

HUTCHENS FAMILY

Serving in Christchurch, New Zealand

Family News



Emma & Alexa pose in their Indian outfits on a missions emphasis Sunday.

Our family continues to be healthy and happy!

Emma continues to enjoy her K-5 year of homeschool, and is picking up new knowledge every day!

Alexa is your very typical three-year old. She loves to stir up trouble and have fun wherever she can find it!

Samantha just hit six months, which is hard to believe! She is, by far, the happiest baby we have ever seen, smiling all the time.

Juliana and I are doing well, and have recently been moving towards a healthier lifestyle over all. I've lost a little bit of weight and feel great!

Changing Seasons

One of the continued novelties to me about living in the Southern Hemisphere is the reversal of seasons. As we have moved through April and into May, the days have gotten shorter and cooler, and now we're on the front door of winter. Now the sun comes up close to 8:00 AM, and it goes down again shortly after 5:00 PM. Morning frosts have become a regular scene. I love watching the seasons change, in part because it reminds me of the truth of Ecclesiastes 3:1 - *To every thing there is a season...*



Autumn colors have been seen all around Christchurch recently!

Ministry Updates

It's appropriate to consider seasons as I look back on our year of ministry so far. Our last prayer letter detailed an insanely busy start to the year in February and March, with multiple outreaches, church events, and follow ups. Since then, while life has continued to be somewhat busy, it's been a slightly slower season. That's not to say things haven't been happening!

Of course, one of the biggest events of the past couple of months was Easter weekend. In 2020, I had felt the Lord leading us to have a much bigger weekend of ministry than we had had in previous years, but then we ended up spending that Easter in lockdown, streaming our services to Facebook (by the way, one gentleman was watching that Easter Sunday who has since gotten assurance of his salvation, been baptized, and become a faithful member of our church! We were bound, but God's Word was not!). Since we had "missed out" on those things in 2020, we placed them on the calendar for 2021.

This started with an Easter youth rally on Saturday night. We invited a couple of sister churches within an hours drive to join us, and encouraged the teens to invite their unsaved friends. We ended up having 26 teens, several of whom do not know Christ. I preached the Gospel that evening, and we're praying the Lord will use that seed to see those teens saved in the future.

On Sunday, we had two services - one to reach Chinese, and our regular English service. Because we rent our building, and don't really have opportunity outside of our normal timeframe to use the building, we rented a separate space above a



Some of our Easter Sunday attendees from the English service

Praises

- Praise the Lord for an excellent Easter weekend, including a youth rally, Chinese, and English services. Overall attendance of 181!
- Praise the Lord for the recent salvation of two Chinese ladies, Shirley and Anne.
- Praise the Lord for an excellent start to our missions emphasis month of May!
- Praise the Lord for a continued ability to minister with no restrictions related to COVID!

Prayer Requests

- Pray for Shirley, who was recently saved and has been diagnosed with brain cancer.
- Pray for our residency application to be approved.
- Pray for our continued search for a permanent building for the church.
- Pray for our Missions Commitment Sunday - 30 May.

Chinese restaurant for the Chinese service, and held that service in the morning. We printed up some tracts and posters, and hired the Chinese restaurant to serve a lunch to all who attended. We placed a QR code on the back of the tracts so people could RSVP, because capacity was limited. Within 72 hours of distributing the first few hundred, we had an unbelievable 60 people who had already reserved their spot! We were a bit alarmed - our largest attendance to any Chinese function had previously been about 25...would we really see that many people come to this service? That Sunday morning, 69 first-time Chinese guests attended the service! I asked them as the service began "how many of you have never attended a Christian church service before?" Approximately 90% raised their hands. It was my privilege to then preach a simple Gospel message, which was no doubt the first time for the majority of those people to hear it. We carefully collected contact details of the attendees, and have used this as a training opportunity for our Chinese believers in how to follow up and witness. While it has been slow going, they have done a *great* job at writing notes, making visits, and keeping in contact. Praise the Lord we've seen two ladies begin attending, and one of them trusted Christ just last week!

That was just the Chinese service! As soon as that was done, I raced back to our house to load everything up for the English service. We had put out several thousand invitations and ordered a caterer to provide a nice meal for all in attendance. We ended up with 12 first time guests to our English service, and again, the Gospel was preached clearly to all in attendance. It was an absolutely exhausting 36 hours of ministry, but it resulted in a combined attendance of just over 180 people, and each one of those people, saved or not, heard a clear presentation of the Gospel. What a wonderful way to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Since then, things have settled down a bit. We've stayed busy helping our Chinese learn to follow up, and continuing in normal day-to-day ministry.

One Chinese lady named Shirley was recently diagnosed with inoperable brain tumors. I had spent about an hour with her last year giving her the Gospel, but she had yet to trust Christ. Upon her diagnosis, one of our church ladies was able to sit down with her and she was ready to hear and trust Jesus. We've been visiting her, helping her get her affairs in order, and trying to be a comfort. Pray for Shirley as she faces the end of her life.

May is our annual missions month, and we've had a great three weeks thus far. I believe strongly in supporting foreign missions, even as we receive missions support ourselves. Our church family has given liberally to missions over the past three years, and just last week we eclipsed our annual commitment, three weeks ahead of schedule! We've enjoyed video calls with our missionaries, our kids had a "dress up" Sunday where they wore foreign outfits, and we're looking forward to our Giving Commitment Sunday on the 30th of May.

On the search for a permanent building, nothing has changed recently. We continue to be vigilant in researching potential spots, all whilst patiently waiting on the Lord and utilizing the building we currently use as best we can. A recent "combined" service of both Chinese and English further highlighted the fact that we simply don't have much space to spare. Keep praying for us in this regard!

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