

FEBRUARY 2019



***“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven;”
Ecclesiastes. 3:1***

Under the sun, in this world, change is inevitable. As the wise man in Ecclesiastes reminds us, people, sadness, love and war come and go in this world. The New Year often brings change and a chance to ponder on these things. But while we live in a world of change, and we ourselves change, what a comfort to know that our God never changes. His love is constant, his character never changes.

I myself still find change unsettling, but am comforted to know that then joy of knowing the unchangeable God.



Christ Church Hillbrow

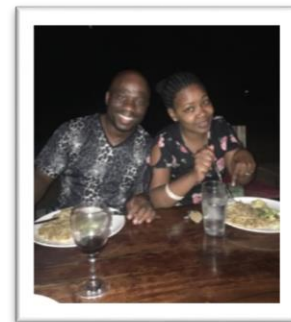
As the year turned from 2018 to 2019, so came the end of my tenure as the minister-in-charge of Christ Church Hillbrow. There were no fireworks (well there were but I think that they were unrelated) but having served as the minister in charge since Edwin’s death, Godfrey took over the reins as the minister in-charge at Christ Church Hillbrow on 1 January. It is a little strange, since I am still at the church, but it has given me a chance to reflect on God’s goodness and grace over time. There have been many ups and downs but I am encouraged at the state of the church and I was delighted to hand it on to Godfrey.



November and December saw us finish of most of the book of Hebrews and prepare for Christmas as we looked at the first chapter of John’s Gospel. So often in a place like Hillbrow, it can seem that darkness reigns. What a joy to reminded that at that first Christmas, as the Word became flesh so light shone in the darkness. December time was quite quiet but do pray that in the years to come Christ Church Hillbrow might continue to proclaim that the light has shone in the darkness.

Do pray for Godfrey, he has begun well. We are looking at the book of Acts in our “Hamba lagtle, go gospel go!” Pray that as Godfrey preaches, we might be enthused and empowered by the Holy Spirit to take the gospel to Hillbrow and beyond. It is exciting to see new people at church almost every week - do pray that they would settle with us. Pray that we would grow as we reach out with the Gospel.

I am getting used to being less involved - it is certainly nice to be relieved of the responsibility and to have a break from almost constant preaching over the last five years. I will be preaching twice in February, finishing off the book of Hebrews, so do pray for that.



Johannesburg Bible College

While things are still getting going at Christ Church, the work at JBC has certainly started. Although students don't join us until the first week of February there is lots to get in place before that.

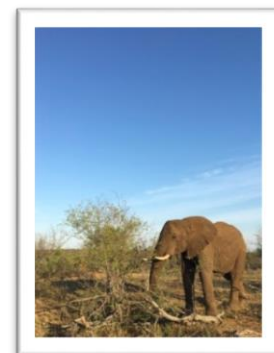
This year we are working hard to get our course accredited. This means we are writing up current material and writing brand-new material. It seems at times that it just jumping through hoops, but we are praying that this might open up a number of opportunities to attract more students and possibly to help other colleges doing a similar thing to focus on equipping people to handle God's word. The two courses which I am working on are 'Handling God's Word' and 'Conducting Worship Services'.

The 'Handling God's Word' course is an update of the 'Grasping God's Word' course that I have been working on for the last few years. We are always trying to develop the course so that it is best able to help students in our context to better handle God's word. There are a number of changes which I have made. Please pray for the whole team as we roll it out this year. Pray that all our hard work would bear fruit and that our students would indeed be faithful handlers of God's word.

The 'Conducting Worship Services' course, is a new course which we need to include to help students to be able to be effective in planning and leading church services. I am sure we will have students from many different backgrounds - pray that I would able to construct a course which helps all of them think carefully about that shape of their worship services.

Holidays, Christmas and the future

It was very nice to spend time with my parents when they came out to see me at the beginning of December. We travelled the country and beyond, from Kruger to Lesotho. Give thanks for the time with them and though my Dad was a little unwell he was fine in the end.



I spent Christmas and New Year with the Millers. John, Jenny and their three boys have joined us in Johannesburg as Crosslinks mission partners, John is working for JBC. They have also made Christ Church Hillbrow their church and they have got stuck into helping with Sunday school. It was lovely to spend Christmas and New Year with them, they are becoming a joy and encouragement to me.

As for the future, I would really love your prayers. This current situation, part-time at CCH and at JBC, does seem temporary, for a year or two. Thinking beyond that, I am praying for wisdom. There is a possibility of developing some train the trainer work longer term at JBC - we have just had a most encouraging conference for those doing similar ministries across Africa. That is one possibility, to think about developing that, but I am also exploring opportunities back in the UK. Pray for wisdom and for it to become clear how I might be used long term. If you have thoughts (offers!) I'd love to hear.

Thank you to all those who have been in touch, it is always a joy to hear your news.
God Bless, Ben

(Pictures: Me with Emeka, our new church warden; CCH young adults; two people on JBC staff; an elephant)

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