



FIRST SPLIT SERVICE

A "SMALLER" CROWD AS A RESULT OF NEW COVID RESTRICTIONS



MOUNTAIN TOP VIEW

MY VIEW FROM A RECENT MORNING HUNT IN THE HILLS



NO PASS REQUIRED

THE SIGN WE MUST HANG IN OUR CHURCH DOOR. NO PASS REQUIRED!

THE HUTCHENS FAMILY



February 2022 Update

I would imagine that you, like myself, are getting tired of hearing the latest about COVID. The truth is, as I observe social media from the USA, it seems as though we are way behind many of you in our "COVID journey." What I mean by that is that we are just now seeing widespread and relatively uninhibited spread of COVID in New Zealand. Prior to this month, the highest daily number of cases ever was in the low 200's. Today was our first day over 1,000. This surge has had both its blessings and its disadvantages.

I'll start with the blessings. The biggest one is that our government has finally set into motion a plan to open up our borders. Since March of 2020, only New Zealand Citizens and residents were permitted to enter New Zealand, and were required to spend two weeks in "MIQ" (Managed Isolation & Quarantine). The cost of MIQ varied on the number of people in a group, and was always in the thousands of dollars.

Thankfully, starting 28 February, we will be entering into a five-step gradual re-opening of the NZ borders, with travellers only needing to isolate at home for seven days after their arrival in the country.

"Increase Our Faith" was the new theme introduced at Vision Sunday, 30 January.

Later on this winter (summer for you), the borders will once again open to citizens of all countries. Since we haven't seen family from outside of New Zealand since mid-2019, we're excited about the possibilities!

Adding to that excitement, I'm thrilled to announce that our Residency application has been **approved!** This gives us much greater freedom to come and go from New Zealand if and when we are ready. Keep in mind, since March of 2020, had we left NZ at any point, we would not have been able to return on our temporary visa. We're so excited to finally be a permanent part of New Zealand, and we're looking forward to a potential trip back to the USA in the next 12-18 months to see family and report back.

The downside to the surge in new cases is that the government has instituted significant restrictions on crowds. Currently, if a venue is willing to check vaccine passes, they are permitted a crowd of up to 100 people. If they are unwilling to check passes, they are limited to a crowd of 25. Our church typically runs about 60 on Sundays, and we will not check passes, so this has directly impacted us. Our temporary solution has been to split our services into two identical gatherings, with half the church attending each on a rotating basis. This way, there is room for visitors (of which we have had several), and the church family continues to see each other as we gather to worship. It's less than ideal, but God continues to demonstrate that He is not limited. Our first Sunday with this system, the 30th of January, we had a combined total of 70 people (obviously more than the 25 per service allotment, but we're trying!). That was our highest attendance since last June, when we had several families leave the church (a total of about 20 people). I was shocked, but I know I shouldn't have been. Since then, we've seen excellent attendances, visitors, and a genuinely sweet spirit in the church. For this, I praise the Lord!

The ongoing restrictions make larger outreaches impossible. Just this week we had been scheduled to set up a booth at the local university for their orientation day. Despite this, we are thankful to see the opportunities God does open. One, in particular, is a teenaged boy who has been attending our youth outreaches recently. I've witnessed to him before, but he's not yet been saved. Just last night, he texted me and asked if we could meet and talk through some things he's been struggling with. He wants to know more about "connecting with God." Pray for me as I meet with him in the next couple of days!

Prayer Requests

- Pray for Juliana's pregnancy and safe arrival of Harrison!
- Pray for the teen boy I am meeting with this week!
- Pray for continued fruit despite COVID restrictions!

*The Hutchens Family
Sam, Juliana, Emma, Alexa, & Samantha*

Family news & pictures



TOP: Emma & Alexa start a new school year @ home

MIDDLE: Alexa enjoys a date with daddy.

BOTTOM: Samantha... being Samantha.

We are very excited to announce that Hutchens baby #4 is a BOY! Harrison Wesley is due in June, and his three older sisters can't wait to meet him.