



CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church
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‘Doing church’ a new way, for now

In the face of the unprecedented viral epidemic which has brought aggressive public health strategies into our lives, the elders and pastors of our church have heeded the authorities — as the Word counsels in I Peter 2:13-14 — and suspended gatherings, pre-empting such normal gatherings as Sunday worship services, weekly Sunday School, the Tuesday Ladies Bible Study and Wednesday night Lent Light supper and lessons. We are respectful of the authorities, and we are deeply concerned for the well-being of our church family. We are so looking forward to the day when we will again all come together in joyful fellowship and communal worship of our loving Father, our Almighty God.

Our dear pastors are moving forward on preparing and delivering sermons to teach and bless us, posting them online beginning Sunday, March 29; the pastors hope to have the sermons posted beginning at the 10 a.m. hour each Sunday; visit the church website at <https://www.grandrapidscrosswaycommunitychurch.com/podcasts>. (A good place to “visit” even during “normal” times!)

Those who have access to *Facebook* are invited to visit often the church page at [facebook.com: CrossWay Community Church GR](https://www.facebook.com/CrossWayCommunityChurchGR), where our pastors are posting brief video messages. In the first such message, Pastor Manuel shares with us Lamentations 3: 19-24. (The next two verses are encouraging as well!)

As we have been counseled in one of the letters from the elders: “We are not meeting together as a group, but we can keep in contact. Telephone calls and e-mails do not spread any virus. These help us encourage and pray for each other. If you are housebound and need groceries or medicine, please call a friend from church or an elder. We can serve each other in this very practical way.”

Take counsel, too, from our Lord Himself in His instructions to His disciples: “Whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.” (Matthew 10: 42)

Some things do not change . . .

Certainly, the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

Neither do the financial needs and expenses of the church.

Please pray about the best means for you to deliver your tithes and offerings to CrossWay during this time of separation.

Mail a check to the church when you can or bring it to the church office (call first). Or give online via our website at <https://www.grandrapidscrosswaycommunitychurch.com/give-online>; it’s simple and secure.

And be encouraged in your giving by reading Philippians 4: 15b-17.

Thank you, and may God bless you and all your family.



Sometimes technology blesses!

The Hinkle family are continuing to host a small group and are welcoming all the CrossWay family. Wednesdays, 7:30 PM, all are welcome to study together in the Gospel of John.



Contact Cody Hinkle (listed in fellowship directory) to learn how to get linked in — on-line — to the small-group study and prayer time.

Coming Up at CrossWay Community

Sun. 10^{AM} Sermons posted on church website
Wed. 7:30^{PM} Hinkle small group (see above)

After notification that limits are lifted

Sun. 10^{AM} Worship together
Sun. 11:30^{AM} Sunday School (all ages)
Sun. 6^{PM} Book Club (coordinator Brenda Weinau)
Tues. 1^{PM} Ladies Bible Study
? Apr. 26 6^{PM}? All-church prayer meeting

Get your smile ready!



Once we regather at CrossWay, our photo team will be stepping up efforts to snap photos of our fellow churchgoers for publication in our annual fellowship directory.

Though it might come later than anticipated in view of our current regime of “social distancing,” we are still eager to offer this enhanced fellowship tool to our CrossWay family when we can, to help us all recognize each other and call our fellow churchgoers by name.

So please say “yes” and smile for the camera when you’re asked to pose. Julia Stevens, Pam Reed and Penny Pullen will be looking for you to help complete the CrossWay pictorial fellowship directory. Let your face shine!



God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
Psalm 46:1

About our denomination

CrossWay Community is the only church in Grand Rapids which affiliates with the Evangelical Free Church of America, an association of autonomous churches united around the same theological convictions.

Many of us were drawn to acquaintance with CrossWay by the denomination’s commitment to sound Biblical preaching. Upon formally joining, our members become knowledgeable also about the denomination’s Statement of Faith and are asked by our pastors to subscribe to that statement.

The 10 topics of the EFCA Statement of Faith are being featured, one each month, in the *Current* during 2020. In this April edition, we offer the Statement’s third principle:

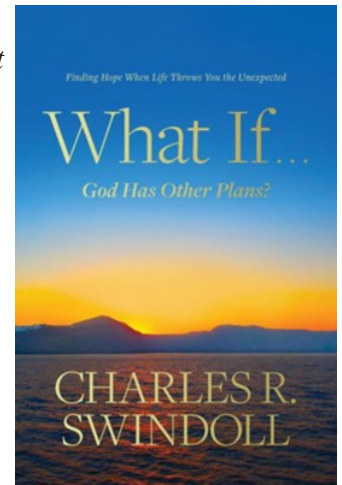
The Human Condition

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God’s saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

New to the CrossWay library

A timely addition to your church library shelves: *What If God Has Other Plans: Finding Hope When Life Throws You the Unexpected.*

Author is popular radio pastor (of the Evangelical Free Church tradition) Charles Swindoll, who, says *ChristianBook.com*, “offers scriptural hope and wisdom for those struggling with unexpected situations.”



Check it out when we’re back together in our building! (The library is near the north entrance, just off the “old” kitchen.) Checking out a book is easy!

Timely reminder

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear
though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved
into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

There is a river whose streams make glad
the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her;
she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
He utters His voice, the earth melts.
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.
Come, behold the works of the LORD,
how He has brought desolations on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
He burns the chariots with fire.
“Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

This message
from Pastor Bob Funk

Stress of Earth, Treasures in Heaven

I had the strangest experience last week at the Cascade Meijer store. I had been nursing a slight cough and decided I needed to stay home and get well. I felt fine and had no other symptoms. At the time, Florence was still working at the Calvin health center, so I decided to make a quick trip to get some much-needed groceries. My plan was to start at the southeast corner of the Meijer store and travel a circle-like path around the key aisles and back to the self-checkout area.

Things were going well; not too many people. Wearing my gloves and keeping safe distances. Quickly, my cart filled to the top with some larger items buttressing the heap. My last stop was at the frozen chicken area. I looked in the freezer and picked up two of the very few remaining packs, then tore off two of those clear plastic baggies (the ones where one can lose his religion trying to separate the corners in order to open them up all the way). Finally got it done. Time to go.

I then turned around to place the chicken in my cart and discovered... no cart. I looked around the large, open adjacent area. No cart. I looked at every shopper and cart with Duane “the Rock” Johnson threatening eyebrows. No cart of mine. I summoned an employee who summoned three other employees, who scoured the store and the checkout aisles. No cart. This could not have been a case of mistaken cart identity, I surmised, for it was obvious that my cart was full, and with some easily identified items on top. Perhaps this was the work of some new kind of “cartel”? I considered contacting the FBI. Surely, they could find my cart. Being a spiritual kind of guy, I paused and said a brief prayer. After all, the Lord knows who stole my cart. I decided against pursuing any government agencies, thinking they might be busy. So...

I then went back, grabbed another cart, and started my shopping circle all over again. (Some items were actually gone by the time I returned the second time!) My “quick” little shopping excursion lasted two hours! I returned home to continue resting in the safety of our home. I did hide the chicken, just in case.



I heard an expert on stress talking about our current malaise in America. He suggested that we try to establish some structure to our days. Evidently, we can easily get depressed and even disoriented when most of our daily plans and “to do’s” are disrupted. Even simple things, like getting groceries, can be stressful. We need structure in our days. Children need the order and security of knowing that certain activities are ahead and that certain trusted people will be there. Most of all, they “read” our emotions. They take cues from what they see and feel from us adults.

I’m sure many of us have challenges far greater than a stolen grocery cart. Whatever we may be dealing with, our spiritual resources can be our greatest strength. We can spend more time with the Lord and His Word. We can pray and meditate on the Psalms. We can, if we are healthy, spend time with loved ones. We may be able to rest, even take a much-needed nap. We can start a hobby. We can call friends and family and stay connected. (Your pastors and elders have been calling every member of our church.)

The Lord has given us some space and time to fill our souls with goods that cannot be stolen. Here are some of Jesus’s words that can help us to reduce the stress and disorientation of these days:

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**” (Matthew 6: 19-21)

The Lord is with us. He is our treasure.

Our church is here for us. Don’t hesitate to call.

We will get through this together. You will be hearing more from us.

Be safe. Be well. I am —

Sincerely yours in Christ, Pastor Bob Funk



This message
from Pastor Bob Manuel

What I am reminded of

In light of the coronavirus, both Pastor Funk and I want to encourage you. I hope you all enjoy his article in this issue of the *Current* as much as I did.

I suppose by now, most of you have heard all sorts of words about fear. I can't tell you how much I've heard the cliché "Faith and Facts over Fear." That is, we shouldn't be afraid but instead, trust God. Much of this can be helpful. Yet, can I suggest that many of us, whether or not we are followers of Jesus, find ourselves with at least a bit of heightened anxiety in these uncertain days. Right? I mean, we have moments (perhaps long "moments"!) of fear.

Personally, I find hope in reminding myself these "uncertain" days are NOT uncertain to God at all. He knew what was coming. Yes, He even knew Pastor Funk's cart would be stolen. (You'll have to read his "fowl" article for this silly comment to make sense!)

Seriously, though, one of the most powerful opportunities the Corona Virus affords us is, it forces us to re-examine what we say we believe. And then, after we see perhaps our convictions/beliefs are not as deep as we'd like, it moves us to pray and seek the grace we need to deepen in our convictions. Because our sanctification (our growth into Christlikeness) is a life-long process, none of us are perfected in daily practicing what we say we believe. God knows this is true, and He's okay with that. He's in no hurry and is tenacious in His grace and truth, to keep maturing us in our lifelong quest to be more like Jesus. For example, this virus is forcing me to ask the following:

Q. Do I truly fear (trust) God more than I do the news reports and all the doomsday prophecies? That is, even if the worst-case scenarios were to happen, can I, will I rest in my fear of Him? If so, I have no other reasons to be afraid. "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear. Fear Him, who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw

you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. ... Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12: 4-7, 32)

Q. Is my deepest heart's treasure truly in heaven, or are my deepest hopes rooted here, upon this unrenewed earthly system? The "treasures" I value might be my reputation, my bank account, my stuff, my "toys," my relationships. NONE of these "treasures" are necessarily bad things, but when an inordinate amount of affection is placed upon them over the treasures of Jesus's kingdom, I find, then, these things are far more important to me than they should be. A virus can unmask/reveal our true treasure.

Q. Similarly, how much has my "kingdom" been shaken the last few weeks? We are told God will "shake not only the earth but also the heavens ... Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 13: 26ff) At this very moment in history, our very world is being shaken. For how long, only God knows. But even if this is the final "shakedown" of this world's system, I wonder, do I fear/trust God more than any other thing? Am I thankful? Do I worship God with reverence and awe?

I confess to you all, staying at home in this "lock-down" and having other routines taken away that I took for granted hasn't always produced thankfulness and worship in me! But God is so good and so kind. When He reminds me of my deepest treasure and the unshakable kingdom I am receiving, my trust, gratitude and worship return. Brothers and sisters, what do we truly believe? Will we quiet our hearts before God long enough so our fears may subside, helping us to see we serve a God that has never lost control of this world, and Who has never stopped loving us?

These are the things I say I believe. I am thankful that God, through COVID-19, is reminding me of this!

CrossWay frontliners in virus ministry mode

One thing's for sure: the coronavirus may change the way we serve, but it does not snuff out the courage and flexibility of our frontline workers:

Luke & Nancy have implemented safety procedures at Bach Christian Hospital in Pakistan, distributing protective products to outpatients at the front door of the clinic. And the staff is meeting for prayer for the country, caught, like so many, unprepared for a serious epidemic. They would like us to join them in prayer for their safety and for opportunities to share God's love with those around them. (Also, pray for visas to be extended so that they can keep their plan to visit the U.S. from June to November, during which they hope to visit CrossWay to bless and be blessed by our own congregation.)



Dennis & Diane also serve Pakistanis, from their home Stateside. They report concern about the crowded living conditions and generally poor sanitary conditions in their mission country. Prices of general commodities are soaring, along with high costs for virus testing. Gatherings are limited to four or fewer people. Schools are closed, but local clerics are not complying, some even encouraging large gatherings for recitation of the "healing prayers" from their book. The upside for our friends serving Pakistan is that a lot of people are sitting at home, watching more TV and spending more time on *Facebook*. Dennis & Diane have brought their TV production/broadcast to their home but continue reaching out on TV and social media, 24/7. Their responders are very busy addressing questions from their audience.

They ask us to join them in intercession:

- Pray that God would use this crisis to bring many Pakistani Muslims to Jesus! As they cry out to Him, may their eyes and hearts be open to the Savior.
- Pray for wisdom about what to share on *Facebook*, and for love and discernment for the phone and message responders.
- Pray for revival among the ethnic Christian community. Many live in very poor conditions and are particularly vulnerable. Pray for God's peace to surround them.
- Continue to pray for God's provision for their TV production work in spite of the current economic crisis.



Steve & Merrilee have made it safely from Hong-Kong to the States, where they will be taking to the road on behalf of SALT (Systematic Asian Leadership Training) when travel becomes feasible. Having been in HongKong, they are, perhaps, a bit ahead of many in our own country; they have moved on from fear concerning the virus and encourage us to think of/pray about "What can I do to better love my neighbor?" In HongKong and China, Steve says, the churches quickly shut down but just as quickly gathered online out of concern for each other's health. They moved into service for each other, distributing masks and sanitizers, buying food for shut-ins, calling one another, all while remembering not to put neighbors at risk either by accident or carelessly. Now that they are Stateside, they urge us to "please take this pandemic seriously, work at changing habits, embrace new inconveniences, primarily for the sake of others. After all, this perspective ranked quite high on Jesus's list of 'directives' (Matt. 22: 39)." They express gratitude for our prayers, support, and encouragement.



Mel continues to serve in China. The staff of her school who remain are making videos and materials for students to complete at home via technology. All grade levels and subject areas must be addressed every day in order to maintain the school's accreditation requirements. They are waiting for our travel ban to be lifted so that their staff can return and they can get back to face-to-face school.

She is no longer totally quarantined and ventures out briefly for food, water, and limited fellowship. Businesses are gradually opening but still greatly limiting numbers of customers.

Mel expresses gratitude for technology and for friends like us who have been lifting her up. While she remains cautious, she covets continued "thoughts" for her situation and that all of this disaster will serve to glorify the Father.



Tom & Dora are safely at home in Indiana but have had to cancel an overseas trip in mid-April. With technology, Tom's network of partners is able to continue serving marginalized people without the planned time of face-to-face encouragement. He is disappointed but sees God's hand in it.



CrossWay frontliners...cont'd

Keith & Judy continue to work online, launching their next term of classes next week and currently offering a *Facebook* webinar by a doctor in Mexico for all their students on the subject of the pandemic and how to protect personal health. Their ministry is less affected than others' because they've been conducting training virtually for a couple of decades, though they find themselves "incredibly busy." But of course, they find the crisis quite disruptive on a personal and social level.

They are looking forward to visiting CrossWay sometime soon to see our new addition and dream with us about its future use.

Marlan & Mercedes saw the crisis approaching and turned their preaching to the stories of Bible characters and events where sickness and fear had gripped the people, passages that stress the message: God is in control. They're using *Skype* and their Marlon Olson *YouTube* channel to join with congregation members in praising the Lord. They seek our prayers for their congregation, especially those who still must tend to the public through their various jobs; for those in the congregation who have been laid off or seen reductions in pay; for all the people in Spain that have lost all hope and are facing a possible Christ-less eternity unless someone shares with them the Hope that we have in our Blessed Hope, Christ Jesus.

Mike & Kari in Germany are locked down the same way we are, so they're taking the boys out for walks and have grocery stores available to sustain them. Black Forest Academy is presently closed, with Mike converting his lessons to online. Some of the students have left the area, presenting the conundrum of how to reopen the school at the appropriate time.

Please pray with them for wisdom for administrators about how to manage the return of students. Depending on where they've been, some may have to wait or self-quarantine once they have come back.

Anita & Peter are both working from home for the foreseeable future. Their church has gone to online/livestream services, and their small group will start meeting over *Zoom* starting this week. Their city is not on lockdown now, but they are avoiding seeing people in person since she was in the hospital for school all last week and wants to make sure she doesn't pass anything on. They are taking advantage of opportunities to connect with some international students over video chat, both ones they already knew and some new students as well. A lot of them are very lonely being away from their families and isolated in a foreign country. Pray that they will seek God in this time and that Anita & Peter will be able to point them to Him!

Never miss a beat!



“Even During a Pandemic, Beijing Persecutes Christians

“If we can trust reports out of China, which clearly we cannot, life there is ‘returning to normal’ as the coronavirus is controlled.

“But even at the height of their nationwide shutdown, one part of Chinese life never stopped being ‘normal.’ As the magazine *Bitter Winter* reports, even while people died by the thousands from the coronavirus, ‘religious persecution remained a top priority’ for Beijing.

“Some believers were arrested just because they prayed for coronavirus victims or shared epidemic-related photos and messages,’ claims the report. One pastor, who called for a nine-day period

of fasting and prayer, was arrested and had his cellphone, ID card, and passport confiscated.

“In the view of government officials, acts of Christian charity [endanger] social stability,’ What that really means is any witness to God instead of Xi Jinping is unacceptable. Even in a pandemic, insecure would-be ‘saviors’ like Xi cannot relax efforts to repress the truth.”

Above quoted from The Point, *Breakpoint.org*, by John Stonestreet & Roberto Rivera

A time for rest

The Lord orchestrated a lesson on “Rest” for our CrossWay Wednesday night Lent series ... the first such meeting of our church that needed to be cancelled to comply with public health guidelines to keep safe by staying apart. Since the theme proved to be so appropriate, Pastor Bob Funk sent out his notes for the evening in an email distributed to the congregation. It was so well received, and continues to be so encouraging during this time of crisis, we reprint it here:

Here our focus is resting in God: *“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.”* (Ps. 91: 1) What does that mean for us personally? The next verse adds *“I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”*

We all know as Christians that, ultimately, our “rest” is in the Lord. But the truth is, even good, faithful Christians can suffer from stress and “unrest” and get overwhelmed emotionally. The last time I checked, we were all still human!

The Bible speaks of several kinds of rest:

1. Physical rest — The Psalms refer often to God as our refuge, fortress and strength (as in Ps. 91). As Ps. 46: 1 reminds us, *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”*

2. Mental/Emotional Rest — The verse that follows Ps. 46: 1 adds, *“Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the sea, though its waters roar and foam...”* Phil. 4: 5-7 promises us, *“The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

3. Spiritual Rest — Jesus says to us, *“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls...”* And perhaps we might all remember to pray like the psalmist, *“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.”* (Ps. 46: 5,11).

What follows are some thoughts and questions that may help us to appropriate, to put into practice, the verses we have just read:

Physical, mental, emotional and spiritual rest are all inter-related to some extent. One aspect of our being affects the other aspects of the total person God has made each of us to be.

Consider the following areas for personal reflection:

1. What is the source of my unrest, stress, turmoil, anxiety? For instance, is it internal (in how I process and interpret things in my thoughts, emotions, soul)? Is it primarily external (in my body, relationships, work, world, etc.)?

2. What kind of rest do I need? Am I in need of physical rest? (more and better sleep, medical care, fasting, better diet and exercise?) Do I need mental/emotional rest? (a

change in my thought habits, what I habitually focus on, what I feed my mind, where I direct my attention, how present I am in the moment, etc.) Do I need spiritual rest? (faith in Jesus Christ, or returning to God in Christ and His Word, spiritual practices like solitude, silence, prayer, and supportive Christian community, etc.) Lent, and perhaps especially this Lent, is a time to honestly reflect upon these things and to engage in practices that can feed and nurture us in body, mind, and spirit.

Again, sometimes good questions can be worth their weight in gold. So, I leave us with these:

- Do I need to retreat? That may be a healthy alternative to the word “self-quarantine.”

- Do I need to simplify? We may now have the (mandated) time to release those things which we don’t need, no longer want, and which can restore both external and internal space for renewed freedom and rest.

- Do I need to restore focus and balance in my life? Could the Lord help me to “demote” some out-of-balance aspects of my life, like food, social media, shopping, working, worrying, wasting time, etc.?

- Do I need to plan better and take action? Am I living according to what I say are my priorities? Am I just “winging it” or “doing the same old things over and over and expecting a different result”? Am I actually using that planner or app and getting my thoughts out of my head and onto “paper” so that I can act, then rest?

- Do I need the help of others? Can I reach out to others to help me deal with my past? my health? my circumstances? my finances? my bad habits? my “enemies” (much of the Old Testament had to do with that one!)? Just as important, Can I help others?

As you can see, this line of Biblical reflection can lead us to reframe our current circumstances and thinking. We must face our current realities, but we can also use this time as an opportunity to draw near to the Lord, even if, physically, we cannot be near one another. I pray for you and me and our extended community, that we may be together in spirit. *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear...”*

And remember, *“He who dwells in the shadow of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.”* Pass the word, and the strength and hope we have in Christ. I look forward to our soon regathering as a community of God’s people in Christ Jesus our Lord.