

HUTCHENS FAMILY

Serving in Christchurch, New Zealand

Family News



Surprise! The exact moment Juliana realized she had walked into a trap!

Juliana's birthday is actually coming up in a couple of days, but we were able to pull off a total surprise birthday party after church on the 15th! After church, everyone "went home", except they went to our home to surprise Juliana when we arrived! About 50 people packed into the living room and gave her a good surprise!

Afterwards, I further surprised Juliana with a getaway for a couple of days - just me and her. We had a very relaxing time and enjoyed some rest after a busy season!

Emma and Alexa are doing great! Emma will be starting K4 in February, in conjunction with the NZ school calendar!

Merry Christmas!

Our 2nd Christmas in New Zealand means we are nearly to the two year mark of our ministry here. It's gone by so quickly! We want to say a heartfelt Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of you, and thank you once again for your continued prayer and financial support of our family! We are thrilled to continue to partner with you to reach the people of Christchurch, New Zealand! 2020 promises to be the best year yet!



Emma & Alexa in their Christmas outfits!

Ministry Praises

The Lord has really been blessing in recent weeks here! I'm excited to share several things with you!

First, HUGE news concerning our pursuit of a permanent building for the church! We received word on the 9th of December that our most recent offer had been *accepted!* We are genuinely stunned to see how God has worked through it all. I'll not hash through all of the details in this letter, but our letter from August details many of the things that only God could have done to bring us to this point! Now we await an engineer's report concerning the stability of the building (a big issue with all buildings in post-earthquake Christchurch), and we are praying for the last bits of financing to fall into place. If all goes well, Lord willing, we will be moving into our new location sometime around the 1st of February!

At the end of November, our church held its 2nd Annual Missions Refresher Sunday. This comes at the halfway point of our missions giving year, which begins at the end of May. I'm thankful to report that our church was right at the 50% mark of its missions giving commitments! I never want us to lose our fervor for reaching souls IN New Zealand and BEYOND New Zealand!

As we moved into December, we prepared for our main Christmas outreach - our Christmas Community BBQ. Last year, this event was well received, and so we were praying for even more this year. Many of you received my email the morning of the BBQ asking for prayer for the day, and I appreciate all the responses!



Praise the Lord for Charlotte & Stephen being baptized this month!

Praises

- Praise the Lord for a wonderful Christmas Community BBQ, with over 80 guests from the community!
- Praise the Lord for the salvation of Stephen and Lyn a few weeks ago!
- Praise the Lord for a huge answer to prayer, with the tentative purchase of a building!

Prayer Requests

- Pray for those who have been saved recently to grow in Christ.
- Pray for good continued follow up with our guests from the BBQ - especially for Claire.
- Pray for a smooth process of covering all of our bases in the building purchase.
- Pray for a fruitful 2020 in the ministry here in Christchurch!

Not too long after I sent the email, I checked the weather forecast again, only to find out in dismay that our forecast had *literally* flipped overnight. From a 0% chance of rain to an 85% chance (island weather, they say!). I sent out a text blast to our church asking everyone to pray for it to stay away. The BBQ began at 11 AM, and right when it began, a few drops began to fall. It sprinkled for about 15 minutes, then it cleared away, and by the time the BBQ ended at 3 PM, it was sunny and hot! The Lord sent over 80 guests from the community to our BBQ, the Gospel was presented many times, and we've had some good follow up since then. Pray, in particular, for one lady named Claire. In my interactions with her, she's stated that she's not religious, but she felt so welcomed at the BBQ, she wants to come along to church just for the social interaction. I told her that God even has something for the "non-religious" person, and asked if I could sit down with her and tell her the most important message of the Bible. She's agreed to let me do that. We haven't gotten to sit down yet, but I hope you'll pray for her!

Chinese Ministry Growing!

This has been a particularly good few weeks for our Chinese ministry! On the 29th of November, I had the chance to take a young couple out for lunch by the names of Stephen and Lyn. They had been attending the Friday Bible studies for a few weeks, and wanted to be learning more. I spent most of the lunch appointment explaining the Gospel to them, and helping them to understand that Jesus is the only way of salvation. Stephen asked this question: "Do you believe this is true for Westerners?" To which I replied, "I believe it's true for the whole world!" He looked thoughtful at that statement, and I knew exactly what was going through his head - Christianity is a Western religion that doesn't impact him as a Chinese man. This is a classic Asian mindset that can be difficult to overcome. We concluded our meal, they thanked me for my time, and promised to be thinking about what had been said.

That night, after the Chinese Bible Study, one of my men let me know he had just been able to lead Stephen and Lyn to the Lord! I was wondering what in the world could have changed their mind - and then I found out. That night, they were eating with one of our Chinese ladies, Kristen, who got saved last year and has been faithful ever since. Kristen began to explain how Christ had changed her life, and told them how it was truth for every person, including the Chinese. Hearing her, as a fellow Chinese, speak of Christ was what it took to bring them to get saved! Praise the Lord! Stephen was then baptized on the 15th! Pray for Lyn to be baptized soon!

Just last week, after the Friday Night Bible Study, a lady by the name of Shirley, who had only visited the church once, asked to speak with me. She told me of how the last 14 months of her life had been terrible. She recounted some of the trials she had faced, and it was heartbreaking to hear it all - she truly has faced tragedy after tragedy in her life. She said "It drove me to try and take my own life this last July, but someone rescued me. Then, two of your church people (another Chinese couple) invited me to come to your church a couple of weeks ago, and I've felt very welcome and I feel like something is different with you." Over the next 30 minutes, I was able to present to her, likely for the very first time in her life, the good news of the Gospel. It's a lot to take in, and she'll no doubt need us to sit down with her many more times, but I believe Shirley will soon be saved. Please pray for her and many others!

*Thank you for your continued prayers!
Sam, Juliana, Emma, & Alexa Hutchens*