



CROSSINGS Connection

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

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Christmas

By Jill Peláez Baumgaertner

He comes small as slender silence,
Still as mist,
Breath soft as feather float.
Not for birth's sake born
But for our washing and our feeding.
An immensity of Word,
This infant lowly stabled,
Whose voice could shake the wilderness,
Uproot cedars,
Strip the forest bare,
Here breathes air crisp as the skin of snow
And sleeps on hay.

Epiphany

By Jill Peláez Baumgaertner

The eyeless dark of mole, worm, coffin.
Earth snugs them. Small breathing
or none. But then the light from Magi's
star's first gleam and sign, the gloom
transformed from shade to shine.
Light streaming. Deep, full breathing.
Eyes muscled open. And Christ at first
a fog, a blur. Enigma. But then arms raised,
so clearly Christus Victor.

**Jill Peláez
Baumgaertner**

has served for 25 years as poetry editor of *Christian Century*. She is Professor Emerita of English at Wheaton College, where she also was Dean of Humanities and Religious Studies.

"Christmas" and "Epiphany" first appeared in *Time of Singing*, Vol. 46 (Winter 2019/20), 7, 16.

Executive Director's Corner

Thank you for your financial support of our Crossings ministry. It has been a remarkable year. More individuals than ever before are contributing. As a result, we are doing more and reaching more people.

Please consider reaching out to your colleagues and friends who would benefit from what Crossings has to offer. Forward a Sabbathology column, or a Thursday Theology blog post. Pass along a copy of the newsletter. If you participate in Table Talk or the book discussion group, let others know about it and invite them to join. If you have not sampled the Crossings Film Series, please do so. Recommend the series to others.

I am grateful for my colleague Bethany Dreher, who leads projects and drives fundraising for our expanding ministry; Steve Albertin and Cathy Lessmann's leadership of Table Talk; for Chris Repp, who leads the book discussion group; Lori Cornell, our Sabbathology editor; and Bruce Modahl, the editor of the newsletter, *Crossings Connection*.

Jerry Burce, the president of Crossings, inspires me with his leadership skills, theological acumen, and pastoral heart. For years, he has edited the Thursday Theology blog. Recently, he has recruited an editorial team and enlisted new writers.

I am excited about the upcoming seminar, and not only because of the presenters and topic, but also because we will again be gathering in person *and* people will also be able to join online. The enclosed flyer gives the details. I encourage you to recruit others to join you for the seminar.

I pray for you a joyous Christmas and a blessed Epiphany.

P.S. The library of Crossings co-founder, the Rev. Dr. Robert W. Bertram, has been collected at Valparaiso University. It is available at the following link: archives.valpo.edu/repositories/3/resources/68.



Sherman Lee
Executive Director

Help Sustain Crossings in 2022

With your year-end gift to Crossings, you can help make sure that the six-step lectionary studies and Thursday Theology continue to appear each week. Almost all of Crossing's activities — like Table Talk and the book discussion group — are led by volunteers, but your financial support underwrites the technology that makes these online forums possible.

Please use the enclosed reply card and envelope to make your gift to Crossings. You may also make a secure online donation 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 our community of faith and learning.

Trusting in God

By The Rev. Kris Fahey

“Trus’ – me – Gawd” is a colloquial saying in an African American dialect used by people in the South Carolina coastal region. This saying is slang for a narrow, dug-out canoe the dictionary describes as being “so cranky that one who ventures forth upon the coastal waters must have faith in God to bring her through.”

Our initial problem as human beings, beginning with Adam and Eve, is not having enough faith in God’s promises. We, too, waffle back and forth about God’s boundaries and what we can get away with. “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God not say that we could eat any of the fruit in the garden?’” God must be withholding the best from us, we falsely assume.

We waffle back and forth about what we can get away with when it comes to being righteous. To that thinking and acting, God says, “I am the Lord your God, do not have other gods. Trust Me, God!”

Did God really promise to tend us like a loving shepherd? People do worry that God won’t help us. Why climb down into a narrow, dugout canoe and navigate the ocean of the South Carolina coast? The ability to trust is what is needed. How can we have faith in God’s love and tender mercy. And how can we be bold instead of timid?

God has saved all people from the consequences of our sin. It is not by our own efforts. God works salvation for us through Jesus Christ crucified by human beings and raised by God. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, God promises new life now and in the future.

We’re still sinners. But now we are sinners trusting God’s work on our behalf. Sinners who

know about God’s “for-us-ness” can now dare to trust in Jesus’ words that he, by way of his own cross and resurrection, forgives sinners, gives new life now, and new life yet to come.

God’s gospel, given to all through Christ’s death and resurrection, is for doubters, who are currently in the middle of not loving and trusting God, because we’re too afraid. God is for us in our doubts and lack of faith. And God’s last Word to everyone is the Word of mercy and love to all through Jesus.



The Rev. Kris Fahey

The Rev. Kris Fahey is guest columnist for this issue of the newsletter. She has served on the Crossings board for five years. While a student at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, she was planning her wedding. But her fiancé had a job in St. Louis. She brought her dilemma to her advisor, the Rev. Dr. Pat Keifert. He told her she could continue her education at Eden Seminary in St. Louis. And she could take her Lutheran Confessions courses in St. Louis from Crossings’ co-founders, the Rev. Dr. Bob Bertram and the Rev. Dr. Ed Schroeder.

Pastor Fahey was ordained in 1987 and served parishes in St. Louis, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. She is now retired but continues to serve as interim pastor and pulpit supply. She lives with her husband, Tom, in Lacrosse, Wisconsin.

**"We're still sinners. But now we are sinners
trusting God's word on our behalf."**

Tom Law, Crossings' Tech Wizard

When websites were new on the scene, Crossings' co-founder, the Rev. Dr. Ed Schroeder, made an appeal in the Crossings newsletter, asking if there was someone who could help with technology. Tom Law responded to Ed's message saying, "I can do that." Tom recalls that appeal coming in the fall of 1998.

Crossings' secretary, Cathy Lessmann, is effusive in her praise for Tom. She says, "I believe Crossings would not be in existence today if it weren't for Tom Law." She calls him a God-sent angel, conscientious, and a quiet giant.

Tom met Ed at a Crossings' workshop held at Faith Lutheran Church in Marion, Iowa, a suburb of Cedar Rapids. Tom described learning that a lay person can dig into the Bible and tie everything back to Jesus. What he learned has stuck with him through the years. He says he looks for people he can dig into scripture with.

Tom described how the diagnosis/prognosis outline for studying the Bible opened his mind. "It also breaks through to our hearts," he said. He paraphrased a popular country and western song "Joy" by King and Country. "Somebody, please pass the megaphone. Preach joy to my heart. It's hard, but I don't want it to be a heart of stone."

Tom worked for an aerospace company. When he started the job, all communication took place by phone and mail. Before repair work could begin, the

company called in part numbers to the manufacturer. The manufacturer then sent documents by mail. Days passed before repair work could begin. After Tom brought the company online, the days turned into hours.

Tom also worked for the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Some older readers will remember standing in multiple lines, registering for classes one by one. Tom eliminated the lines when he brought the registration process online.

Before Sherman Lee became executive director of Crossings, he volunteered alongside Tom. Sherman said, "Tom Law was an integral part of Crossings' history for his contributions to its website, shepherding Crossings' reach from paper-only to digital publication. Just as important was his sending out two weekly online publications (a text study and the essay known as Thursday Theology). Although 'old hat' by today's standards, this was a major achievement in the late 1990's and is the backbone of Crossings' online library."

Sherman concluded, "Tom not only fulfilled Crossings' tech needs for many years, he often anticipated them. He joyfully gave his time and talent to the online portion of Crossings' mission. It was always delightful collaborating with him."

Currently, Tom is a software support engineer for Collins Aerospace in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He hopes people continue to be inspired by Crossings in the same way he was.



Tom Law

Tom learned that a lay person can dig into the Bible and tie everything back to Jesus.



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Connection
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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