



News from the Blue Ridge

Claire & Lorin Cranford



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Family Events:

Somehow, having to mow the grass on Dec. 14 seems very strange; yet, that was my task with a yard still covered by green -- and growing -- grass, even though we are about as far north as Tulsa, OK. The Bermuda grass (it's called 'wire grass' in NC and viewed more negatively than Johnson grass in Texas!) in some yards has been brown for quite some time, but the blue grass etc. mostly used out here is very cold tolerant and continues to be green and look good through most of the winter. Thus most of the yards in our neighborhood still are green and quite attractive.

A new feature added to Cranfordville over the holidays is the Photo Album section. It's found on the homepage with a camera icon as the hyperlink. Once I was able to relocate the academic pages onto a different computer server, enough space is now available on the Shelby Net server to begin uploading pictures of family etc. You will want to check this out; over time several albums will be added.

Christmas was spent in Virginia with Donald, Hallie and the three grandkids. You will want to check out *Christmas in Virginia* in the Photo Album section. We went up on Thursday and came back on Sunday. The weather, although cold, was clear and pleasant. What a fabulous time we had playing with the grandkids and visiting with their parents. On Christmas eve we all attended the worship service at their church, Gateway Community Church, and enjoyed a wonderful time of celebration of the true spirit of Christmas. On Christmas day we all opened gifts and delighted in the thrill of seeing the children's eyes light up with their gifts from 'Santa.' That evening we helped Donald and Hallie with a neighborhood celebration of the 'birthday of Jesus' in their home. As an outreach ministry they opened up their home to almost a dozen neighbors plus kids for desserts and a short spiritual emphasis on the real reason for celebrating Christmas. Everyone seemed to have a very good time, and quite a mixture of religious backgrounds was present all the way from Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, to Baptist and Methodist.

You will want also to check out the current online edition of *Christianity Online* (*Christianity Today* is the parent company) at <http://www.christianityonline.com>. Donald is the webmaster for the church's web page at <http://www.gatewaychurch.org> and both he and the church's web page are featured in the Jan/Feb 2000 issue. Donald has done a splendid job in creating a very attractive web page that is becoming a significant outreach tool for the young congregation ministering primarily to young adults in the high tech area on the northwest side of Washington, DC. He is a project manager for British Cable and Wireless in DC and works in this area.



University Happenings:

The beginning of the new millennium signals all kinds of opportunities! The spring semester holds much promise for new, exciting adventures in teaching.

Central to this is the *development of two online sections* of the New Testament survey course (Religion 3050). With the exploding interest in taking courses via the internet, this way of teaching presents a variety of challenges. Not the least is the enormously greater amount of time required to set up a course in a distance learning environment. So far, I have experienced about three times the amount of time to create a course in this environment in comparison to what it takes to set up one in a traditional onground setting.

The online MDiv course last fall in the divinity school gave me my "baptism of fire" into this way of teaching. With the responsibility to not only create the course content and structure, but also the technical aspects of the course as well, I spent many, many hours of extra time working on it. In the very simplified structure used (to check it out link on to Cranfordville, GWU Classes, DSNT4010), the course ran very smoothly and productively for the students. Collectively the class generated approximately a 1,000 page commentary on 1 and 2 Thesalonians, along with each creating the basics of 16 sermons based on these two scripture documents. Hopefully, these materials will be a valuable source for each student during their lifetime of ministry.

But undergraduate biblical survey courses have an entirely different learning objective and dynamic. So the challenge this spring is to adapt the DE insights gleaned last fall to this different type of learning experience. At the same time I'm doing an online Independent Study course with another GOAL student in the Old Testament survey (to check out these courses go to the Religion 102 /305 or 101/304 sections at Cranfordville.) This will lay the foundation to begin offering the Old Testament course online beginning in the fall semester.

The *managing of the online course* is another challenging aspect. The flexibility of no weekly classroom schedule is offset by the required extra time for grading written assignments submitted via e-mail. Also the professor is much, much more involved in interaction with small groups and individuals in the class through the discussion forums and chat rooms. Amazingly, I know these students more personally than the onground students in a traditional classroom!

Although the adult evening school program has been the beta testing group (GWU's GOAL program), these courses are also available to the day school students and gradually will be advertised to them as an option to fulfill this aspect of their core degree requirements.

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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>

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Claire's Musings:

Lorin's Religion Department at Gardner-Webb came to our house for a Christmas get-together. It gave us a real reason to decorate the house and we both enjoy doing that. I think that Lorin, especially enjoyed it the most. Our house was beautiful and some of the pictures are now on our web site. Check it out.

The Christmas holidays have been very exciting and busy. I have kept my suitcases and bags packed continuously. In between trips I unpack a little to wash and then immediately repack for the next trip.

The day after my last school day Lorin and I went to Buies Creek, which is a four hour drive, to attend a wedding of one of Lorin's former students. Steve and Kheresa visited us for one weekend recently to see the beautiful fall colors in our mountains. We had a great time and were looking forward to attending their wedding. The wedding was perfect, of course, and we were glad that we could go. We stayed overnight and enjoyed a leisurely trip back home the next day.

Next, I had two or three days to get as much done as possible before our next trip to Virginia to have Christmas with Donald, Hallie, and the three kids. We had a fantastic time and it made Christmas special for us. Christmas with three small children, all preschool age, can be extremely entertaining. They even had a birthday party for Jesus on Christmas night which was special. We drove back on Sunday (seven hour trip) and the traffic was heavy.

Then I had Monday to unpack and repack for my trip to Ft. Worth to visit family. We had to get up at 3:30 a.m. to get ready to leave. But, we think that we like the Greenville airport a little better than Charlotte. And it's a little closer. Angie, Brian, and Clay were there to pick me up and it was wonderful to see them. I stayed with them and Clay let me use his room, so I had all the toys I could want to play with. Carrie came over as soon as she got off work and I couldn't have been happier. I just wish Lorin could have come too, but he had too much work that needed to be done. The visit was awesome and one day Angie and I went to baby resale shops and found some sweet baby clothes for a girl. I went with her for her doctor visit and got to hear the baby's heartbeat. The next day we worked on getting the baby's room ready. Actually I am writing this in Texas while I am still visiting them.

I have had an awesome Christmas break. I fly back home Sunday afternoon, so I will only have one evening to get ready for school again. I know I will be tired, but it's worth it and I feel very fortunate to be able to do this. I have enjoyed getting to spend time with the kids and family. It doesn't get better than this.

See y'all next year!



Lorin's Musings:

Some catchup reflections:

The **SBL meeting** last Nov in Boston, MA, was one of those delightful experiences of picking up new insights into topics of particular interest to me, mostly New Testament studies and computer assisted research and teaching. To bask in the midst of hundreds of book and computer product displays in the exhibit area is close to being in Heaven for a professor! This meeting has by far the largest such opportunity anywhere in the world. With the deep discounts offered by most of the publishers etc., this place becomes a source of huge temptation. The icing-on-the-cake is the opportunity to visit with numerous former students and friends who serve as professors in universities and seminaries all over North America in a variety of Christian denominations. Through these contacts, one finds validation for all the struggles to try to "stamp out ignorance" in the class room. After being at this business for over a quarter of a century, I've developed friendships with quite a large number of people, most of whom I only get the chance to see at this meeting each year.

Christmas 1999 became another adventure. December brought a flurry of visits and activities that proved to be most delightful. On Thurs Dec 9 the members of the religion department and spouses along with Jack and Ruth Partain came over to the house for our annual Christmas dinner celebration. What a delightful time together we had. Added to that was the guitar music supplied by one of our international students from Nicaragua. Ignatio is a wonderfully talented musician.

The next evening Claire and I shared dinner with neighbors, Bruce and Diane Rabon and Don and Carol Berry and their two daughters. We had a most enjoyable time together. These are typical of our neighbors in the edition and are what makes living here so delightful.

Sandwiched in between was a visit from a former SWBTS student, Alan Fleming and his wife Leah and their two children. They were on their way home from missionary orientation school in VA back to Texas to get ready to leave for Kenya on Dec. 28. We had a lot of fun recalling seminary days in the middle 80s -- and Greek classes! We pray them God's blessings as they begin this new journey of missionary service among tribal groups on the Ethiopian border.

On Sat. Dec. 18, Claire and I traveled to Buies Creek and Campbell University, some 4 hours NE of us, to attend the wedding of Steve and Kheresa Harmon. They had spent the weekend with us earlier in October, and we wanted to be a part of this special time for them. The worship service was one of the best structured and most thoughtfully planned services that I've ever attended. All of it reflected the historic Christian traditions about marriage and weddings, especially highlighting Steve's expertise in the early Church Fathers. We got to visit with several former students there as well.

In the midst of all this, grades for the semester were finished.

"What's the difference between a tenured professor and a terrorist?" "The terrorist you can negotiate with."