



December 2020

PRAYER LETTER NO. 37

Dear Friends,

Greetings to you all in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our last prayer letter dates back to July of this year, so it's time to write again. 2020 has certainly been an eventful year to give us food for thought, yet it is good to know that the Lord continues with His work worldwide whatever the circumstances. He has promised to build His church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16v18). He has also promised that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11v9). Like all Christians, we need to take encouragement from such promises as we labour away in His service.

The church in De Panne during the first lockdown

Many of you will have witnessed a lockdown in your own situation. The first lockdown here in Belgium started on Friday 13 March (no, we're not superstitious!) and continued until Monday 8 June. During that time, Michael provided outlines of Sunday services and sermons online via e-mail, weekly Bible studies via e-mail, and daily Bible meditations.

Worship services resume (with a difference!)

By 14 June, services on the Lord's Day could resume. However, restrictions on indoor meetings were so severe that we felt obliged to consider alternatives. We opted for open-air services on the plot of land next to our Sunday School premises. We erected a tent to provide some shelter in case of bad weather. Thankfully, the Lord provided dry weather on each Lord's Day, so the weather was not an issue. Sadly, not all church members attended those services, but those who did attend enjoyed great blessing. We also pray that some of the neighbours will have listened 'in secret' and heard something to do their souls some good.

Worship services indoors (11 October to 1 November)

By October, the weather was getting too cold for outdoor services for our senior citizens, so we had to move indoors. That involved plenty of extra work in order to comply with indoor regulations. Sadly, there were some church members who had attended services outdoors, but did not wish to do so indoors. Other church members have stayed at home for the entire summer and have not even shown any desire to keep in touch. All this has caused some friction within the fellowship. Please pray for us as we try to maintain a spirit of unity.

The second lockdown (8 November onwards)

At the time of writing, Belgium is in a second lockdown and there are no indications as to when restrictions will be eased. The Lord uses all circumstances to continue His work and we as a church have had to acquire the skills of recording online services. And so, each Saturday morning, a small group of us meet together to record a service which church members can view online on the next day. We've also been learning how to use the Internet tool Zoom for some meetings. Whilst this can never fully replace face-to-face contact, we are thankful to the Lord for the technology which enables us to maintain some form of ministry. Do please pray that the Lord will use these online services to build up the members of our church and also reach some outsiders. As we mentioned in our last letter, we haven't really made any fresh contact with outsiders in recent months, although we still hope and pray for more opportunities for spiritual conversation with our new neighbours.

Other matters

We are thankful to the Lord that we ourselves have not fallen victim to the corona virus and only one of our 42 church members has had the virus. Ariëtte has enjoyed a reasonable year in terms of health, despite her ongoing muscular disorders. Financially, we still depend largely on Michael's translation work. Several businesses in Belgium have gone bankrupt this year, so we are grateful that Michael's translation business has more or less stayed on an even keel.

A practical request

We would like to share one practical issue with you. Our car (a Peugeot Expert) has done yeoman service over the past decade or so in bringing us from A to B, but recent visits to the garage suggest that it is nearing the end of its life. In September, we had a bill of 1200 euros to get the car through its annual mandatory inspection. Moreover, garage staff also informed us that even more repairs will be needed next year to get the car through its following test next September. The car is 15 years old and has done over 340,000 kilometres (about 212,000 miles), so the time has probably come to replace it in the coming months. We have put aside some money for that purpose, but we would greatly appreciate any financial help which churches or individuals could give us in this matter. If you or your church fellowship would be willing and able to contribute towards this need, please contact the EMF office (see address below).

Summary of prayer points :

1. We praise and thank the Lord for His kindness and sustaining grace in an unusual year.
2. We thank the Lord for the dry weather during the summer months so that we were able to hold open-air services.
3. We thank the Lord for helping us to acquire a degree of technical expertise to do some ministry online. Please pray that the Lord will use all these efforts to build up His children and reach outsiders.
4. Pray for wisdom for us as we try to maintain a spirit of unity within the fellowship.
5. Pray for us as we try to establish more contact with our neighbours.

In closing we send you all our greetings of the season and very best wishes for 2021. We realise that the season known as Christmas will very likely be different this year, but we pray that the Lord may bless all efforts to serve Him at this time. Thank you for your prayers!

Yours warmly in Christ,

Michael and Ariëtte Robinson

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