



CROSSINGS Connection

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

PENTECOST 2021 | Vol. 142 | From the Crossings Community, Inc

Experiencing the Spirit's Nudge and Kick

By the Rev. Rachel Stout

One of my earliest memories of church is Pentecost Sunday. I think I was three years old. My mother wore a red dress for the occasion. We sat in the balcony of the sanctuary. I remember the lector reading Acts 2:1-21. I remember getting stuck on the phrase, "Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them" (Acts 2:3).

I remember looking around at the others in the balcony, and down at those seated on the floor. I wondered when the fire was going to come. It was the day of Pentecost after all. Acts tells us this is the day it all happens. My three-year-old mind assumed God would act in a similar way just as he had on that particular Pentecost recorded in Acts 2.

I did not see tongues of fire that Pentecost Sunday morning at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Kiester, Minnesota. There was not the rush of a violent wind filling the sanctuary. Nor did we speak in our native languages. But I was privy to the work of God's Holy Spirit in and through that congregation as I grew up. I was nurtured in my faith, given space to ask questions, loved and cared for within the walls of that church. I was confirmed at the altar rail.

Years later, I knelt on the steps going into the chancel on the day of my ordination. I was carried by the congregation's prayers and songs the day we buried my Dad.

Over the years, I have experienced, both personally and in congregations I have served, the Holy Spirit as a gentle dove and all-consuming flame. I have experienced the Spirit's gentle nudge and her not-so-gentle kick in the butt. I have felt her peace and her persistence. When I look around and wonder when the fire is going to come, when God's Holy Spirit is going to act, when the rush of the wind is going to sweep us off our feet, I am continually surprised by the large and small, ordinary, and extraordinary ways in which this happens.

I really was a presumptuous three-year-old. I presumed God would act on that Pentecost Sunday in the same way or a similar way as in Acts 2. I am

(see page 4)



"I have experienced the Holy Spirit as a gentle dove and all-consuming flame.... I have felt her peace and her persistence."

Executive Director's Corner

As I shook off the side effects of my second Covid vaccination, I was struck by the contrast of planning this year's annual retreat of the Crossings' board of directors compared to last year's retreat. Again this June, the board will meet via Zoom, but the decision last year to meet via Zoom was a hasty, reactive decision. We did our best and focused on what could and could not be done in pandemic mode.

This year's planning calls for more intentionality in terms of frequency, length, and types of sessions. This intentionality is necessary because of what's known as "Zoom Fatigue" and inspires our creativity to make the best use of our time and energy. That creativity will, we hope, make up for some of what we lose by not being in person: the informal conversations and the spontaneous Spirit-filled thoughts caught in between delicious cooking and warm hospitality of Cathy and Gary Lessmann, who open their St. Louis home for the entire board to gather (room and board!) for a few days.

Crossings learned a lot in 2020, introducing virtual programming like "Table Talk" and an online book club. Your generous financial support and your involvement have made these innovations possible. Thank you!

In the months ahead, we'll develop other such events and multimedia content. We'll also consider when and how to host in-person events, such as the traditional January international conferences or seminars. We all crave the return of being able to see you again. And we're also working on the possibility of "hybrid" events, for people to join both onsite or online. More to come in future communications.



Sherman Lee
Executive Director

Online Discussions Spark Insights

Covid-19 restrictions led the Crossings Community to explore new avenues for nurturing our learning community. A book group takes place every other Thursday. The group discussed *A Time for Confessing* by the Rev. Dr. Robert Bertram, co-founder of Crossings. The group continues to meet via Zoom and is discussing *Gift and Promise: The Augsburg Confession and the Heart of Christian Theology* by the Rev. Dr. Edward Schroeder, the founder of Crossings.

Table Talk is a second online discussion. Ahead of each monthly meeting, participants read an essay.

In May, the Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker of Valparaiso University led the discussion on the essay "How Our Sins Were Christ's," written by Dr. Bertram.

In January, the Rev. Dr. Kathryn Kleinhans,

dean of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, presented "The Orders of Creation — Some Reflections on the History and Place of the Term in Systematic Theology," an essay written by Dr. Schroeder.

Dr. Kleinhans said the paper was of particular interest to her. From a young age, she felt a call to ordained ministry, but the church she grew up in made a distinction between the orders of creation and the orders of redemption. Schroeder's essay argues that as redeemed people we are free to structure society in different ways.

On July 27 at 1:00 pm Central Time, Steve Hitchcock will lead a discussion with the Rev. Candice Wassell and the Rev. Dr. Bruce Modahl. The topic will be "Preaching the Proclamation: Keeping the Gospel in our Good Works."

To take part in the Book Study or Table Talk, email Cathy Lessmann at info@crossings.org.

Meet Bethany Dreher, Crossings Project and Development Manager

In the last issue of the newsletter, Crossings Executive Director Sherman Lee announced that the Rev. Candice Wassell accepted a call to be the senior pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in O'Fallon, Illinois. In this new position, Candice found it necessary to step down from her role as Co-Executive Director of Crossings. Sherman said that among her parting gifts was finding her replacement, Bethany Dreher.

As with Sherman, Bethany works part time for Crossings. As Project and Development Manager, she helps in managing leadership work sessions, maintaining the website, and updating the Crossings database. She plays a key role in fundraising projects and participates with Sherman and the board of directors in big picture planning. When conferences resume, she will also work on conference planning.

Her Crossings story began when she was a high school student at Lutheran South in St. Louis. She took a class taught by Crossings co-founder, the Rev. Dr. Ed Schroder. She was drawn in by his personality and enthusiasm. Her familiarity with Crossings was nurtured by her family's friendship with Cathy Lessmann, the longtime Executive Secretary of Crossings.

Her face may be familiar to recent Crossings conference participants. She attended conferences as part of her job with Unify Creative Agency. Unify filmed the conferences, did the video work, and produced the Crossings film series.

After high school, Bethany attended Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri. She majored in non-profit management. Upon graduation, she worked for Habitat for Humanity in Atlanta, Georgia. She began as an administrative assistant. She moved on from that role to work on construction projects, headed up human resources, kept the books of the organization, and wrote grant proposals.

Her nickname at Habitat was "grandma." She was the youngest person on staff but after

12 years with the organization she had the longest tenure. It was said, "If you want to know anything, ask grandma."

She met her husband Paul in their last semester of college. They and their two elementary school age children, Tyler and Nathan, live in St. Louis, Missouri. They belong to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Manchester, Missouri.

Cathy Lessmann said, "We are most fortunate to have Bethany working with us. She has a solid theological background and cares about Crossings. She is efficient and always easy to work with."

"Bethany has been a wonderful addition to the team," commented Sherman Lee. "I was already familiar with her project management skills from her work at Unify. She has distinct savviness about how to craft programs and communications to newer audiences. When I consider these and also her infectious enthusiasm and passion during our virtual meetings, I am upbeat about the future of Crossings."



Bethany Dreher with husband Paul and their children, Tyler and Nathan.

Experiencing the Spirit's Nudge and Kick

(from page 1)

still presumptuous in that regard, though forty years older. I presume God has acted, acts now, and will continue to act in the world. I presume that God's will is done even and, in spite of us. I presume that the fire will come, and it stirs us into holy activity in the name of Christ and for the sake of the world.

Are you, reader, that presumptuous? To be sure, it is easy to get discouraged. It is easy to look at ourselves as well as the world around us and assume that God has given us up for lost. But scripture reminds us over and over that our God will neither leave us nor forsake us.

The Rev. Rachel Stout is guest columnist for this issue of Crossings Connection. She serves First Lutheran Church in Parkers Prairie in central Minnesota and shares some of her time with Elmo Lutheran Church, named for the township in which the church resides.

Rachel also serves as a consultant with the Church Innovations Institute. She hosts the institute's twice-a-month podcast, and consults with congregations. Rachel says her great joy is ministering with people who see that the gospel is transformational; it's good



Pastor Stout driving her children to school on a Minnesota winter day.

news that changes peoples' lives.

Church Innovations Institute partners with churches to innovate their capacities to be renewed in God's mission. Discover more about CI at churchinnovations.org.

Rachel grew up on a farm in southern Minnesota, graduated from Augsburg College in Minneapolis and, in 2006, from Luther Seminary in St. Paul. She and her husband, who is also a pastor, have three children, Soren, Anna, and Bridget, ranging in age from eight to thirteen.

Support Crossings' Mission

Crossings is an organization that seeks to connect the Gospel with daily life, but Crossings is also a community of individuals connected by our trust in the promise of that Gospel. As we make and sustain those connections, we fulfill the mission of Crossings.

These Gospel-focused connections are facilitated by a handful of part-time employees and dozens of

volunteers across the country. And their work to help all of us stay connected — through online resources and publications like this newsletter — is made possible by generous gifts from individuals around the world.

If you haven't sent a gift recently, please use the response envelope included with this newsletter. And take a moment to send along the names and addresses of anyone you think would benefit from being connected to Crossings. Thank you.



CROSSINGS
Connection
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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

PENTECOST 2021

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

© June 2021