



December 2020

# CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

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[www.crosswaygr.com](http://www.crosswaygr.com)

## His first coming celebrated • Advent & Christmas are here!

Pastor Manuel has begun his Advent sermon series with a sermon on “hope.” We are listing his Advent sermon topics below.

When you come to church during December, you’ll find we’re all dressed up for the celebration of the first coming of our Lord, with glittering trees and wreathes, spangles and manger scenes, all displaying our joy and praise. A big thank-you to the church-dressing crew!

You will find a different kind of ornament adorning our lobby tree this year ... shiny white pledge cards for participation in our Welcome to Grand Rapids refugee outreach project in which CrossWay is partnering with Bethany Christian Services of Grand Rapids. More information about this undertaking is on our missions page.

### Advent sermon schedule

Nov. 29	Hope
Dec. 6	Love
Dec. 13	Joy
Dec. 20	Peace



## CrossWay families reach out to children for Christmas

Toys, pens, toothbrush, pencils & sharpener, soap, comb, a personal note, all tucked into a “shoebox” to bring joy to a child we’ll never meet, all in the precious Name of Jesus — sent from families at CrossWay across the globe through the ministry of Samaritan’s Purse: Operation Christmas Child.

CrossWay families participated again this November in the annual tradition that reaches needy children with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thanks to all who gave.



## And on Christmas Eve

Dec. 24 “Simply Christmas” — A Service of Scripture, Carols and Candlelight (7 PM)

## You did it, CrossWay family!

Despite the challenges of 2020, you came out for our 4<sup>th</sup> annual Christmas Card Party for Persecuted Christians in numbers almost equalling last year.

And some of you wrote cards at home and brought or mailed them to the church, eager to add your greetings to the basket of cards being sent to as many as 25 prisoners for Christ. In all, the final number of cards placed into the mail before Thanksgiving Day came to 300, up from 265 in 2019.

Thanks, CrossWay family, for embracing this unusual project, as we reach out to men and women who are torn from their loved ones for many years, just because they love our Lord. He blesses those who bless His children.

## Coming Up at CrossWay Community

Sundays • 10 AM • Gather for Advent worship together  
Sundays • 11:15 AM • Sunday School for all ages  
Tuesdays • 1:15 PM • Ladies’ Bible Study, south wing  
Wednesdays • 7 PM • Hinkle small group  
Sun., Dec. 13 • 11:15 AM • Christmas potluck  
Sun., Dec. 13 • 6 PM • All-church School of Revival  
Thurs., Dec. 24 • 7 PM • Christmas Eve Candlelight Service



## “Do not forsake gathering...”

As we prepare for the coming of Christ’s birthday celebration, we’ll once again gather for good food, good fellowship at our annual Christmas potluck. Plan on bringing a dish to share on Sunday, Dec. 13. We’ll eat together in our spacious new south wing, served in His love by our Elders this year. Join us for some old fashioned family fun!

## Cosmetic necessity



Prettying up our parking lot by enclosing the dumpster may not seem like much, but it marks completion of our renovation from a city permit point of view.

So, a big thank-you to Bob Johnston and his crew for taking this step and bringing our building project to an official “APPROVED.” Let’s rejoice!

## Christmas stories



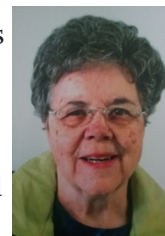
This month, take about 20 minutes per day to sit back and listen to Evangelical Free church pastor Colin Smith’s imaginative, yet true to the text, sermon series of Christmas stories, each told from the viewpoint of a Bible character

who was there with Jesus, either at His birth or during His ministry.

It’s this month’s offering on Moody Radio 89.3FM weekdays at 9 a.m. and online at [unlockingthebible.org](http://unlockingthebible.org). Penny Pullen and Pam Reed can recommend the entire series, as they were present for these delightful sermon presentations, delivered at Arlington Heights Evangelical Free Church in Illinois (now known as The Orchard). The series began on November 30.

## Free at last

Jan Agee is resting in the arms of Jesus after a long struggle with her health. Jan lived 83 years on this earth and blessed this church with her presence for many years. She leaves behind two children and four grandchildren, as well as a sister.

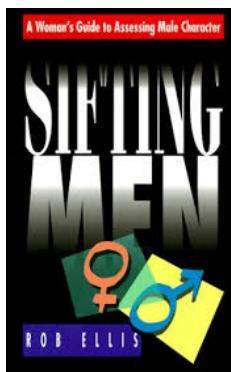


You can honor Jan by viewing “Remembering Jan Agee” at [YouTube.com](http://YouTube.com) and by providing a memorial contribution to Child Evangelism Fellowship.



## Christmas is beautiful, at CrossWay!

## Recommended for young women



Leigh Basler calls Ron Ellis’s *Sifting Men* a “must read” for young women contemplating a serious relationship.

Leigh notes, “While the book is entertaining, it contains a plethora of wisdom. It defines how to recognize red flags when looking for Godly characteristics in men and women.”

Ellis is a writer and Christian counselor who, in this book, combines Biblical principles with contemporary cultural conditions that, if followed, can save women from heartaches and poor choices, according to Leigh. He is Director at Marketplace Ministry, offering Christian counseling for a small donation, and spends summers coaching for the Minnesota Twins, drawing from his previous experience as a professional baseball player.



# *Helping one another toward hope*



As you read this, we will be well into celebrating our Advent season, which this year began Sunday, Nov. 29. Advent is a time of longing and anticipation, as we move from darkness into Light, experiencing the coming of Jesus to us once again. More than ever, we need to take deeply into our hearts this message of Advent. I know I do.

At our recent School of Revival prayer meeting, I confessed to the group I felt more tired and stressed than I have in quite a while. That was hard for me to do. You see, pastors are supposed to have all the answers and the faith needed to not feel unduly burdened or stressed as “ordinary” people do. Well, if you don’t know by now, pastors are ordinary people!

Much of the stress I feel is Covid-related. Navigating the strains of how Covid affects personal/work life is hard enough, but trying to weigh and listen to the varying “expert” opinions on related issues is like getting nibbled to death by a duck. One or two nibbles aren’t so bad, but nibble after nibble, after nibble — it takes its toll. So, what do we do? Perhaps the themes of Advent will be helpful as we celebrate together our Lord’s coming.

Meanwhile, I read recently an article on the Gospel Coalition’s website ([thegospelcoalition.org](http://thegospelcoalition.org)) titled, “How churches can promote mental health through the Coronavirus pandemic” by Stephen Grcevich. (Yes, his name is spelled correctly!) Here are some excerpts from what he said:

“The church can play an essential role in combating the social isolation so many are currently experiencing. It was wonderful this past weekend to see so many friends sharing links to their church’s worship services. ... Phone calls and letters are also important in helping less tech-savvy members to continue to feel connected.”

“The church can help by providing individuals and families meaningful opportunities to serve their friends and neighbors during this time.”

“The church can offer practical help to relieve common situational stressors that often lead to mental health concerns. We know that life-change events are associated with increased prevalence of depression [and] anxiety ... . Helping people struggling with job loss, the closure of a business or inability to find childcare can reduce the stress burden leading to increased risk of mental and physical health problems.”

“The church can assist members and attendees in connecting with professional counseling and other mental health services in the cities and towns they serve.”

“Most importantly, we as the church need to be purveyors of hope. ... Secular authorities recognize that the central tenet in recovery is hope — hope is the catalyst for change and serves as an enabler of other factors involved in recovery and the means through which a better future can be perceived. ... For most of us, there has never been a time when the world has been in as much need of hope as exists in the present. We in the church own the ultimate message of hope.

“The Apostle Paul illustrated this principle in the midst of suffering in his words to the Colossians: ‘But now He has reconciled you by His physical body through His death, to present you holy, faultless and blameless before Him — if indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the Gospel that you heard. This Gospel has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become a servant of it.’ (Col. 1:22-23, CSB)

“Each of us will have an opportunity to share our hope in Jesus with lots of hurting and vulnerable people during the days and weeks ahead. The manner in which we conduct ourselves will point our friends and neighbors to a hope that can sustain them through our current circumstances and offer a sense of peace.”

Another confession: When pastors read, “The church can ...” — this can stress us out! We tend to hear, “The pastor can” or “The pastor will see to it that this will happen.” Sometimes articles like the excerpts above just feel like another nibble from the duck! Instead, I must read this as, “God’s people (the church!) can ... .” (And, you can. I see you caring for each other all the time!) So, how can I, your pastor, help you, the church to ... ?

Finally I ask, how will you read the above? I pray the Lord will place on your heart where you and a few others in the church can reach out to encourage those in our midst who are struggling. By the way, that is probably most of us!

May God give us the grace to see, believe and walk in the coming Light of Christ, Who is our Hope!

## God is calling us

# Project Welcome to Grand Rapids

Our partnership with Bethany Christian Services to bless a refugee family that God is sending to Grand Rapids is under way, with Bethany's Deb Hoekwater introducing the proposal to our Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday School class and our Elder Board approving it the following week.

Our Global Missions Steering Committee is leading the way for our CrossWay family to respond to God's call to welcome the family He plans to send into our care. Won't you join this effort?



The International Organization for Migration provides refugees with items that can fit inside this bag. They arrive with the bag and the clothes on their backs.

### Action Steps:

1) Pray! What role is God calling you to?

2) Choose a level of participation:

- a) Giving financially to the benevolent fund Dec. 6; the benevolent offering this month will be designated for use in welcoming our family.
- b) Donating an item, either new or gently used, for setting up an apartment from scratch; you'll find an "ornament" on our lobby Christmas tree to help you make your pledge of this item — to be kept at home until it's called for — or refer to the list being sent by email.
- c) Get actively involved by committing to a role:
  - i) Team member for physically furnishing and stocking the apartment just before the family's arrival.
  - ii) Welcome Party at the airport.
  - iii) Join others who've volunteered to provide occasional transportation for family members, who will be trained by Bethany staff to ride the bus for most of their errands.
  - iv) Assist with English lessons by spending time with the family.
  - v) Be a friend by visiting in their home or greeting them at church.



3) Communicate your commitment:

- a) For donating an item, make your pledge by contacting Annette Doerr. You'll find her email address in the directory; for her phone number, call the office.
- b) To perform a role, contact Paul Samuelson, whose contact information is in the fellowship directory as well.

## Please pray for this brother



**Pakistan** is an Islamic republic; more than 96% of the population are Muslim. Implementation of Shari'a Law in many areas has increased problems for Christians, who are at the very lowest level of the economic and social scale. Breaking the blasphemy law, Section 295c of the penal code — "blaspheming Mohammed" — is punishable by death.

Imran Ghafur is serving a life sentence because neighbors said they saw a few pages of the Quran blow into a trash fire he was supervising at his retail shop. While in prison, he is lifting up praise songs to his Lord and Savior. His family is being cared for by The Voice of the Martyrs.

