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Editor's Notes

Stuart Love
slope@pepperdine.edu

D'Esta Love
dlove@pepperdine.edu

Nathan Bills
nbills80@gmail.com

Carol Shoun
carol.shoun@gmail.com

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Editors' Notes

D'Esta Love and Stuart Love

Your editors, filled with gratitude, thank Nathan Bills and Carol Shoun for their oversight of this issue of *Leaven* that honors Paul and Kay Watson, who have served *Leaven* faithfully for over twenty years. It was Paul who convinced us to edit *Leaven*. It was Paul and Kay who visited us in our home, at the Pepperdine University Bible Lectures, and at Milligan College and Emmanuel Christian Seminary and encouraged us on our journey as your editors and in our efforts to reach out to Christian Churches and Disciples of Christ. It was Paul that we turned to so often to edit issues and write articles. Never did he say no. Then to realize how these two gifted devoted servants of Christ have served churches and others underscores why they should be honored and all should know some of the contributions they have made.

At every turn, Paul and Kay live by faith, do not lose heart, but commit themselves to the Lord Jesus. Paraphrasing the words of the Apostle Paul, “Paul and Kay are constrained by the love of Christ as they have persuaded others and have allowed light to shine out of darkness.”

Also, we believe that Nathan Bills and Carol Shoun are the logical choices to put this issue together. Perhaps, no persons better than they know firsthand the broad sweep of the Watsons' contributions and who best could capture the depth, width, and height of their lives in one issue of *Leaven*. Thank you.

Dedication to the Life of the Local Church

Nathan Bills and Carol Shoun

In this issue of *Leaven*, we explore the theme of local church ministry by honoring the legacy of Paul and Kay Watson. The following reflections and essays are written by those who bear appreciative witness to the faithful service of this Christian couple. Paul and Kay have dedicated their time, love, and spiritual gifts for the last three decades to the Cole Mill Road congregation in Durham, North Carolina. And through their missionary travels and a host of teaching opportunities, their influence has been felt by those far beyond their home church.

In letters to his missionary churches, the apostle Paul often encouraged the Christians to “imitate me, as I imitate Christ” (1 Cor 11.1; cf. 1 Cor 4.16; Phil 3.17; 4.9; 2 Thess 3.7–9). Many of us might shy away from such boldness, but we can all think of people in our lives of whom we would declare, “Imitate them, because they imitate Christ.” They are followers *among* us, *ahead* of us, who embody the way of Christ *for* us in our day. They offer tangible, rooted expressions of the reality of Jesus's life that provoke those around them to reimagine the world scripturally. Paul and Kay are such people.

This is not to say that they are faultless. A few years ago I (Nathan) was part of a preaching rotation with Paul and Patrick Messer. One series of sermons we worked on together surveyed the biblical metanarrative. When it came time to preach on the topic of sin, Patrick and I joked that Paul should definitely preach this theme, because he had had much more practice! Joking aside, the church does well to give space to reflect attentively on the examples of seasoned Christian leaders like Paul and Kay precisely because they bear on their bodies the scars and graces of “Christ in them, the hope of glory” (Col 1.27).

The contributions begin with a brief tribute to Paul and Kay offered by two longtime members of Cole Mill Road, **GAIL McCORMICK** and **BOB JONES**. The following two essays, by **PATRICK MESSER** and **AMANDA PITTMAN**, inquire into the dispositions that sustain the steadfast ministry of the Watsons. The next three

essays, by **BRUCE BIRCH**, **JOHN JACKSON**, and **MARK MATSON**, consider biblical texts about leadership in ministry. These articles discuss truths that have borne much fruit in the examples of Paul and Kay. **RANDY HARRIS** reflects on how an underappreciated aspect of church ministry—retirement from paid pastoral ministry—provides needed perspective to those engaged in the full-time work. **AARON METCALF** rounds out the theme of the issue by giving an imaginative sermonic meditation on the Apostle Paul’s charge to his younger apprentice: “Preach the word in season and out of season.” **LEE MAGNESS** closes the issue with a liturgical contribution. Through all these offerings, we hope to fulfill the exhortation of the book of Hebrews: “Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith” (Heb 13.7 NRSV).

CAROL SHOUN SERVES ON THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF *LEAVEN* AND IS A MEMBER OF THE COLE MILL ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST IN DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA. SHE SUPPORTED THE LOVES AS THE FIRST COPY EDITOR OF *LEAVEN* WHEN THEY TOOK OVER AS EDITORS AND, AS A GESTURE OF APPRECIATION TO PAUL AND KAY FOR THEIR MINISTRY, GRACIOUSLY SERVED AS PRIMARY COPY EDITOR FOR THIS ISSUE (CAROL.SHOUN@GMAIL.COM).

NATHAN BILLS IS A THD CANDIDATE IN OLD TESTAMENT AT DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL. FROM 2009 TO 2012, HE AND HIS FAMILY WORSHIPPED AND SERVED WITH THE COLE MILL ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST. THEY NOW RESIDE IN TULLAHOMA, TENNESSEE (NBILLS80@GMAIL.COM).

MESSAGES FOR PAUL AND KAY WATSON CAN BE SENT TO PAULWATSON1112@GMAIL.COM.

