



CROSSINGS Connection

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

FALL 2023 | Vol. 151 | From the Crossings Community, Inc

Schroeder Legacy Funds Library for Ethiopian Seminary

By the Rev. Dr. Bruce K. Modahl

Crossings is not the only community with a legacy or memorial fund that honors Ed Schroeder. So too does the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.

The Rev. Dr. Ed Schroeder was a university and seminary professor, co-founder of Crossings, and peripatetic teacher and proclaimer of the gospel. Ed and his wife Marie traveled throughout the United States conducting workshops for clergy and laity.

They also traveled to Indonesia, Australia, Lithuania, and several times to Ethiopia. In between, they took part in many missiology conferences. Everywhere they traveled, Ed and Marie taught, proclaimed, and lived the gospel.

Under the auspices of Global Missions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Ed taught ethics and systematics at the main seminary in Addis Ababa, the capitol of Ethiopia. Marie taught English and was involved in community projects. On weekends they

traveled to rural areas to conduct workshops with pastors and lay leaders.

The Rev. Loren Bliese spent 44 years as a missionary and teacher in Ethiopia for ELCA Global Missions. He said, “Ed was recognized for his expertise and loved by the students at Mekane Yesus Seminary because of the special interest he took in them personally.”

Mekane Yesus is a church of nearly 12 million members, the largest church body in the

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The Rev. Dr. Tilahun Menedo, (second from right) president of the Master Builder Center, presents a check from the Schroeder Memorial Fund to the Rev. Buseneh Sumudo, (third from left) president of Central South Ethiopian Synod of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. Others include the Rev. Dr. Bruk Ayele, (third from right) president of the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa, and Abie Haile (far right), coordinator of Africa Internet Radio Ministry.

Ron Coulter, *Technical Support for Crossings*

Unflappable and Enthusiastic

For the 40 years that Crossings has been active, the internet has been the primary way most people have been involved with the organization. In large part, that's because Ed Schroeder—with the help of Tom Law—was an early adapter of digital technology.

In the mid-1990s, Ed started sending out his weekly lectionary study, which he called Sabbathology. Eventually, when others took over the text studies, Ed began his Thursday Theology postings.

Keeping all of this working smoothly—including the Crossings website with its extensive library—is a technical mountain that must be scaled week after week.

One of those “climbing that mountain” is Ron

Coulter, who provides part-time technical support to Crossings. His few paid hours—and many more volunteer hours—take place after Ron's day job as a contractor for NASA, where he provides technical assistance to scientists and others.

Appropriately, Ron found out about Crossings by visiting the Crossings website after hearing his pastor, the Rev. Dr. Jerry Burce, talking about the organization in sermons and Bible classes. Ron noticed that Jerry was speaking at the 2015 Crossings conference. He attended the conference and met Sherman Lee, who was a board member at that time. The two shared similar work backgrounds with an interest in technology.

Coulter describes his conference experience *(see page 3)*

Message from the Executive Director

You Are Invited!

I'm pleased to announce that preparations are underway for the Crossings seminar, January 28-30, 2024, at the Pallottine Retreat and Conference Center in Florissant, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis.

With this seminar, Crossings returns to the pattern of having a three-night conference every other year. In between conferences, Crossings will host two-night seminars. This will be the first seminar since 2017.

The conferences are organized around a theme. The seminars focus on basics: the Crossings approach to law-gospel theology, which uses a 6-step diagnosis-prognosis model to ground ourselves in the Gospel text for the Sundays following the seminar. Those participating in the seminar will go on to track their own lives along the contours of the biblical text and cross their own lives with the life-affirming prognosis declared through Jesus' death and resurrection.

The Rev. Dr. Jerry Burce, the president of Crossings board, says, “I'm looking forward to another lively, rich discussion of the essentials of Crossings theology—the kind that enables people to see the world clearly, to face God with honesty, and to skip with joy at the wonder of the Gospel.”

In the weeks ahead, the Crossings website will offer you and others a chance to register for the January seminar. There you will also find out news about how you can take part in Table Talk, the monthly online Zoom gathering to experience “Gospel crossings.”



Sherman Lee
Executive Director

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as eye-opening. “It helped me discover that the Gospel is more than analyzing a text. The gospel relates to your own daily life.”

Not long after that Ron was asked whether he would be interested in doing some part-time work for Crossings.

“The last of our four kids was finishing high school,” Ron said, “and I thought this might be an interesting empty-nest project. Over the years, I’ve learned a lot and have enjoyed the work immensely.”

Ron grew up in Rocky River, Ohio. He and his wife Ann began attending Messiah Lutheran Church in the adjacent Cleveland suburb of Fairview Park. A few years earlier Jerry Burce—now president of the board of directors for Crossings—had become Messiah’s senior pastor. Ron’s four children attended Messiah Lutheran School.

In those years, Ron was pursuing his post-college career of journalism. He worked at a local newspaper, then a trade newsletter, and eventually for a Lutheran organization that produced the *God’s Word* translation of the Bible.

In his journalism work, Ron became more and more interested in computers and the internet. That interest and his increasing skills led Ron, in 1999, to begin his long-term stint as contractor for NASA (often 40-50 percent of those working for federal agencies do so as contractors).

Ron played a key role in the redesign of the Crossings website, and he is involved in the regular updates to the site. He helped Crossings convert to a robust donor and email management system.



Ron Coulter, Crossings technology director, is flanked by Bethany Dreher, project manager for Crossings, and Sherman Lee, Crossings executive director, at the 2023 Conference.

Along with Sherman Lee, Ron managed the online streaming of the 2023 conference—nearly doubling the participation in the three days of conference sessions.

Ron is optimistic about the future of Crossings. “There is so much potential for growth. It needs to be better known and easier to find. People will find it valuable—with a wealth of insight and inspiration.”

Bethany Dreher, project manager for Crossings, works closely with Ron in maintaining the weekly flow over the internet of text studies and Thursday Theology. She says, “Ron is unfazed by any and all issues that Crossings encounters. His knowledge and willingness to help Crossings improve how we communicate with our readers are great gifts.”

Halfway There— Thanks to You!

Once again, the Crossings Community has responded enthusiastically to the challenge match provided by Kathy and Mark Helge, who have generously offered to match all contributions to Crossings up to \$25,000.

This outpouring of support will enable Crossings to prepare for the two-day seminar in January 2024. These gifts will also sustain the ongoing stream of weekly text studies and Thursday Theology.

Contributions so far have taken us to the halfway point. You can help us meet this match by using the response form accompanying this newsletter. Or you can make a secure gift right now at crossings.org. Thank you!

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Lutheran World Federation. Formed on January 31, 1959, the church took its name from the first Lutheran congregation in the country. Mekane Yesus means Place of Jesus.

In 2021, the Ed and Marie Schroeder Memorial Fund was established to benefit a library at a new seminary being built in the city of Hosanna, located in the Central South Ethiopian Synod of Mekane Yesus. This synod is one of the fastest growing synods in the church.

Earlier this year, the Rev. Dr. Tilahun Menedo presented a check to the Rev. Buzeneh Sumudo, the president of the Central South Ethiopian Synod (see picture on page 1).

Menedo was one of many of Ed's students, and he benefited from Ed and Marie's advocacy and generosity. With Ed's guidance, Menedo applied to several graduate programs in the United States. He was accepted by six schools and chose to study at Concordia Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Menedo went on to serve as president of Concordia College in Selma, Alabama, from 2010

to 2016. He currently is associate director of Lutheran Bible Translators headquartered in Concordia, Missouri.

For the purpose of gathering gifts for the memorial fund, Menedo founded a U.S. nonprofit: the Master Builder Center. In this effort, he is joined by the Rev. Dr. J. Michael Wyss. Wyss was one of Ed Schroeder's many students, and he was in the first Seminex class, graduating in 1974. The following year, Wyss received a PhD in

Everywhere they traveled, Ed and Marie taught, proclaimed, and lived the gospel.

neurobiology from Washington University. He is now distinguished professor of medicine and neurobiology at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. He also serves part-time as pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Birmingham.

Gifts to the Ed and Marie Schroeder Memorial Fund for the seminary library in Hosanna, Ethiopia may be made payable to the *Master Builder Center, Inc.*, a 501(c)3 entity, and mailed to the Center at 1925 Old Creek Trail, Vestavia Hills, Alabama 35216.

Menedo said, "The Word of God has prevailed through the government persecution of the communist era as well as the wars and tumult that continue to unsettle our country. We praise God for the flourishing of faith that sustains us."

An all-night Easter Vigil held by the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Addis Ababa in 1995.

Photo taken by Marie Schroeder.



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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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FALL 2023

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