

# Editorial

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**W**e think and fret about the various aspects of leadership and power more than we talk about them openly, freely, and thoughtfully. At one point, as I was editing these essays, it occurred to me that I have never actually heard the word *power* used in any of the hiring processes in which I have participated over the years. Yet any employment interview, to say nothing of the many other activities that churches and institutions do on a regular basis, is indubitably colored by how we think about and engage power.

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dialogue: how might we nurture more generous discussion of these issues as we gather to be God's people with and for one another? Our writers, as writers are wont, were not always content to remain comfortably within these modest goals—and so you will also find fresh and creative approaches to the issues of power and leadership that point us beyond where we are to where God might be calling us to go.

I doubt that Mennonites struggle with leadership and power more than other denominations. But the various strands of our tradition have shaped the particular ways we struggle. The first articles in this issue deal with some of that history. We begin with the history of an idea, as Arnold Snyder leads us in reflecting on *Gelassenheit*. For me as for many others, this notion of yieldedness played a role in my journey toward claiming ministerial identity. There was a time when I simply rejected the idea as inappropriate

for Mennonite women. Later I began to see how empowering, and iconoclastic, the concept could be. Whether the word is mentioned or not, the spirituality of *Gelassenheit* lies beneath many of our struggles to understand what power is and what role it should take in Christian community. Snyder helps us understand what the concept did and—perhaps more importantly—did not mean for the sixteenth-century forbears who left their mark on us.

Steven Nolt and Brenda Hostetler Meyer also expand our awareness of how the past shapes our present. Two of the most significant challenges for our understanding of power are the way we structure our internal life and how we respond to our external world. Nolt writes a fascinating analysis of the revolutionary, but in some ways little noted, movement from bishops to conference ministers. He challenges some of our “in the box” thinking about relationship, ritual, hierarchy, and egalitarianism in ways that are important as we consider life in our congregations and conferences. Meyer describes a thwarted conversation between Guy F. Hershberger and J. Lawrence Burkholder on the issues of power raised by war and social responsibility. This conversation roams far beyond these two men, of course—figuring in some way in almost every conversation we have had about peace theology in the last fifty years. Minimally, it shadows any talk about the state between a Canadian Mennonite and an American Mennonite. Meyer, however, uses the concept of designated power to apply a gentle critique to both positions that can, I think, help us through that stalemate.

Regina Shands Stolfus’s sermon marks the transition into a series of essays that deal with some questions and concerns about leadership and power that arise in the active, everyday life of the church. Her powerful and provocative sermon sets the stage by reminding us that power and leadership are gifts of the Spirit—gifts we dare not dismiss as negative, gifts that Jesus showed us how to employ and enjoy for God’s purposes. Joseph Kotva addresses directly the powerlessness that pastors and other church leaders sometime feel and shares some practical insights into the ethical dynamics of the power that pastors have. Rebecca Slough looks carefully and thoughtfully at some issues of leading worship that we have sometimes overlooked. Her analysis is especially helpful in transcending what we sometimes call rather hopelessly

the “worship wars.” Beyond the questions of style and technology are some principles to which we should give serious and prayerful attention. Sally Weaver Glick, a veteran of substantial Quaker and Mennonite “processing,” who has lived to tell the tale, offers thoughtful guidelines for addressing those knotty problems of who gets his or her way in congregational discernment. Her article is an intriguing example of Mennonite peace ecclesiology—of putting our money where our mouth is on peace at home.

And then there’s Arlo Frech—our curmudgeonly commentator from (barely) North Dakota. Arlo helps us take a lighter view of some of these issues—and who better? I did not know exactly where to put Arlo’s letter, but smack dab in the middle of the practical church section finally seemed most appropriate.

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The final articles in the issue give us new categories with which to move into the future. Christopher Marshall uses Paul’s correspondence with Corinth to ground us in a biblical vision of leadership and power. In many ways, his article is a companion piece to Joseph Kotva’s description of the paradox of pastoral power. In the interplay of these

two articles, paradox and tension become possibilities—the very heart of God at work—rather than the negatives we sometimes assume they are. Irma Fast Dueck challenges us to see power as energy rather than commodity. In contrast to the stinginess with which we often guard power, power shared generously and distributed widely expands and engages us with abundance for all. Ray Gingerich goes straight to the heart of Mennonite peace theology to turn upside down some of our assumptions about violence and power. His bold assertion that nonviolence is power is one that our war-weary world is waiting to hear.

When I conceptualized this issue, I confess that I was thinking mostly about the church internal. But I am grateful that our writers, Gingerich and others, had a wider vision—a vision that integrates the church gathered and the church in mission. Both the church and the world will benefit from these thoughtful reflections.