



December 2024

# CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

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AED-equipped, wheelchair accessible • www.crosswaygr.com • crossway.communitygr@gmail.com

## A most blessed season

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given....” And so, we enter this Advent and Christmas season at CrossWay with new fervor and new opportunities to bless our families, our friends, our neighbors. As the month begins, preparations are already underway for “An Evening at Bethlehem,” CrossWay’s two-day outreach, involving the whole congregation in portraying a marketplace in a tiny town some 2,000+ years ago to give attendees a way of imagining themselves receiving the Good News ... the Very Best News of all time.

And while we look back on that blessed night, let us look forward to our Lord’s Second Coming, another emphasis of the Advent season we celebrate the first four Sundays of this month, when we light the Advent candle together during our worship services. There’s so much for us to celebrate together during this most blessed season.



Just imagine for a moment the conversations that can grow out of this experience. Let us joyfully and prayerfully prepare our own hearts to welcome our neighbors into a memorable and significant experience.



Invite everybody you know to attend “An Evening at Bethlehem” for a blessing!

## Blessing others

Thank you, CrossWay, for beginning the season early again this year by filling shoeboxes with practical and fun gifts for needy children around the world. We’re sending 34 shoeboxes to the Samaritan’s



Purse ministry for their distribution, with Bible resources, through Operation Christmas Child. It’s a great way for CrossWay to reach beyond Grand Rapids and bless children who are so dear to the heart of our Savior.



## Coming Up at CrossWay Community

- Sundays • 9:30<sup>AM</sup> • Prayer, lobby classroom
- Sundays • 10<sup>AM</sup> • Gather for worship together
- Wednesdays • 6:30<sup>PM</sup> • Underhill Club
- Sat., Nov. 30 • 10<sup>AM</sup> • Christmas decorating party
- Sun., Dec. 1 • 11:30<sup>AM</sup> • All church prayer meeting
- Tues., Dec. 3 & 10 • 1<sup>PM</sup> • Ladies Bible Study/Philippians
- Wed., Dec. 4 • 6<sup>PM</sup> • Elder meeting
- Sat., Dec. 7 • 9<sup>AM</sup> • Men’s breakfast @ Bob Evans
- Sat., Dec. 7 • 9<sup>AM</sup> • Women’s breakfast @ Russ’s
- Sun., Dec. 8 • 11:30<sup>AM</sup> • Dress rehearsal for “Bethlehem”
- Thurs., Dec. 12 • 6:30<sup>PM</sup> • Small group @ Le’s
- Fri. & Sat., Dec. 13 & 14 • 6:30<sup>PM</sup> • *An Evening at Bethlehem*
- Wed., Dec. 25 • *Merry Christmas!*

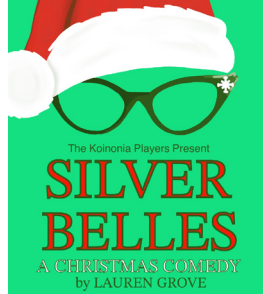


# When the Weather Outside is Frightful

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](http://www.woodtv.com/weather/closings)) and on WCSG Radio, 91.3 FM ([secure.wcsg.org/closings](http://secure.wcsg.org/closings)).

## December delights

Besides your very own visit to Bethlehem, there's the fun of watching Caleb Ward perform in the Koinonia Players' production of *Silver Belles: A Christmas Comedy*, Friday, Dec. 13, at 7 p.m. or Saturday, Dec. 14 at both 2 and 7 p.m. at Orchard View Church of God, 2777 Leffingwell Ave. NE, Grand Rapids. Tickets \$8 at the door.



## A refreshing day at CrossWay

Our Sunday worshippers had the privilege in October of witnessing baptisms during our worship service.

At right, Pastor Manuel drapes joyous Sharon Robinson with a shawl after he and elder Michael Stevens administered the sacrament.



*Our harvest potluck ... a wonderful opportunity to relax together.*

*And it's never complete until the dishes are done! Thanks, Mike Batson!*

## Make it a point to invite friends



If you attended last year — or if you are part of the cast — you know what a moving event we are offering as a special Christmas celebration. *An Evening in Bethlehem* is

all set for prime time — Friday, Dec. 13, and Saturday, Dec. 14, here at CrossWay in the lobby, sanctuary and south wing. Though offered from 6:30 to 9 p.m., the tour takes just 20 - 25 minutes and welcomes visitors to a Bethlehem marketplace, culminating in a “visit to the manger.” Meet a Roman centurion, a Jewish rabbi, a woman at a well, grape stompers, and sellers of a variety of goods on your way to the stable.

Before the event, **take action!** Invite your friends: If you can, go to [facebook.com/crosswaygr](https://www.facebook.com/crosswaygr) and find the evening in Bethlehem event, like it, and mark yourself as going. This will help lots of other people see the event and see that you were going. It will share the event with your “friends” list. The more activity (likes, shares) *Facebook* sees on our Crossway church page and on the Evening in Bethlehem event page, the more relevant it will rate that content and the more feeds it will put that content into. We have to feed the algorithm! So share as much as you can. Get your friends to like and share!

If you see threads on other people's *Facebook* pages talking about free events or looking for things to do with their family, leave a comment on that thread and link to our events page on our church's *Facebook* page. Help spread the word in the comments sections of other people's pages. And come up with even more ways to invite people. It's an outreach event, after all!





## Some Advent Reflections

I've had the privilege once again of doing sermon preparation over Advent themes. Traditionally, the four main themes of Advent are Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace.

In some respects, all of life is lived in Advent tension. That is, we experience the Advent of Jesus as Already-Not Yet. The Kingdom has come because the King has come (Luke 17:20-21), yet the Kingdom is not-yet come in its fullness. (Acts 1:6; Matt. 6:10)

One writer said it this way: "In one sense, the whole of the Old Testament is text for Advent: the creation of the world and the fall of humankind, the choosing of one family to bless all families and one nation to bless all nations, the exodus of that nation from captivity, the giving of the law and settling of the land, the choosing of kings and building of a temple, the sins of the people and cries of the prophets, the exile in Babylon and the return to live under Persians, then Greeks, then Romans, and the long, long wait for the One anointed to come and deliver. This is the history — the story — that leads up to Jesus." (Bobby Gross: *Living the Christian Year*, pp. 42-43)

This already-not-yet aspect of Advent shapes our hope, love, joy, and peace. There is always an already-not-yet aspect to them. Our hopes are mixed and dashed. Our love is mixed and at times unrequited. Our joys can be so very real, yet so elusive and short-lived. And the peace we know, both internally and externally, gets routinely interrupted.

In Advent then, we are given permission to both sing and to groan. We sing because the King has come. We groan because He has not yet come in His fullness.

I will close this brief piece with some Advent themes that I found in Jeremiah 29. Specifically, how do we express our Advent hope, love, joy, and peace today? Apart from the famous verse 11 ("I know the plans I have for you . . ."), verse 5 ("plant") and verse 7 ("pray") are the two operative words for us in order

to live in Advent hope, love, joy, and peace. I trust you will take time to read the context of Jeremiah 29, but the people who received this letter from Jeremiah were exiles from Jerusalem, deported to Babylon. They were not where they wanted to be. To make matters worse, false prophets kept spreading lies that they would not be in Babylon long. (Jer. 29:8, 21-23) God, on the contrary, told them they would live as exiles there for 70 years. (29:10)

So, what were these exiles to do? God answers this question rather clearly: "*This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city in which I have carried you into exile. . . [and] Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.'*" (Jer. 29:4-7)

I see these two words of planting and praying as corresponding roughly to the already (so plant) and not-yet (so pray) tension of Advent. We have permission to sing (plant, build, invest in your life upon this earth now). Yet, we also have permission to pray, that is, to groan. Our groans are most healthily directed to God in prayer, for along with the whole of creation, we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies." (Rom. 8:23)

So, for Advent, I suggest we express our advent hopes, loves, joys, and peace in the now of "planting" and the "not-yet" of "praying," leaving the outcome of the tensions we feel in the hands of our Good God.





## Blessing our frontline workers

Our Missions Steering Committee gets together each Spring to arrive at a budget request to present to our Board of Elders as one way that we can take part in obeying Jesus's Great Commission together. We estimate the likely total budget and pray about the portion that we suggest for this purpose. And we look at the individual situations of our various missionaries, evaluating our levels of monthly support for each, and we consider other expenditures that would likely advance our "mission" as the Missions Committee. That's how we build our budget request.

During the year, we seek to bring you information about the work CrossWay is doing through the handful of Gospel workers that represent our Savior abroad. When possible, we host their presentations so that you can get to meet them for yourself. Perhaps their stories have inspired you personally and you've decided you'd like to partner with CrossWay and donate to these dear ones yourself.

As we near the close of the year, our Missions Committee is herein sharing with you contact information for a few of them to facilitate your individual donations:



You're welcome to add to CrossWay's support for the Kondors.  
Write tax-deductible checks to  
EFCA - ReachGlobal / attn: Donor Services  
901 East 78<sup>th</sup> Street  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55420  
(with "gift designation #2348 — Kondors" on the memo line)

You're welcome to add to CrossWay's support for the Beckers.

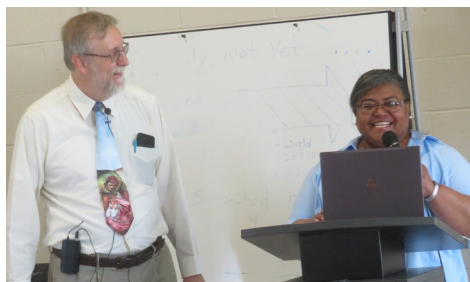
Write tax-deductible checks to  
EFCA - ReachGlobal / attn: Donor Services  
901 East 78<sup>th</sup> Street  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55420  
(with "gift designation gift designation #1063 — Beckers" on the memo line)



You're welcome to add to CrossWay's support for the Andersons.  
Write tax-deductible checks to  
EFCA - ReachGlobal / attn: Donor Services  
901 East 78<sup>th</sup> Street  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55420  
(with "gift designation #1350 — Andersons" on the memo line)

You're welcome to add to CrossWay's support for the Greenhoses.

Write tax-deductible checks to  
Teach Beyond  
PO Box 610  
Downers Grove, IL 60515  
(with "Mike & Kari Greenhoe" on the memo line)



You're welcome to add to CrossWay's support for the Olsons.  
Write tax-deductible checks to  
Ripe for Harvest  
PO Box 487  
Monument, Colorado 80132  
(with "M. Olson"  
on the memo line)