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## Editors' Notes

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## Editors' Notes

D'ESTA LOVE AND STUART LOVE

Your editors wish to commend the patient and diligent work of **C. Robert Wetzel**, our guest editor for this issue. Dr. Wetzel is President of Emmanuel School of Religion, Johnson City, Tennessee and a member of the *Leaven* Editorial Board. He has chosen a cadre of authors that not only provide needed expertise for issues pertaining to conflict resolution in the church but also represent our various traditions. In addition, he was able to draw from the expertise of an outstanding New Testament scholar, Luke Timothy Johnson. We are grateful to him and to all who work so diligently to make *LEAVEN* a meaningful ministry to our readers.

Much has been written in recent years on the topic of resolving church conflict. Periodicals have devoted entire issues and there are some excellent books on the subject. Why, then, should **Leaven** be interested in contributing to this discussion?

At the center of this issue of *Leaven* is the recognition of the need for biblical models that can inform our approach to contemporary problems in the church. One can find many helpful articles that to one degree or another apply techniques developed by the social sciences. But like many techniques drawn from the social sciences, these may or may not be compatible with the heart of the gospel. Consequently, we attempted to focus both on models for resolving church conflict and on a hermeneutic that will move us forward in preventing divisive problems from spiraling out of control. Therefore we endeavored to develop a cohesive approach that moves from biblical insight and theological reflection to practical application.

We are grateful for the interview with **Luke Timothy Johnson** who discusses at length the approach he takes in his book, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church*. His careful study of the Book of Acts and other New Testament documents suggests ways of creating a community of discernment that can deal with potentially divisive issues before they lead to schism in the church. In his article, "Creating a Climate of Consensus," **Calvin Phillips** develops a similar line of approach but from his perspective as a veteran pastor. **Tim Kelly** writes from a historical perspective in his article, "Facing Issues—Making Decisions." He pleads for an approach to contemporary issues in churches of Christ that would avoid the divisions of the past. From the perspective of a church planter, **Tom Jones** and his student **Mike Decker** remind us that one does not escape divisive problems in a new church. Their article, "Growing Pains: Managing Conflict in Church Planting," grows out of their successful experiences as church planters.

**Bob Russell**, senior minister of the 14,000 member Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, writes about "Maintaining a Spirit of Harmony" in a church experiencing extraordinary growth. It is hard to argue with his conclusion that God blesses a harmonious church. **Charles Siburt** takes a few specific cases of church conflict to demonstrate that what is often portrayed as defending Scripture or principle may more likely be a problem of attitude and behavior. And thus he challenges us; "Be of One Mind... Anyway." With his wry sense of southern humor and sensibility, **James Street**, a gifted counselor and preacher talks about "Suffering Fools Lightly: A Confession." **Randy Lowry** of Pepperdine's Institute of Dispute Resolution writes from the standpoint of what they have learned from their work over the years. And thus he addresses the questio, "When Church Conflict Erupts What Do I Do?" **Mark Love** writes about living in peace in our churches from the perspective of Paul's Letter to the Romans.

We are especially pleased to include in this issue one of the most thorough bibliographies on dealing with conflict in the church. We are indebted to librarian **Tom Stokes** for his relentless work on this project. **Robert Hull** reviews Luke Timothy Johnson's book, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* and **Jack Holland** reviews *Character Forged from Conflict* by Gary Preston.