



December 2021

# CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

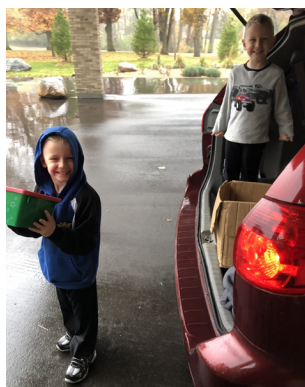
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## 'Tis the Season

We have entered the Advent season, and our pastor is taking a break from his Isaiah sermon series to focus on the anticipation of the coming of our Lord Jesus, Who humbled Himself to leave the glory of His heavenly realm to become a human and associate with us for the purpose of sacrificing Himself for the punishment of our sins. Blessings unimaginable, bringing His light to our darkness.

### Shoebox blessings



"The boys absolutely loved participating!" That's Nathan & Noah Kelp, bringing boxes!

CrossWay's annual tradition of sending packed-out shoeboxes overseas through Operation Christmas Child has become a delightful opportunity for our own families to engage in Kingdom work.

This year's offering to the Samaritan's Purse project totalled nearly 50 boxes, all filled with small, practical gifts, imaginative toys, and spiritual greetings. Way to go, CrossWay!

Along with the Advent candle wreath and the festive decor around the church building, we'll celebrate the season with a potluck lunch on Dec. 12 and gather for evening worship on Christmas Eve at 7 p.m.

Christmas is special at CrossWay. We hope you will be with us in celebrating the birth of our Savior.



We're pretty hardy at CrossWay, but if winter storms ever do make calling off Sunday worship a necessity, we will post the cancellation by 8 a.m. on a given Sunday on WOOD-TV ([www.woodtv.com/weather/closings](http://www.woodtv.com/weather/closings)) and on WCSG Radio, 91.3 FM ([secure.wcsg.org/closings](http://secure.wcsg.org/closings)).

### Our family's special request

Interpreter Pastor Alphonse shared with us during the clothing distribution that our refugee family is hoping one or two of us will take up the project of teaching them English on the weekends — either at the church or at their home near the Calvin campus. Seems the ESL classes they've been offered conflict with their work schedule. Contact Pam Reed.

### Coming Up at CrossWay Community

Sundays • 10<sup>AM</sup> • Gather for worship together  
Sunday School • 11:30<sup>AM</sup> • (except Dec. 12)  
Tuesdays • 1<sup>PM</sup> • Women's Bible Study at church  
Tuesdays • 7 - 9<sup>PM</sup> • Small group @ Hinkles' home, Lowell  
Thurs., Dec. 2 & 16 • 7<sup>PM</sup> • Small group @ Amanda Le's home, Grand Rapids  
Sat., Dec. 4 • 9<sup>AM</sup> • Ladies breakfast @ IHOP, Men @ Bob Evans  
Tues., Dec. 7 • 6:30<sup>PM</sup> • Ladies' Christmas tea @ Johnstons  
Sun., Dec. 12 • 11:30<sup>AM</sup> • Christmas potluck; all welcome!  
Fri., Dec. 24 • 7<sup>PM</sup> • Simply Christmas worship service  
Sat., Dec. 25 • Merry Christmas!

### Let's make it a feast!

Plan to stay after our worship for our festive Christmas potluck on Sunday, Dec. 12. Bring your appetite and



your favorite dish to share. We'll be enjoying each other's fellowship in our South Wing. A great time to celebrate the joy of the season together . . . and to invite friends and neighbors to join you at your table — and at worship!

## Welcome our new members!

Joy and Brendan Marchione live in CrossWay's neighborhood and have attended CrossWay for more than a year now. Joy has joined a worship team, and in mid-November, the couple recently took the step to formally join this local Evangelical Free church.



## Sunday School offerings for you

Bob Johnston has begun a class featuring Rev. Colin Smith's "Momentum," a video sermon/discussion study on the Beatitudes.

Michael Stevens is leading a study on "How to Interpret Poetry in the Bible".

## And coming up in January . . .

Beginning Jan. 2, Pastor Manuel will be leading a class on Dane Ortlund's book, *Gentle & Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners & Sufferers*.



Free copies of the book are available now on a table in the narthex, just outside the sanctuary.

Those interested in participating in the class are encouraged to pick up a copy now and begin reading it in anticipation.



Jacob Hinkle tries his hand at the drums while sister Johanna & dad Cody help Heather Johnson

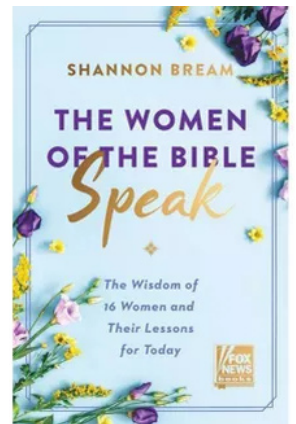


trim the narthex tree for the Christmas season and Bob Johnston & Frank Burt dress the lobby. The gremlins gathered at CrossWay on Nov. 27 for the trimmings.

## New to the CrossWay library

This new best-seller by Shannon Bream traces the challenges and triumphs of women whose stories inspire faith, straight out of the pages of Scripture.

From Sarah to Mary, the mother of Jesus, this book imparts "the wisdom of 16 women and their lessons for today."



Check it out at the lobby book table. A sweet read, with discussion questions after each chapter, offering a useful text for starting a neighborhood Bible study.

## Call for volunteers

CrossWay has a continuing need for the Lord's servants to step forward to aid in our church nursery on occasional Sundays during the worship service. Please contact Becky Alves to inquire about this opportunity to welcome the growing number of little ones to our fellowship.

We also have a continuing need for sound-booth stewardship during worship services – no experience required. Contact Jane Schultze for a bit of training.

Find either of these ladies in our pictorial fellowship directory for contact information, or approach them on Sunday morning.







Happy holidays!

For many of you it is, and for others, it is not.

If you are of the “Happy Holidays” sort, and you are upbeat this time of year, I am thankful for you. I often need some of your outlook during this time of year! I am grateful for the honesty of both the Scriptures and the history of God’s people throughout the ages. For them, Advent began in the dark.

I often like to remind others, by way of giving them “permission,” that it’s okay to feel a heavy burden, even sadness at this time of year. It can be especially hard for those of you who are experiencing any kind of loss this holiday season. I have good news for you.

As I will have already shared during my Nov. 28th sermon, the first Sunday of Advent: Advent begins in the dark. This idea is not my preference. It’s the Biblical witness.

Let me briefly explain. Each Sunday during Advent, we light a candle. Prior to the candle, let us imagine darkness. That is, in our imagination, the particular light of Jesus we are longing for, pre-Advent, is nowhere to be found. Then, the Light comes. The candle is lit. Before that, it was dark.

Isaiah and Matthew (who is quoting Isaiah) say it this way: *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.”* (Isaiah 9:2) And now Matthew: *“Now when He heard that John had been arrested, He withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth He went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light,*

## *Advent Begins in the Dark*

*and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.’ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”* (Matthew 4:12-17 )

May I suggest that to the extent we are familiar with and have been impacted by darkness, to that same extent, we will have a measure of capacity to rejoice in the Light once He has come. By “darkness,” the Scriptures of Isaiah and Matthew are not necessarily implying a “sinful” darkness — that is, darkness caused by sin — though I suppose I wouldn’t rule it out altogether. The darkness the prophet and the evangelist speak of is that caused by the general effects of a life that is hard and one that longs for something better.

In Isaiah’s day, think of the oppression of Assyria and Babylon, along with the physical/emotional/spiritual drain that came from their not knowing God.

In Matthew’s day, it was the stress of being occupied by Rome and having little hope for the future.

I ask us a simple question: What “darkness” (in us or around us) is making us so hungry for the Light who is Jesus?

When we act, for whatever reason, as though everything is always okay, then when Jesus does begin to shine during Advent/Christmas, I wonder how much we revel in His coming?

Please do not misunderstand! I am not encouraging us to be gloomy, overly introspective or scrooges. I’m just trying to give you a bit of permission, if needed, to say, “I’m not always okay. Life is not always okay. And that’s okay.

It won’t always be like this. The Light has dawned.



Thanks to you . . . our clothing drive brought smiles and tangible aid to some of Grand Rapids' newest residents . . . refugees from across the globe, building wardrobes at little to no cost.



The donation process was just the beginning. Several days of sorting, folding and displaying turned our south wing into a clothing sales floor.

Tables of sweaters and jeans and blouses and scarves, racks of coats and dresses and shirts and jackets, rows of shoes, all arrayed across our gym floor.



You gave so much to those who have so little,  
all in the name of Christ.





Our sponsored refugee family was given first choice and took home 400 items of clothing. Thank you, CrossWay!

And the Lord gave them, that day, their first touch of snow, their first snowball fight, their first snow angels at CrossWay!



Welcome to Grand Rapids in winter, Tubaone family!



Many thanks, too, to Pastor Alphonse of our sister church, who was on hand to welcome and to interpret.

