



News from the Blue Ridge

Claire & Lorin Cranford



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Family Events:

Of course, the big news this month is the birth of Anabeth Lee Cranford in Huntsville, TX, on Feb. 15. Weighing in at 8 pounds 1 ounce, she was 19.75 inches long at birth. Although grandchild number eleven for us, she is nonetheless very special. We're looking forward to a trip to Texas at the end of the spring semester in order to spend some time with her and her family. Here is a sampling of the pictures. Now her big brother, Andrew, has a



baby sister to play with. We're so grateful that both mother and daughter are doing wonderful. Now dad -- we not so sure!!! He has two budding athletes in his family. I doubt that he has come down to earth yet.



The weather in western NC continues to play games with us this winter and as we head into spring. The intervals of dry, clear sunny days have been sparse most of the winter. We've had more rain, snow, and sleet this winter than old timers around here can remember for many years back. School closings, even at GWU, have played havoc on the educational process. Some public schools already are resorting to Saturday classes in order to make up for the 'snow days.' Some holidays, like Memorial Day in May, have already gone by the wayside so that the required 180 days of teaching can be met without extending the school year significantly into the summer.

This fluctuating weather has also done a job on my health, especially the neuropathy problem in my feet and the arthritis problems generally over my body. I don't need to watch the TV or listen to the radio to know when a weather change is setting in. Pain from my toes up the spine to my fingers tells me dramatically that it's happening. Through my extensive tracking of all this, twice daily for almost two years now in a spreadsheet data file, I'm coming to realize that the key factor triggering pain is the barometric pressure change. Temperature, humidity, dew points, rain, sunshine etc. aren't nearly as important as the barometric pressure, especially a sudden change in the pressure. Getting older is sure proving to be 'a lot of fun!' But, as my father used to say, "It sure beats the alternative!"



University Happenings:

Spring Break for me comes March 3-7 this year. That also means that we are halfway through the spring semester, since spring break traditionally comes the week after midterm in US university life. The older I become, the faster the semesters seem to rush by. But, that isn't necessarily bad!

One of the pluses in teaching, especially in higher education, is the cyclical nature of one's job. A very definite rhythm exists and is predicated on a sixteen week cycle. If you get a bad or mediocre group of students one semester, there's always hope for a better group the following semester. But, if you have an excellent group of students during the semester, there is some apprehension about what will cycle through next.

A middle ground in this comes when one teaches courses like foreign languages where at least a three semester pattern holds true for the majority of the students. The cycle, either positively or negatively, extends over three or more semesters, instead of just one.

One of the exciting things ahead is the teaching of the book of James in the Lay Institute of Religion through the divinity school at GWU, which is a part of the Center for Congregational Enrichment. This program is designed for non-clergy folks who want to expand their knowledge in a wide array of topics related to Christian faith and practice. The studies are designed to be inspirational as well as informational. No tests or textbook purchases are required.

The James study will be on Thursday evenings from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm beginning on March 13 and concluding on April 17. The enrolment fee for the course is \$45.00.

As a part of the background preparation for the study, I have just about finished revising and transferring over to a web format the *Study Manual for the Epistle of James: English Text*, which was published a number of years ago in print form. The web based form is greatly simplified, and also incorporates hyperlinks on the internet to allow exploration of issues as a self-contained study. This material will also serve as the visual aid for the teaching of the book of James during the classroom activities. You can check it out by going to Cranfordville.com and clicking on Bible Study Aids, then Bible Studies, then James. Or, at the Cranfordville.com homepage just click on Academic Pages, then LIR James. The completed study will be posted by the beginning of the study on March 13.

Worth Thinking About

"Of the 535 members of Congress, only one has a child or grandchild in the Armed Services, that being Sen. Tim Johnson of South Dakota. The lack of military service among our leader's children indicate the appalling level of insulation between the upper-middle-class elite and the military."

--- Armstrong Williams

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Claire's Musings:

March 2003

The first weekend in February Lorin and I made a six-hour trip to visit Carrie and Daniel in Jacksonville,

Florida. It was so good to see them and we had a fantastic time. The weekend went too fast and Saturday was the one day that we had to do everything. Most of the day was spent in St. Augustine where we took a trolley excursion through the old city and were able to see many of the special places and learn about some of the history of St. Augustine. Of course, I took many more pictures.



For those who know about Flat Stanley (elementary school)



we got a lot of great pictures and it added to our fun. There is a book for elementary school called Flat Stanley where a boy gets squashed flat by his bulletin board. He then gets to do special things and make a journey through the mail in an envelope. Sometimes elementary

school children color a picture of Flat Stanley and send that picture to someone else in another state or maybe even another country. The recipients can use their imagination in various ways taking pictures of Stanley and writing a letter telling how Stanley visited them and what they did. The four of us had a lot of fun taking pictures of Stanley on the trolley tour, the beach, and even taking him out to dinner. Daniel got some great pictures of Stanley on the navy base and including Stanley on some of the airplanes.

We not only had a lot of fun just being together, but we ate well, also. I had gater tail and squid at a fish restaurant and was surprised that it actually tasted good. But even better was getting to eat Blue Bell Vanilla Bean ice cream. That's one of the things that I have missed since moving from Texas.



The night after we got home I went to see Clay's school program held at Shelby High School. I was quite surprised at how big a production it became for an elementary show. It was held in a high school auditorium and even with \$5.00 tickets, it was sold out before the show and no tickets were sold that night. Quite impressive! All the students did a great job, but of course, Clay was fantastic. That comes from a Mimi's perspective.

Speaking of wonderful grandchildren, Greg and Jennifer had their baby girl, Anabeth, February 15. They sent us some email pictures and, of course,



she is adorable. Pictures of Andrew holding his new baby sister showed how proud he was. He will probably be a great big brother. Lorin and I need to make a trip to Texas to see the latest family addition, plus lots of other friends and family.



Lorin's Musings:

Last month we took a quick look at the Lord's Supper narratives as a piece of early church worship liturgy. This time we continue to look at identifiable expressions of early church tradition, but more related to preaching than to worship.

The first of several subgenera here is labeled Kerygma. For a detailed listing see NT Genre at Cranfordville.com. The term originally came from the Greek word, κηρυγμα, and mostly referred to the apostolic preaching about Christ in the early church. Often distinguished from material labeled 'teaching,' this material focused on the essentials of the preaching about Christ by the apostles in early Christianity.

Several passages seem to preserve these essentials. 1 Cor. 15:3-5 is one of them (NRSV): "3 For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 4 and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve, ..." The essentials focused on the death and resurrection of Christ. Both events happened in line with divine promise in scriptures. The death of Christ had redemptive purpose.

Rom. 1:1b-4 also preserves this message (NRSV): "...set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, 3 the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,..." Here the focus is on Jesus as both divine (Son of God) and human (descended from David). The identity of Christ was a central part of early Christian preaching.

1 Timothy 3:16 represents a later, more poetically developed expression of the kerygma (NRSV): "Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory." Various aspects of belief about Jesus Christ emphasizing again both his human and divine nature formed the central emphasis.

In the narrative material of Acts 2:22-24 we again see this emphasis in Peter's sermon at Pentecost (NRSV): "22 You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know -- 23 this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. 24 But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power." The involvement of the Heavenly Father in the death and resurrection of Christ is the distinctive emphasis of Peter in this expression.

What is important about this insight? If we try to write the bottom line foundation of the gospel message, it must underscore Jesus Christ as fully human and fully divine. His death and resurrection were a part of God's plan of redemption that was set forth in advance in the Old Testament. Erase any of these aspects and whatever results cannot be legitimately called gospel. Early Christianity passionately proclaimed this. So should we!