



CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

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Moving ahead

CrossWay's congregation met on Sunday, Jan. 21, to celebrate the Lord's leading over the last several months and take some steps toward keeping us on track for the future.

We heard reports from Pastor Bob Manuel, Elder Board chairman Michael Stevens, and Missions Coordinator Pam Reed. We reviewed elder responsibilities and celebrated Cody Hinkle's leadership of our all-church Evening at Bethlehem two-day event in mid-December.



Elder Bob Johnston leading us through the agenda

We reviewed and approved details of our church finances and discussed some physical needs of our facility, including raising funds toward repaving our parking lot, which needs attention as a result of construction traffic brought on by our remodeling projects of 2020 - 2022.

We also approved volunteers for two temporary committees that will do their work in preparation for decisions to be made at the annual meeting planned for May 2024. Chosen for the Audit Committee are Alvin Alves and Cody Hinkle. They will review the financial processes administered by the church administrative assistant. Elected to the Nominating Committee are Sarah Hinkle and Penny Pullen, who will serve along with the pastor and two elders to propose elders for election.

Elder specialties

Our elders each have taken on a special area of service for CrossWay, and their designations were announced during our business meeting. They are:

- Discipleship: Pastor Bob Manuel
- Education: Michael Stevens (also board chairman)
- Facilities: Bob Johnston
- Finance & Administration: Bob Greenhoe (treasurer)
- Outreach: Scott Montgomery (also board secretary)
- Worship: Jeff Lash
- Service projects: Dennis Veurink & Frank Burt

Each of these elders is listed in the fellowship directory.

'Lent Lite' begins Feb. 18



The Lenten season offers us a special time of fellowship and reflection, as we prepare together to celebrate the Resurrection of our Savior.

We will gather after Sunday worship each week for bread and soup and then for a time of teaching and reflection.

If the weather gets really bad ...

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).

Filling your 'bottle'?

We kicked off the campaign on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in January, but the month of February gives us our best chance of filling the baby bottle banks for the Pregnancy Resource Center. Coins, folding cash, checks — all are welcome ways to donate to this vital ministry. Thank you!



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'
Sat., Feb. 3 • 9^{AM} • Men's breakfast @ Bob Evans
Sat., Feb. 3 • 9^{AM} • Women's breakfast @ Russ's
Sun., Feb. 4 • 11:30^{AM} • All-church prayer meeting
Wed., Feb. 7 • 7^{PM} • Elder meeting
Thurs., Feb. 8 & 22 • 6:30^{PM} • Veurink small group @ Le's
Sun., Feb. 11 • 11:30^{AM} • Sunday School
Sun., Feb. 18 & 25 • 11:30^{AM} • Lent Lite soup and study
Sun., Feb. 25 • Last day to bring PRC 'baby bottle' donations

'Bethlehem' 2024

In the wake of the CrossWay's successful two-night *Evening at Bethlehem* outreach event in December, project director Cody Hinkle is looking forward to 10 months of planning for a reprise during Advent this new year.

Becky Alves has already committed to making a costume each week.

- ▶ Volunteer Coordinator
- ▶ Scheduler
- ▶ Treasurer
- ▶ Outreach
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Improvements



Storage has been offered for the set and supplies, with logistics being planned.

And committees are forming to work steadily, meeting monthly through January 2025. Contact Cody (in the fellowship directory) to volunteer for the following committees and positions:



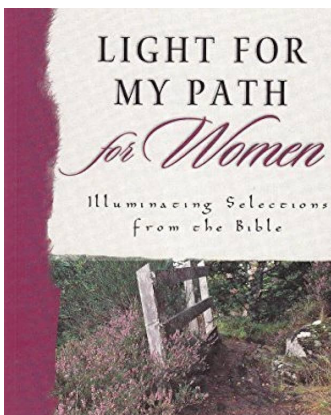
Examining where we stand

Pastor Bob Manuel opened a new Sunday School discussion series in late January, to be explored intermittently in the weeks ahead. (We'll be interrupting for Lent Lite and then for our Easter celebration, but the topics will be our focus for much of the spring.)

Discussion topics will be derived from a declaration by our denomination, the Evangelical Free Church of America, as issued after much discussion in June, 2023.

Pastor Manuel distributed copies of the declaration at the opening session in late January. The text can also be found on the Internet at <https://www.efca.org/where-we-stand-in-the-efca-denials-and-affirmations>.

New to the CrossWay library



From the back cover:
"Have you been seeking the bright daylight of wisdom and understanding? Searching for a beacon of hope and encouragement? Then turn to the one source of pure light, which the psalm writer called 'a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path:' God's Word.

"Especially for women, this book contains hundreds of Bible verses (organized into dozens of topics) that will help define your purpose in life, clarify and strengthen your relationship with others and with God, and provide encouragement and hope for the future."

New this month to the CrossWay library. Look for on the table near the lobby coffee bar.

The document is preceded on the website by the following declaration: "This statement has been approved by the Board of Directors and the Board of Ministerial Standing, the two boards elected by and accountable to the EFCA Conference, and was later affirmed by the District Superintendents." That tracks with the assurance given us by Pastor Manuel that the complex declaration was adopted only after much discussion and wide agreement across the denomination.

Topics addressed include:

- The "Social Justice" Movement
- 'Wokeness' vs. Awakening
- 'Critical Race Theory'
- 'Christian Nationalism'
- Dual citizenship here and Hereafter
- Gender confusion vs. God's design
- Women's place in ministry
- Annihilation vs. Hell

Our elders expect we will have a lively discussion about these topics.

Notably, the declaration closes with this statement: "In sum, the EFCA is neither 'Progressive Evangelical' nor 'Neo-Fundamentalist.' We remain tethered to the text of Scripture and grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as we love God and love others. (Matt. 22: 37-39) As we interact with one another and the world around us, we are committed to convictional kindness – conviction that is grounded in the "*faith that was once for all delivered to the saints*" (Jude 3), and kindness that manifests "*the fruit of the Spirit.*" (Gal. 5: 22-23) We both proclaim the Gospel (Rom. 1:16) and seek to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel. (Phil. 1:27)"



Helping with Hebel

As I write this article, we are two weeks into our new series on the book of Ecclesiastes. As you might recall, the “Preacher” we encounter in Ecclesiastes 1:1 has a favorite word he uses (“Hebel”), which is translated in a variety of ways. In the NIV it is rendered mostly as “meaningless,” which I don’t believe is a good rendering of this word for Ecclesiastes. This is because in the entire book the Preacher is trying to proclaim in his “sermon” what is truly meaningful in life, such as enjoying the simple gifts of God (2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22) and fearing Him and keeping His commandments (5:7; 12:13) — all very “meaningful” things. Let me give us all a little help with Hebel, and a few reminders that will aid us to better digest Ecclesiastes. This is not an easy word or book to understand, but I believe a proper response to this book, as with any book in Scripture, can yield some powerful fruit.

First, I suggest the usage of Hebel in Ecclesiastes is mostly aimed at getting us to move our affections and longings away from this earth alone and any accomplishments or experiences we might have here. This is a bit tricky, but let me try to explain. What is interesting about the author’s use of Hebel is that when he wrote it, the Israelite’s concept of a resurrected after-life was still quite fuzzy. (Job 14:11-14) So, when we read the Preacher talking about the Hebel of “life under the sun,” we must not think so much that he is trying to get us to think about our “heavenly” life in the “here-after.” While I do think early on in Israel’s history, there was a developing belief about an after-life, the only life the Preacher knew of was his life “under the sun” or his life on earth. (8:9, 14) And what he knows about this life is that it is Hebel. Again, instead of the idea of “meaningless,” it seems a better way to understand Hebel in Ecclesiastes is that it means our lives are brief or fleeting. (See Ps. 39:5; 144:4; Prov. 31:30, where Hebel is used.) When I read Psalms like this and the verses in Ecclesiastes, I think of the humorous idea that says, “In every old person you meet, there is

a young person inside who wonders what happened.” Another saying, mostly appreciated by parents with young children: “The days are long, but the years are short.” These are the kinds of ideas conveyed by Hebel in Ecclesiastes. So, in light of this, what kind of life should we live on this earth?

First, as believers this side of the New Covenant, we know there is a resurrection! Life on this earth is still “Hebel” in the sense that it is brief and fleeting, but some of the “sting” of this brief life is muted as we have hope in Jesus and the resurrection He offers. Because of Him, our lives on this earth, as short as they might be, are not in vain. (I Cor. 15:58) Second, we can honestly and without apology “groan” in this world because of its captivity to the effects of the fall and still be faithful and joyful believers. (Romans 8:18-39) We can weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice and do so with intensity precisely because of life as Hebel. Time is short, and we must not be afraid of (or apologetic to feel) the pain of this fallen world. Our empathy for those who are living without the hope of Jesus should be great precisely because of Hebel. Third, and somewhat related, we must know it is okay to be “human.” The brevity and insubstantial qualities of life on this earth are felt not only by “unbelievers” but should honestly be felt by us all.

I often think of what it means for our understanding of what it means to be human when we read that Jesus, the perfect human, was well acquainted with grief. He was a Man of sorrows (Isaiah 53:3) and a Man of great joy! (Hebrews 1:9; 12:2) We must ask for the grace to be both appropriately sorrowful and joyful at the same time. But let us never, God-forbid, be the kind of Christian who feels he must always have answers for life’s pain and put a smile on his face as a witness to others. This kind of witness (though perhaps well-meaning) can often have the opposite effect, driving people away from Jesus rather than closer to Him, as people mistakenly conclude that to be a “believer” means one denies the suffering within and around him or her. Yes, life is Hebel (short, elusive), but our God is eternal, and, by His grace, we share a very non-Hebel everlasting life! (John 5:24)