

Hill's Christmas Letter 2023



Merry Christmas from the Hills to all of our family and friends! As we entered 2023, we closed one chapter of our lives in America, and we opened another chapter in Ireland.

In January, we settled Jen's dad's estate and left the house in the hands of trusted realtors with much prayer that it would sell quickly. Josh also had his 17th birthday in the United States. Meanwhile, in Ireland, our church building landlord was constantly contacting us, questioning whether or not we would meet the deadline to close on the purchase by the end of June. As you know from our prayer letters, the whole ordeal was quite a saga! After being away so long, our church people greeted us with open arms and hearts. Due to Covid and multiple other reasons, our congregation was in the 40s, the lowest it had been for several years. Although we have a reasonably sized youth group, we all were very burdened about our children's Sunday school, as numbers had fallen to about three children. On a weekly basis, several of our members met for early morning prayer, and some fasted for more families to come and for the purchase of our church building.

In February, John turned 12, and our children resumed music school with three other missionary families.

In March, we had our St Patrick's Day outreach, and at the same time, the Josses with Masters Craftsmen stayed with us for a week. With Eric's advice, it was decided that we should obtain a new roof for our church from an Irish company, especially since it would come with a 20-year guarantee. We needed to purchase the building first.

In April, our sweet Hannah turned 15. She was thrilled to be able to celebrate that birthday with her friends in Ireland. We also began planning for the internships of Josiah and Josh in Ireland.

In May, all the homeschool families and missionary kids from several churches in Ireland put together a music, arts and crafts day, which was called Firstfruits. This was held in New Life B.C in Drogheda, and the missionaries that sponsored it (the Tharps), did a phenomenal job organising it. All the children worked incredibly hard and further developed their God-given talents and skills. Jen flew to America to see her mom for Mother's Day and sign to close on the sale of her parents' house. At the end of May, Josiah flew home, and we went on a five-day family holiday up in Northern Ireland, before the mad rush of summer ministries began.

In June and July, Josiah led the adults' Sunday school class (which they really enjoyed), and he preached, ran the month-long HBCs (holiday Bible clubs) in the park, and ran teen events and young adult events. Josh began a new choir ministry at GBC, which has been a great blessing. As you followed our prayer letters, you know that even though we had financing in place, we did not close by the time we agreed with the owner/landlord.

In August, the LORD began to answer a big prayer by bringing in many visitors on a weekly basis, and to this day, four new families and a number of individuals have stayed and grown. One of the single ladies received Christ, and two of the families came forward for membership. The rest of the individuals and families seem to be settling in very nicely to the church. Along with the families, we have several new children. During this month, the Andersons from BWM stayed with us for a number of days, and Josiah went back to Bible

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college in Ambassador with Joshua joining him. It was bittersweet to say good-bye to the boys, but Ruby (Cavapoo puppy), the new addition to our family softened the blow



In September, we signed for the church building, but it would still take a couple of months for the sale to close. We also said good-bye to dear missionary friends, Dan and Sharon Pero.

Jen started up a monthly ladies breakfast and Bible study, and the new attenders have been faithfully coming.

In October, having brought a team from GBC down to Galway to pass out literature to help a new church plant, we went down to support the opening day of Grace Baptist Church on Sunday evening. Les also preached the previous Thursday "get to know you" meeting.

November was a very busy month. It began with Jen and our church ladies hosting Ladies Fall Getaway, a 2-3 day camp for pastors' wives and ladies from their churches. At the same time, Les and a few young lads went to Scotland to help our friends, the Shores, do renovation work on their new church building. We had a few birthdays in between the busyness of the month. We enjoyed having 5-6 churches represented at our annual area-wide teen event.



We had the Kiss family, missionaries to Hungary stay with us overnight, and they gave us an update on their ministry. Thanksgiving is always one of the highlights in our year as we gather with many of the missionaries in Ireland for feast, fellowship and Christmas carols!! This year, it was hosted by our dear friends, the Finleys, in their new addition to the church building in Athlone. However, this day was even more spectacular because it was the day that we finally closed on our church building!! The day afterwards, we had our annual church bonfire at our house. We sang hymns, choruses, and Christmas carols again!! Later that evening, we shifted gears and hosted 11 students and teachers from the Baptist College International, Romania. They stayed with us for two nights, and they performed our Christmas cantata. They did a wonderful job!!

December began with our missionary and homeschool music school putting on their end-of-year recital. The kids did an amazing job with their piano, violin, orchestra, bells, choir and readings. Our church Christmas carolled the following week at local nursing home. One of the residents helped us to secure our first church meeting place in Lucan almost 20 years ago! She now has Alzheimer's, but she lit up with the singing and hearing of the Gospel. Many others were touched, and our people were able to share Christ more with them afterwards. Our Christmas play was led by one of the young ladies who grew up in the church. This is the second year that she has led this ministry, and she did a phenomenal job. Her assistance has been a tremendous help to Jenny! Attendance has risen significantly, and the church was packed for both Christmas programmes, and it has been really encouraging for everyone.

This year, we will spend Christmas with our boys and Jen's family in America. Thankfully, Les' sister and husband will be able to spend Christmas with Les' dad this year. They will stay in our home.



Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!

Les, Jen, Josiah, Josh, Hannah, John and Ruby (6 months)