



June 2014

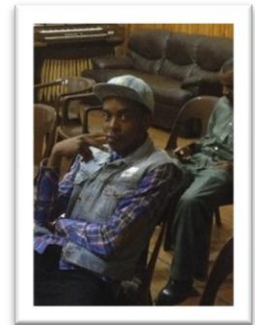
Dear Friends,



"Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. You will eat the fruit of your labour; blessings and prosperity will be yours." (Psalm 128:1-2)

At the beginning of the year I began preaching through the Psalms of Ascent at Christ Church Hillbrow and a few Sundays ago we reached Psalm 128. In the South African environment, particularly in somewhere like Hillbrow, many would preach the prosperity gospel from these verses. As I prepared the passage for that Sunday I thought about how we should rightly understand these verses. Do we ignore them or skip over them? The clue to understanding these verses comes later on in the Psalm where we read in verse 5 "The Lord may bless you from Zion... may you see the

prosperity of Jerusalem." Jerusalem was important since this was the capital of God's kingdom and from there blessing would flow. As we look back on this verse through Jesus and the gospel we see that actually those who use this verse to proclaim prosperity now have a too smaller a vision. The promise now is that blessings will flow from the New Jerusalem and as they do the whole world will be made new. The hope is not a better life now but a whole new world. And of course that kind of renewal will come in the New Heavens and the New Earth (Rev. 21:1). Jesus' resurrection is a foretaste of that and from him all the blessing which renews the earth will flow. Over the last few months many things have been hard, whether it be overseeing the church while Edwin (the rector of Christ Church Hillbrow) has been ill, having my wallet stolen and dealing with anxious situations, however the promise of the Psalm is so wonderful in that God will put everything right, all things will be made new. We continue, as these Psalms are pilgrim Psalms, in hope of a recreated world and we rejoice on the way. We await a day when the whole world will be made new.

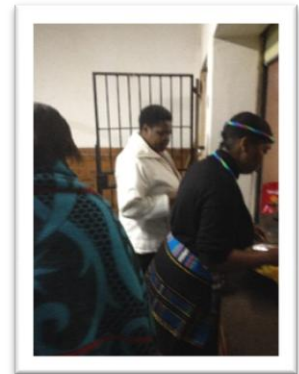


In my last newsletter I said that Edwin had been off for two weeks and potentially three more. What was two weeks turned into three months! Shortly after writing my last prayer letter he was taken into hospital and was kept in there for over three weeks. Edwin had TB and pneumonia and after his release from hospital had to spend a number of weeks recovering at home. We are thankful that he has now largely recovered and although he is still weak he is slowly returning to work. In his absence I took on the burden of running the church. At almost every stage I felt ill equipped and out of my depth but the last few months have been testimony of God's grace and strength. I preached through the whole of 2 Timothy and was very encouraged by Paul's charge to Timothy to "Preach the Word." This is what I sought to do and we learned as at church why it was crucial



that we were a church where the word was preached since this is how God builds and strengthens his church. In bible studies we continued through the book of 1 Corinthians which has proved incredibly relevant and opened many doors to discuss cultural and practical applications, including what to eat at a funeral!

As I reflect on the last few months I am encouraged to think how God has used me and through necessity I have had to do many things which I would not normally have done. I constantly give thanks for God's provision of strength. The experience has also made me think whether I should consider leading a church in the future, although this may well be some time off, please pray as I think through what I have learned over this time. As Edwin returns to work, I can step back in a few areas and have a bit more time to concentrate on different areas. In particular I am focusing on our new evening service, which is small but steady. We are currently looking at following Jesus from Luke's gospel. The congregation in the evening includes some children and teenagers as well as adults who come in the morning. Please pray that we would be able to plan the service and the sermons in a way that best serves each person who comes.



One of the highlights in recent weeks at the church was our international evening where different members of the congregation brought meals from their country. I cooked Cottage Pie and many people were surprised to see I could cook. For those who came it was wonderful way to build community and you can see some pictures on this page. We are trying to build community through various different things, please pray that Christ Church would be a family of believers and not just individuals who attend on Sunday.

Over the last few months there have been various practical issues in living. With Edwin's illness I have been getting the bus to church, which has generally been fine although I did get my wallet stolen on one occasion. This has made me slightly anxious about travelling so please do pray for safety and that I would be confident in his protection. Unfortunately I also have to move again so please do pray for an appropriate place to live.

Despite the busyness I was able to have a week's holiday with my brother and his family who have recently moved to South Africa. We went to a game park and then I spent a few days in their home in Clarens.

I will be back in the UK in July for four weeks and hopefully this will be a good time to rest and reflect on all that has happened over the past few months. Do pray for a good time and get in touch as I would love to see as many people as I am able.

Thanks you again for you prayers and partnership, Ben Williamson

PRAYER POINTS

Praise:

- Edwin's recovery.
- God sustaining me and the church while Edwin has been ill.
- Good time on holiday with my brother Sam.

Pray:

- For Edwin to recover fully.
- Wisdom in planning and developing the evening service.
- A good and restful time in the UK.
- A suitable new place to live.

Please contact your local Crosslinks office to change your contact details

Crosslinks, 251 Lewisham Way, London SE4 1XF Tel: 020 8691 6111 pletters@crosslinks.org
Crosslinks, 32 Montgomery Road, Belfast, Co. Antrim BT6 9HL Northern Ireland Tel: +44 (0) 28 9079 6028