

A BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I was born Jeffrey Gregg Crow, March 20th, 1946 at 2 minutes to 7 in the morning, Central Time, at McNeil General Hospital in Berwyn, Illinois. My Dad was a graduate of Wesleyan University and Hartford Seminary, and, at the time of my birth, was head of youth work for the Chicago area Congregational churches. My Mom was a graduate of Emma Willard School, Russell Sage College, and Hartford Seminary (for Christian Education). She also played the piano and the organ, being drafted more than once to direct the Church Choir. She was Chairperson of The Board of Homeland Ministries of the UCC, President of the New Hampshire Conference, UCC, and respected author of many Christian Education materials. She loved “Honky Tonk” music as well as the “classics”, and I did once hear her playing “Bumble Boogie” on the church organ when she thought no one was listening. Still, she was the “Presbyterian” that kept us in line while my Dad was the “Methodist”, always testing the limits of life and faith. A rather remarkable couple.

I have two older sisters who live in Connecticut; Connie, a retired High School teacher and Trinka (Katrinka), a nurse specializing in Rehab & Hospice work. My parents wanted the best in education for the 3 of us, so we attended Emma Willard, Northfield, and Wooster School respectively. Connie attended Vassar and graduated from Syracuse. Trinka started at Connecticut College, moved to UCONN for the nursing program and finished up at a Community College after taking time out to raise 4 children.

When I was 3, we moved to Danbury, Connecticut where Dad was Pastor of The First Congregational Church; 1200 members and 500 in the Church School, which my Mom ran. In 5th Grade (Church School) I bopped a kid in the nose (he kicked me first, under the table) and I was banished from class. For me, this was a good thing ‘cause I got to go to worship instead. Worship was much more invigorating for me. Sorry Mom. Regular school didn’t rate any higher than Church School in my concept of human life, but I learned to read & write, add & subtract, and, most importantly, to THINK! It was my thinking that often confounded my teachers, and continues to make my life, shall we say, interesting. Being a year ahead of myself in school, I was always the youngest, and hence not always “socially smooth”. I’m still working on that! I was shy, believe it or not.

As I turned 13, Dad moved his ministry and our family to Meriden, Connecticut. I attended Platt High School and, in my sophomore year, found that I was quite fast and could play a pretty fair game of football. This helped my self-confidence immeasurably, as finally someone besides my parents commended me for doing something well. I did also begin acquiring my Dad’s pension for seeking truth, by leading an all-school walk out in support of one of our favorite teachers who was mysteriously fired. After High School, I was “sentenced” to Bridgton Academy in Maine for a year due to my aversion for homework. While there I did manage to frequently wind up on the honor role because they MADE YOU DO HOMEWORK!

From there, it was on to Springfield College where I enjoyed the college life and the chance to play some more football. I was contacted by the Chargers and the Bengals of the NFL about possibly playing “safety” in the pros, if I would learn

that craft with the Hartford Knights semi-pro team. In the end, I opted to focus on attending Hartford Seminary.

This was a mistake. Not the going to Seminary per-se, but going to Hartford. It was, for me, a cold and lonely place, devoid of any real sense of faith and love. After a year and a half, I removed myself from the situation and became a banker. This lasted 3 months. I got fired. The reason? I was “having too good a time” doing my job. I kid you not! Actually, everyone should be fired at least once. It’s a good character builder. So anyway, I did what any college graduate might do when life threw him a knuckleball; I drove an oil truck for 2 years (see picture).

Then one day, I up and “retired” from this honorable profession, opening up my life to a panorama of new opportunities. I checked out Yale Divinity School, thinking I might try again, but, during the admission processes, I happened to be walking by a United Van Lines agent. I went in and asked if they might need a driver. The man smiled and asked if I could leave for Florida on Friday. Good-by Yale, hello open road! What a great time traveling the country. No regrets.

A couple of years later, I became advisor to the Jr. High Youth Group at my Dad’s old church in Meriden (He & Ma had left for Boylston Massachusetts). That progressed to my also advising the Senior High Group, and then to becoming Director of Christian Education (Church School, Confirmation, etc.). What a great time with great kids! I think we had close to 60 in Youth Group, with a dozen or more in Confirmation every year.

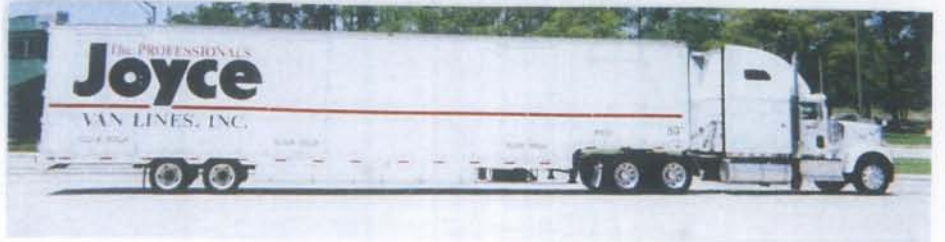
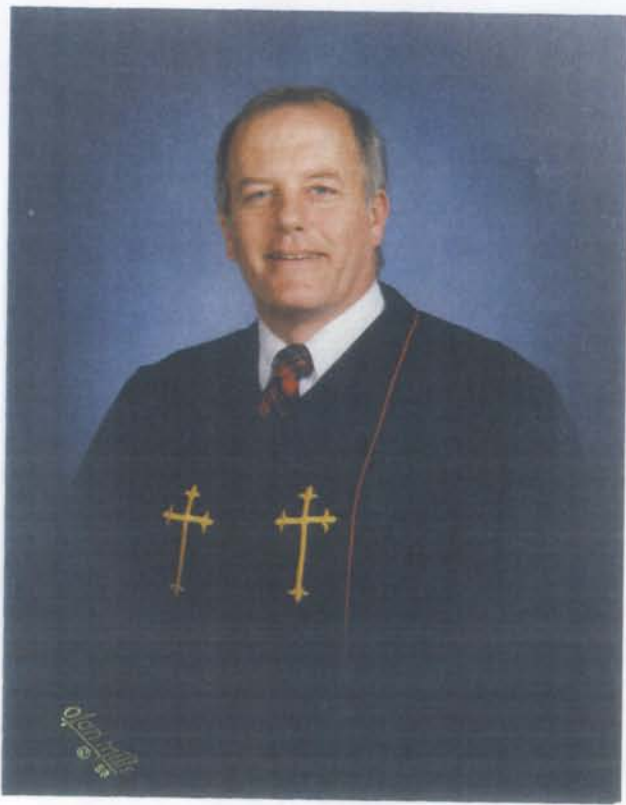
I had known these folks (the adults of the church) since I was 13 (I was now 30) and I loved them, but I was now experiencing a side of them that was very controlling and afraid. They didn’t know what to make of me in this new role of mine, and the kids with their energy, questions, and joy had them shaking in their boots. In worship, as well as in church life, the Bible & Jesus Christ seemed truly to be missing in action. I had thought about getting my MBA and starting a “mobile” Christian Bookstore, but the state of that parish and others that I knew of switched me onto a track that was leading once again towards Seminary. Somebody had to preach RESURRECTION & JOY!

I don’t know why Duke University accepted this Yankee rebel, but they rolled the dice, and so did I. I still didn’t really warm up to the academic stresses of seminary, but I had some excellent professors, and I enjoyed questioning them immensely! Also helping was the fact that I drove Charter Bus Tours all over the south in my “down” time, which included driving the Duke basketball and football teams, and taking the Duke Chorale on their week long southern tour during spring break. They thanked me with a 12 fold “Amen” that took 20 minutes!

I was ordained on Halloween of 1982 “in the arms” of “church on the hill” in Acworth, New Hampshire, having accepted a Call to be Associate Pastor at the Holden, Massachusetts Congregational Church. Two years later, I was off to Lebanon, Connecticut to be Senior Pastor of the Congregational Church there. After 7 years of service, I moved on to the Harwinton (CT) Congregational Church. It was during my 4-year stint in Harwinton that I met Wendy at a wedding that I was officiating. Three years later, we were married. By that time, I had moved on to The North Stamford Congregational Church in Stamford, Connecticut where I served for 11 years. And now, well, I’m here, - doing my best, as I have for these past 27 years +, to keep Christ alive, to keep the Bible at hand, and to keep God at the center of everything that matters.

POTPOURRI

- I have been riding motorcycles since 1965, and I do own a Harley Davidson Dyna Wide Glide.
- Hot Rods and interesting cars are also a part of my life. I do own a 2000 Camaro SS convertible (fun to drive!).
- My Dad retired from active ministry at age 81, and passed away at age 91 in 1996. My Mom passed away at age 92 in 2004.
- Since 1988, I have taken part of my summer vacation to drive tractor-trailers around the country. Some people like to golf. I like driving 18-wheelers.
- In 1961 I sailed to France on the Queen Mary.
- During my college summers, I drove a wrecker.
- One summer while in college, I took a month and drove a school bus (along with 2 other counselors) across the country with 25 Junior Highs aboard, camping out every night. *Las Vegas, Garden of the Gods, Grand Canyon, Disneyland, Mesa Verde, Yosemite, Mt. Rushmore, the Badlands, etc.*
- In the 70s, 80s, & 90s, I led of many week long UCC Summer Conferences for Junior and Senior High School Youth.
- Dave Smith, who was a Youth Leader here in the early 80s, was a member of the High School Youth Group I led in the 70s in Meriden, Connecticut.
- In the past, I have served on the Board of Directors of Senexet House and the Star Island Corporation (both Conference Retreat Centers). In addition, I have served as Registrar of the Litchfield North Association, CT/UCC; as Moderator of the Fairfield West Association, CT/UCC; and as President of the Stamford (CT) Clergy Association.
- I was President of The Minister's Association of Rhode Island, UCC, from 2007-2009.
- My wife Wendy is a Nurse, specializing in OBGYN & IVF.
- Wendy's Dad passed away in 2000, and her mother resides in a nursing home in East Greenwich.
- Wendy has 3 brothers who live in Connecticut (Steve, Tom, & Dave), and a sister, Pam, who lives with her husband Andrew and their 2 children in Warwick. Both of them are architects. Pam also teaches at RISD.
- Wendy has 3 sons: **CHRISTOPHER**, 30, lives in Philadelphia with his girlfriend Mari. After many years with Sun Microsystems he is now off on his own as a consultant. **SEAN**, 27, after living in Colorado for the last few years - where he worked the slopes of Aspen as an EMT, taught rock climbing, and was a lifeguard - is now back in Connecticut training to become a Paramedic. **GREG**, 24, cleans swimming pools in the summer for the "rich & famous" in Darien, Connecticut and lives with his father in Bethel. In his spare time and in the winter months⁵, he is a group home worker for *Abilities Beyond Disabilities*.
- Wendy's X, John, is a jeweler in Bethel Connecticut. We are good friends. He calls me his "husband-in-law". He did provide our wedding rings!
- We have a dog named "Chuck" and a cat named "Bob".





Senior & Junior



Harold & Janet with Son & Machine



Connie & Trinka



Chris, Sean, & Greg



Wendy & The Preacher

*It's a Wonderful Life!
Real HARD at times -
But Wonderful nonetheless!
Live it up, ~ this is not a dress rehearsal!*

Your Friend, Pastor Jeff