



CrossWay Community Current

an Evangelical Free Church

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

Looking back, going forward



The CrossWay congregation sat for our semi-annual business meeting on Jan. 26, led by elder board chairman Scott Montgomery. We rejoiced to hear from our pastor, Bob Manuel, who is beginning to resume his duties while recuperating from heart surgery.

We received reports from the worship team (Annie Lash & Jocelyn Ostoich), our missions coordinator (Pam Reed), radio ministry leader (Mark Mohr) and our buildings-and-grounds elder (Bob Johnston). Church treasurer Jeff Lash went painstakingly through the financial reports, taking notes and answering questions.

In preparation for our annual meeting in May, the congregation elected Alvin Alves and Penny Pullen as congregation representatives on the elder-board nominating committee, and elected Alison Kane and Annie Lash as the audit committee.

EFCA crisis response in LA

Wildfires in the Greater Los Angeles area have severely impacted several churches and communities, and left many suffering, grieving and homeless.

ReachGlobal Crisis Response, in partnership with EFCA West, is in the early stages of a response to support those affected by the wildfires in Los Angeles County. Crisis Response staff has contacted local church leaders to assess needs and gather resources to support immediate and long-term responses in the affected communities. Although no EFCA churches are currently in an evacuation area, many have lost power — with some located within five miles of the wildfires — and many have congregants who've lost their homes.

Help us share the love of Christ with those in need during this crisis. Your financial gifts will help sustain a Crisis Response ministry presence alongside local partners and homeowners as they recover. (Goal: \$200,000) Please mail a check with "Los Angeles Wildfire Response 21709-38473" in the memo line to:

EFCA
901 E 78th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55420



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).

Building a culture of Life

We started our collection on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday (Jan. 19), and we'll be saving our coins, bills and checks till Feb. 23, using baby bottles as banks for donation to the Pregnancy Resource Center of Grand Rapids (PRC).

The aim: to aid pregnant moms in distress and to introduce them to the life-saving grace of Jesus Christ, saving the lives of innocent developing babies in the process!

In 2024, 287 babies were saved from abortion at PRC, and 64 women in need found salvation in Christ. The Lord blesses the gifts we bring and uses them for Life, here and through eternity. Hallelujah!

Talent welcome

Want to share your musical, art or writing talent? Contact Annie Lash for our coffeehouse March 14. Find her in the fellowship directory.

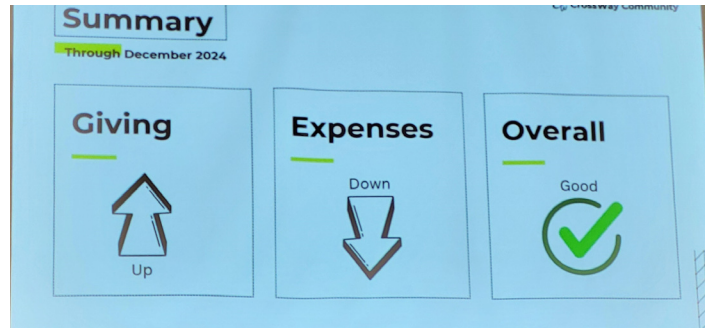
Coming Up at CrossWay Community

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., Feb. 1 • 9^{AM} • Men's breakfast @ Bob Evans
Sat., Feb. 1 • 9^{AM} • Women's breakfast @ Russ's
Sun., Feb. 2 • 11:30^{AM} • All church prayer meeting
Wed., Feb. 5 • 6^{PM} • Elder meeting
Thurs., Feb. 6 & 20 • 6:30^{PM} • Small group @ Le's
Sun., Feb. 2, 16, 23 • 11:30^{AM} • Adult Sunday School
Sun., Feb. 23 • Deadline for Baby Bottle Donations

At our semi-annual congregation meeting ...



Treasurer Jeff Lash brings good news



The congregation welcomes investing reserved cash to steward resources

Investment

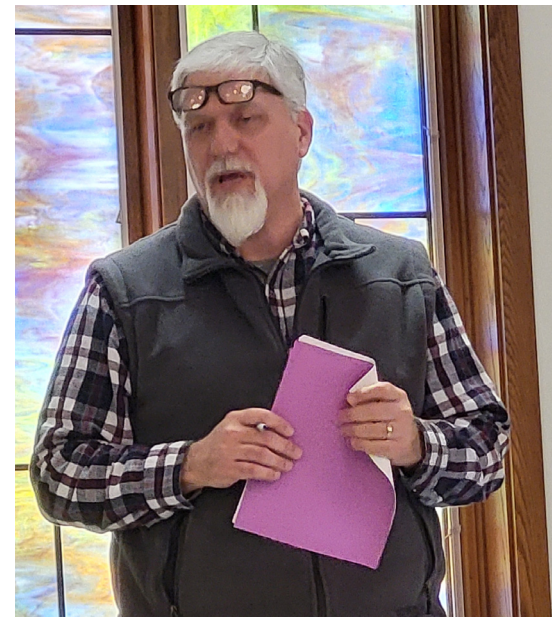
Proposal: To invest up to \$50,000 in an interest-bearing account.

Reason: To be good stewards of the resources that we have been given and to help fund future ministry.

Initial Idea:

- 01. Short-term**
Place up to 50k in one or more CD's at Chase Bank (our current bank).
- 02. Longer-term**
Research other investment options that would help us fund future ministry. (ex: Christian Investors Financial)

Elder Bob Johnston reports on the church's building & grounds



Rachel & Mark Mohr make it official ... CrossWay's newest members



We Need Each Other or The Beauty of the Body

you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (I Cor. 12:21-23, 26-27)

One big teaching from this passage is that we do not exist on our own. We cannot and in fact do not exist on our own. That’s not how God has built the church, the Body of Christ. I love Paul’s use of sanctified humor that gets this point across: *“If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?”* (I Cor. 12:17)

Let me say it again, we ALWAYS need one another in the Body of Christ. It is reality because it is the way God has constructed the Body. Along these lines, perhaps the main “lesson” I have been learning along the way that might be of help to you is this: An active bent that suggests “I don’t need you” or “I can do it myself” is not a sign of strength but of pride and weakness. We are told, *“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”* (I Peter 4:5) I want us all to be in a place where we can experience the favor, the grace of God. The way to do that is to humble ourselves before Him.

One of the most painful yet refreshing reminders this surgery and ongoing recovery have brought is that I am unfortunately too often a proud man. Yes, I realize there are good and healthy expressions of pride, as in, “take pride in your work,” but that’s not the kind of pride I’m talking about. That I am too proud has been a painful reminder because it shows my “Corinthian” bent that I often think I can exist on my own. I can’t.

It has been a refreshing reminder because I have been learning (once again!) how much I need others, how much I need you. As I am learning to submit to this reminder, my family and I have been receiving the love of Christ through you, which, by the way, is the most powerful “apologetic” for the Christian faith we can give a watching and dying world. (John 13:35)

My suggestion is we don’t have to wait for a big crisis to live in such a way that unashamedly says, “I need you.” This is the way of grace in which Jesus invites us to live. There! Say it and gladly live it: “We need each other.”

At our Jan. 19th congregational meeting, I mentioned to you that I am a better giver than a receiver. I’d rather be helping people than being helped. As you are aware, my family and I, because of my Dec. 12th surgery and subsequent recovery, have been for many weeks on the receiving end. We are SO thankful for this body and could not have gotten this far without you. We truly have been moved to want to obey Paul’s words in Romans 13:8: *“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another.”*

When I mentioned above that I am a “better giver than a receiver,” I hope you do not misunderstand. I was poking a bit of fun at myself by way of confession: I like to be in control of my life. I think it is human nature. At the very least, our culture (secular and “Christian”) tells us to be “strong,” to say, think and feel like the little train: “I think I can.” Except when you can’t. Except when you need other people. And, I would also suggest, as the main point of this article, we ALWAYS need each other.

That is the beauty and reality of the Body of Christ. It’s hard to always see or acknowledge this because at certain times in our lives, it is not so apparent we need each other. And not only the “strong” seasons of life, but, in our pride, we don’t easily admit we need other people. Oh, what a beautiful reminder this surgery has brought to me, how much I need my friends in this Body of Christ!

Scripture alerts us to our need of each other in so many places. For example, we read, *“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’ On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty. . . . If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now*

Taking our mission personally

“The LORD had said to Abram... ‘I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’ — Genesis 12:1-3

God chose one man from whom He formed a nation, and He established that nation to be a birthplace for His Gospel.

It was Abram’s faith and obedience that began an organized recognition of our Creator as God Almighty. What would it



have meant for the future of the world if Abram had scoffed at God? Instead, he gave up his home and took a journey without a clear vision of where he was going or what it would come to mean.

What is God calling you to do that

asks you to step out in faith? Is He asking you to leave your home and even your family? Or is it something else, like taking advantage of the information age we live in and following the geopolitical shifts in some obscure nation overseas where Christians are struggling to bring the Good News? What might that look like as a missions project? It could be as simple as connecting with a CrossWay missionary and asking to receive email updates so that you know how to pray, and then committing to that prayer ministry. If this looks like something you could fit into your week, ask Missions Coordinator Pam Reed to help you make that connection.

Update on Cuba



In November, many of us sent Christmas cards to Maridilegnis Caraballo and her family in Cuba, unable to obtain an address for her imprisoned husband Pastor Lorenzo Rosales Fajardo. Unfortunately, those who put their return address on the card have probably received them back with a sticker indicating that mail service has been suspended. It appears that is true for the Communist nation as a whole, since the label was applied by USPS. Though we cannot communicate with this family to offer our comfort in their distress, we can continue to lift them up to our faithful God, Who is always available and never refuses our messages!

Persecution comes in many forms

In India, attacks against Christians tend to ramp up at Christmas. Recently, a small group of Christian women were assaulted, threatened, tied to a log, and arrested — simply for distributing cakes to families in celebration of the Christmas season.

Please pray for the safety of Christian families in states with anti-conversion laws in India. Pray, too, for the powerful love of Jesus to break down the bondages of fear created by false teachings and idol worship so that many lives will be transformed in 2025. — Mission India

Update for CrossWay



We hadn’t heard from Keith and Judy A. lately, so I asked Keith to provide some notes for this issue of the *Current*. Seems there’s been a lot going on in their lives: “How thankful we are for the body of Christ! Quite often, when churches and individuals pray for us, there may not be much awareness of what’s happening in our lives at that moment. However, I believe the prayers of many were instrumental in God working in our lives and the life of our extended family needed recently. Let me explain.

“The final six weeks of 2024 brought a constellation of family events that stretched us. Four days after a wonderful family thanksgiving in Dubuque, my (Keith’s) mom suffered a massive stroke and passed into glory seven hours later. My dad followed her 25 days later. We had no clue at our family Thanksgiving in Dubuque that December would be their homegoing. They were both doing so well on December 1st! Sandwiched between those unexpected events was a wonderful celebration: Judy and I traveled to the Philippines (Dec. 4-20) to celebrate the February 2024 wedding of our youngest son. His wife’s family was not able to travel to the US last year. God’s presence and strength were with us.

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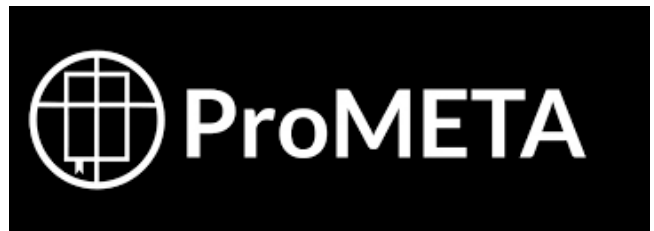
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“My mom’s funeral was on Dec. 28th and my dad’s will be on June 14th, what would have been their 78th wedding anniversary date. As difficult as it was to manage the emotional highs and lows of the month, those days were full of God’s continual presence, love and blessing. Among the many wonderful ‘take- aways’ during that stretch, here are a few: God is always good, our hope is real and eternal, God’s grace is sufficient, God listens to our prayer (the timing of the answer is His), godly joy runs deep, and God’s continual presence is precious. Throughout those difficult days, it was also good to join siblings and family before God’s throne! We press on in prayer! (Romans 8:26; Col. 4:2)

“Speaking of prayer, Dr. Sepulveda and family are facing a barrier that needs prayer. More than three years ago, Dr. Sepulveda assumed my (Keith’s) role as director of ProMETA (the online seminary we created 25 years ago). The family received a letter on Saturday, Jan. 18th stating that their visa application for a work visa was denied. As of midnight, their visa extension would expire (a surprise to them). Please pray that God would give them favor in the eyes of the Canadian Immigration authorities. They have been given 90 days to be in Canada and will use that time to appeal the decision. If their appeal is denied, they plan on returning to Ecuador.

“Along with the difficult news items, there are some very encouraging and joyful news bytes! In February, by the grace of God, ProMETA’s first term of 2025 will launch. All master’s and doctoral programs are finally fully accredited! It will take some time for students to learn the new accreditation system, but we praise God for this wonderful achievement. These innovative programs require that to graduate, each student must demonstrate competency in academic knowledge, ministry skills, and spiritual maturity. Each student will be mentored by a seasoned and trained mentor for each area. This is a game changer! There are 144 students enrolled as of two weeks ago, so the final enrollment numbers are yet to be determined. Of the enrolled group, 23 are doctoral students. God is good!

“On February 21st ProMETA will have a graduation celebration from Costa Rica. Most students will participate virtually from their own countries. No final count yet on the number of graduates, but it should be between 30 and 40. Judy and I will be in Costa Rica from February 18 – 25 for the celebration.



“Please pray for a trip I (Keith) will take to Brazil for Latin American leadership meetings (March 27-April 1). The academic dean of ProMETA and I will be part of a group that will address the topic of biblical transformation through theological education. This will have huge application in their local organizations. Leaders from Cuba, Venezuela, Brazil, Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and the US will be engaged. This ReachGlobal event focuses on regional church leaders.



“Also pray for my next trip to Cuba. The government on the island has unexpectedly made it more difficult to receive a religious visa which would allow me and the others to teach publicly. This shift is inexplicable. I’ve had to cancel Cuba trips twice in the last year. Pray that the trip will be possible in the near future. We are working on it.

“Thank you for your continued partnership over the years. I look forward to visiting CrossWay with Javier when he is able to leave Canada! God bless you as you serve the cause of Christ around the world!”

Keith and Judy A.



You’re welcome to add to CrossWay’s support for this faithful couple.

Write tax-deductible checks to

EFCA - ReachGlobal / attn: Donor Services

901 East 78th Street

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55420

(with “gift designation #1350” on the memo line)

To join Keith & Judy’s communication and prayer support team, please see Missions Coordinator Pam Reed

One in eight

excerpts from Ben Johnson's report published January 10, 2025, by The Washington Stand

One in every eight Christians around the world faces persecution, ranging from imprisonment and censorship to extra-judicial and government-sanctioned martyrdom, according to a new report.



cuted because of their faith in Jesus. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are beaten, imprisoned, and even killed for their faith,” said the International Christian Concern’s (ICC) 2025 Global Persecution Index, released last Friday, which documents instances of governments

“Each year, an estimated 300 million Christians around the world are perse-

denying rights to a share of the world’s estimated 2.38 billion Christians. “In many countries, it is illegal for them to share the Gospel. ...”

Four of the five deadliest nations for Christians are in sub-Saharan Africa, according to [Global Christian Relief (GCR): Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and Ethiopia. The ICC report’s red list also included Somalia and Eritrea, the Marxist dictatorship of North Korea, as well as Pakistan and Afghanistan, now dominated by the Taliban (but excluded Ethiopia).

The world’s two most populous nations, China and India, fall just below the worst level of persecution, making ICC’s orange list, with Iran and Saudi Arabia. ICC’s yellow list includes Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russia, and Vietnam.

... Christians face the greatest persecution in Africa’s Sahel region: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal. ... “Nigeria is the most dangerous place on earth for Christians, where they face the most intense violence,” said Isaac Six, senior director of advocacy for Global Christian Relief, on “Washington Watch” Wednesday. ... “The stories coming out of Nigeria are almost unimaginable. And I think if the American church heard some of these stories on a regular basis, they would be shocked,” said Six. He highlighted the story of a Nigerian woman kidnapped by the Islamist fundamentalist terrorist group Boko Haram. “Four of her sons were executed in front of her as soon as she was taken captive. Then she spent another year and a half in captivity [before she] finally escaped and had nothing at all,” said Six. “One of the pastors we support there found her. We were able to provide her with a new home to live in, to be reunited with her children. We helped her start a new business and basically start her life again and get back on her feet.” ...

Property crimes are a key concern in India, which topped GCR’s list for targeted attacks on Christian property with 4,949 attacks. The ancient Christian community in the region of Kerala believe the Apostle Thomas planted the Christian faith during his apostolic ministry in the first century. But today, the Malankara Orthodox Church and Syro-Malabar Catholic Church face targeted assaults. “This isn’t just random violence. Persecutors use violence to drive out Christians to take control and capture the culture in some of these countries,” said Six. “This is a decade of systematic, planned, organized occupation of some Christian areas. And it’s now at the point where every single rung of civil society and government is armed against impoverished Christian communities,” which “have no recourse.” ...

“From China, which has refined and exported this belief around the world, to Nicaragua, where the Catholic church is viewed as a political enemy of the state, dictators everywhere appear to be increasing their focus on controlling religion or eliminating Christianity altogether,” noted the ICC report. In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas’ “communist government increasingly surveils, detains, and forces Christian leaders into exile.” Communist nations of concern to ICC include China, North Korea, Nicaragua, and Vietnam. ...

Eritrea meets at the crossroads of Islamist extremism and socialist persecution. Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki’s People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) “represents a radical left-leaning nationalist ideology that is completely closed to civil liberties and political rights,” said the ICC report. ...

This report is quite lengthy but gives us a lot of fodder to inform our prayers. You can read the whole piece at <https://washingtonstand.com/news/1-in-8-christians-worldwide-is-persecuted-because-of-faith-in-jesus-report> .