



January 2021

# CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

3950 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546 • 616.949.5690

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

## CrossWay's all a-buzz this season!

When we decorated our church building for Christmas last month, we dedicated the lobby tree to pledge tags for gathering items to show Christ's love to a refugee family soon to arrive in Grand Rapids. You responded beautifully, stocking the shelves with necessities and niceties for a family in great need.

Phase 2 has now begun, with larger items of furniture being gathered and stored in our South Wing, waiting for word from Bethany Christian Services that "our family" is arriving.

When we receive the phone call, we'll be offered information about a refugee family; we'll go to the Lord in prayer to decide whether this is the family He has designated for CrossWay's support. Typically, refugee families arriving in Grand Rapids from camps hail from either Congo or Burma. Could be one person or ten people, or any number in between!

Next steps after accepting the "call" will be **shopping for items** not yet donated, working with Bethany's housing coordinator to **stock the apartment** with our donations, and **welcoming the family at the airport** when they arrive. There's opportunity to get involved in one or more of these tasks. Will you be on hand to make someone's American dream come true? Stay in touch! We can't wait to see what the Lord is doing with our Welcome to Grand Rapids — and America — project!



## 'Food' for the soul



It's a January tradition at CrossWay, in observance of Sanctity of Human Life Month.

Watch for the baby bottles to arrive, take one home and fill it with coins as a gift to the Pregnancy Resource Center of Grand Rapids. (Folding money and checks can fit, too!)

Proceeds will aid the Center in serving expectant moms with medical care, counseling and the financial support needed by so many of the moms-to-be.

The Center's ministry celebrates new life and helps families in crisis to meet Jesus and find the path to eternal new life. Help as you can.

Be His hands. Show His love. Save a life.

## Who's who for the refugee project

Ready to welcome our refugee family?  
Please check your fellowship directory  
for contact info for:

Annette Doerr, inventory specialist

Paul Samuelson, team manager

Pam Reed, CW missions coordinator

## Coming Up at CrossWay Community

Sundays • 10<sup>AM</sup> • Gather for worship together

Sundays • 11:15<sup>AM</sup> • Sunday School for all ages

Tuesdays • 1:15<sup>PM</sup> • Ladies Bible Study, south wing

Wednesdays • 7<sup>PM</sup> • Hinkle small group

Sun., Jan. 2 • 9<sup>AM</sup> • Ladies monthly breakfast, south wing

Sat., Jan. 9 • 10<sup>AM</sup> • De-decking the halls!

Sun., Jan. 10 & 24 • 6<sup>PM</sup> • All-church School of Revival

Sun., Jan. 17 • 11:15<sup>AM</sup> • Semi-annual business meeting

## Growing - together - in Christ

Pastor Manuel and our Elders invite you to check out our three-track Adult Education offering on Sunday mornings following our worship together. Your choice, beginning Jan. 10:

Lobby — “Principles of proclaiming the Gospel, through a study of the Book of Acts”

— Michael Stevens

South Wing — “Reading God’s Word Well”

— Cody Hinkle

Library/Conference Room — “CrossWay Core”

— Pastor Bob Manuel

Sign up at the sanctuary entrance, or come and see for yourself!

## A valuable resource

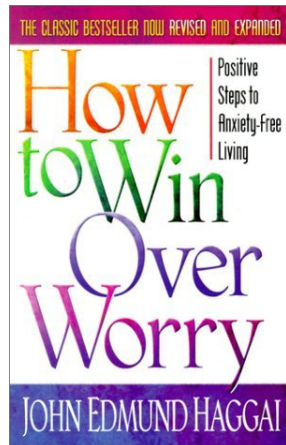


Have you taken advantage of the Michigan-based national ministry *Revive our Hearts* yet?

Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth has been blessing women — and men — on the radio for many years.

But there’s so much more: a complex website, *YouTube* channels, blogs and podcasts, conferences, books, small group studies, and the list goes on and on. An arm of Life Action Ministries, *Revive our Hearts* enriches the listener and reader with messages vital to any life dedicated to following Jesus and walking in His way.

## Antidote for worry



by Leigh Basler

*How to Win Over Worry* by Dr. John Edmund Haggai is more relevant today than when it was first written over 40 years ago.

“More than six world leaders have told how the book delivered them from suicide at the very moment they had made plans to take their lives.

Doctors in various parts of the world use this book with their patients, and pastors preach from it. Psychologists and psychiatrists have contacted the author to offer appreciation for the contribution it has made to the field of understanding emotional stress.”

## Reaching out ... to Midland

Back in May, our neighbors in Midland, Michigan, suffered sudden, overwhelming flooding when a series of critical dams failed, demolishing homes and causing widespread flooding in an already rain-soaked region.



Among those still in need of helping hands from loving Christians are some 40 families who worship at Evangelical Free churches in the Midland area.

The denomination’s response arm — Reach Global Crisis Response — is sending in teams of volunteers this month to aid in the ongoing home-restoration efforts. Volunteers are asked to give a week’s time to be hands and feet for these needy neighbors (e-mail: [crisisresponse@efca.org](mailto:crisisresponse@efca.org)). Those unable to offer physical help are welcome to send a financial donation to aid the effort via:

EFCA — Attn. Donor Services

901 E. 78<sup>th</sup> Street, Minneapolis, MN 55420

Note on the memo line:

“Michigan Flood Response 21709-39906”



Pastor Manuel this month resumes his sermon series in Peter’s Letters, now in II Peter.



Dr. John Haggai was the founder and CEO of Haggai International. HI provides specialized training for leaders from Third World countries who are able to make the Gospel relevant in their own societies. “His legacy is one that can now be tracked around the world through more than 124,000 Haggai leaders in 189 nations who have led millions to a saving knowledge of Jesus,” according to Dr. Bev Upton Williams, HI CEO.

You’ll find it as the latest addition to the CrossWay library, where many blessings are found, near the Burton Street entrance.



## *Looking back . . . looking ahead*

Personally, I am glad to view the year 2020 from the perspective of the rear-view mirror. As I write this, and perhaps as you read this, this tumultuous year will soon be behind us. Like many of you, this year has left me more than a bit drained emotionally, spiritually, etc.

If you are not drained, I sincerely praise God for this God-given fortitude, but if you do need permission to say “I’m tired,” well, here you are! I find that sometimes Christians find it harder than others to say “I am needy.” Somehow that’s looked upon as “weakness” or lack of faith. I see it differently.

I think it takes great strength to be honest with people that you have need for strength outside yourself. So with that said, my main thought that comes to mind when I think about 2020 is gratitude. Yes, gratitude. What am I grateful for? Here’s just a partial list that pops into my mind:

I am thankful for God’s formative discipline. He is treating us as sons and daughters. We are to “endure hardship as discipline.” (Heb.12:7) Yes, the hardship of both present and potential circumstances “seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Heb.11:11) I would like to think 2020 has made us more like our Lord Jesus “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame ... .” (Heb.12:2) Christlikeness, after all, is the goal of all discipline and discipleship.

I am thankful for you, our congregation. As brothers and sisters, we have endured together. And we will endure together in the future as God allows. Sure, we’ve had some level of disagreements over Covid-19 protocols, etc., and that is to be expected, even welcomed. In any given body, we are not all noses, arms, feet, hands, etc., We are diverse. In this diversity of thoughts and opinions, overall, I have seen mutual

respect and honoring of one another. I have heard not-so-good stories and attitudes relayed to me from other pastors and congregations about what they are experiencing. While we still will navigate tensions together, we have been mightily blessed with an “eagerness to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4:3) THANK YOU for following our Lord on this command. (John 17:21; Rom. 12:3; Philippians 2:1-5)

As for the future and looking ahead, none of us knows, of course, what is ahead. None of us even knows if we will have tomorrow. Tomorrow has not been promised to us. But as the Lord allows (James 5:15) more time, I look forward to and pray for the following:

- Revival among God’s people. I will continue to work and pray toward this end;
- A fruitful 2021, measured by an increase in God’s joy, conversions, and displayed love among God’s people (John 15:11-16);
- Meeting and caring for our refugee family;
- Further implementation of aspects of the “5-Year Plan” the Elders asked me to put together, part of which includes targeted Adult Education courses that are being developed;
- Experiencing a new “normal” that will be increasingly seen in an enjoyment of being shaped by the Spirit’s fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal. 5:22) As we live animated like this by His Spirit, we will be free to love God and one another. (Gal. 5:1, 13)

So, as we look back and ahead together, may we be shaped by the Apostle Paul’s heart when he said he is “forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.” (Phil. 3:13)





## You can join this prayer circle



Tom Becker has been very busy this year in his outreach to marginalized people around the world. Instead of traveling, he's been busy organizing virtual meetings on the internet, bringing his ministry team "together" to coordinate reports, pray and strategize for the new reality we all experience.

These confabs have resulted in a new way for us all to participate in this EFCA/ReachGlobal ministry: a new website which you can access at [crossthemargins.com](http://crossthemargins.com). You'll find updates on the facebook page, as well. Check out the website, subscribe to the newsletter and get involved!

In September, Tom's ministry released a 23-minute video on yet another website: *The Good Story*. This beautiful video is titled "Reach" and is an excellent window into the work being done by Roma people among the Roma people to give them, for the first time, a sense of being valued as humans. This people, who have no homeland of their own, have faced rejection wherever they have lived. But they are discovering through devoted Christ followers obediently visiting, encouraging and praying for and with them, that the value they place on their natural family positions them well to discover their value as part of the family of God.

"One man can't work alone. He needs partnerships. He needs co-workers and people who will work together. We are called to work together to build the kingdom of God, and that kingdom, the kingdom of God, is something that God has entrusted with us. We need each other."

—Words of a Roma pastor, transcribed from the "Reach" video on *The Good Story* website

By taking the time to watch "Reach," you can walk the streets of Europe — and even India — and experience just a little of the heart of God for this marginalized people group, where churches spring forth from one man coming to Christ on the street and offering his one-room home for others to come and meet Jesus with him.



Tom & Dora Becker

Thanks to the Beckers and their partners in ministry, the "least of these" are experiencing the joy of knowing Christ's love. Let's remember Tom and Dora in our prayers.

## China report



Mandarin Chinese is the majority language in most of mainland China, though there are many ethnic minority groups. Explosive growth has characterized the church for at least the past 30 years. About 100 million Christians live in China, but only 30 million are affiliated with the government-authorized Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the state church controlled by the Communist government. The remaining 70 million worship in unapproved house churches. Despite continual pressure and oppression from the Communist government, house church leaders refuse to compromise the gospel and join government-approved churches. About 60% of believers in China live in rural areas. Few house church leaders have formal theological training or access to Bible study materials. The main persecutor is the government.

In 2018, **Pastor John Cao** was sentenced by the Communist government in China to seven years in prison for "organizing illegal crossings of national borders." Pastor Cao lived many years in North Carolina but returned to his country to serve the Lord by building schools for poor children in Myanmar, which he did for three years without incident. Experts believe his arrest and sentencing are related to the ruling Communist Party's attempts to control the house church movement.

Pastor John Cao was able to meet with his mother in August 2020 via video link. She said John looks fine. He told her he prays daily for his brothers and sisters in Christ and everything going on in the world. He reassured his mother that he does not have to do field work and that he has time to read and interact with other inmates. As you pray for Pastor John, please pray also for his wife, Jamie Powell, and their sons, Benjamin and Amos.





Enjoying  
food &  
fellowship ~  
celebrating  
Christmas  
together  
in our new  
south wing



## *Rejoice in Christ*

*The year is twenty-twenty  
So many hearts are heavy  
We dwell on what has changed  
Our lives so rearranged*

*Do we forget the truth?  
What Christmas time does mean  
Our Savior sent to earth  
Still dwells upon the scene*

*A child born to save  
For each one who believes  
The greatest love of all  
To one who will receive*

*Give your heart to God  
and thank Him for His Son  
Praise God for His great gift  
Our victory is won*

*—Carole Storteboom*



# Proclamation on 850<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Saint Thomas Becket

*Issued on December 28, 2020, by President Donald J. Trump*

Today is the 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the martyrdom of Saint Thomas Becket on December 29, 1170. Thomas Becket was a statesman, a scholar, a chancellor, a priest, an archbishop and a lion of religious liberty.

Before the Magna Carta was drafted, before the right to free exercise of religion was enshrined as America's first freedom in our glorious Constitution, Thomas gave his life so that, as he said, "the Church will attain liberty and peace."

The son of a London sheriff and once described as "a low-born clerk" by the King who had him killed, Thomas Becket rose to become the leader of the church in England. When the crown attempted to encroach upon the affairs of the house of God through the Constitutions of Clarendon, Thomas refused to sign the offending document. When the furious King Henry II threatened to hold him in contempt of royal authority and questioned why this "poor and humble" priest would dare defy him, Archbishop Becket responded "God is the supreme ruler, above Kings" and "we ought to obey God rather than men."

Because Thomas would not assent to rendering the church subservient to the state, he was forced to forfeit all his property and flee his own country. Years later, after the intervention of the Pope, Becket was allowed to return — and continued to resist the King's oppressive interferences into the life of the church. Finally, the King had enough of Thomas Becket's stalwart defense of religious faith and reportedly exclaimed in consternation: "Will no one rid me of this meddlesome priest?"

The King's knights responded and rode to Canterbury Cathedral to deliver Thomas Becket an ultimatum: Give in to the King's demands or die. Thomas's reply echoes around the world and across the ages. His last words on this earth were these: "For the name of Jesus and the protection of the Church, I am ready to embrace death." Dressed in holy robes, Thomas was cut down where he stood inside the walls of his own church.

Thomas Becket's martyrdom changed the course of history. It eventually brought about numerous constitutional limitations on the power of the state over the Church across the West. In England, Becket's murder led to the Magna Carta's declaration 45 years later that: "[T]he English church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished and its liberties unimpaired."

When the Archbishop refused to allow the King to interfere in the affairs of the Church, Thomas Becket stood at the intersection of church and state. That stand, after centuries of state-sponsored religious oppression and religious wars throughout Europe, eventually led to the establishment of religious liberty in the New World. It is because of great men like Thomas Becket that the first American President George

Washington could proclaim more than 600 years later that, in the United States, "All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship" and that "it is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights."

Thomas Becket's death serves as a powerful and timeless reminder to every American that our freedom from religious persecution is not a mere luxury or accident of history, but rather an essential element of our liberty. It is our priceless treasure and inheritance. And it was bought with the blood of martyrs.

As Americans, we were first united by our belief that "rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God" and that defending liberty is more important than life itself. If we are to continue to be the land of the free, no government official, no governor, no bureaucrat, no judge, and no legislator must be allowed to decree what is orthodox in matters of religion or to require religious believers to violate their consciences. No right is more fundamental to a peaceful, prosperous and virtuous society than the right to follow one's religious convictions. As I declared in Krasiński Square in Warsaw, Poland, on July 6, 2017, the people of America and the people of the world still cry out: "We want God."

On this day, we celebrate and revere Thomas Becket's courageous stand for religious liberty, and we reaffirm our call to end religious persecution worldwide. In my historic address to the United Nations last year, I made clear that America stands with believers in every country who ask only for the freedom to live according to the faith that is within their own hearts. I also stated that global bureaucrats have absolutely no business attacking the sovereignty of nations that wish to protect innocent life, reflecting the belief held by the United States and many other countries that every child — born and unborn — is a sacred gift from God. Earlier this year, I signed an Executive Order to prioritize religious freedom as a core dimension of United States foreign policy. We have directed every Ambassador — and the over 13,000 United States Foreign Service officers and specialists — in more than 195 countries to promote, defend, and support religious freedom as a central pillar of American diplomacy.

We pray for religious believers everywhere who suffer persecution for their faith. ... To honor Thomas Becket's memory, the crimes against people of faith must stop, prisoners of conscience must be released, laws restricting freedom of religion and belief must be repealed, and the vulnerable, the defenseless, and the oppressed must be protected. ... As long as America stands, we will always defend religious liberty.

A society without religion cannot prosper. A nation without faith cannot endure — because justice, goodness, and peace cannot prevail without the grace of God.