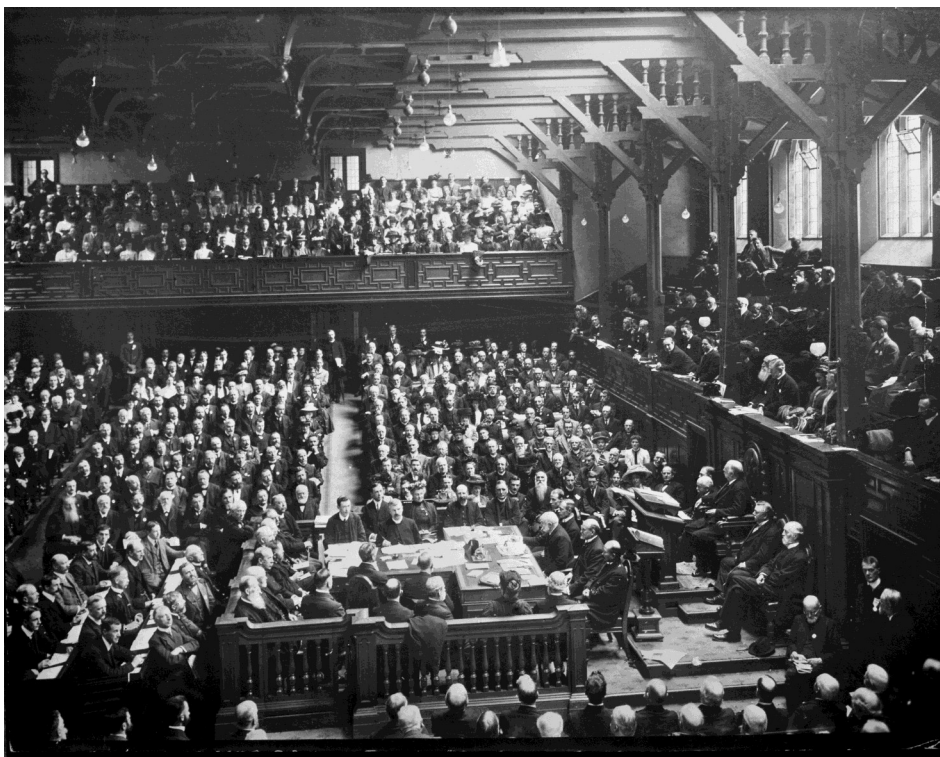


*This month's Newsletter is contributed to and edited by Crossings President Steven Kuhl. The feature article is done in commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference which is generally understood as marking the beginning of the modern Ecumenical Movement.*

*As Robert Bertram noted in his work, **A Time for Confessing**, one of the six criteria of a Confessing Movement is that it is ecumenical. For Crossings the Law-Promise outlook itself is nothing if it is not also ecumenical. To wit this line from the Crossings web page: "The proper relationship between God's words of Law and Gospel was considered by the Lutheran reformers to be essential to the life and mission of the church; however, this understanding has deep roots in the history of the church and in Scripture, and is not the exclusive property of Lutherans." May the ecumenical character of the promise bear fruit in our times.*

**C** is for **Conference**, as in the 1910 **Edinburgh World Missionary Conference**, of which the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was observed this summer.

One of my favorite ways of describing the Crossings Community is this: We are an ecumenically diverse, internationally dispersed community of Christians dedicated to using Luther's Law-Promise outlook for



*Delegates at the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference*

relating faith in Christ to daily life. The ecumenical character of Crossings is important because Jesus is ecumenical. That is, what he offers he offers to the "whole inhabited world," and that is what the word "ecumenical" means as it is commonly translated from the Greek word *Oikoumene*, the whole inhabited world.

No movement in Church History was more conscious of this ecumenical character of the Christian Message than the Nineteenth Century Missionary Movement. In the early 1800s that movement was being energized by hundreds of individuals, lay and clergy, and many organizations, both Church and para-church societies, eager to serve Jesus' Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20) to bring the gospel to the "whole inhabited world."

But soon this movement ran into a problem. As missionaries went to Africa and Asia to proclaim the

ecumenical or worldwide significance of Jesus, their hearers became confused. Baptists, Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, to name a few, all spoke the name of Jesus, yet would have nothing to do with one another. That division within the Body of Christ was now experienced as an obstacle to communicating the Mind of Christ to the missionaries' hearers.

Eventually, in July of 1910, thanks to the efforts of John Mott (missionary, former president of the YMCA, and leader in the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions), enough critical concern was raised to mount a global meeting of missionary minded Christians: the first World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh. This year marks the 100th Anniversary of that event, an event for which many celebrations will be held.

## ***R** is for Restoration, as in the Restoration of Christian Unity*

The makeup of 1,200 delegates at the Edinburgh Conference was a veritable "Who's-Who" of lay and clerical Christian leaders throughout the world, from Anglican Bishop Charles Brent, missionary to the Philippines and founder of the Faith and Order Movement, to American Progressive Politician William Jennings Bryant, who is also known as the infamous attorney for the prosecution in the Scopes Monkey Trial (1925).

As Charles Clayton Morrison described the Event in the July 7, 1910 issue of the **Christian Century**: "Edinburgh is a gathering of missionary specialists, in the main, who come together to exchange views on the ways and means of executing the Lord's command to preach the gospel to the whole creation. The missionary conscience is assumed here. The church's duty is taken for granted. Every delegate is already an ardent missionary believer." (<http://www.religiononline.org/showarticle.asp?title=1408>)

As the conference proceeded, the delegates made a discovery: The mission of the Church is intimately related to the unity of the church. *Oikoumene* has a double meaning. The ecumenical character of Jesus' Great Commission is not only that his message is directed to the *Oikoumene*, "the whole inhabited world." The ecumenical character of his commission is that his disciples are themselves to be an *Oikoumene*, that is, an "abiding household," an "inhabitable house," which is what the Greek literally means, *Oikos* (house) *mene* (to abide).

With that insight the modern (Twentieth Century) ecumenical movement was born in Edinburgh and its goal was the restoration of Christian Unity. Church unity and mission outreach are intimately linked. One cannot be truly engaged in the ecumenical work of outreach to the "whole inhabited world" without also being concerned about the unity of the "abiding household" of faith.

## ***O** is for One, as the Father and the Son are One*

It didn't take long and the new Ecumenical Movement found its classic text, John 17:20-23. The text is part of the so-called "high priestly prayer" Jesus prays for his church, then and now, on the eve of his betrayal:

17 <sup>20</sup> 'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup>The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, <sup>23</sup>I in



### In Memoriam

**Norbert Kabelitz**

May 18, 1929—July 20, 2010

*Cherished member and active participant in the Crossings Community from its founding.*

*Norb is remembered by the Crossings Community for his Sabbath and Thursday Theology*

*writings and for the way he engaged us in the Mutual Conversation and Consolation of the Saints.*

### In Resurrection Hope

them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Central to Jesus' prayer is the link between the unity of believers in Christ (*Oikoumene* being the church as an "abiding household") and the mission of believers in Christ (*Oikoumene* as mission to the "whole inhabited world"). And soon speculation began to emerge about what this church unity might look like. "What constitutes 'visible unity'?" is the way the question was asked? What sign would definitively display and insure that unity?

Unfortunately, in answering this question the discussion often shifted away from the words of Jesus in the text to the machinations of human beings about power. Specifically, the focus shifted to organizational structure and bureaucratic cohesion as the sign and insurer of unity. Understandably, the divide between Christians continued all the more—only now about what power structure is best: what blend of democracy and hierarchy will ensure the churches' unity and commend the gospel with integrity in the mission field? Of course, the answer is "None." But that conclusion has not yet been drawn and, unfortunately, the Ecumenical Movement is presently being bogged down.

## **S** is for *Sign*, specifically, as in the "sign of the cross"

However, if we look to Jesus' own words, the answer to the question "What sign displays and insures the unity of the church?" is simple. As Jesus clearly says, "The glory that you (Father) have given me I have given them (my disciples), so that they may be one, as we are one" (v. 22). And what is the "glory" the Father has given Jesus? What is that visible "glow-ry" that signals the unity of the Father and the Son and, hence, is the sign of unity of Christ's disciples? Answer: It is the sign of the cross, the glory of Jesus' death and resurrection.

The Jesus of John's Gospel has been constantly trumpeting that point through many sub-symbols and signs.

See it described, for example, as the sign of the destroyed temple in Jerusalem (Jn 2:19) or the sign of the serpent lifted up in the desert (Jn 3:14) or the sign of the good shepherd laying down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:17) or the sign of his foot-washing (Jn 13:16). The outward sign that identifies and insures the unity of the disciples of Christ is the sign of the cross appearing in their midst.

No wonder the preaching of the promise, the pronouncement of absolution, and the practice of baptism and Eucharist have historically been identified as signs of unity. They are explicit, outward, visible signs of the death and resurrection of Christ in which Christians participate fully by faith. But as John also points out, there is another explicit visible sign of the church and its unity that has explicit impact on mission. Jesus instituted it also on the night of his betrayal:

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you (the sign of the cross), you also should love one another (the sign of the cross). By this everyone will know that you are my disciples (sign of unity), if you have love for one another (sign of the cross) (Jn 13:34-35).

The sign of the cross as the sign of church unity has nothing inherently to do with power or organizational structure; it has everything to do with being a community that lives under the sign of the cross.

## **S** is for *Steven*, as in me, and my *Ecumenical Experience*

Although ecumenism may be bogged down in the mire of polity debates, nevertheless, it is also still moving forward in the sign of the cross, and I would like to think that I am evidence of that. I could point to the fact that I am an ELCA Lutheran teaching and practicing the sign of the cross at a Roman Catholic institution, Cardinal Stritch University.

But I want to point elsewhere: to the fact that I, an ELCA pastor, preach and preside regularly in Episcopal churches and even served eight months as the interim priest at St. Thomas of Canterbury Episcopal





Church in Greenfield, WI. To be sure, that opportunity was made possible by the full communion ecumenical agreement in 1999 between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Episcopal Church USA. But what made this agreement possible is the decision to bracket out of consideration church polity as a sign of church unity and to let the sign of the cross (exhibited in Gospel preaching, baptism, Eucharist, Absolution, and mutual love for one another) become the sign of unity and nothing else.

Indeed, as I would converse with parishioners after the Eucharist around a cup of coffee or a spot of tea, the question would inevitably be asked: “Do you have apostolic succession?” (That’s the idea that clergy are a part of an unbroken mechanical chain of laying on of hands signaling their legitimacy.) And I would say, “You say I do.” But that’s because what is really “apostolic” about the succession of ministry in our (Lutheran and Episcopal) Churches is not the hands of the bishops or the bureaucratic structures that tend to peripheral and organizational things. What is really “apostolic” is the Apostolic Word of the Cross. The Apostolic Word of the Cross is the Word to which church bishops and bureaucrats bow and the Word they insist we preach, so that the sign of the cross remains the sole mark by which the church is known.

The very fact that I am absent those hands has no bearing on the integrity or the identity of either the Word of the Cross preached or the community that gathers around that Word. Their identifying mark as the church of Christ is the sign of the cross freshly preached and sacramentally practiced. Wherever you see that mark, there resides the Church of Christ, the Ecumenical Church in the twofold sense of the word: the church as the “abiding household” of faith, the church whose mission is to the “whole inhabited world.”

*Steven C. Kuhl*

## ***I is for Introducing New Gifts, the gift of two new Crossings Board Members and a newsletter editor***

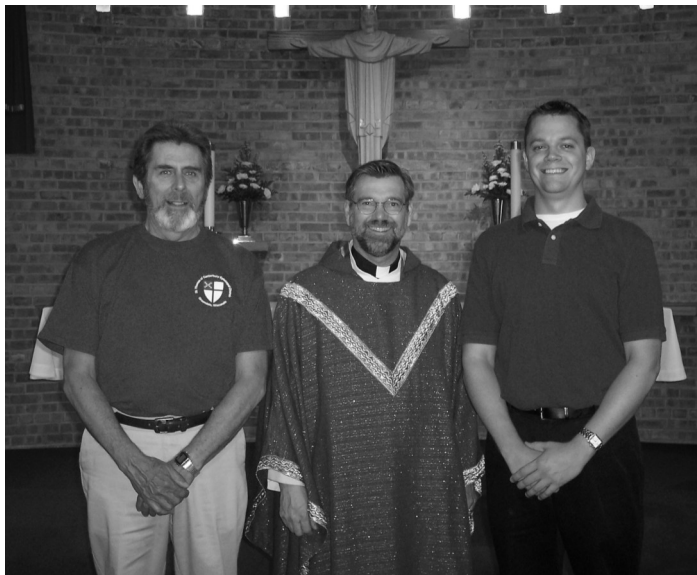
On August 11-12, 2010, the Crossings Board of Directors met to evaluate the past fiscal year and to plan for the next. 2009-2010 was a good year and the next will be even more so. Details to come. Of special joy is

the addition of two new members to the Board of Directors, Chris Repp and Peter Keyel, **and** an editor for this newsletter, Robin Morgan. Keep your eye on them. Even though they represent the next generation of the Crossings Community, their impact is already now being felt.

Chris Repp grew up in the St. Louis area and presently serves as the pastor of Epiphany Lutheran Church in Carbondale, IL. One of the more serendipitous and fortuitous features of his life is that he attended Purdue Uni-

versity where he accidentally became a Russian major. That accident led him to study abroad in Moscow (1984) where he met his future wife Helen, a student from the UK, and where he would eventually teach Church History and Systematic Theology for a spell (1999-2003) in the Russian Lutheran Seminary in St. Petersburg. What helped pave the way to this Russian call was his Ph.D. work at the University of Chicago, where he wrote a dissertation on the development of biblical studies in the Russian Orthodox Church in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

Chris came under the influence of Crossings Theology while a M.Div. student and advisee of Bob Bertram. “Crossings has helped me hone and refine my Lutheranism,” he says, “and in the midst of the current storms in both the ELCA and the LCMS...it has helped me to find the solid ground of the gospel to stand on.” Chris’ Russian background intrigues us at Crossings because of the growing number of Russians frequenting our



*St. Thomas of Canterbury: Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 2006  
Pictured from left to right: Peter Leszczynski (Senior Warden),  
Steven Kuhl, Wayne Riggs (Worship Committee)*

website. Are they the product of the seeds Repp sowed in Russia? Our log records can't tell us that, but we are eager to find out. But even more than his Russian skills, Chris combines passion with intellectual and pastoral gifts that are already bearing fruit in the area of Sabbaththeology writing, his contributions to Thursday Theology and his role in planning the upcoming Crossings Training Seminar and the 4<sup>th</sup> International Crossings Conference. Welcome Chris!



*Chris Repp (above)  
Peter Keyel (below)*



Peter Keyel resides in Pittsburg, PA with his wife Beth Martin, and is presently doing post-doctoral work in the field of immunology. If you “Google” his name you will see that he is not only actively engaging and impacting the world of his godly secular call of immunology; he is also actively engaging and impacting the world at large with his insight and passion for relating the gospel of Jesus Christ to the challenges of daily life.

Peter is a layman who passionately argues for the need of a theologically literate laity. He

became infected with the Crossings bug while doing graduate work at Washington University (St. Louis) and by participating in parish life at Bethel Lutheran Church. Ed Schroeder was the primary carrier of this virus and it seems that it has overwhelmed and reformulated Peter's entire immune system.

Peter is no stranger to those who are linked to Crossings through the wizardry of the internet. This past year he developed the Crossings Facebook page, connecting us to a whole new public, one that is younger and by second nature connected to the world through this new medium. He is also an occasional writer for Thursday Theology, bringing his gifts and energy and theological insight to bear on numerous topics that interject themselves into modern life. Welcome Peter!

We are additionally blessed to have Robin Morgan join our “staff” by assuming editorship of this newsletter. The next issue—which will be issue number one hundred!—will reflect a new creative approach by Robin. Stay tuned.



*Robin Morgan*

Crossings has played a large roll in Robin's life, but then, Robin has also played a large roll in Crossings' life. Robin began by taking semester-long Crossings classes taught by Edward Schroeder and Robert Bertram in 1989 and the Gospel she learned from them changed the course of her life. That led her to Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago where she earned a Masters of Divinity in 1995. Since then she has served as a congregational pastor and community organizer.

In the early years of the internet, Robin was one of the first to recognize the possibilities it offered to Crossings, and she played a leading role in getting us “on” the web. She was a Sabbaththeology writer before it was called Sabbaththeology. She has filled in for Edward Schroeder's Thursday Theology numerous times, both as writer and editor. She served on our board for many years. Now she offers her talents to spearhead this newsletter, and we are most grateful.

Of course, the Crossings Board is also blessed by the continuing work of eight others: Cathy Lessmann (Executive Secretary), Jerry Burce, Steve Albertin, Marcus Felde, Don Tanner, Lori Cornell (Sabbatheology Editor), Steve Kuhl (President), and Carol Braun. In addition there are numerous behind the scenes people like Tom Law, our web master, Michael Hoy, Edward Schroeder, Nathan Schroeder, fifteen Sabbaththeology writers, and various individuals who write for Thursday Theology. For all these gifts we say: Thanks be to God!

*Steven K & Cathy L*

*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.*

## ***S** is for **Seminar**, as in the upcoming Crossings 'Cross-Training' Seminar*

A great deal of conversation at the board meeting involved whether we were succeeding in helping people use **all** of the Crossings method. We noted that many people assume that doing the "Grounding," that is, using the six-step method to diagnose and prognose pericopes (which we do regularly with our Sabbathologies) is all that the Crossings method is about.

But truth is, that is only the **first** part of the process. Just as important is identifying how issues that surfaced in the particular text make their appearance in the world and/or in our lives today (which we've called "Tracking"), and then (most importantly) "Crossing" the two—identifying how Jesus' benefits for people in the text become benefits for people today. (This was the original Crossings intent—to help people link their faith in Jesus to daily life.)

To rectify this situation, we decided to host a seminar in January, 2011 designed to focus on the **entirety** of the Crossings method. We've called it: "**How is Jesus Good for you, Really?**": A **Crossings Cross-Training Seminar**. It will be held at Our Lady of the Snows Retreat Center in Belleville, Illinois (same as previous conferences), beginning Sunday evening, Jan. 23, to Tuesday noon, Jan. 25.

People wanting to learn **and practice** the entire method (there will be many "tutors" available), or hoping to be workshop leaders themselves, are urged to attend. Tuition is \$150 which includes all hotel and meal costs. However, tuition will be **free** to all seminary students. Please, spread the word!

Registration and more information are available on the Crossings web site at: <http://www.crossings.org/conference/2011sem-reg-form.shtml>mply. Or send us a note, or call Cathy Lessmann at 314-576-7357.

*Cathy L*



# **"How is Jesus Good for You, Really?" A Crossings "Cross-Training" Seminar**

**Learn and practice the Crossings method  
Read Scripture through the Law-Gospel lens  
Connect Scripture to everyday life**

**January 23-25, 2011**

**Do you want to:**

- **Understand and articulate law-gospel theology more effectively?**
- **Apply the Crossings method in teaching and preaching?**
- **Learn to lead Crossings workshops?**

**This seminar is for you!**

**Our Lady of the Snows  
Belleville, Illinois**  
(across the river from St. Louis)