

# The Robelen Report

February 15, 2019

Dear prayer partners and supporting churches,

Greetings from the Farmville front of our war for souls! As usual, things have been very busy here for the last couple of months, and suddenly, I realized that I was overdue for an update on what has been going on here in Farmville.

As I'm sure many of you have noticed, it's winter. This has definitely had an impact on our visitation and attendance, as much of the worst of the weather has happened (not coincidentally, I'm sure) on the weekends. God has used even this, though, to create some opportunity for us. A few weeks ago, on one such weekend, virtually every church in Farmville announced their closing for Sunday because of severe weather in the forecast for Saturday night. On Sunday morning, I was able to observe that the roads were still safe in town, and announce through local radio that we were still having our services. It is possible that we were the only church in town having services that day, and this led to a visitor who usually drives an hour away for church. It was a blessing to hear some of the people who got the value of having church, one teenager went away repeating what he heard from me; that if McDonald's was open (and they were), the church ought to be open.

While things have slowed down somewhat because of weather and other issues, the work is still progressing. During the last two months, we have had seven first-time visitors. We have seen some of the first-time visitors returning as well, and are hopeful that we will reach several of them, either with the gospel or with spiritual growth.

Speaking of spiritual growth, we have begun a push towards discipling the new believers. Since I couldn't find any material that I really felt began at the low level of Biblical understanding where many of our people begin, I am working up the material as I go. One of the most recent converts is especially interested in learning and progressing through these studies; He has come by three times in the last two weeks to get another lesson. It is exciting to see his interest in the things of God growing; Betsy and I often visit other likeminded churches on Sunday evenings, since we have an afternoon service instead of an evening service, this Sunday, when Demetrius heard that we were going to church again in a couple of hours, wanted to come along until he realized that we were driving more than an hour away, and he needed to be closer

to his newborn child and the mother. Please be praying for Demetrius, though; he has some difficult steps to take to get his life on course at this point.

One thing that has been limiting us for the last year has been health. From a double dose of flu last February, to a protracted crisis with joint-dislocating spiders from which our bodies are still recovering, to an extremely difficult pregnancy, to a bumpy recovery from the c-section, through another round of flu this month for mom and baby, health has been a constant factor in our lives and ministry and a key prayer request. By God's grace, it looks like this is beginning to improve. Betsy and Priscilla are both apparently over the flu, and while Betsy isn't yet completely recovered from the difficult pregnancy and extended issues related to it, she is already stronger than she has been in over a year and continuing to improve. We would ask you to continue praying a bit longer, though. The most recent development in the saga is that she has a condition that prevents her from nursing Priscilla as we had intended. By God's grace, she was able to nurse her for the first six weeks, which are the most critical, but we have had to switch Priscilla over to formula. Fortunately, she responded well to the formula, and still seems to be growing quite well. We still have some decisions to make about how to handle some of these issues that have come to light through the pregnancy and follow-up. Please pray that health will continue to improve, and that God will guide and provide for the best way to treat these issues to avoid future problems.

We had requested prayer for our building location; our lease is running down and we had heard rumors that our landlord had other plans for the building. I have since spoken to the realtor who handles our property several times and been assured that the landlord is happy to continue renting to us. We have not yet been presented with a new contract to sign, but we have a verbal agreement to renew the lease for another two years with only a small increase in rent of fifty dollars per month. Since this location has been almost ideal, and moving would present a whole series of challenges and expenses, we are thrilled at the thought of being able to stay here. Please pray that there would be no bad surprises and that the lease would be signed soon.

Another issue that has been a consistent challenge for us has been finances. Rather than spend years raising funds and support before beginning, we started the church in a matter of months and we have not regretted it; dozens of souls are on their way to Heaven who wouldn't be if we were still travelling on deputation. For the last few months, for both personal and church finances, income has been trending downwards as support tapers and expenses have trending up (needing to buy formula, rent increasing, etc.). Because of this, we have set up temporary quarters in the back of the church while we look and pray for support increase to where we can afford local housing again. While we enjoy the lack of commute and the extra time to put into the church by being here, this isn't ideal because we have had to occupy what would have been the nursery and the church doesn't have bathing facilities, requiring us to drive across time to the Y, which will also become much more expensive next month. Thanks to an unexpected gift of \$1000 designated to our housing, we now have the deposit and first month's rent for some local places; please pray that the monthly support would increase to where we could show we can pay the monthly rent also soon.

Last month, we were blessed to be able to travel to the Church Planting Conference at Heartland Baptist Bible College in Oklahoma. We weren't sure that we would be able to until shortly before we left, because we had to assure ourselves that Priscilla would handle car travel well. We had some excitement when we hit a wolf on the road in Oklahoma (bringing the total of animals that the devil has thrown into the path of our car since starting this church to three deer, one owl, and one wolf in less than two years!), by God's grace, the rental agent had included the insurance that covered the damage for free. We were amazed at the generosity shown by the people at Heartland and the pastors who went there to give; we didn't get the opportunity to present, but we still received over a thousand dollars!

We have also seen the devil's attack and God's provision in the matter of our car. Shortly before Priscilla was born, the car broke down; the harmonic balancer, which turns the belts and pulleys, had come off. At first it looked like a fairly minor if unusual repair. After getting back from the hospital with Priscilla, we were told by the mechanic that because the crankshaft had been damaged where the harmonic balance attached, that it could not be repaired and that we needed to replace the engine or the car! Thank God, He provided someone who could weld the part on that could no longer be bolted on properly, and the car is running great again!

One more matter for prayer is Betsy's father; his health has not been good for some time, but recently it has become more difficult, and doctors are telling him that he needs a particularly invasive form of open-heart surgery. We are planning to drive up to New York after church Sunday to visit him (he hasn't met Priscilla yet, either). Please pray for us to have a safe trip and a good visit, and please be in special prayers for his health and for wisdom in how to proceed.

We appreciate each of your prayers more than we can express. As having a seemingly random lone wolf run in front of the car reminds us, we never know all that we will face until we face it. Having support from praying brothers and sisters is a great help as we face all that the devil throws our way. We are thrilled with the improvements in health and the expected improvement in housing, and we look forward to being able to do even more for Christ in the coming months, as we say with the Psalmist; "For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through they work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands." (Psalm 92:4)

In Christ,

Pastor Paul Robelen

**Praises:**

Visitors  
Spiritual growth  
Betsy and Priscilla healthy  
Safe travel  
Car repaired  
Provision for housing

**Prayer Requests:**

Guidance and provision for dental work  
Financial provision/housing  
Return of the lady who is pulling others away  
Demetrius' spiritual growth  
Betsy's father's health  
Travel to New York