

Nick's News

NEWS UPDATE FROM NEW ZEALAND



G'day from New Zealand!

G'day once again from New Zealand. As I write this, I am struggling to get my head around the fact that there is only 2 days until Christmas! As I reflect on the year, it has been a year of ups and downs, good times and hard times, but one thing that I have constantly seen or been reminded of is that no matter what, God is with me and loves me.

There's a Christmas carol that has the words, "It's the most wonderful time of the year." That is the case for some people, but for many, it is the most craziest time of the year, with the pressure of looking for gifts, travelling, having kids home for the holidays, end of year meetings and Christmas parties, spending time with extended family amongst other things. For others still, it's the most loneliest time of the year—a reminder of the fact that they don't have family or friends around when so many others do.

Isaiah 7:14 says, "All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us')."

God saw that we needed serious help, so he came to the earth in the form of a human being to provide the ultimate gift of his Son so that we could be free from the mess that we have made of our lives.

This time of year is a great time to find peace and take comfort in that reminder, and also the perfect time to share that message of hope to someone else who may have none at this time of year.

Merry Christmas!



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Update on the Youth...

The last quarter of the year has seen us spending time working through the book of John as a youth group. It has been very beneficial to spend a good few months looking at the life of Jesus and learning from the man who was God in the flesh.

A personal highlight for me was the night that we covered the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. We watched a DVD that focused on this part of his life, and showed the whole event through the eyes of Jesus. This really connected with the

youth, as they saw the contrast between how Jesus treated others and how he was treated himself. Some of them have mentioned this to me several times.

Last Wednesday night (December 18) we had our youth Christmas party. We started with some tenpin bowling (which I happened to win!) and then we moved onto a progressive dinner. For those who don't know, a progressive dinner is where you visit different houses for several different



The youth hanging out at the Christmas party.

courses of a meal. We were blessed to be hosted by 2 families from Otumoetai. The night was very successful, with several of our newer teens being there as well! Please pray for connections to continue to be made with these teens.

Brianna and I are still studying with two of the youth girls—Tracey and Michaela. We had our last study for the year today and will continue to get together every week after the new year. This study has been very encouraging and is one of the highlights of

my week. I have seen so much growth in these girls—they are really coming out of their shells. They are also remembering everything that we cover in the studies, so there is obviously a hunger to know more there.

Please pray for the youth over the Christmas and New Year as many of them will be travelling during this time, and please also pray for growth in the youth in 2014—there is always much work to be done!



The youth enjoying some pizza at the Christmas party

Bex's Bit

As I reflect on 2013 I am amazed at how much we have done, it has been a busy year but God has been at work in so many ways. One of those ways that is so amazing to me is the joy that we have found in our precious boy, Noah. It is so amazing how God designed us to grow and learn. Watching a baby who knows how to cry and drink milk to now at 14 months beginning to walk, talk and pull funny faces at us knowingly. We feel truly blessed to have such a great little guy in our lives. He loves going to bible class and stares very intently when anyone prays :)



Probably the most exciting thing that has happened this quarter is that we have had 5 baptisms at Otumoetai in 5 weeks! Praise the Lord for 5 new family members!



I enjoyed organising the women's Christmas party this year. We heard from two of our ladies who have worked hard to build a close relationship cross generationally. They shared that despite absolute different personalities, hobbies, ages and life experiences they found what they did have in common and built a relationship from there. It was inspirational for all of us to see what a blessing it is to be in Gods family and that he places people in our lives for a purpose.



CHURCH VISIONING

Over the last few newsletters I have been sharing that we as a church are going through a time of visioning. Our desire is to really get to know God and His nature through spending time in the Scriptures and listening to the Holy Spirit. From this, we are trusting God to reveal how He wants us to be living out His mission in this part of the world.

I mentioned last newsletter that we have 4 values that are important to us that the church came up with—*Jesus, Transformation, Community and Outreach*. We have spent roughly 2 months looking at our first 2 values. In the new year we will spend more time on *Community and Outreach*. During the summer we will be spending time as a church dreaming together, spending time in prayer and brainstorming how we can be specifically living out our values.



Please be praying for this time as this is where we get to the stage where we start taking action.

I have been blessed to be a part of this process by being on a team of 8 people who are leading the church through this time of visioning. Every 1-2 weeks, we get together to pray, discuss how things are going and to organize things to keep the momentum going.

Over the last couple of months the overall mood in the congregation has been very positive. God has been causing some growth with 5 baptisms in the last 5 weeks! There is also a strong desire from members of Otumoetai to be involved and serving. It is encouraging to see everyone be excited about what God is doing through this place! Please be praying for God to continue to work through this time of visioning.

Church Visioning (cont'd)



There are many of us that believe that 2014 is going to be a massive year for our church. We are all excited about what God could potentially do over the next year! Please also pray for us on the visioning

team to have a refreshing break over the Christmas and New Year period, as leading this process of visioning is also tiring business! Pray for God to give us more energy and stamina for the year to come.

FINALLY FOR 2013...

I want to say a massive thank you to everybody who has contributed financially to our family over this year. I appreciate each and every one of you and thank you for the sacrifice that you have made. It is truly humbling that you would put your trust in me—some of you who have done so I haven't even seen in a very long time!

I'd like to also ask you for your prayers for my sister Jodie and her continued situation. It's a long story, but she is not being treated well in prison and it is very difficult to do anything about it because of the way the legal system works. There are people who are high up in the system who are making life very difficult for Jodie, and my family is looking at talking to someone from the Queensland government to see if there is anything that can be done. It is sad that these things happen in a country

like Australia, but I guess this is because we live in a fallen world. Please be praying for her and the rest of the family.

I truly hope that your Christmas is filled with peace, joy and happiness and that God gives you some rest and rejuvenation over the holiday season.

I look forward to sharing what God does here in 2014—Merry Christmas!

Because of Christ

Nick



Don't we live in a beautiful part of the world?



Sharing some thoughts during our Christmas themed service on Sunday (December 22).

Prayer Requests

- The visioning process for the Otumoetai church—especially as we come up with ways to live out our values in our community.
- The Bible study with Tracey and Michaela.
- Growth in the youth—both spiritually and numerically.
- Our Shepherds as they lead the congregation.
- Bex and my marriage, and that we can be godly parents to Noah.
- My sister Jodie and her continued struggles.
- Financial support for Bex and I.
- Direction for my role at Otumoetai.
- Those who are struggling in their faith.
- That those who haven't committed their lives to Christ will do so.
- My fellow teammates, Andrew and Veronica Gearhart and Amy Alfreda as they work to serve the church in their various roles.
- Andrew and Veronica as they are expecting their first child.