



March 2015

Dear Friends,



From the beginning of the year here at Christ Church Hillbrow, where I serve as minister, in our midweek Bible studies we have been working through the book of Daniel having now reached chapter 7. The book is a wonderful reminder that though Daniel and his friends find themselves in exile, just as we believers do (1 Peter 2:11-12), God is constantly in control and ruling for the good of his people. Daniel's steadfastness which can be seen again and again is only in response to the firm belief in the rule of his God. Such rule makes even the greatest kings of history powerless and at His mercy. As God's people today, we can take greater courage than even Daniel, for we know not just of a rescue from a lion's den or a fiery furnace, but through the empty tomb we can be confident of deliverance from death. I have been reminded while there may be fears and difficulties in ministry in somewhere like Hillbrow, as anywhere, remembering God's constant rule faithful in our Lord is the wisest cause of action.

God has been extremely gracious over the last few months here at Christ Church Hillbrow and there is much to praise God for. While 2014 was a difficult year we ended with a wonderful celebration. When Edwin Ngubane and I arrived at Christ Church we started a fundraising effort to raise money within the congregation for the church renovation. Members of the congregation would pledge money to 'buy a brick' (not a literal brick) and that would contribute to the building fund. We called it "My Brick, My Church". Many people did and the original plan was that at the end of June 2014 we were to have a service of thanksgiving for all the money that had been given. However, with Edwin's death, this was obviously postponed, but in the first week of December we finally held our "My Brick My Church Sunday." It was a true celebration with many people attending, great food and everybody involved in some way. I preached on 1 Peter 2 and we were reminded that it is not physical bricks but spiritual (people) which build the church, and they do as they come to the living stone Jesus. Along with the sense of great celebration and thanks, there was also a real sense that more people were involved in CCH and that God was, through us, building his church. Since then many more people have been involved and while people went away for Christmas the momentum has been picked up at the beginning of 2015.



Christmas was quiet in Hillbrow and I was able to take two weeks off after Christmas day. I went to visit my brother Sam, who now lives in Clarens a small town in South Africa on the border with Lesotho. Sam works with a team of missionaries seeking to reach the shepherd boys in Lesotho. Sam and his wife Leanna and their four kids act as a base camp for the team while the team live in the mountains of Lesotho. It was great to be able to have a family Christmas and to spend some time with my nieces and nephews. I also managed to spend a day and a half in Lesotho as we went to pick up the team. I may also go later in the year to do some teaching for the team. Give thanks for a good break and a really encouraging time with Sam and his family.



Back in Johannesburg for the New Year, on my first Sunday back I went to speak to two guys waiting at the Church gate just before church started. This unfortunately ended with them stealing my phone, although I was not hurt in anyway. I was shaken, and remained very anxious for the next few weeks, but was able to preach that Sunday and carry on. It was a reminder of the area we were in and the challenges we face. Give thanks that I have not had an issue since and the anxiety has calmed down. Please continue to pray for safety and that I would not feel too anxious.

Despite this set back there have been more encouragements as we have begun 2015. As a council at CCH we have been trying to work on helping the church to run more effectively and involving more people. The first step to this was adding five men to the council who have brought wisdom and ideas. They have been a great help. We as a council then identified nine area of ministry which we are going to focus on and then appoint people to coordinate those ministries. We then asked everybody in the congregation to commit to being part of at least one of those ministries. The response was extraordinary with 75 people signing up. The following week was our prayer meeting and so we used some of that time to pray specifically in those groups for our ministries. Please pray that everybody who has signed up would be involved in some way. Pray that this would lead to the church growing as the whole church is serving.



I am greatly encouraged by so much, more than I can fit here. We have had new people join us who are keen to be involved, the slow work of teaching the Bible to bring about growth continues to bear fruit. We have been working through the Sermon on the Mount since the beginning of the year, it has been challenging to both teach and live. I am praying, and would love you to join me in this, that we are at CCH, in response to God's mercy, would increasingly live kingdom lives as Jesus describes in the sermon. Holiness is a need for us all. I give great thanks for God as he has helped me as I have covered issues such as anger, lust and divorce. He has been good.

Thank you so much for your prayers and partnership. I love hearing from you so please let me know how you are and what I can be praying for you.

In Christ,

Ben Williamson

(Pictures: Bible Study, Children's Play on My Brick Sunday, Sunset in Lesotho, some of my nieces and nephews).

PRAYER POINTS

Praise:

- For the great celebration of the giving to the building project.
- 75 people signing up to be involved in the different ministries.

Pray:

- Pray for wisdom as I lead, particularly that I would lead in a gracious and wise manner.
- Pray that as we have been working through the Sermon on the Mount on Sunday mornings, God would bring about kingdom living in our lives.

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