



News from the Blue Ridge



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Claire & Lorin Cranford
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Family Events:

The health miracles continue with me. Since our last newsletter in June, my health has continued to steadily improve. The two months of very busy activity in Germany this past summer didn't hurt me health wise. To the contrary, they seemed to help. I have continued losing weight and now am down to a monthly average of around 220 pounds -- down from the 252 average this time last year. The average blood sugar is now around 115, while the blood pressure typically is around 118 over 76 with a heart rate of 72. The periodic checkups with doctors so far this fall have netted very positive reports. I still have several more to go in November as we prepare for the move to Wesseling Germany in December. Again I give the human credit to Dr. Bonar, my endocrinologist in Gastonia, and the Byetta diabetes medicine.

Claire's health, on the other hand, has not been so good this fall. Most of it is due to the huge stress that she is experiencing this fall with her work as an elementary school librarian. Policy changes in the school, in the district, and throughout the North Carolina public schools have pretty much evaporated any sense of job satisfaction and feeling of meaningful contribution to the education of children. Consequently, she is having trouble walking, among several things. The eye doctor decided to go ahead with cataract surgery in her right eye since we're getting ready to move out of the country. This was done on Wednesday, Oct. 22, and was very successful. For that we're very grateful. All this has made her even more anxious to retire from teaching and get moved to Germany ASAP. There we intend to live a

much more relaxed and less stressful pace of living. Two items will be our focus: 1) helping the church and 2) expanding our photography activities.

Our limited experience in living in a German lifestyle for two months this summer opened up the anticipation that retirement life in [our apartment](#) in Wesseling could extend our life many years and make the quality of that living much, much healthier and more enjoyable. The absolute chaos of August through October in trying to sell our home and belongings here have made us all the more anxious to get situated in Europe permanently. With a similar cost-of-living to here in NC, an enormously better but much



less expensive health care system, and a much slower pace of living, we are anxious to escape the American rat-race kind of living for a higher quality of living in Germany. God graciously allowed us this summer to set up house in a lovely apartment in [Wesseling, a small town](#) of 12,000 people located between [Cologne](#) and [Bonn](#). For us it's a wonderful location; we like living in small towns, but it's close to Cologne (1 million plus) and Bonn (1/2 million plus). The fun in decorating and furnishing it as we like is something we eagerly look forward to.

Academics:

My final semester of teaching in the United States has been mostly a pleasant experience. The typical four classes ([Greek 101](#), [Greek 201](#) on MWF and two sections of [Religion 101](#) on TTh) have been enjoyable and not overly burdensome. I'm enjoying the students, and especially their curiosity about our retirement plans and pastoring a cross-cultural church in a foreign country. Lots of questions have arisen over this. It has provided opportunity to challenge them to expand their horizons to a global way of thinking, and to see that God's will and calling have no borders or national boundaries.

Yet as we move into the final weeks of the fall semester I must confess that retirement looms ever more attractive. I remember several years ago when Dr. Bob Morgan, now retired GWU faculty member, was asked, "How do you know when it's time to retire?" His classic answer was, "You will feel it deep down inside! And then you'll know." I am at that point that Bob alluded to. There's a sense of being ready to "turn loose" of the class room, and of moving on to new and excitingly different things.

I first stepped into the class room to teach as a teaching assistant and grader at SWBTS in the spring of 1965 at 23 years old, the second semester of my MDiv studies. I joined the faculty of the School of Theology at the Fort Worth seminary as a New Testament and Greek professor in 1974. Retirement from SWBTS came in December of 1997 and in January of 1998 I began as Professor of Religion in the [Religious Studies department](#) at [Gardner-Webb University](#). So December of 2008 will complete forty three years of teaching experience in the American university and seminary experience. That's enough time spent in the class room! It's time for others to pick up the load and carry it forward.

And yet whether I completely stay out of the class room remains uncertain. Agreements with GWU to help develop an [international studies program](#) in Cologne, a tentative offer to teach a course periodically at the [university of Bonn](#), and possible help to a Texas Baptist seminary to set up an extension campus in the Cologne area could well keep me involved in theological education for a few more years to come. Time and God's leading will tell how much continued involvement there will be.

I enjoy working with young people and have learned much from them over the years. Our church in Cologne has enormous potential in reaching students with a combined student population of over 60,000 students at the two universities in Bonn and [Cologne](#). I can't imagine not trying to present the gospel to such a massive group of young people.

Aachenerstra. 128
D-50389 Wesseling
Germany

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NC Ph: 704 966 6845
Wesseling Ph: 02236 702 5102
webmaster@cranfordville.com



Claire's Musings:

[Our trip to Germany for two months](#) of the summer was so fantastic so that it's hard to know where to begin. We spent about six weeks with [Dieter and his mom](#) and they were both so kind and generous. They made us feel at home the whole time. How nice for Lorin and me that they were such great cooks.

Lorin and I did not have much time to travel (to castles and other places further away) during our visit because we stayed so busy with church and new friends. Everyone was so helpful and showed us lots of interesting places and things to do. And, of course, many of them were also great cooks. I enjoyed learning about new foods that I had not tried before. The church members really looked after us and made sure that we were well taken care of in many ways, including traveling on the trains. They escorted us to and from the trains and made sure we got on the correct one, even at times staying with us until the train left. We found traveling by trains an excellent way to get to our many destinations along with lots of walking. I became healthier and lost several pounds (I'm afraid that I found those pounds when we got back to N.C.). The church members helped us with furnishing [our apartment](#). We were only there in the apartment for two weeks and they supplied us with the basics to get by on and more. During those two weeks we had two house guests from the Virginia Baptist Mission Board stay with us for eight days. It was a special time of getting to know the whole group and of realizing what these young people were able to accomplish as they helped the church in outreach ministry in early August.

We barely had time to get over jet lag (a three-day weekend) and both of us were right back in our schools and busier than ever. I am trying to take care of several doctor visits and just had cataract surgery. It's nice to be able to see better now.



School has been extra busy for me this year. Our library classes used to be 45 minutes one time a week for each class plus the in-between times for checking out books. Now it is 30 minutes two times a week for each class. There is a lot of traveling back and forth for the classes and for me it has been hard to get in a good lesson and have time to check out books. I guess I'm just getting older and slower and this is a good time to retire. I am so ready.

We had a garage sale the beginning of October and sold so much of our furniture and other items. It's hard to give up some things, but for the most part it was a good feeling to get rid of items that we hardly use or need. It's so amazing to realize how much stuff we had and it took trying to get rid of it to come to full realization. Lorin and I both are pack rats and for me it is mostly photography and scrap booking supplies, plus various frames and a few crafty things. There's nothing like moving to a different country to make us really trim things down to a minimum. I won't miss the stuff, but the tough part is knowing how far we will be from family and friends.



Lorin's Musings:

God has absolutely fantastic ways of leading His people! For years I have dreamed of living in Germany in order to serve Him there. Yet health problems over the past several years had caused me to largely abandon this dream. But God had other plans. When two different IBC churches in Germany tried to call me as pastor in the late 80s and middle 90s, and God closed the door to both, I thought that pastoring again was a closed door for me.

Then God gave Claire and me the experience of a lifetime [this summer](#) in helping a small IBC struggling church find new hope and life. And in all places, in Cologne near where we had been planning on retiring to in the summer of 2010! In July the [IBC church Cologne](#) called us as pastor. God has blessed the small congregation of a hand full of dedicated folks in the five months since in moving from a very uncertain future to a thriving congregation of almost a hundred people. We are in a [new church meeting place](#) and are looking toward a bright tomorrow with unlimited possibilities for growth and ministry. God opened the door for the founding pastor of the church in the early 90s, Calvin and Betty Ann Hogue, to come back to lead the church this fall while we are wrapping up things in North Carolina. This has enabled us to



move into retirement eighteen months earlier and to help rebuild a vital congregation in the west central part of Germany.

I especially want to pay tribute to the [First Baptist Church](#) of Shelby, NC for their significant role in all this. God used this very mission minded congregation, and especially the M. Christopher Whilte men's SS class that I teach along with the couple's class that Claire and I hold membership in, to provide much of the financing for the trip this summer. Their prayers and support have played a significant role in God opening up this opportunity. The men's class also has contributed to helping the church in Cologne with ongoing needs this fall. For this Claire and I are profoundly grateful.

Leaving our church home here is the most difficult part of the move to Germany. We have come to love and deeply appreciate the folks at FBC. And yet, as I check on airline fares to Germany for December, I have discovered a round trip ticket from Charlotte to Frankfurt and back to Charlotte is a whole lot cheaper than a one way ticket. God is telling us something here about coming back periodically to visit beloved friends! So we anticipate a visit next September to family and friends!

