



News from the Blue Ridge



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Claire & Lorin Cranford
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Family Events:

Hurricane Gordon, which passed through the Carolinas as a tropical depression the second week of Sept., brought some welcomed rain in Cleveland county. And some very cool weather! Our high temperatures for a few days ranged from the upper 60s to the lower 70s. Everything now is very green and growing, making this area very lovely. Then the following weekend Hurricane Helene repeated the rain and cool weather for us. Our grass is green and growing like early spring! We have a wonderful ground seasoning to begin preparing for fall and winter flowers in the beds across the front of the house.

Claire and I are discovering that hurricanes are generally welcomed in western NC because we typically get good spin-offs from them, like rain and cooler weather. However, to live in the coastal areas of the Carolinas is a different story. The folks in northeastern NC are still trying to recover from hurricane Floyd which came through over a year ago. The dividing line seems to be in the Charlotte area. To the west of it hurricanes most often are helpful; to the east of it they are dreaded.



The beginning of fall in Boiling Springs has been wonderful. The temperature ranges from the upper 40s to low 50s at night and the upper 70s to low 80s in the day. We are back into a more normal pattern of rainfall about every seven to ten days thus keeping everything green and pretty. Also, we enjoy the beautiful sunsets as you can see from the picture above that was taken from the deck of our house.

Just ahead of us during the latter part of October is the fall foliage in the mountains. This has become an annual pilgrimage for Claire and me to spend at least a couple of weekends taking pictures and enjoying the magnificent scenery. Next month we've have pictures to share with you.



University Happenings:

The weekend of Sept. 15-16 provided a delightful experience at Campbell University in Buies Creek, NC, in the north eastern part of our state. NC Baptists have a wonderful tradition of providing annual opportunities for professors of religion in the Baptist universities throughout the state to meet together overnight for fellowship and learning. This year the meeting was held in Buies Creek after having been washed out last year by hurricane Floyd.

The meeting involves some program leadership, along with meals and fellowship. This year the dean of the Campbell University law school, Dr. Willis Whichard, spoke on the issue of academic freedom after dinner on Friday evening. We gained insights into the minefield that academic freedom typically poses in a Baptist university. On Saturday morning, Dr. Bill Boatwright from the BSC public relations office spoke on the issue of the state convention and its relationship to the colleges and universities in NC. All of us learned a lot about the historical relationship that the state convention has had with the Baptist schools. Four of us were invited to participate in a panel discussion responding to Bill's presentation. A lively discussion followed about the present and future.

With the growing fundamentalist influence in the state convention, the likelihood of most all the Baptist universities severing ties with the state convention grows steadily. All but two of the schools voluntarily joined the state convention in days gone by, and thus retain the option of severing ties with the state convention. With so much investment by donors and faculties in basic principles of education and freedom to pursue understanding of truth, college administrators have a sacred obligation to protect their schools from a right-wing takeover with no interest in genuine education nor honest inquiry. Consequently, some troubling days lie ahead for Baptist universities in North Carolina.

The positive aspect is the expressed commitment of virtually all of the universities to take whatever action is needed to protect themselves from such takeover efforts. The group of religion professors is beginning to plan for a future day beyond state convention sponsorship for our annual meeting. The fellowship and communication with one another provided by this meeting each year is too valuable to let fall by the wayside.

One particular highlight of the trip was Saturday evening. Todd Still and I were invited to spend the night with Steve and Kheresa Harmon. We had a delightful time 'catching up' on events. Steve and Kheresa had just returned from Athens Greece where Steve was one of six Americans invited to present a paper on St. Gregory of Nisa at an international congress on Gregory. They have a lovely home near Buies Creek which they are decorating beautifully. It was a delight to spend time with them.

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Claire's Musings:

One of the things that I most enjoy doing now is continuing to work on my photo albums. Previously, I mentioned before the discovery of Creative Moments, which is working in a special way with photo albums. I thought I would just go to the first workshop to learn the basics and then work on my own. I found that I enjoyed it so much that I can hardly wait till the next workshop, which is about every other month. Occasionally there is a crop-till-you-drop session on Friday nights, which can last till around 11:30 p.m. I get great ideas from the others and at the same time have made some new friends. Working with photo albums is expensive, and I have learned to shop through Creative Moments, Michael's, and Wal-Mart. My love of photography really began with taking pictures of my two special daughters. I have a marvelous collection of photos of everyday life of both of them from the time they were born. Needless to say, I have many albums. It will take several years to update my albums, probably finishing in retirement. The girls will inherit these albums anyway, so I am making albums of their growing-up years for both of them. I think these will be very special to Angie and Carrie. I can not think of too many things that I could pass on to my girls that could be more special. This is their history.

Well, it seems strange, but the lease was up on my car and I now have a new 2001 Honda Civic. I decided it was time to



give up my stick shift. In the new car I have stomped my left foot on the floorboard several times and tried to shift. I think I am slowly getting used to this and now I think I will enjoy not having to shift. I do miss the feeling of more control of my car, though. Another nice feature is now having a CD player. The color of my other car was silver and my new car is Titanium metallic (gold). Both of the colors are both so light that the difference is barely noticeable. It was several days before anyone at work noticed my new car. I got tickled because one of the teachers asked me if I had washed my car. She said it looked so clean and shiny. It has taken me one whole week to put 100 miles on my car. Talk about a car driven by a "little old lady school teacher".

Angie and Brian have sent another video of Clay and Taylor, along with more pictures. It is so hard missing all the excitement of this growing family, but the videos truly help. Clay is such a good big brother and Taylor is crawling now. Wow!



Lorin's Musings:

The meeting in Buies Creek in September provided many insights about who NC Baptists are. Claire and I experienced culture shock in the move from Texas to NC almost three years ago. Part of this has been the process of trying to learn more about Baptists in North Carolina who are very different from Texas Baptists in many, many ways. In the Sat morning program of the religion professors meeting we spent a good bit of the program taking a look at who NC Baptists are and where we have come from; it was a most insightful glimpse for an outsider. I want to share some of that over the next several months.

NC Baptist roots go all the way back to 1727 when a Paul Palmer founded the first Baptist church in NC at Chowan near the Virginia state line. Rapid growth took place, aided especially by the revivalist movement of George Whitefield, so that by 1754 some 17 Baptist churches existed in NC. These earlier churches were a part of the General Baptist movement that believed that Christ died for all humanity, one could loose salvation if not faithful, and sprinkling as a means of baptism.

However, in the 1750s these churches came under the Calvinist influence of the Particular Baptist movement and switched over to the views of limited atonement, security of the believer and immersion as the only means of baptism. A New Jersey pastor, John Gano, was instrumental in this shift with a base of ministry in Charleston, SC, that extended north along the coast into North Carolina.

A most pivotal influence in NC Baptist history was the Sandy Creek church led by Shubal Stearns and Separate Baptists in the 1750s. The Separate Baptist movement grew out of a radical side of the Puritans who separated themselves from the Church of England believing it to be so corrupt as to be beyond redemption. The tendency toward isolationism, negative views about the surrounding world, emphasis on personal purity and heartfelt religious experience were some of the influences of these Puritans upon the Baptists. Under Stearns the Sandy Creek church grew from 16 to over 600 members in barely three years in the desolate wilderness of the NC Piedmont region. Within 17 years of 1755 some 42 Baptist churches, along with 125 ministers out of these churches, came about. These Separate Baptist churches were closely aligned with the New Light movement in the Congregational Church in New England, which had embraced the sometimes wildly emotional evangelism of the Great Awakening. The so-called Great Awakening in the middle 1700s benefited Baptists in NC substantially, perhaps more than any other Christian group outside of Methodists.

Another pivotal influence in the early development of Baptists in NC was geography. With no major deep rivers transverseing the state from the west to the east, along with no deep water ports like in New England, settlement of NC slowly filtered down from the North mostly along the coastal region. Most of the early settlers were poorer farmers etc. who craved freedom and open space away from the dominance of the landed aristocracy who controlled Virginia and regions to the north. With travel away from the coast so difficult, settlements developed in relative isolation, thus breeding a fierce individualism and survivalist orientation. With the growing emotionalism in religious experience sometimes taking on bizarre patterns, Baptists readily breathed in all these traits.

Part 2 to be continued next month.