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Brothers & sisters,

I hope that the new year has started well for each of you. We are excited for the year ahead, especially after a difficult 2015 that brought about a number of challenges and transitions for the church here in Duluth. After losing three families last year to out-of-state moves, we are now roughly the same size we were when I moved to Duluth in 2008 (20-25 people). While it has certainly been hard to lose these valuable families in a congregation that is already small, it has given some of the Christians here opportunities to step in and fill roles they might not have otherwise filled. It has also caused us to evaluate where we are as a congregation and to discuss ways we can increase our evangelistic efforts in the area.

One of these efforts is the weekly Bible study I've been posting on **meetup.com**, the social networking website we've used to set up and publicize Bible studies in the Duluth area. Currently, we're meeting on Thursday nights to study through the book of Romans. Although attendance varies from week to week, we've had a total of five people who have joined Melanie & me for the study on several occasions. Among the attendees are **Joe & Christina**, the young couple I wrote about previously who moved to Duluth last summer from Texas. Melanie & I have been trying to stay in regular contact with them, and as a result they have joined us for a couple of the meetup studies. Additionally, they've joined us for Sunday morning worship and have shown interest in coming back. Two others that I've studied with on a semi-regular basis – **Jeremy & Janelle** – have also been regulars at the Thursday night study. This has definitely been a positive step for the meetup study, but it has still been a challenge to get people from the group to attend the study in person (the group currently has almost 50 members on the website, but attendance isn't required for group membership).

Another person I've been talking with for some time is a man named **Toby Cook**. Toby and I first met when he visited our worship assembly several months ago. Since then we have gotten together several times to get acquainted and talk about the Bible and other spiritual matters. He has been very interested in these conversations and has continued to attend worship and/or Bible study at the church building about once a month (even bringing his wife & children occasionally), but he has yet to agree to a Bible study with me. Toby is very thoughtful about his faith and family, and always seems to have very

perceptive questions whenever we talk; I just haven't had enough regular conversations with him to find out where his heart is spiritually and to encourage him to become a Christian and grow in his faith. Part of the reason we haven't been able to set up a study yet is related to his employment – Toby is a bricklayer and his job situation changes regularly depending on the availability of work. Additionally, Toby & his wife just celebrated the birth of their third child, so their lives are even busier now. I'm hopeful that this won't prevent us from being able to get a study going soon.

Finally, I'd like to briefly update you on the work at the **Federal Prison Camp**. Our Tuesday night Bible study is continuing through the gospel of John, and our numbers have been holding steady at around 10 men or so each week. This regular study has opened the door for another opportunity at the prison camp this year. Last spring, the longtime chaplain at the prison camp retired, leaving them without a regular speaker for their Sunday Christian worship service. Back in the summer, I was given the chance to fill in on a one-time basis, and that led to an invitation this winter to come in and preach every week. Their worship service meets in the evening, which allows me to preach & teach at Hawk Ridge in the mornings & afternoons, then preach at the prison camp in the evenings without any schedule conflict. While I'm still not allowed to meet with inmates for one-on-one studies (which would be preferable) and the inmates aren't currently allowed to have baptisms, this is still a tremendous opportunity – one that I'm hopeful will give me the chance to teach more men at the prison camp. In a city where Bible studies have sometimes been hard to come by, I hope you understand what a thrilling prospect this is for the Lord's work here (and wherever these inmates will return once their sentences are completed). Please pray for the wisdom, boldness, and love on my part to make the most of each door the Lord opens. He is gracious to give us a part in this work, and you are gracious to allow it to continue through your sacrificial support and unceasing prayers. May He continue to bless you in all you do for Him.

Gratefully yours,  
Taylor