



CROSSINGS Connection

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

EASTER 2022 | Vol. 145 | From the Crossings Community, Inc

John 21:1–19, The Third Sunday of Easter

Using Christ's Benefits

By Bruce K. Modahl

John seems to have a hard time letting go. He brought his Gospel to a nice conclusion with the final words of chapter 20, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book." Then he goes on to write in his book some of those other signs.

Chapter 21 sounds like an anticlimax. Indeed, many Johannine

scholars think chapter 21 was written later and tacked onto the end of the Gospel.

I propose chapter 21 is not anticlimax but aftermath. In the aftermath of cross, empty tomb, and Jesus breathing out the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, John picks up his theme of abundance. He shows us the disciples living in and making use of Christ's abundant benefits.

Jesus provides a big haul of fish, a baker's twelve dozen of

fat, juicy ones. In the same way, he provided a hundred and fifty gallons of wine for the wedding in Cana. And in the same way, he took five loaves of bread and two fish and fed a hungry 5,000.

On Easter Sunday, Jesus comes asking if we have any food. We answer, "Yes Lord, some bread and wine." With it he feeds us his own body and blood, the very means by which he has redeemed us. And there is enough
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Jesus provides a
big haul of fish....

On the third Sunday
of Easter, he comes
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THE GREAT CATCH

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Serigraph, 22 1/8" x 31 3/4"

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Covid-19 Reporting from the Front Lines

Crossings veterans, Susan Mitchell and the Rev. Nathan Hall were asked to reflect on the ways the Covid-19 pandemic has been addressed in sermons, how the virus has affected the life and ministry of their congregations, and how it affects them personally.

Susan Mitchell first encountered Crossings at a workshop led in the early 1990s by Crossings co-founder, the Rev. Dr. Ed Schroeder. The weekend event took place at Christ Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Temple Terrace, Florida, where Susan and her husband Bob were members at the time. In 2019, Susan attended the Crossings conference, and she currently participates in the online Table Talk and book discussion group.



Susan Mitchell

In 2007, Susan and Bob retired, moved to Las Cruces, New Mexico, joined Peace Lutheran Church, and quickly became involved. Susan also serves as secretary of the Rocky Mountain Synod.

Susan says, “I have always listened to sermons to hear the gospel. Crossings has fine-tuned my hearing, making me attentive to law and gospel. I have heard the pandemic mentioned mostly because of the isolation it causes.”

She says that Peace Lutheran Church is in a stalled mode, partly because they have a pastoral vacancy.

The congregation did not do a good job when in-person worship stopped. They tried to get by using cell phones to put the service online. Only recently have they ordered audio visual equipment.

There was a core group of seven assisting ministers. Now, though, Susan and two others are sharing most of the Sundays.

A bright spot she reports is that the church’s social ministry efforts have continued. These include a food pantry and the Border Servant Corp, an ELCA recognized ministry. Las Cruces is located 50 miles from the US-Mexico border. Another positive development is the calling of an intentional interim pastor. Susan reports he is

making a significant difference in the transition work that must be done before the congregation elects a call committee.

Susan acknowledges that at one point she became discouraged. She said, “In Crossings we talk a great deal about God’s promises, clinging to them, and using Christ’s benefits. It was in the midst of my discouragement I heard God’s promise in Paul’s words in Philippians 4:8-9. Paul urges the congregation to think on whatever is true,

“I cling to the promise that the God of peace... is with us even in our muddle.”

honorable, just, pleasing, commendable, and worthy of praise. Paul promises us the God of peace will be with us.”

Susan says, “I cling to the promise that the God of peace, revealed in Jesus, is with us even in our muddle. I have resolved to be in church every Sunday. My Stephen Ministry experience taught me to be a good listener to others who are discouraged. Crossings has emboldened me to urge others to cling to God’s promises and so help move the congregation out of our stalled mode.”

Nathan Hall became pastor in 2017 of the Lutheran Church of the Nativity in North Conway, a year-round resort village in eastern New Hampshire. This is his second call after graduating from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Nathan serves on the board and is vice president of Crossings.

Nathan became acquainted with Crossings in his undergraduate years at Valparaiso University but started participating after attending the 2015 Crossings Conference on the Holy Spirit.

Nathan said, “The pandemic comes up regularly in my sermons because the congregation finds itself located in a community where tensions are rife over pandemic protocols. What does it mean to live in community with people who disagree on

vaccinations and mask wearing? What do we do with the stress of navigating the ever-changing conditions and the weariness it brings?”

Crossings’ influence is evident as he tells his congregation, “Jesus is still forgiving sins, offering life and salvation. God is still loving and redeeming the world that is estranged. And God is still daily transforming our hearts as the gospel takes root. Dominance is the way of the world, and it is not ending well. We may assert our opinions, but in a way that honors those who disagree, recognizing in them a sibling whom God has redeemed.”

Nathan referred to the various contentious issues in Corinth. Paul advised them that insisting on their rights was not beneficial to the community. “Not all things build up,” Paul said. “Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other.”

Worship at Nativity is still online. There has not been a push to be in person. Nathan said he was made for this moment. For years he oversaw the live streaming of the annual meeting of the Lutheran Deaconess Conference. He knew how to produce video. He had much of the necessary audio and video equipment sitting in his home.

Lectors and assisting ministers receive their parts through email. They record themselves and file it back in the shared cloud-based Dropbox. Choir members each record themselves singing while listening to a scratch track over headphones. Nathan puts their voices together. In that way the choir leads at least three hymns every Sunday.

When they move back to in-person worship, they plan to continue live streaming the service. “The challenge,” Nathan says, “will be to find ways for the two groups to be one community rather than two.”

Fellowship has been the most adversely affected aspect of the community’s life. They have tried trivia nights over Zoom. At Christmas they went to a lake shore at a summer camp to sing carols, socially distanced and masked.

The church was founded in 1983 but was without a building until 2000, when they bought a former Roman Catholic church. The property came with a rectory with multiple bedrooms and bathrooms. The former rectory now serves as a day resource center for the homeless and for housing-insecure members of the community. This center is called the Way Station.

During the first year of the pandemic, he had no time off. Nathan said, “I made myself indispensable for preparing Sunday services. Several people in the church intervened. I taught them what to do so they could take over and give me some time off.”

Nathan said, “I give thanks for and greatly appreciate the congregation. Financial support for our ministry has increased. More people are attending worship via Zoom than attended prior to the pandemic. People who have moved away, including college grads, log in for worship. Some faces appear on screen from different parts of the country, who have somehow found our worship service and have continued to attend.”

*Thank you, Susan and Nathan, for your witness.
You enrich our Crossings community.*



The Rev. Nathan Hall

Your Plans for 2022 and Beyond

In the final months of 2021, Crossings received many generous gifts. This outpouring of financial support will help sustain our shared mission of crossing the Gospel with daily life. Thank you!

You may be among those who, in the early months of the year, review their finances and long-term plans. Revisiting your will or living trust is a good stewardship. You may wish to change the

primary or secondary beneficiaries of retirement accounts and insurance policies.

Those who are 70 ½ years or older may find that charitable distributions from an IRA can be an effective way to support Crossings and other organizations.

As you make your own plans, thank you for keeping Crossings in mind—and for continuing your financial support of our efforts to keep the Promise bold.

Using Christ's Benefits

(from page 1)

forgiveness for everybody with leftovers.

A great Easter hymn proclaims, "At the lamb's high feast we sing, praise to our victorious king, who has washed us in the tide, flowing from his pierced side." John shows us that washing as Peter wades through the water to come to Jesus.

Here we witness a ritual of confession and forgiveness as Jesus rehabilitates Peter. Peter's rehab, like ours, is marked not by progress but by return to water's edge, to baptism, dying with Christ by repentance and rising with him into a new creation. Reconciliation is Christ's benefit. Paul says God has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation. We make use of Christ's benefits and return to the water's edge when we seek reconciliation with one another.

We make use of Christ's benefits at the grave's edge. Jesus told Peter, "The time is coming when you will stretch out your hands and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." The Evangelist explains

that Jesus said this, "to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God." This verse looms over every trip to the hospital or nursing home. The time is coming also for us. How does death glorify God?

I can only tell you that I have seen the abundant life in those at the point of death, who place their trust in the God who gives life. God gives us eyes to see the life waiting for us on Jordan's far shore. There God will wipe away every tear. Death will be no more. Mourning and crying and pain will be no more. And all things will be made new.

Hilary Mantel's historical novel, *The Mirror and the Light*, is about Thomas Cromwell. As the book reaches its end, Henry the VIII has sent Cromwell to the tower of London. As Cromwell awaits his execution, he says to himself, "If a man should live as if every day is his last, he should also die as if there is a day to come, and another after that."

In summation, Jesus says, "Follow me."

Message from the Executive Director

Crossings Seminar Update

We decided to postpone the January 2022 seminar. More than half of registrants voiced their hesitancy to attend, and an overwhelming majority expressed their desire to meet in person compared to an online-only experience.

The good news is that the seminar will take place next year, January 22-25, 2023. Note that reflects an additional day compared to the original plans.

Most importantly, Dr. Kathryn Kleinhans, the dean of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore, the dean of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, and all other presenters have committed to the new dates, and we plan to have additional presenters. *Stay tuned!*



Sherman Lee
Executive Director



CROSSINGS
Connection
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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