

Central to Christian expression is the conviction that through Jesus Christ, God has brought salvation to the world. We preach sermons, lead Bible studies, and remind others about this salvation as we work and serve in the church. And for all of us, undoubtedly, salvation is also a personal longing.

As Christians who are located at different places across the theological spectrum, we will not always use the same language to express our convictions about how God saves. Our language and our expressions will be influenced by factors such as our religious upbringing, educational formation, life experiences, and present

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circumstances. In our time, we do well to recognize the diversity among us. Equally important is that we recognize the identifiable threads that hold us together.

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in scripture. In his investigation of Paul, Tom Yoder Neufeld observes that salvation has a wide range of meanings, and that God's ways of working cannot be limited by our finite imaginations. Lydia Neufeld Harder's study of the witness of women to the cross and empty tomb likewise points to the multifaceted mystery of God's salvation, and she encourages us to listen to scriptural voices that have often been ignored.

The contributions by Thomas Finger and Rachel Reesor-Taylor take stock of the various images of salvation and atonement that have emerged in the Christian church, and they also examine those images that have resonated in Anabaptist communities. Both authors observe that Mennonites have been deeply shaped by theological expressions of the wider Christian world, and they

note further that Mennonites have made their own unique contribution to the church's understanding of salvation.

The next several articles illustrate how our various views of salvation are manifest in the life of the church. Claire Ewert Fisher reminds us that proclaiming salvation is not easy work, and that our first task is to listen for the stories and metaphors that communicate God's intentions most clearly. April Yamasaki makes the striking observation in her sermon that knowing something about salvation will make a difference in how we live—in other words, our theology really does matter. Marilyn Houser Hamm reminds us that much of our theology is most easily recognizable in the songs that we sing. And Jose Ortiz brings into view the degree to which our understandings of salvation are dependant on our cultural background and life experiences.

The final two contributions in this issue focus on matters surrounding evangelism and witness. Some of us may wonder how our local congregations may become more inviting to those who have not grown up with the church. Perhaps, in having been influenced by our multireligious context, we also harbour feelings of ambivalence about the Christian confession that Jesus is the only way to God. Jim Loepp Thiessen shares some of his experiences of leading people to faith. He indicates that evangelism is not a matter of following a particular formula but has much to do with prayer, patience, cultivating relationships, and our openness to the Spirit's leading. Wilbert Shenk develops a theology that speaks to how Christians might relate to the other religions, and he concludes that if indeed we have experienced salvation, we have no right to withhold our witness.

The articles that appear in the following pages do not exhaust what we could say about salvation in Christ, but I am grateful for the wide-ranging way the various authors have contributed their perspectives on this topic. I trust that readers of *Vision* will also benefit from these thoughtful and thought-provoking reflections.