

CROSSINGS Connection

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

MICHAELMAS 2021 | Vol. 143 | From the Crossings Community, Inc

John 11:32–44

Come and See: The Festival of All Saints

By Bruce K. Modahl

Jesus waited for his friend Lazarus to die before traveling to Bethany. He doesn't even get there in time for the visitation. Martha and Mary greet him with a veiled reproach. People in the neighborhood whisper their contempt. All Jesus can say for himself is, "Where have you laid him?" "Come and see," they answer.

John Kysar says John's gospel is like the seamless outer garment Jesus wore. If you pull on one thread, you discover the thread extends from one end of the garment to the other. Thus, midway through the gospel, in chapter 11, pull on "Come and see" and watch for the movement on both ends of that seamless garment.

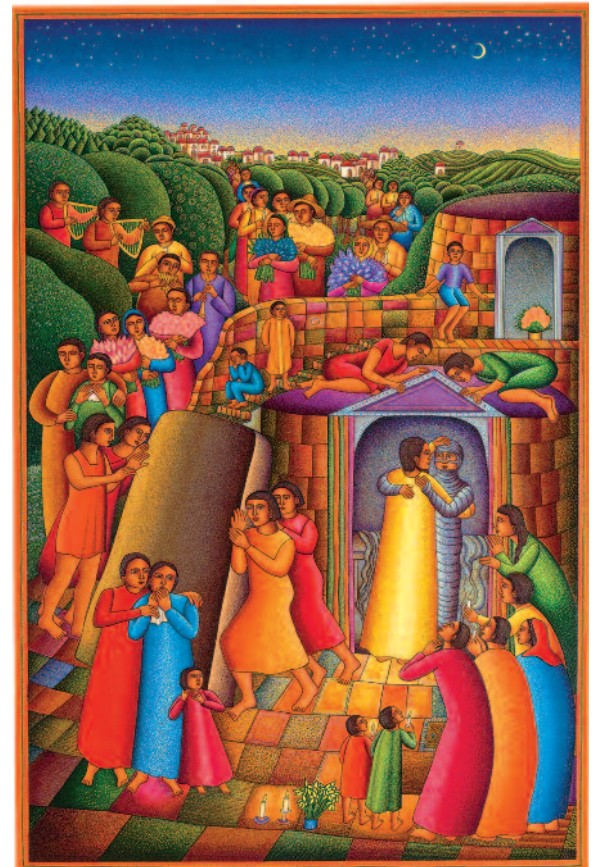
In John 1, Philip asks Jesus "Where are you abiding?" Jesus answers "Come and see." Philip extends the invitation to Nathaniel, and they join in abiding with Jesus.

In John 11, Jesus asks, "Where have you laid Lazarus?" They answer, "Come and see." They lead him to that gash in the earth where they have buried Jesus' friend Lazarus. Come and see his abiding place, the grave. You, Messiah, come and see what you are up against.

How does Jesus respond to death? We need to know because that is what we come to do on All Saints Day. We read the names of those in the congregation who died in the past year. We recall the deaths of family and friends. The poet asks, "How do we arm ourselves against death?" Jesus armed himself with tears. Jesus wept. Jesus' tears bind him to us, fellow human to fellow human, a weepy fellowship.

Jesus met death with tears. And he was angry. I know the text says Jesus was greatly disturbed and deeply moved. But everywhere else those Greek words are translated as angry and indignant.

(see page 4)



TAKE AWAY THE STONE. Copyright 2005 by John August Swanson. Serigraph, 30" x 20". www.JohnAugustSwanson.com

... Lazarus, peering
from his closeted tomb,
his wormy shroud
left behind with the world's victories.
Now he wears the raiment of death's
failed ravagement, stepping forth
in his new body.

— from *Dead Clothes*, by Philip C. Kolin

Executive Director's Corner

The board of directors of Crossings met via Zoom for three days in mid-June. With only two part-time employees, the board plays a key role both in governing the organization and in carrying out work that fulfills our mission.

We all missed our usual in-person gathering in St. Louis. It's our annual planning retreat and business meeting of the board. But this year's Zoom meeting provided more structured discussion, and much was accomplished.

A new executive committee was elected. We are excited about the influx of energy: president, Jerry Burce; vice president, Nathan Hall; secretary, Cathy Lessmann; and the newest board member, Chris Neumann as our treasurer. Chris is a member of Messiah Lutheran Church in Fairview Park, Ohio. In his May 2019 Thursday Theology reflection, Chris put his law-gospel theology to work in his role as a volunteer basketball coach.

In addition to these able leaders, the board benefits from the time and talent of Chris Repp, Steve Albertin, Lori Cornell, Robin Lütjohann, and Kris Fahey.

Along with the rest of the country and world, the Crossings board wonders how best to emerge from the pandemic. To reach the largest possible audience, we plan to resume with our traditional January Seminar in Belleville, Illinois (just outside of St. Louis), while also making the seminar available online. More about the two-day event in January can be found in this newsletter and at crossings.org/conference.

The Crossings board brainstormed and prayerfully considered where God is calling us. We discussed reinvigorating our focus on young pastors, a possible collaboration with the Lutheran School of Theology (St. Louis) on a preaching class (again with online options), and exploring and experimenting with ways to communicate the Gospel with more than just text. More to come!



Sherman Lee
Executive Director

Please Support Our Writers

Because of your interest and support, Crossings is recruiting and featuring new writers for both the weekly text studies and Thursday Theology. Your financial support makes it possible to provide extra editorial work to cultivate and enlist new writers.

This growing "cloud of witnesses" is essential as Crossings seeks to engage and equip seminary students, new clergy, and more lay people in our shared mission of "crossing the Gospel with daily life."

If you haven't recently made a gift to Crossings, please use the enclosed reply card and envelope to send off your contribution. You may also make a secure online contribution at crossings.org/give. As a tax-exempt nonprofit organization, Crossings welcomes gifts from donor-advised funds as well as charitable IRA distributions.

Thank you for helping sustain and expand our community of faith and learning.

Lori Cornell: Editor Extraordinaire

By Steve Hitchcock

When you do something once a week every week of the year, the numbers really add up. As a result, the Rev. Lori Cornell, editor of the Crossings lectionary text studies, has compiled a remarkable record: nearly 1,500 of the weekly online offerings.

More than 25 years ago, Crossings Co-Founder Ed Schroeder seized on the internet as a way to pass on his wealth of knowledge about law-gospel theology. He began posting brief online studies of the Gospel appointed for the following Sunday. With his usual wordplay, Ed called this posting “Sabbatheology.” He structured his brief studies according to the Crossing’s six-step method of diagnosis and prognosis.

After Ed retired as Crossings’ executive director, Dr. Mike Hoy edited the weekly text studies until Lori, with experience in editing and publishing, took on the responsibility.

Lori was an ideal “generational bridge” between the founders because she was a student of Robert Bertram, the other Crossings Co-Founder. Bob was teaching at LSTC, and he was the professor of Lori’s first seminary course.

Lori also participated in the Christ the King workshops that Bob created to bring clergy and laity together to cross daily lives with the gospel. “Those workshops were a game changer for me, to take the gospel into life experience, to get down in the dirt with the good news,” Lori says.

Lori took on text studies as she was moving from her first call at Christ Lutheran in Lakewood, Washington, to serve as pastor of Calvary Lutheran Church in Federal Way, Washington. Her two daughters were then three and six years old. Now, with her daughters fully grown and on their own, she’s headed to the other side of the Cascades to serve as Lead Pastor at St. Mark’s Lutheran in Spokane, Washington.

In the fall of 2020, the 16 writers who author the weekly text studies met in two workshops.

This was the first time that many of the writers had interacted with each other. What struck Lori is that “we all want to hold ourselves accountable for the product we provide. We all have a commitment to the deep mission of these text studies.”

As an editor, Lori seeks to streamline and filter what she receives from the writers. The writers range from those with thirty years of experience to those with fewer than ten years. Most are pastors, a few are academics, and three are lay people. More recently she has recruited a former intern and a seminarian to join the ranks.

“I find the longer they have written these text studies, the briefer — and more playful — they are. Younger writers are still figuring it out.”

All these years of editing, Lori says, have made her a better preacher. It is a “good discipline for me. I find myself inspired and better prepared for preaching.”

The Crossings six-step method includes three of diagnosis and three of prognosis: 1. external problem; 2. internal problem; 3. eternal problem; 4. eternal solution; 5. internal solution; and 6. external solution.

This methodology serves the larger purpose of inspiring preaching that achieves what Ed Schroeder called “the double dip-stick”: make full use of Christ benefits and provide maximum comfort to the hearer.

Or, as Lori puts it, an accountability to the six steps helps preachers be truly honest in their preaching. We are able to say, “God loves us where we are the weakest.”



The Rev. Lori Cornell

Come and See: The Festival of All Saints

(from page 1)

Jesus was angry at the way death disfigures God's good creation, turning it into a stench. Jesus was angry at the way death sows doubt even in the likes of Martha. Death postures; it poses as the final abiding place for us and the whole universe. That makes Jesus angry. Jesus faces death armed with tears and with anger.

How can we be otherwise armed when our eyes are fixed on that gash in the earth, the empty place at the table, the absence in the bed space next to us? Is there any other place to look? We can try to look away, to turn our gaze to something more pleasant.

Jesus looked upward, but did not look away. With the grave still in his line of sight he looked up, and in the hearing of Mary and Martha said, "Father, I thank you." "Eucharist," he prayed. He faced death

armed also with faith in his Father. And with that Jesus drew their eyes up to him. All eyes were on him. What they came to see was Jesus. Jesus ordered them to take the stone away and commanded Lazarus to come out.

As you pull the thread "Come and see," look to the other end of John's gospel. Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed. She stood weeping and asked the one she took for the gardener, "Where have you laid him?" "Mary," he said, drawing her eyes to him. Mary sees her Lord and ours risen from the grave. He has the power over death. With Mary, we see that Jesus, not the grave, is our final abiding place. We face death armed with tears, with anger, and with one more thing — with faith in Jesus.

2022 Crossings Seminar:

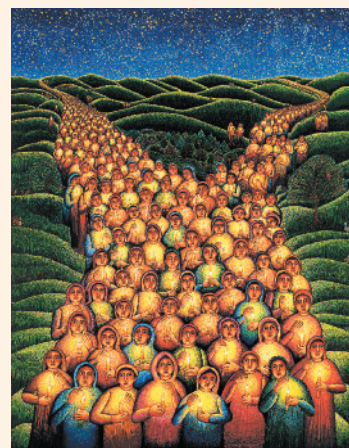
The Promising Community: "Can I Get a Witness"

Sunday, January 23 – Tuesday, January 25, 2022

Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, Illinois

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

- The Rev. Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore, Rector and Dean of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina
- The Rev. Dr. Kit Kleinhans, Dean of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio
- The Rev. Robin Lutjohann, Pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts



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Serigraph, 30 3/4" x 24" www.JohnAugustSwanson.com

For more information and early registration, visit crossings.org/conference.



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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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