

Szwarga Family

planting churches in New Zealand

Prayer Letter | December 2024

The first two weeks of December were a bit more calm than November. Visitors began developing into faithful attendees through this holiday month. Initially, there was hesitancy beginning the church so close to Christmas as the holidays stretch from mid-December to mid-January, and many are traveling and out of routine. But, God has brought in new visitors to morning and evening service since the start and has proven Himself correct in His timing, as always. In the third week of December, we moved into Matamata, our previous home being 45 minutes away. The home that God provided has been a Providential blessing for our family, ministerially, and financially. Since our church rents a hall for services, we have hosted prayer meetings, outreach meetings, and many families in our home already.

Three days after moving in, Heritage Baptist Church held its first Christmas service. A large contingent from Grace Independent Baptist Church along with Pastor Fraser joined us, bringing their friends and family from Matamata. It was our highest "Matamata local attendance," with 36 joining us that evening.

Later that week, my parents, Steve and Donna Szwarga, landed in New Zealand. My dad preached at the North Island Family Camp, through the invitation of Pastor Fraser. The preaching and counsel given throughout the week was used of God powerfully. Attendance ranged from 150-195, with many testimonies of God doing a great work in the families. The following Sunday (and the first Sunday of 2025), my dad preached in the morning service at HBC. The church once again hit a high local attendance of 40. After the service a man trusted Christ as his Savior, marking the first person to receive Christ through Heritage Baptist Church! We found it fitting that my dad was the one to deliver the gospel for this milestone!

Most scheduled outreach activities were suspended for the holidays, but God knows how to bring people to you. My parents experienced a classic aspect of Kiwi culture, the home drop-in. Several neighbors stopped by to chat, providing good opportunities to discuss the Scriptures and witness. Considering we lived rural in our previous home, this location has given us the chance to invite, witness to, and pray with neighbors already.

Although this letter is arriving halfway through January, we will send one out back on schedule next month with all that has happened this month! God has been at work here in Matamata and we praise the Lord for His outpouring of blessings. Churches such as Fellowship Baptist Church in Hamilton have maintained a prayer chain for this church for many months now. Our sending church in Elgin has been a constant source of prayer, communication, and support. Those, along with all of you, are the source of God's blessings here. We are simply the channel through which God has allowed those blessings to flow.

Thank you as well for the overwhelming thoughtfulness and sacrifice in sending Christmas love offerings. We are undeserving of it all.

As we continue through January, please pray for the outreach of HBC, Matamata and the salvation of souls. Pray for the assistant, Limuel and his wife Caitlin, and that God would give him wisdom beyond his years and longevity in the work of God. Lastly, pray for the filming of a series of gospel films later this month. More details later!

Thank you for praying,

Josh, Alyse, Bentley and Raelynn Szwarga

