



News from the Blue Ridge



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Claire & Lorin Cranford
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Family Events:

Unbelievable events have taken place since our last newsletter in December. Whereas 2007 was a health nightmare for me personally, 2008 has turned into a health miracle of major portions. I credit both God and Dr. Adolphus Bonar for this dramatic turn around. Dr. Bonar is an endocrinologist who specializes in treating diabetes patients. When I first met with him last November, he immediately began an aggressive strategy to lower my blood sugar levels from the monthly average in the high 150s down to the goal of about 100. The initial efforts didn't work well and produced substantial side-effects. So just before Christmas I began taking a twice daily injection of [Byetta](#), a medicine developed recently especially for type 2 diabetic patients. Early in January I discovered that the medicine is synthetically produced from "a hormone in the saliva of giant lizards." So for several months now I've been shooting myself in both legs with 'lizard spit' thirty minutes before breakfast and supper. Friends have teased me about checking to see whether I change patterns of moving my tongue.

But I must say that this medicine has proven to be a true wonder drug for me. Unlike the almost universal tendency for potential side effects of medicines to be intensified in me, I did not experience any of the typical side effects that go along with the Byetta. When I switched over to the full dosage level about

the beginning of January my blood sugar levels began dropping dramatically. As of May they are averaging slightly below 110, and thus I have only a small ways to go in order to achieve the target average level of 100 - 105.

But the news gets better. One side benefit of Byetta is the suppressing of one's appetite. Consequently my monthly average weight (recorded 2x daily) has dropped from 253 in December to 235 in May, and continues to gradually move toward the target weight of 220 pounds. A consequence of this has been dramatic decreases in blood pressure averages to a monthly average in May of 120 over 70 with a pulse rate of 78. This has come down enough that my cardiologist indicated that with continued decrease I will begin to go off some of the blood pressure medicines that I've taken for over seven years now. Energy levels have dramatically increased. Even the neuropathy pain in my feet has improved somewhat so that I can walk without as much pain and with more stability than previously.

What I have only recently begun realizing is that God has plans for Claire and me that we could not have imagined even three months ago. We have committed ourselves to spend this summer (June 12 - August 14) in Cologne Germany as interim pastor of the International Baptist Church there. More about this can be found in my Musings column on the next page. Perhaps the old adage has some relevancy: it's always darkest before the light dawns. To God be the glory; great things He has done!

Academics:

The spring semester became one of my more enjoyable semesters to teach at Gardner-Webb University. To be sure, a part of it was the improved health. But mostly it was the quality of the students in my classes. For the most part, they were interested and engaged in the discussions that took place in class. Though the total number of students was lower than usually is the case, this lower number enabled much greater interaction during the class sessions. This, in turn, made the classes more interesting to me as a professor.

Perhaps the most enjoyable class was the [graduate seminar](#) on Colossians as an advanced Greek exegesis study. The course was cross listed and had students from the divinity school, the religion department MA program and senior undergraduate students. And we completed the detailed exegesis of the Greek text of Colossians, along with presentation papers, by the end of the semester. One student who has taken numerous Greek courses with me suggested that we celebrate the completion of this NT book, since that rarely ever has happened over these three decades plus of my teaching advanced Greek exegesis courses.

The other courses were Greek 102, Greek 202 and Religion 102 (NT survey). These were enjoyable courses as well, but operated at a much less technical level than the Colossians seminar.

This spring completed 33 years of full time teaching at either the seminary or university level in American higher education. Added to this are the nine years of serving as a teaching assistant and grader to various professors at Southwestern Seminary before joining the faculty full time in 1974. This teaching career has taken place in both Texas and North Carolina.

Now retirement looms ever larger on the horizon. As I move closer to that date, mixed feelings swirl around in my mind and emotions. A sense of relief is certainly present. Three plus decades is enough! It's time to let someone younger take over. And for me to do other things. Yet, stepping out of the energizing dynamic of interaction with young people in the class room is not something I'm looking forward to doing. Originally the planned date for retirement was the summer of 2010. But now God has dropped into our laps the opportunity for pastoral ministry in Cologne Germany, and this could possibly move the retirement date to December 2008. So the possibility of retiring sooner, rather than later, is looming very large on the horizon. During the two months of ministry this summer in Cologne we (and the church) will determine whether God is leading us to a permanent ministry in Europe. If so, then a retirement to Germany will take place the first of January 2009. The future is unbelievably exciting as we contemplate this new chapter in our lives and ministry. Pray for us that we will have a clear sense of God's leading in all this..

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😊 *Claire's Musings:*

This is one newsletter that I have some of my more interesting news to talk about. In 3 ½ weeks, June 12, Lorin and I will be flying to Cologne, Germany for a two month stay. We will fly back August 14. He will pastor a small church, with the possibility of going back to live there in retirement. Lorin's part of the newsletter below explains more of the details.

I am excited and nervous, but mostly excited. Lorin knows the German language and has even taught it. I, on the other hand, don't. Needless to say, I will stick very close to Lorin. I suppose the first German phrase I need to learn is "Where is the bathroom?" I don't have to worry too much, because the church is an international church filled with people who speak at least two languages. The only other language that I know is Sign Language and that will not help me much.

My last teacher workday is June 11 and then we leave the next day. When we return August 14 I will have a three day weekend before returning to school for the teacher workdays. That will be one quick culture shock with just barely enough time to recover from jet lag. But, this trip will be well worth it.

If we do decide to move to Germany, one of the hardest parts will be leaving our church and all the wonderful friends we have made there. Our Sunday school class which we first joined has many friends that we don't see often as Lorin

teaches the men's class. One of those friends is Rachel, who when we do get a chance to visit, is my friend who likes to laugh (or as we say, giggle) when we get together. I tell my students at school that one of my favorite pastimes is laughing. Rachel gives me the best opportunity for that. Then there is the men's class who has been very supportive of Lorin. It is full of the nicest and kindest men who do not mind me being a part of the class. They have extended that special welcome to me, along with Lorin. These are people who will be missed a lot, including the annual trip to the Atlanta baseball game in the summers.

I have always enjoyed taking pictures in North Carolina, but this will be a new beginning to be able to take pictures in Europe. My photography is continuing to improve and just in the nick of time. Lorin and I took another photography course in the fall and have continued to work together on numerous projects. Some of my pictures in a local gift shop have sold which makes it more exciting. Last weekend Lorin and I took engagement pictures of a young couple around Gardner-Webb University. We love doing things like that together. Later I went back to take many more pictures in the G-W rose garden.

Now Lorin and I will embark on a new adventure in which we believe we are following God's will and look forward to making new friends in this church. I feel like a real missionary and I am full of excitement about our new adventure together.



✌️ *Lorin's Musings:*

Since January and the dramatic improvement in my health, I had dared to dream again of retirement in Germany in order to be able to do more -- and more technical -- writing related to the New Testament. That long time objective had virtually been lost with all the health struggles over the past several years. Claire and I also coveted to pray for God to use us in ministry in Europe, should that be His will as well. At the end of April, an email came from Dr. Jimmy Martin, general secretary of the [International Baptist Convention](#) which is located in Wiesbaden Germany. Among several ministry opportunities currently open was a need at the [International Baptist Church](#) in Cologne. They were loosing their pastor and would be looking for a new pastor, as well as an interim. Would we be interested? Jimmy who is a former seminary student of mine had indicated in January that they would like to use us when we moved to Bonn in the summer of 2010 at retirement.

Immediately I sensed that God was in this. How I wasn't entirely certain, but we eagerly began pursuing the possibility of coming over this summer as interim pastor, and should God lead then to return later as regular pastor. The month of May has developed into the most terrific month of our lives for many, many years. The church has substantial financial limitations right now on the amount of support it can offer a pastor. But we committed to go anyway thinking that we could tighten up on our budget and cover the costs mostly ourselves. We are scheduled to fly to Germany on June 12 and then to return home on August 14. Amazingly things have fallen into place in

dramatic fashion.

The church is going to provide us a place to stay during these two months. They have found two options for us, either of which will be most adequate. The cost of our airline tickets has been covered by some gracious folks in Europe. Our church, and especially the men's SS class, in Shelby FBC is offering to help via individual donations to offset some of the daily food etc. costs during the time we are there.

Even more importantly we have been astounded by the quickness and smoothness of everything falling into place. Passport renewals, which normally take at least four weeks to complete, came back completed in seven days through the usual renewal process. This is but one example of a long list of things that have occurred in almost surrealistic manner over these past few weeks.

As I have begun corresponding with a growing number of members of the church, the excitement over what God is about to do increases for both us and for the church. The church is made up mostly of internationals from about a dozen countries from around the world who live and work in Cologne and Bonn. Our church is small right now but has tremendous ministry opportunity in trying to be a witness to nearly three quarters of a million internationals in the Cologne area.

In over half a century of vocational ministry decisions, I have never sensed the overriding presence of God as powerfully as has happened regarding this commitment. Claire and I covet your prayers greatly for this trip. We stand available to be used however God desires in helping a wonderful group of people serve God in Cologne.