

The Forge Church

2022 Report Letter

Dear friends and family,

We want to take this opportunity to once again share with you the wonderful things that God has done in and among us in the year 2022. This past year was full of new beginnings and endings, adjustments and relationships, as well as challenges and opportunities. The events of the past year have opened our eyes to the glory of God and to the ways in which he has been at work in each and every aspect of our lives and in this fairly small community here in Manhattan, Kansas. We praise and worship the Lord with hearts filled with thanksgiving for His great love, care, and presence among us because of all of these things. Without Him, there is no doubt that we would have perished in the wilderness that we have been walking through since June of this year.

Towards the year's end, God graciously provided a way for us to be reunited with Ana. After spending so much time together in virtual reality, it took us a few days to adjust to being in each other's physical presence again. Everything looked fantastical and otherworldly at the same time. As a group, we rang in the new year together without having a clear idea of what lay ahead for us in 2022. Despite our joy, we had no idea at this point if our circumstances would significantly shift. Nonetheless, we settled to make the most of the time we had and to devote ourselves to God, to His little flock, and to the goodwill he had bestowed upon us.

In early 2022, Ana and Ashlyn attended the Navah church's "Life Transformation School" program in Kansas City. During those three weeks, they were able to invest in new relationships, establish stronger bonds with others, learn more about the eternal principles of God's kingdom, and share what they've learned with our local community. Meanwhile, while they were gone in Kansas City from Wednesdays through Saturdays, they paid a visit to some dear friends for whom we have nothing but the highest esteem and regard.

While they were in KC, on January 31st to be exact, we got the news that Ana's visa application had been approved. Like Abraham, we kept hoping that God would keep His Word even when in our circumstances there was no reason for hope (Romans 4:16-21). That's why this day was particularly meaningful and memorable for us all

After two and a half years, discipleship took on a greater breadth. The women of our church began to enjoy more varied moments of discipleship and more learning opportunities in everyday situations because of their almost daily presence in each other's lives.

We took advantage of Ana's presence to get together with friends and family who have supported us in multiple ways, including providing financial assistance, as well as their love, prayers, and support. We were fortunate to have the Amundsons' support, as they were kind enough to provide the location as well as all of the other essential logistics. Having the opportunity to celebrate and share with everyone all that God has done with us and taught us during our time spent in the wilderness brought us a great deal of happiness.

In the days leading up to Ana's departure for Portugal, we commemorated her birthday, maintained our regular church gatherings, and advanced the mission that the Lord had given us to carry out. Ana flew back to Portugal on the 27th of February in order to wrap up the visa application process at the

United States Embassy in Lisbon. She also took this opportunity to say her final goodbyes to her friends and family.

Midway through the month of April, Ana arrived back in the United States with her religious visa. At this point, it had been almost three years since we had been waiting for this visa and for her return in a more permanent capacity. This was a time marked by lots of joyous celebrations, not only among us in Manhattan but also with our friends in Kansas City. Here's just a short and funny testimony:

As I sit here, I can still tap into the same feeling of shock as when I saw her walk off the plane at MCI. All of you know Ana and are aware that she has a big personality. When you sit on the other side of a computer from someone for several years and only see them from the shoulders up, you forget how tall they really are, and I found myself projecting Ana's larger-than-life expressions onto her stature. Imagine my face when I realized once again that she's only 5'6"! But the bigger shock—and all of the emotion—came from the realization of God's faithfulness to his promises and finally being able to celebrate a homecoming with our little house church, who had been fervently praying for this day since June 2019. Where God guides, God truly provides!

—Caleb Amundson

In June, our church experienced a very special moment: Sadie and Cody's wedding. It was a very exciting day for all of us; after all, it was the first wedding the church had officiated, and at the same time, we were celebrating the lives of two such dear people who faced with us some of the greatest challenges we experienced as a church. Our hearts were overflowing with gratitude for the lives of Sadie and Cody, who have faithfully served the church with their talents and gifts.

This year, we also had the incredible pleasure of connecting with some new friends. Before Sadie and Cody flew the coop to establish their life together in Kansas City, they started inviting Sadie's sister, Beth, into the flock. Beth has graced us with her talent and willingness to lead worship each week, and we

are so delighted by her humor, storytelling, and care. A house church alum, Kristian, also introduced us to her friend, Taylor, who recently moved back to town after a few years away. Taylor quickly became an integral piece of our community and continues to bless us with her baking skills, deft meme references, and compassion. We also had the joy of meeting several new international students, primarily from Iran, and were able to provide many free home essentials—cookware, plates, furniture, and more—and food thanks to the generous donations to our yard sale. From saffron rock candy stirred into tea to backyard bonfires and a South African braai to Thanksgiving dinner, we were able to share some memorable moments with Mostafa, Sepide, Nooshin, Maryam, Reza, Amir B, and Amir E, Tochukwu (Nigeria), Trupti (India), Donika (Kosovo), Cristian (Argentina) and old friends Donovan, Takesure, and Nokwanda (among many others!).

Over the last year, God has been teaching us a lot about encounter. We have been embarking on a beautiful new journey of experiencing God's presence in the most intimate place in the world: prayer. Through resources like The Prayer Course, How To Pray by Pete Greig, monthly Zoom calls at 6 am with our friend Adam Chiarelli, and the 24/7 Prayer National Gathering in Portland, we have started to see lives and relationships transformed in beautiful new ways through the tenderness of Emmanuel, God with us.

As we come to a close, we just want to verbalize how deeply humbled and grateful we are for the way you have made real sacrifices for our community this year. We are so grateful to God for the friends and family he has given us, and for how he is continuing to take us into a deeper experience of his love through his presence and his people.

Amen!

