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## Editor's Notes

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## Editors' Notes

D'Esta Love and Stuart Love

**W**e have entitled this issue *Cruciform Living*. *Cruciform* literally means “being in the shape of the cross” and refers historically to the architectural form of churches that were built in the shape of a cross, especially during the medieval period and in the Orthodox traditions. From this basic structural notion evolved the identification and application of *cruciform* to a way of life. We are to be cruciform Christians and cruciform churches disciplined by Christ.

Recognition must be given to Leonard Allen of Lipscomb University for his excellent book *The Cruciform Church: A Call for Biblical Renewal*, first published by ACU press in 1989 and revised in 2007, supplying us with a derived understanding that can be applied to those who hold *restoration theology* favorably. In other words Allen’s book, in both its original and revised versions, serves us as a basis for seeing cruciform behavior as essential to expressing our love for God and our love for others as the heart of Christian living. We believe this simple, profound, and obvious biblical notion requires restoration in an age of consumerism, materialism, inequality, and exploitation of the poor driven by an accommodation to secularism. All too often modern church practices bypass a substantive application of cruciform living that results, whether wittingly or unwittingly, in the use of this profound symbol as a spiritual veneer to justify “success.” In chapter 4 of the 1989 edition (page 113) Allen asserts that the “most pressing question facing Churches of Christ today is the question, ‘Can we recover the “word of the cross” in its biblical fullness?’” This issue of *Leaven* is devoted in a very small measure to the ongoing recovery of that quest.

Using Paul’s imagery, we are individually and communally temples in which the Spirit dwells to give glory to God (1 Cor 6.19–20; 3.16). Or as the apostle states in the letter to the Galatians, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2.19b–20 NRSV). Here, we believe, is the foundation, the heart of cruciform living.

Most of the articles in this issue depict avenues of seeing cruciform living for our time. We open with a piece by **JOHN BARTON**, who explores in the context of mission “how the Christian cross can be dangerous considering the ease and frequency with which the message is co-opted and used by people in power.” Next, **RICHARD BECK** demonstrates how “perfect love” (1 John 4.18) is greater than the “power of the devil” and can break the “slavery” to the “fear of death” (Heb 2.14–15). In a sermon, **TIM WILLIS** continues the biblical topic of fear by considering two competing assumptions. When biblical writers use “fear in a negative sense they assume that someone is afraid of what someone else or something else can do *to* them. This negative type of fear actually has its effect whenever believers do not possess enough of the positive type of fear. When they fear God and recognize His authority and love, that fear of God assuages their fear of other things.” The positive fear of God “includes an acknowledgement of His omnipotence, and that reminds them of the limited power of the other things they might fear.”

**SARA BARTON** provides a deeper meaning of spiritual formation as she emphasizes six ways through which cruciform spirituality connects our spiritual lives with our broken world: it gives us power; it is unpredictable, but it does have some predictability; it is prophetic; it costs; and it is within the gravitational pull of the cross. Barton’s piece is followed by two sermons by **JEN CHRISTY** and **BEN RIES**. Christy’s sermon beautifully leads us to appreciate the holy ground in “the thin places” of life where time stands still and we experience transcendence, that is, “existing somewhere between this life and the life to come.” Ries challenges us in

practical ways to go “outside the camp” (Heb 13.1–8) where we can meet and see Jesus in the lives of others who are suffering.

In a different vein, **MARKUS McDOWELL** reviews how the life of Martin Luther, the great Reformer, truly was cruciform in nature. **BEN LANGFORD** develops a theological approach to the nature of Christian ministry in the Gospel of Luke with its singular emphasis announcing the gospel to the poor. Finally, the issue closes with two liturgical pieces. **LEE MAGNESS** develops a reading of Mathew 16, and your editors share a scripture-reading worship service entitled “Redeemed by God’s Power through the Blood of the Cross,” held at the University Church of Christ in Malibu, California.

Moving to the future, we close 2015 with an issue emanating from the Pepperdine University Bible Lectures on the theme *Faith/Works*, a study of the book of James.

Keep *Leaven* in your prayers!

