

Editorial

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During the first Palestinian Intifada, I was part of a global delegation to the First International Symposium on Palestinian Liberation Theology, held in Jerusalem in 1990 at Tantur Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies. As part of the experience we spent several days in Gaza. We walked the streets and saw bulldozed homes and water barrels with holes in them made by Israeli bullets. We visited hospitals and talked to doctors and nurses as well as people healing from injuries caused by rubber bullets and regular bullets. We visited schools and talked to teachers and students about disruptions of teaching and learning caused by the war. We ate meals and drank tea served by Palestinian hosts in their family tents.

We heard many stories. We also heard expressions of fear and frustration—understandable ones. And we witnessed joy—gentle amusement and robust laughter—as people made jokes, teased, enjoyed each other. This joy I found puzzling. In my naïveté, I wondered: How can this be? How can people know joy amid such incredible adversity? And when I returned to North America, I faced a second puzzle: how to talk about the joy I had witnessed. Too often people responded to my attempts with “Well, it can’t be too bad over there, if people are able to make jokes about it.” Then I knew that I had failed once more to communicate the significance of what I had seen and heard in Gaza.

This issue of *Vision* on joy is rooted in the questions about joy raised by that time in Gaza all those years ago. I confess: I was anxious about editing an issue on this theme. Unlike other topics we have explored in these pages—worship, confession, sexuality, the Bible, and prayer, for example—joy has no substance that we can pull apart and examine. It is an emotion. It is something we feel or feel the lack of. It may be a Christian virtue, although some would claim that, like happiness, it is more often a by-

product of Christian virtue. And joy is easily trivialized or sentimentalized. The things that lurk in the dark in the middle of the night taunted me with the suggestion that this issue could become *Vision's* version of a Hallmark card. I will let you, dear reader, make your own assessment. But mine is that our writers have given the lie to those insidious two-in-the-morning voices.

We begin the issue with companion pieces. Chris Marshall's thoughtful essay on why Christian joy matters is followed by Julia Gingrich's reflection on Marshall's presentation, from the perspective of her ministry internship experience in a historic Black church in south-central Elkhart. These two essays provide a framework for reading the rest of the articles, most of which deal more specifically with various aspects of joy.

Janet Elaine Guthrie and Abbot John Klassen write about joy as it permeates a life in leadership—Guthrie from the perspective of a Mennonite pastor and Klassen from the perspective of a Benedictine monk. Jennifer Davis Sensenig and Korey Dyck deepen our understanding of joy by reading texts—in a broad sense. Sensenig reads Acts 16:25–34, bringing to readers her care for the Bible and for the church. Dyck reads history, his own family story and related artifacts, in order to mine insights about joy for us.

The next three articles explore joy from a vocational standpoint. Gilberto Pérez writes about joy out of his experience as a practitioner and teacher of social work. Sarah Thompson contributes thoughts about finding joy in the holy work of making justice. Carol Ann Weaver reflects on her life as a musician and on the relationship between joy and art.

The final contributions in the issue serve as summary and capstone. Anita Yoder Kehr's sermon states beautifully how joy is rooted in love, and how it in turn helps us open ourselves to suffering and sorrow. A letter written to *Vision* readers by the irrepressible Arlo Frech, from his farm straddling the US/Canada border, invites us to the joy of the Lord. Finally, we include the responses of nine *Vision* readers to our invitation to them to tell us about their resources for sustaining joy.

Perhaps I can only, with Arlo, wish you the joy of the Lord as you peruse these lovely and thought-provoking contributions.