

CROSSINGS Connection

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

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Meet Chad Bird, 2020 Conference Speaker

Chad Bird straddles the blue-collar and academic worlds. For the past 13 years, his day job has been truck driver, first in the oil and gas fields of Texas and more recently in and around San Antonio. Driving a full-size rig in the city and navigating into tight spots, he spends as much time driving in reverse as forward.

From 4 to 8 am each day he reads and writes. He prepares for speaking engagements, and he works on his podcast lecture series on the Old Testament and his blog (both at 1517.org). Those morning hours have also resulted in two books: *Your God Is Too Glorious and Upside-Down Spirituality*.

The theme for the 2020 Crossings Conference January 26-29, 2020 at Our Lady of the Snows Conference Center in Belleville, Illinois is “The Broken Life.” In light of that theme, I asked Chad, “How does a robust faith in the promise of Christ crucified keep us going when the lungs want to quit, or the kid lands in jail, or the company goes out of business two months before I was supposed to start drawing my pension?”

Chad responded by telling me his own experience in brokenness and what it takes to keep going.

Chad graduated 20 years ago from Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, with MDiv and STM degrees. He and his wife, Texas natives, went with their two little children to a small congregation in small town Oklahoma. After five years he was called to teach Old Testament and Hebrew at Concordia, Fort Wayne. While teaching, he pursued PhD studies at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio.

His marriage fell apart. Chad resigned from the seminary, moved back to Texas and began what he called “dark, rebellious, and intense years.” Six years ago he said he started coming out of the darkness. I asked him what caused the turnaround.

He said, “It started with a conversation with my daughter. My children were visiting me and I was putting my daughter to bed one night. She

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**Chad Bird will speak at the
2020 Crossings Conference**

“The promise of
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— Chad Bird

Co-Executive Directors' Corner

At the June 1 memorial service for Ed Schroeder, I shared the story about his film interview because it almost didn't happen. We hadn't initially included Ed in those to be interviewed. We were focusing on those whose lives were affected by both Ed and Bob Bertram. Serendipitously, we invited him to talk between other film shoots, letting him just riff about Crossings.

Ed started with the legendary "origin story," a challenge posed to him and Bob at a barbecue with mostly lay people. "How does all your egghead religious stuff apply to my daily life?"

Bob and Ed had already been cooking up something in their theology laboratory. The question posed at the barbecue prompted them to try out their ideas in the "real world." That conversation launched discussions, a community, and eventually a mini-movement. Ed and Bob had no idea where their Law-Gospel theology — applied to slices of life in church history and in parishioners' lives — would take them: hundreds of workshops around the world; semester-long classes; and forays into "cyberspace" (Ed loved that term) with Thursday Theology, Ed's weekly letters about whatever came his way through his sharp theological lens.

As he thought about the future of Crossings, Ed also had no idea exactly what's in store for it and, with a twinkle in his eye, speculated but only in his head. I sensed he was excited to see the energy and enthusiasm in the next generation, but he was realistic that all things shall pass, including him and possibly Crossings as an organization. For Ed, the only thing that persists is God and God's Good News.

I never explicitly asked Ed if he felt Crossings was in good hands now, if he trusted us. I think I know the answer: he trusted that as long as the Good News informs, reforms, and rejuvenates us in our mission, that's all that matters. Sweeping changes like a large number of clergy retirements, shrinking attendance and church budgets, a smaller pool of seminary graduates and newly-ordained ministers — not to mention increasing irrelevance in main-stream thought and culture — all lead to uncertainty in the short-term and long-term.

What remains constant is the Gospel. And what Crossings will continue to do is open our hearts to Good News and share that news in our writing, our conferences and forms yet to take shape. We will be sharing something that is too good to keep to ourselves in a fast-changing world that (as throughout all of history) yearns for God's promise. Keep an eye out for what we're cooking up next. I think Ed trusted that the next generation(s) will keep on trusting the Promise.

You can find video and audio from Ed Schroeder's Memorial Celebration online at:
<https://crossings.org/ed-schroeder-memorial/>.

Sherman Lee
July 2019



Sherman Lee
Co-Director



Dr. Paul Tambyah traveled from Singapore to speak at Dr. Ed Schroeder's memorial celebration on June 1.

Speakers Reflect Gospel Theme of Ed Schroeder's Life

Conversations with Dr. Ed Schroeder invariably had a law-promise rhythm to them. The presenters for the Crossings June 1 event celebrating Ed's life and ministry gave witness to that rhythm.

The Rev. Dr. Marcus Lohrmann, former bishop of the Northwestern Ohio Synod (ELCA), recalled just such a conversation. When he was Schroeder's student in seminary, Ed told Marcus, "You are good at quoting the Bible, but you don't make use of the crucified and risen Christ."

The Rev. Dr. Jukka Kääriäinen, the mission theologian for the National Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, said it was a Crossings devotee who wrote him a "harsh but nice" email while Jukka was a pastor in the United States. After hearing Jukka preach, the writer told Jukka that he did not preach the Gospel but said there was still hope for him because he was young. The writer urged him to the Crossings web site.

Jukka went to the web site and continues to do so. When he left the parish to pursue doctoral studies at Fordham University, he visited Ed and Marie Schroeder in St. Louis. Schroeder encouraged his dissertation subject "Missio Shaped by Promissio," becoming an informal dissertation advisor to Jukka during his doctoral studies. Jukka said he reflects daily on Ed's influence.

The need for the Crossings movement was made clear recently for Jukka when he attended a conference organized by a Finnish mission organization. He said, "I began to keep track of certain words used and to my dismay the term global warming beat out Jesus 52 to 6." Jukka said that there is a

great need for stating the Gospel clearly and keeping it at the center.

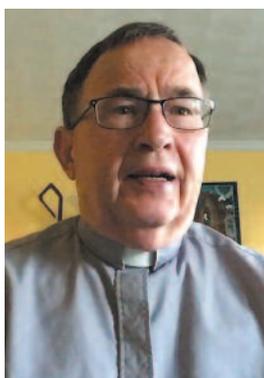
Jukka and Marcus made their comments in video presentations for the June event. Seven people spoke at the June 1 celebration: the Rev. Ron Neustadt, the Rev. Dr. Kathryn (Kit) Kleinhans, Dean of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Dr. Paul Tambyah, a medical doctor, who came from Singapore for the event, the Rev. Dr. Steve Kuhl, former director of the Crossings Community, the Rev. Ruth Hanusa, a hospice chaplain, Sherman Lee, co-executive director of Crossings, and Marie Schroeder, Ed's spouse and partner in ministry.

In addition, others beside Jukka and Marcus sent video presentations: the Rev. Dr. Gerald Mansholt, bishop of the East Central Synod of Wisconsin (ELCA); the Rev. Martin Yee, assistant to the bishop of the Lutheran Church in Singapore; the Rev. Dr. Robert Kolb, Concordia Seminary; the Rev. Dr. Albert Jabs; Marty Lessmann.

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The Rev. Dr. Jukka Kääriäinen, the mission theologian for the National Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.



The Rev. Dr. Marcus Lohrmann, former bishop of the Northwestern Ohio Synod (ELCA).

"There is a great need for stating the Gospel clearly and keeping it at the center."

— Jukka Kääriäinen

Meet Chad Bird, 2020 Conference Speaker

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asked me why I had cheated on her mother. So, I told her. I confessed to her what I had done and the mistakes I made. At the end of it she hugged me and said, ‘I love you, and I forgive you.’”

The second person through whom God worked to pull him from the darkness was Stacy. Chad said she knew everything he had done but loved him anyway. He said her unconditional love for him brought about further change. He became more open in his writing and became more

involved in the church. He and Stacy have been married for six years. Together, they have four children and two grandchildren.

The grace of God that Chad experienced through his daughter and his wife Stacy is what brought him to repentance and back to the community of faith. He said, “The promise of the crucified Christ draws us out of ourselves. Faith in Christ crucified plants us in him. Living in Christ crucified and resurrected from the tomb, we rise from our darkness to new life with him.”

An Appeal for Books for the Bertram Collection

Dr. Robert Bertram, co-founder of Crossings, was generous in giving and lending books from his library. Often, Bob would write detailed notes and comments in the margins of his books, revealing his theological insights. At his death, the books were given to Lutheran School of Theology in St Louis, and then entrusted to Dr. Matthew Becker, professor of theology at Valparaiso University. Becker is in the process of organizing the books to be archived in the Valparaiso

University Library. Anyone who has books from Dr. Robert Bertram’s library is encouraged to send them to Becker at Valparaiso University, 1400 Chapel Dr., Valparaiso, IN 46383. Send questions to Matthew.Becker@valpo.edu.



Dr. Robert Bertram,
co-founder of Crossings

Did you know you can support Crossings by contributing stock or securities?

The gift of an asset (common stock or mutual fund shares) is a great way to make a gift. You may avoid capital gains when giving stock that has appreciated, and you may be eligible for a charitable deduction as well.

For those who are 70 ½ years or older, charitable distributions from an IRA may be especially cost effective — even for those no longer itemizing their taxes. Crossings also welcomes gifts from donor advised funds. Making Crossings a beneficiary of your retirement accounts or your donor advised fund is yet another way to support Crossings.

This information is not intended as legal or financial advice. Please consult your professional advisor before taking action.



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