

CROSSINGS Connection

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

ADVENT 2020 | Vol. 140 | From the Crossings Community, Inc

Becoming Giftful – John 1:1-14

By Bruce K. Modahl

What is this world coming to? According to John 1, the world is coming to a great deal. There is a lot of becoming and begetting going on. All things came into being through the Word that was with God and was God. God spoke the creation into being. Therefore, the creation is God's revelation. God's Word makes things happen. It puts facts on the ground, facts that reveal God to us. Without this Word not one thing came into being. What was begotten in this Word was life and the light of all people, against which the darkness gives way.

Darkness is not always a symbol for the forces hostile to God's rule, but it is in John's Gospel. "What is this world coming to?" is a question we ask after hearing of the latest work of darkness as John would define it. Nicodemus comes crawling out from under cover of darkness to see Jesus. Judas slithers out of the darkness to do his foul work of betrayal. The darkness of the grave smothers both light and life. But the darkness of the grave could not overcome the light that was coming into the world. What the world is coming to is determined by this coming Light and becoming Word.

What is becoming cannot be abstract. The Word of God takes on a particular shape and substance in a particular location. The location was Bethlehem. The substance was human flesh. The shape was that of an infant. John the Baptist was sent by God to announce this begetting.

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a Father's only begotten Son, full of grace and truth." The Greek word for grace is *charis*. One way to translate that word is "gift." So we have "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, full of gifts and truth." Graceful is a word in our vocabulary. I'd like to propose a new word, *giftful*. That would be an appropriate word at this time of year. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, giftful and truthful.

(see page 2)



"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a Father's only begotten Son, full of grace and truth."

Executive Director's Corner

Resiliency has been a major theme of 2020. Resiliency entails keeping what is essential and adapting as needed in a sea of changing conditions.

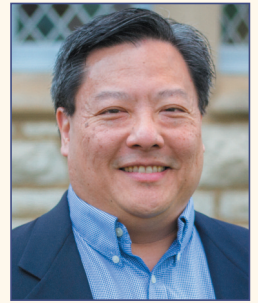
Crossings is no different. We had big plans for a 2021 conference in January. As the pandemic hit, we decided to postpone the conference until 2022 at the earliest. In its place, we kicked off a pilot series with “Table Talk” — an interactive theological discussion based on some of the best papers from the Crossings Library. Attendance and engagement were high at the first two in October and November. We’re expecting to have more people taking part in December. Until we can again gather in person, we will be brainstorming other ideas for the Crossings Community.

Another change is that the Rev. Candice Wassell has taken a call as senior pastor at Faith Lutheran in O’Fallon, Illinois, and decided to step down as Co-Executive Director. Candice will still be contributing behind the scenes, but not on a daily basis. One of her parting gifts was finding a successor in Bethany Dreher. Bethany will serve as the Crossings project and development manager. We look forward to seeing Bethany’s skills and experience in new endeavors going forward.

That leaves me reluctantly with the title of “Executive Director.” I will miss Candice as co-conspirator, but her departure has spurred building a strong team of staff and volunteers. Working with that team, I humbly take on being “E.D.” — a fond nod to Crossings co-founder and wordplay aficionado Ed Schroeder.

In the shadow of what Ed did so well, thank you all for your generous contributions, especially in honor of the 35th Anniversary Newsletter. As we celebrate Advent, Christmas, and a new year, your gifts and involvement will enable Crossings to share the Good News in our continuing publications, in new ways yet to be announced, and eventually again in person.

Blessed Advent,
Sherman Lee, Executive Director



Sherman Lee
Executive Director



Bethany Dreher

Becoming Giftful

(from page 1)

God’s Giftful One came into the world but the world did not recognize its Maker. God’s Giftful One came to his own people, but his own people did not receive him as their Lord. Imagine God’s disappointment at his unacknowledged gift. The darkness spreads. But John counters “his own” with “whoever.” His own people did not receive him *but “whoever” does*. Whoever believes in the Giftful One, God gives power to become. Are you ready for this? He gives power to become children of God.

The Gift becomes us. It looks good on us. It makes us look good to God. It makes us becoming to God. God looks upon us with delight when we put on his Gift to us.

This Gift will never wear out. We cannot outgrow it. It gives us an identity. We are God’s sons and daughters, Jesus’ siblings. The gift also gives us purpose. As our Elder Brother showed us, we go into the world giftful and truthful. And this gift gives us a destination. This gift is always becoming for us. We are always growing into it until our Elder Brother comes to take us to our final destination where he has already prepared a place for us.

Merry Christmas.

Partner, Editor, Translator — A Profile of Marie Schroeder

By Bruce K. Modahl

Thirty-five years ago the founders of the Crossings Community, the Rev. Dr. Ed Schroeder and the Rev. Dr. Bob Bertram, issued the first Crossings newsletter. We commemorated this anniversary with the September issue. We continue the 35th anniversary observance this month with an interview with Marie Schroeder. She and Ed were married from 1955 until his death in 2019. Together, the two of them directed and managed the Crossings Community in its formative years.

Marie Schroeder grew up on the campus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Born November 18, 1932, she was the last of Theodore and Pauline Hoyer's ten children. The Rev. Dr. Theodore Hoyer taught church history at the seminary. The family lived in seminary faculty housing.

Marie attended Concordia Lutheran Church's elementary school in Maplewood, Missouri. She was in the first class of the newly established Lutheran High School in St. Louis.

She had a scholarship to attend Valparaiso University, but the cost was still out of reach for a Lutheran seminary professor with ten children. Her father asked Marie if she would be willing to attend St. John's College, where he had taught before being called to the seminary. St. John's was a junior college operated by the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod in Winfield, Kansas.

Upon finishing the two-year curriculum at St. John's, Marie came back to St. Louis and took a job in the seminary library. She completed a degree in library science at the University College of Washington University. Courses cost \$50 per credit hour. She graduated from Washington University as the class valedictorian.

In those days what mostly was available to girls, she said, was to become a teacher, but she preferred to be a librarian. "Books don't talk back," she commented. Plus, she had a natural inclination to put things in order, a personality trait

her children often comment on.

She met Ed in the seminary library. What caught her attention was that he checked out German books and actually read them. She also noticed that Ed and a classmate set up an art exhibit at the seminary.

Ed and Marie were married at Luther Memorial Lutheran Church in Richmond Heights, Missouri, on July 10, 1955.

Both Ed and Marie applied for Fulbright scholarships. Marie was awarded the scholarship. Ed was not. They went to the University of Hamburg, Germany. Marie took courses in German literature and art history. Ed began his doctoral studies under the direction of Helmut Thielicke. Ed needed to stay a second year for his doctoral course work. During that second year, Marie worked as a translator for the Shell Oil Company.

In 1957, Ed and Marie returned to the states, where Ed had a job waiting for him at Valparaiso University. Their three children — Anne-Marie, Nathan, and Gail — were born during their years in Valpo. Marie played a key role, helping Ed translate German theological works, including books by Leonhard Goppelt, Werner Elert, and Helmut Thielicke. Ed wanted Marie to be named as co-translator, but the publisher refused.

In 1971, Ed received a call to teach at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Those were tumultuous years at Concordia Seminary. The faculty was being investigated for teaching heresy. In the aftermath of the suspension of seminary president John Tietjen in December 1973, the majority of the student body and faculty walked off campus.

"Don't call it a walkout," Marie implored. Employees walk out when they want more money. That had nothing to do with it. The reasons were purely theological." The students and professors
(see page 4)



Marie and Ed Schroeder, 2000

PHOTO COURTESY OF BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH,
UNIVERSITY CITY, MO.

A Profile of Marie Schroeder

(from page 3)

stepped out in faith and formed a new seminary, Concordia Seminary in Exile — Seminex, for short.

Seminex moved into available classroom and office space at the Divinity School of St. Louis University. Students moved from dorm rooms, and most of the faculty moved out of seminary housing to find new homes in the community.

After ten years Seminex moved again, this time to Chicago, Illinois, to become part of the Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago (LSTC). Ed and Marie stayed behind in St. Louis. Ed taught as an adjunct professor at Webster University in Webster Groves. He taught Crossings courses for lay people in the metro St. Louis area and at churches throughout in the country.

During this period, Marie became the primary bread winner. She worked first for the American Diabetes Association and then for Washington

University, where her job title was Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Board of Trustees.

Upon Marie's retirement, Ed and she travelled the world, not as tourists, but as teachers. Marie finally had to face students who talked back. They journeyed to Ethiopia, South Africa, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, China, Vietnam,

Australia, the Philippines, Lithuania, and Bali. They travelled to many more places to attend mission conferences. Ed taught in seminaries and they participated in the life of local congregations.

They also continued to travel in the United States to teach Crossings courses. Marie was not a silent partner in these adventures. For example, I invited them to Lutheridge Camp in Arden, North Carolina, to lead five days of continuing education

for ten pastors who accompanied their youth to confirmation camp.

The Crossings approach is to ground participants in a portion of Scripture, in this case the Gospel reading for the coming Sunday. The second movement is tracking. We talked about our own lives, ministries, and families. The third phase is crossing the Word of God with daily life.

During the tracking portion, we talked at length about problems in our churches and problems deep within ourselves. After this went on for a while, Marie spoke up. She said, "I hear a deep discontent within each of you. What is the source of this holy discomfort?"

The complaining went on a bit longer. Marie spoke up again. "Maybe this discontent is not holy. You speak of problems with budgets and with this and that parishioner. You admit problems with yourselves. But if God is the one who has called you to this ministry, then isn't God the one with whom you have the problem?"

Finally, the group was silent and still. The law had done its job, silencing us, holding us still, preparing us to hear the Word of promise. We were ready to consider the difference it made in our lives to have a crucified and risen Savior.

Ed expanded and diversified Crossings' outreach with his weekly text studies (Sabbatheology) and later with Thursday Theology. Marie played a key role as copy editor and proofreader. Cathy Lessmann said, "Ed always credited Marie's care and companionship for his long life. He also said she taught him everything he knew about computers."

We give thanks for Marie's career of teaching, translating, editing, and management. Her faithful witness to the Gospel renews the Word of promise.



Marie at Gibraltar, 1956

"Ed always credited Marie's care and companionship for his long life."



CROSSINGS
Connection

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Writer/Editor: Bruce Modahl
Executive Secretary: Cathy Lessmann
Executive Director: Sherman Lee
Project and Development Manager: Bethany Dreher

ADVENT 2020

Contributions to Crossings are tax-deductible. Crossings welcomes donor advised fund gifts and charitable IRA distributions.

© December 2020