

JOSH, ALYSE, & BENTLEE  
**SZWARGA**

MISSIONARIES TO NEW ZEALAND

*Prayer Letter | August 2023*

If you recall from our previous prayer letter, our church hosted its first Friend Day on August 20. There was great anticipation leading up to the event because of the unified involvement of the church family in preparing and inviting. God blessed the efforts and prayers with 45 first-time visitors in attendance, most of whom were adults. All of those guests were considered to be relatives or close friends of our church family, with many of them previously not having a positive view of churches or the gospel.

During the invitation time, several raised their hand indicating they had trusted Christ, and the overwhelming response during the fellowship hour afterwards showed that hardened hearts to the gospel have been softened. It is difficult to relay by letter and therefore likely not headline-worthy, to hear of visitors whose only positive progression was in comments they made regarding the message. However, this was preceded by years, and in some cases decades, of labor and prayer for those who invited them.

The growth experienced by our church family was an unanticipated outcome as well. The opportunity to labor and pray together as a unified team, to see God answer those prayers in such a decisive fashion, and the effort to break from the comfort zone during the event to focus on all of those who were visiting, were all powerful effects.

We recently shifted our door knocking to a more rural area. This is located just one mile from the hall that our church rents. Although we have yet to see someone attend from this area, there has been heightened interest because of our proximity and the lack of any churches in the area. We are praying that God would add to the church from our own neighborhood.

Initial plans for our first church plant have been methodically discussed over the past few months. God has given some further direction in location, but please continue in prayer for His leading. We are anticipating a church plant equidistant from our church and a sister church, in conjunction with them. Early planning has led us towards October 2024 for the start of this church. Please also pray for God to prepare the hearts of the people. We will update with more information in future letters.

Thank you for praying,  
Josh, Alyse and Bentlee Szwarga

*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6*

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