

Dear Friends & Loved Ones,

Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. We all know and understand that we are in a battle and the devil is trying to defeat us day by day but some times when things are going well we can get lazy. Over the past few months things have been going quite well and we are thankful for all the Lord has seen accomplished here. In December we had the normal business of the holidays with a Christmas parade which our church entered a float, and we were able to hand out many tracts. We were the only float with a Christian theme which was, "The Greatest Gift Is Jesus." We were dressed in Bible Character costumes, had a manger scene on the float and the church choir sang the song "The Greatest Gift".

Christmas Day was a great service with more than 150 in attendance. This was a normal service with just a bit more special music but we were blessed to have many visitors-several of whom were from Israel as a family in our church has been hosting Israeli tourists. It was good to speak to them after the service and to have an opportunity to share with them the gospel. They were amazed that many of the songs and the passage I preached from talked about Israel. The Friday after Christmas we were able to go to Auckland to pick up our overseas visitors. We were expecting to pick up Lynette's parents at 6:30 a.m., then Mr. Turner (a retired man from our home church that paid his own way to come and do odd jobs at the church for two months) at 7:30, and Pastor and Mrs. Wall (one of our supporting church pastors) at 12:30, but Lynette's parents missed their flight and didn't come in until two days later. That evening I had a wedding dress rehearsal and then we had a very large wedding on Saturday with over 250 in attendance. On Sunday we had a service for New Year's Day. The Walls were a real blessing to us even though we only had them here for a short time over the weekend. Lynette's parents arrived on the first of January so they were here in time for our afternoon service. It is such a miracle that they are here since the last time we wrote a regular prayer letter, we had flown to the states because the doctors didn't think Dad would live!! Please continue to pray for Lynette's father as he is still having a hard time; his speech is mostly gone and he has difficulty with daily activities of life. We appreciate every day we have with him and Mom Hayward.

We were told by one of the deacons not to get discouraged if the attendance of the church went down a lot during the holidays. I was waiting for this to happen but to the Lord's credit we did not see this happen, nor through the summer holidays, instead we have averaged about 150 or so for most Sunday mornings.

At the end of January we had our Family camp. This camp was a real blessing. A pastor from the South Island, Pastor Jeff Williams, preached for us. The camp is a great time to spend a long week-end together with our church folks and enjoy each other, God's creation (we were across the road from the Pacific Ocean) and good preaching. We can add to that excellent food as one of our new members, Ryckie Takewa, prepared the food. He was a pastor of a small church in town that merged with ours but is now working as a chef. What a treat! Every meal that he prepared was a gourmet experience (you had to be there to believe it)! Two other highlights were seeing a visitor saved and Dick Turner (the man from our home church) baptized in the ocean! School has started again for this year. The summer holiday isn't as long since we have four terms with 10 weeks on, two weeks off. Our Kid's Clubs start this week and we look forward to the many kids that come, hear God's Word, and hopefully get saved and grow as Christians. We have seen many good results and the evening club (9-12yr. old) was running about 60 before we had summer holidays. We appreciate your prayers for these ministries.

We are thrilled to see many visitors out every week. Some are passing through, some from town. We have a couple new families that are coming back regularly. One man joined the church this Sunday- he had been baptized before but is now ready to make the commitment to join our church. We are seeing more nationalities, like the church in Hamilton had.

Speaking of the church in Hamilton (our first church here in New Zealand), Pastor Jono and Christi are doing a great job there. They just had their first baby, a girl they named Kara. We see our sweet friends from Hamilton now and then as we're only an hour and a half away.

Thanks for your support! We're so thankful for all the ways you show your love- birthday cards, Christmas cards, etc. Our church folks that came to our house around Christmas were impressed by the beautiful American Christmas cards hanging around our home. Thanks for your love.

Your co-workers in New Zealand,
Garth, Lynette, Lydia. Garrett and Grant Piper

