

LORIN & CLAIRE CRANFORD

Santa Ana, Costa Rica
December 2014



2014 REFLECTIONS 2015

What a year 2014 has been for Claire and me! The ups and downs have mostly been in the extremes. By the time I turned 73 at the first of November, life had become a daily challenge to overcome a seemingly endless string of health issues. The year began with some health problems that seemed somewhat easy to solve. We made the commitment then to travel back to Europe in July to visit friends and to teach again at Interlaken during the summer retreat of the International Baptist Convention. Additionally, we began planning a trip to North Carolina for a week to visit family and friends there at the end of March. January was one of the up moments of optimism. But by the first of March, a deep downer moment with new health issues forced a cancellation of the trip to NC. But the up moment came in late May that allowed us to make the trip to Europe at the end of June and through the first week of July. But a succession of downers hit again at the end of July that have continued into the present. Most of the health problems have come from two sources: issues connected to my diabetes and high blood pressure and an extreme sensitivity to all kinds of medicines. The net result has been a slow but steady weakening of my body which then has left me much more vulnerable to normal kinds of things like colds, flu, infections etc.

Thus the reality has set in that, by golly, I'm getting old! It's time to start seriously cutting back on things I try to do. Thus no more traveling, not even here in our beloved Costa Rica. Our weekly schedule would be boring to most folks, since a big occasion for us now is walking to one of the restaurants here in town for a meal. Most of my days are spent working

on Bible studies for the Sunday morning and Wednesday evening groups that I try to lead. The background commentary for these two groups always goes into the *Biblical Insights Commentary* at cranfordville.com to be universally available. I continue to be astounded that now almost a quarter of a million people have come into the web site to download these materials. Claire has found a special calling in quilting items which she then gives away as symbols of friendship. So we are both quite content with the limited range of activities, since God continues to allow us both to contribute to the enriching of the lives of other people.

But along with the 'downers' have come a number of 'ups' during 2014. One of the really great highlights of the year was the opportunity to travel back to the Cologne / Bonn area of Germany and this time to get to be in the worship service of the IBC church we helped 2008-2010. Their young pastor and his wife are being used mightily of God to reach a rapidly growing number of both immigrants and nationals in the Cologne area. I'm so proud of them and of the church in weathering the storm of many difficult days in the past so that God could use them in significant ways to give a strong Christian witness to the almost five million residents of Cologne. Equally a source of pride is to see the strength and maturity of the Friday Evening Bible Study group in the Baptisten Gemeinde in Bonn that we helped start in 2009. These folks are such a personal delight to Claire and me.

Another very significant 'up' has been working with the two Bible study groups through our IBC church here in Costa Rica. With some good fortune,

we will finish a two year study of Revelation by the end of this coming February. The BIC background commentary I have written thus far is beyond 800 pages covering the first seventeen chapters of Revelation. All of us in the group have learned immensely more about this document in the NT, mostly at the point of developing skills to think 'apocalyptically' when approaching this text. The study of the life of Paul on Wednesday evenings is starting on the fourth year with the background commentary well over 900 pages on the first two of three parts in this study. We finally have gotten Paul back to Rome a second time where he faced execution at the hands of Nero. In the process the group has explored not just the related NT texts but many sources from the church fathers and the NT Apocrypha documents. In January, part three begins with a brief overview summary of each of the letters of Paul and will conclude with a summation of Paul, the religious thinker of early Christianity.

A third 'up' during 2014 has been the establishment of the *Eleos Trust Fund*, which has taken over ownership of our entire estate. At our passing, the vast majority of our estate will be distributed from the *Eleos Trust Fund* to both the Associated Baptist Press (now Baptist News Global) and the International Baptist Convention Ministries organizations. Thus what we have accumulated over the many decades in earthly possessions will continue to contribute to the cause of Christ long after our deaths. Through this, God gives us the opportunity to continue to contribute to His work indefinitely into the future. That is wonderfully satisfying! I am deeply grateful to one of my former lawyer colleagues in the business school at Gardner-Webb University, who specializes in estate planning, for guiding us through the legal process of setting it up.

As we look forward to 2015, it holds much promise to be an exciting year. To bring to a completion these studies on Revelation and Paul will bring immense personal fulfillment to me. One of the 'downers' we already know that will happen will come next November when we leave our beloved Costa Rica to begin the final stage of our earthly journey at the Baptist Retirement Center in San Angelo, Texas. While in one sense it is a downer, in another sense it is an 'up' with the opportunity to meet new friends, especially to find a life where trained people are surrounding us to help with the growing health issues etc. that we face. My earthly journey began in West Texas in 1941 and, God willing, it will finish there as well. As a na-

tive son of the state with ancestors reaching back to the Alamo and the signing of the Declaration of Independence for the Republic of Texas, west Texas is deeply embedded in me, along with accumulations of dust, sand etc.!

Claire's Reflections: 2014

This past year has been nice in that we were able to go to Germany where we had a great time visiting with friends. We think that this was probably the last visit there for us. Also, getting to go to Interlaken, Switzerland where we enjoyed the International Baptist Convention and visiting with lots of other friends. Both of these places are beautiful, but Interlaken is especially so.

My time here in Santa Ana is quiet, which is perfect for me. I am beginning to really feel my age. I enjoy getting to walk to most everything that I need, such as Palí, the little grocery store across the street, the fruit stand, bread store, farmer's market, etc. For the past several months I have really enjoyed quilting the most. I am getting most of my lessons from the internet and have learned so much. It has been fun making lap quilts for close family members. The short time before Christmas I have been making lots of Christmas tree ornaments to give to church friends and some of the street people that I see often. Making things for others made it seem more like Christmas.

Lately Lorin has been going through some rough times with his health. It has been hard on both of us. I hate to see him going through so many struggles. At the moment he is doing a little better, so we will enjoy that time. He has enjoyed immensely his Sunday morning Bible studies at the church and Wednesday evenings here in our apartment. We have made some really special friends through this.

I have mixed feelings about leaving Costa Rica next November. The four years that we have been here so far have been good. It took me a long time, but I finally adjusted to Costa Rica. We have been here long enough that it will seem strange to be back in the U.S. On the other hand, I really have missed the States and am looking forward to going back there. It will seem like we are really going back home and being closer to family. I am ready.

I hope that all of you have a happy New Year with good health and family and lots of special friends.

