



News from the Blue Ridge



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Claire & Lorin Cranford

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Family Events:

The five Sundays preaching at Coggins Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington, NC, were most enjoyable. The people were absolutely delightful to work with and most attentive to the sermons. One very satisfying experience is to seek to help people and have them respond enthusiastically to that ministry.

The first weekend in October provides another special opportunity. I will be leading revival services on Sunday through Wednesday at the Fairforest Baptist Church near Spartanburg, SC. Dr. James Hilton, a seminary student at SWBTS in the 1970s, is the pastor. I'm looking forward to getting acquainted with this growing congregation in a rapidly developing area about 30 minutes southwest of Boiling Springs.

October looks to be a delightful month. The revival meeting, another preaching engagement later in the month, the visit of my brother Bill -- all very special occasions that we eagerly anticipate. Plus, the lease on the Accord expires the first of the month, so that means a new vehicle comes aboard -- most likely a Honda Passport. To top all, the fall foliage of the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains comes off the last of the month and into November. The gorgeous scenery this time of the year should make a believer in God out of the hardest skeptic! Only the Lord could put together such wonderful beauty.

The weather this summer and fall has been quite unique. Most of the summer all of North Carolina has suffered greatly through a drought; we have had only about half the normal rainfall. With the beginning of hurricane season, we hoped for a turn toward more rainfall. With Dennis and Floyd the eastern side of the state -- basically east of Interstate 95 -- has experienced more rain than the relatively flat countryside can handle. Terrible flooding and misery have come about, and still continues. All the while, the western part of the state still suffers under severe lack of rainfall. Watering of lawns etc. to keep things alive has become normative. Our beloved Broad River is flowing at lower levels than we have noticed ever since moving here. Maybe the beginning of fall will change things!!

Continued from Claire's Musings

get to see them from time to time.
For those who might be wondering how we made it through Hurricane Floyd, you would be surprised. Residents of the coastal areas were fleeing inland and our area's hotels and motels were full. We had a "brisk" Texas breeze -- it would have been more complete with tumbleweeds. We didn't even get one drop of water. While we were sorry not to get some rain, we were also very thankful that we were safe. We still believe that we must live in the most perfect spot in the entire world. We are blest!



University Happen-

On Sept. 2 the C.M.A. organization, the student ministries organization for religion majors and minors, held a picnic at Alice Cullinan's house for the kickoff meeting of the year. Appx. 90 students from GWU were present and we all enjoyed ourselves greatly. A renewed excitement is spreading through our department majors, as well as a growing interest in the student body at large, in the program being offered them. The religion major with the three concentrations provides an excellent opportunity for students going into vocational Christian ministry to develop a strong foundation in Christian studies that can serve them well as they move either directly into ministry -- as about 50% of our students do -- or go on to seminary/divinity school studies. This fall is reflecting real excitement within our department with the additions of Paula and Joel, along with Don Berry's part-time teaching in our department, and with Ron's leadership as dept. chair. We're now able to fully cover the wide range of course offerings in order to serve the needs of our students.

The fall semester has gotten off to a wonderful beginning! I'm enjoying teaching more this semester than ever before. Even the freshmen Bible classes are enjoyable! In fact, the 8:00 am TTh Old Testament survey class continues to amaze me. Most mornings all 32 students are present and ready to go by 8:00 am!!! And they are involved in class discussions and are doing well on the quizzes and exams. The web based course materials with test questions posted in a datapool are proving very popular with the students, as well as a high motivation for study.

Perhaps my favorite class is the third year Greek 301 study of the Sermon on the Mount. We are having a wonderful experience exploring Matthew chapters 5-7 from the Greek New Testament and its connections to contemporary Christian life. But the first and second year Greek students are encouraging as well. The Div School online course on 1/2 Thessalonians is coming along very well. It's taken a while for the class and me to adjust to this new learning environment, but we're getting there. The students are working hard -- you former seminary students will understand the meaning of that -- and are keeping me busy keeping up. Jeremy Abshire is continuing to work with me on his German skills with theological literature in an independent study. Other students are expressing interest in such a program as well.

Additionally, I've been asked to assume the editorship of the newsletter for the university YOTS (Year of The Scholar), which promotes academically oriented programs and events. The university atmosphere gives religion profs the opportunity to be a part of a larger world -- something I enjoy greatly.

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For all kinds of info about us as well as a PDF copy of this newsletter, check out our homepage [Cranfordville at http://www.shelby.net/cranford](http://www.shelby.net/cranford)

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Claire's Musings:

I have discovered a world of difference between the group of fourth graders that I am subbing for six weeks this year and the group last year. It's great! The atmosphere of the elementary school is better, also. This has restored my faith and I am enjoying teaching again (even though elementary kids can sure try your patience). This school does not have a cornfield across the street like last year, because all I can see are trees (how perfect). One morning I saw two horses and a colt galloping around the schoolyard. It seems that about once a week, after the kids have left for the day, an announcement is made over the PA system that the ice cream truck is in front of the school, for the teachers. I have had so many new interesting experiences here.

The drive to and from school is awesome, too. As I drive to school I am driving toward the Blue Ridge Mountains and can see them in the distance (and still enjoy on the way back, because I can see them in the rearview mirror). It reminds me of the first time that Carrie, Angie, and Clay came to visit and we headed to those mountains. We were so excited and there was an abundance of laughter, which we usually have when together. Oh, what wonderful memories!

I wish I could describe the awesome beauty that is in this part of the country. Even in the summer color abounds in the trees. Probably, the best way to describe the colors would be to have a deluxe box of Crayons (sounds like something an elementary school teacher would say). There are such a variety of trees with varying shades of green – olive, pine, and jungle green. As beautiful as this is, we still have fall to look forward to which becomes even more beautiful. The best of all are the mountains. I can well understand why they are called the Blue Ridge Mountains. The colors vary from the darker shades of blue to the fainter pale blue, when seen from a distance. It is possible to see layers of mountains because of the different shades – teal, cerulean, and midnight blue. At times, with certain atmospheric conditions, it is possible to see some of the farthest mountains. They are such a pale blue – periwinkle - that they almost blend in with the sky. Since heaven is even more beautiful than anything we can imagine, and this is so beautiful here, we certainly do have a lot to look forward to!

Occasionally, I can not see the mountains, because of the early morning mist or fog. It might be a low cloud just covering the ground like a fluffy blanket or a little higher peeping in and out of the trees. It is just as breathtaking! It gives the trees and the rest of the scenery a frosted glow, which only tends to add more beauty. There is almost a calm eeriness and quietness.

If I take the back roads, it is harder to see the mountains, because of all of the beautiful trees – unless I am at the top of one of the hilly roads. Oh, the tough decisions we sometimes have to make! It's nice to travel either way. Daily I drive by fields of cotton, which almost daily I can see the growth. A brand new elementary school is being built and a farmer's market, which will be close to us. It's wonderful, but already I dread losing some of the country, especially when we just moved

Continued in next column



Lorin's Musings:

The Charlotte Observer carried an article on Sept. 5 that deserves much greater exposure than it received in the paper and in public opinion at large. Since 1977 a menacing storm cloud has been looming larger and larger across the horizon of U.S. society: the dramatic shift of wealth into the hands of a very small elite group of people. The newspaper article reminds that the richest 1% of Americans (2.7 million people) control in dollars about the same amount (\$620 billion) as the lowest 100 million Americans. Also, the so-called middle class in the U.S. is shrinking and about 217 million people -- about 4 of 5 households -- are taking home a "thinner slice of the economic pie today than in 1977." More than 90% of the economic gain since 1977 has gone to the top 1% of richest Americans.

All of this leads to the undermining of the American system of democratic government and the destruction of the American dream where one can better his or her life. American democracy cannot and will not survive unless this trend is reversed! We are moving more and more into the unstable, questionable foundations of social disparity that has characterized South American societies most of this century and created horrendous injustices and discrimination against the poor in these countries. I'm personally convinced this growing disparity in our society is playing a major role in crime, in the explosive growth of gambling and a whole host of other social problems plaguing our country today. All of this apart from the clear call of scripture for justice and equality, and Jesus' focus on the poor and outcast as the target of his ministry! The U.S. may well be laying the foundations for becoming a third-world country in the trash heap of world history.

Continued from Claire's Musings

here. Of course, on the back roads there seems to be more crazy fast drivers who will whiz by, passing, even though there is a yellow strip in our lane. There seems to be some sort of racetrack mentality on some of the backcountry roads.

Occasionally I do have to dodge a furry animal crossing the road, even on highway 74. So far I have avoided (by a small quick swerve) rabbits, squirrels, or turtles. On a few occasions I have seen deer and beavers just standing by the roadside.

The school is a little up the road past Hog Pen Branch. I absolutely love the names. And, this is not a put-down on the country life. I love some of the country names (including Boiling Springs), and I am proud to be a part of this. I never quite made a good city girl – I always thought I would love the country better. I have discovered that I was right.

Lorin finished up the five Sunday preaching job in Lexington. Even though it was almost a two- hour drive each way, I will miss the church greatly. The people were fantastic and so friendly. David (Music Minister) and Karen took us into their home every Sunday and not only fed us excellent home cooking, but gave us the opportunity to nap, too. Another couple had us out to their home for lunch, too. We had such wonderful opportunities to visit and meet new friends. I even found a new friend to sit with in church on Sunday evenings, David (different David). It was sad to leave, but I know we will