Editors’ Notes
D’Esta Love and Stuart Love

We are pleased to begin 2012, Leaven’s twenty-first year of publication, with an issue whose inception arose out of the Christian Scholars’ Conference at Pepperdine University in 2011. Under the caption Leaven Presents, Kindy Pfremmer De Long led a study session at the conference on the Gospel of Luke. What was presented and then responded to by others serves as the core of this issue. Moving beyond those key contributions, Dr. De Long has assembled an assortment of other materials about the Gospel of Luke including articles, sermons, a liturgical piece and a poem. Your editors have added a book review to close out the issue.

Dr. De Long teaches New Testament in the Religion Division of Seaver College at Pepperdine University. Her doctoral studies were done at Notre Dame in the field of Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity with Luke-Acts as one of her areas of specialization. Upon completion of her doctoral studies she became the first woman to hold a tenure-track position in biblical studies at Pepperdine University. She has written frequently for Leaven. We are grateful that she has consented to serve as the guest editor of this issue. Dr. De Long is not only an accomplished scholar; she is also a faithful churchperson who worships and serves alongside her fellow family members at the Conejo Church of Christ in Thousand Oaks, California.

Let us conclude our remarks by previewing Leaven’s topics for the remainder of the year. Kathy Pulley, Missouri State University, will guest edit an issue on the progress of women’s inclusion among a cappella Churches of Christ. She has gathered a number of church stories which recount the journeys various congregations have made. Cliff Barbarick, Abilene Christian University, is working on an issue on 1 Peter. His efforts also had their inception in another Leaven Presents study session at the 2011 Christian Scholars’ Conference. Finally, we will have an issue growing out of the 2012 Pepperdine University Bible Lectures on Romans 5–8. Please continue to pray for Leaven.

Guest Editor’s Notes
Kindalee Pfremmer De Long

Like portraits that use different angles, brushstrokes and colors to depict the same subject, the four Gospels each present a distinctive view of Jesus. The Gospel of Luke paints a portrait of Jesus that illuminates the inclusivity of divine redemption and salvation. Reaching beyond the usual suspects, the kingdom inaugurated by Jesus extends to embrace even those who seem—from a flawed human perspective—least worthy to receive it: the poor, the disabled, lepers, tax collectors, children, women, Samaritans and Gentiles.

Jesus acts out a metaphor for the wide reach of the good news in Luke 5.1–11. After using Peter’s fishing boat, anchored slightly offshore, as a platform from which to teach a crowd, he tells Peter, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Peter hesitates, because he has already fished all night without success, but obeys Jesus. When he, James and John catch more fish than all their boats can hold, Peter falls at Jesus’ feet in amazement. Jesus explains, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” The implication is clear: Jesus expects his disciples to catch people in deep water, in places they wouldn’t naturally go. His teaching here aligns with his earlier proclamation that he brings “good news to the poor…release to the captives and recovery of
sight to the blind” (Luke 4.18). Luke seems to be playing with language: to “catch” people in deep water is really to set them free or—in the words of Mary’s hymn—to fill them when they are empty and lift them up when they are low (Luke 1.52). When the kingdom arrives, comfort is shaken up on behalf of the oppressed.

Writers in this issue of Leaven explore the inclusive kingdom in various ways. Christopher Chesnutt, in a homecoming sermon on Jesus’ own homecoming sermon in Luke 4, reflects on how the reach of gospel surprises us. Bradley Griffin provides a creative liturgical reading that considers the care Jesus showed to women, most of whom had little voice or agency in his day. Charles and Darlene Coulston offer moving testimonies of modern children “caught” by the kingdom and so lifted out of oppressed lives on the streets of Nairobi, Kenya. Andy Wall provides insight into how artists and ministers can join forces to communicate Luke’s “shake-up” to an American middle-class congregation.

Meals are another key theme in Luke. As Robert Karris has famously put it, in this gospel, “Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal.”1 And when he’s not, he’s often talking about food. This theme corresponds closely with the kingdom’s inclusivity. We find a good example of this connection when Jesus challenges his disciples to invite to feasts not those who can repay but rather “the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind” and to go even further—into deep water—by taking their invitation out to “the roads and lanes,” so that their master’s feast will be filled (Luke 14.13, 23).

David Matson studies the meal imagery in Luke from a distinctive angle—as a guest—helpfully distinguishing between parallel and personalized eating and highlighting the barrier-breaking significance of Jesus’ command to the seventy-two disciples to eat and drink whatever their hosts provide. Three responses draw out the implications of Matson’s work.2 S. Scott Bartchy highlights the significance of some of Matson’s key exegetical and contextual points while also extending these points further. Julia Fogg considers ethnic identities and eating in churches today, while Heather Holland offers a responsive sermon on how the vulnerability advocated by Jesus for his disciples mirrors the vulnerability of God.

Luke is also a historian, who has “carefully investigated everything from the beginning” in order to provide to his readers “an orderly account of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection” (Luke 1.3). Deborah Prince examines Luke’s historiographic strategies by investigating comparative ancient sources in order to illuminate how Luke provides reliable testimony to the truth of Jesus’ resurrection. Luke’s history seeks to strengthen the faith of his readers. Lee Magness analyzes Luke’s “little” apocalypse in this light, arguing that this passage serves the purpose of exhortation rather than expectation.

Finally, a poem by John Struloff shines the spotlight on Luke himself, as the author has been traditionally understood, reflecting creatively on how a doctor might feel about the Great Physician.

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2. David Matson presented a longer version of this paper in the session “Leaven Presents the Gospel of Luke: A Table for All People” at the 31st annual Christian Scholars’ Conference, Malibu, California. The three responses were originally presented orally in this session.