



News from the Blue Ridge



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Claire & Lorin Cranford
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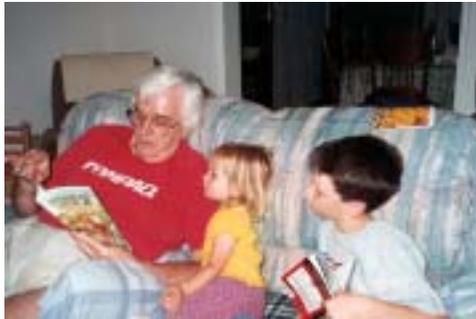


Family Events:

December has become a very special month this year! Last year at the end of the semester I underwent cancer surgery without knowing whether I would be alive twelve months later. The hope was there but the certainty wasn't. One year later I celebrate a year of life free of cancer. The PSA tests have consistently come back 0.00, indicating that the surgery successfully got all the cancer in my body. Of course, no one enjoys absolute certainty. But the news has consistently been encouraging. Along with the blood pressure and blood sugar being brought under control, the cancer surgery signaled a long and sometimes difficult road back to a healthy life. Thus I celebrate December for additional reasons beyond the coming of Christ as Savior.



Of course, one of my major enjoyments in life these days is spending time with grandkids. Unfortunately, Clay and Taylor are the only



ones living close by so that we get to see them regularly. But we enjoy having them more than words can describe. Their laughter and curiosity keep both Claire and I constantly amazed. We are particularly fascinated by Taylor as she approaches her third birthday this January. The little girl instincts are certainly coming to the surface. The very mention of the word 'shopping' and she's headed for the door beckoning the other females to hurry up and head for the car. This weekend she had to help Mimi fold clothes; she had some creative ways of folding socks but did so enthusiastically. This coming year will add to our joy when Greg and Jennifer welcome their second child who will be our eleventh grandchild.

The improved health has allowed me to resume doing some teaching at our church, First Baptist Church of Shelby. This fall I have averaged about three Sundays a month teaching in some of the Sunday School classes. I enjoy doing this greatly. Frank Garver's men's class asked me to serve as their backup teacher. I have taught several times in our own couple's class. The handouts etc. always generate comment, but these experiences help provide insight into where the lay people are in their understanding of scripture.

OUR BEST WISHES AND PRAYERS TO YOU FOR A HAPPY HOLIDAY REST AND A HEALTHY NEW YEAR!

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University Happenings:

During a dismal fall semester with heavy dark clouds of disaster looming over the school and its future, a few bright spots have emerged to provide encouragement and hope.

One of the brightest was the lectureship begun this fall in the school of divinity through the New Testament chair. Dr. Still in the div school invited Prof. I. Howard Marshall from Scotland to deliver a couple of lectures to the university. Having known Prof. Marshall for many years, I was delighted to renew friendship and listen to this outstanding evangelical scholar share his insights gleaned over half a century of teaching and ministry as a Methodist minister and NT scholar. He was well received by students and faculty. Claire and I had the additional joy of hearing him preach since he was guest minister at our church in Shelby on Sunday following the lectures. Dr. Marshall represents the finest among NT scholars in the English speaking world; professors who are profound in their scholarly insights, but also are committed churchmen who serve the Lord in parish ministry.

Another bright spot has been the new class Religion 314, New Testament Theology. Although this first time of teaching the course has had experimental aspects and refinements have taken place in midstream, both the students and I have learned a great deal. We spent the beginning part of the semester trying to figure out what New Testament theology is all about from its history and major exponents. Then we moved to working on developing a program of scripture study in order to enable a theological reading of the Bible. Finally, we have spent the last segment of the semester with the students doing twenty minute presentations on their experiences of reading individual NT documents theologically. Their final exam will be to put all of this together into their own theological understanding of the New Testament as an assigned paper. This has kept me hoping to stay on top of things, but the twenty students have done excellent work as undergraduate students. Their presentations on the individual documents are available in the Schedule page of the Religion 314 course room at Cranfordville.com.

This fall has seen both advancement and frustration with my computer skills and equipment. This past summer necessitated a process of updating the equipment when Claire's computer crashed. One new Pentium IV computer was added then. Recently, another AMD 2400+ computer was also added to the configuration. Gradually, the network system is being migrated to Windows XP Professional, since Microsoft has created a system that can't get along with the earlier Windows 98 systems. Through frustration more than anything else I'm learning more and more about Microsoft networking. If Sun Microsystems will advance the Linux desktop as they indicate for 2003, then this coming year will be the longed-for day of dumping MS operating systems.



Claire's Musings:

Dec, 2002

Angie, Taylor, and I took one Saturday to go Christmas shopping in Gastonia. It worked out well that it was just us girls, because Clay would have been bored. I'm not much of a shopper, but little 2 1/2 year old Taylor is already showing signs of becoming a pro. She was exceptionally good for that young of an age and enjoyed the whole day. No matter how tired she was she was always ready to go to the next store. Her favorite phrase that day was "go shop'n!" What a fantastic and fun day!!

Thanksgiving break was great, too. Brian's parents came for a visit with Angie and Brian and everyone came to our house for the Thanksgiving meal. I cooked a turkey and a ham in a stove that was not big enough for both. I had to put in the ham pan at a small angle and got busy and forgot to check it often enough. When we noticed smoke it was discovered that there was a small fire in the oven which was immediately put out. No big deal, but it does add excitement to the day. In spite of that everything was delicious. We all had a good visit and were so glad that Doug and Bonnie were able to visit North Carolina.

Most of the rest of Thanksgiving break was spent working on my university studies. I was grateful for the extra time and was able to turn in two major assignments.

I missed my 40th (wow, what a long time ago – time does fly by faster the older you get) high school reunion that same weekend. I hated to miss it, but the expense was too much at this time for such a quick trip. Hopefully by the 50th reunion I might be retired and able to go.

The next Wednesday after Thanksgiving there was news of a major snow and ice storm coming. We started out with our usual school day and before I even had my first class an announcement was made for the children to start getting back on the buses to head back home. The teachers were able to leave about mid morning and the bad weather was just beginning. The snow fall that day was beautiful with the biggest snow flakes that I have ever seen. The Carolinas had a major ice storm with much of the electricity in homes and businesses down. Because of the four-year drought many of the trees and root systems were weak and the ice (1/4 to 1/2" thick) broke branches and whole trees, which in turn tore down power lines. I stood on our front porch and was amazed at the sounds of trees and ice breaking all around us. It was an eerie sound and we are surrounded on all sides by trees, but our yard just has a few. We were very fortunate (as were Angie and Brian) that we did not lose our power. I spent most of the off time catching up on my final paper, which counts 40% of my grade. I was in a panic to get as much work as possible in case we lost electricity. Fortunately I was able to finish my work.

This past year has been extremely busy, because I started my Masters in Library Science one year ago. I have finished 15 credit hours out of 39 hours. I am thankful to be this far along. As I have said before, I am too old for this and it's harder to get by with less sleep than I used to be able to do, my mind works a little slower. But, I am proud and happy to be this far along and it amazes me that I have been able to do what I have. It's been difficult, but I know I can do this.

We still love the beauty of North Carolina and the mountains. We hope that any of you that have an opportunity will come to visit.

WE WISH ALL OF YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR !!



Lorin's Musings:

I'm going to deviate from the study of interpretative approaches to scripture again in order to reflect back on the past year. The study

will resume next month.

2002 was quite a year of ups and downs. It began with severe restrictions from the cancer surgery in Dec. 2001. Teaching while trying to recover from major surgery proved to be quite a challenge. Added to that were the other health problems related to the diabetes and arthritis. But we made it through the spring semester and the health issues began resolving themselves. No trip to the regional SBL meeting was possible in March, but I did manage to get in an intensive seminar in Charlotte, sponsored by Adobe Inc. on programing techniques with the Adobe Acrobat software. At least some personal development took place.

For the first time since coming to GWU in Dec. of 1997, I did not teach any summer courses. Instead, the concentration was on resting and regaining my health. Work on school stuff did take place, mostly related to the development of the new course in NT theology offered in the fall and the latest revision to the Greek grammar. But some work on the yard and the shop were major activities during the summer months. The limitations from the health issues slowed me down considerably. Also, they forced me to balance a couple of hours each day working outside or in the shop and being on my bad feet with several hours working in the home office while sitting down to give my feet some relief. Couple that with the severe drought we were experiencing through early fall, and I had more challenges than anticipated trying to get yard work done.

The fall semester proved to be one of the most difficult ones that I've experienced since coming to GWU five years ago. The craziness connected with Dr. White's departure from the university added to a huge work schedule with six separate, unrelated courses being taught -- something I've promised myself never to repeat! Claire's schedule has been hectic as well. We've promised each other and the Lord that we will find ways to slow down and have more free time to do fun things, even if it takes a move to somewhere else to achieve this.

Consequently, we both are looking at 2003 with excitement to see what the Lord has in store for us. One resolution is that this time next year we will be able to say that we have enjoyed living each day more than ever before.

As a new year approaches, the need of authentic Christian values grows increasingly greater. Our world is becoming a more dangerous place in which to live. The US government is seemingly committed to plunging the world into a stupid and needless war in order to cover up its failure to address fundamental social and economic problems in US society. Organized Christianity in the US, and especially Southern Baptists, are turning away from both the mind and the spirit of Christ to an institutionalized religion, and increasingly to a phoney civil religion that collapses the line of division between citizenship responsibilities and religious devotion. The effect is the growing loss of spirituality and the increase in hypocrisy among professing Christians. It's no wonder that the Gallop Poll this fall indicated that evangelical Christianity in the US ranks only slightly above prostitutes for honesty and trustworthiness. Consequently, non-Christians in US society are turning in growing numbers to alternative versions of some kind of religion or spirituality.

This is not an encouraging picture! But, Christmas stands as a fresh reminder that the Babe in the manger came to transform lives and society. When we give Him opportunity, the most wonderful changes imaginable are possible. Although a cliché, He truly is the only hope for our world.