



Winter 2007

LIGHTHOUSE PAROS

A NEW MINISTRY OFFICE...



Richard Nicholson, HOPE Board Chair, dedicating our new ministry office with Armen, Dr. Kaarina, Tatevik, and Narine

Reflections on our Armenia Ministry Visit From: Richard Nicholson, HOPE board Chairperson

My wife, Linda, and I visited Armenia at a beautiful time of the year (end of September and first week in October). It seemed a lot like Southern California except the sun comes up later in the day, so the mornings are slow and the evenings long. The country is about the size of the State of Maryland (60 miles wide x 150 miles long). Yerevan is the capital and location of our HOPE Ministries. Our tour took us on a visit of two other major cities, Gyumri and Vanadzor, so we traveled in a triangle through the middle of Armenia.

I am looking at some of our 900 photos. Mt. Ararat looks like a high desert mountain, always snow capped, just outside the Armenia border in what is now Turkey. It is visible from the high points in Yerevan. We were part of a tour group of 10 people from Pasadena which included Armenians who live in California and speak the language. Almost everything was translated to us from either Russian or Armenian to English.

We were picked up at our hotel for our first lunch and meeting of our HOPE Staff (Tatevik,

Narine, Tigran). Kaarina's apartment is on the 4th floor (no elevator) so she gets her exercise. It is located in the heart of the city. What a treat to finally see the "where" and "who" of our HOPE ministry. Our staff is professional, and has the energy of their 30 year old's lifestyle. We watched a session with Tatevik training young adults willing to reach out to the spiritual needs of children. It was great watching Kaarina give directions in Russian and English, even as she is attempting to learn more Armenian. The Lord prepared her for Armenia through her many years of ministry in Russia, since Russian is spoken in all the former Soviet republics.

The HOPE staff took us on many trips around the busy capital city. It is not easy to drive or park, but Kaarina knows the "system." We saw churches, government buildings, monuments, schools, universities, and the beautiful people trying to "find themselves" between their Soviet background (only 15 years ago they became a self governing country) and wanting to be "like the West."

Since HOPE ministers to youth, I really enjoyed seeing the points of contact that our HOPE staff has developed in the city and villages. The children are learning a few English phrases, so I tried to help them practice. For some time, our Board has prayed for a ministry office and work area outside of Kaarina's 800 sq. ft. apartment where she lives, does office work, gives training sessions, and shares her desk with the staff (in her dining area), so it has been a very busy place.

In the few days we were in Armenia, we participated in the dedication of a new office (about 1200 sq. ft.). Praise the Lord. Now our staff has a work area, a kitchen, and an area for training young Christian leaders for this emerging country. Thank you for providing workers and a place to serve the spiritual needs of the Armenian people. One of my favorite photos is of a 10 year old boy standing in his 2nd floor classroom window, waving to me across his school yard. I'm not sure if he is waving "thanks" or "come back" soon.



24 HOPE staff members and ministry volunteers celebrating American Thanksgiving in our new office!

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Youth Ministry

One of our goals is ministry to youth, ages 12-18. Thus, beginning in September, we initiated youth programs in two locations here in Yerevan.

Yerevan's 3rd district: Our first program is held in a community center in a working-class district of Yerevan, with children from low socio-economic backgrounds. Parents come to the center to meet with social workers and psychologists.

Around 40 kids come on a rotating basis to the after-school vocational program, which usually lasts 3 ½ hours. They choose from among the following classes: Armenian history, Armenian language, religion, painting, sewing, drama.

The staff is grateful to our team (under Tatevik's leadership) for coming regularly to reinforce spiritual principles and offer positive input into these kids' lives.

Yerevan's Vardashen district: Our second youth program is held in a special boarding school ("lock-up" facility) for troubled teens. Some have parents, but they meet them only on weekends or special occasions. Most are "street-wise," having been involved in petty crime or gangs.

The teachers organize special events and group excursions to acquaint the kids with the outside world (they are not allowed to venture out on their own). There are also psychologists who help in areas of personal difficulty. An important part of the program is teaching life skills, in the hope that, when they leave the school at the age of 18, they can become responsible members of society.

Volunteers from several international organizations visit the school regularly to offer practical training in such areas as computer technology, mechanics, shoe repair, hairdressing, etc. World Vision has for several years provided relief assistance. As in all schools in Armenia, the kids receive formal religious instruction.

Our team has found that these boisterous, special-need kids are a quite a handful to manage! The girls especially are carrying heavy emotional "baggage" and appreciate the chance to interact with caring adults. The aim of our program is to reinforce biblical principles and affirm Jesus' special love for each of them.



Our team leaders at the Christmas-New Year Outreach Event at the youth center (Yerevan's 3rd district)



3rd district kids visiting the Armenian Genocide Museum



Christmas-New Year Outreach Event at the Vardashen district special school



Perspectives on HOPE

A recent message here at Yerevan International Church focused on one verse in the New Testament: "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (Romans 12:12). Three short instructions, full of meaning.

Faithful in prayer. No matter what we face, Christians are always to be faithful in talking with God. There's no substitute for pouring out our hearts to him.

Patient in affliction. Sometimes life is just plain hard; sometimes tragic circumstances come into our lives; sometimes people don't understand us; sometimes even serving the Lord seems too strenuous. Yet the Apostle Paul reminds us that "our labor is not in vain in the Lord..." (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Joyful in hope. No matter what we feel on the surface; no matter if we are happy or sad "on the outside;" it's our deep joy and hope in the Lord Jesus "on the inside" that keeps us going.

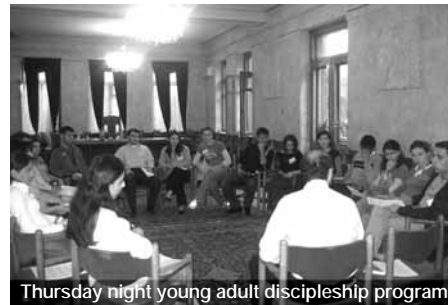
The prophet Jeremiah spoke about optimism in times of pessimism. He spoke of "one ray of hope" that God's people may count on (Lamentations 3:21-26).

May the Lord be with each of us in a special way as we face a New Year, full of joyful hope that he will be with us, guide us, provide for us, and be pleased to use us in his service.

In the Hope of Jesus,
Kaarina A. Ham, Ph.D.
General Director



Young Adult Discipleship



Thursday night young adult discipleship program

This autumn we also initiated a spiritual discipleship course for young adults (under Narine's leadership) on Mashtots Prospect, in the center of Yerevan. This course is a 15-session practical introduction to Christian faith designed for "nominal" Christians, new Christians, and those who have never attended church.

The program consists of a light meal, followed by a short talk by a guest speaker on a subject central to Christian faith. After the talk, participants divide into small groups for discussion.

During this first discipleship course, we've had 25 participants from various professions (a lawyer, a history major, an elementary school teacher, a theology student, a linguistics student, an artist-designer, etc.). They all have different interests, but they come faithfully every Thursday evening to learn about the Word of God and how they can apply Christian principles in their lives.

Here are some comments from participants after our recent weekend retreat emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives:

Herachuhi (female, 19) "This program is very important, because many people don't know anything about Christian faith."

Harut (male, 19) "Before attending this program, I didn't know much about God. Now I am happy to be involved in a spiritual life."

Edita (female, 33) "I was reborn through this program..."

Syuzi (female, 35) "I had many dark areas in my life, but now they are being cleared."

Arman (male, 25) "Usually spiritual things push young people away. But this is a good program that helps young people enter into a spiritual life."

Gor (male, 21) "I try not to listen to my heart, because several times my heart was wrong. I want my heart and mind to be in balance."



young adult discipleship program retreat in Tsaghadzor



Tatevik, Dr. Kaarina & Narine at the LIGHTHOUSE with Linda Nicholson, visiting from California

LIGHTHOUSE / "PAROS" Training Center

We're pleased with ongoing progress with interior renovations at the LIGHTHOUSE Training Center near Lake Sevan, enabling us to begin seminars this winter and spring:

- March seminar for singles:
"Building a Christian Identity"
- April seminar for young couples:
"Building a Christian Marriage"
- May seminar for young parents:
"Building a Christian Family"

Special thanks to Bill Lackie and his family from Arkansas (member of Yerevan International Church) for helping to construct kitchen counters and shelves during the winter months!



How do you like our brand new entrance doors!

Project PAROS

Short-term Mission
Opportunity in Armenia

July 7-28, 2007



Participation in discipleship and youth ministry programs; practical help at the LIGHTHOUSE; visits to historical sites.

Further information: paros@wayofhope.am



ARMENIAN CHURCH HISTORY

Part III: "Why Do Armenians Celebrate Christmas on January 6th?"

By Narine Sinanyan

Armenian Christmas is celebrated each year on January 6th. This causes some confusion, especially since December 25th is so widely recognized in the West. During the Armenian Christmas Season, the major events that are celebrated are Jesus' Nativity in Bethlehem and Jesus' Baptism in the River Jordan. A frequently asked question is, "Why don't Armenians celebrate Christmas along with the rest of Christendom?"

Obviously, the exact date of Christ's birth has not been historically established, neither is it recorded in the Gospels. However, until the 4th

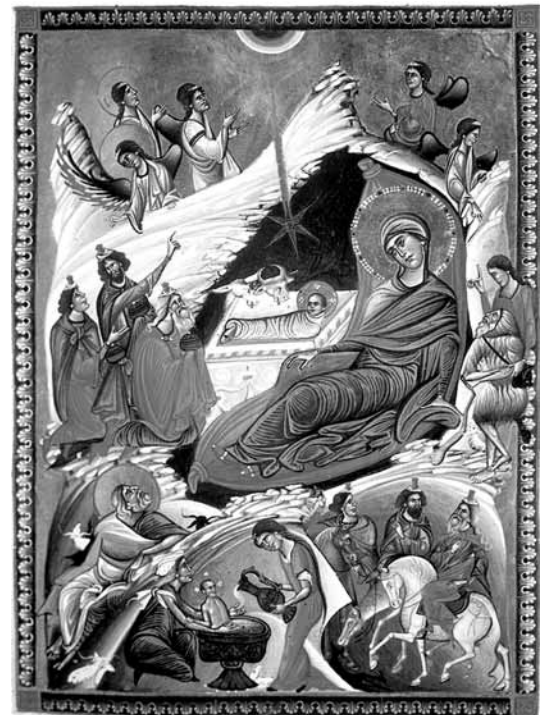
century, all Christian churches traditionally celebrated Jesus' birth on January 6th. There are varying accounts about why the celebration of the Nativity was changed to December 25th.

According to Roman Catholic sources, the date was changed in order to override a pagan feast dedicated to the birth of the sun, which was celebrated on December 25th. Christians long ago continued their observance of these pagan festivities. Thus the Feast of the Nativity was moved to shift the focus of celebration from the birth of the sun to the birth of the Son, Jesus Christ! In order to undermine this pagan practice, the church hierarchy designated December 25th as the official date for Christmas, and January 6th as the Feast of the Epiphany.

Armenia, however, was not affected by this change for the simple fact that there were no such pagan practices in Armenia at that time. Thus, remaining faithful to the traditions of their forefathers, Armenians have to the present time continued to celebrate Christmas on January 6th.

Unfortunately, many Armenians (especially the older generation) celebrate the New Year even more magnificently than Christmas---perhaps because the New Year comes earlier; perhaps because of the 70-year influence of the Soviets, who tried to subdue Christian faith in favor of

scientific atheism. But, praise God, today's younger generation focuses more and more on the celebration of Christmas, not just the New Year.



Christ's Nativity (Armenian miniature)

ARMENIAN LIFE & CULTURE

By Tatevik Ghazaryan

Part III: "Armenia Before Christianity"



influence) affected the countries of the Near East. As in many countries of this region, during the 3rd century B.C., Greek culture, mythology, and language were spread among the cream of Armenian society in the populated areas. Thus in the Armenian royal court, literature, science and other aspects of learned culture were developed first in Aramaic, then in Greek. Nevertheless indigenous customs and beliefs persisted at the village level.

From the 1st to 4th centuries B.C., and also in subsequent periods, Armenian national epics (novels) and dramas developed alongside



pagan temple of Garni

The history of Armenia goes back 2,500 years. Long before adopting Christianity (in 301 A.D.), Armenia had already created its culture and was living in a "pagan age." In this pre-Christian period, Armenians worshipped many pantheons of gods and created monuments to them.

After the invasion of Alexander the Great and the collapse of Achamenian Persia, "Hellenism" (Greek

Hellenistic dramas. Greek literature records Armenian King Tradat I's request that Nero give him one of his famous mimes. Greek historian Plutarch confirmed the victory celebrations in the Armenian city of Artashat against Roman General Marcus Crassus, an event portrayed in Euripides' theatrical drama, "The Bacchae."



pagan god Anahit (on display in the British Museum)

During the Hellenistic period, architecture became highly developed, and many towns, pagan temples, and impregnable strongholds were built. The capital city of Artashat, constructed during this period, was called "Armenian Karthagen" by the Romans. During the 1st century B.C., Garni temple (one of the most beautiful), dedicated to the pagan god Mihr, was built. This recently renovated monument is similar to Greek and Roman temples of the period. In addition, a marble statue to the pagan god Anahit, now on display in the British Museum, was found in Artashat.

In our next article, we will examine ancient Armenian beliefs and the role they played in the life of the Armenian people before Christianity was officially adopted.

Answers to Prayer

God has given us a memorable first year of ministry!

- 1 Our first young adult discipleship program with 25 regular participants
- 2 Effective youth programs in two locations
- 3 Good progress with interior renovations at the LIGHTHOUSE Training Center near Lake Sevan
- 4 A wonderful ministry office near the city center

Prayer Concerns

Please pray with us about our current needs:

- 1 A follow-up discipleship ministry Bible study
- 2 A third youth ministry team (to begin in a new location)
- 3 Special seminars at the LIGHTHOUSE during March, April, and May
- 4 New financial partners willing to contribute on a monthly basis to our ministry needs

"Be strong and courageous, all you who HOPE in the Lord." Psalm 31:24

Return this portion with your gift

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

Monthly pledge: \$ _____ Name: _____

Extra gift for ministry office: \$ _____ Address: _____

Total amount enclosed: \$ _____

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Thank You for Giving