



May 2020

CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

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Stay tuned!

With nearly 400 confirmed cases of the COVID-19 virus in Kent County, we remain 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. We are encouraged that the epidemic appears to be abating in Michigan, but our authorities — at this writing — are continuing to order a limit on public gatherings. We cannot know, at this writing, when our doors will be open to worshipping together, but we hope it is soon, as we miss the fellowship which characterizes our congregation.

Be watching for a “welcome back” e-mail message from CrossWay; though we cannot know, at this writing, when we can regather, we hope it can be during this month of May.

Meanwhile, our pastors continue to post sermons for Sunday mornings — available to you at your own schedule — on our website via the “media” click — and we were delighted that Brad and Sandy Williams led us in musical worship on Easter Sunday and that church chairman Bob Greenhoe joined the pastors in singing (with us all) “Were You There” to close the Good Friday service. As a bonus our pastors are posting nurturing video messages online at [facebook.com: CrossWay Community Church GR](https://www.facebook.com/CrossWayCommunityChurchGR). (If you’re looking for corny jokes, check out the April 15 posting!)

Praying for each other, phoning each other, offering help to the homebound among us ... these things we all can be doing, and many of us are. Praise the Lord, Who is prompting His people to love one another in even a bleak time for our community.

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)

Can you help?

All of us are grateful to those who have made tithes and offerings to the Lord’s ministry at CrossWay a priority at such a time as this.



If your own circumstances permit you to help sustain CrossWay and our staff in this time of physical separation, please mail a check to the church, bring your offering to the church office (after a phone call to schedule your visit) or give online at <https://www.grandrapidscrosswaycommunitychurch.com/give-online>; it’s simple and secure.

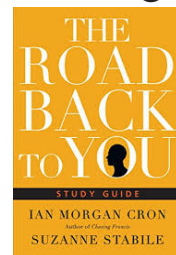
“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap, for with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”

~ The words of Jesus, Luke 6:38

Book club still meeting!

CrossWay’s Book Club coordinator Brenda Weilnau invites us to read and discuss together *The Road Back to You* by Ian Morgan Cron, beginning May 19.

Contact Brenda (brenda.weilnau@gmail.com) for guidance on getting into the discussion with fellow CrossWay-goers.



Coming Up at CrossWay Community

Sun. 10 ^{AM}	Sermons posted on church website
Wed. 7:30 ^{PM}	Hinkle small group (see pg. 2)

After notification that limits are lifted

Sun. 10 ^{AM}	Worship together
Sun. 11:30 ^{AM}	Sunday School (all ages)
Tues. 1 ^{PM}	Ladies Bible Study
Sun., May 19 11:30 [?]	Annual congregation meeting ???
Sun., May 19 TBA	Book Club (see above)

Hangin' out together!

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 the fellowship directory) to learn how to get linked in — online, for now — to the small-group study and prayer time.

Below is a screen-shot of the Hinkle group “meeting” on a recent Wednesday. As you can see (note “Vijay” and “Pam”), appearing on-screen is optional ... but isn't it great to see those CrossWay smiles?!



CrossWay on-line ... Wednesday evenings! (Thanks, Amanda, for the happy photo!)

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 May edition, we offer the Statement's fourth principle:

Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus — Israel's promised Messiah — was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

Welcome, little one!

Our church family is pleased to welcome another baby girl, Noelle Nicole Kelp, the first daughter born to Brett & Nate Kelp, joining Nathan & Noah in a growing family. Can't wait to see her — and them all — in person!



Unfinished business

At the time we last met together, we were bringing items for donation to Heartside Ministry. Our participation in this Reaching Out opportunity is shepherded by Linda Stevens, who will appreciate more in-kind donations being brought to church when next we are permitted to be together.

The Heartside “Wish List” can be found online at <https://heartside.org/giving-options/wish-list>. And while you're there, check out Heartside's mission and work.

New to the CrossWay library

Looking for hope? Look to your future in Christ!

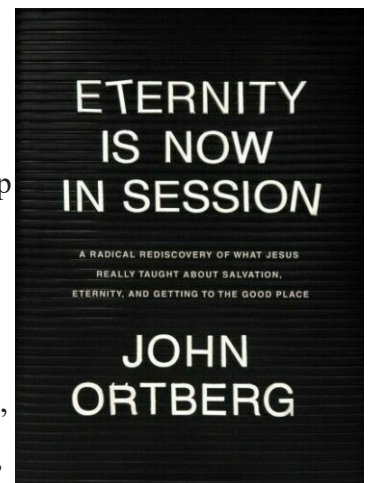
John Ortberg's *Eternity Is Now in Session* is waiting for you to pick it up from CrossWay's library.

Subtitled “A Radical Rediscovery of What Jesus Really Taught About Salvation, Eternity & Getting to the Good Place,” the book is 176 pages long, plus extensive notes.

Here is the summary, reprinted from the back cover. See if it intrigues you!

“Are we there yet? Most of us think of eternity as something that begins after we die. However, Jesus doesn't talk about eternity that way. In fact, Jesus defines ‘eternal life’ only once, with great precision, and in a way that has been largely lost in our day. This book looks at His riveting definition and the questions that flow from it. ...” There's more, but you can see for yourself by checking it out when we're back together in our building!

(The library is near the north entrance, just off the “old” kitchen, with a small outpost in our new lobby.) Checking out a book is easy!



This message
from Pastor Bob Funk

He Is the God of Peace



We were sitting and chatting before the start of a recent elder meeting. I said to Elder Paul Samuelson, “Paul, since you work in the field of counseling, would you be willing to write an article or two for our church newsletter that might help our readers deal with the stress and anxiety many are feeling these days?” Paul graciously agreed to do so, and his first article is in this newsletter. My column here is, in part, an “advertisement” for Paul’s articles. Please read them and, perhaps, pass them on. We have had some indication recently that sending a *CrossWay Current* article can bless other people well beyond the circle of our congregation.

In his article, Paul does allude to one particular Scripture verse that is special to me. In fact, you would have heard me quote it in part in my benediction after every sermon I preach. I include that verse in a trinitarian blessing saying,

“And now may the peace of God that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever. Amen.”

It has been my experience, and that of countless other Christians, that there is a supernatural peace available to us. We are not its source. It is the peace that is of, by and from God. It is the peace of His presence. It “surpasses understanding” in that it is not attainable solely by intellectual acumen. It is not gained by a degree in theology.

What I am getting at is this; **the peace of God is to be found in communion with the God of peace.** The peace of God is for those who know God. It is not those who have the most education who will best weather our current storms. It will not be those who simply have an abundance of worldly resources. It will not be those who have been most adept at climbing whatever ladder of worldly success they have been climbing. It will not be those who have been relying on earthly props or power or idols. It will not be those who have their own “religion.” No.



We can have the peace of God in the midst of our physical, emotional and social upheaval only as we turn to the God of peace. That’s why Jesus said,

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14: 27)

How we think, and what we think about does matter. That’s what Scripture is for. But let us never forget that, in reading God’s Word, it is God we are seeking, not simply more information about God, as though we could contain God in our minds or thoughts alone.

I have taught over several Lenten seasons at CrossWay about spiritual habits, disciplines and skills that Christians have practiced and valued for many centuries. They were people like us. They faced death, disease, wars, poverty, hunger, persecution and fear for their children and their very lives. They learned to discipline the flesh and nurture the spirit through prayer, fasting, repentance, silence, stillness, meditation and contemplation. In all of these things they were seeking God and fleeing the ways of the world, the flesh and the devil. We can do that now. God is giving many an opportunity to turn back to Him. There is no lasting peace without Him. **He is the God of peace.** And we know Him in Jesus Christ our Lord. Remember His words: “...My peace I give you. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid!”

See Paul Samuelson’s commentary
“For Such a Time as This” on page 5



This message
from Pastor Bob Manuel

Stepping into His Light

Many years ago, I had a highly respected pastor friend tell me one key responsibility a pastor has, is to express out loud the fears, questions and doubts his parishioners might be thinking/feeling but are often too afraid to admit. You know, the kind of things “good” Christians should not be struggling with.

Pastors often do this by opening up their own lives, admitting to their own struggles. It’s one way we give church members hope, because they will see their struggles/doubts/questions are not unique. It gives you “permission” to take off any mask you might be wearing, to step into His light for greater fellowship with Him and to begin to receive the healing you need. (I John 1: 5-7)

Oh yes, I know my struggles will not be the same as yours, or yours mine, but believing people are basically the same, I trust at least one “confession” below will encourage you to move into His light.

- I don’t always trust God. Oh, I “believe” in Him and what He has said in His Word, but more often than I would like to admit, my “belief” has not descended from my head to my heart.
- I don’t always like God. Oh, given time, I usually come around, but in the meanwhile, I often find myself getting perturbed at Him. I find myself confused and frustrated at what He is doing or not doing, and basically, His “timing.” I often think He should be working on my timetable in my way.
- I’m not always convinced He likes me, is fond of me. Oh, I’m pretty sure He “loves” me. After all, God is love, and loving His creation is in His “job description!” But sometimes I doubt He would ever give me a call or send me a text to just say, “Hey, let’s hang out, have a cup of coffee or shoot some baskets together. I just want to be with you.”



- If you ask me “how I’m doing,” I want to say, “fine” or “good,” even if it’s not true. I’m afraid if I’m too honest, you won’t respect me, you will think less of me, or you will try to fix me.
- I find myself struggling with the “same ol’ sins,” be they ones of commission or omission, in word, thought or deed.
- I love judging others. It feeds my sense of self-righteousness and that I’m better than you. For example, lately I find myself judging those who are not as faithful, persistent or consistent as I am, in the practice of “social distancing!”
- I find myself loving the world or the things of this world, perhaps more than I should. (Go, Cubs!)
- I worry too much.

There! What of the above list would you admit to? What would you add, that would give others hope that they are not alone?

When all is said and done and I look at the above “confessions,” I increasingly find rest and joy in knowing that the God who already knows all of this about me (and more!) is not deterred by any of it, is not surprised and is still thoroughly committed to me.

I hope you feel my hope and that some of your own hopes are being stirred and will deepen to the glory of our Great Good God, Who knows us perfectly and loves us completely.

He will never let you go.

For such a time as this

Guest column by Elder Paul Samuelson

The other day I was walking with Elma, and when we crossed the road, I noticed cars stopping to allow us to get across. I said to my wife, “Isn’t that amazing, how much more patient and considerate people are when they are not in a hurry because of the Coronavirus?” Elma responded, “Yeah, they have time to think.” She was right about this, because when we are stressed, we tend to move towards the inner part of our brain, which makes us much more impulsive (brought on by the “fight-or-flight” syndrome, which will be explained below) and less able to really think about our responses from the outer part of our brains (the pre-frontal cortex).

Elma’s response got me to thinking: though this COVID-19 virus has brought a lot of destruction, loss and struggles in our lives these past couple months, it has also caused us to slow down, and this is good. Having time to reflect on our identity in Christ and our purpose as servants of God — and understanding how God will protect and provide for us — is so crucial for dealing with our anxiety, and I will show you why.

When we experience excessive stress in our lives — whether from internal worry or from external circumstances — a bodily reaction is triggered in our midbrain (in the hypothalamus), which is called the “fight-or-flight” syndrome. We all have it in our brains; it is our body’s primitive automatic inborn response that prepares us to either “fight” or “flee” from the perceived or real threat to our survival.

So, let’s say we experienced a 500-pound bear which was ready to attack us. We would immediately experience great fear or terror, which would trigger the “fight-or-flight” syndrome. Immediately, we would decide whether we would run like we have never run before, or we would fight this bear and kill it, because our life is at stake. Chemicals like adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol would be released into our bloodstream. Our respiratory rate would increase, our blood would go to our major organs, we would have superhuman strength, our pupils would dilate, our sight would sharpen and our impulses would quicken, all with the purpose of helping us to fight that bear or to run. This is all initiated by extreme fear or terror and starts in a nano-second.

All of this is very useful if there is really a bear attacking but is really of no use during “perceived threats,” like rush-hour traffic, missing a deadline, bouncing a check or worry about whether we will lose our job. Yes, these are legitimate stressors and real, but they are not life-and-death situations. They are just “perceived threats.” Once our fight-or-flight response

is activated, we cannot flee or fight this enemy, and so all of these stress hormones lie in our bodies with nowhere to go. We cannot fight or flee our threat, so we experience panic attacks, headaches, pain all over our body, irritable bowel syndrome, high blood pressure, compromised immune systems, chronic fatigue, depression or autoimmune diseases. You sometimes can feel all the stress in your body, like your shoulders, your neck or your stomach, along with experiencing headaches, clenched teeth and elevated heartbeat. The key to learning how to manage your anxiety is to recognize when you are stressed and how to calm yourself down, which then counteracts and shuts off your fight-or-flight response.

Well, how do you do that? Let’s open the Bible. More than 100 Bible verses state “Do not fear,” “Do not be anxious,” “Do not let your hearts be troubled,” “Do not fret,” etc. I Peter 5: 7 states, “*Cast your anxieties upon Me, for I care for you.*” Philippians 4: 6-7 says, “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, with prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God, and the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*”

As we give up our fears to the Lord with a thankful heart in prayer and dependence on Him, God gives us His peace, which transcends all understanding, and He will guard our hearts. Like a guard protects and will continue to protect the garrison, so God will protect and continue to protect us with His peace. Like the eye of the storm where there is perfect calm amidst raging winds swirling around us, so God will put us in the eye of His peace as we go through the storms of life. Isaiah 26: 3 states, “*Perfect peace He gives to those whose minds are fixed on Thee.*”

As we go through these very difficult times of stress, fear and constant changes during the Coronavirus, let’s remind ourselves that God is in control and we can trust Him. Reflect on Scripture, find a promise you can hold onto and cast all your anxieties on the Lord through prayer, because He wants to fight your battles if you will just let Him (see Psalm 46: 1-3, Deuteronomy 3: 22 and 20: 4). Isaiah 49: 15-16 states, “*Though a woman may forget the baby at her breast, God will never forget you. See, He has engraved you on the palms of His hands.*” You know, you may not know what your future holds, but you know Who holds your future. Rest in that truth — that God has got you!

God is speaking ...

For such a time as this, CityFest (a Luis Palau Assn. ministry) has announced a special online event April 30 for us all: “For such an unprecedented time as this, God is speaking to the people in your life, and remember — He wants to use you to make a difference. This event will encourage and equip you to be bold and courageous in joining the conversation that God is having with those around you.”



Hosted by Andrew and Wendy Palau, the event will feature an exciting lineup of special guests, including Mandisa, Francis Chan, Mark Mittelberg, Shaila Visser, York Moore and Chris Quilala from Jesus Culture.

Reaching Your World: How to Share Hope During Social Distancing

April 30 — 8 pm

On the Internet: Palau.org

Staying on the frontlines while staying at home

Here's CrossWay's Roma ministry leader Tom Becker, doing what he does best: *putting his heart on the line for the Lord*. The screen shot shows him opening a Roma network prayer and praise meeting on April 17 with a devotional springing from the text of Proverbs 3: 5-6 (see right column).



*Trust in the LORD
with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own
understanding.
In all your ways
acknowledge Him,
and He will make straight
your paths.* ” Prov. 3: 5-6

The Roma, a marginalized people group scattered throughout Europe, the Middle East and Asia, are suffering in this pandemic. They, too, are affected by work stoppages. But in this time of trouble, chaos, fear and confusion, Tom's network of frontliners continues to assure them that the Father is able not just to hear but also to act! He led his prayer meeting with a recitation of “Five Absolute Facts You Can Trust.” And these are helpful for us in West Michigan as well:

1. You can live forever in heaven with God.
2. God is with you now.
3. God fulfills His promises.
4. You have brothers and sisters around the world who care about your situation.
5. The church of Jesus Christ is stronger today than ever before.

Tom embellished that last statement with the good news that this crisis is spurring Christians to find new ways to serve each other. The church building may be closed (for now), but, Tom says, in reality the church is not closed, but rather deployed and released.

Tom's family is like so many of us these days: Tom is busy with online work and receiving a lot of calls; his wife Dora is teaching her fifth-grade bilingual students online. Their son Nate is persevering in his schoolwork online. Hannah is finishing her college semester while at home — you guessed it — online.

Tom asks prayer for the Roma for:



Emergency needs for those who have no food or medical supplies



Roma who have no internet and have contact with others who don't understand what is happening and are not abiding by social distancing and basic hygiene practice



Roma communities being locked down and guarded by military (no one in and no one out)