



February 2018

Dear Friends,



'So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.'
Ephesians 2:19

One of the things that particularly struck last year, as we worked through Paul's letter to the Ephesians was Paul's understanding that the church was much more than a human organisation, but the family, or the household of God. Most of us will know that in practice church often does not feel like family although we long for it to be such. But we are all united to Christ, and in him brought into the family of God, so we are family.

One of my longings and constant prayers for Christ Church Hillbrow is that we become more like a family. I mentioned in my last letter our church conference with my friend Phumezo. At one point that weekend I apologised to Phumezo for something which wasn't well organized. His reply was 'Don't worry Ben, it is just like a family.' It is encouraging that someone from the outside could see that, but I often feel that we still have a long way to go. But we are making progress - praise God.



Church Fun Day

At the end of November, we had a carwash and braai. Normally at the end of the year we go out for a Braai but this year we decided to host it at the church and to combine it with a carwash to raise funds for the youth to go on camp. This meant a lot more of the church could stay, and we had some visitors from other churches. I have included some pictures from the day, it really was a great family day, as people had longer than usual to chat and to get to know one another better. The whole church family mixed and the fellowship was wonderful. I praise God when I see different parts of the church getting alongside one another. Give thanks, and pray that the fellowship in the church might continue to grow. Particularly pray that friendships can be built in which we can encourage each other in our walk with Christ.

Christmas and the New Year

Although it is now February, since this is the first prayer letter of the year, let me wish you a Happy New Year, or as everybody seems to say in South Africa, 'Compliments of the Season'. Christmas is a strange time in Hillbrow: very few people are actually from Hillbrow and so many of our congregation travel during the months of December and January. This makes church quiet but it can be a good time to spend with people who remain behind. There were a few extra services but overall the load was a little lighter. I was thankful that the pace slowed a little - it has been a busy year.



Many of you will know that with the departure of my brother about a year ago and Glenn and Lizzie, fellow mission partners in Johannesburg, I have been worried about friendship and support. I have been praying, and asking you to pray with me, that the Lord would provide others who would begin to fulfil these roles. It was great to spend the Christmas period with friends, old and new. On Christmas Day, after the Christmas Day service I went to spend the day with Thorsten and Vera Marbach. Thorsten is a fellow lecturer at Johannesburg Bible College and it was a great to spend Christmas day with him and his family. They live near Pretoria, so although it was not far, it did feel like getting away. Over New Year I went to spend some time with Mike and Jill Marsland. Mike is a minister at a church in a different part of Johannesburg. I have gotten to know Mike through a few denominational things and I preached at his evening service in December. Mike and his wife, Jill invited me to spend a few days with them. They provided a lovely place to go and relax. Jill's mother is a former JBC student, it was great to see her on New Year's Eve.

The Beginning of the Year at Christ Church Hillbrow

The new year has begun well. The last few Sundays we have been very full. We have had lots of visitors. New people have been a real encouragement over the last few months. A number of people have joined us and stayed with us. As we get to know them better, please pray that we may love them as Christ loves them. We are thankful that they are coming under the sound of the gospel and we long that those who know Christ would grow in their faith and that those who do not would come to a living faith in him.

Coming up in the next few months, please pray that those who have joined us would stay and more would come along also. Like last year we are planning an outreach month in May: we have moved it slightly later in the year so please do pray that God would use it to bring even more people.

Slowly, I am beginning to get to get to know individuals in the congregation at a deeper level. It can be hard, and often the issues that are facing them are hard for them to deal with and I feel I have little wisdom to offer. Of course, in myself I do not, so please pray that God would give me the wisdom to offer them Christ in their situations. Pray that people in the church would open up and have the confidence that Christ and the gospel can deal with the issues which they are facing.

Thank you as always for your partnership in the gospel.

Ben

PRAYER POINTS

- Give thanks for a good end to the 2017, with the church family growing closer.
- Pray that we would grow as a church family, loving and knowing one another.
- Pray for the upcoming outreach month in May.

Please contact your local Crosslinks office to change your contact details

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