



CROSSINGS Connection

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

PENTECOST 2022 | Vol. 146 | From the Crossings Community, Inc

Luke 10:25-37 – 5th Sunday after Pentecost

Which Part Do We Play?

By Susan Westhorp

Whenever I hear this text, I am taken back to my Sunday School days and the experience of acting out this parable. From memory I played the part of the poor man who was beaten up. Mine was an Oscar-worthy performance I'm sure, filled with groans and sighs and much collapsing on the floor.

Secretly, though, I wanted to be the "hero" of the story, the Samaritan who rescues the man and gets to heave him onto the donkey. After all, the Good

Samaritan is who we're meant to strive to be, isn't he?

Parables encourage us to play with, and in, the story — to immerse ourselves in that world and to imagine ourselves as the different characters. Far beyond the playing of a role in a kid's play, we seek resonances with our own life experiences, looking for points of connection. And there are times when the connections confront and unsettle us, reminding us of our shortcomings. That happens when we hear the law, and dwell there, sensing the Gospel is hovering somewhere nearby,

but it is just out of our grasp.

Revisiting the story of the Good Samaritan in Covid times would seem to be a no-brainer. After all, there are countless stories to be told about selfless giving, about serving our neighbors, about those we know as the heroes of this pandemic.

If you work in the healthcare sector, as I do, you are surrounded by people whose sacrificial service continues to provide inspiration as we go about our daily work. These health care workers are the Good Samaritans of this time

(see page 4)



A God-sized problem: bound or boundless?

Stealth Crossing at the Extravaganza

Extravaganza is the annual gathering of leaders of children, youth, and family ministry from across the Evangelical Church in America (ELCA). In the years the National Youth Gathering is held, the Extravaganza meets prior to the youth gathering, in the same city where the gathering will take place, adopts the same theme, and gives youth leaders an advance look at gathering sites and events. The Extravaganza has been called the national youth gathering without the youth.

Sherman Lee, Crossings executive director, is on the planning committee and led a workshop for the most recent Extravaganza, February 11-14, in

Minneapolis. Seven hundred people attended in person and another 300 participated online.

Sherman attended the Minneapolis event in person because he has long been involved in faith formation for children and youth. And, as an IT professional, he has the technological skills much in demand. The title for his workshop was *Connecting the Good News Across the Ages with Technology and Theology*.

Boundless was the theme for this year's Extravaganza. The theme drew on Ephesians 3:14-21. This passage invites readers to know the breadth, length, height, and depth of the love of

Message from the Executive Director

Bishop Eaton Will Speak at Crossings Conference

I am delighted to announce that the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA, will attend and speak at our next conference, January 22-25, 2023.

Serving her second term as presiding bishop, Bishop Eaton was ordained in 1981 and served three different congregations in Ohio before being elected bishop of the ELCA Northeastern Ohio Synod. Bishop Eaton was a featured speaker at the 2013 Crossings Conference, shortly after she began serving her first term as ELCA's presiding bishop.

The conference theme is *The Promising Community: Can I Get a Witness?* The conference leaders are those announced for the 2022 conference that was postponed to 2023. The conference will take place in Belleville, Illinois, 15 minutes from downtown St. Louis.

The keynote speakers are: the Rev. Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore, rector and dean of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina; the Rev. Dr. Kathryn Kleinhans, dean of Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University, Columbus, Ohio; and the Rev. Robin Lütjohann, pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and an instructor at Harvard Divinity School.

For more information and to register, visit crossings.org/conference.



Rev. Elizabeth Eaton



Sherman Lee
Executive Director

Christ, and be filled with the fullness of God. Sherman said the bible study portion of his workshop was a stealth Crossings event. He used the Crossings method to look deeper into the problem in order to realize all the benefits God gives through Jesus' death and resurrection.

For his workshop, Sherman led with an anecdote told by a member of the planning committee. She said her five-year-old announced one day, "We're in the middle of a pandammit." Sherman said this is what the past 20+ months have felt like.

Sherman then noted that — rather than boundless — many of us and many of our youth are feeling bound: bound by Covid, masks, and social distancing, bound by isolation, and bound by the expectations other people have of us.

Sherman pushed deeper into the malady, as we teach in Crossing. He confessed that with each new bad development he dies a little bit inside. With that admission he revealed that he feared the expectations of others and trusted in their approval more than he feared, loved, and trusted in God.

Crossings teaches us to acknowledge we have a God-sized problem. Sherman rephrased the sentence to say that God has a problem with us; God has expectations of us. Those expectations are to fear, love, and trust God above all things. Sherman said this change was key to opening up discussion among those attending the workshop.

The conversation then moved to what God has done in Christ to solve the problem. Christ



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHERMAN LEE

Sophia Agtarap, one of seven Extravaganza track leaders, giving her presentation *Technology and Digital Storytelling*. Sherman Lee provided support for her track.

emptied himself for us. For us he was bound within the confines of the grave. Christ died for us. And God raised him to boundless new life. The Spirit of God pours that boundless new life into us.

Since his workshop consisted of those interested in technology, Sherman used words from the IT lexicon. For example, he used the word transitivity to talk about the way the gospel is relayed to us and then by us to others.

Sherman said his audience participated enthusiastically in the bible study portion. This, he says, shows that the Crossings message can enable people from all walks of life to hear the gospel in new ways.

Your gift to Crossings will be doubled in value

Kathy and Mark Helge, longtime generous friends of Crossings, have made a \$25,000 challenge grant to Crossings. Thus, your gift this summer to Crossings will accomplish twice as much.

Kathy and Mark made their gift to support the 2023 Crossings Conference. Gifts from you and others will provide scholarships for seminary students, first-time pastors, and those attending their first conference.

You may use the reply device and envelope accompanying this newsletter to make your gift. Or you can make a secure gift online at crossings.org. Crossings welcomes charitable IRA distributions and donor advised fund gifts.

Help make the
2023 Conference
available to the
widest possible
audience

Which Part Do We Play?

(from page 1)

and place. We do well to thank and honor them. Alongside this, we know that Covid has left our world feeling exhausted, and it has left many of us with compassion fatigue.

So, how might we be “playing” in this story now? In our weariness, do we identify with the priest and the Levite, needing to focus closer to home and doing all that we can just to survive?

Perhaps we are inspired by the Good Samaritan, and even pleased that we have been able to contribute to the care of so many in need. And, just maybe, we oscillate between these characters, between how we were at the start of this pandemic and how we are now, two years in.

Random acts of kindness inspired us all at the beginning, in the midst of our fear. Now, for some of us, managing to make it through the week takes all our energy. Our brokenness, our woundedness, has come to the fore in these past couple of fraught years, reminding us of the fragility of life.

Grief is deeply embedded in many of us — loss of loved ones, loss of health, and loss of security. Those losses, griefs, and traumas — which we are not able to even articulate — linger, thick and heavy in our bodies.

Maybe this is when we best sit in the place of the wounded man and turn our attention to what it is to be helpless and crying out in need. That is the time when the Gospel is no longer out of reach but is firmly within our grasp and our experience. Our compassionate God, who as the Risen Christ

is our Good Samaritan today, hears our cries, sees our pain, and binds up our wounds. Perhaps, our compassionate God surprises and startles us with the people he chooses to do this through. And when our wounds have been bound up by the One who was wounded for us, when we have experienced God’s love and grace, then we are better equipped to offer the care of the Samaritan to those around us.



Sue Westhorp is a CPE educator in Melbourne, Australia. She was a speaker at the 2020 Crossings conference.

Susan Westhorp is a member of the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand (LCANZ). She has worked as a church musician, composer, lay worker, and educator within the church. She currently works as a clinical pastoral education (CPE) supervisor, chaplain, and manager of Spiritual Care at Austin Health in Melbourne. Sue is completing post-graduate theological studies as she waits with hope for the LCANZ to decide to ordain women. Sue was a speaker at the 2020 Crossings conference.

“... acts of kindness inspired us all at the beginning.
Now, for some of us, managing to make it
through the week takes all our energy.”



CROSSINGS
Connection
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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

PENTECOST 2022

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

© June 2022