



October 2018



It is often hard to explain to those in the UK what the church scene in South Africa is like, particularly in places like Hillbrow. In Hillbrow you will see sin and brokenness on every corner, but paradoxically you will also see a church of sorts on every corner. Many of these churches are centered around the pastor, whom you are not to question or doubt. You are not to disrespect 'the man of God' for he is the one who brings you to God. It is a new form of a very old idea. They do not use the word, but the idea is that the pastor is a priest, one who grants access to God. We have been working our

way through the wonderful letter to the Hebrews. But the lesson we learn in the central section of the book is that we don't need a priest because we have a priest, and his name is Jesus! What a comforting truth to pastors and others alike. The writer of the Hebrews is always seeking to show that Jesus is better than any human priest who might seek to take his place. In one of the bible studies, one of the ladies commented about this truth, 'Isn't this great, because this means that even if Ben leaves we are trusting in Jesus and not him!' Indeed, and a fairly apt comment.

When I was back in the UK I spoke to Crosslinks and a number of you about my plans for the future. Having now discussed things with people here I wanted to fill you all in on the planned way forward. I told the church council, and recently announced to the church, that I will be stepping down as the minister-in-charge of Christ Church Hillbrow at the end of the year. I have been reflecting on the sustainability of the role but also the best way forward for the church. I have been greatly encouraged the last two years working with my curate, Godfrey. I now feel that the right thing to do is hand the church over to Godfrey. I think it will be a great thing to have a faithful African pastoring Christ Church Hillbrow. Godfrey has really grown in his love and ability at Christ Church Hillbrow and I would ask you to join with me as we pray and support him into the future. Crosslinks, the church council and the denomination are all happy with this move.

You may be asking, however, if Godfrey is taking on the church then what will I be doing? Well... Godfrey has requested that I do not leave but stay on to advise and support him. I am more than happy to do that and I have said to Godfrey and the church that from January I will commit a further two years to supporting Godfrey and being involved in the ministry there. Godfrey will, though, be taking on the role as minister-in-charge and I will just be there to support him. From January I will be returning part-time to lecture at



Johannesburg Bible College and, God willing, develop and support similar ministries across the continent.

The whole thing is exciting but daunting. I think it will relieve some of my stress and anxiety but will also bring new challenges. There are a number of things to pray for:

- Please pray for Godfrey as he takes on the role of minister, that God will grant him wisdom and grace as he leads God's people.
- Please pray that God will protect Godfrey and my relationship with the changes of roles. That God will enable me to serve Godfrey and the church with humility and love.
- Please pray that I would quickly settle into my new role at JBC and within the church next year. It all seems a little strange at the moment, so please pray that I would be able to be useful and effective, both at church and college.
- Please pray for the financial provision to make all this possible (more on that later).
- I have said to both the church and the college that I will give a further two years in South Africa. It may be that after that time I decide to return to the UK. Please pray for wisdom and the right opportunities as I think this through (I'm open to offers!)

In terms of the financials issues let me try and summarise some of the implications and needs. In terms of my personal support, I am very grateful for all those who have partnered with me over the last eight years that I have been in Johannesburg. My ministry has changed and developed, and I am very grateful that your partnership in the gospel has made that possible. My need will stay pretty much the same, perhaps with a slightly adjusted budget, so please do continue your support if you are able. This will allow me to continue my ministry both at Christ Church and JBC for at least the next two years.

As you will be aware (and many have been generous towards), the Hillbrow Workers Fund has been used to support Godfrey and the ministry at CCH. I have been working with Christ Church Hillbrow and the denomination, and building partnerships with local churches, so that the ministry of Christ Church Hillbrow can continue long into the future. From next year we are planning that the contribution to Godfrey's salary from within South Africa will increase and over the next two years his entire salary will be covered from within South Africa. It is an ambitious aim, but I think that we can do it. This means, God willing, the amount of money coming through Crosslinks will be reduced, which we hope to do slowly over the next two years. There is still a need; indeed on our current planning the fund will be short £1,300 by the end of 2019. Even if we manage to reduce the amount used for Godfrey, any extra in the fund will still be used to fund ministry at CCH. If you are able to give to the Hillbrow workers fund, please do contact Crosslinks. Either a regular or one-off gift will help the gospel ministry in this deprived area of the city to continue.

With all this talk of the future you might wonder what has happened in the past few months. There is much to give thanks for: Godfrey was ordained and the day was a great celebration - not just of his ministry but also the church and gospel partnerships. We've taken a break from Hebrews in September and we are thinking about what it means to belong to the church. Godfrey has been preaching while I have been running seminars after church to help us to apply what we've learnt.

Please pray for all the changes and do get in touch with me if you have any questions. It is exciting but changing times. Thank you again for your continued partnership.

God bless,

Ben

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