

THEY LIVE AMONG US

The convent, the writing, the husbands: Christin Lore Weber talks about her life

BY DIANA COOGLE

Contemplating her 84 years of life, Christin Weber says, “It feels like my whole life has been miraculously impossible.”

Well might she think so. She spent her childhood summers not with other children but with nature, on her grandmother’s resort in the Minnesota wilderness. As a very young child, sitting on a hillock overlooking the lake, she learned to meditate.

In winter, in town, she learned catechism from the Sisters of Saint Joseph. At four, her religious experiences began. At nine, influenced by a beautiful book about convents, she determined to join the Sisters when she turned 12. Alarmed, her mother consulted the priest, who provided some made-up rules—no boyfriends, dietary restrictions, chores—and told Christin she could become an aspirant if she upheld those rules. Christin backpedaled. She wanted a normal childhood.

But she also wanted to be a nun. After high school graduation, she joined the Sisters. Life was difficult at first—strictness, rules, the ban on family contact—but became exciting in college, when she was learning things, meeting people, and doing art. After graduation, she taught English, religion, and drama in a girls’ academy, and then became head of religious education in a large school in Saint Paul. She also met and became friends with Father Patrick Kelly.

It was the era of Vietnam and Vatican II. Rebellion was in the air. These were Christin’s protest days—marching, preaching, and discussing Vatican II with her students.

When she was 32, Christin left the convent. Leaving was as difficult as

entering. The beautiful parts of that life—the deep friendships, the diversity in age and temperament of the Sisters, the 50 acres of woods and farmland they lived on, the bonfires at night; lying on the ground, looking at the stars, listening to a story—were left behind. Christin suffered from depression, guilt, removal from friends, and having to learn to live on her own.

Pat Kelly had also left the active priesthood. Two years after Christin reentered the world, they married.

“Our marriage was like a halfway house,” Christin says, “between the convent and life in the world.”

After ten years together, Pat Kelly died, unexpectedly, of cancer.

Six weeks after Pat’s death, Christin’s high-school sweetheart, John Weber, called. Though he was working as a traffic controller in Oakland, California, and she was in Minnesota, he stayed in touch. They married a year later.

“This marriage was my initiation into the world as it is,” Christin says.

By this time, she had written a thesis for a Doctor of Ministry degree on psychological pastoral theology. Recognizing her writing talent, John Weber offered to be her patron and give her the freedom to write.



Sister Mary Christopher (now Christin Weber, left) and Sister Stephen Marie in a wheat field at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Crookston, Minnesota, circa 1959.



Christin Lore Weber

Caring Community: A Design for Ministry launched her career in 1983, but her breakthrough book, she says, was *Woman Christ*, a book of feminist theology describing Christ as “the mergence of the Divine with the human in all of us.” Though it was widely read by women, some theologians, including a bishop, rejected it.

Her most-read book is *Finding Stone: A Quiet Parable and Soul-Work Meditation*. Her first novel, *Altar Music*, was an *LA Times* Best Book of the Year in 2000. Her favorite of her books is *No This But This*, a novel of reflections on “the everyday mysteries of a woman’s life.” Her latest is *Observances: A Memoir of Poems*, written to and in response to writers who have influenced her life (my favorite).

After living in California’s East Bay, then Port Townsend, John and Christin moved to the Applegate. In 2008, John died of the cancer that had plagued him since 2003.

Two years after John died, Christin read John Sack’s book, *Yearning for the Father*. Recognizing correlations with her own studies, she contacted him. After many deep discussions and realizing how much they enjoyed each other’s company and intellects, they married in 2011. John moved into Christin’s Applegate home, Casa Chiara, where they live a “semi-cloistered, hermitage-like writing life,” meditating daily and enjoying the peaceful, oak-savannah hillside of their home.

The Minnesota wilderness, the convent, the teaching and writing, the husbands—it’s no wonder Christin feels like her life has been miraculously impossible. The only way to make sense of it, she says, is to write about it. “A thing is impossible till I find the words for it,” she says. “Then I get it.”

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Editor’s note: Know someone we should feature in “They Live Among Us”? Contact Diana with your suggestions.



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