



# CROSSINGS

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

Christmas/ Epiphany 2017 | Vol 128 | From the Crossings Community

## Epiphany Showing Off

God the Father does what all new parents do. He shows off the baby. But he does it in a way no new parent can. One set of new parents in the neighborhood erected a pair of giant plywood storks in their front yard to show off to the neighborhood the arrival of their twins. Actually, as you know, it was the father who erected the plywood storks. His wife bore the twins. This was him saying, “See, I can do something too.” Mary had the baby. God lowers a star into the heavens, God’s front yard, to show off Jesus’ birth to the cosmos, God’s neighborhood.

Watching the cosmos are the Wise Men of our story. Part of the reason for showing off is to show others up. That is usually not attractive behavior when we engage in it. But what God’s showing off shows up in the wise men is their yearning, their desire for something more than what they discern about life and its meaning from plotting the movement of planets and stars. Call it a desire for God.

On Epiphany and the Sundays thereafter, the Gospel readings show us a number of things about Jesus. In so doing they also show us some things about ourselves and the difference God’s Promised One holds for us and our world.

## New Creation as God’s Completed Work

In the last issue I invited reader response to a Crossings glossary. I did not receive any corrections or additions, but I ran across one to offer from reading Paul Hinlicky’s latest book, *Luther vs. Pope Leo*. It bears on what I wrote about Luther’s two kingdoms, calling them “the realm of the first creation and the realm of the new.” In Hinlicky’s clever book he puts Martin Luther and Pope Leo in purgatory together with the assignment of hashing out their differences.

Hinlicky draws on Luther’s works and the Confutation for much of their dialogue. He introduces passages into the text from documents



## Give a Gift of “Gift and Promise” for Christmas!

*Gift and Promise* shows how the theology of the Augsburg Confession is a true gift for the world today. In the first three chapters, Ed Schroeder traces the “hub” of the Augsburg Confession - the promise of justification by faith alone - to its source in Luther’s theology of the cross.

Copies of *Gift and Promise* are sent as a thank you gift in response to contributions of \$25 or more. Mail request and check to office, or use a credit card via our website: <https://www.crossings.org/book-donation/>.

of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues. Towards the end of the book John Wesley joins Luther and Leo in purgatory. Wesley points out to them, “[R]edemption in Christ is not God’s second thought, but His first thought in the creation of the world. *Felix culpa!* Oh, happy fault of Adam! The new creation is a deed of redemption that was integral to God’s creative purpose from the origin.” [N.B. “Oh, happy fault of Adam” occurs in the Easter Vigil: “O necessary sin of Adam that is wiped away by the death of Christ! O happy fault that was worthy to have so great a Redeemer!”]

How often I have heard (and said) something to the effect of “God tried everything to save humankind. God attempted to salvage the first

creation, even going so far as to send a flood to wipe most of it from the face of the earth and start over with the stock aboard the ark. Sin persisted and God persisted all the more with the Judges and the prophets from Moses to Malachi. Finally, when everything else had failed, he sent his Son, the harbinger of a new creation.”

Scripture, to a degree, supports such a statement. The book of Hebrews opens with “Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.” Jesus tells the parable of an absentee landlord who sent his servants to collect the rent due. The tenants mistreated the servants and refused to pay. The landlord, absent other ideas, sent his son, whom they killed.

Hebrews 1:1-2 and Jesus’ parable are not meant to make Jesus’ incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension into an afterthought. When speaking of new creation we can speak of it also as God’s continuing creation, the next step in God’s creation, perhaps creation part 2. In the Large Catechism, at the conclusion of his explanation of the First Article, Luther writes, “We see how the Father has given to us himself with all creation and has abundantly provided for us in this life, apart from the fact that he has also showered us with inexpressible eternal blessings through his Son and the Holy Spirit.”

God is not the prime mover of the cosmos who revisits the creation only when things go awry. God the Father, creator of heaven and earth,

### Our New Look

*Notice our new logo? We also have a brand new look on our website. Check it out. Brandon Wade, the creator of our new visual identity explains that the center of the design is the cross composed of 3 lines which represent grounding, tracking, and crossing.*

*“The bottom of the cross has a U-turn design,...the center are individuals representing the community of Crossings. To enclose the cross we have a “C” container which provides room for the cross to break out from itself (and its symmetry) moving us forward.”*

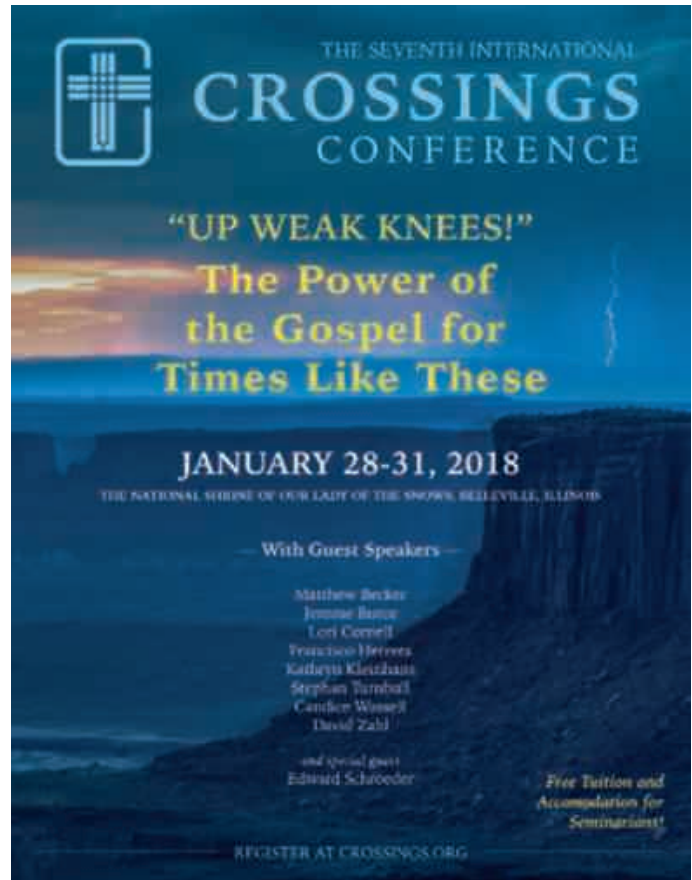
attends to our daily needs and our eternal welfare. The present time is the time and this place is the arena in which God is at work completing the creation, bringing it to eschatological fulfillment.

In God's creation, newness comes not at the beginning but at the end. We and the rest of creation do not come new off the assembly line, only to depreciate with each passing month. Rather, God is at work bringing the cosmos to a completion that will be marked by Christ's return. God the Father spoke the Word by which God called the creation into being. The Holy Spirit — the breath of God — carried that Word to the Virgin's womb and the Word became flesh. And so God's creation continues with our redemption.

This draws attention to the significance of the daily. The main character in Walker Percy's novel *The Last Gentleman*, says, "Whereas, and in fact my problem is how to live from one ordinary minute to the next on a Wednesday afternoon. Has not this been the case with all 'religious' people?" The happy news for those

who have the same problem is that God is at work in the mundane and prosaic details of the day. In the language of Crossings, *better yet*, God is present and is at work in and through us in the mundane and pedestrian details of the day.

*Bruce Modahl*



### Join Our On-line Text Study

Led by Steven Kuhl



Tuesday evenings at 7:00 PM  
Thursday mornings at 9:30 AM

Go to [www.crossings.org](http://www.crossings.org) and sign up in the box advertising the text study, or email Steve Kuhl at [skuhl1@wi.rr.com](mailto:skuhl1@wi.rr.com). No charge!

### Featured at our Conference

**Stephan Turnbull, Ph.D.** —Pastor,  
Exegete, Specialist in Paul

**Kathryn Kleinhans, Ph.D.** — Luther  
Expert, Crossings-style Theologian

**Matthew Becker, Ph.D.** — World's Only  
Robert Bertram Scholar

**David Zahl** — Law/Gospel Episcopalian,  
Director of Mockingbird Ministries

**Francisco Herrera** — Ph.D. candidate,  
key voice of Decolonize Lutheranism

and also Crossings Editors Jerome  
Burce, D. Min, and Lori Cornell

# **“Up Weak Knees” The Power of the Gospel for Times like These**

## **Sunday evening:**

- 7:00 Conversation with Ed Schroeder, Steve Kuhl  
moderating  
8:30 *Gemütlichkeit.*

## **Monday**

- 8:45 Morning Prayer  
9:00 Keynote: “Discarded Dynamo: The Underuse  
of God’s Gospel as the Problem of our  
Times” (Jerome Burce)  
10:30 Tracking the Times: An Issue (Francisco Herrera)  
1:30 Grounding: “Romans and the Revelation of God”  
(Stephan Turnbull)  
7:00 Tracking the Times: “Charlottesville. I Live There.  
What I’m Thinking Six Months Later” (David Zahl)  
8:30 Evening Prayer  
8:45 *Gemütlichkeit*

## **Tuesday**

- 8:45 Morning Prayer  
9:00 “For Such a Time as This’: The Power of the Gospel  
in a Divided World” (Kathryn Kleinhans)  
1:30 “From Fatih to Faith: Knee Bracing from Bertram  
and Elert” (Matthew Becker)  
7:15 Eucharist (Candice Wassell, preacher)  
8:30 *Gemütlichkeit*

## **Wednesday**

- 8:45 Morning Prayer  
9:00 “The Crossings Method as a Tool for Employing the  
Gospel” (Lori Cornell)  
10:00 The Gospel and our Presenting Issues: Panel  
Discussion (Herrera, Zahl, Kleinhans, Becker,  
Turnbull)  
11:15 Final Word: “The Right One for Dark Times,  
according to St. Mark” (Jerome Burce)  
12:30 Closing Prayer (box lunches)

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Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, Illinois  
January 28-31, 2018

Register at [www.crossings.org](http://www.crossings.org)

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Kathryn  
Kleinhans



Matthew  
Becker



Lori Cornell



Ed Schroeder