

Smiths Prayer Letter

Church Planting in New Zealand

Dear Praying Friends,

5 June 2010

The last couple of months have been very busy for us. We have enjoyed visits from Laurie's mom (which is always a fun time) and from one of Carol's closest friends in the States. We have been enriched by our annual Field Conference and visit from our Area Director and his wife. We have completed the Parenting Course we were doing with 6 couples and Lisa (our daughter who was taking it to help her in her pursuits to become a nanny). I have had several meetings to attend and a Men's Retreat and 30th Anniversary for our Church to help organize. We have also celebrated two birthdays – Laurie's and mine (the big 50).



Pastor Steve Wong brought a team from Fellowship Bible Church in San Francisco, CA to minister to our missionary team as well as our combined church leadership teams. Overall, there were 87 people present. The singing was wonderful and the messages insightful, helpful and challenging. The team provided specific ministries to our pre-school children, school age children and teenagers. They did an excellent job!

It was good to catch up and fellowship with our co-workers in Christ, both missionary and national workers. We had time to do some sightseeing with the team and let them experience a little New Zealand cuisine and culture. At the end of the conference the Maori men paid tribute to them by giving them a Haka performance (traditional Maori dance).

Our Word of Life Clubs have been up and running well. Last month 18 children from our Olympian Club reached the Bronze Level Achievement Award. Our Dyna-Might Club (for teens) has grown out of their meeting venue. A family in our church has offered their place to meet in which is bigger. On Mother's Day we had over a hundred people in our morning service which put us over our maximum amount allowed for our building without a fire plan permit. We stand in amazement over what we have seen God do since coming to Hamilton in April 2003. Then, there were 18 discouraged people on our first Sunday. Now, the church is thriving and looking to expand in two possible ways – by looking for a bigger building to accommodate more people and by starting a new church plant in Cambridge, a neighbouring town.

As I have been praying and searching the Scriptures for a Biblical strategy for transitioning from a pastoral role of church planting to more of a mentoring role, certain principles have come to light. First, is the need for a plurality of qualified leadership to be in place. Secondly, a willingness to lead on the part of the leaders and a willingness to follow on the part of the congregation. Thirdly, as the leadership gains the trust of the people and the skills and experience needed they must increase their sphere of influence and I must decrease my sphere of influence. **Please pray that God would give us wisdom into the implementation and timing of each facet of the strategy mentioned.**

One final note, we have been rejoicing over two young men (late teens and early twenties) who have received the Lord as their personal Savior through the witnessing of members within our congregation. Please pray for Jake and Jordan's continued growth and spiritual development.

Gratefully,

Barry & Laurie Smith (Hamilton, New Zealand)