



CROSSINGS CONNECTION

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

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The Preaching of St John the Baptist: Baciccio

“Practicing the Hiddenness of God”

An Interview with Rob Saler

By Bruce Modahl

In his address at the January 2019 Crossings Conference, Rob Saler will challenge conference participants to “practice the hiddenness of God.” His book, *Theologia Crucis*, and much of his writing and teaching call us to embody the theology of the cross. Luther’s obsession with the theology of the cross is more than a way to talk about God or understand God’s presence in the world. For Luther, it was a matter of existence, the way we live as faithful bearers of God’s promises.

Saler says the theology of the cross “changes the geography” of our encounter with one another in our greatest need. “We don’t have to be God’s lawyer, justifying God

to a suffering world.” The landscape shifts as we stand in solidarity with our brother or sister in anguish, “holding God accountable to God’s promises in the midst of things we do not understand.”

Saler continues, “We have a deeply incarnational faith when dealing with the world’s brokenness. We go as deeply into the world as God did in Christ, loving the world more than the world loves itself. Holding back from the world makes religion nothing more than a consolation from the world’s brokenness.”

As Saler sees it, “God always demonstrates God’s power

Continued on page 6

Peggy Schauer: A Crossings Case Study

By Bruce Modahl

Peggy Schauer says her seminary education began at the kitchen table with her father as her teacher. He was a student at an Episcopal seminary before circumstances took him a different direction. Her theological education continued under the tutelage of J.S. Bach whom she calls “my favorite theologian.” A bassoonist, she earned a degree in music education from Baldwin-Wallace University in Berea, Ohio, which has the oldest collegiate Bach festival in the country.

Her first job after graduation was at Holy Family Catholic School in a Cleveland suburb. In addition to classroom duties, she played the organ for weekly mass and directed the marching band for a neighboring Catholic high school. There she met her husband, contracted from the Cleveland Clinic as an athletic trainer for the high school.

Applying for a job at a public magnet school, the Cleveland School of the Arts, Peggy worked with the students for an hour in band rehearsal. She said, “At the end of the hour I would have worked there for free. Even though it was a magnet school I had students that could not read and struggled in math. I started tutoring my students. There were many difficult things going on in their homes and neighborhoods. I found myself asking my kids in this public school, ‘Do you go to church? Have you read the bible?’

“A district school superintendent who regularly came to visit my classroom kept telling me, ‘You should be a principal.’ With that encouragement and wanting to make a greater impact, I enrolled at Cleveland State and received a master’s degree in educational leadership. With my teaching experience I can be an elementary or high school principal.

“I left the classroom to be an assistant principal and then principal in Cleveland schools. It was those experiences that led me to want to lead a Lutheran school so I could really get at mind, body, spirit education for my



students and families.

“My daughter was attending Messiah Lutheran School near where we live. I visited the principal and said, ‘I want to start a Lutheran school in the inner city. Do you have any advice?’ The principal said, ‘There already is one and the principal there is retiring.’ Turned out the school, Luther Memorial, also had an arts focus. The school had 56 students and was housed in a church which had a membership of 12.

“After the first year at Luther Memorial, we enrolled both of our daughters at LMS because I didn’t want to lead a school I wouldn’t send my own kids to. They were in 1st and 4th grade their first year at LMS. We all agree it was a wonderful experience and helped shape the young adults they are today. Morgan is in college to become an elementary school teacher in urban schools with a focus on refugee students. Ellie aspires to be a nurse. Their work side by side with me at LMS had much to do with these paths and I’m so thankful.

“After two years we outgrew the building. Across town, a Lutheran church had just closed its school so we moved into their facilities and continued to grow. We were recognized as one of the best urban schools in the nation. Now the school has 250 students on two campuses.”

This did not happen without controversy and heart-

break. The pastor retired from the church whose facilities the school rented. A new pastor arrived with different expectations. At a spring concert a non-Lutheran clergywoman, looking for a working microphone, stepped into the pulpit to lead a prayer. Not long after that, the pastor of the school's host church arrived with an envelope containing an eviction notice for the school. The pastor blamed Peggy for breaking the rules by having a female pastor not of their denomination in the pulpit. Peggy appealed the decision saying, "If I go, can the school stay?" The answer was yes.

"J. S. Bach - my favorite theologian. "

During his conference presentation, Jerry Burce walked conference attendees through Mark's Gospel. He invited Peggy to speak in order to give currency to Jesus' pronouncement of judgment on the temple, "The time is coming when not one stone will be left on top of another." Jerry pointed out that Jesus spoke these words after witnessing the widow putting her two mites, all she had to live on, into the temple treasury. The religious institution was charged with protecting and providing for the widows and orphans. The institution was dysfunctional and stood under God's judgment. So also the church in our day displays its dysfunction.

Peggy added the following update, "The pastor that was willing to evict the school baptized a large group of LMS kids around May (after my talk at Crossings) of this year. Again, God doesn't give up on any of us. Hearts and minds can change. Thanks be to God!"

Peggy went back to public education after this. She was invited to open Eagle Academy, a high school at the John F. Kennedy School, located in one of Cleveland's roughest neighborhoods. She said, "In two years we lost nine students to violence. I began asking students the same questions of faith and Scripture and church that I asked the students at the first public school in which I taught. I invited local pastors to walk the halls with me."

In the beginning, Peggy was able to choose the faculty members of the school. She was not authorized to continue that practice. At the end of her second year, she resigned because she did not have confidence in the faculty. She began wondering how she could get back to faith-based ministry. After sharing this quest with her pastor, Jerry Burce, he invited her to attend the Crossings Conference.

While principal of Lutheran Memorial, she enrolled in the PhD program in Urban Studies at Cleveland State. She finished her degree while she was principal of Eagle Academy. Her research focused on teacher identity. As she continues her research she is looking at faith formation as a component of that identity. She says, "My big question is 'Who is a great teacher for low-income and minority students?' I believe teacher identity is inseparable from who I am as a person—my experiences, my connections with others and my faith."

Beginning in the fall term of 2018, Peggy assumed an assistant professorship in secondary education at John Carroll University. She wanted a faith-based school; John Carroll is a Jesuit university. Located minutes away from where her nine students lost their lives, she will be teaching those preparing to be middle and high school teachers in a university operating under the Jesuit motto of "People with Others" and a stated focus on social justice and service to those living on the margins of our society.

John Carroll partners with a nearby Roman Catholic seminary where she can take classes. She said, "If I take Greek or Old Testament or New Testament and later decide God is calling me to ordained ministry, certainly I could transfer those courses to a Lutheran Seminary; couldn't I?"

You can see Peggy's Presentation at
crossings.org/peggy-schauer-a-crossings-case-study



Free for seminary students and newly ordained pastors.
Half off for all first time attendees.

Co-Ed Corner

By Sherman Lee

I was baptized as I entered grad school, so I didn't realize for a few years that I actually had my own special Confirmation class: the semester-long courses I took from Ed Schroeder and Bob Bertram. For those unfamiliar with these classes, they were 13 weeks long and could be taken for college credit. The courses had several weeks of grounding in a scriptural passage, followed by tracking a slice of church history, and then crossing it with the text. The course culminated with each student sharing a paper of crossing a slice of their own lives.



What I gained was far more than from any other college class: it was an immersion in the Gospel as well as the truest form of “group therapy,” with each of us healing each other with the Holy-ing Spirit working through us in our papers and in our sharing.

As we enter the Year of Luke, I recall that one of my favorite Crossings papers focused on the Lukan Christmas story:

This was a favorite text because it helped spur my exploration of Christianity about which I knew very little.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

You might wonder why I chose the King James Version; it's because I heard Linus recite it throughout my childhood in “A Charlie Brown Christmas.” The anti-commercialism of that TV special is a good enough message for the masses. Instinctively I sensed there was even more goodness in the Christmas story that eventually led to my adult baptism. But that's a story for another time.

For my paper using a slice of my life, I chose a Batman story as my slice of life. A comic book industry-transforming story, “The Dark Knight Returns” is a graphic novel in which an aging Bruce Wayne contemplates becoming Batman again after decades of retirement and what a good death would look like.

Ed was skeptical about analyzing a fictional character through the lens of God's Law; the slice of life was usually from the student's own lived experiences. But Ed was game, and he gave me additional ideas (and extra reading,

Continued on page 6

“Hidden in These Pews”

An Interview with Liv Larson Andrews

By Bruce Modahl



Liv Larson Andrews is charged with giving a parish pastor's perspective on the conference theme, “When God Is Silent.” In her address, “Hidden in These Pews: Space for Rage, Space for Hope,” Pastor Larson Andrews says she will explore “what in congregational life can equip us for the sense of abandonment people experience in life.”

She told of her congregation's recent experience when a favorite member of the congregation died. She said, “We all knew Doug had his problems. But he was the sort of young man who would come up to the baptismal font. He was not content to dip in his fingers to make the sign of the cross. No, he splashed water all over himself.

“We had not seen Doug for a few weeks. One morning a man who looked very much like Doug came in. He turned out to be Doug's twin brother. He told us Doug had died of a drug overdose. We were devastated. The whole congregation, it seemed, cried out to God, ‘Why didn't you help Doug? Why didn't we help Doug?’”

I asked Liv to reflect on how the pastor is a role model for those feeling such devastation. She answered, “By being silent and listening to people's despair and rage. By not being quick with answers thinking we have to defend God. By being honest and saying ‘I don't know’ when people press us to answer why God did not intervene in a tragic situation. We are role models for others when we turn to the Psalms and let them speak our sorrow, our anger, and offer words of comfort.”

The morning we spoke, Liv was preparing to travel to the bedside of a woman approaching the end of her life. During such visits, she follows liturgies like “Commendation of the Dying,” which use the words of scripture and prayers of the church to create space for rage and hope.

Liv spoke in gratitude for those members of the congregation who come to funerals not because of their personal relationship with the deceased but because the funeral is a congregational worship service and the deceased is a part of that body.

Liv serves Salem Lutheran Church in Spokane, Washington, founded 130 years ago by Swedish immigrants. The neighborhood around the congregation now suffers blight, poverty, and opioid addiction. She is helping the congregation address the questions, “What is God asking us to do?” and “How is God speaking to us through our neighbors?”

Liv met her husband Casey at Valparaiso University. From there she went to the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, graduating in 2006. She waited until 2010 for her call to Salem and ordination. Her husband is a professor English at Whitworth University in Spokane. They have two sons, Arlo 8 and Robin 3.



of course) about Deus Absconditis, or the hidden God. Ed helped me examine Bruce Wayne through a lens of what if he had accepted God's Promise instead of returning to his caped crusader identity.

As I write this (not quite Halloween), I'm pleasantly surprised by the serendipities of my first year as Co-Executive Director of Crossings and my history with the organization. This article, my first solo piece for the newsletter, is in the Year of Luke. My decades-old paper aligns with the theme of the 2019 Conference about the hiddenness / silence of God. On Monday evening conference, there will be a reflection of Shusako Endo's book and movie "Silence," another pop culture exploration.

This first year as Co-Executive Director has been a year of discovery and (dare I say it?) reformation for Crossings as a new generation emerges to carry forth its distinctive (but not "unique" as Bob Bertram loved to say) take on Law and Gospel Theology. I do hope you will sign up to see all the wonderful stuff we've cooked up for the conference in January. (I encourage you to visit our website – crossings.org – to read extended backgrounds on speaker Emmy Kegler and hymn consultant / music leader Tom Baynham).

Please allow me to close with the NRSV's more inclusive translation of Luke 2:14:

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

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in mercy." God's mercy is for us most unsettling because mercy is not the way power is shown or understood in the world. Nor does the old Adam want mercy. The old Adam wants the law because the law is predictable; it puts us in control. Mercy is unpredictable. God is in control. Grace disrupts the old Adam."

"We live into the hiddenness of God in the practices of the church," when we seek reconciliation with one another rather than keeping score and getting even, in the sacraments where Christ is hidden in, with, and under water, bread, and wine, in worship as an outpost of God's kingdom, and when we process behind the uplifted cross in the funeral procession for a saint completing the baptismal journey.

Rob grew up in Olney, Illinois, the son of public-school teachers. He graduated from Valparaiso University in 2001. He received a master's degree from the University of Chicago, and then MDiv, ThM, and PhD degrees from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC).

Rob served parishes in Gary and Merrillville, Indiana, and taught at LSTC. In 2012, he received a call to Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. He serves as Associate Dean, the Executive Director of the Center for Pastoral Excellence, Research Professor of Lutheran Studies, and the Director of The Lutheran House of Studies.

Rob has published two books and numerous scholarly articles. He enjoys writing about music and has a forthcoming book on theology and the music of Radiohead. He has two children, Nora, six-years-old and Cole, age three.