

April 2023



CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

3950 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546 • 616.949.5690

wheelchair accessible • www.crosswaygr.com

He is risen! And we are redeemed

Hear the bells ringing, they're singing
That You can be born again.

Hear the bells ringing, they're singing
Christ is risen from the dead.

The angel up on the tombstone
Said, 'He has risen, just as He said.
Quickly now, go tell His disciples
That Jesus Christ is no longer dead!'

Joy to the world:

He has risen, Hallelujah!

He's risen, Hallelujah!

He's risen: Hallelujah, Hallelujah!

Hear the bells ringing, they're singing
That You can be healed right now.

Hear the bells ringing, they're singing:
Christ, He will reveal it now.

The angels, they all surround us
And they are ministering Jesus's power.
Quickly now, reach out and receive it,
For this could be your glorious hour!

Joy to the world —

He has risen, Hallelujah!

He's risen, Hallelujah!

He's risen, Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah!



Hallelujah!

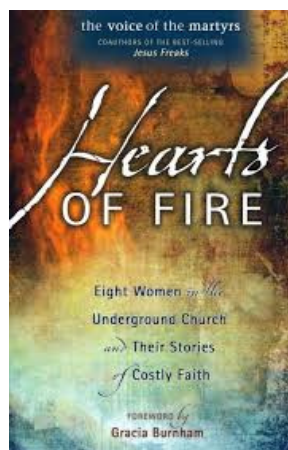


Adult/youth ed hour this month

April is a transitional month for our Sunday School program for adults and youth. Mike Ward will bring his evangelism training in for a landing April 1. The next week, after worshipping together we'll be enjoying Easter celebrations with our families. The rest of the month will give Brendan Marchione a platform for part II of his series on how our Bible was put together for the transmission of God's Word over the centuries.

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 • 6:30^{PM} • Underhill Club @ Marchiones'
Sat., Apr. 1 • 9^{AM} • Men's breakfast @ Bob Evans
Sat., Apr. 1 • 9^{AM} • Women's breakfast @ Russ's
Sun., Apr. 2 • 6^{PM} • All-church prayer meeting
Wed., Apr. 5 • 7^{PM} • Elder meeting
Thurs., Apr. 6 & 20 • 6:30^{PM} • Veurink/Le small group
Fri., Apr. 7 • 7^{PM} • Good Friday service
Sun., April 8 • 9^{AM} • Breakfast together in South Wing
Fri., Apr. 14 • 6^{PM} • Men's discipleship program



The Voice of the Martyrs is so good at bringing the stories of Christian persecution alive ... alive with hope. *Hearts of Fire* will touch your heart as it recounts the faithfulness of Christ in the lives of eight women who serve Him in the "underground church," a movement founded in Gospel hope and bringing the Good News to people who live outside the

margins of safety we enjoy here in Grand Rapids. May *Hearts of Fire* inspire you to grow bolder in reaching your neighbors with the love of Christ. Check it out!



Repentance: Our Lifeline & Joy

Repentance (turning from “sin” and returning to our Good Father) is our lifeline and joy.

Repentance is our lifeline because when we go astray in our sin, we effectively are walking in the realm of death, eating slop with the pigs and not enjoying the full life Who is Jesus. (John 10:10; 14:6) Repentance is our joy for the same reason: We begin to enjoy Jesus Who is our life, and walk again with the God Whose very goodness is our motivation to repent. (Luke 15:17-19, Rom. 2:4)

I was reminded of a quote the other day from the late John Gerstner (1914-1996), a theologian and long-time church history professor at Westminster Theological Seminary. The first time I read this statement, it was jarring. It still is. Gerstner said, “*The main thing between you and God is not so much your sins; it’s your damnable good works.*” I believe Gerstner was reflecting upon the story of the Prodigal Sons in Luke 15. Another way of saying this is that our sins have not kept us away from God so much as our *self-righteousness* has.

To prepare us to walk with and enjoy Jesus this Easter season, I’d like to suggest we focus our repentance on turning away from the sin of trusting or finding our identity in our own good works, because, when we trust our good works for securing our standing before God, our good works become damnable.

I have always loved the Apostle Paul’s testimony in Philippians 3. After laying out his spiritual resume (Phil. 3:1-6), he states that compared to knowing Jesus, all of his “righteousness” was “garbage,” sometimes translated as “dog dung.” (vs.8) Paul wanted to be “*found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.*” (vs.9)

Perhaps you have heard the idea that says as Christians, we are only beggars, showing other beggars where we have found bread. I think most of us would agree

with this, but over time, if we are not careful, we effectively forget this. What I mean is that we enter into what I would call the *Galatian problem*. You might remember Paul, when he wrote to the church in Galatia, as being very upset. He said, “*I am astonished that you’re so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — which is really no gospel at all.*” (Gal. 1:6-7)

You see, on a practical level, in our day-to-day lives, we tend leave the Gospel/good news because we don’t trust it. We think in order to be accepted by God we have to add to the Gospel. And when we add to the Gospel, we enter into a non-gospel which would place us under God’s curse, cutting us off from grace. (Gal. 1:7-9; 5:4)

Our damnable good works. To repent from these damnable good works, oh how we need to remember the very first thesis of Martin Luther’s 1517 disputation that he nailed to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany: “*When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said ‘Repent,’ He intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance.*” You see, we need to turn from our sins and back to God, not with special “indulgences” but in daily attitudinal shifts, from trusting our own righteousness to finding our hope in Him alone.

Our varied “righteousness” can be seen as good, even as “sweet,” but as the song says: “I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name.” When we do not lean wholly on His name but try to “help” Him with our own good works, we enter the Galatian problem. Our good works become damnable. (see, too, Isaiah 64:6)

Finally, I think we need to be aware of this dynamic of “damnable good works” because when we think of sin, as believers, we tend to think of it in terms of “bad” things done by “those people out there.” We think of homosexuality, drugs, sex outside marriage, drunkenness, secularism, other political parties doing things “we” wouldn’t do, etc. Now, those types of things are “sin.” Sins God is surely displeased about, and sins I don’t have to turn away from. Our damnable self-righteousness. Yes, I know the phrase is a bit jarring. It’s not meant to cut us off from God, to indulge in so much navel-gazing, or to only make us feel guilty. It’s meant to wake up slumbering, complacent and self-righteous people.

Ramadan offers much opportunity

A couple of our frontline workers are serving in a country legally and culturally closed to our faith. But they are boldly joining their brothers and sisters in approaching the people around them especially during the month of Ramadan because this 30-day religious season is a time of greater sensitivity to all things spiritual.

Let's pray for them and join them in this endeavor, as there are many followers of Islam living around us. Perhaps this month would be a time to pay a visit now

Let us also pray for our friend Peter, whose employment contract is changing, with the timing of contracts possibly jeopardizing this couple's visas.



and then to the Friendship Center on 29th Street or look for opportunities at the grocery store to open conversations.

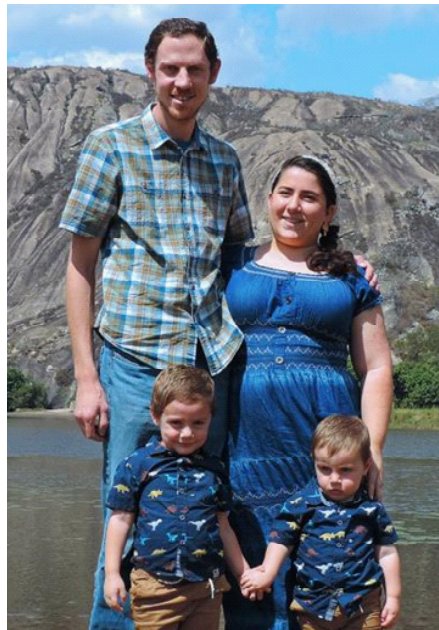
Don't know much about Islam? Ramadan might be a time to be curious, ask questions, maybe gain an opening to share your own faith.

Mission Aviation Fellowship pilot released

Pilot Ryan Koher and two South African volunteers for MAF have been provisionally released after four months from a Mozambican high-security prison but must remain in the East African country while their case is still ongoing.

They were taken into custody enroute to church-run orphanages to which they were bringing vitamins and other supplies, as they had done many times unhindered.

While in prison, Ryan suffered from a medical condition that made sleep difficult.

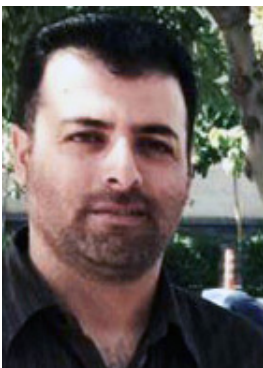


While he waits for his case to be resolved, he has contact with his family, who are praising God for his release. They ask for prayers to continue on his behalf.

Ryan's situation reminds us that we have brothers and sisters putting themselves in jeopardy for the sake of Christ in many corners of the world. But persecution of Christians is no surprise.

The Apostle Paul, who spoke from personal experience, wrote to Timothy, "*All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*" (I Tim. 3:12)

And then there's our Christmas card recipients in Iran . . .



Saheb (Zaman) Fadee received a "general pardon" on Feb. 8.



Yasser Mosayebzadeh was given "conditional release" on Feb. 22.



Pastor Yousef Nardkhani was given a "general pardon" on Feb. 26.

These men are all members of the Church of Iran, sentenced to 10-year terms in the notorious Evin Prison in 2018 after a year under arrest on charges of "acting against national security" and "promoting Zionist Christianity."

Praise God for their release and pray for them as they make daily decisions about sharing their faith in a country where Christianity is spreading but still underground.