



November 2022

CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

3950 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546 • 616.949.5690

wheelchair accessible • www.crosswaygr.com

You asked for it! ... concluded

Pastor Manuel's sermon series with topics/Scripture requested by congregation members, ends this month, leading us into the Advent season.

This month's sermon schedule is cited here (at right) for your information and heart preparation.

On Sunday, Nov. 20, worship coordinator Sandy Williams is preparing a sermonless all-worship and prayer service. The congregation is encouraged to participate with testimonies, Scripture reading and artistic display, or by joining a musical worship team for the day.

Election day is coming!

CrossWay's south wing will be open to the community as a polling place all day on Tuesday, Nov. 8, for the neighbors who live in our precinct. Please be praying for smooth operations and peaceful processes.

As you go to your own polling place to vote, please remember to find the constitutional amendment proposal section of your ballot and vote "no" on Proposal 3; by voting "no," you will be voting to protect unborn children and parental rights in our state.

Upcoming Sermon Topics

November 6 - The Book of Hebrews. (Overview)

November 13 - The Kingdom of God (What is it and how can we participate in it?)

November 20 - Worship and prayer (no sermon)

November 27 - First Sunday of Advent



Coming Up at CrossWay Community

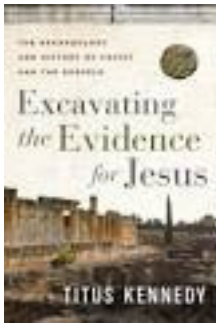
Sundays • 9:30^{AM} • Prayer, south wing classroom
Sundays • 10^{AM} • Gather for worship together
Sundays • 11:30^{AM} • Sunday School for all ages
Tuesdays • 1^{PM} • Ladies Bible Study
Tuesdays • 7 - 9^{PM} • Small group @ Hinkles' home
Wednesdays • 7^{PM} • Underhill Club @ Marchiones' home
Wed., Nov. 2 • 7^{PM} • Elder meeting
Thurs., Nov. 3 & 17 • 7^{PM} • Veurink/Le small group
Fri., Nov. 4 • 6^{PM} • Men's discipleship program: What & Why
Sat., Nov. 5 • 9^{AM} • Men's breakfast @ Bob Evans
Sat., Nov. 5 • 9^{AM} • Women's breakfast @ Bob Evans
Sun., Nov. 6 • 6^{PM} • Monthly church prayer hour
Tues., Nov. 8 • 7^{AM} to 8^{PM} • Election Day in Michigan
Fri., Nov. 11 • 6^{PM} • Men's discipleship program: How
Sun., Nov. 20 • 11:30^{AM} • Christmas card writing party
for persecuted Christians
Thurs., Nov. 24 • Noon to 5^{PM} • Thanksgiving potluck



Thanksgiving @ CrossWay

Our south wing will be open on Thanksgiving day from Noon to 5 p.m. for those who wish to bring food and fellowship to gather with church friends on this special day. Questions? Call Linda Stevens.

New to our library



You've likely heard of the Shroud of Turin, yes? It's a first-century burial cloth that bears stains consistent with crucifixion.

But have you heard of the Nazareth Inscription? It's even more fascinating! Titus Kennedy's book *Excavating the Evidence for Jesus* meticulously documents the many archaeological finds that independently verify the truth of our Scriptures and cites other ancient texts confirming what we know of Jesus through the eyes of nonbelievers. It doesn't read like a novel, but it just might provide eye-openers for your friends who question your faith.

Blessing today's heroes of the faith

If you are new to CrossWay, you might not be aware of our all-church pre-Advent tradition of blessing persecuted Christians with sacred-style Christmas cards addressed and signed by folks at our church — including some of the older children — to be mailed to Christian prisoners of conscience.

We will gather during the Sunday School hour on Sunday, Nov. 20, in the south wing. Profiles of prisoners — along with the addresses where they are believed to be held — will be supplied in write-ups prepared by Pam Reed from postings by The Voice of the Martyrs.

CrossWay folks tuck into each card a scripture in the heart language of the imprisoned martyr and sign and address the card. Some of the cards, VOM believes, will reach the prisoner addressed; some will be intercepted by their guards, who need desperately to learn the Good News and who may, VOM believes, offer better treatment to prisoners who are known to be cared about by average citizens in America. (Someone's watching!)

Though cards will be furnished, participants are encouraged to bring their own sacred-style Christmas cards, as a large volume will be needed. Cash donations are needed to cover postage as well; international postal rates are \$1.40 per card. This expense is not covered by the church budget.



Doing our part for Operation Christmas Child

Nov. 14-21 is collection week for Operation Christmas Child — the shoeboxes-for-children campaign of Samaritan's Purse.

CrossWay is a collection point for the gift boxes for needy children, offering school supplies, small toys, notepads and crayons or pens & pencils — the list is exhaustive and can be found on the Internet at <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child>.



Delivery of the shoeboxes opens a path for discipleship of youngsters and their families who need to learn the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Let's see how many children CrossWay folks can bless.

CrossWay missions

Dora and Tom visited early in October and reminisced with our congregation, which sent them to Czech Republic some two decades-plus ago, launching a missionary career that has brought Tom to leading our denomination's outreach to marginalized peoples.



One of Tom's recent projects has been to spearhead fundraising to purchase Threadies — cloth teddy bears — for loving distribution to Ukrainian refugee children who have been damaged by the horrors of war at their very doorstep, forcing them to flee across Europe. Last month, CrossWay participated in this effort by donating \$250 from our missions contingency fund, enough to bless ten children with Threadies.

Also this month, our congregation sent \$250 from that same fund to provide flood relief for in-country workers associated with Zindagi (Life) TV, a ministry that brings the Gospel into Pakistan via satellite and the internet. Many of them lost their homes this summer. Your love, going forth through CrossWay missions.



Looking for the God Who Is Looking for Us —An Advent Meditation

“Hi. It’s Me, your God. Today I wanted to simply share something fun and amazing that you might not have considered. My child, I live simultaneously outside and inside of time. I see up ahead in your story. So, I get to enjoy your exciting, exhilarating, heroic and amusing moments before you step into them. I get to drink their goodness in more than once. You have the experience itself and the memory of it. I get to experience the event, carry the memory of it and experience the event before it happens. Pretty cool, huh? Anyway, I just wanted you to know that there are some supremely good moments up ahead. That’s all. I love you. — See Romans 11:33-36” (Excerpt from *Trust for Today*).

I just read the above excerpt from one of my devotionals and thought I would weave it into an Advent meditation for us. At least for me, this piece above and the upcoming Advent season seems to fit. That is, if the Advent season is about anticipating and then celebrating the first and second coming of Jesus, then it is true for us that we have some “supremely good moments up ahead!”

It’s hard to remember that, to joyfully anticipate the good times that are awaiting us, right? Things don’t even have to be going “bad” for our premature amnesia to settle in upon us. The lack of anticipating His Coming Joy can simply hover over us unintentionally as we get so busy with the tasks of everyday life. Distractions. Duties. Deadlines. The dailyness of it all adds up. And then we fail to look up, or at least look ahead to the good stuff.

Let me close with what I hope to be an encouraging thought for you. In my sermon preparation a few weeks back, I came across an idea from writer Curt Thompson. He said, “We all come into the world looking for someone who is looking for us.” This spoke to me on so many levels, but let’s apply it to our Advent season.

Advent is a time of looking. We are looking for, longing for the Coming of our Lord. Is it possible, on some level, when Jesus returns, He will be looking for those of us who will be looking for Him? I think so. On a more personal level, this idea relates to each of us who were created with a need to be seen. That is, when we came into this world as

little babies, as our sight begins to develop, we are looking for someone who is looking for us. Mom. Dad. Brother. Sister. Grandmas and Grandpas.

There is a sense of delight and security in the baby that knows it is “attached” to someone who is looking for them. Love. Relationship. The enjoyment of being enjoyed. I think all of that can be celebrated and anticipated during Advent season.

The challenge this Advent season, as in any Advent season, is to let ourselves be seen, known and loved precisely because *we* have been seen and known and then loved. Notice the “we” is italicized. Why? God can love only *us*, who *we* are, not some idealized version of who we long to be. He can’t love a phantom ideal self that doesn’t exist.

When God sees it all, sees us all, even before we “step into” who we are and what we will do with our lives, He sees us, knows us and loves us.

Sadly, one of the things I most actively repent of is my reluctance to believe that **God** loves me not because I have it all together or have had a good day, but simply because He has *chosen* to love me because of Jesus. (John 17:23; Rom.5:8; Gal.2:20) When I do repent of this unbelief and experience His amazing grace, I am able to trust Him and enjoy the love of the One who is looking for me, looking for Him. It changes everything.

Joy to the world. The Lord has come — and is coming. Will we be looking? I hope so!



He is coming!

Serving Him beyond our walls

Hurricane Ian made landfall west of Fort Myers, Florida, on Wednesday, Sept. 28, as a Category 4 storm. It caused damage to EFCA churches and communities across the state.

ReachGlobal Crisis Response is mobilizing in partnership with three EFCA churches along the southwestern coast of Florida. Staff and volunteers will help local churches reach out to communities who need help and hope, after storm surge, wind damage and heavy rainfall impacted the state. Financial goal: \$100,000; raised to date: \$40,158.

According to a ministry partner in Cuba — Los Pinos Nuevos — many families have lost homes and belongings. The ministry distributed some relief supplies, but much of it was damaged by the water. EFCA Crisis Response is working in partnership with Los Pinos Nuevos to help with rebuilding and discipleship efforts.

Are you interested in joining a short-term team to Cuba? Please see Pastor Bob for more information.

Or you can help...



Our denomination is on the ground in Eastern Europe,

working day in, day out with refugees displaced by the war in Ukraine. EFCA increased its initial goal to \$3 million and, to date, has raised \$1,740,444 for this crisis.

From the website: “We are grateful for your generosity toward the Ukrainian Refugee Response. Our initial efforts offered real help and hope: doors are open for Gospel conversations through the ministry of Reach-Global City Teams and national partners in Europe.

For an on-the-scene video report on EFCA’s Ukrainian Refugee Response efforts, check out <https://www.efca.org/ukrainian-refugee-response> and scroll down a bit.

Give online or mail a check designated “Ukrainian Refugee Response 38935” or, for hurricane-impact aid, designate your check with “Hurricane Ian Response 3969-FL” in the memo line to:

EFCA
901 East 78th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55420-1300

ReachGlobal Crisis Response is hosting short-term teams in partnership with Fort Myers Evangelical Free Church. Volunteers will help form relationships by serving in communities from Naples to Englewood. Email respond@efca.org for more information.



Could you serve for 1-6 months? They need additional staff to help with working in homes and churches, with hosting teams, administration and trauma care conversations. Email crisisresponse@efca.org.

We also serve by praying:



for wisdom and discernment as Crisis Response partners with Fort Myers Evangelical Free Church, Compass Church and Grace Community Church



that God would provide the staff, teams, housing and resources for this response



for God to open doors for Gospel ministry as a result of the storm

“This is a long-term response in a dynamic and rapidly-changing crisis. As a result of our initial assessments and response efforts, we have identified an opportunity to increase our goal in order to restore the Body, extend Gospel ministries and establish the Church where the Gospel isn’t known. As this situation develops and more Ukrainians are displaced, our new goal of \$3,000,000 will help Crisis Response and ReachGlobal provide holistic pathways for discipleship, leadership development and church planting in Ukraine and throughout Europe.”





*Families together
at CrossWay,
enjoying
a potluck lunch
in the South Wing ...*



*... & a touch of
Indian summer in October!*

