# Editorial

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I have been thinking about and researching small harms and their repair for about a decade and a half, and every time I talk about this project, at least one person asks, "But what about abuse?"

I mention this at the beginning of my editorial to remind you of the theme of this issue of *Vision*: small harms and their repair. This issue does not intend to address trauma, abuse, sexualized violence, war, murder, or systemic oppressions of various kinds. Of course, these realities matter and deserve attention; such harms are both all too frequent and never desirable, right, or just.

Yet what *all* of us routinely experience is everyday relational harm—the small, often-overlooked hurts that linger in homes, friendship groups, workplaces, churches, communities, and perhaps even in brief one-off interactions with strangers. Though not catastrophic, these moments disrupt our sense of well-being and our relationships with ourselves, others, and God. Thus, one reason to focus on small harms is their ubiquity.

Another is that centering small harms points us toward a both/and perspective, which we can easily overlook when we think only of big harms. Small harms make it impossible to sustain the illusion that we are only ever "victims" while others are only ever "perpetrators"—at the small scale, we are all both.

In addition, moments of crisis are the worst times to gain skill and practice something difficult, including the difficult work of repair. Teachers, parents, coaches, and pastors all know that we learn new skills best when we are not panicking. Catastrophe does not usually elicit wisdom, discernment, or self-management. Focusing on small harms and their repair allows us to practice recognizing and remediating harm in times of lower stress and greater bandwidth, which gives us some hope of doing better in times of higher stress and less bandwidth.

Finally, perhaps ironically, we are unlikely to do better at addressing large harms until we can recognize small harms as genuinely harmful, find ways to remediate them appropriately for their scale, and become better and wiser at differentiating among varieties and intensities of harm. If harm is viewed either as nothing at all or a complete catastrophe, the temptation to deny even the big harms can be overwhelming when, for whatever reason, those harms do not meet our personal or collective catastrophe thresholds. When we begin paying closer attention to the less-intense part of the harm

spectrum, however, it is harder to pass off a big thing as a small one or as nothing at all. We know better.

This issue of *Vision* opens with an article by theologian-pastor Tim Peebles that proposes a conceptual map for categorizing "negative happenings" along a spectrum of intensity, from simple hindrances to severe horrors. By distinguishing between subjective impacts, objective outcomes, and the degree of moral agency involved, Peebles illustrates how misclassifying events distorts both personal and pastoral responses. Conflict mediator and consultant Betty Pries argues that peace theology must address the close-to-home dynamics of small harms rather than focusing exclusively on large-scale war. Grounding conflict resolution in a divine identity, she outlines several actionable practices for living out Anabaptist peace theology on the small scale. Pastor and activist Jonny Rashid writes a vulnerable personal reflection on the ways even "those who are working toward noble causes they believe in" can and do cause harm. Conrad Grebel University College professor Carol Penner follows this up with an invitation to spiritual maturity in the form of humility, *Gelassenheit* (yieldedness), and a posture of looking for the growth in love made possible when we bump up against our own and others' less-than-ideal behaviors or attitudes.

Two Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary colleagues, Gilha Lee and Malinda E. Berry, tackle biblical and theological resources for thinking about harm and its repair, including the repair of small harms. Lee writes about Paul's theology of reconciliation, which addresses the most unequal power dynamic possible: the divine-human one. Yet this reconciliation was achieved through genuine reciprocity that neither reinforced hierarchy nor led to unilateral surrender, a reality that helps us imagine how reciprocity might also unfold in unequal human relationships. Drawing on Julian of Norwich's concept of "oneing," Berry advocates for a colorful spectrum of salvation that embraces both personal and collective healing, encouraging faith communities to address daily slights through compassionate, incremental grace.

MDiv student Catherine Bergs Mohr invites us to reflect on the unintended consequences of overly avoidant liturgical strategies such as eliminating "sin-talk," abstracting confession, and banning physical touch. Though it is not their goal, these strategies can disenfranchise trauma survivors, erase moral agency, and enforce white, middle-class norms of decency. Bergs Mohr points out that, in an effort to do good for those who have experienced great harm, we may inadvertently undermine our collective capacity to recognize the small harms every one of us perpetrates and lose the opportunity to build remediation muscles for both the everyday and the extraordinary. My own essay makes the case for what I call "small non-moral painful experiences": things that, while they hurt, are not wrong. Particularly if we are unable to

claim that such experiences exist, we may seek to remediate them with strategies that cannot succeed, looking for apologies when what we really need is reconnection. Pastor and writer Joanna Harader offers a contemplative, artistic prayer practice to help us discern and process small harms. A variety of church leaders write brief essays on the kaleidoscope of scriptures they return to again and again as they seek to repair harms both small and large. The issue closes with a prayer by Mary Schertz, seeking, by God's grace and in God's love, to practice forgiveness as a way of life.

To say that I am thrilled with this issue is a vast understatement. I hope you, too, will find it enlightening, challenging, thought-provoking, and encouraging as you seek to recognize and remediate the small harms you encounter in family, friendship, congregational, and work groups. And I pray that good work with small harms will help us all do better with big ones.