



CROSSINGS Connection

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

EASTER 2020 | Vol. 137 | From the Crossings Community, Inc

2020 Conference Highlights:

Bared Souls and Great Music

In the evaluations of the 2020 Crossings conference, January 26–29 at Our Lady of the Snows conference center in Belleville, Illinois, the speakers received praise for their vulnerability as they proclaimed the gospel. “So much baring of souls! So much wonderful music,” wrote one. “The Broken Life” was the conference theme. (The papers presented can be accessed at crossings.org/recap.)

The Rev. Dr. Marcus Felde led off on Sunday night with a Crossings primer that presented the six-step Bible-study process as relevant and joyful. On Monday morning, the Rev. Lori Cornell, in her address titled “Faith Enough for the Broken Places,” surveyed personal, ecclesial, and societal dimensions of the broken life. She then proclaimed the good news of the Broken One who makes us whole. Jesus reclaims us and reorients us toward our neighbor.

Author and podcaster Chad Bird presented “Wounded Prayers: Relearning the Language of Lament.” He lamented the trajectory of his life from Hebrew professor to truck driver, from married then divorced, at the top of his game but then disgraced. His tanker truck stuck in the mud in the middle of the night, waiting for the wrecker to pull him free, Bird reached for an old copy of the psalms he kept in the truck. He prayed to God the words of lament God had provided. He talked about how over the years, piece by piece, the Lord of patience and mercy glued the shards of his life back together.

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The Rev. Glenn Monson preached Monday evening for the Feast of the Presentation of our Lord.



David Zahl, the founder of Mockingbird Ministries presenting his keynote, “Speaking Grace in a World of #GettingReal.”



Conference speakers (left to right) the Rev. Lori Cornell, Sue Westhorp, and Chad Bird led the Wednesday morning panel discussion entitled “Mended and Mending.”

An Easter Crossing

By Bruce K. Modahl

I told the confirmation class about a stone that was rolled in front of a tomb in the Fischer Price neighborhood where my family lived. We all put in backyard fences to keep the children and pets safe. Rick Freeman put in a stockade fence. He asked the neighbors on each side to pay for half the cost of the section of fence that ran between their properties. He did all the work. The neighbor on one side ponied up, but Bob Stubler on the other side said no. He was on the corner and had more fence to put in than anyone else and no one to share any

cost with him. And besides, he did not want to contribute to the cost of that ugly stockade fence Rick had inflicted on his yard. So there.

Bob set to work digging the postholes and nailing up the fence. After several weekends of work, he was about to close the gap between his and Rick's fence. Rick came out of the house and said, "You can't attach your fence to mine. If you haven't noticed, I set my fence a foot back from the property line and you cannot bring your fence onto my property." So there.

It was late in the day, so Bob quit work to weigh his options. That night Bob's family put their dog on the deck, on a leash since the fence wasn't finished. The deck was about four feet off the ground. The dog had plenty of line to go up and down the stairs but in the night the dog got the line all tangled up in the porch furniture. Somehow it fell or jumped from the deck and did not have enough leash. The family came out the next morning to find the dog hanging off the side of the deck.

The children cried; the neighbors feuded. They each talked bad about the other to the other neighbors. "What would it take to make peace?" I asked the confirmands. "Jesus," said one. (In confirmation class that is always a good answer.) "But," I countered, "how would that work? Stand outside their house and yell 'Jesus!?' What would it take?" Another student spoke up: "One of them has to be the bigger person and go to talk to the other one saying, 'I don't want us to be enemies.'" Exactly, and here is the paradox. To be the big person takes humility. It means risking rejection and name calling and maybe even physical violence.

And that is exactly what God did. God said, "I don't want there to be enmity any longer between human beings and me." So God the Son emptied himself and took on our flesh. He became obedient to the mission God the Father entrusted to him: death on the cross. There he took to himself all the rejection and anger and humiliation that enmity produces. The great stone was rolled against the tomb. But, on Easter, God rolled that stone away.

Jesus was raised not to get even with his enemies but to invite them to new life in him. It is a bigger life, free of the constraints of fear, in the land beyond the border of keeping score and getting even.

From the beginning Jesus taught his followers to see into a world from which the stone has been rolled back. In his Sermon on the Mount he directed our sight across the border from the realm of an eye for an eye to a territory in which we love our enemies and pray for those who talk us down. With his powerful works he sent demons on the run, gave the blind their sight, made the lame walk, and raised the dead to life. In so doing, he threw open a window to the kingdom of God. Can we see? Are we able to see where in the world that great stone is rolled up against life? Do we have eyes to see the power of the resurrection rolling back that stone? Can we be those people who set their own resurrection-empowered shoulders to the task?



From the beginning, Jesus taught his followers to see into a world from which the stone has been rolled back.

New Crossings Video Series Begins: “Faith Seeking Understanding”

Pastor Steve Albertin has created a new video series that seeks to apply the Crossings perspective on faith and life to a variety of issues faced by Christians today. The genesis of the series began in the last congregation Pastor Albertin served before his retirement. He was concerned that his church needed to make more effective use of visual media in order to better connect with a world increasingly dominated by screens and images.

Steve also wanted a simple, accessible way to address many of the questions the people in his congregation were asking about faith and life. “Faith Seeking Understanding” began as a series of short videos that sought to answer ordinary questions submitted by members of his congregation.

Steve was convinced that the Crossings community faced a similar kind of problem. It needed to make its ministry more accessible to a broader audience that was not all that unlike his congregation: immersed in visual media, living busy lives with many demands for their attention, yet hungry for ways to better understand their faith and better connect it to their daily lives.

The initial series of “Faith Seeking Understanding” is ten 4-5 minute videos that seek to do just that. The videos address a series of simple and ordinary questions that Steve hears many people ask in the church today. These questions often address the most basic and fundamental aspects of the

Christian faith and life. Two groups of short questions accompany each of the videos that can facilitate their use in a variety of small group situations. The first group of questions for use before viewing the video set the context. The second group of questions for use after viewing the video dig deeper into issues raised by the video. They also encourage further application to the daily lives of the viewers.

The initial series of “Faith Seeking Understanding” addresses these questions:

- What is Crossings?
- What is Law and Gospel?
- What is the Crossings Method?
- How does the Gospel work? The Sweet Swap
- Do you have Yahbut’s Disease?
- What is Christian Freedom?
- Where have you seen God in your life this week?
- Will everyone be saved?
- Why do bad things happen to good people?
- Fake Gospel or Real Gospel?

If you’re signed up to receive our weekly email offerings, expect to see the first video in March. All of the videos will be available on our website in March, as well.

—From the Crossings Board

2020 Crossings Conference

Participants at the January Crossings conference in Belleville, Illinois, joined in worship at Christ the King chapel for the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord.



2020 Conference Highlights:

Bared Souls and Great Music

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David Zahl, the founder of Mockingbird Ministries, surveyed social media in his address “Speaking Grace in a World of #GettingReal.” He described how the lives displayed on social media are performances. He detailed how the drive to perform on many fronts has young people asking not “How should I live?” but “Why should I live?”

For Zahl, God’s grace is a reprieve from performance-ism. The value of life is not in what we achieve but in who is affiliated with us. God in Christ comes down whatever ladder of success we are climbing and meets us at the point we are falling off.

The Rev. James Brooks serves the north Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago as a parish pastor and as a senior staff member at Lawndale Christian Health Center. In his address, titled “Call and Response,” he told the story of a young teenager in his congregation hit by gunfire. That night from her hospital bed she posted on her Facebook page “I’m good.” Brooks responded, it’s *not* good that young people are shot on their way to school or sitting in their homes. It’s *not* good that

people live with food insecurity. It’s *not* good that our community is neglected. The response he proclaimed was, “God is

up to something.” God is responding by reaching’s into his own broken life and into that of the congregation and community Brooks serves.

Karen Clapp and Sue Westhorp spoke of the challenges daily life brings to faithful living. Clapp addressed her family’s life in one of the neglected neighborhoods Brooks spoke about. A neighbor across the street was killed in a shooting. Gunfire broke out in front of their house as Clapp’s family sat on the front porch eating supper. They struggled with whether or not to stay. They decided to stay in the neighborhood she calls a community of saints.

Sue Westhorp serves the Lutheran Church of Australia as a lay worker in pastoral care and music. Currently, she manages a center for clinical pastoral education. Her address focused on her personal brokenness waiting for the Lutheran church in Australia to approve the ordination of women. She attended seminary 20 years ago.

As a CPE manager, Westhorp trains future male pastors. The last time women’s ordination came up for a vote she was certain it would pass. It did not. Through her tears and brokenness of what she calls her Holy Saturday, God faithfully pulls her together and puts her to work in ministry.

The Rev. Brian Stoffregen and the Rev. Dr. Chris Repp accompanied morning prayer and compline on keyboard and cello. A small orchestra including melodica, clarinet, trombone, cello, and more gathered to accompany the Monday night service of Holy Communion.



The Rev. Martin Yee from the Lutheran Church in Singapore poses a question to a conference speaker.



Karen Clapp described the communion of saints in her neighborhood on the west side of Chicago.



“God is up to something,” was the refrain in the Rev. James Brooks’ keynote, “Call and Response.”



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