

2021 NEWS

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A personal word of greeting

Please accept my apologies for the delay in sending out this year's report. In particular, the last few months have very busy with the work developing in several areas which require a lot of time and attention.

As I write the government is considering further restrictions to our life and as a result it is difficult for us to plan family gatherings over the holiday period.

It is hard to believe we have had nearly two years of restrictions because of the virus. Rather than restrict the gospel activity locally here it has had exactly the opposite effect. Many new areas of opportunity have opened for us especially in the prison work. We pray the following report may demonstrate the wonderful ways in which the Lord can use the most difficult circumstances for His glory and the furtherance of the gospel. Despite the problems, the Lord has given encouragements and blessing in various aspects of the work here.

We do pray that the Lord will bless you as you read this report and that you too will be greatly encouraged as you read how the Lord continues His work here.

As always Janet and I want to thank you for your continued support in prayer and in practical ways and seek the Lord's richest blessing for you and yours in the days ahead.

Jim and Janet McMaster

Report and Prayer Items

"HAVING OBTAINED HELP FROM THE LORD WE CONTINUE UNTO THIS DAY"
Acts 26:22

An Important Request

As always, can I please ask that, due to the sensitive and personal nature of the information here, you do NOT display this newsletter in any public place or publish it in any way that would allow the general population access to the information contained herein.

Overview

The last twelve months have been times of great progress in the work of the Lord. While others have applied their mind to innovative and largely digital methods of outreach the Lord has graciously allowed us to continue face to face contact with our folks and personal interaction over all this difficult period. We have ventured into employing video in several areas but largely the work has continued by the personal contact with those on the street and the prison. Travelling has been severely restricted so I have been greatly blessed in being able to completely devote myself to the local work without the added responsibility of travelling to other places to preach. I am sure that many

local companies have benefitted by the efforts of the local brothers who are usually largely occupied helping in other areas of the country or even further afield in the world.

Street Work

The street work has continued without interruption although the way we reach folks has changed dramatically. The soup kitchen work has had to cease and has been replaced but touring the streets with the gospel cart and reaching folks where they are sleeping much like the way the work began 28 years ago. At the soup kitchen often, I had many folks seeking my attention simultaneously but as we sit with them on the street the personal interaction allows many more opportunities to present the gospel in a detailed and effective way. This takes much more time but gives a lot more freedom to share the gospel at length with the folks. At the beginning of the year, we discovered that the hotel directly opposite the Gospel Hall was being used by several local authorities to accommodate homeless folks

during the pandemic. I approached the manager who very kindly allowed me to set up in the hotel car park every Sunday night and invite the residents to come, receive help and hear the gospel. So, for the most of this year this is how I begin the Sunday night street work. The numbers have not been large but there was a regular core who come to be fed and supplied with the usual material help. Please pray for Shaun. I have known him for many years, and it is an amazement to me that he is still alive when his life is so full of drug use and crime. He is always open to the gospel and continues to come to hear the gospel. Usually I spend around an hour in the car park and then proceeded over to the city and do the usual rounds of all the sleeping and begging spots. As the lockdown lifted more and more began to sleep rough again. In August we were able to begin our gospel meeting on the hall again and we were greatly encouraged by the number that attended from the "Hotel Express". Cameron, has several Christians in his family but makes regular suicide threats on the many bridges across the river Tyne. When I visit him in his accommodation and when he is not "under the influence" he has a good understanding of the gospel. He always in the conversation blames his addiction and his mental state, and while both are very serious, often it seems he is using them as a "reason" to escape his personal responsibility. Much patience and wisdom are needed for very many complex personalities like this that we encounter almost every day. These are just a small sample of the folks and problems that we deal with daily. Please pray for us as we continue this work into its 28th year.

Thank you to all who continue to send materials to help on the street. Now that we have a new emphasis in the work the needs have shifted a little. A young couple in the assembly now make sandwiches for me to take to the street every Sunday night and Pot Noodles. Chocolate, crisps, and biscuits seem to go down best and open many ears for the gospel. We continue to supply the necessities of sleeping bags, socks, boxers, hygiene packs etc to alleviate the immediate distress of many who find themselves on the streets. Thankfully we are well stocked for the upcoming hard winter months.

Prison Work

The work in HMP Durham has been the major source of encouragement during the time of the pandemic and especially when we are emerging from the restrictions. For more than a year I have been able spend two or three days a week in the prison. For most of this year I have been able to make a regular gospel video which is broadcast into most of the 173

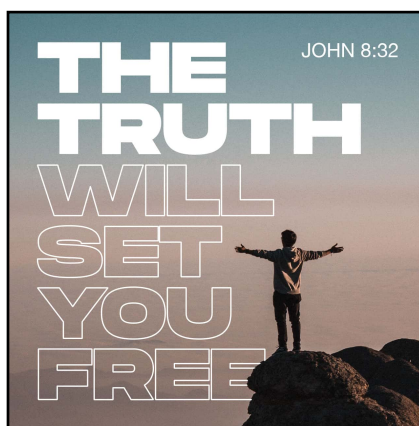
prisons in England and Wales on a special channel called Wayout TV. This has a potential audience of 100,000 and, while not everyone will watch, I am already hearing stories of many tuning into the gospel in places I could never reach in person. This, however, has come to an end as the men are now able to return to normal activities eg education, gym exercise etc. At present I go in on Tuesday and Friday. I hold a Bible class on each afternoon of these days. The classes are always oversubscribed and the current group of men I have on Tuesday are some of the most serious-minded men I have worked with.

Pray for M (1). He is major player in the organised crime network in this part of the world. He was sent to Durham because none of the other jails in the area could handle him. He is a "big man" in every way but during the last three months he has shown a very clear change in his behaviour. He has always claimed he was a Roman Catholic and previously was always very argumentative. I have spent lots of time in his cell reading scripture and clearing up some of his former beliefs. Just yesterday, when he was asked by a

brother who now helps me in the Bible Class every Tuesday, said "I don't tell people I am catholic now I tell them I am a Christian". His behaviour on the wing has changed dramatically. The officers are sceptical and suspicious, but it seems a real change. He is my "recruiter" for the bible class and has found many interested men for the studies. Space prohibits me from telling of the many more men who currently are showing great interest in Bible Study and the

gospel. There never has been a time of more opportunity and openness for the gospel in the prison work. Please remember the work in your prayers.

Please pray for M (2). He is in another prison in the UK and has been on hunger strike for many days and had said he won't talk to anyone but me. I first met him in HMP Durham 23 Years ago. He came to bible class over many years when Durham was an A Category High security residential prison and was an avid listener to the gospel. It's a long and tragic story but he has now decided it's time to leave this world. On my initial visit I had nearly two hours with him, and he has indicated that now he has spoken to me he will cease to take any fluids. This is a very serious situation. I have assured him that I will encourage Christians to pray for him. At one time he was in the hostel near the hall and attended the gospel meeting on numerous occasions. I confess I am way out of my realm of experience and comfort zone during the times with him. I usually quote scripture and pray



with him, but I confess I leave feeling useless. Only the Lord can change his mind. I have visited him now several times and he is getting close to death. He continues to request regular visits from me even though he is in another prison.

In addition, I now hold a Sunday gospel service, once a month, in the prison. The prison has allowed this to take place in the afternoon (a first for the prison and requires officers to be specially detailed to supervise) and the number of men attending has been a great encouragement. This gospel service is now the “official” Christian service for the prison on one Sunday every month. I have complete freedom to invite speakers. Please pray I will be able to find men who are not only willing but able to communicate the gospel to the men in prison. Most of the prisoners have no bible knowledge and have never heard the gospel before so I need brothers who can speak in a way that the men will understand the truth rather than being bamboozled by our familiar vocabulary which makes sense to us but is totally unintelligible to the ordinary man on the street (or in the prison).

Not everyone in the prison was enthusiastic about my service on Sunday afternoon. The full time Anglican chaplain lodged a formal complaint against me claiming that I was unqualified to lead services (ie not an ordained minister of any recognised denomination) and that it was inappropriate for me to conduct my service in the “sanctified space” of the Prison Chapel. Thankfully the Governor and the managing Chaplain (a Muslim Imam) were unimpressed by her objections and have insisted that the service continue. In a most interesting turn of events that Anglican chaplain has been forced to resign and the problem has been resolved in a most remarkable way by the Lord. Please pray as the prison has a new managing chaplain. Mohammed is a Muslim Iman who has previously worked in HMP Durham. I know him well and find him to be considerably more helpful to the spread of the gospel than the liberal Anglican Chaplain who work in Durham. It is a sad reflection of our day when a Muslim is more open to the gospel than a religious liberal church person. There are now two full time Muslim chaplains in HMP Durham. Mohammed and I have had many good conversations about the gospel. Please pray that there will be no further obstacles to the gospel and that the witness to the other chaplains may yield fruit in bringing them the light of the gospel.

Please pray specially for J. He had made a profession in prison some years ago but had fallen back into drugs and returned to HMP Durham at the beginning of the Covid 19 crisis. I am not sure whether he was saved before but since coming back has made a very clear,

genuine, and lasting profession of faith in the Lord Jesus. His evidence of real Christian fruit has been perhaps one of the most obvious results of the work in prison. We read and pray together three times a week and he has led others to the Lord on D wing. He was released recently and has gone to live in a Christian rehab in another part of the country. I received a letter from him after his release and he has settled well and is enjoying the extra time he is spending in the word of God. He is also getting good fellowship with other believers there, something that he was greatly lacking while in prison.

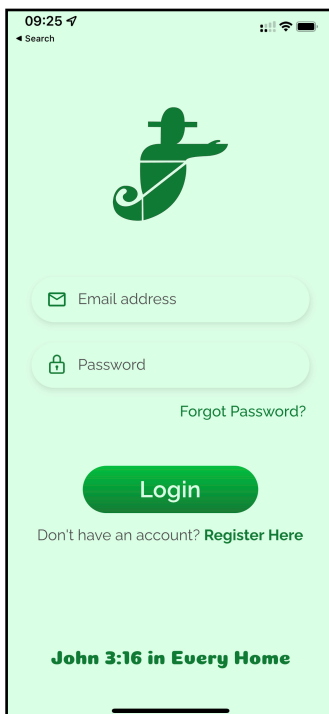
I have used Emmaus Bible Study resources for many years with great blessing to many. This year Emmaus have begun a special effort to promote these in the prisons in England and Wales. A local brother has taken this responsibility for the six prisons in the Northeast region. I have been delighted to be able to assist him to contact all the managing chaplains and will be visiting all these establishments with him early in the new year. Initial reaction from the managing chaplains has been very positive so please pray that the new year will bring great blessing to many men in the prisons here through the courses.

The same local brother (who has just had his 70th birthday) is coming in with me on a Tuesday afternoon for the Bible class and for every Sunday gospel service. This is a wonderful help and encouragement. However, if the Lord allows me to continue for a few more years there is a great need for a man at least 40 years younger than me to be raised up to continue the work. At present there seems to be no obvious interest in this area among the younger men for work like this. Please pray the Lord will raise someone up to continue this work. The door is wide open!!!

Seed Sowers

Despite many who said that door to door distribution of texts was unwise and ineffective in the current situation, here on Tyneside (and in other areas where believers have continued local distributions) exactly the opposite has been our experience. Instead of including an invite to the meeting in the SS pack this year we have been including the offer of a free bible. In conjunction with this we have put a banner at the hall and run a few Facebook ads with the same offer for a

free bible. This has proved be a most fruitful work this year. Since March 2020 we have had local requests for more than 84 bibles. We continue in regular correspondence with some of these contacts. Several are already believers who are disillusioned by the very popular shallow type of “Christianity” that is commonly



on offer and are looking for a more serious bible-based profession. Others are clearly unbelievers who are being moved by the Lord to seek the truth of His word. Many of our contacts have attended the gospel meetings that we recommenced in July.

We are planning to encourage others to join with us in 2022 in the effort to put "A John 3:16 text in every home in the UK". Andy Mullan has worked hard over the last year to produce an APP for smartphones which will allow the distributor to record the area that is covered, and the number of texts distributed every time texts are given out. It is in the final stages of development and will be available early in 2022 to be tested by volunteers. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact me.

This is a great work of Seed Sowing. We are assured by the Lord that this is indeed a work he has promised to bless. "So, then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

The Continuing Work in Malawi

In 2016, in a most unexpected way, the Lord opened up the way for Janet and me to be involved in His work in Malawi. With Stephen and Gail Harper, we have been producing and encouraging literature distribution through the auspices of Southern Africa Literature Trust. (SALT). As I write there are one million calendars and more than 3 million gospel tracts on the way by container for the brothers to use for the furtherance of the gospel. Also, the development of the site in Saidi has been greatly blessed by the Lord and there are too many aspects of the work to describe here. For detailed information please visit www.southernafricaliteraturetrust.org. My particular interest in the work is for the great gospel need in the prisons of that nation. Stephen has made three visits to the country in 2021 but I have been unable to visit due to the travel restrictions. It was my intentions to visit in November, but this proved impossible for several reasons. I was deeply disappointed but as the time passed it became clear the cancellation of the visit was of the Lord. During Stephens last visit a special Open day was held at Saidi followed by some gospel meetings. Many locals attended these meetings. The Covid 19 situation in the prisons is still very serious so the Governor at HMP Durham has donated a lot of surplus PPE that I intended to take with me to try and help in miserable prisons of this very poor country. As I write I am trying urgently to arrange transport of the PPE by air.

On January 3rd we plan to hold an online update on the work in Malawi. As before this will include video contributions from local workers. It will be an event not to be missed. So please check the website for the log in details. They will available very soon.

Family news

The family continue well by the Lord's grace. David, Rachel now have three children and are expecting number four in April 2022 (DV). They are well settled in Ayrshire.

My Mum is still able to live in her own house with regular support and care but is becoming increasingly frail. In the will of the Lord, she will have her 90th Birthday in February 2022. She still is a bright witness to all who enter her home. Janet's Mum and Dad are likewise elderly but daily drawing strength from the Lord.

Janet continues to be involved in the increasing demands of administration and accounting that is needed for the work of SALT. She is ideally suited for this demanding and growing work for the Lord and greatly enjoys fellowship in this work with Gail.

Thank you again for your continued and faithful support as we continue to seek to serve the Lord as He directs us.

May the Lord richly bless you.

By His Grace and For His glory,
Jim and Janet McMaster

