



CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

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'Towards a Christian Understanding of Race'

Pastor Bob Manuel will be among the speakers for a 9^{AM} Feb. 19 breakfast discussion at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, 2250 East Paris Ave.

All are invited to attend this gathering on the theme: "All Are Precious in His Sight: Towards a Christian Understanding of Race."

Moderator for the program will be Kentwood Mayor Stephen Kepley. Joining Pastor Manuel on the panel will be Pastor Andrew Mead of Church of the Servant, Pastor Sam Moffett of House of God, Father Michael Nasser of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Pastor Jason Ross of Ada Bible Church's East Paris campus and Pastor Brian Smilde of Immanuel Reformed Church.



Dig deep for the PRC



*All are precious
in His sight*

Sunday, Feb. 6, is our target date for receiving the gifts of God's people for the Pregnancy Care Center of Grand Rapids. Bring in your baby-bottle bank — or just a check or folding money — for this urgent cause. "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." II Cor. 9:7



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) and on WCSG Radio, 91.3 FM (secure.wcsg.org/closings).

Can you help?

Though our official service commitment to our refugee family has ended, we continue to need someone to step forward to bless them with assistance in learning English, meeting with them preferably on Saturdays, either at church or at their home just west of Calvin. Our denomination offers online help to English-as-a-second-language volunteer tutors beginning this month. Can you help fill this need? Contact Paul Samuelson; his info is in our fellowship directory.

Coming Up at CrossWay Community

Sundays • 10^{AM} • Gather for worship together

Sunday School • 11:30^{AM}

Tuesdays • 1^{PM} • Women's Bible Study at church

Tuesdays • 7 - 9^{PM} • Small group @ Hinkles' home, Lowell

Fridays • 8-9:30^{PM} • Men's discipleship meeting

Wed., Feb. 2 • 6^{PM} • Elders meeting

Thurs., Feb. 3 & 17 • 7^{PM} • Small group @ Amanda Le's

home, Grand Rapids

Sat., Feb. 5 • 9^{AM} • Monthly breakfasts - Ladies @ IHOP, Men

@ Bob Evans

Sun., Feb. 6 • PRC Baby Bottles due in narthex

Sat., Feb. 19 • 9^{AM} - Noon • Pastor Manuel to speak on

'Christian Understanding of Race' @ St. Nicholas Church

A timely word...

from The Voice of the Martyrs

It's less than one week until the opening ceremonies of the XXIV Olympic Winter Games in Beijing, hosted by China and its Communist government.

Thousands of Christians around the world have already committed to pray for persecuted Christians in China during these Games. Will you join in making this athletic event a spiritual victory for our brothers and sisters in China?

In recent years, the persecution of Christians in China has grown more intense as the Communist government has redoubled its efforts to control religious expression. Christians are routinely detained, beaten, arrested and sentenced to long prison terms; church buildings are destroyed; and Christian schools are raided and shut down.

Hundreds of churches have been forced to close, pastors and church members have been arrested or detained and the online sale of Bibles has been prohibited. A campaign to remove crosses from churches continues in one province. The government has installed more than 170 million facial recognition cameras, many in or near churches, in an effort to identify those who attend worship services.

Church leaders are under intense pressure to join the government-controlled Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the state-sanctioned protestant church organization. Authorities pressure Christian parents by

refusing their children an education, and even the grandchildren of Christians are often denied schooling. It is illegal to disciple anyone younger than 18. Christians are often charged with participating in cults or with other spurious accusations, such as "bad business practices" or "intent to undermine the state."

But despite the efforts of the Communist government, the Gospel continues to advance in China. The battle is not against flesh and blood, and our weapons are not bullets, tanks or submarines.

- Pray for pastors and church leaders to stand firmly for biblical truth in spite of government pressure to compromise.
- Pray for the encouragement of Chinese believers and that they will experience unity and fellowship as members of the body of Christ.
- Pray for Christians in prison. Pray for God's protection over them, for their health and nutrition, and that they will have opportunities to witness for Christ to guards and fellow prisoners.
- Pray for the spread of the gospel among participants in the games and among local, provincial and national Communist Party Leaders.
- Pray for the safe distribution of Bibles in every part of China.

As you pray, remember ...



Pastor John Cao, married to an American, returned to serve his people and was sentenced in 2018 to seven years in prison for his work for Christ.



Pastor Zhang Shaojie was a local leader when he was sentenced in 2014 to a 12-year sentence on a fabricated charge of fraud.

Pastor Li Juncai is serving 5.5 years in prison after protesting removal of the cross from his church building in 2019.



Pastor Wang Yi led the hugely important Early Rain Covenant Church until his arrest and conviction in 2019. He is receiving ill treatment during his 9-year sentence.



Alim Yimiti's crime is being an active member of a Uyghur church. He is serving a 15-year term after conviction in 2010.



Pray also for the thousands of nameless, faceless Christians who are suffering by living in the world's largest prison – China itself.



Our Powerful and Gentle God

Here we are at the beginning of February. And though it is the shortest month, we begin to long for the month of March, which begins our spring season. Having gotten past January, are you experiencing the “winter blues”? At this time of year, we all need a bit of a pick-me-up.

Last month I shared with you the idea of “starting and finishing,” reminding us in this new year that, ultimately, it is God who both starts and finishes any good work in us. (Philippians 1:6; I Thess. 5:23-24) Yes, we are intimately and vigorously involved in His work (Colossians 1:29), but without Him the work would never have started, let alone be finished. I say this to encourage you. I’m not sure as God’s people, if we ever have enough encouragement. As I am preparing to preach Isaiah chapter 40, I am once again reminded of our need for encouragement.

You see, God’s people at that time in Judah had some serious doubts, fears and questions about God. Had He forgotten them, now that they were in exile? (40:27) Had the Babylonian gods defeated Him? (40:18ff) Perhaps you never or rarely have doubts about God and/or His timing in what you long for Him to do. I think most of us have doubts from time to time. Briefly, how did God seek to encourage His exiled people at that time? What we see is how He seeks to encourage us today. Here’s what I see in Isaiah:

- God WILL complete His work in us. Though we might experience His discipline, it is always for our good, and He will never abandon us. We have His Word on that. (40:8)
- God has the POWERFUL “arms” we need. Notice His mighty “arm.” (40:10) How does God “come” to us with power, and, how does He rule with a mighty arm? I am convinced that this God who comes to us is a prophecy of Jesus Himself, who comes to us in a “power” that we often do not expect. You see, He was

“crucified in weakness, yet He lives by God’s power.” (2 Cor. 13:4) Jesus came, not to kill the Romans or the disobedient Jews, but to die for them. We meet His power, not only in His “weak” cross, but in our dependence. For that is when His power rests upon us. (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

- God has the GENTLE “arms” we need. Notice how He “gathers the lambs in His arms and gently leads those that have young.” (Isa.40:11) Wouldn’t it be great if, like Judah, we could be reassured in our “exile” that we have such a kind and gentle Shepherd? Well, of course we do have such a Shepherd. You see, as mentioned in my January 30 sermon, this too, is a prophecy of Jesus. Only Jesus is the mighty and powerful King and, at the same time, our Gentle Shepherd. (John 10:11) Make no mistake, while His power is most often seen today in a “weakness that acknowledges its dependence upon Him,” it is still a power that can change the world. (Matt.5:5) And some day, our Gentle Shepherd’s power will rearrange the kingdoms of this world. (Rev.11:15) In the meanwhile, we wait and we trust — see Isaiah 40:27-31.

- Yes, there will be times, again, when we may question God, as we complain, “My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God.” But when you get to that place of doubt, remember, He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Hope in Him, and you will be renewed. That is His promise to those who are in the “winter” of exile and are longing for the promise of spring and an eternal summer. He WILL complete His good work in us.

