



CROSSINGS Connection

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

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God's Spirit Working in Our Time

*"How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language,
speaking about God's deeds of power?
I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams."*

By the Rev. Karen Husby

This Pentecost, during the year of Seminex's 50th anniversary, is a good time to reflect back on the work of the Spirit pouring out the "power of prophecy" on "all flesh" — and how that Spirit encouraged the outpouring of gifts of women pastors. My own story has been a part of this flow of the Spirit.

Growing up Missouri Synod in the 50's and 60's, the closest I got to being encouraged to be a pastor was the advice to marry one. When a confirmation classmate wrote in my high school yearbook, "Go to Valpo, and be our first woman pastor," I didn't think she was serious. This was, after all, 1969, and women couldn't even vote in congregational meetings.

But the Pentecost Spirit was at work preparing the promise. After 1970, when the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America voted to allow ordination of women, things were beginning to change. Those changes helped pave a path that I didn't know I was on yet. Valparaiso University had required theology
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Seminar Extols Preaching that Delivers God's Goods

By the Rev. Dr. George C. Heider, Senior Research Professor of Theology, Valparaiso University

For the first time in several years, Crossings held its annual gathering as a shorter, focused seminar rather than a more general conference. About 45 people met at the Pallottine Retreat Center in St. Louis, January 28-30. The seminar's theme was "Delivering God's Goods: A Seminar in the Theology and Practice of Preaching."

As might be expected of a Crossings event, the sessions grew out of the "Law-Gospel Hermeneutic" developed by founders Robert Bertram and Edward Schroeder and expressed in their six-step model of diagnosis (Law) and prognosis (Gospel). Also prominent was what Luther called the Happy Exchange by which God in Christ trades our death for his life.

In the opening session, the Rev. Dr. Chris Repp explored the "tools" available in the Lutheran Confessions, comparing specific portions of the Confessions to literal tools in a shop. Similarly,

the Rev. Robin Lutjohann explored the appropriate uses — and inappropriate uses — of Law and Gospel in preaching.

Three sessions were more explicitly exegetical. The Rev. Dr. Fred Niedner, a former colleague of mine from Valparaiso University, unpacked the Happy Exchange in the four distinct portraits of Jesus in the canonical gospels. Most memorably, he held up the advice of a chaplain to a dying rogue, as the latter anticipated his moment before St. Peter at the Pearly Gates: "Confess it all and then say, 'Cock-a-doodle-doo.'" Otherwise put, salvation is not propositions, but "swapping stories."

In the next session, the Rev. Nathan Hall, a former student of mine from Valparaiso University, explicated the six-step method. He urged preachers to go beyond guilt/forgiveness to shame/honor. He argued that moderns may well not resonate with the former, but in their heart of hearts, know
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A panel discussion at the January 2024 Crossings seminar is led (from left to right) by the Rev. Matt Knuppell and the Revs. Ella and Louis Moehlman.



The Rev. Ruth Hanusa (center) preaches and the Rev. Dr. Bill White (left) presides at the Crossings seminar worship service.

Panelists repeatedly expressed a desire to hear of Jesus Christ crucified and risen and to be sent forth in peace, not fear.

Crossings Website: *Not Just for Readers!*

Crossings has an online library that would be considered large for any organization. It includes dozens of essays and articles by our founders, Bob Bertram and Ed Schroeder. On the Crossings website, you'll also find more than 25 years of Thursday Theology posts and Text Studies. And you can now enjoy a growing library of video content.

Newer content includes video interviews from the 2023 conference of lay persons, pastors, seminary students, and Bishop of the ELCA, Elizabeth Eaton.

1. 2024 seminar videos — although this was an in-person event, some of the sessions were recorded from this Spirit-filled gathering. These will be available for you to watch later in the year.
2. Crossings has a 10-part series (with more on the way) from Steve Albertin, titled “Faith Seeking Understanding.”
3. Crossings is able to provide these insightful and inspiring videos because individuals have made special gifts to support this work. And, as always, we are grateful to the volunteers who take time to record these videos.

— Sherman Lee, *Executive Director*
and Bethany Dreher, *Project and Development Manager*



Sherman Lee
Executive Director



Bethany Dreher
Project and
Development
manager

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shame and desire honor. In the final session, the Rev. Dr. Jerry Burce offered points to ponder from “Mark’s Dark Gospel.”

The most distinctive sessions were two panel presentations. The first heard from the participants in a “Project in Mentoring Preachers,” in which five younger pastors had met weekly (mostly via Zoom) with experienced preachers. The second panel offered five laypeople’s views on “What I Need and Want to Hear Every Sunday.” Panelists repeatedly expressed a desire to hear of Jesus Christ crucified and risen and to be sent forth in peace, not fear.

A real highlight and source of hope to me were the four homilies that we heard. Three were by learners in the mentoring project and one by a veteran preacher, the Rev. Ruth Hanusa. All clearly distinguished Law and Gospel — and proclaimed Christ crucified and risen, sending us forth in peace.

We Met the Match. Thank You!

Because of a \$25,000 challenge match offered last year by Kathy and Mark Helge, gifts made in 2023 from many in the Crossings community were doubled in value. That outpouring of \$50,000 provided scholarships and other assistance for the January seminar on the theology and practice of preaching. Those funds will also help underwrite the stream of resources Crossings makes available month after month, week after week. Thank you to all who helped meet the Helge’s generous challenge.

God's Spirit Working in Our Time

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courses, but other classes also raised theological questions. I had heard some women were taking seminary classes at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, which had become the epicenter of theological conflict. After college graduation in 1973, several classmates had gone there and joined the student walk-out that formed Seminex. I had taken the year off to consider what I wanted to do — to listen for the Spirit.

I heard that quiet encouraging inner voice of the Spirit that said, “you could do that.” And so I went. I was the only female student in the incoming class in August of 1974 — one of just four in the whole school at that point.

It took some time for the other students and professors to get used to a female in class; it was new for us all. But the Spirit continued to work, and the Gospel Good News was being heard in a fresh “native language.”

Finding field work placements and internships was a challenge. I had never seen a woman in the pulpit when I finally got to preach my first Sunday sermon — the Sunday after Easter — at my field work congregation. The Spirit

outpouring was still a trickle, but the Pentecost power was present.

Things got better; more women joined the movement of the Spirit at Seminex and in many other settings. When the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches was formed in 1976, women, at least in theory, could be ordained and perhaps even be paid. In 1977, the AELC ordained its first woman, Jan Otte Murphy.



Rev. Karen Husby is an intentional interim pastor in the Indiana Kentucky Synod of the ELCA.

In my case, a supportive and creative congregation recognized my Clinical Pastoral Education chaplain residency work as their outreach to the community, and I was ordained in March of 1981, the fifth woman pastor in the AELC. Thirty years ago, when I first came to the Indiana Kentucky Synod of the ELCA, I could count the women pastors on the fingers of *one* hand.

“... the Spirit continued to work, and the Gospel Good News was being heard in a fresh ‘native language.’ ”

It has been heartening to see the Pentecost progress over the decades. When, at clergy events, I would see a line waiting to use the women’s bathroom, I knew a new day was dawning. When I watched the video of the joyful throng of women pastors processing, and processing, and processing into the 2019 Churchwide Assembly worship, I was profoundly grateful for this remarkable movement of the Spirit that we celebrate at Pentecost. “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons *and your daughters* shall prophesy.”

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND THE
2025 Crossings Conference

**Hearing Christ: The Gospel
for an Exhausted World**

Sunday evening, January 19 –
Wednesday noon, January 22
Pallotine Renewal Center, St. Louis County



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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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