



December 2015

Dear Friends,

I am sorry this prayer letter is a little late, lots have happened since I last wrote.

When I returned from the UK I began to preach through the first seven chapters of 1 Samuel, we will return to the book early next year. The key chapter on the books, which we kept returning to, is 1 Samuel 2, where Hannah sings of how God brings a great reversal. God in his mercy brings down the proud and the arrogant and he lifts up the humble. It is a wonderful reminder that as we come to God acknowledging our lowliness and humility he in his mercy lifts us up to use us. And as we approach Christmas, we find an echo of Hannah's song in Mary's song:



'He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble.' Luke 1:52

Christmas is a great reminder that the Lord Jesus gave up his high position to take on lowliness, even to death on the cross, so that we could be lifted up. That we should come to him humbly dependent on him that he might use us. That is certainly what I continue to pray for Christ Church Hillbrow.

UK Trip

It seems a long time ago now (and it was) but it was great to be back in the UK over June and July. As many of you will know, I had planned to spend only three weeks back in the UK, but due to having to renew my visa I spent close to five weeks there. In God's providence this was a good thing I hadn't realised how tired the year had left me and it was good to have an extra two weeks of refreshment and encouragement from friends in the UK. It was also a good time to reflect on the situation back in South Africa: having taken over leading Christ Church after the death of Edwin, I hadn't really had time to think through how long-term leading of the church would be manageable. I was particularly grateful for the meetings that I had with Crosslinks staff and their wisdom and encouragement. One thing that became clear as we talked is the need for greater support and partnership on the ground in Hillbrow to make the ministry more sustainable. Please pray for wisdom in this going forward.



Ordination

As you will know, the issue of ordination has been discussed for some time now. On my return to South Africa, I had a very positive and encouraging meeting with the area bishop. He said that he felt that the best way forward was to ordain me and not cause me to go to college. He was incredibly supportive and positive about my ministry and has been a huge help. The plan was to try and do the ordination before the end of the year, but with the busyness of things this seems to be an unlikely target. However, it should happen next year. Shortly after my return I attended Synod of REACHSA, the denomination which Christ Church Hillbrow is part of, and again this was a great encouragement as people in the denomination whom I had never met said they had heard about and were encouraged by what I was doing at Christ Church Hillbrow. This, of course, is only by God's grace and I am thankful that he has enabled me to serve in this way. Please give thanks for the enthusiastic support from the denomination and pray that plans for the ordination would be put in place. Although the actual practicalities still have to be arranged, this is a huge worry off my mind.



Vestry Meeting and Council

At the end of October, we had our annual vestry meeting (AGM). This meant the election of a new council. A number who had served faithfully over the last few years stepped up and it was wonderful to have a new group willing to take on the responsibility. I am particularly grateful for the appointment of two church wardens: godly men who even just since October have been a huge encouragement and support to me. Two young men have also joined the council, Donald and Lee, who were not previously part of the council but have been a great addition. They have shown themselves to be men of integrity with servant hearts. One of my greatest joys now is seeing how the older and younger men on the council work together. I am praising God that within the new council there is a real sense of unity and mutual support. Along with giving thanks for these men being willing to serve please pray for them. Pray for continued unity and love amongst us. God has been good to us and we continue to need his protection.

Co-ordinators Forum

I know that many of you have been praying for the co-ordinators forum and slowly it is beginning to take shape. With the new council things are starting to work well. A number of areas are beginning to change and develop: pray for a few areas which still need some work. Nathi continues to lead it well, for which I am very grateful, and he now has a deputy, Lee, who is helping out. Pray that the practical changes discussed will help the church to run more smoothly so that God's word might be heard.

Fellowship Groups

In a city-centre church like ours it can be difficult to build a loving community. People are very busy and although mid-week bible studies are encouraging and help build friendships, many in the congregation find it difficult to attend during the week. To address this we have split all those who come on Sunday into four fellowship groups who meet during the service. Our prayer is that this might help people in the congregation get to know one another better and support each other in their faith. We are starting to see this happening, so please pray that God might use these fellowship groups to help us to know and encourage one another.

Church Outing

The pictures in this letter are from our recent Church Braai. We had a lot of fun. It was a real joy to have people join us who don't normally come to things like this and I think the turnout was much better than last year.

Future

I mentioned in my previous prayer letter that we were hoping to employ another worker at Christ Church Hillbrow. Unfortunately we were unable to get the funds together in time to be able to offer the job to the person we had hoped. We are however very committed to employing someone to help with the work here, although it is not yet clear what the job will be, whether an apprentice or an assistant minister. This will slightly depend on the candidate. Either way we need funding for this to happen: we need to raise around £1,300 a month to cover his salary and employment costs. To this end Crosslinks have set up a separate fund called 'The Hillbrow Gospel Worker Fund'. If you would like to donate to help us to employ this extra worker then you can do so through Crosslinks. You may also know some people who would be keen to help, not already partnering with me but wanting to partner with CCH to increase the ministry. If you or anyone you know would like to contribute, please contact Abbi McClure amcclure@crosslinks.org at Crosslinks (or telephone 020 8691 6111), specifying that you would like your gift to go the "The Hillbrow Gospel Worker Fund". This will ensure that the money goes directly to the fund for the new gospel worker rather than to my own fund. Please also pray for the right person to be found so that the work here in CCH can continue to grow.

In Christ, Ben Williamson

PRAYER POINTS

Praise:

- Give thanks for the unity and servant-heart of the new council.
- Give thanks for the fun and fellowship at the church outing.
- Give thanks for the support of the Bishop and the denomination.

Pray:

- Pray for preparation and funds for an extra worker.
- Pray that for continued unity amongst the Church Council.

Please contact your local Crosslinks office to change your contact details

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