

Szwarga Family

planting churches in New Zealand

Prayer Letter | November 2024

The highlight of our month was not difficult to choose as the anticipation for the beginning of Heritage Baptist Church of Matamata was rewarded on November 17th! In attendance that day were 20 “members” of Heritage Baptist Church (those who are moving from the mother church to attend HBC), 32 members of 5 sister churches there to support, and 16 visitors from the community. All aspects of our rental facility were excellent, making for a friction-less beginning. There was a definite spirit of excitement throughout both services.

The second and third Sundays were also well-attended, with 11 first-time community visitors on the second week and several more on the third. Returning visitors have come each week as well. Prior to the third Sunday there was cause for more celebration as Limuel and Caitlin, the assistant and his (now) wife were married! Christ was first in everything that day from the gospel message in the ceremony to start the wedding to the gospel being clearly given again in the speeches at the end. This is a couple with an evident, thorough walk with God and God’s leading on their life together. Pray for them! The following Sunday, there were 64 in attendance, primarily from their families attending. The gospel was preached with liberty with several unbelieving relatives and visitors present.

Comments from visitors over the course of these first few weeks focus around the need for churches that faithfully preach the gospel and take the gospel message out of their doors to those who need it. There has been surprise and excitement over the door-to-door Gospel of John handout from visitors, with some volunteering to get involved. Although we’ve had many professing Christians visit, the number of unsaved have been few, highlighting the need to “go out into the highways and hedges and compel them!” This week we’ve met and witnessed to individuals in bondage to drugs, drink, and self-harm, and others who have “tried religion” and found it empty so they reject all spiritual help. But most common here are those who bury eternity in the sand, in hopes that by doing so they won’t have to face it some day. By faithfully spreading the Word, the seed is planted for when the goodness of God or trials by God bring them to face the reality of eternity. Our desire is to establish this church to maintain a reputation of preaching the gospel and sticking to the Book. Years from now when that individual has tired of his damaging attempts towards peace, and when the other person suddenly has to stare eternity in the face, may there still be that church that they remember cared for their soul enough to get them the gospel. A fellow church planter recently put it like this: “Slow and spiritual > fast and carnal.”

God’s Providence is always evident while in His work. Several weeks ago, a church member was at our canvassing event and the last flyer in his hand matched up perfectly with the final house on his route. He approached the man and realized it was his co-worker whom he had witnessed to several times, but had not shown interest! The week after our opening service, the co-worker delivered breakthrough news that he had live streamed our Sunday services. A step in the right direction! These stories of God’s Providence could continue endlessly: Praise the Lord!

Thank you for praying,

Josh, Alyse, Bentleye and Raelynn Szwarga

