



January 2024

CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

3950 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546 • 616.949.5690
wheelchair accessible • www.crosswaygr.com • crossway.communitygr@gmail.com

Looking back, looking ahead

Plan now to attend CrossWay's semi-annual meeting after worship on Sunday, January 21.

We'll be setting aside some time to get our bearings, reviewing our congregation's undertakings during the first half of our fiscal year by receiving ministry reports and reviewing the financial accounts as planned and executed through our church's budget.

We'll also take care of the business of appointing a couple of ad hoc committees to provide a detailed

Come to the rescue

Carl Sandburg once said "A baby is God's opinion that life should go on." It's a saying that brings a smile to our lips but also has profound meaning.

For some newly expectant moms, though, the coming of a new baby is a challenge, and the folks at Pregnancy Resource Center of Grand Rapids stand ready to help and guide those who may be panicking.

It has long been a CrossWay tradition that we stand behind the PRC with an annual fundraising drive through their "baby bottle" campaign.

During this month, you will find in the narthex a supply of baby bottles meant to serve as banks to collect change (or other cash or check donations). Take one home, fill it up, bring it back . . . save a baby!



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).

review of our church's business in preparation for the annual meeting, usually scheduled for mid- to late-May.

Watch for the semi-annual report to hit your church mailbox prior to the meeting this month so you can be an informed attendee of our congregational meeting, ready to volunteer to serve briefly for the common good.

New worship coordinators

Jocelyn Ostoich and Annie Lash have been leading worship from the piano in recent months, and now they have joined forces to provide coordination for our worship teams.

Thanks to Brad and Sandy Williams for the talent they have brought to that role in the past year or so.

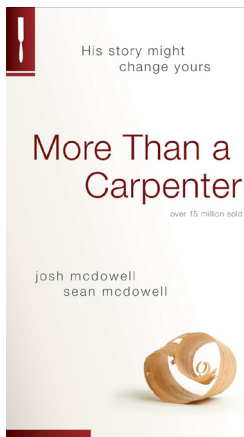


You can take part in leading worship by volunteering your musical talent for a new rotation of teams, to begin in February. Offer up your services to Jocelyn or Annie when you see them, or look them up in the fellowship directory for immediate contact.

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 • 6:30^{PM} • Underhill Club @ Marchiones'
Wed., Jan. 3 • 7^{PM} • Elder meeting
Sat., Jan. 6 • 9^{AM} • Men's breakfast @ Bob Evans
Sat., Jan. 6 • 9^{AM} • Women's breakfast @ Russ's
Sat., Jan. 6 • 10:30^{AM} • De-decorating the church
Sun., Jan. 7 • 11:30^{AM} • All-church prayer meeting
Tues., Jan. 9 • Ministry team reports due to office
Thurs., Jan. 11 & 25 • 6:30^{PM} • Veurink small group @ Le's
Sun., Jan. 14, 28 • 11:30^{AM} • Sunday School
Sun., Jan. 14 • 12:30^{PM} • Taco lunch for worship volunteers
Sun., Jan. 21 • 11:30^{AM} • Semi-annual congregation meeting

New to the CrossWay library



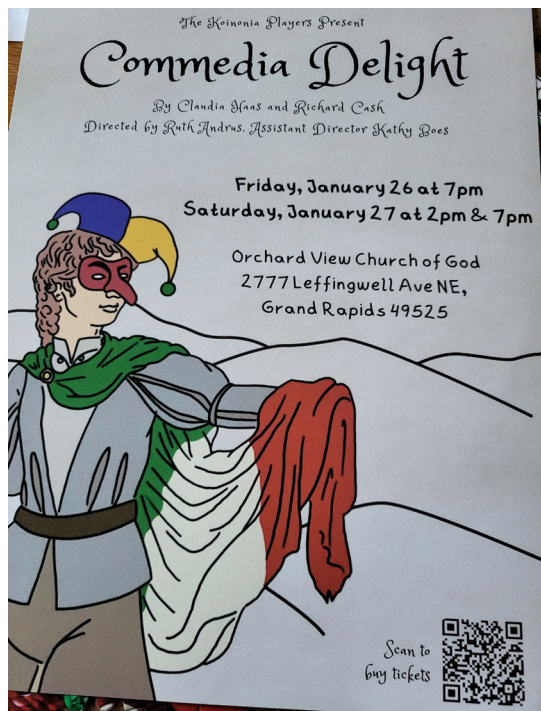
Skeptic Josh McDowell thought Christians were out of their minds. He ridiculed and insulted them, then decided to combat them with his own thorough research to disprove the claims of Jesus Christ. To his surprise, he discovered that the evidence suggested exactly the opposite — that Jesus, instead of being simply a 1st century Hebrew carpenter, truly was the

God He claimed to be. With more than 15 million copies in print since its original publication, *More than a Carpenter* has changed countless lives.

Now, in this revised and updated edition, Josh is joined by his son Sean as they tackle the questions that today's generation continues to ask: > "Can I be spiritual without believing in God?" > "How can I make sure that my life counts for something?" > "Is it really possible to know anything for *sure* about God or Jesus?"

Read the story. Weigh the facts. Experience His love. And then, watch what happens!

Pick it up on the lobby table near the coffee bar.



Caleb Ward invites you to his performance Jan. 26 & 27

Blessed event

Frontline workers Anita and Peter have welcomed into the world a lovely baby girl, doing well at 7.5 lbs, 21.65 in. She was born at 3:52 a.m. on Dec. 28.

The family is home from the hospital, receiving help from grandparents for a bit, and asking prayers for sleep and good feeding.



Is your directory page up to date?

Jeff Lash has agreed to take over publication of our pictorial fellowship directory. Please check your page and get in touch with Jeff if any updates or corrections are needed. And if you have become a regular attender (or even member) and are not yet listed, please contact Jeff about publishing your contact information, family birthdays, anniversary and, if you don't mind, a photo of you. We anticipate fresh copies will be printed soon. You'll find Jeff's contact information in — where else? — the fellowship directory.

Encouraging responses from CrossWay missionaries to our *Evening in Bethlehem* photos edition

Dr. Luke and Nancy, from eastern USA: "The *Evening in Bethlehem* presentation looks very impressive!"

Kate, from Budapest, Hungary: "Wow!"

& from a Reach Global missionary friend

Anne, from Lowell, having been sent an invitation: We brought our 2 grandsons, ages 6 and 11. It was really a good experience for all of us, just the right length of time. We could tell the event took a lot of work and time but so well done! It gave us opportunity to review the story of Christ's birth with our grandchildren and was encouraging for us, too.

**A big thank-you to
Cody Hinkle & the whole crew
for an inspiring Advent event. ❤️**



Happy & Glorious New Year!

I have always received the New Year with a sense of hope and optimism, not meaning of course, that I expect everything will go swimmingly well in the New Year. It's just, for me, the literal beginning of a New Year always seems like God is giving us permission, even calling us to a spirit of expectancy as to what He might do among us. I hope you feel much the same.

For this year's New Year's sermon, I've chosen to preach a message on some of the paradoxes found in the Bible (mostly in Matthew) and how they call us to live accordingly as Jesus's disciples. (It is helpful to consider, a "Paradox is a *statement or proposition that seems self-contradictory or absurd but in reality, expresses a truth.*") My thinking is that unless we are paradoxically different from the people in the world around us, we can be exhorted to either faithful stewardship or to live out our mission statement, but it will bear little fruit, if any. We must first and continually be transformed in the way we think, in the way we receive and process Life. (Rom. 12:1-2) That is where biblical paradox comes into play.

For example, consider I Corinthians 1:18-25: *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God . . . For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength."* The Corinthians were enamored with "power" and "wisdom" and even though they were followers of Jesus, they still had not learned to let go of their culturally driven views of what was powerful and wise.

Of course, the question remains for us: How "Corinthian-like" are we? How does this paradox challenge, stir, correct, rebuke or encourage us? (2 Tim. 3:16) How will we live truly wise and powerful lives in 2024?

How about one or two more paradoxes? When I was a younger man, I had more of what might be called "ambition," or the need to be appreciated or recognized. Can you relate any?! Jesus's words to His disciples in Matthew 20:20-28 call us to live in a different way. The mother of James and John was busy filling out their resumes as to how they might serve in Jesus's new economy. Surely, they, being such fine young men, should sit at Jesus's right and left in His kingdom. These, of course, were positions of prestige and power. Jesus eventually said to their mother this kind of "promotion" is up the Father, not Him, and, if she wanted her boys to be "great" in the kingdom, they must become slaves/servants. Do you want to be great? It's okay if you do, but we get into trouble with this ambition when we choose the world's definition of greatness.

Then, I will close with what I have always found to be one of Jesus's most ridiculous and impractical teachings: To love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. (Matt.5:44) Surely there must be some way to "interpret" this teaching apart from its simple meaning, because this is not the way the world works. I suppose that is precisely the point. (vs.46-47) But instead, in 2024 and beyond, we are called to reflect the Perfect. (Matt.5:48)

By the time you have read this article, many of you will have heard my message on December 31st. If not, you can always go back to our livestream on *Facebook* or find it on our church's webpage. I hope it encourages you as it did me in my own preparation for preaching it.

So, as we look ahead to the New Year, it is good and appropriate to say in our customary way, "Happy New Year." And I do wish you much happiness in the year ahead. But for those of us with heavy hearts, I would gently say, please, do not lose heart even if you feel like outwardly you are wasting away. (2 Cor. 4:16-18) For, in a paradoxical way (!) I remind you, *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."* (Matt.5:4)

Have a Blessedly Happy New Year!

Oh, Barnabas...

Picture yourself on assignment from God, sent to eastern Europe to encourage the Lord's servants on the front lines. No need to pitch in and work. Just providing your presence as a boost for one of our missionary families during an intensive week in the field.

You can represent CrossWay and serve the Lord at an annual conference. We've made it easier for you: our missions budget for 2023-24 includes an increase in short-term missions support to \$500. Take your pick!

Spend a week in Durrës, Albania, with Tom and Dora

You could encourage this couple by attending the Roma Networks conference, scheduled for April in the heart of Roma ministry territory: Durrës, Albania.



Tom says, "Roma Networks is expanding in numbers of countries, continents, and projects we are involved in. I am simply one representative of this amazing organization. In April we will have a conference of 400 people from Europe, Latin America, and Asia."



Last month, Tom sent an update to CrossWay, sending greetings to "all of YOU, our faithful ministry partners. With the Lord's faithfulness and the people He has put me with, I am expecting a fulfilling and impactful year of ministry in 2024. I count it a privilege to call you my team. This ministry happens by God's grace and your faithfulness to join in prayer, encouragement, and hands-on work. Blessings to you all this holiday season!"

Tom is wearing many hats these days, continuing to lead the five team members for EFCA's ReachGlobal Roma Ministry, tracking partnerships in eight countries with 23 projects; representing the U.S. at the Roma Networks conference in April; and also transitioning within ReachGlobal, joining its Global Equipping—Community Development ministry in order to truly focus on Roma/Banjara/Domari/Gypsy peoples all over the world.



Spend a week in Budapest, Hungary, with Matyas and Kate

You could encourage this couple by attending the annual Hungary Summit, organized as a major outreach activity by the EFCA/ReachGlobal Budapest City Team. Kate and Matyas have sent us an invitation for April 18-22, resuming a tradition that was interrupted in 2020.



Kate recently wrote: "We will meet together in Budapest to learn more about the team, the city, and our vision and be encouraged about how God is at work here. This conference is for mission leaders, supporters, those exploring future involvement in Hungary, and others who might be interested. The Summit offers an opportunity to gain firsthand experience with the ReachBudapest team, our areas of ministry involvement, and Hungarian culture."



The program will include opportunities such as:

- Interaction with ReachBudapest staff and other EFCA ReachGlobal leaders
- Experiences in a variety of local ministry contexts
- Getting to know Hungarian pastors, church planters, and leaders
- Meeting others from US churches involved in Hungary
- Prayer for Budapest on prayer walks around the city
- Worship on Sunday with a local Hungarian church
- Exploration of the city, visits to museums, and cultural experiences

The registration fee is \$350, which includes all meals, ground transportation, admission fees, cultural experiences, and conference materials. Air travel and lodging costs are not included.



Who I am in Christ

from *Living Free in Christ*, by Neil Anderson
copyright 1993, Regal Books

I Am Accepted in Christ

<i>John 1:12</i>	I am God's child
<i>John 15:15</i>	I am God's friend
<i>Romans 5:1</i>	I have been justified
<i>I Corinthians 6:17</i>	I am united with the Lord and one with Him in spirit
<i>I Corinthians 6:20</i>	I have been bought with a price; I belong to God
<i>I Corinthians 12:27</i>	I am a member of Christ's Body
<i>Ephesians 1:1</i>	I am a saint
<i>Ephesians 1:5</i>	I have been adopted as God's child
<i>Ephesians 2:18</i>	I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit
<i>Colossians 1:14</i>	I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins
<i>Colossians 2:10</i>	I am complete in Christ

I Am Secure in Christ

Romans 8:1,2	I am free forever from condemnation
Romans 8:28	I am assured that all things work together for good
Romans 8:33,34	I am free from any condemning charges against me
Romans 8:35	I cannot be separated from the love of God
II Corinthians 1:21	I have been established, anointed, and sealed by God
Colossians 2:3	I am hidden with Christ in God
Philippians 1:6	I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected
Philippians 3:20	I am a citizen of heaven
II Timothy 1:7	I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind
Hebrews 4:16	I can find grace and mercy in time of need
I John 5:18	I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me

I Am Significant in Christ

Matthew 5:13,14	I am the salt and light of the earth
John 15:1,5	I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life
John 15:16	I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit
Acts 1:8	I am a personal witness of Christ's
I Corinthians 3:16	I am God's temple
II Corinthians 5:17-20	I am a minister of reconciliation
II Corinthians 6:1	I am God's coworker
Ephesians 2:6	I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm
Ephesians 2:10	I am God's workmanship
Ephesians 3:12	I may approach God with freedom and confidence
Philippians 4:13	I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me

A new year of ministry
in God's Kingdom
awaits all of us.
Happy New Year!





***Pulling our south wing back
into the 21st century***



***Many hands
make
light work . . .***





Thank you,
Jerry Pretzel,
for the photos!

*How 'bout it,
CrossWay?*



*Ready to go
back to Bethlehem
in 2024?*

