

# Crossings

*Michaelmas 2011*

*With this edition, we introduce our new newsletter editor, Rev. Dr. Marcus Felde. Chances are, you've already read something by him (maybe a Sabbathology or a Thursday Theology), or you've heard (and been inspired by) a presentation by him at one of our conferences (also posted in our web site)....But, rather than **tell** you any more about him, let him introduce himself below.*

## *C* is for *Si*

*"Porque el Hijo de Dios, Cristo Jesús, que nosotros, Silvano, Timoteo y yo, proclamamos entre vosotros, no fue sí y no, sino que en él se realizó el sí."*

Full disclosure: If someone spoke those words to me, I would have no clue what they were talking about. I know barely enough Spanish to recognize the word "sí," which I know means "Yes." "Ja." "Oui." "Да." "Mmm hmm." "Yeah."

The NRSV of 2 Corinthians 1:19 reads:

*For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not "Yes and No"; but in him it is always "Yes."*

As I walked through the doorway, late to a Crossings Board meeting last August, someone called out "Say yes." I obliged. Unwittingly, I had agreed to write the Crossings newsletter.

*Albrecht Durer*

*St. Michael  
Slaying the  
Dragon*



Which is not entirely regrettable from my point of view. I like word games, so a chance to decide what "C" stands for has been on my bucket list. More to the point, I love Crossings for how it has held my feet to The Fire during a longish span of ministry. I probably owe to Crossings as much as to my seminary training my consciousness of and attentiveness to the most important thing. The people who have led Crossings have encouraged me never to forget the "one thing needful" (Jesus to Martha). Both the theological thing and the actual thing, God's love for us in Christ.

Jesus Christ is not a mixture of "no" and "yes," but the inimitable, unconditional, unequivocal, inspirational, indomitable, palpable, consequential "YES" of God to sinners, while we were yet sinners.

So, yes, if I can assist others who are assisting others to hear and tell the Good News about Jesus in such a way as to make the yes audible and not let it be drowned out by the no, I'll try. For a while. This time around, come play with me as I fool around with the letters in Crossings, my new toy, teasing out a little news/good news from each of them.

## *R is for Are*

In English, “are” declares. Ties subjects to their predicates. Curiously, the word is the singular form of the second person verb “to be,” but the plural form of all three persons. Perfect for consequential real time dialogues between ourselves and Jesus.

“Are” also asks: “**Are** you the Christ?” “**Are** you the one who is to come?” “**Are** we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” (He denied only the latter.) Jesus uses it as well: “**Are** you still without understanding?” But, happily, “Blessed **are** the eyes that see what you see.”

Preachers predicāte (G. *predigen*, to preach). It’s what we do. If we are faithful to Scripture, we will predicate of God what is revealed to us in Jesus Christ. (“He who has seen me has seen the Father.”) And that will be Good News. We will expatiate on “Christ crucified,” not merely (thank you very much, 1 Corinthians 1:20-25) how wise or strong our God is. As Fred Danker reminded me recently, the New Testament term that corresponds to what we do from pulpits is either “proclaim” or “evangelize” (tell the Good News).

If we want to avoid being preachy (ever a pejorative!) we must discern, amid all the predication going on in the Bible under one form and then another, the witness being made to one who is the Word of God. Sometimes it is clearer than other times. Peter predicated prettily: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.” Thomas, too: “My lord and my God!”

And we must be as clear about whatever the Bible says about us brothers and sisters, children of the first Adam, both the law and the Gospel. “You are dust.” But, by the grace of God, “Here are my mothers and brothers and sisters!”

The Crossings Method, a way of performing theologically astute pericope exegesis, is only a humble tool for keeping our predicates straight. I hope that if you have not learned to use that tool, you will soon.

And make use of the Sabbatheologies piling up on our website. A course in the method will be offered at our pre-conference in January, about which more below. Learn to sift through the Bible’s predicates carefully, to the joy and edifying of God’s holy people.

## *O is for Owe*

“Owe no one anything, except to love one another.” Pauline wit; and the basis for Martin Luther’s paradoxical theses in **The Freedom of the Christian**: “A Christian is perfectly free lord of all, subject to no one.” (“Owe no one anything.”) And “A Christian is perfectly dutiful subject of all, subject to all.” (“... except to love one another.”)

One reason for the existence of Crossings is our concern that many Christians stumble over the obligations of the law of God, mistaking its strictures for rungs on a ladder to God. On the other hand, we fret over the proclaiming of Gospels which disconnect people from God’s mission in the world. We do not want to be hearers of the word only, and not doers, “all blessed up and nowhere to go.” So the six-step method helps us articulate the connections between our faith and our daily life. Theology is tasked, we believe, with **gracefully** connecting the dots of the oughts and the nots with the grace in which we live.

*SS is for* . . . (can we leave them alone for the moment?)

## *I is for I*

May I introduce myself? Born in South Dakota, I grew up in Kentucky, lived in a paragraph of places. Undergraduate studies at four colleges. Seminex ‘75. Papua New Guinea missionary fourteen years. Pastor of three congregations in Indiana: Terre Haute, Olean, and Indianapolis, where I have been at Bethlehem since 2007. D.Min. from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago Divinity School. Participated in the Lutheran World Federation Worship and Culture study from 1994-1997.

I have been ELC, ALC, LCMS, AELC, LCA, ELCA, yet was ordained in the GLC, or Gutnius Lutheran Sios -Papua New Guinea.

I have written Sabbatheologies, and serve on the Crossings Board. Published an article about Mark, “Jesus Victor,” with a novel hypothesis. I’m obsessed with a personal theory about the Lord’s Prayer. Also have theories about some other things. Don’t get me started. At my church, I have two Bible studies “by juxtaposition” in which we compare and contrast our own faith and lives, and Scripture, with short stories we read out of the New Yorker. Good stuff.

I love to preach, love being a Lutheran pastor, love music, love Christine and my family (four married children, five young grandchildren, in-laws), love to travel, play violin, enjoy books and movies and researching the family tree, and am concerned about the Cincinnati Reds and Indianapolis Colts.

I can’t wait to offer, with Cathy Lessman, a pre-conference workshop on using the Crossings method to do Theologically Astute Pericope Exegesis.

I, I, I, I, and yet (per 1 Corinthians 15:10): “by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them [*kidding!*]-- though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.”

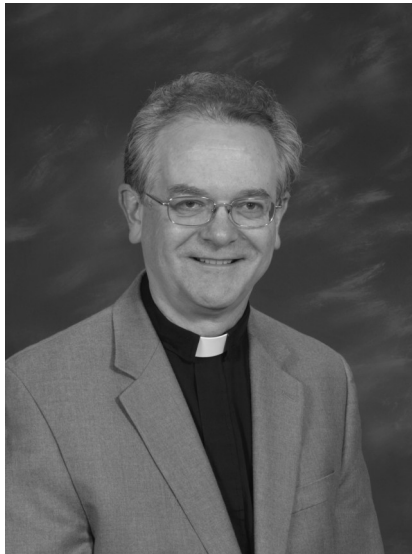
## *N* is for *en*

The Greek preposition *εν*, “en,” gets a lot of use when the Apostle Paul wants to express the good news that the Good News is not just theory; Christ did not just explain things better. We actually factually get baptized “**into** Christ,” and remain “**in** Christ.” He is our address. Our zip code.

Not that we are no longer in the world. Jesus rubs that in in John 17. But while we remain in the world, we also remain in the Word, commissioned and charged with bringing in the sheaves. For the fields are white unto harvest. The righteousness and peace and joy which we know are not for us alone.

And because we are in Christ, we are one with one another. That’s not just community, that’s communion.

## *G* is for *Gee*



*Crossings new newsletter editor*

I don’t know whether they still sell “gee haw whimmydiddles” at the shop in Berea, Kentucky. It is a child’s toy, a stick with a series of notches on one side and a tiny propeller nailed to one end. You take another stick, rub it back and forth on the notches, and the propeller goes around and around. It’s called a “gee haw whimmydiddle” because, well, you tell a mule to go right or left by saying “gee” or “haw.” If you stroke the notches from left to right the propeller goes clockwise; if right to left, marvelously, it turns and goes counter clockwise!

“Gee” = “right.”

I remember the first time I was addressed by a clerk in Papua New Guinea with the Australian form of the question about whether I was being served, whether I was taken care of: “Are you right?” I was supposed to either accept the offer of help or, if I didn’t need any help, simply reply “I’m right.”

Right. Well, you get used to language. I got used to saying “I’m right.” But every time I said it I would think, that’s not entirely true, and even if it were true it would be boasting, and that’s not right. One is never “all right.” One is often wrong.

Yet there is another rightness, another righteousness, which is true about us, a righteousness which makes us “right as rain.” An alien righteousness, true, a

righteousness which is not our own. See Romans 3:26—“he himself is righteous, and he makes righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Gee, the Gospel is hiding under every stone! Or do you find what you are looking for?

Last, not least:

## *SSS is for \$\$\$*

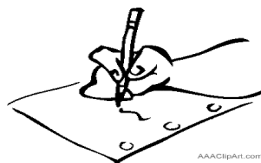
Sorry if I got my acrostic a little out of order, but it's nice to have three of those just in time to make “the pitch.” If you care, the dollar sign probably originated as a symbol for *pesos*. The “s” worked its way down to where it was placed atop the “p.” The world's equivalent of the church's *chi rho* (XP)?

Crossings has been the beneficiary of, and still lives off of, the money which you have sent us in the past after we send you the newsletter. I want to encourage that habit. Or ask you to get in it. I don't know you as well as previous editors of the newsletter, but may I repeat what I know they have said in the past: If you keep sending us money, it will enable us to do the things we do, to keep one another conscious of the Good (understatement) News.

The Board has a few expenses when we meet to conspire about conferences and publications, although we thriftily eat around Cathy Lessmann's own table. We have other costs associated with just staying in touch. And if you send more than you have in the past, we will try to raise our game and make good use of the \$\$\$.

Now, good Cathy Lessmann is going to use the rest of this newsletter to fill you in on a terrific opportunity, which very few ought to miss. We have always had good conferences before, but this looks to be really special.

*Marcus Felde*



## *A Note from Cathy Lessmann*

Marcus is not kidding! Everything about our upcoming conference is remarkable (as in, something to talk about), and I am excited! First, the topic is extremely timely. How often have we heard discipleship referred to as “doing what Jesus would do,” as if, if we only tried hard enough and were obedient enough, we could make ourselves into pretty good disciples. I know Steve Kuhl will be stressing a different approach, one based on Jesus' invitation to “come, die with me.” (See synopsis, opposite page.)

Second, and equally remarkable, is the lineup of speakers coming: Mark Mattes will evaluate contemporary views of discipleship; Kathryn Kleinhans will discuss discipleship in a wired world; Bishop Martin Wells will discuss discipleship as a church executive. The list goes on, with Robert Kolb, Matthew Becker, Steven Kuhl. One speaker, remarkably, is coming all the way from South Africa – Felix Meylahn. (See back page for list of speakers and their topics.)

As if the conference weren't enough, we are also offering a pre-conference day with two different tracks. The first, led by Marcus and myself, will focus on learning, practicing, and using the Crossings six-step method. It remains fundamental to all we do, so if you don't know it yet, this is for you.

For those who are already proficient with the method, the other track will be rewarding. In the morning, Jerry Burce will do a crossing on the Gospel of Mark. He did this at our 2011 seminar on the Gospel of Matthew and captivated us. In the afternoon, three Bonhoeffer scholars, Richard Bliese, Matthew Becker, and Steven Kuhl, will lead a conversation on **The Thought and Challenge of Bonhoeffer**. What could be more apropos to the topic of discipleship?

Now finally, my request: Please come to the conference. Bring someone with you. Help us advertise. We don't have much of a budget, we need your help. Our web site has downloadable flyers and brochures you can print and disseminate, or ask me and I'll send you some. Help us find donors who will underwrite seminary students so they can join us, free.

Thanks ahead of time,

Cathy

## Crossings Fourth International Conference

# The Gospel-Given Life: Discipleship Revisited

January 22-25, 2012

Belleville, Illinois

## Pre-Conference Synopsis

The Pre-Conference offers two different tracks which will run simultaneously.

### Track A: You *Can* Handle the Truth

Note that this actually begins Sunday evening, at 7:00 pm with the following introduction by Jerome Burce: **Setting the Foundation: How Distinguishing God's Law and God's Gospel brings Jesus' Full Benefits to Bear on Real Lives in the Real World.** In short, why/how is a law-gospel approach helpful/necessary?

Then, all Monday will be dedicated to learning and practicing the six-step method, and making the connection to daily life. Marcus Felde and Cathy Lessmann will lead these sessions, with help from Sabbatheology writers.

### Track A Schedule

Sunday 7:00 pm Introduction by Jerome Burce  
Monday 9:00 am Morning Prayer  
9:30 Learn the Six-Step Method  
12:00 Lunch  
1:00 Tracking and Crossing

### Track B: Is divided into half-day sessions:

In the morning, Jerry Burce will cross the Gospel of Mark. In the afternoon, three Bonhoeffer scholars, Steve Kuhl, Richard Bliese, and Matthew Becker will discuss **The Thought and Challenge of Bonhoeffer.** We anticipate that Bonhoeffer's views of discipleship will set the stage for the conference topic. You are encouraged to read the books and article on the opposite column in preparation for this session.

### Track B Schedule

Monday, 9:00 am Morning Prayer  
9:30-12:00 Jerome Burce **Patient Impatience and Other Astonishments: A Reading of St. Mark, Crossings-Style**  
12:00 Lunch  
1:00-5:00 **The Thought and Challenge of Bonhoeffer**  
Steven Kuhl, Richard Bliese, Matthew Becker

## Conference Synopsis

What does it mean "to follow Jesus" today? That question is often answered in self-help therapeutic and moralistic tones, as though "to follow" means to "imitate Jesus," as though he is a model of common sense behavior and sensibility, as though discipleship is rooted in the demands of law. But such a view of discipleship produces, at best, "anxious Christians" and, at worst, "presumptuous ones."

This conference revisits the theme of discipleship in order to recover both its biblical and gospel basis. "To follow Jesus" means first and foremost to trust him and what he promises to do to and for us as we make our way with him in church and world. It means to follow him to the cross. At the heart of discipleship, then, is the invitation "come and die with me," as Bonhoeffer observed. Exploring the counterintuitive power of this invitation to create a genuinely gospel-given life is what this conference is all about.

Note that the conference begins Monday night with dinner followed by the first keynote address.

### Suggested Reading for Conference Preparation:

- Robert W. Bertram, "'Bonhoeffer's Battles for Christendom: His 'Responsible Interpretation' of Barmen" in **A Time for Confessing**, Michael Hoy, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), p. 65-95.

- Phillip Cary, **Good News for Anxious Christians: Ten Practical Things You Don't Have to Do** (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010)

- Eric Metaxas, **Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010)

*Printing and mailing this quarterly is paid for by your gifts, thank you. If you are a reader but not yet a giver, we can wait. When you are ready to be both, we won't object.*

## Here are the speakers with the topics they will be presenting:

**Steven Kuhl** (*President of Crossings, Assistant Professor of Historical Theology at Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, WI*)

- **The Disciple and Christ: Faith Alone**
- **The Disciple and the Church: The Fellowship of Faith**
- **The Disciple and the World: The Hidden Discipline**

**Jerome Burce** (*Papua New Guinea Missionary; Parish Pastor; Author; Sabbathology Writer*)

- **Patient Impatience and Other Astonishments: A Reading of St. Mark, Crossings-style**
- **Setting the Foundation: How Distinguishing God's Law and God's Gospel brings Jesus' Full Benefits to Bear on Real lives in the Real World**

**Matthew Becker** (*Assistant Professor of Theology, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN; Author*)

- **The Thought and Challenge of Bonhoeffer**
- **The Theologian as a Disciple of Christ**

**Richard Bliese** (*President of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN*)

- **The Thought and Challenge of Bonhoeffer**

**Kathryn Kleinhans** (*Assistant Professor of Religion, Wartburg College, Dubuque, Iowa; Author*)

- **Tweet if You Love Jesus: Discipleship in a Wired World**

**Mark Mattes** (*Professor of Philosophy and Religion, Grand View College, Des Moines, Iowa, Author*)

- **Evaluating Contemporary Views of "Discipleship" in Light of Luther**

**Felix Meylahn** (*Pastor & Trainer of Lay Preachers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa*)

- **Following Jesus when things are Falling Apart: A Post-Liberation Perspective from South Africa**

**Robert Kolb** (*Mission Professor of Systematic Theology, Director of the Institute for Mission Studies, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO; Author; Co-editor of "The Book of Concord"*)

- **History of Discipleship in the Lutheran Tradition**

**Martin Wells** (*Bishop of Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod, ELCA*)

- **The Church Executive as Disciple of Jesus**

**Marcus Felde** (*Pastor; Author; Sabbathology Writer*)

- **You Can Handle the Truth (Crossings Method)**

**Lori Cornell** (*Pastor; Sabbathology Editor and Writer*)

- Preacher for the Eucharist Service

## Some Practical Matters:

**Costs:** Basically, the conference is \$250 and the pre-conference is \$100 per person. This includes not just the conference fee, but also hotel, meals, and receptions. Note, this is based on double occupancy. If you prefer a private room, the cost is higher. If you do not stay at the hotel, the price is lower. For those who cannot attend the entire conference, there are half day options for \$35.

**Location:** For the fourth time, we will be at Our Lady of the Snows Retreat Center in Belleville, Illinois, a short 15-minute drive from the St. Louis Arch and easy to get to from the interstates. The Center has a web site with good travel directions: <http://www.snows.org>.

**Transportation:** As mentioned above, drive directions can found on the Retreat's web site. If you fly into Lambert Airport, please take the metro rail to Belleville and give me (Cathy) a call, and I will shuttle you to the Retreat Center. I'll have more detailed directions when you give me your flight information.

**Worship:** The days will be interspersed by Morning, Midday, and Evening Prayer, and there will be a Eucharist service in the Cathedral Tuesday night with Lori Cornell preaching.