



December 2019

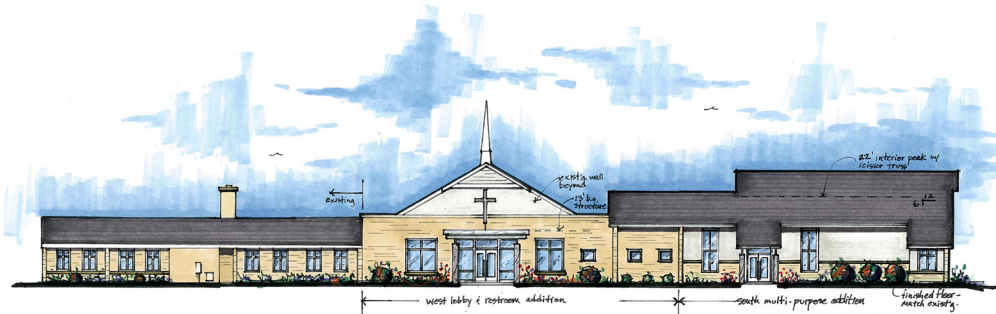
CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

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Any day now . . . literally!



As this edition of *CrossWay Current* is being published, we are waiting — literally any day now — for the City of Grand Rapids to issue an occupancy permit authorizing use of our long-awaited building addition.

Electrical and plumbing connections are completed, kitchen appliances are installed, the new restrooms are ready for use, furniture is beginning to arrive, the basketball hoop is ready for fun, the contractor's equipment is being cleared, the doors are hung and we're hoping to be able to "move in" and deck the halls — both old and new — for the celebration of our Lord's birth as a human baby.

We praise God for all the progress and wait on His plan for effective use of the facility . . . as the building completion is just the beginning of what the Lord has designed for CrossWay to undertake for His glory and the advance of His Gospel.

We are thankful for those who have contributed to the project in so many ways (including our late November cleaning crew!), and we ask the congregation to continue to pray fervently and give generously toward the added touches that promise to make our ministry more effective.

The time is here, and the need is now.



Help Needed — all ages!!!
Saturday, Nov. 30, 9:30 a.m.
Come help decorate CrossWay for Christmas!
Coming Up at CrossWay Community



Thank you for the invitation!

CrossWay's Missions Outreach Steering Committee thanks those who have welcomed a Calvin student for Thanksgiving dinner, while encouraging more CrossWay families to host such a student for Sunday dinner during Advent, for Christmas Eve or for Christmas Day.

Many students from overseas won't be traveling home this special time of year when the campus empties and becomes a lonely place.

This project gives us a great opportunity to reach out in love. Look for the sign-up sheet just outside the sanctuary. Questions? Contact Stella Michael, Paul Samuelson or Annette Doerr, in the CrossWay Fellowship Directory.

Every Sun. 10 a.m.

Every Sun. 6 p.m.

Every Tues. 1 p.m.

Dec. 1 & 15 11:30 a.m.

Dec. 1 & 15 6 p.m.

Dec. 4, 11 & 18 7 p.m.

Dec. 5, 12 & 19 2-4 p.m.

Dec. 5, 12 & 19 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 7 9 a.m.

Dec. 7 9 a.m.

Dec. 8 11:30 a.m.

Dec. 10 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 11 2:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Dec. 11 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 24 6 p.m.

Worship together

Book Club (ck with Brenda Weilnau)

Ladies Bible study (conf. rm.)

Sunday School (all ages)

Alves small group @ Doerrs'

Hinkle small group

Learn Biblical Hebrew (here)

Wholyfit exercise (church hosting)

Ladies' breakfast @ IHOP

Men's breakfast @ Bob Evans

Christmas Potluck

Veurink small group @ A. Le's

Pregnancy Ctr. counseling (here)

Ladies' Christmas tea @ Johnstons

Christmas Eve service



Ladies! Join us for our annual Christmas Tea & Ornament Exchange!

Wednesday, Dec. 11 • 6:30 p.m.
at the home of Audrey Johnston

2503 Maple Valley Dr. SE

Bring:

- a wrapped Christmas ornament (\$5-7)
- a plate of treats to share
- friends or relatives (& enough add'l ornaments for them)

Advent-Christmas sermon series

The Gifts of Christmas

Dec. 1 Advent 1	<i>The Gift of Anticipation</i> (Isaiah 25:6-26:6)
Dec, 8 Advent 2	<i>The Gift of Patience</i> (Romans 8:25) Christmas Potluck after service
Dec. 15 Advent 3	<i>The Gift of Hope</i> (1 Peter 1:3)
Dec. 22 Advent 4	<i>The Gift of Revelation</i> (Hebrews 1:1-4)
Tues., Dec. 24 6 p.m.	Christmas Eve: <i>The Gift of Joy</i> (Isaiah 12:3) Service of Carols & Candlelight
Wed. Dec. 25	Christmas Day (no service)



Opening our doors to those in need

The Pregnancy Resource Center of Grand Rapids has linked arms again with CrossWay Community Church to serve young moms in need in our area.

The third Wednesday of each of the next three months, our doors will be open to PRC staff and clients for counseling sessions and to equip the young mothers with gifts of diapers and other baby needs.

We continue to welcome CrossWay volunteers as hostesses for this important work in Jesus' name. (Contact Women's Ministry Team Leader Brett Kelp; she's listed in the fellowship directory.) And we ask our congregation to join us in prayer for this outreach.



Be among the first 20

Get your CrossWay mug!

In celebration of the expansion of our ministry center, CrossWay Community Church offers commemorative mugs at \$6 each donation (or 2 for \$10). At church on Sundays; when we run out, we'll start a sign-up sheet for the next 20! Treat yourself (or your spouse) for Christmas!

Special offer

A member of our congregation is offering a never-worn navy blue men's parka with zip lining — size M — as a gift.

Interested? Contact Pastor Manuel.

This message
from Pastor Bob Funk

Thinking Through the Incarnation



“In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God...
The Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us.”
(John 1:1,14)

What does the incarnation mean to you? As you may know, while this is a central doctrine of the Christian faith, there were many false teachings, even heresies, surrounding this key doctrine. The 2nd and 3rd century Docetists, for instance, believed that Jesus was pure spirit. He just appeared to be human but didn't have a real physical body. The Gnostics also believed Jesus was the transcendent God but was not incarnate in human flesh because God would not enter “evil matter.” Again, Christ only seemed to be human.

The early Church and the Church fathers debated, studied and struggled to clarify these important issues. Orthodox Christianity, consequently, has considered Christ's dual nature definitive since the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. That council declared,

“Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood.”

Dr. Charles Ryrie says, “More concisely one may describe the person of Christ incarnate as being full deity and perfect humanity united without mixture, change, division or separation in one Person forever.”

In his *Jesus On Trial*, David Limbaugh also writes, “Christianity does not teach that Jesus was 50 percent deity and 50 percent human; rather, that He was 100 percent God and 100 percent human.” And Jesus was not a pretend human, without a real physical body. The Son of God really did become one of us, and this has important consequences for us.

Christ's incarnation really does mean that God is with us — “Emmanuel.” He took on human form and endured the same experiences we do. We can identify with Him. We can have a personal relationship with Him. He is not an abstract idea or distant deity. He understands our sorrows, distresses, fears and our grief. He was tempted as we are, yet without sinning. He is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. (Heb.4:15-16) He really was capable of suffering. He dignified human nature. And, perhaps most importantly, as fully God and fully man, He is able to save us!

Archbishop Fulton Sheen wrote,

“No man can love anything unless he can get his arms around it, and the cosmos is too big and bulky. But once God became a Babe and was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, men could say, ‘This is Emmanuel, this is God with us.’” (*The Life of Christ*, p.22)

Many may still believe that Jesus Christ was either deity or a human teacher/prophet.

Because of Christmas, and the testimony of the Church and the Scriptures, we confess that Christ Jesus is “at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man.”

This is Christmas. This is the core of our faith. This is the foundation of our salvation.

CrossWay Community Mission Statement:

God has called us to make disciples of Jesus Christ who respond to His Gospel by committing ourselves to loving God, one another and the world in Christ's name.



This message
from Pastor Bob Manuel

A Sunglasses & Crash Helmet Christmas?

“Christmas” can be, must be, a dangerous time. At least it was in the beginning.

With the original in-fleshing of the Son of God upon this earth, a cosmic clash began. We still feel its reverberations. That is, in His incarnation, the dynamics of God’s Kingdom, of the age to come, clashed with the “god” of this age who has been doing all he can do to “blind the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” (II Cor. 4:4)

Not surprisingly, King Herod didn’t welcome Jesus either. He only wanted Him dead. (Matt.2:16)

Especially during Christmas, I long for us to “come to church” with a sense of expectancy and awe. Annie Dillard writes of this, saying:

“On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies’ straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake someday and take offense, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return.”

(Annie Dillard: *Teaching a Stone to Talk*)

As for the “sunglasses?” I had the privilege of preaching on the glorification of Jesus on November 24th. The glory of Jesus is a crazy good, beautiful and awesome thing to behold. Just ask Isaiah. (Is.6:1-5; John 12:41) Seeing the glory of Jesus, he was “undone/ruined.” Everything changed. The Hebrew word “ruined,” carries with it the idea of “dissolved,” of our connecting tissues disintegrating. Seeing God’s glory, we might become a messy pile of bone and blood. Perhaps, like Moses, we need a renewed

awareness that unless we are hidden in the “Cleft of the Rock” (Exodus 33:19-20), seeing the glory of God would dissolve us. Of course, as followers of Jesus, “our lives are now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, then we also will appear with Him in glory.” (Col. 3:3-4) While we need sunglasses to shield us from the power of the sun, do we have nearly as much respect and reverence (and hunger!) for Jesus the Son as we do for the fiery ball of gas He created?

Finally, none of the above is meant to strike an unhealthy fear or a sense of dread in our lives. It’s only meant to help us become, as Dillard suggests, to be “sufficiently sensible of conditions.” We are at war. (Eph. 6) And so, the “sunglasses” and “crash helmets” are *mindsets*, meant to help prepare us for the coming of our King. Yes, a cosmic kingdom “clash” will often occur, which is why we are told to pray, “*Thy* kingdom come, *Thy* will be done on earth as it is in heaven . . .” We must be willing to *repent* of our own desire to control our own lives and little kingdoms. (Matt.4:17) A sunglasses-and-crash-helmet mentality will also protect us from the many trivialities and demonic busyness that so often accompany this season. We will also be empowered to experience the *joy* we often sing about during this holiday! May our Heavenly Father pass out the crash helmets and sunglasses this Christmas. May we wake up each morning with a sense of *expectancy* and *awe*, a *longing* to “see” the glory of the coming of the Lord, and so worship our glorious King.



The new norm for global missions

It's only natural that, when we think of missionaries, we think of those sent by U.S. churches to far-flung regions of the world.

Sadly, many of those regions no longer welcome North Americans to their communities. But global evangelism is still in full sway, according to our missionary Keith Anderson of ProMETA. Keith has heard that "close to 24,000 Latin Americans are deployed as cross-cultural missionaries whom God has filled with passion and desire to serve beyond their own borders."



And CrossWay is doing its part by supporting Keith and Judy Anderson in their role as directors for training Spanish-speaking followers of Jesus who are serving even in Muslim-majority countries. ProMETA has developed a curriculum that specifically addresses the sensitivities involved in this

challenging work. Recently, ProMETA offered a free online course on the study of Islam. Sixty Latin Americans signed up within the first three weeks of the offering. Let's praise the Lord!

Andersons ask us to pray for their ministry.

Please pray for:



...the new ProMETA board, taking office during the annual association meeting, which was held during November.



...security for the ministry's office in Costa Rica, in the wake of a September break-in. And for the gradual replacement of the equipment that was stolen.



...Dr. Tim McIntosh's health. He is head of the Leadership Dept. and is battling a serious form of brain cancer.



...a 2020 strategic planning retreat in Costa Rica December 2 - 7.

To join the Andersons' communications and prayer support team, see team leader RaeAnne Hansberry or Missions Coordinator Pam Reed.

The 15th prisoner

Participants in our fourth annual Christmas Card-writing Party for Persecuted Christians addressed their greetings to 14 Christ followers who are in prison for their faith in Eritrea, China, Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan. Even before we could get our 265 cards in the mail, The Voice of the Martyrs listed a 15th prisoner on their *prisoneralert.com* website. You're invited to send your greetings to Mahrokh Roksare Kanbari. Choose and sign your card and bring it, unsealed, to Pam Reed's mailbox at church. She'll tuck in a heart-language scripture verse, address and mail it for you! By Sunday, December 8, please! Here's some info about this dear sister:



Shortly before Christmas in December 2018, three **Iranian** intelligence agents raided the home of **Mahrokh Roksare Kanbari**, 65, in the city of Karaj. The agents confiscated cell-phones, Bibles and Christian materials. Mahrokh was then taken to intelligence offices, where she endured ten days of intense interrogation from morning to evening.

Mahrokh was conditionally released after submitting a bail of approximately \$2,500. In January 2019, she was brought before the prosecutor to answer charges of "acting against national security." She was then forced to go to a religious leader to be "instructed" and directed to return to Islam.

At her trial in July 2019, friends said the judge was rude and tried to humiliate Mahrokh. He then sentenced her to one year in prison for "propaganda against the system."

Mahrokh was summoned to serve her one-year prison term in October 2019.

Our 4th annual Christmas card-writing party for persecuted Christians • Nov. 10, 2019



A buffet of sacred-style Christmas cards is offered for notes to our persecuted brothers & sisters.

And, of course, a buffet of treats & Christmas cookies to keep us going through the long list of brothers & sisters in need of comfort.



Diligence & devotion fill CrossWay's fellowship hall.

Hannah Samuelson & her mom, Elma, pray and write cards to brothers & sisters in Christ, imprisoned for their beliefs.

