

Editorial

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When I speak about *Vision* with people who are trying to place it in the spectrum of publications, the word I like to use is *thoughtful*. With each issue we seek to offer pastors and church leaders thought provoking articles on a theme from a variety of perspectives. But I think this issue on confession appeals as much to the heart as to the mind. As I worked with these articles, I found myself moved, sometimes to tears, sometimes to laughter,

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and always to compassion. Confession, it seems, is near the core of who we are as kingdom people and what we are about in the world, a core that embraces the heart as well as the mind, the affective as well as the cognitive.

In this issue we are deliberately blurring the definition of confession to include both confession of faith in God and confession to God of who we are in that relationship as well as in our relationships with others and our world. Some of the authors work with one of these aspects or the other, while several of them point out that these two “edges” of

confession, as Alan Krieder puts it, are integrally related and interdependent.

In this issue, we deal with confession as a practice of the church in a variety of ways. Some of the articles are foundational—dealing with biblical, theological, and historical issues of confession. Karl Koop reviews ways we have used and misused confessions of faith. Jacob Elias writes about how both confession of faith and confession of sin functioned in one of the biblical communities. Marcus Smucker works with a biblical basis for both individual and congregational disciplines of confession. David Tripp and Charles Hohenstein enlarge our horizon with

their description of confession and absolution in a variety of Christian traditions.

Other authors write about how the disciplines of confession function in contemporary contexts both in the church and in the world. Mario Higueros makes the connection between confessional “reflections” and the Central American conflict in which Mennonite believers struggle to figure out what it means to be faithful. Malinda Berry calls congregations in Canada and the United States to take another look at our race politics, to think about how we have been shaped by racism even as we have at times resisted it. Rachel Miller Jacobs tells funny and poignant stories of confession in family life and makes some profound observations about why we find confession hard and how freeing it can be. Janet Schmidt reflects on the place of confession in the healing work of restorative justice, and Melanie Zuercher interviews four Mennonite leaders to help us think about what role confession has in the world that has been shaped by the war on terrorism. Arthur Paul Boers reviews *Confession: Doorway to Forgiveness*, to which several of our authors refer.

Finally, we have three contributions that could be described in a variety of ways, but that I want to highlight here as artistic. I keep returning to Ann Hostetler’s poem because every time I read it I feel some of those caulked shut doors in my heart creaking open. Muriel Bechtel describes several services that were created to address various needs for confession. Michael King’s sermon helps us laugh and cry our way to a healthier regard for confession in our lives.

I am grateful to all the authors who have contributed to this issue. Their stories, questions, ideas, memories, and examples will, if we open our hearts and minds, help us and our congregations move toward more authentic confession—of who God is and who we are in the light of God’s redemptive love.