

Three Hundred Years of Pietism, Anabaptism and Pluralism*

Scott Holland

1. How do you describe the Church of the Brethren to people who ask you about your church? What are its core beliefs, as you understand them?
2. Holland describes a set of pictures in his office of people who exemplify core Brethren values, even if they're not Brethren. Name the people you look to as embodiments of the faith and tell why they are important to you.
3. Holland says, "Jews are good at the cultivation of particular identities and so are Brethren and Mennonites." Even though you identify with the particular tenets of the Church of the Brethren, what do you have in common with non-Brethren, even non-Christians? How did the church in Paul's time deal with the competing claims of Jewish Christians and Greek and Roman Christians?
4. The Brethren sometimes say we have no creed but the New Testament. What does that mean to you? Rather than a creed of salvation or eternal life, Holland describes the creed of the New Testament as a revelation about Christ and a theology of redemptive love. What do you think a "theology of redemptive love" is?
5. The founders of the Brethren movement lived at a time when the state dictated a person's membership in the church, a practice they soundly rejected. Where do Brethren stand today on issues of religious education in schools, public displays of religious messages and art, and the foundation of the country as a Christian country? Do we practice a type of force in religion in our own congregations? That is, do we drive people out or make the church an uncomfortable place if they believe differently?
6. Holland points out that the Brethren focus as much on Jesus' life as his death and resurrection, and as much on Jesus' work in this world as in the next. What difference do these emphases make in how we understand the mission of Jesus?