



Summer 2017

# LIGHTHOUSE PAROS

[www.wayofhope.am](http://www.wayofhope.am)

## Tradition of Sunday Schools in Armenia

**by Mher Nahapetyan**

**Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'** Matthew 19:14

For 70 years under the sphere of the Soviet Union, Armenia was one of 15 Soviet Socialist Republics. Over this time, citizens of the USSR became accustomed to the Soviet regime's special regulations and the strong preaching of atheistic principles. This instilled fear in our lives, and families wishing to express Christian faith had to do so secretly. Teachers and government workers who were known to be believers were in danger of losing their positions.

Leaders of the Soviet regime for several generations attached great importance to the education of children according to Marxist-Leninist philosophy. They saturated our young minds with godless ideas and proved effective in manipulating us toward atheism.

Looking back, it is clear that Soviet ideology was based on false idols and false heroes. Soviet leaders filled our minds with false stories about *Father Lenin*, positing, for example, the (untrue) "fact" that Lenin had been a child genius. Dedicated Soviet parents explained to their children that they should follow Lenin's childhood example of "total obedience."

During the Stalin period, whenever parents were banished by the government to the *Gulag* (system of forced-labor camps), their children were forced to renounce them publicly. Likewise, treacherous young people in the *KOMSOMOL* (Communist Union of Youth) betrayed their parents for various notable "infractions." Since economic equality was of prime importance, teenager Pavlik Morozov became our hero for his willingness to betray his own father for having hidden wealth above what was required of a good Soviet citizen.

In the early 1990s, after the failure of the Soviet regime, Armenia was able to once again achieve its independence (in 1991). The response to this great political, economic, social, and cultural shift away from being the Armenian SSR was a whole new way of thinking and acting. The overt persecution of the

Church was eliminated, and there was a revival of Christian faith in the new Republic of Armenia.

In this new atmosphere, the Armenian Bible Society was established (in 1991) and began to be active, people started to visit historic churches for services, new churches were built, and ancient churches left in ruins for many decades were renovated and became active once again. Faith communities were formed, and people started to be concerned about spiritual education for young people. Groups were formed with the objective of offering spiritual knowledge, and soon these groups were called Sunday Schools. Their aim was to refocus children's innocent minds back toward God, and teach biblical principles.

Over these past 25 post-Soviet years, there have been efforts to publish Children's Bibles, colorful teaching materials, audio and video tracks, and DVDs that tell the story of God's great Salvation. I have observed Sunday Schools filled with children who eagerly hear God's Word and are anxious to follow the Lord Jesus by faith. Many of these have been established by the Christian Education Department of the Armenian Apostolic state church. Registered Protestant churches have also worked actively to develop evangelistic children's and youth programs and summer camps.

Starting in May of this year, Way of HOPE established its first program for children, which we are calling **HOPE Kids' Planet**. Our aim is to educate the children and grandchildren of our participants, along with their friends, so that they know and understand the principles of God's Word and have the chance to follow Him by faith. So far we have more than 20 kids ages 4 – 11 who come to listen to Bible stories, watch DVD lessons about God's Love through the Lord Jesus, and enjoy interactive games and activities.

I believe that children's prayers and responses to Christian teaching are beautiful and sincere, as they listen and take to heart what God is saying to them. Having myself grown up in the Soviet period of false gods and godless concepts, I am privileged to join with Tatevik and our staff in this important bi-monthly Saturday morning outreach.

In June of this year, Mher reached the 10-year mark in his service with HOPE. An actor by profession, Mher has earned the nickname **MAXI** because of his desire to always do the **maximum** in service to the Lord. We are thankful for his Christian dedication, genuine love for people, and desire to study and teach God's Word. *God Bless You, Maxi, during the next 10 HOPE years!*



## HOPE News



Mane & Avetis  
colorful chairs for Kids' Planet

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### Outside Armenia

#### HOPE Armenia Ministries

P.O. Box 4009  
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#### Board Chairman

**Hugh Woodward**, Ohio USA

#### NE Prayer & Support Group

**Sharon Combs**

Massachusetts USA

#### In Armenia

##### Way of HOPE

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Youtube: [hope armenia ministries](https://www.youtube.com/user/wayofhope)

#### General Director

**Dr. Kaarina Ham**

Administrator/Ministry Coordinator  
**Tatevik Ghazaryan**

Computer Technician/Media  
**Tigran Apikyan**

Ministry Assistant/Special Events  
**Mher Nahapetyan**

Young Adult Ministry  
**Tigran Mkrtchyan**

Operations Manager  
**Suren Khangaldian**



## Perspectives on HOPE

**... hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Romans 5:5**

Have you ever been disappointed? I have. At times I've been disappointed in myself, at times in others, at times with circumstances.

Recent political realities have disappointed me. Although far from my homeland, I can still link into various online media sites, many that are informative, many that are far from uplifting. How disappointing to hear of families and friendships that have been seriously divided by extreme politicizing.

Post-Soviet Armenia is not immune to divisions in the political realm. Nor is the Christian community here immune to attacks from the Enemy. Recently we heard from someone who is striving to bring young people to faith in the Lord Jesus, but is discouraged with the untoward behavior of leaders claiming to be Christians.

How is it that hope does not disappoint! It's because of the Holy Spirit's miraculous work in our hearts and lives, helping us to clearly discern His will, no matter what unwelcome or confusing realities we may face.

Our hope is that Christians here in Armenia will exhibit strong confidence in our sovereign Lord to calm political realities, rather than give in to despair. Our hope as a staff is that we will work together in harmony for the sake of the Lord's work--even when personal viewpoints diverge.

We are excited to welcome a 2018 Project PAROS team to Armenia next summer to share with us the wonderful **sureties of our Faith that point toward unity!** Maybe you'll be the one your church fellowship will send to join in with our summer ministries?

Kaarina A. Ham, Ph.D  
General Director

# 12<sup>th</sup> NE Prayer & Support Group Annual Meeting

10:00 am - 2:00 pm ~ Saturday, April 22, 2017

First Congregational Church - North Brookfield, Massachusetts USA

We were pleased to have a good group of Christian friends gather on April 22 for our NE annual meeting! This time the venue was First Congregational Church in North Brookfield MA, not far from Worcester. Many hands contributed to a fine time of music, worship, and devotions, followed by our 2016 Slideshow: **2016 - A Year in the Life of HOPE Armenia Ministries**. Then HOPE staff came on-screen by SKYPE from Yerevan to give personal updates about the ministries here in Armenia.



- **Tatevik** announced the **Kids' Planet** program this spring and summer, with newly-acquired children's Bible lessons and DVDs in Armenian. We are excited about her vision to teach the Bible to the little ones God keeps bringing into HOPE Family!
- **Tigran** explained that, in addition to up-to-date information on **website** and **Facebook pages**, videos and slideshows are now available on **youtube**: <https://youtu.be/-pkzuVYN1U> Tigran designs our publications and media presentations. We especially approve of his new Kids' Planet logo on page one!
- **Mher** reported that from 2006-2016, we have held **23 BASICS of Christian Faith** youth programs, **9 FRUIT of the Spirit** youth follow-up programs, and **19 summer youth day CAMPS** at village schools in the Sevan region, involving well over 1,600 young people. Mher is recruiting student actors in preparation for the formation of a **HOPE Drama Group**. After several months of initial training this autumn, this group will perform Bible stories and parables for children's and youth programs, summer camps, and special programs at homes for the elderly.
- **K.Tigran** related that we are taking steps this year to bring more **young adults** into Christian discipleship programs, the first being the February 24 *Into the Cosmos* Single's New Year Celebration at HOPE Office, and the second an *Ascension Day* event on May 27.
- **Suren** commented on the harsh winter in Armenia, with damage to electrical and plumbing systems at the **LIGHTHOUSE**, where water pipes were frozen well into the month of May. Masters traveled with him from Yerevan to Tsovagyugh village for extensive repairs. We are thankful that both **vehicles** came through with few problems.
- **Dr. Kaarina** wrapped things up by thanking the Lord for our dedicated, hard-working staff, and for His hand of **protection, provision, and mercy** on our programs and travels.

After the SKYPE connection, four 2016 Project PAROS team members gave personal testimonies about their short-term ministry last summer here in Armenia. Thanks to Karla, Debra, Pam, and Paul for telling the story about the Lord's work across the ocean!

Special thanks also to **Sharon Combs** and the missions committee, church secretary Debbie, tech gurus Byron and Steve, praise team musicians Crystal, Rick, Steve, Sharon, and Pastor Dave and Betty Libby in North Brookfield, for their major contributions to this important day of prayer; and to **Leslie Witty** and the missions committee from Mission St. Congregational Church in Gardner, for partnering with Sharon and her team. We are very grateful to representatives from nine churches who prayed earnestly for God's blessing on our spring-summer ministries, and contributed to a wonderful offering toward the 2017 Lighthouse Well Project.



## Welcome to HOPE Governing Board



HOPE Governing Board meets on a quarterly basis each year, as ministries and financial issues are updated and monitored. At the August meeting, we were pleased to confirm Chuck Newman of Northridge MA as our newest member. By his own admission, Chuck enjoys gardening ("playing in the dirt"), spending time with his wife Sheila, enjoying new status as a grandfather, and keeping in shape by running. A software engineer by profession, he has for many years served faithfully as a layman at New Hope Chapel in Westboro MA. His desire is "to make the grace of Christ known to all people." *Welcome to the HOPE Family in this important capacity, Chuck!*

# Personal Testimony

by Tigran Mkrtchyan



People sometimes say that young people are a bit crazy, always too ready for new adventures and personal exploits.

One fateful day in 2008, I as a young man full of such great potential for life, visited HOPE office. At the time I was a university student in the second course. My first impression was that of a small kid during a Christmas celebration. Everyone was joyful, smiling, in a bright and festive mood.

Mentally I tried to leaf through the calendar to see if it was some special day. Visually I was looking around, trying to find decorations, balloons, or banners on the walls, to remind me what special day I'd

K.Tigran has served as a part-time youth ministry assistant in Way of HOPE for 8 years, starting after his mandatory 2-year army stint. He has helped with planning, organizing, decorating, recruiting, and serving as *greeter extraordinaire* for special ministry programs. This year he organized *Into the Cosmos* and *Ascension Day* programs for young adults. He is known for his friendliness, positive spirit, servant's heart, and desire to increase in knowledge of God's Word. We are grateful that God brought him to us 'way back in 2008!

*Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. I Timothy 4:12*

apparently forgotten. But I didn't come up with anything! The truth was that inside these office walls were gathered lots of cheerful, happy young adults.

Finally I entered into this atmosphere somehow like a person turning on the computer screen, finding the *Facebook* page open. So much seemed to pop out! As I entered into conversation and tried to tell my first joke to whoever was standing around, Mher came in and announced that the speaker for the evening program had arrived. Suddenly the scene changed before my eyes. Everyone became quiet and showed respect toward the one who had come to explain about Christian faith. I became a sober listener who started absorbing the truths from God's Word shared by this Bible study leader. Gradually a smile graced my face, as from that moment I realized that I had found my second family in *Way of HOPE*.

Over the years since that day, I have seen many young adults come to various programs, eager to enter into the personal adventures of Christian fellowship: seminars, retreats, excursions, summer youth camps, boat rides, special events (Mexican Taco Day, Italian Spaghetti Day, French Café Day, Hawaiian LUAU, Talent Evening, etc.)

Of course, age is not really important ---anyone can be young at heart, eager for new adventures and exploits. If a person has spiritual eagerness and a hunger for truth; freshness, vigor, and enthusiasm will come toward all that life has to offer. Anyone can walk with the Lord and serve Him regardless of age.

But somehow being young is a special thing too. Those of us who are young have many years ahead to walk on God's path and impact others for Him.

## Young Adult Ministries

**Single Women's Group**  
*Celebrating American Thanksgiving*  
November 24



**New Year Celebration**  
*Into the Cosmos*  
February 24



**Ascension Day Celebration**  
May 25



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

## Children's Christmas Celebration

Lesson: *The Birth of Jesus*

December 22



## Kids' Planet

Lesson: *Faith of Noah*  
June 10



## Kids' Planet

Lesson: *David & Goliath*  
June 24

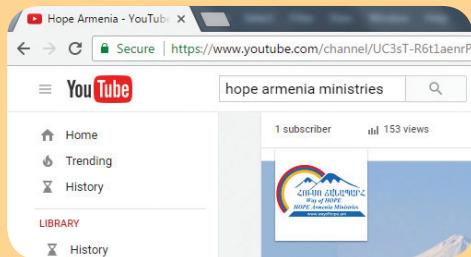


## Kids' Planet

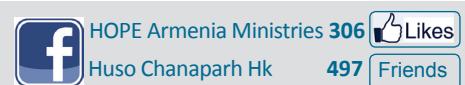
Lesson: *Daniel in the Lion's Den*  
July 8



Now you can find HOPE videos on youtube by typing  
*hope armenia ministries* in the youtube search box



157  
views



## Website



# HOPE Family



New office Dedication  
October 10



Mid-Winter Celebration  
11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - Way of HOPE  
Cold Days - Warm Hearts  
February 3



11<sup>th</sup> Excursion to Marmashen  
Shirak region (10<sup>th</sup> century church)  
July 9



CHRISTMAS  
Ashtarak  
December 24



OUTREACH  
to families in need

EASTER  
Etchmiadzin  
April 15



## Adult Ministries

### Monday Evening Bible Study

Letters of St. Paul  
HOPE Office



### Autumn Bible Study Retreat *God's Relationship with His People*

LIGHTHOUSE  
July 22-23



## HOPE Armenia Ministries Project PAROS

# 2018

In Eastern Armenian, *paros* means “lighthouse.” This is the name of our special short-term mission opportunity. Our program is centered in Yerevan, Armenia’s capital city, and in Tsovagyugh village in the northern Sevan region.

### Summer Short-term Mission Opportunity

Tentative dates: June 22 - July 8



### WELCOME TO ARMENIA! ԲՈՐԻ ԳԱԼՈՒՄՆ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆ

- ministry team building
- summer youth day camps
- young adult discipleship events
- hands-on work at the Lighthouse
- touring Yerevan, Armenia’s capital city & Khor Virap near Mt. Ararat
- relaxing near Lake Sevan, highest Alpine lake in the world!

Our team is  
now accepting  
applications!

Projected costs: Cost of flights + insurance + US \$600 = **\$2,100** (approximate)  
Project director: Dr. Kaarina Ham [kaarinaham@gmail.com](mailto:kaarinaham@gmail.com)

Application available through HOPE website [www.wayofhope.am](http://www.wayofhope.am)  
Last date applications will be received: February 1, 2018  
Valid passport required

## Youth Ministries

### BASICS of Christian Faith



GEGHAMAVAN village school  
Sevan region  
October-December



SEVAN CITY School #4  
Sevan region  
March-May



GEGHAMAVAN village school  
Sevan region  
March-May

### Summer Youth Day Camps



GEGHAMAVAN village school  
June 26, 27, 28



VARSER village school  
June 29, 30, July 1



Summer camp team:  
K. Tigran, Dr. Kaarina, Tatevik,  
Satenik, Tigran, Mher

### HOPE Staff

9<sup>th</sup> Staff-Helper Retreat  
Theme: *Faithful Followers*  
February 18



### LIGHTHOUSE Well Project

*It is finished!*

- \* US \$10,000 raised
- \* great management by Suren
- \* hard work by local workers
- \* hit a "gusher" at 64 meters (210 feet)
- \* great excitement about sufficient water for ministry programs



*With joy you will draw water from the wells of Salvation.  
Isaiah 12:3*



**Saghmosavank, Church of the Psalms**, is one of the famous cultural and spiritual centers of Medieval Armenia. In historical sources, Saghmosavank is mentioned from the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

By tradition, Saghmosavank was founded in the 4th century by St. Gregory Illuminator, the revered evangelist who is credited with converting Armenia from paganism to Christianity in 301, thus making Armenia the first nation to adopt Christianity as its official religion. He spent time alone on a spiritual quest on the slopes of nearby Mt. Aragats, one of the most beautiful mountain peaks in Armenia (4,090 meters = 13,418 feet high). One frosty winter day, he went down to the Kasakh Canyon, where he established two hermitages.

The first one in Kasakh canyon he named **Lushavirchi Anapat** (*Hermitage of the Illuminator*), and the second he built on the edge of the same canyon. In this place, hermits were training to sing the Psalms, and for this reason, he named the second one **Saghmosats Anapat** (*Psalms Hermitage*). In the Armenian language, the word Saghmos refers to a lyrical poem in the form of a spiritual song.

The main church of Saghmosavank is called **St. Sion** (*St. Zion*), and was built in 1215 by Prince Vachi Vachutyan. In 1235, the son of the Vache Vachutyan, Prince Kurd, built the small church called **St. Mary** at the southern part of St. Sion church. In addition, in 1255, he built the manuscript library which housed a rich collection of Medieval spiritual works. At the end of 12th century, around 120 manuscripts were preserved there.

The 15<sup>th</sup> century is notable as a golden period of intensive cultural activity in and around Saghmosavank. Later, in 1830, people from the Kars province in Western Armenia migrated to the village of Saghmosavan to live and work beside this magnificent edifice. Saghmosavank became inoperative from second half of 18<sup>th</sup>

century and stood in dilapidated condition almost to the present time. In recent years, after the end of Soviet period, Saghmosavank has been fully renovated, and regular services are held there.

I am personally very fond of this beautiful church, standing on the edge of the deep (and dangerous) Kasakh ravine, within full view of our beloved Mt. Ararat. My first involvement with Saghmosavank was 16 years ago, when I travelled each week from Yerevan to sing in the church choir, serve as youth leader, and visit families in the community.

After these initial 5 years of ministry in Saghmosavan, in 2005 I joined Dr. Kaarina to establish a youth ministry team and program involving 70 teenagers, where we held activities in the church yard. We also developed a Bible study team to teach the *Gospel of John* to a group of 20 teachers in Saghmosavan village school. We believe that many from these ministry programs are continuing in their faith and service to the Lord.



An M.A. graduate of Yerevan State Philological Institute and former high school history teacher, Tatevik has served for 11 years as our capable administrator and ministry coordinator. She and her husband Suren have an 8-year-old daughter Mane, and a 5-year-old son Avetis. We are very thankful for the spiritual dedication and **visionary leadership talents** she brings to our ministries.

## ANSWERS TO PRAYER

1. **BASICS of Christian Faith** youth program  
Sevan City School #4, 45 teens
2. **FRUIT of the Spirit** youth follow-up program  
Geghamavan village school, 23 teens
3. Single Women's leaders Tatevik & Alla
4. 12<sup>th</sup> NE Prayer & Support Group annual meeting
5. 2 fine summer youth day camps
6. LIGHTHOUSE Well Project completed!

## PRAYER CONCERNS

1. **Kids' Planet** bi-monthly programs
2. HOPE ministries – that God would bring people whose hearts are open
3. HOPE staff – wisdom and courage
4. HOPE Drama Group – Mher organizing this autumn
5. open doors for autumn ministries
6. 2018 Project PAROS leaders & team!

## HOPE Drama Group

Starting this autumn!



*Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' John 8:12*

Return this portion with your gift

Please consider prayerfully a gift in support of our mission in Armenia

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Other gift (please specify) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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