



# CROSSINGS Connection

WHERE THE GOSPEL MEETS OUR DAILY LIVES

PENTECOST 2024 | Vol. 154 | From the Crossings Community, Inc

## Save Us from the Time of Trial

By the Rev. Dr. Bruce K. Modahl

In our worship community the presiding minister invites the congregation to pray the Lord's Prayer in either the traditional or the newer version, as printed in the bulletin. He adds, "You are welcome to pray in whatever language you wish, especially if your primary language is other than English."

I never detect hearing anything other than the traditional version until we arrive at the sixth petition. Then I hear the presiding minister praying "Save us from the time of trial." I hear it because this is the one petition starkly different from the traditional version: "Lead us not into temptation."

The newer version of the Lord's Prayer is not so new. It dates to the International Consultation on English Texts that began its work in 1969. We no longer use thee, thou, and art, but according to my informal poll, most congregations continue to use the traditional form of the prayer. As a friend of mine quipped, "Change is good, but not now."

Nevertheless, I make a case for "Save us from the time of trial," if not for congregational worship, then for our personal devotion. The Greek word *peirasmós* can be translated as either temptation or trial.

The newer version of The Lord's Prayer reminds us that, as Luther says in the Small Catechism, God tempts no one to sin. Robert Jenson claims the petition—"save us from the time of trial"—points us beyond personal morality ("temptation") to the eschatological trials that take place daily.

Many people are plagued by a parade of trials. They constantly litigate past hurts received and given. A friend wrote a Lenten devotion about forgiveness. He described a newspaper cartoon, "Grandma is in bed. Her thought bubbles say, 'I can't sleep because I keep remembering every bad mistake I made over the course of my entire life. Where are my senior memory problems when I need them?'"

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"Supplicant": Linoleum print, 15 x 24" © R.O. Hodgell, used by permission of P.C. Hodgell | pchodgell.com

Courage, forgiveness, love,  
and presence are Christ's  
benefits that sustain us  
in the time of trial.

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# Pilot Project Offers ‘Amazing Gift’ to Young Preachers

By the Rev. Dr. Jerry Burce  
President of the Crossings Board

“This has been a stellar and amazing gift to me.” So wrote one of the five young pastors who participated in a Crossings project for mentoring preachers. This is the first time Crossings has undertaken such an endeavor.

The project was made possible by the Neeb Family Foundation, which has provided generous support to Crossings in the past. Their recent grant helped underwrite a mentoring experiment—a pilot project, as we came to call it.

Work on the project began in the first weeks after Easter, 2023. What emerged was having five preachers, each steeped in Crossings-style theology, work one-on-one with a younger

preacher for twelve to fifteen weeks.

The mentoring process concluded with all participants coming together for the January 2024 seminar in St. Louis.

The chief qualification for inclusion in the project was a desire to grow in the preacher’s calling. To reflect the commitment of time and study, both the mentors and the young pastors received modest stipends.

Bill White, Fred Niedner, Marcus Felde, Steve Albertin, and I served as mentors. All have long-time involvement in Crossings and know the Gospel (as distinct from Law) and the Crossings method for deriving it from a biblical text.

The mentors met several times over the summer—by Zoom, of course—to discuss the goals, content, and schedule of the work they’d undertake. They quickly agreed each would tailor the task to the needs and interests of each particular learner. They also developed a reading list that would underscore the essentials of Crossings-style preaching—the Law-and-Gospel distinction, the

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## Save Us from the Time of Trial

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Am I overselling this problem as an eschatological trial? I don’t think so. I remain troubled by those who come with hearts and minds chained to their failures. They readily acknowledge God’s forgiveness. But, they say, they cannot forgive themselves. They come seeking vindication when what God in Christ offers is absolution. What is to be done?

I think the first thing to be done is to reframe this litigation of past hurts as a spiritual struggle. Spiritual struggle is the way Kurt Hendel translates the German word *Anfechtung*, which Luther

repeatedly used to describe his own trial with God.

The second thing we can do is to make use of Christ’s benefits. One of those benefits is the courage to take a look behind the failures for which we cannot manage to forgive ourselves.

There is a larger failure common to and underlying all the others. We say we believe God forgives us but we don’t live accordingly. We live as though our own judgment matters more. We usurp God’s authority. We take God’s place. The first commandment is to have no other gods before the Lord our God. The law accuses us.

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“double-dipstick” test, the “sweet-swap,” and the “six-step method.” (For more on any of these topics, use the search function on our Crossings website.)

Recruitment of the young pastors began in mid-summer. It went surprisingly well. The pastors who signed on are Matt Knuppel, Ella Moehlman, Louis Moehlman, Shaun O’Reilly, and Eli Seitz. They are serving in North Carolina, North Dakota, Nevada, and Ohio.

Three of the young pastors are altogether new to Crossings, the others only barely acquainted with us. Four are on the ELCA roster. One is aligned with the NALC. Each was assigned to a mentor as they came on board.

Each team of mentors and learners devised its own working plan and schedule, with the last week of August as an approximate starting point and the First Sunday of Advent as the time to wrap things up.

As the project unfolded, the mentors came together a few times as a group to swap notes. What they heard from each other was uniformly cheering. More cheering still were the overall project assessments that the learners submitted in the weeks after Christmas.

All five learners echoed the sentiment quoted at the start of this article. They repeated their



The Rev. Dr. Marcus Felde, left, mentors the Rev. Eli Seitz, above.

appreciation for this amazing gift when they met in person at the Crossings seminar in January. Those who preached at the seminar delivered the Gospel marvelously well.

They told of growing as preachers, as theologians, as servants of Christ with a sharper ear for what Good News sounds like and stronger skills for delivering it to people who need to hear it.

I for one can’t thank God enough for what came of this project: new connections, new friends, new Crossings colleagues, and—first and last—the Word of Christ, spoken with confidence and heard with joy.

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The law drives us to another of Christ’s benefits: forgiveness. *Lex semper accusat* to be sure. But its necessary corollary is *Christus manet mediator*. The law always accuses; but Christ remains our mediator. Jesus takes our faithlessness to his grave and rises to stand between us and God’s terrible justice. For Jesus’ sake, God forgives us. The Holy Spirit woos us with love, another one of Christ’s benefits. God pierces our hearts with his love.

Yet another benefit we have from Christ is the promise that God is *with* us, and better yet, *for* us. Courage, forgiveness, love, and presence are Christ’s benefits that sustain us in the time of trial.

God makes these benefits available to us at

the font and table and by the proclamation of the gospel. Baptism washes our shame away. God joins us to Jesus’ death and resurrection and to the community of the baptized. With every confession and word of forgiveness, we return to the font.

The Lord’s Supper feeds us Jesus’ body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Luther says, “the sacrament is for us a ford, a bridge, a door, a ship, and a stretcher, by which and in which we pass from this world into eternal life.”

In the course of every week, we nourish these benefits in our daily devotion. Whatever time of day that might be, our worship book provides rich resources in prayer, liturgy, and song that exercise and exalt the benefits Christ gives. We carry these benefits with us from the assembly of Christ’s body.

January 2025 Conference

# Hearing Christ: The Gospel for an Exhausted World

*The planning committee for the January 2025 conference composed a vision statement to guide their planning. The committee is chaired by Ella Moehlman. Committee members include Robin Lütjohann, Matt Metevelis, Louis Moehlman, Sherman Lee, Jerry Burce, Chris Repp, and Cathy Lessmann. What follows is a lightly edited version of the statement.*



The Rev. Ella Moehlman chairs the 2025 conference planning committee

Rest better. Care for yourself. Establish a healthy relationship with yourself. These are the new laws that reign in the consumer capitalist treadmill we run on. Even our rest has to be productive. But for many people lazy weekends in front of Netflix, trips to the spa, or even relaxing are not restful. Is true Sabbath possible in the age of smart-phones and social media?

Commands to take sabbath are just that, commands. They are functions of the law that give us the false promise that if we do something just right,

we'll be more productive, more valuable, more admirable and more loved.

Might God be up to something else when we are invited to honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy?

As St. Augustine reflected in his famous autobiographical prayer to God, "Our hearts are never at rest until they rest in you." True Sabbath is this. The gift to rest in God's presence opens to us

when we hear God's promises as limited creatures but also infinitely beloved children. In short, true Sabbath is hearing and trusting the Gospel.

At the 2025 Crossings Conference we will hear a variety of speakers walk us through this gift of Sabbath. We will hear how God claims and

St. Augustine reflected, "Our hearts are never at rest until they rest in you."

renews us for a different kind of relationship with our neighbors and all creation.

During times of teaching, worship, and fellowship we will reflect on what God's promise of rest in Christ might mean for us and for our neighbors. We will focus on Sabbath as the good news of the One who seeks us, weary and heavy burdened as we are, to give us rest.

## 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

Up-to-date information at [crossings.org/conference](https://crossings.org/conference)



**CROSSINGS**  
Connection

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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**PENTECOST 2024**

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