



January 2025 AD

CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

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

Meeting to reflect and prepare

Sunday, Jan. 19, is the date set for our semi-annual congregational meeting, to convene in the sanctuary shortly after our worship service adjourns.

Members will hear reports from various elders and ministry leaders, and elections will be held for the nominating committee and the audit committee, both scheduled to report at the May business meeting.

Those who have joined the church are encouraged to participate; those who worship with us but have not taken up membership are invited to attend but will not be included in any voting.

Elder assignments

Our church board members have taken on these leadership roles in serving our congregation:

- Church chairman: Scott Montgomery
- Vice chairman: Michael Stevens
- Secretary: Bob Johnston
- Treasurer: Jeff Lash
- Worship: Jeff Lash
- Discipleship/Christian Ed: Scott Montgomery
- Facilities: Bob Johnston
- Missions: Michael Stevens
- Local Outreach: Pastor Bob Manuel
- Hospitality/Care: Dennis Veurink & Frank Burt
- Technology/Media: Wendell Gafford

Contact information for each of these leaders can be found in the church's pictorial fellowship directory.

We are so thankful for the ongoing recovery of our Pastor Bob!



January is for the babies & moms

January is Sanctity of Human Life month, and at CrossWay, we will, mid-month, kick off our annual baby-bottle cash bank fundraising drive for the Pregnancy Center.

Watch for the bottles to appear in the narthex, take one (or more) home and fill them with change, dollar bills, checks — however you wish to gather your contribution to aid ministry to distressed and pressured pregnant moms.



Are you listed?

If you consider yourself to be in fellowship with CrossWay but you are “too new” to be found in our fellowship directory, please see Jeff Lash about getting your photo and contact information listed. We want to get to know you and be able to contact you!

Coming Up at CrossWay Community

- Sundays • 9:30^{AM} • Prayer, lobby classroom
- Sundays • 10^{AM} • Gather for worship together
- Tuesdays • 1^{PM} • Ladies Bible Study/Philippians
- Wednesdays • 6:30^{PM} • Underhill Club
- Sat., Jan. 4 • 9^{AM} • Men's breakfast @ Bob Evans
- Sat., Jan. 4 • 9^{AM} • Women's breakfast @ Russ's
- Sun., Jan. 5 • 11:30^{AM} • All church prayer meeting
- Wed., Jan. 8 • 6^{PM} • Elder meeting
- Thurs., Jan. 9 & 23 • 6:30^{PM} • Small group @ Le's
- Sat., Jan. 11 • 10^{AM} • Christmas de-decorating party
- Sun., Jan. 12 & 26 • 11:30^{AM} • Adult Sunday School
- Sun., Jan. 19 • 11:30^{AM} • Semi-annual congregational meeting



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).

Did you “go” to Bethlehem?



We opened our doors to our neighbors, and they came to “An Evening in Bethlehem” for entertainment — and for inspiration.



Including special guests all the way from Hungary! Here are their comments:

The Evening at Bethlehem was EXCELLENT! Thank you for the details so that we could attend. The church members really brought their best, it was excellent to see. Hope you all have a rich turn out on Christmas Eve because of this outreach to the community!

Blessings!

Kate K.

EFCA - Reach Global: Budapest City Team



Will he or won't he? Let us pray ...

President-elect Trump is widely expected to issue a clump of pardons once he has taken the oath of office on Jan. 20.

Focus on the Family's *Daily Citizen* has noted two jailed pro-life protestors who could certainly be candidates for such clemency. Sadly, there are several others.

“Paul Vaughn, father of 11, was sentenced on July 2 to three years of supervised release for his role in a protest at an abortion clinic in Nashville,” reports *Daily Citizen*, quoting a writer in the *Washington Times*. “Judge Aleta Trauger’s lenient sentencing means Vaughn will avoid prison time” His conviction for a constitutionally protected act stands, though, on his record.

Worse yet is this reprint from the *Daily Citizen*:

“Pro-lifer Cal Zastrow has been sentenced to six months in prison over his participation in a peaceful protest at a Tennessee abortion facility March 2021,” the *Daily Wire* reports.

“Zastrow was sentenced by Judge Aleta Trauger ... in federal court in Nashville. Trauger sentenced him to 6 months in prison and 3 years of supervised release. She did not impose a fine on him. He must self-report by Oct. 1.

“When given a chance to speak, Zastrow spoke of his Christian faith and how it drove him to advocate for unborn babies. He said he tried to live his life ‘under the Lordship of Jesus Christ’ and that ‘children are a blessing from God.’”



For the Pastor

by Michael Stevens

If I were to say to you that poetry is essential for understanding our existence within the created order, you might well raise an eyebrow and respond by telling me, “I’ve gone through life just fine without recourse to the poetic muse — except for those three or four traumatic weeks in high school English classes when the dreaded ‘poetry unit’ descended upon us!”

Well, I could (and likely would) try to persuade you that there is something within the human consciousness that longs to take universal ideas and make them concrete in language. (That’s the best definition of poetry I know of — to take a vast existential concept, and to express through image, rhythm, and all the other possibilities within language something intelligible, even tangible.)

I could (and definitely would) try to unpack the richness of the sounds of poetry (which is meant to be read aloud and heard) and the wondrous metrical variations, the music within the words and phrases, that brings delight to mind and soul and body, like:

“As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each
hung bell’s
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its
name.” (Thank you, Gerard Manley Hopkins!)

But don’t just take my clearly biased and possibly wild-eyed word for it — God Himself is also a massive fan of poetry.

After all, about one-third of the Old Testament is poetry, a huge chunk of God’s revelation to us — and not just the obvious books of wisdom literature, like Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, but also large chunks of the Major and Minor Prophets, with poems and songs scattered throughout the history books and the Pentateuch as well.

From the Professor’s Pen

It turns out that only five books of the Old Testament — Leviticus, Ruth, Ezra, Haggai, and Malachi — have no poetic elements. God has chosen to use rhythmic language (though in Hebrew poetry the rhythm is more structural than sonic), metaphor and imagery, rich figures of speech which are vivid with emotion and nuance, like the opening verses of Psalm 42:

*“As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet God?
My tears have been my food day and night,
while men say to me all day long,
‘Where is your God?’”*

Or the lament in Isaiah 9:18

*“Surely wickedness burns like a fire;
it consumes briars and thorns,
it sets the forest thickets ablaze ...”*

And a thousand other such examples.

Why does God communicate to us like this — why not just declarative phrases to instruct us step-by-step how to live and how to respond to Him?

Well, He made us with imaginations, with a sense that many of the most important aspects of life are allusive and mysterious. That’s what it means to be human, to be God’s image-bearers — that we have a poetic relationship to existence.

So, read a poem (one of Shakespeare’s sonnets?) or, better yet, a Psalm or chapter of Job or one of the prophetic sequences in the Bible, and let your whole self respond to this life-enriching, even life-sustaining mode of communication.



Merry Christmas, CrossWay

What a delight to find in the mailbox last month a Christmas card from a retired ReachGlobal missionary, at one time supported by CrossWay (back when we were 1st Evangelical Free Church of Grand Rapids). Indeed, she addressed the card thusly and sent it to our old address on East Paris. Blessedly, the Post Office made sure it found its way to our congregation anyway. It turns out that our long-time missionaries Keith and Judy A. have memories of driving to 1st E-Free together with the Colbys and have long enjoyed this dear one's prayer support over the years. Here's her note to you:

*"Dear Friends at First EFC in Grand Rapids,
Thank you for your loving prayer and financial support during our 35 years with ReachGlobal. Now at 85, I live with my daughter Becky in Illinois. I still love every opportunity I get to help others get to know and grow in Christ and I hope to get my autobiography published in 2025. Its title is True Tales from Mama Tabita.
...May you keep on experiencing God's love among yourselves and His guidance and blessings galore as you reach out to others. Love in Christ, Norma Colby"*

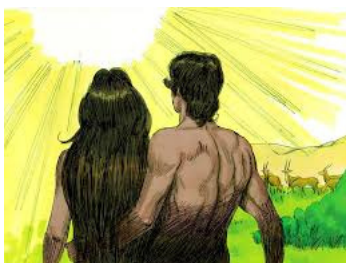
CrossWay Missions Coordinator Pam Reed called her to complete the connection and found her to be still going strong. She and her late husband served principally in the Democratic Republic of Congo and a few other African mission fields. Thought you'd like to know you are remembered and loved!

Taking our mission personally

When Pam Reed became Missions Coordinator at CrossWay, she had spent months in conversation, prayer, and reading God's Word in preparation. During this year, she will share with *Current* readers some of the insights and understanding she gained then and over the years that initiated her answering the call and have kept her motivated to coordinate the many ways we engage in missions as a congregation. Perhaps you, too, will find a calling to advance God's mission here on earth:

"God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over ... every living creature ...'" — Genesis 1:28

When you think about it, you can see God's intention was for Adam and Eve and all who came after them to be His managers of all activity on earth. And, since they were made in His image, we can guess that He desired then (and still desires today) for them (and us) to be His representatives.



He expects us to reflect His character to the world around us, as there are many who do not own the treasure of His Word and live only according to their "own truth."

Here's a challenge for this month: What "mission" has He called you to? As you bear His image, what's the work He has

designed for you ... something that just might not get done if you don't do it?

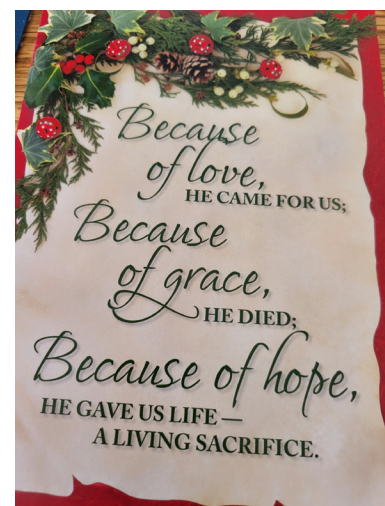
Opportunity to bless



Meet Manojo and his family. Manojo is a Banjara (gypsy) pastor in Mumbai, India, with whom our ReachGlobal frontline worker Tom is engaged in establishing house churches in the slums. Manojo grew up in the slums with an alcoholic father and had to start work at 10 years old to help the family survive. He still struggles to provide for his own family, but he is following God's will to spread the Gospel and has started multiple house churches.

Tom has found that, by establishing tea shops (at the cost of just \$6,000) men like Manojo can make enough money to sustain their families and hire two others who can, in turn, support their families. These shops are typically sited at busy intersections, and each generates enough income for three families to move out of the slums; these families then work together to plant a church.

Please pray with Tom and his team for new funding that facilitates bringing the Gospel to this dark corner of the world.



A prayer

by Pam Reed

Our heavenly Father, Creator of the universe and everything within it —
Nothing exists but that You called it into being —
Even Your Name is holy.

We long to see You bring Your Kingdom throughout the earth.

We long to play our part by doing Your will —
Show us Your will, Lord, so that we can obey You and do our part
to conform the deeds throughout the earth
to the glorious way all things are done in Heaven.

Even today, Lord, we long to serve You —
our Great Provider, give us all we need to be able to serve You well —
and forgive us when we stray from the path you have us on toward holiness
by wronging those around us.

Give us hearts to forgive those who wrong us
so that we do not add to the strife of the world by holding personal grudges.

At the same time, Lord, we acknowledge that we are weak
and are often distracted by the ways of this world,
failing in big and small ways to please You
by giving in to those around us who don't yet know You.

Keep us as our Good Shepherd, Lord,
from falling into pits designed by our enemy
to trap us into doing his will instead of Yours.

We give You all the honor, Lord Jesus.
After all, it's Your Kingdom in which we live,
and we give You all the glory
as we yield to Your power.

May it ever be so.

Amen.

