



## PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

FEBRUARY 2021

Several times a week I walk through the corridors and rooms of our new facility envisioning the ways God will use us in our neighbourhood and the lower part of the city of Hamilton. Looking back, I'm amazed at how God used a group of willing and available servants in a restrictive facility with a dirt basement to impact this community. The 'foyers' of our old facility are as large as the entrance vestibules of the new facility. Many people have asked what our future plans are. There is often an underlying assumption that our future will be bigger than our past. We are thankful for this facility and the blessing it is to us, but I believe there is one word for our future, and it is personal. I never want our ministries to grow so large that we won't know the people we are caring for. I never want our ministries to be so vast that we can't share the gospel personally with everyone we care for. After our online service today, our youth pastor and I had lunch with a student from our youth ministry who is from a Buddhist home, where we were not only able to hear about his plans after high school (which he finished on Friday), but where he stands

with the gospel and how he is growing as a young believer. One of the families who received a Christmas Hamper from us was a single mother with a newborn who had recently moved to Hamilton. The person from James North who dropped off the hamper realized that she had very little in her apartment. That set off a series of events where furniture, food and other supplies have been dropped off, where conversations have taken place, prayers have been offered and the gospel has been shared. I never want to grow bigger than this. Ministry is about people. Genuinely caring for people and offering them the hope we have in Christ. I dream about a place where everyone connected to us will personally be cared for and loved by God's people, where the saving grace and gospel of Jesus will be offered and where believers will grow in their faith though a vital relationship they have with Jesus, which is anchored in the Word, as they serve others around them. Thanks for partnering with us to be that church,

*Pastor Dwayne*





## GOD'S WORK AMONG REFUGEES

God has allowed James North Baptist Church to work among the Karen people since 2011. We have been fervently praying that He would raise up a leader among them as their minister (who is a godly man but untrained) approaches 80. We are thrilled that God has raised up Klosay, who started his pastoral internship with us on January 15th and who began courses at Heritage College and Seminary this month as well. The Karen people are from Southeast Asia and had been forced to flee from their traditional homes due to an 'ethnic cleansing' being carried out by the military government of Burma. Nearly 1 million Karen lived in hiding within Burma, moving from place to place to keep ahead of army troops that were hunting them. Nearly 200,000 have fled to Thailand where they are living in refugee camps, where there was no work. Having been rejected by Burma, most refugees do not have Burmese citizenship. Since they are also rejected by Thailand, citizenship is unavailable to them there. When someone has no citizenship, they are generally rejected by the world and trapped in deplorable conditions. With no end to the difficulties in sight for Karen refugees, governments around the world began to accept Karen people from the camps in Thailand for resettlement. Between 2006 and 2008 about 5000 Karen people were brought to Canada with others coming since. In Hamilton, there are presently about 400 Karen people.

Although Burma is predominantly a Buddhist country, the Karen were some of the earliest converts to Christianity in Southeast Asia. American Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson arrived in Burma in 1813 and found the Karen people ready to embrace the Good News of Jesus.

It has been a daunting journey for the Karen who have arrived in Canada. They struggle to adapt to urban life as they are a rural people. Prior to coming here many had never seen a concrete building or been on a bus. Some of the Karen leaders spent the first 25 years of their lives living in a refugee camp. Learning a new language and finding their place in a new culture that is radically different from their own is an enormous challenge.

The Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses welcomed the Karen into their movements. Given the language barrier, many of them couldn't discern that these were cults and not Christian churches welcoming them. Additionally, their young people began to hear that, 'there is no God' and 'you can't trust the Bible,' in school. When their parents couldn't answer their questions they began to abandon their faith.



God is at work. More than 100 Karen gather each week in our facility. Pastor Marcio and Pastor Dwayne are preaching alternate weeks at their service. They will start through the book of Colossians with them in March. With their online services, they have been posting the translated messages to Facebook live where they receive over 800 hits per message. As they live multi-generationally in their homes, they would estimate that between 2500 and 3000 Karen are watching these messages.

We are praying that God will use Klosay's training from Heritage and the internship at James North to equip him to pastor and preach in a Gospel-centered, Christ honoring way so that their believers may be strengthened and those that have abandoned their faith will be won back. Here is a link to a recent interview with Klosay: [youtu.be/FvObQiHcibk](https://youtu.be/FvObQiHcibk). We are thankful for several donors and foundations who have contributed to this ministry. If you would like to know more about the work God is doing among the Karen please contact us. God is at work.

## GROWING TO SERVE UPDATE



In the month of December we were praying that God would bring what we owe down considerably. As you know the building has ended up costing us \$22 million (including both the 45 supportive and affordable apartments as well as the church facility of 32 thousand square feet). Our project was hit hard by tariff wars, rising construction costs and COVID. As our mortgage is only for \$3 million dollars, we needed to be below that number but realize that a mortgage that size is a stretch for our budget. One quarter of our \$1 million budget will be mortgage beginning April 1st. And so we prayed for God's provision. Both our donors and God's people at James North gave generously and we are thankful to share that we are now left owing \$2.8 million. We are praying that between now the end of 2022 God will provide an additional \$800,000, with much of that coming in by March 31st when our construction loan rolls into a mortgage. Thank you for praying with us and for your faithful generosity. At the beginning of this process we documented the journey of our church being built, some of the milestones and our partnership with Indwell. Watch the video at: [youtu.be/RgrWEybw028](https://youtu.be/RgrWEybw028)



# CHRISTMAS HAMPERS

We are thankful that over Christmas God allowed us to assist over 250 individuals and families with Christmas hampers. Thank you for your part in this! As the statistics indicate, those hit hardest by COVID are the marginalized and racialized. Many people expressed their personal appreciation to me this Christmas, as their struggle has been the most challenging in recent years and even decades. We are thankful that God not only provided all the money, food and toys needed for the hampers, but we were able to direct some of the money toward our benevolent fund so that we could assist others though the holiday and into January in a more generous way. Even last week, we were able to assist 44 individuals and families with food assistance. God has opened the door to share the Gospel with so many this season. Continue to pray that He will open doors so we can share the gospel, and many would turn to Christ and be saved. Thanks for your prayers and generosity.



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## MY DONATION FOR JAMES NORTH

☐ \$\_\_\_\_\_ for General Fund

☐ \$\_\_\_\_\_ for Growing to Serve

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**Email transfers:** send to office@jamesnorth.church

**Direct Deposit:** Email office@jamesnorth.church for direct deposit form for pre-authorized gifts

**Online:** through Canada Helps

**Cheque:** Payable to James North Baptist Church

Donations will be used as restricted with the understanding that when the need has been met or changed by the JNBC Board, the remaining funds will be allocated where most needed.