

Our Purpose: Why Do We Exist as a Church?

WHY DOES CROSSWAY MILWAUKEE EXIST?

Our Mission: *To make maturing followers of Jesus by the power of the gospel.*

God and Man. In the beginning God created all things very good; man and woman dwelt with God in perfect harmony. However, sin quickly destroyed that, as man rejected God as King and therefore deserved God's judgment. Since God is holy and just, he would remain righteous if he condemned all sinners to eternal damnation. But in his kindness, he had other plans: a plan to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory, and a plan to redeem a people for his own possession (Ex 19:1-6; Hab 2:14; Rom 3:23; 6:23; 2 Thess 1:9).

God's Plan of Redemption & Renewal. God's plan to spread his glory and save a people come together and intersect in the gospel. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took on flesh and died in the place of sinners, taking their punishment and reconciling back to God all who trust in Jesus and worship him as king. This salvation is offered to people of every tribe and tongue: by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But this initial redemption is not the end of the story. God intends to bring ongoing renewal to His people during their pilgrimage on earth (Rom 12:1-2; 2 Cor 4:6, 16; Col 2:13; 3:10).

The Church. This mission of God – to spread his glory, redeem a people for himself, and renew them – could easily be accomplished by God alone. But God has chosen to accomplish his plan through his people, the church. This means, God's plan to redeem the lost, and to bring ongoing renewal to his people, flows through the life and ministry of local churches; and these churches display God's very glory in the world! Our identity as a church, therefore, is specifically that of a redeemed people called and caught up into God's mission. His mission precedes ours; and our mission exists only as an extension of his. Our mission is God's mission (Eph 3:10; 5:25-32; Mt 16:18).

Therefore, we must not think too little of the local church and how God intends to serve, empower and use her in His plan. We expect its members, and the world around us, to be impacted through us. On the other hand, it is wonderful to know that God's plan doesn't ultimately depend on us, and we must avoid taking ourselves too seriously or thinking too highly of ourselves. If good things happen through us, it is because of God's grace at work, and we return all thanks to Him. This is not our story, and we don't have the power to change hearts – this belongs to God alone, to whom be glory forever and ever.

When you consider all of these truths, we really do feel amazed at the privilege of participating in God's gospel mission through a local church on the south side of Milwaukee.

Consider:

- How has God been renewing my life through CrossWay in the last two weeks? If you can't think of anything, why do you think you're missing this experience?
- Over the last several months, what has excited you the most about being a part of God's mission at CrossWay? Does anything about your answer make you feel nervous or seem daunting?
- When was the last time you were able to share the message of *redemption* with someone? How could my friends at CrossWay be part of helping me in this area?

HOW DO WE PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S MISSION?

Therefore, as a local church, we gather and we scatter.

We gather to behold and build up,

and *we scatter* to display and declare

– all for the glory of God, in the name of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

On a high level we have two movements as a community: we come together as the church, and we go out into our various spheres of influence as the church. Another way of saying this is that, as a church, we gather and we scatter.

Gather. When we gather together, while the activities may differ, we want to see two things occurring.

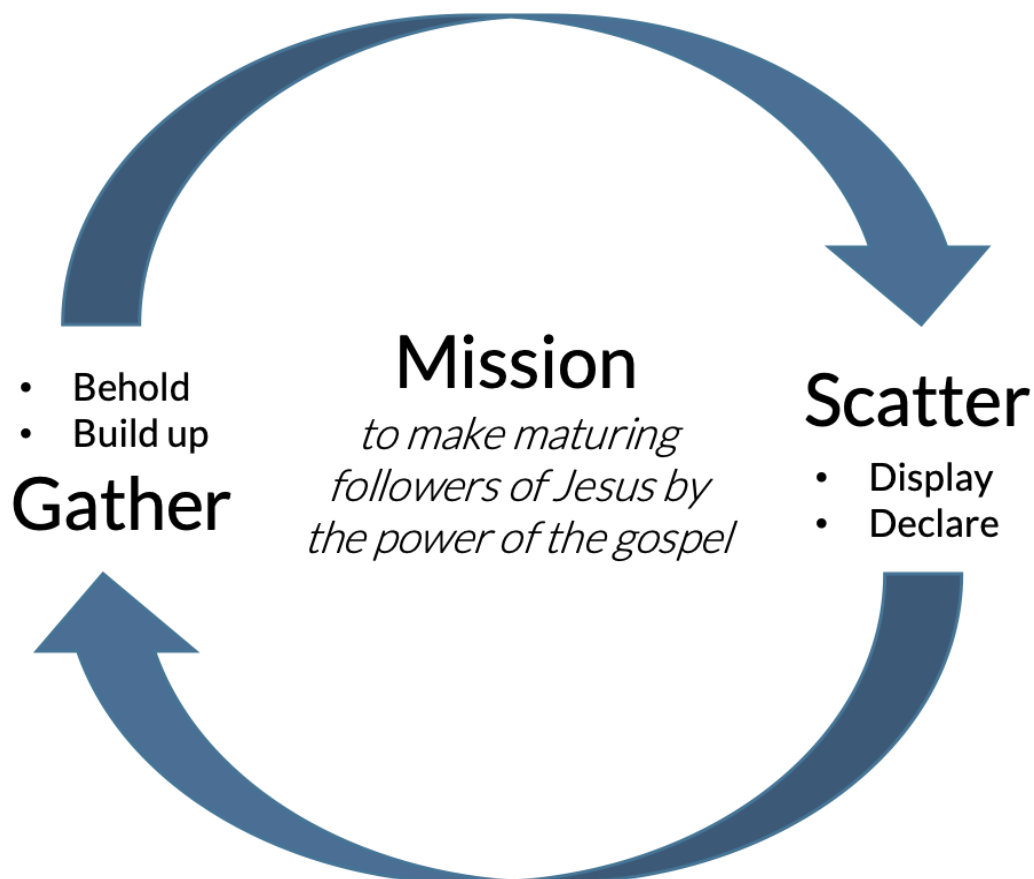
1. **Behold.** We must be looking to God – we behold Him. And, as we do, so much good occurs. For example, our souls are satisfied, we are changed, we are given strength to endure. It's important for us to look to God, behold Him, at all of our gatherings. (Ps. 16:11, 2 Cor. 3:18, Heb. 12:1-3)
2. **Build up.** We gather to build up one another in the faith. Each of us needs other people in our lives regularly if we are to persevere in the Christian life. It's not too hard to see how a church could personally benefit ourselves. However, in our consumer oriented culture, it can be easy to miss our place in serving others. As we gather we should consider, "How can I be a part of building up other believers at this gathering?". In doing so, we all experience God's ongoing renewal through one another, and God prepares us to move outward to scatter into the world as His representatives. (Heb. 10:24-25)

Scatter. As we scatter to our own areas of influence, there are also two things that should occur.

1. **Display.** We display what a life redeemed by God looks like – in the home, the neighborhood, at work, and at places we frequent. As we rightly handle the joys and sorrows of life in this world, our lives should be a visible testimony that our hope is active

and attractive, whether engaged in acts of service, hobbies, or rest. (Matt. 5:14-16; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:15-16; 1 Cor. 7:29-31)

2. **Declare.** We declare the hope of God's redemption. In doing so, at times we will have the joy of seeing others around us experience God's redemption. At other times, we will be met with discouragements and opposition. But, no matter what we face, we know we have our church family to gather with us to rejoice together and work through discouragements together as we behold God and build each other up. What a privilege to walk together in this cycle – doing it all for the glory of God, in the name of Jesus, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. (1 Pet. 2:9; 2 Tim. 3:12-13; Acts 14:22; John 15:20)



Consider:

- What is one way your presence could help *others* behold Jesus at a CrossWay gathering? What is one obstacle that might keep *yourself* from beholding Jesus at a CrossWay gathering?
- What two people from CrossWay can you build up this week, and how will you do it?
- What is one area of your life that you would like to better display a redeemed life? What is one intentional step you could make toward that this week, and who can you tell about this plan?
- Who is one person that you can pray for throughout the month, asking that God would give you opportunities to declare the good news of Jesus to them, and that they would be given ears to hear?

Our Pursuits: What Cultivates a Healthy Church?

We believe scripture demonstrates the following pursuits as important marks of a healthy church as things which cultivate and foster a community of “maturing followers of Jesus” (disciples). As such, we consider CrossWay healthiest as we embody and exemplify the following aspects of our collective discipleship:

- **Ministry of the Word – The Foundation & Means of Our Discipleship**

Because scripture is God’s Word to the church, the church must ground itself in and constantly conform itself to scripture. Truthful and accurate teaching from scripture (sound doctrine) matters immensely as it shapes not only our beliefs, but our very lives—as well as our life as a church. This means, as a church, we must devote ourselves constantly to seeking God’s will through faithful and diligent adherence to scripture. In short, God’s Word is the foundation of our church (Ps 127:1; Rom 15:4; Gal 1:6-9; 1 Thes 2:13; 2 Tim 3:14-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21; Jude 1:3).

But not only is God’s Word our foundation, it is also the means God uses to continue to mature us as followers of Jesus. God sustains and nourishes His church through his Word. This includes more “formal” ministries of the Word such as preaching on Sunday mornings. But it also includes the more “informal” ministries of every member of our church engaging one another and encouraging each other with God’s Word—prayerfully applying the truth of God’s Word to each other’s lives (Acts 4:31; 20:20, 32; Rom 15:14; Eph 4:15-16, 25; 6:4; Phil 1:7, 14; 4:3; Col 3:16, 23-24; 4:6; Heb 3:12-13; 1 Pet 2:9; 3:15; 4:10-11).

As an outflow of these convictions about God’s Word, as a church we practice “expositional preaching,” which means we seek to make the message of our sermons the message of the Bible; rather than using the Bible to preach our own messages, we seek to base our messages entirely on what the Bible has to say (Isa 55:10-11; 1 Cor 2:1-5; 1 Thes 2:13; 1 Tim 3:14-4:2; 2 Tim 4:2).

- **Gathered Worship – The Expression & Fuel of Our Discipleship**

We believe our discipleship is fueled by our times of regularly gathering as a church to worship together. In our gathered worship, we encounter God through the reading and preaching of His word, by responding to him through confession, prayer, and song, and remembering our gospel-identity in baptism and the Lord’s Supper. As we behold God in this way, we are formed as worshipers. And as we assemble together, we have opportunity to encourage, edify, and support one another (Acts 2:42; 20:7, 20; Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 5:4, 11; 11:17-18, 20, 33; 14:14-17, 23, 26-33; 15:1-4; 16:2; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 5:19-20; Phil 2:5-11; Col 1:15-20; 3:15-16; 4:16; 1 Thes 5:27; 1 Tim 2:1-2; 3:16; 4:13; 6:12; 2 Tim 2:11-13; 3:15-4:2; Heb 10:25; Js 5:16).

- **Diligent Prayer – The Lifeblood of Our Discipleship**

The church is completely dependent on God for its existence and the success of our mission. Because of this, we must be devoted to prayer, and we must constantly strive to pursue fostering a church culture where prayer is the air we breathe (Ps 145:18; Mt 7:11; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 14:14-15; Phil 4:6; Col 4:2; 1 Thes 5:17; 1 Tim 2:1-2, 8).

- **Community & Service – The Context & the Unleashing of Our Discipleship**

Our growth as Christians is inescapably relational. In God’s wisdom, He saves us, not as individuals, but as part of a community—the church. This community (the church) is the “natural habitat” of the Christian life, the context God has appointed for our ongoing discipleship. And he uses these mutually-enriching relationships to guard us from the dangers of sin and nurture us towards Christlikeness. The church community is the incubator and catalyst of our discipleship (Ps 133:1; Jn 13:34-35; 15:12; Acts 2:42, 44-46; Rom 12:4-5, 10, 13, 15-16, 18; 14:1-4, 10, 13, 15, 19-21; 15:5; 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10; 12:12-31; 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 4:2-6, 15, 25; Phil 2:3-4; Col 3:14; 1 Thes 4:9; 5:14; Heb 6:10; 10:24-25; 13:1, 3, 16; Js 5:16; 1 Pet 1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 1 Jn 1:7; 3:14; 4:11, 20).

Not only so, but the church is also a community of servants. We don’t view our pastors as the only folks called to ministry; we’re *all* called to do ministry (and pastors are our primary equippers – Eph 4:11-16, 25). Every believer has been given a gift by God specifically for the purpose of serving and ministering to others in their local church. And so we want to see *all* members of our church involved in ministering to others (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 4:31; Rom 12:3-8; 15:14; 1 Cor 12-13; 15:58; Eph 4:11-16, 25; 6:4; Phil 1:7, 14; 4:3; Col 3:16; 4:6; 2 Thes 1:11-12; Heb 3:12-13; 10:24-25; 1 Pet 2:9; 3:15; 4:10-11).

- **Gospel Saturation – The Source & Shape of Our Discipleship**

The more the gospel saturates our church the healthier we will become. We aim to ensure that every person of CrossWay has a clear *understanding* of the gospel and can articulate it (1 Cor. 15:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:21). We also strive to see each of us *changed* by it day by day, sometimes dramatically, but mostly a “drip-by-drip” effect (1 Thess. 2:13; Col. 1:3-6; Phil. 1:27; Gal. 2:14). Furthermore, we desire that each individual increasingly sees how to *connect* the gospel to every area of life – whether food, grades, parenting, fighting against sin, money, etc. – seeing how the gospel empowers us for the Christian life (Titus 3:1-8; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Phil. 2:12-13; 3:12; 1 Pet. 2:11; Eph. 4:32). We all need the gospel every day, and we desire to be a people that never grow bored with the gospel and set it aside, but that our *love and appreciation* for the good news excels (Eph. 3:14-21), and moves us to *share* it with the lost world all around us. For God is on a gospel mission of redemption and renewal, and He intends for this mission to flow through us (Rom. 10:14-15; 1 Pet. 2:9; 3:15).

- **Mission-Focus – The Aim & Heartbeat of Our Discipleship**

Everything we do ultimately comes back to our mission: *to make maturing followers of Jesus by the power of the gospel*. We want to keep our mission front and center so we never lose track of why we do what we do. It keeps us deliberate and intentional about what we pursue; and it helps us keep things in perspective (Mt 28:19-20; Jn 4:35-37; 2 Cor 5:18-6:2; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Tim 4:2; 2 Tim 2:2-7, 23; Tit 3:9; Heb 12:1-2).

Along with this focus on mission should come a sense of urgency. We are a missionary people. And this should shape everything about us, and in radical ways. As those on mission, we want not only to be willing but eager to make great sacrifices, devote ourselves to spreading the gospel, and live with abandon for Christ (Mt 9:37-38; 25:14-30; Rom 13:11-14; Eph 5:15-16; 1 Thes 5:2; 2 Tim 4:1-2; Heb 12:1-2; Rev 3:11; 22:20).