitality, she turns to its expression in Christianity from the early church to the present and reminds us, in the words of Krister Stendahl, “Wherever, whenever, however the kingdom [of God] manifests itself, it is welcome.”

Pohl gives us primary sources, both ancient and contemporary, in a readable style which will make this volume a valuable resource for church professional and laity alike. Through the writings of Lactantius, Jerome, Chrysostom, Calvin, Luther, John Wesley, Benedict, Dorothy Day, Jean Vanier, Henri Nouwen and a host of others, Pohl traces the rise and progressive decline of hospitality’s role in Christian life as the church grew in size and power.

And there is the rub for Pohl. As the church became powerful and acceptable, it lost its counter-cultural and subversive nature. In essence, she asks, “How can you welcome the stranger or the ‘other’ if you are now the one in power?” Our contemporary times, however, have reversed that role; once more we become the “stranger” and the “other”. Can we – will we – revive this meaningful counter-cultural and subversive dimension of our faith and welcome the other as “another Christ”?

In the book’s section entitled, “Recovering the Practice”, Pohl offers guidance on how the church can again become a welcoming community. Pohl is no idealist; she illustrates the commitment required and its frustrations. She offers direction on boundary setting and respite for hospitality givers and advice

for physical and spiritual self-care. *Making Room* concludes with descriptive commentaries on eight contemporary Christian communities where hospitality is regularly practiced as a skill and a gift.

I have two criticisms about *Making Room*. First, there is the tendency to be repetitious in places. I get the feeling that the chapters were, by-and-large at one point, lecture notes. Good editing from Eerdmans would have cleaned that up.

Secondly, while Pohl focussed on the poor, the refugee, the disenfranchised and the marginalized, her omitting of gays and lesbians as candidates for hospitality was apparent. Here she might have helped us peek at this issue through the lens of hospitality to see something different, but she failed to provide the opportunity.

*Making Room* is a welcomed book that will provide a lot of fodder for the Christian community as it seeks self-understanding in this post-modern time. With Pohl, I agree that, "Hospitality is a lens through which we can read and understand much of the gospel and a practice by which we can welcome Jesus himself".

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### **Saved From Silence: Finding Women's Voice in Preaching**

Mary Donovan Turner and Mary Lin Hudson

St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999

\$26.75 Softcover

*Saved From Silence* is a timely book. Whether we like it or not, there are still subtle, and not so subtle, elements in our culture and church that continue to silence women. Turner and Hudson's book is a revelatory piece that examines this phenomenon and offers ways and encouragement for women preachers to find their voice.

Turner and Hudson have commandeered the metaphor of having "voice". To have voice means to have the ability to be authentic, distinctive, and to claim authority. Having voice is important because when we have voice we have the right to self-expression. When we lose voice, our lives are determined and defined by others. This is what is happening to women.

The authors present an extensive history of the Old and New Testaments and the Reformation. Within these chapters we see how women spoke and then were