

UCC ROOTS

Remembering our History

July 2018

He Took the World Seriously

Roger was a very curious child filled with questions. He wanted to understand the world. Fortunately, his church took him seriously and he never forgot what his pastor told him—“taking God seriously meant taking the world seriously.” The familiar scripture, “God so loved the world...,” meant that the locus for the Christian life was to be found less in tending the church and more in the political, ethical, environmental, economic, and community life of the world.

Roger Nathaniel Pohl (1941-2017), born and raised in Chicago, graduated from North Park University, earned an M.A. in English at Indiana University and a Master of Divinity at Yale University. Later he served UCC churches in Minnesota and Michigan. His deep sense of purpose to make the world more just was accompanied by his knack for asking the tough questions while consistently working for justice. He knew how to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. During his pastorate in Lansing, he once helped organize children and youth of the community to cleanse the Capitol steps with mops and water after the Ku Klux Klan had been there.



Pohl’s vocational journey culminated as executive director of the Ecumenical Center and International Residence at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor—nurturing a cross-cultural inter-faith setting with students from around the world. Throughout his life he traveled widely and took groups on global trips. He was deeply moved by his teaching experiences on the island of Mindanao in the Southern Philippines and encouraged Michigan clergy and church members to cultivate a “Philippine Partnership.” Interfaith issues, always linked to justice concerns, remained central to his life.

After Pohl’s death from pulmonary fibrosis, his family created the Pohl Legacy Fund for Southern Christian College in the Philippines.

Contributor: Joanne Pohl

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