

MILITARY MISSIONARIES SERVING GOD IN ENGLAND

Friends,

1 May 2023

There are two updates that I left out of the last letter. Let me mention those first.

- One of our young couples had a baby boy, adding one to our number, and another mother is set to give birth before the next prayer letter is issued!
- We voted to take on three missionaries from the candidates that our supporting churches recommended to us. The first support will be sent out this month.

Major Update

James 4:14 “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

While we’re aware that the Bible is a living, breathing Book whose words are as practical today as when originally written, sometimes the application of a verse just smacks you in the face. These two thoughts in particular gripped me:

- We don’t know what tomorrow holds.
- My life—and any individual chapter in my life—is just for a short time.

On Friday morning, 28 April, I awoke to an e-mail from our British sponsor, Tom Gritts. He serves as sponsors for 17 missionaries across England, Scotland and Wales, although he himself lives near Birmingham (three hours from us on a good day). Recent changes were made to immigration law that will cause them to no longer be able to remotely sponsor us as they have been doing. We had no idea such an e-mail was coming, to correspond to my first thought from James 4:14.

The e-mail also told us that they expect their licence (to sponsor) will be revoked on 15 May, two weeks from today, and that we should be able to stay in the country another two months beyond the 15th to attempt to secure another means of sponsorship. Talk about something appearing for a little time and then vanishing away! We’ve barely gotten our feet wet here and unless something changes very soon, we would be on our way out.

Going forward, any new missionary (which would include us) would need to be sponsored by a person local to their ministry. This missionary would also have to be paid by the charity (in the States, we would call it a non-profit) where he ministers. Another missionary and I posited that gone are the days that a man could sense a burden from God for a city in the UK, then pack up and go. The new requirement would only enable a church that was already organised as a charity, and able to pay a pastor, to call a man to come...effectively stopping the spread of the gospel to where it already existed.

Since the e-mail, I have corresponded with our sending pastor and mission board director. I shared with them the e-mail I received, and suggested a few ways that we may be able to continue our ministry here beyond 15 July: (continued)

OUR SUPPORT LEVEL

Monthly Support

Promised 100.0%

Received YTD 99.2%

OUR FIELD

Suffolk County, England

Faith Baptist Church,

ministering to USAF airmen and their families + British nationals

SENDING CHURCH

Good News Baptist Church

3252 Taylor Road

Chesapeake VA 23321

(757) 488-3241

www.goodnewsbaptist.org

FIELD ADDRESS

33 Woodcock Rise

Brandon, Suffolk UK

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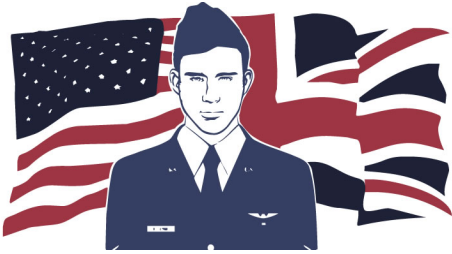
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1. Register our church with the government as a charity. Find a nearby British national who would be willing to do the work of a sponsor. (100% of our current membership is USAF and here for only a short period of time.) The first bit (registering as a charity) would require some work and some money; the second half depends on a willing person. I've put a few lines in the water for potential sponsors.
2. Switch over to a work visa and be sponsored by my place of employment. Doing so would make my residency contingent on staying with that employer, giving them priority over my time. The problem here is that I am basically asking an employer to hire me without proof that I can excel at the job they need me to do. I am not opposed to working outside of the church if it means being able to stay.
3. Move elsewhere in the UK where there is a person willing to sponsor me and a church for whom I could work. This would mark the end of our time at Faith Baptist Church in Lakenheath, and under these new rules, it would be nearly impossible for them to bring in someone else.
4. I could buy six months, but only six months, if we applied for standard tourist visas. We could continue to do volunteer charity work until those expired. That span of time might also allow us to pursue other options for minister of religion sponsorship or work sponsorship.

We put forth a great deal of time and effort to get here. Churches gave far and wide to facilitate us moving here. Because of the burden God gave us for this place and the investment put forth thus far, it is unfathomable to think that in fewer than 24 months here we'd be packing up to head back to America, or to somewhere else on the island. So we request your prayer for wisdom in knowing what God's purpose is in this obstacle, and where we are meant to minister, and for how long.

The next matter of prayer is that we choose the right route for sponsorship. I think any of the four enumerated approaches are able to be accomplished by the deadline, but only one. We don't have time for dead ends. I don't think we have time to pursue multiple options and hope that one of them works out. All of these options will cost and we want to be good stewards of the Lord's money, so we want to put our all into one route once God has showed us which route to take.

We're also navigating these legal waters while doing our jobs as missionaries and my job as a pastor. I'm reminded of Paul writing, "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" in II Corinthians 11:28. Pray for us that we aren't neglecting the primary reason we were sent here. I feel like Nehemiah when he said, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" Yet we must set aside some time to do *that*, in order that we may have more time to do *this*.

We highly desire your prayers and welcome feedback as God leads you.



+1 (941) 7-PREACH



info@GodSaveBritain.com



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