



December 2019/January 2020

Greetings from the Lusks and Forest Hills Baptist Church.

It is 6:04AM on this cold January morning here in Rockville, and I have a full day ahead of me. I began a new schedule back in December to help me keep up with everything currently on my plate. I now arrive at the office by 5:30AM every day. That may sound like death to some, but I cannot tell you how much I have fallen in love with this new schedule. I usually work on church stuff until around 1:30PM or 2:00PM (no breaks or lunch—I am doing the whole intermittent fasting thing). After 2:00PM is side hustle time. It really has been so good.

December and January have both been awesome months for Forest Hills. In December we had our annual ladies' Christmas party, which was very well-attended. We even had several guests that are not a part of our church attend. I love how much the people of Forest Hills love one another. It really is unlike anything I have ever experienced in a church before. Later that week, a group headed out to the North East Vision Church Pioneering Conference in Hoboken, NJ which is right on the west side of the Hudson river across from New York City. Our church currently supports three church planters in the city. So every year we try to go up on Wednesday (the conference doesn't begin until Friday usually) and we spend the day in New York before going to church with one of our church planters that evening. On Thursday, we split our group in two since the other two church planters have services on Thursday. This year we had a group of around 12 from our church attend. It was awesome! They got to see the city. They got to be with our church planters in their churches with their people. And, they got to see a church planting conference firsthand, which if you have never done so, I would highly recommend it. The way God works at these meetings is incredible. I do think we have decided that next year, instead of giving money at the conference, we'd devote our entire time to our church planters and simply show up with a check for each of them. We are planning on taking on another church planter to New York City in March of this year.

Toward the end of the month, my family was able to head to Texas for Christmas to be with my mom and my sister. While there, the Senior Coordinator of Community Engagement for the City of Rockville reached out and asked if we could meet. He wanted to discuss ways our church and the city could work together to serve the community. Obviously, I was intrigued. I wish I could tell you everything God did leading up to this opportunity, beginning with a random visit from a lady to our church who was running for city council that ended up getting elected (I thought she was just there for votes). It turns out this official (the one that reached out to me about meeting) is a former missionary who is now on the missions board of a southern Baptist church in a neighboring town. He has wanted to work through the city to get churches more involved in the community for a while and, apparently, with the recent election, there were enough likeminded individuals elected to the city council to give him the green light he needed. I sat in city hall for an hour and half discussing ways serving in the community with the city could lead to Gospel opportunities... In Rockville, Maryland, the county seat of Montgomery County. (We rival Baltimore as one of the most liberal counties in the state.) Right after meeting with the official, I set up a meeting with our community outreach team and began making plans. I am very excited to see how God uses this opportunity to help us connect with the people all around us. Also, in January, we attended the National Church Planting Conference in Oklahoma City. Because of the distance and such, it's a bit more challenging getting folks out that way, but I always love the opportunity this conference affords me to catch up with friends I haven't seen in a while.

2019 was our best year by far in every way! Our general giving increased by over 50% for the year and our missions giving increased by almost 30%. Our attendance averaged in the 70's, breaking into the 80's a few times. I fully expect our church to break 100 this year. Also, we are in meetings with another church that is interested in leasing our space. This could be a huge answer to prayer regarding the start of our rent payments in March. We'll see how it goes. I haven't spoken to the owner again about the ideas I have regarding the purchase of our building. I don't feel like God has given me a green light yet. The owner has been out quite a bit traveling. Please keep all of that in your prayers. Also, please be in prayer about our missions month in March. It is the largest one we have ever done, and I just feel like this year is special. I feel it in my gut that God is going to do something unique this year and I am very excited.

Thank you again for sticking with us as long as you have. We couldn't be here without you, and God is truly doing something special in Rockville. I'd love for each and every one of you to come out and see it for yourself.

Thanks again for everything!

In Christ,
JJ Lusk
I Timothy 1:12

— Sending Church Info: Hillcrest Baptist Church | 4710 Hercules Ave. El Paso, TX 79904 | (915) 755.0400 | www.hillcrestbaptist.cc —

— Forest Hills Baptist Church | (405) 343.7145 | www.myForestHillsBaptist.com | jlusk@myforesthillsbaptist.com —