

Szwarga Family

planting churches in New Zealand

Prayer Letter | January 2025

January recorded many “firsts” for Heritage Baptist Church of Matamata. As mentioned in our previous letter, the first person trusted Christ through this new church plant! Additionally, Alyse was able to lead her first person to Christ during the family camp, a girl from Pastor Fraser’s church! We also hosted the first church outreach from our home on January 11 with fourteen adults involved. (Keep in mind that roughly this amount of people transferred as founding members of HBC from the “mother” church.) Most in attendance are canvassing for now, and since then we have had four separate visitors and families as a result of the flyer in their letterbox. Some have shadowed us delivering Gospel of John books in anticipation of advancing to that stage of evangelism themselves. It is always an encouragement to the church family to hear that someone visited because of the flyer they delivered.

We also conducted the first youth group activity. We have scheduled an activity once a month with weekly discipleship being the main focus for the teenagers. God has placed quite a few teens in our path over the last few weeks; please pray for an increase of influence with the youth of our town.

Our rented hall was booked for one Sunday this month so we met at a restaurant for church! An unusual setting, but God blessed with visitors and a vibrant spirit in the services. A couple visited the evening service, and later that week we had the privilege to lead the husband to Christ. They begin discipleship this week.

The final Sunday of January, there were sixteen new visitors in the morning service. This came as a result of a faithful man in the church (and his daughter and her family) bringing friends and family. As was our prayer request to close out 2024, there have been more unsaved coming through the doors of the church. A visiting lady trusted Christ following the morning service, and almost all those who visited returned the following Sunday, some bringing visitors with them this time. This naturally creates a busy flow of people in our home, which has become a hub of fellowship and counseling, made possible through the effort Alyse invests.

One of the most encouraging trends is to see most of the visitors becoming faithful and starting to bring other visitors. One of the most discouraging trends is the desperate lack of Biblical discipleship in professing Christians. One on one discipleship has been introduced with ten individuals starting discipleship through late January and early February. This ranges from long-time Christians to recently saved and anyone without a solid foundation from discipleship is given the opportunity. Several others are lined up for the near future. Pray for the growth of the Christians which God has given us to serve.

On the final Monday of January, a crew from Bible Tracts, Inc (Evangelist Micah McCurry) arrived in country. We spent Monday to Saturday traveling and filming for seventeen hours a day at some of New Zealand’s most iconic locations. God opened up opportunities of a lifetime and made possible the recording of four New Zealand Gospel Films. The locations, weather, and verbal testimonies were all gifted from God and the BTI crew gave it their all to capture the work of God both in nature and in the lives of the four men who gave testimony. We are anticipating and asking God to use this tool greatly when we begin distribution later this year on streaming services, TV ads, and social media promotion. Please pray with us.

Thank you for praying and sacrificing for the gospel’s sake,

Josh, Alyse, Bentley and Raelynn Szwarga

