



November 2023

CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

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Prepare Ye the Way

Though Advent does not begin officially until Sunday, Dec. 3, preparations for the celebration of our Lord's incarnation typically begin in November, and this year is no different!

Collections are already underway for Operation Christmas Child, the annual shoebox gift drive for Samaritan's Purse. Boxes and instructions are available in the narthex, and filled boxes can be delivered there by Sunday, Nov. 12. Questions? Call Linda Stevens; she's in the fellowship directory.



Then on Sunday, Nov. 19, we host our annual Christmas Card Writing Party for Persecuted Christians, this year focusing on heroes for the Gospel in Eritrea, an East African country whose government brutally persecutes followers of Christ. A table or two will be reserved for children of CrossWay to draw pictures to tuck into the cards in addition to the scriptures we will send in the Eritrean language. Plan now to participate, and please bring sacred-style Christmas cards in quantity. Donations for international postage will be appreciated.



And preparations are already underway for a Christmas play, to be presented on Dec. 15 & 16. Cody Hinkle is organizing this exciting venture and has already

gathered set pieces for building Bethlehem at CrossWay next month. (see above)

Cody is looking for volunteers to appear in costume as 1st-century characters and also for designing costumes, set building, adding decor, acting and providing food. Costume fitting will be Nov. 4 at CrossWay.

Curious? Willing to help? Contact Cody, preferably by e-mail. You'll find him in the fellowship directory.



Coming Up at CrossWay Community

Sundays • 9:30^{AM} • Prayer, south wing classroom
Sundays • 10^{AM} • Gather for worship together
Tuesdays • 1^{PM} • Ladies weekly Bible study
Tuesdays • 7 - 9^{PM} • Small group @ Hinkles' home
Wednesdays • 6^{AM} • Men's Discipleship @ church
Wednesdays • 6:30^{PM} • Underhill Club @ Marchiones'
Thurs., Nov. 2 • Pregnancy Resource Ctr Gala
Sat., Nov. 4 • 9^{AM} • Men's breakfast @ Bob Evans
Sat., Nov. 4 • 9^{AM} • Women's breakfast @ Russ's
Sat., Nov. 4 • 9-Noon • Costume fitting for Christmas play
Sat./Sun., Nov. 4/5 • Turn back clocks for standard time
Sun., Nov. 5 • 11:30^{AM} • All-church prayer meeting
Wed., Nov. 8 • March for Life Michigan in Lansing
Wed., Nov. 8 • 7^{PM} • Elder meeting
Thurs., Nov. 2, 16 & 30 • 6:30^{PM} • Veurink small group @ Le's
Sun., Nov. 12 • Shoebox collection deadline — OCC
Sun., Nov. 12 & 26 • 11:30^{AM} • Sunday School
Sun., Nov. 19 • 11:30^{AM} • Christmas cardwriting party for persecuted Christians (children welcome)

Time to Fall Back



Prayer prompts



During this time of war and turmoil, The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) invites us to join them in praying for Christians in Israel,

including those in Gaza and the West Bank. VOM has recently received prayer requests from our brothers and sisters affected by the war in areas controlled by both sides.

A church in Bethlehem has requested prayer for provisions to meet the practical needs of those in their community. Because of the war, the church is unable to deliver essential items such as food and fuel to their congregants and surrounding community.

Communication is currently very limited between family members living in some of the affected areas. Pray for improved communications capability and that the peace of Christ will be revealed to our brothers and sisters during this time of crisis.

Leaders of another church, located in one of the communities infiltrated by Hamas in the initial attack, request prayer for wisdom regarding when and how to share the love of Christ with those in their community.

The home of one VOM frontline worker's parents was bombed in the fighting. Please pray that the Lord will fill their hearts with comfort and peace.

Resource for perspectives on the War on Israel

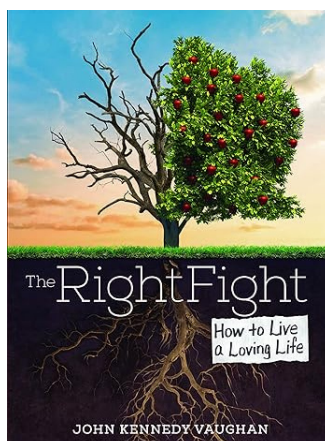
The Moody Radio Network, which is operated by Moody Bible Institute, has been devoting time and resources to offering in-depth information on the war against Israel, raging now in the Middle East.

A variety of resources is available on their website at <https://www.moodyradio.org/relief/israel>.

The editors of *CrossWay Current* have listened to an hour-long broadcast produced by Moody and accessed through that website by clicking on "After the Attack: Making Sense of the Senseless" — highly recommended.



New to the CrossWay library



Praise for this book: "What you hold in your hand is a gift that could radically change every interaction and relationship you have. ... *The Right Fight* will hold your attention and challenge your perspective and application of love." — Reg Lloyd, Pastor, Praise Church, Beaumont, Texas

John Kennedy Vaughan is a family man and world-class athlete, as well as a servant of Jesus Christ. He includes in his preface, "My prayer is that this book will help you to understand what fear really is, what love really is, and how they work to frame our lives. I hope, from these pages, that you can find the power and the insight to build strong roots for your life fed not by selfish fear but by selfless love. May the choices lined out on these pages set you on the path of strength and boundless hope and joy — in the hard times and the good." Available on the library table in the CrossWay lobby.

EFCA Crisis Response has set a goal of \$200,000 for Middle East Crisis Response. <https://give.efca.org/projects/middle-east-conflict-response>

For the babies



We have opportunities this season to support young moms in the Grand Rapids area through the Pregnancy Resource Center.

Consider attending the annual gala

on Nov. 2. Or perhaps you'd like to "adopt" a family, "adopt" a mom, or donate items urgently needed by the ministry: winter clothes for children, sizes 18 mos. and 2T; diapers, sizes 4,5,6; and baby wipes. For more information, consult www.prcforlife.org on the internet or ask Bernie Burt, a CrossWay member on the PRC staff.



Advent and our need of an Epiphany

Oh, how we need an Epiphany. This past week, I have had the privilege of studying Titus 2:1-15 as part of my sermon preparation for the October 29th message. It occurred to me that these verses form for us some very powerful Advent themes and point out for us the “epiphany” that we have experienced and that we still long for.

As you are most likely aware, Advent has to do with celebrating and preparing ourselves for both the first and second comings of Jesus. In Advent we celebrate His first coming. We celebrate His birth. Advent gets us ready for Christmas. But Advent also takes some of those same impulses of waiting and anticipating surrounding Jesus’s first coming and prepares us in much the same way for His second coming.

As for His first coming, we read in Titus 2:11, “*For the grace of God (in Jesus) has appeared that offers salvation to all people.*” Then, two verses later we read, “*while we wait for the blessed hope — the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*” (Titus 2:13) In both of these verses, the key word is “appearing.” See, too, Titus 3:4 — “*But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared . . .*” We get our English word “Epiphany” from this Greek word family. Someone today might say, “I had an epiphany moment.” What we mean by this is, I had an “aha” moment, “something came to me where now things make sense.” Think about that! Epiphany, an appearance if you will, comes to us, shedding light on our current (often dark, chaotic, confusing) situation.

As for how all this applies to our upcoming Advent season, let me offer some brief directions/reflections from Titus where we see the Epiphany/Apearances of Jesus. First, if we are truly waiting for Him and have already experienced Him coming in His grace (2:11), He is teaching us/disciplining us, to say “No” to much of what characterizes our present age in its ungodliness and worldly passions. (2:12)

The word for “passions” in v.12 is often translated “lust” and has the idea of “over-desire.” That is, much of what we “lust” for is simply desire on steroids!

Normally, lust or over-desire starts with a desire for mostly good and legitimate things. God-given desires, if you will. But then we fixate, dwell upon these desires until they eclipse even our desire for God Himself. (The Bible often calls this “idolatry.”) The antidote for this is found in verse 13. We say NO to over-desire as “*we wait for the blessed hope — the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*” So, my first encouragement is to urge us to walk closely with Jesus, avail of Him in His grace to teach us to truly wait for His glorious second coming. (2 Pet.3:11) May we have an “epiphany” in the sense that Jesus Himself, through His Holy Spirit, comes to us every day, being our Teacher, getting us ready for the Big Day of His return. That, really, is the focus in Titus — That we would live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

The second and final reflection I would bring to us in our Advent preparation is to remember that in Advent, God *always* takes the first step. He always takes the initiative. He comes to us. Yes, we are to prepare ourselves. We are to be looking for His Arrival. Titus says we are “waiting.” (Titus 2:13) Yet, our preparations do not make Him come. Our preparations merely make us ready and available to enjoy Him when He does come. We keep our lamps filled with oil so they can be lit at a moment’s notice. (Matt.25:1-13) Titus says in part, this will look like becoming a people who are “*being purified and eager to do what is good.*” (Titus 2:14) IF we are not being purified nor have an eagerness to do good works (Eph. 2:8-10), it shows we are not truly waiting for Him in this present age.

We must thank God that we are His very own possession — no amount of good works can secure our salvation, but a wondrous thing in Jesus taking the initiative in His coming, includes the good works “*He prepared in advance for us to do.*” Jesus came. He comes to us still, and He will yet come to us in His second coming. While we cannot make His arrival come, perhaps our good works have some mysterious way of “hastening” His arrival. (2 Pet.3:12) Lord Jesus, we need another “aha” moment. Please come to us. Appear to us once again, now, during this present age, and, as we wait for you, usher in the Age to Come. (Matt.6:10; Rev. 11:15)



Game on! CrossWay folks gather in fellowship hall for board games & friendship . . . hosted by the Underhill Club



We gathered in the south wing for the annual CrossWay Harvest Potluck . . .



. . . & now the south wing is being converted into a Bethlehem street scene for our 'Evening in Bethlehem' event in December . . .



Volunteers needed for so many tasks & roles . . . contact Cody Hinkle to offer your time & talent toward welcoming Jesus and making Him known.