

CROSSINGS

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R is for

Crossings-site Redesign

On Easter Monday, 2016 Crossings launched a newly re-designed website powered by a state-of-the-art platform known as Word-Press. Of course, that design did not happen by accident. It happened because of some very savvy and committed Crossings enthusiasts who possess a wealth of high tech computer knowhow. They are Tom Law, Sherman Lee, and Ron Coulter and we call them Crossings Web Tech Support Team. As a way of thanking them, I want you to meet them.

Tom Law has been Crossings' steadfast webmaster from the beginning. He posted the first online *Sabbatheology* (aka Text Study) written by Ed Schroeder on July 6, 1996. Twenty years ago! Tom's steadfastness is also illustrated by the fact that he has worked thirty years for Rockwell Collins (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) as a Software Developer and now holds the title of Sr. Developer.

Of course Tom's "crossing" of his work as a software developer at Rockwell and the webmaster for Crossings came naturally. What did not come naturally – it came spiritually -- is the crossing he

makes every day between the Christian gospel and the world of work—for Rockwell and for Crossings. This, Tom will tell you, is why Crossings is so important to him.

Tom was introduced to Crossings the old-fashioned way—when in the early 1990s Ed Schroeder came to his congregation (then, Faith Lutheran Church in Marion, Iowa) to do a Weekend Crossings Workshop. In Tom's words, "I was hooked immediately when I realized I could truly connect my Sunday morning with the rest of my week." And what is that "connection"? His words again: "It is a way of getting beyond legalistic religion and seeing the freeing nature of the Gospel." To use familiar Ed Schroeder language, through the gospel the duties of daily life are transformed from a "got to" to a "get to." Legalistic religion can't do that; only the freeing gift of the Gospel can.



Tom Law

Sherman Lee spends his weekdays as a Senior Information Delivery Analyst at a large financial firm in St. Louis. Those

are also the skills he brings to the Crossings Web Tech Team. Sherman knows how to bring people together for mission. But as he himself will tell you, he is much more than that. In his words, he is also a "husband, proud father of two, lay theologian, youth minister, church leader and musician." When Sherman talks about relating faith and daily life, he means ALL of daily life.

Sherman was introduced to Crossings in the late 1980s when he heard about Crossings Courses through his congregation, Bethel Lutheran Church, where he was, and still is, very active. As he tells it, “I was ‘burning out’ at youth ministry and sought spiritual rejuvenation. So I decided to take a semester-long Crossings class.” And that’s all it took. Soon “that class turned into many such classes taught by Ed Schroeder and Bob Bertram.”

The importance of these Crossings classes was monumental for Sherman, as he will bear witness. “Having been baptized as an adult in 1985, these classes served as my Confirmation classes. They provided theological depth which enables me to live the Gospel in a very practical day-to-day manner. It’s not just *what-all* I do at work, church and in the community, but also *how* I do it *all*—not in myself but through God-in-Jesus. As I face moments of failure and weakness or opportunities to share with others (mostly non-Christians) the amazing thing is how God-in-Jesus gets me through day and night.”



This picture comes from the cover of February 2015 issue of The Lutheran which contains an article featuring Sherman’s faith journey. Read it at <http://content.yudu.com/A392am/TheLutheranFeb15/resources/index.htm>).

Ron Coulter is the newest person to the Crossings Web Tech Team members and, as a contracted web developer for NASA Glenn Research Center in Cleveland,, he brings impressive credentials to the team. We are very thankful that he has agreed to be Crossings’ main go-to guy for enhancing, supporting and updating the technical aspects of the Website.



Ron Coulter

Content, of course, remains the responsibility of the Board.

Ron has been a member of Messiah Lutheran Church in Cleveland, Ohio for 20 years. It is there that he first became acquainted with Crossings through his pastor, Jerry Burce. Most of you know Jerry as a Crossings Board member, editor of the Crossings blog, and a favorite presenter at Crossings events. Ron received firsthand experience of the Crossings Community when he attended the “Unearthing Gospel Gold” Crossings Conference in January 2014. As part of the Board of Directors after-conference meeting he overheard us talking about the need to upgrade our website and immediately said he would like to help us out if we needed him. Needed him? He was a Godsend! We took him up on his offer immediately. It is amazing how God provides.

Of course, as Ron himself will tell you, he offered himself for service to Crossings because it provides a valuable ministry for him and others. Hear him out for yourself: “What Crossings has taught me is that ‘distinguishing between Law and Gospel’ is much more than analyzing a passage from the Bible and splitting the good news from the bad news. It’s a way of looking at the world.”

Amen! And the angels of heaven rejoice over one soul who gets it. So do we. We rejoice because Tom, Sherman, and Ron really do “get it.” They get what Crossings is all about—and because of their technical savvy, they can help others “get it” through the new Crossings Site on World Wide Web.

Steve Kuhl



S is for Crossings Retreat - Our Savior's Lutheran

Before the advent of the internet, retreats and workshops in congregational settings served as the mainstay of Crossings' work. Ed Schroeder not only crisscrossed the continental U.S. doing workshops, but he and Marie traveled around the globe doing them. Like Tom Law (above) many of you were introduced to Crossings precisely in this way. Well – THEY'RE BACK!!!

On Saturday, April 30, Steve Kuhl, Crossings Executive Director, led a Crossings congregational workshop at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Hartland, WI where twenty-two participants practiced the art of crossing faith and daily life using the three-step method: Grounding, Tracking, and Crossing. Here is what the Schedule looked like...

Workshop Schedule

Registration

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. -- Arrival and check-in
Continental Breakfast will be served

Session I – The World Today (Tracking)

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. – Hearing what's going on in the lives and minds of you who are present. Brief introduction on what to expect. Hand out Tracking Inventory for participants to take. Interview 1, 2 or 3 people to get a sense of what's going on in their lives and what it's doing to them.

Break 10:30 – 10:45 a.m.

Take a stretch, grab a cup of coffee, ask a fellow workshop attender how it's going.

Session II – The Word Then (Grounding)

10:45 – 12:30 p.m. – Hearing the message in Sunday's Gospel: John 14:22-31. Hand out the Crossings Template with text.

Lunch -- 12:30 p.m.

Meal Prayer, enjoy the lunch, practice Tracking, discuss the Grounding. Do you see any connections (Crossings) between them?

Session III – The Word Today (Crossing)

1:00 – 2:15 p.m. – Using the Crossings Template and the Grounding from John 14, what connections do you see between those we Tracked and the Gospel Grounding?

Wrap up and Closing Prayer

2:15 – 2:30 p.m. Identify one thing you learned today about: 1) the Christian message (Grounding), 2) the World we live in (Tracking), 3) connecting the two (Crossing). Closing Prayer.

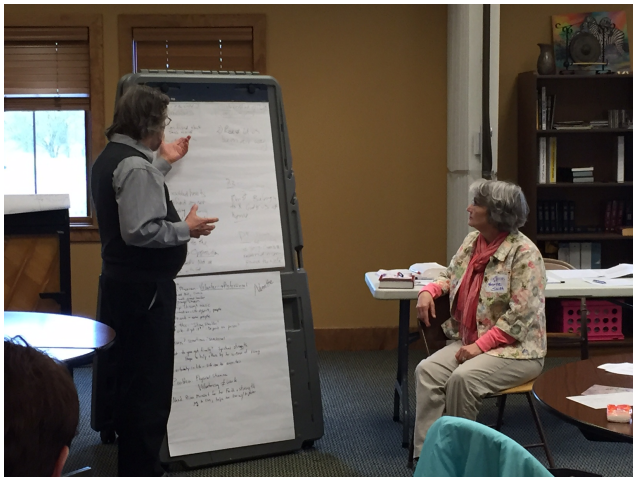


The Grounding was based on the upcoming Sunday's Gospel Reading, John 14:22-31. There Judas, not Iscariot, asks on behalf of all disciples of all times and places this knotty question. I paraphrase: "Why do we disciples see you, Jesus, for who you are -- and even love you -- and the world does not?" The answer is not only deceptively simple, but potentially heart troubling. It's not because we disciples are smarter or better than other people—all the evidence shows otherwise—but because God has chosen to give us, and not the world, the Holy Spirit, the advocate and helper. What???

Suffice it to say that you needed to be there to see how this potentially heart-troubling answer becomes life-giving joy. But it did. For we learned that Christian life is all about the prepositions, that is, about relating to things properly. For while Christians live *in* the world, they are not *of* the world. Rather, they are *of* Christ. Therefore, *with* Christ *through* the Spirit they give their lives *for* the world so that the world, too, might become *of* Christ *through* their

witness in their vocational deployments in their daily lives.

The Trackings or the life-stories that we sought to cross with this grounding came from two workshop attendees who shared their stories and their faith with grace and eloquence: Nanette Smith (a skilled musician, wife, daughter, and a very active member at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls, WI) and Kathleen Walrath (wife, mother, member at Our Saviors in Hartland, and the office manager for a Christian missionary outreach to Native Americans called Lutheran Indians Ministries). I wish you could have been there to hear them out at length. In lieu of that, I'll share with you the gold nuggets they shared with me about their crossings experience.



Nanette Smith, "Professional Volunteer"

I would describe Nanette, paradoxically, as a "professional volunteer," not as her first choice but by the Spirit's choice given life's circumstances. She has bipolar and is on disability. That was the focus of the spiritual challenge she wrestles with and that only she could explain. Listen.

Due to the fact that I have bipolar and am on disability, I have been unable to work for many years.

This has been a source of embarrassment to me because of my age (I am 55). I viewed my life in terms of work output; that is, because I don't have a "regular job" (that is, one that pays) my life doesn't measure up to my peers. However, I do a lot of volunteering at church, mainly in the music program. Through being "tracked" at the Crossings workshop I have come to realize that what I do is also important and vital. As one person put it, "you are a professional volunteer." I had never thought of it that way, and this has given me new insight and has helped me realize that my "work" (i.e., volunteering)

and acceptance of my limitations ("when I am weak, then I am strong", as Paul states it) spreads the word of Christ in a different, but no less important, way. Indeed, it was brought out that Christ himself was THE professional volunteer. He took up the work of the cross as a volunteer; he did it not for pay but for us, AND a professional, as the only One qualified to do that for us.



Kathleen Walrath being interviewed by Steve

Kathleen and her husband Hugh have been members at Our Saviors Lutheran in Hartland for 28 years. That community of faith has been for them their spiritual home where their two boys were baptized and confirmed, and, if it should be in God's future, says Kathleen, where they will be married. But it was Kathleen's daily work that she brought with her to the workshop for tracking and crossing. Listen.

I have worked with Lutheran Indian Ministries for the past 17 years as Assistant to the Executive Director. God's grace compels us to help build the capacity of Native Americans to impact their communities for the sake of their people and Christ's Kingdom. In my role, I wear many hats, representing the CEO when and where he is not available.

The Crossings workshop was very helpful for me. Working in ministry, I'm often left "empty" at the end of the day because of the emotion involved in Native ministry. I learned that I should not be surprised by that. Native ministry like all ministry, takes place "in" the world, a place caught up in self-interest and not God's interest. Therefore, the challenge is to learn what it means to be "in" the world and "not of" the world, to be "in" the world AND "of" Christ, the One whose ministry is for salvation of the world. To know this is the gift of the Holy Spirit; to know this is

to be in Christ's ministry "for" the world. In my case, "world" includes both the world of the Native Americans to be served and the world of the office through which I serve them. The workshop reinforced my need for God's grace in my life and how it works through me, through Christ and the gift of the Spirit. It was amazing to see how the short text that served as our grounding could speak so much. It was a day well spent on solid theology. I only wish my work schedule would allow me to participate in the weekly Crossings study group [that meets every Wednesday in Milwaukee].

That gives you some clue as to what happened at the Crossing workshop at Our Savior's in Hartland, WI. If you think a workshop like this could benefit your congregation, organization or group, give me, Steve Kuhl, a call at 262-642-6303 or email me at skuhl1@wi.rr.com. I would love to talk with you about it. You can also find out more about Crossings Workshops online at www.crossings.org. Simply click on "Workshops."

CrossINGS is for **Singapore**

One of the many blessings to befall Crossings has been its international connections and partnerships—Singapore being one very important one. The first time Crossings went to Singapore was in 2004 when Ed and Marie Schroeder went as ELCA Global Mission Volunteers. This year, in October 2016, Steve and his wife Kelly will be going by invitation of the Lutheran Church in Singapore as a Crossings ministry.

The assignment is two-fold. First, Steve will lead a day-long congregational workshop for the laity on Saturday, October 8 at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Singapore. The program will follow the outline of the Hartland Workshop spoken about above. Second, he will lead a three-day seminar for the pastors of the Lutheran Church of Singapore on October 10, 11 and 12. There the central focus will



include 1) showing the essential Law-Gospel theological and hermeneutical connection between Luther and the Augsburg Confession, on the one hand, and the Crossings Method, on the other; 2) doing lots of practice in using the Crossings Method to interpret the Gospel Readings for Advent; and 3) practicing the art of crossing those texts with "trackings" taken from personal life stories of individual Singaporeans, and contemporary public issues and

mission challenges that Singaporean Christians have a responsibility to address.

Much of the cost for this trip will be borne by Crossings. Therefore, we ask for your support in two ways: First, keep Steve, Kelly and this mission journey in your prayers. Second, if you could contribute financially, it would be most appreciated. You can do the latter by sending a contribution to Crossings, with the memo marked "Crossings Singapore."

EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT

The next issue of this newsletter will contain a special offer for a new book by Edward H. Schroeder.

Gift and Promise: The Augsburg Confession and the Heart of Christian Theology will be available soon from Fortress Press. In this book, Ed, together with nine members of the Crossings Community who are distinguished theologians, historians, or scholars in their own right, shows how the theology of the Augsburg Confession is a gift for the world today.

Particularly timely as we approach the 500th anniversary year of the Reformation, this book will be a valuable resource for many years. Watch for more details and the special offer in the next issue.



is for **Support**,
as in your Support
of Crossings.

As you know, every service has its cost. Crossings as an organization can achieve its service goals only with the support of generous contributions from partners like you. Without these donations, our services to you and countless others would not be possible.

So please consider a donation to Crossings. If you are a regular donor we thank you for your continuing support. If this is your first donation to Crossings, we not only thank you, but rejoice that you see value in what we do. A donor envelope is enclosed for your convenience. We hope that you will help support our efforts.



Don't forget that Crossings is on Facebook...

As you may or may not know, Steve Kuhl meets every Wednesday morning in Milwaukee with a Crossings Text Study to study the upcoming Gospel Reading for the week. As part of his online invitation/advertising each week, he publishes a "Text Teaser" and posts it on the Crossings Facebook Page. (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Crossings-Community/249555105261?ref=nf>) You may want to check it out. Here, below, is a sample. It was for the Gospel for Sunday, June 19 which he posted on June 14.

Luke 8:26-39 is the text that we will focus on this week and it can be tricky to interpret. Like so many of Luke's stories, it is a double story, a story within a story, designed to reveal the irony in human nature. The first story is simple and direct. A man whom everyone sees as obviously a demon-possessed man is healed by the "commanding" word of Jesus.



But what also dare not be overlooked in this story is the extent of the man's healing. Being possessed by a demon he was not only a physical and emotional wreck, he was the enemy of Jesus, exhibited in his fear of Jesus. Now that he is cleansed of the demon he is not only "clothed and in his right mind," but he "begs" to be a disciple of Jesus. Why? Because he is now Jesus' possession, which finds expression in his going home to proclaim all that God/Jesus has done for him.

Indeed, it is that feature of the man's healing that reveals the irony in the reaction of the presumably normal people in the second story. Upon learning of the healing -- and Luke is very generous in his giving of details -- the presumably normal people are "seized [possessed] with great fear" toward Jesus and want nothing to do with him. Instead of following him, they want him to leave. Which he does. And along with him goes his power to save.

Or does it? Might not that formerly demon-possessed man, transformed by Jesus into a frenetic disciple and proclaimer of Jesus, be the best thing they now have going for them in their midst? Think about it. What are we to make of this story within a story? What does it tell us about the nature of demon possession? What does it tell us about the kind of healing Jesus has in store for us? What does it tell us about the meaning of discipleship? Come and see!

Steve Kuhl

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