



Summer 2009

LIGHTHOUSE PAROS

TRUSTING GOD THROUGH THE HARD TIMES...



Steve and Brenda Willard
with their children
Sam, Olivia, and Caleb

In late June of 2008, God brought me into a completely new chapter in my life. While testing a friend's new motorcycle, something happened of which I still do not have remembrance. The next thing I knew, I was being loaded into a medical helicopter. About twenty minutes later, I landed at a large medical facility in Worcester, Massachusetts. Over the next couple of days, I learned that I had broken my back in two places, ribs, many facial bones, including my nose, my upper right arm in two places (while shattering the bone in-between), pulverized my right wrist, and open fractured and lost about three inches of my right tibia bone, muscle and tissue just below my knee, as well as splitting the top ball of that bone in two.

To say that I was thankful for the presence of Jesus in my life is a great understatement. The surgeon for my leg was talking about the possibility of having to remove my leg just above the knee. Was there any fear with me? Absolutely! Throughout my past, I had always been extremely active with rock and ice climbing, hang gliding, weight lifting, sail boarding, running and other outdoor activities. Now I wondered if I would ever recover, and if so, would I be able to walk again. Steel frames were running down the outside of my arm and leg with rods penetrating my skin, screwed into my bones. A full

brace encircled my torso from my hips to my neck. How would I be able to help my three young children experience the joy of some of these outdoor activities? How would I ever be able to help my wife with our home, cut and split and bring in the wood to heat our house? What about work and an income to support our family? I had so many questions and seemingly no answers.

But, I knew that in God's Word, Hebrews 4:13, God tells us "And there is no creature hidden from His sight ..." and in Matthew 10:29 - 30 "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." God's truth was there. Because of His work and faithfulness in my life, I knew He had the power to keep His Word and I could trust Him

Not only did God know my situation perfectly, but the events that had put me into the guard rail with that motorcycle, were completely within His sovereign control and will, as was my recovery. Through that, God brought me the strength and comfort that I desperately needed. He did the same for my wife. Many times in His Word, God says that He will be with us. In Isaiah 43:1-3, God promises us, "...Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior ..."

I was certainly walking through the fire, but He was with me, giving me strength and hope, leading me through this fire. During this time, God continually encouraged me through believers who were sending me letters, praying for me, calling me and encouraging me. Others like Kaarina were visiting me with encouragement and goodies. What wonderful things God does as He shows His power and love to those who trust in His Son, our only Lord and Savior Jesus.

The surgeons told my wife that I should be able to be home by December, six months between hospitals and inpatient rehabilitation. My wife Brenda, not accepting that, prayed that I'd be home sometime in September. Psalm 118:8 tells us, "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man." What the doctors did not count on was the power of God's intervention in my recovery. Two weeks after the accident, I was transferred to an acute rehab center. Two weeks after that, I was home at the end of July, just one month after the accident. The doctors had predicted six months! They told me I would probably not get back any use of my wrist. Now I have over 50% use back, as well as full healing of my back, facial bones, ribs and upper arm. In early June, I went rock climbing on a cliff near our home. My leg continues to improve. Praise the Lord of heaven and earth for His great power and mercy. God is infinitely able to do all that He chooses to do. I know that God is with me, that He is doing what is best, as all His ways are perfect. What incredible contentment we can have by simply trusting in God's sovereign control over our lives. Thank you for your prayers. Keep trusting in Him. Sincerely grateful for His mercy,

Steve Willard
Ashby, Massachusetts, USA

* Steve serves as co-chair of the New England-based HOPE Ministry Committee, a group of church mission committee representatives and friends of HOPE who meet annually to pray together for our ministries.

HOPE NEWS



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PERSPECTIVES ON HOPE

"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word."

II Thessalonians 2:16,17

Just the words of blessing I needed to hear this week, sent by a friend at home in Massachusetts! **Eternal encouragement**—coming to us by the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Good hope**—encouraging our hearts and strengthening us for service.

God's Word always speaks to us right where we are. Holy Spirit-inspired writers faithfully recorded divine principles which centuries later still "penetrate even to the dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow," judging the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

Mine is the privilege each season of teaching the lesson on "The Significance of God's Word" halfway through our young adult discipleship program, focusing on the "Basics of Christian Faith." Young Armenians are always full of questions: *How was the biblical canon compiled? How can we be sure it is God's Word? Why should we take time to search for its deep truths? How can its truths be applied to our lives?*

HOPE staff members can count on me to recount to new disciples the strenuous thrill of delivering Bibles in many Slavic languages to believers behind the "Iron Curtain" during the Late Soviet Period (1970s & 1980s), when Armenia formed the south-western border of the USSR. I always explain how such risky trips reinforced the value of the Bible in my (much younger) heart and mind.

Many years later, I still marvel at the wonderful treasure that is God's Word, as through it the Holy Spirit instructs in exactly the areas where I need special wisdom, correction, and guidance. May our **Bible Education** ministries among teenagers and young adults point faithfully to the Lord of the Scriptures, "whom to know aright is life eternal."

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



HOPE Governing Board, California

The HOPE Governing Board met once again on April 18th to oversee progress in our ministries, finances, and overall direction. We're grateful for the prayerful support and guidance of the board members, and their willingness to invest time, expertise, resources, travel, and hospitality for the sake of God's work in Armenia.

Pictured here (from left to right):

David Dunbar, Lisburn, GA
Heather Thrall, San Dimas, CA
Juliana Mirabilio, San Mateo, CA
Paul Green, Glendora, CA
Linda Webster, Roswell, GA
Richard Nicholson, San Gabriel, CA



HOPE Ministry Committee, Massachusetts

Members of the HOPE Armenia Northeast Ministry Committee gathered at 11:00 a.m. on April 25th at Bethany Bible Chapel in Winchendon, Massachusetts. Friends, family and supportive church members assemble each Spring to discuss current items, learn about upcoming activities and ministry efforts and pray for Kaarina, her staff and the ministry work that God is continuing through them in Armenia. Our previous meetings had been held at People's Evangelical Congregational Church in South Ashburnham, Kaarina's home church here in Massachusetts, but due to a scheduling conflict, we were thankful for the willingness of Bethany Chapel members to allow us to utilize their facility.

After coffee and refreshments, we began in prayer. Next, we took a roll call of attendees, about 20 of us, including a few who were preparing refreshments and lunch in the kitchen. I shared a devotional reading from Romans 9 and 2 Corinthians 4 in God's Word, explaining that though we are common earthen vessels, God has created us to carry the treasure of the gospel of Jesus into the world, highlighting God's power in the use of common things.

We then reviewed the agenda, including prayer updates from HOPE staff in Armenia and a Project PAROS address and encouragement from Ruth Dahlgren, this summer's team leader. Nearing the time when we'd link up electronically with Armenia, meeting members considered questions to ask of Kaarina and her staff.

At our previous gathering in the Spring of 2008, we enjoyed having Kaarina with us while in the states. The year prior to that, we utilized a phone connection and talked with Kaarina during our gathering. This year, we ventured into a new realm of video conferencing through a Skype computer connection.

Kaarina and her staff in Armenia were projected live on a large screen as we talked, which added a family closeness and real time discussion to our meeting. We were both excited and pleased to be able to meet "virtually" Tatevik, Tigran and Mher of the HOPE Armenia staff and witness an impressive level of English spoken by them. Those of us in Winchendon could be heard and seen on the computer in the HOPE office there as well, though none of us in the states ventured to try to speak in Armenian. Then we gathered into a few smaller groups to pray for the needs for which God can perfectly provide. After this, we enjoyed a wonderful lunch prepared by the loving hands of a number of both Peoples and Chapel members.

Of the 20 of us present at the meeting, three will be part of Project PAROS in Armenia this summer. Ruth Dahlgren of Bethany Bible Chapel will lead the group from the states. Nearing the end of our meeting, Ruth gathered together with two other members of the team traveling to Armenia, Dana Teufel from Orchard Christian Fellowship in Londonderry, NH; and Nancy Merrifield from New Hope Chapel in Westboro, MA. Nancy's daughter Sarah will also be traveling with her to Armenia, as will Emrie Smith and Pastor Steve Misarski of New Hope Chapel. They will join up in July with Gloria Nollido of Vienna, Austria, also part of this team. Paul Ham of Christ Church in Fitchburg, MA and Chuck Newman of New Hope Chapel and I sat with Ruth, Dana and Nancy to discuss early details and travel considerations of the Project Paros trip. Paul shared valuable information gained from his previous trip to Armenia.

The HOPE Armenia Ministries staff wishes to thank those who participated and made possible this year's Ministry Committee Meeting, as well as those who have kept this ministry before the Lord in prayer and with their faithful support. Thanks also to those at Bethany Chapel and from People's Church for their wonderful hospitality.

By Steve Willard



4th Annual HOPE Ministry Committee meeting

AUTUMN 2008 ministries

3rd JRASHEN Youth DISCIPLESHP

Our ministry team conducted the 3rd youth discipleship program in Jrashen school with 12 faithful pre-teens (ages 9 - 12). They looked forward each week to seeing our team arrive from Yerevan and discussing the "Basics of the Christian Faith." Based on the good response generally in Jrashen, HOPE staff decided to invite kids from all three of our programs to a Project PAROS summer day camp next July, with visitors from the USA. The teachers hope we'll do another regular program in their school sometime in the future, since there are few options for kids in their village.



1st Follow-up group

3rd JRASHEN Follow-up BIBLE STUDY

Starting from September 2008 through May 2009, Way of HOPE organized the 2nd "Fruit of the Spirit" Youth Program in Jrashen district school, near Yerevan. Program participants were 7-9 teenagers who had already completed the Youth ALPHA program. This follow-up program included 12 lessons where we discussed Galatians 5:22-23, which describes the fruits of Holy Spirit. These kids had already become acquainted with the Bible, the mission of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and Christian teaching. During this second program, they talked more freely than during the first one. Reading specific Bible verses extended their spiritual knowledge and will prove useful as they apply the truth of God's Word in a new stage in their lives. useful for them in entering to new stage life of life. *By Anna Arakelyan*

Anna (age 27) is a recent graduate of Yerevan State Conservatory of Music (vocal major). She has served faithfully for five years as a youth ministry volunteer in several villages near Yerevan.



2nd Follow-up group



5th Young Adult DISCIPLESHP St. Hovhannes Church, Yerevan

With pleasure, the Christian Education director gave permission for us to hold our first discipleship program (HOPE's 5th so far) in the fellowship hall beside this prominent church in Central Yerevan. After fine recruiting efforts by HOPE staff, a group of 22 participants and 8 team members met each week to discuss the "Basics of the Christian Faith." Most were not closely connected with the Church and were pleased to learn more about issues of practical faith presented by inspiring speakers. Halfway through the programs, there was a weekend retreat near Lake Sevan during which participants learned about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The good location, fine fellowship, and positive spirit all contributed to a fine program, and led naturally into a follow-up Bible study for this eager group of young adults. *By Tatevik Ghazaryan*



5th Young Adult Discipleship RETREAT LIGHTHOUSE Training Center

Two popular deacons from the Armenian Apostolic Church joined our discipleship group for the weekend retreat in mid-November with about 25 participants from our discipleship program in mid-November, halfway through the program. The weather was beautiful, the air clear and clean, and the participants started to be closer as they enjoyed lessons, fellowship, and free time away from Yerevan city



Summer BIBLE STUDY 2008: "Christian Faith & Family" HOPE office

For the first time (by popular demand!), our staff organized a special follow-up Bible study at HOPE office to continue spiritual emphases during June and July, after the regular winter-spring ministries were completed. We found a great response from about 20 faithful participants to issues concerning faith and family, and decided to continue this special summer feature next year as well.

WINTER-SPRING 2009 ministries



"The Importance of Didactic Materials in Youth Ministry"

Our current HOPE youth team members, Tatevik, Mher, and I, have conducted programs for three years already with teenagers, ages 12 - 18. During this time, we've found how important materials such as films, photos, and charts are in making spiritual truth relevant.

Throughout childhood, movies inspired us all in one way or another. I remember when I was very young and my father tried to improve my behavior, in many cases without an effective result! But as I watched instructive films about friendship, forgiveness, faithfulness, etc., step by step my attitudes and manners improved.

For young people in any culture, it's boring just to listen to adults talk about various topics; they need more "colorful" explanations. In other words, those of us trying to teach spiritual principles should learn to "speak their language." From the start of our programs, our team has utilized a laptop computer, power point projector, and screen. This means that, in addition to Bibles, we are always carrying lots of equipment to and from our programs!

Each discipleship lesson about some basic aspect of Christian faith includes approximately four or five film frames. At appropriate times in the lesson, we present relevant material through media. What's the result? Invariably the kids in small villages near Yerevan, where we obtain permission to conduct Christian programs in local schools, seem very inspired, like something important is going on in their minds. As the video clips play, they become quiet and thoughtful, and ask questions about the remainder of the current story displayed on film. Teenagers are going through the most difficult stage of life. The material we use to reinforce lessons has to be chosen carefully, so that the biblical principles will go down deep in their hearts and minds. Through small-group discussion, we can follow their spiritual growth step by step. It's hard work to update our media database periodically. But finding relevant material is the best way to fit their needs and interests.

Our laptop, projector, and screen, provided by Christian friends living far from Armenia, are valuable ministry tools! They're helping us to make youth programs effective and interesting, rather than school-oriented and boring. Many thanks from our ministry team to the HOPE board and sponsors who had the vision to provide just what we need to reach kids with the "Good News" of the Lord Jesus.

By Tigran Apikyan

**Tigran serves on HOPE staff as computer technician and media coordinator. His hard-working spirit, commitment to teamwork, and eagerness to share spiritual truth with teenagers are all great assets in HOPE ministries.*

JRVEZH 1st Youth DISCIPLESHIP



This year, HOPE staff began youth ministry in another village near Yerevan. Through connections with church leaders, permission was given to meet each week in Jrvezh School. Around 10 middle teens participated in this program. At first, it was hard going, but toward the end, they started to respond to spiritual truth and appreciated our team's committed efforts.

JRVEZH 1st Youth Discipleship RETREAT Arinj village church

In the middle of the program, we took the Jrvezh group on a short retreat to Arinj village church, where they heard about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. They seemed to enjoy the picnic and chance to have fun together with our team.



6th Young Adult DISCIPLESHIP, St. Hovhannes Church, Yerevan



The HOPE Young Adult Discipleship program is really very useful for me. It gives much Christian knowledge, as well as a chance to communicate with other young people about the "Basics of the Christian Faith." It makes me think about problems and issues that I would never think of otherwise. This program teaches us to be understanding toward other people who do not think exactly as we do, to listen to each other, to respect each other's opinions, and to not be afraid of speaking our minds. I think everybody goes home filled with love and peace after each program.

By Tsovinar Talyan

**Tsovinar (age 18) is one of our newest ministry team members. She's pictured here to the left with the entire winter-spring discipleship ministry team: Mher, Anna, Anna, Samvel, Arman, Susanna, Tatevik, and Tsovinar.*



Here are some of the topics we study each week (based on the ALPHA course outline):

Who Is Jesus?
Why Did Jesus Die?
How Can I Be Sure of My Faith?
Why and How do I Pray?
Why and How Should I Read the Bible?
How Does God Guide Us?
How Can I Resist Evil?
Why and How Should We Tell Others?
Does God Heal Today?
What About the Church?

Halfway through, we spend a weekend at the LIGHTHOUSE, studying about the role of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives:

Who Is the Holy Spirit?
What Does the Holy Spirit Do?
How Can I be Filled with the Holy Spirit?
How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life?

6th Young Adult Discipleship RETREAT LIGHTHOUSE Training Center

Our 6th discipleship retreat was held in mid-May near Lake Sevan at a very beautiful time of year. Two popular deacons joined us once again to teach about the role of the Holy Spirit. This group created several interesting dramas using biblical themes and seemed to thoroughly enjoy spending time together away from city routines. [Tatevik likes to call this picture of our kids on a run-down bus near the LIGHTHOUSE: "On the way to heaven..."]



"Fruit of the Spirit" Follow-up Bible Study HOPE office

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Galatians 5:22

In my opinion, each person has some knowledge about the "Fruits of the Holy Spirit," and that they are important conditions in every Christian's life. We know generally the significance of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. But do we apply these spiritual characteristics in our lives and make them our rules for sincere living? That is the question.

The discussions each week about these topics are important for us as Christians, because step by step they deepen our understanding of spiritual truth. Each week the two-hour hearty atmosphere, full of biblical teaching, lively discussion, God's presence, and growing

interaction, make a deep impact on each of us. We come to understand that biblical principles are not just theoretical knowledge to be acquired, but also practical guidance that can be applied day by day as we live out a nature transformed by Jesus Christ. As one program leads to another, gradually we find ourselves coming even closer to the Lord. *By Lilit Mkrtchyan*



** Lilit (24 years of age) studies drama at the Yerevan Institute of Theater and Cinema. She has faithfully attended HOPE discipleship programs, Bible studies, and seminars.*

SPECIAL EVENTS

Staff NEW YEAR celebration

January 3

Suren and Tatevik's home



2nd LEADERSHIP SEMINAR LIGHTHOUSE

April 17-18



2nd Annual STAFF RETREAT HOPE office

March 28



3rd Annual HOPE Family EXCURSION to BDJNI

June 14



Staff EASTER celebration

April 12

Anna's home



3rd SINGLES' SEMINAR: "Building a Christian Identity" LIGHTHOUSE

June 27-28



Summer BIBLE STUDY 2009: "The Sermon on the Mount" HOPE office

June - July

Once again there's been a steady group of 25 - 30 meeting each Thursday evening during June and July for a special Bible study at HOPE office---a popular follow-up to last summer! All have interacted well with Jesus' teachings in the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7, and (as usual) have asked many questions. HOPE staff has been especially pleased to see spiritual unity and personal friendships develop among these new disciples the Lord has entrusted to us.



Project PAROS

Short-term Summer Mission Opportunity

July 12 - 25, 2009

"First Impressions of Armenia"

When I arrived recently in Yerevan, my first impression was that the airport was still in a very Soviet style. There are many obvious marks of the long Communist Era. There are not many street lamps—only in the city center. People do not seem very aware yet of international networks. I seem to stand out as an Asian from the Philippines. Drivers don't seem very patient—just like in my homeland! I noticed this especially because I'm living in the very organized and structured city of Vienna. Also like in the Philippines, people put up little stores or kiosks on the street, in front of their apartments.

Our Project PAROS team agrees that there's quite a mix of the old and the new in Armenia. When we held the youth camp in the village of Jrashen near Yerevan, we noticed the big contrast between city and village life—kids in the village seem eager and receptive. We've been impressed with the gentleman-like behavior of Mher and Tigran on the HOPE staff and are grateful for their helpfulness.

By Gloria Nollido

** Gloria is a long-time friend of Dr. Kaarina who is Filipina by birth and Austrian by nationality. She has lived in Vienna, Austria since the mid-1980s and is active in the International Baptist Fellowship there. She has participated in ministry trips to Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia and (former) Yugoslavia..*



Khor Virap

One of the things that amazed me about Khor Virap was seeing Mt. Ararat, where Noah's Ark is said to be, and also looking over the border into Turkey was very interesting. It was also very humbling to be in the *khos* (pit) where King Trdat put 4th century Christian evangelist "Gregory the Illuminator" for 14 years. It was very dark in that pit, and the ladder down into it was quite a descent. Several of us on our Project PAROS team sang the Doxology there, remembering Gregory's refusal to refute Christianity and go back into paganism. I can't really believe that I had the opportunity to see these things.

By Emrie Smith

** Emrie, who just turned 14, is a high school student in Westboro, Massachusetts and attends New Hope Chapel. She enjoys singing and ballet.*

Echmiadzin

Our team visited Echmiadzin after our final day of summer camp in Jrashen. The same Christ whom we proclaimed in the village had descended in a vision to St. Gregory, instructing him to build the first Armenian Church [in 303 A.D.]. When I entered the Cathedral, I was struck by the balance of the sacred and the simple. From the paintings of Gregory, Mesrop Mashtots [creator of the Armenian alphabet], Thaddeus and Bartholomew (Apostles to Armenia), to the wood-carved pulpits and alabaster altars—I found myself saying over and over, "Beautiful, very beautiful." Although I come from a very different stream of Christianity, I appreciated the beauty of Armenian Apostolic worship.

By Pastor Steve Misarski

** Steve grew up in Connecticut and now pastor's New Hope Chapel in Westboro, Massachusetts.*



Genocide Museum

Before coming to Armenia, I was familiar with the story of the Armenian Genocide. I knew about the eternal flame and the commemorative stele. But once there, the location on the hills overlooking Yerevan was truly inspiring. We came upon a field of pine trees planted in remembrance of the Genocide. The horror perpetrated on the Armenia people by the Turkish government took me aback. It was the total eradication of a culture as well as an ethnic group. This type of horror is still with us as seen recently in places such as Darfur and Rwanda, and it is a stark reminder that even in modern times we must be on our guard.

By Dana Teufel

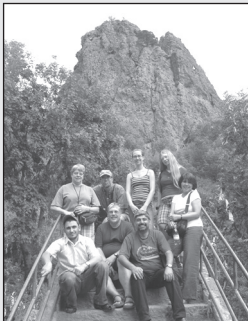
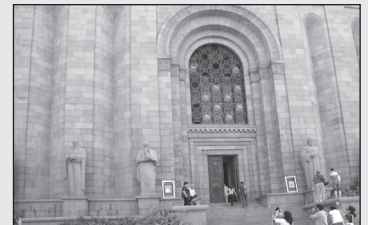
** Dana is a computer systems administrator and attends Orchard Christian Fellowship in Londonderry, NH. His son Jason is a police officer. Dana is an avid sailor and is interested in the martial arts.*

Matenadaran Manuscript Museum

This important Armenian site is more than a museum; it is a scientific institute that studies and preserves ancient manuscripts (handwritten copies). I was impressed by the body of knowledge recorded here in the fields of religion, philosophy, mathematics, pedagogy, astronomy, and medicine. Throughout the guide's presentation, I sensed the great pride Armenians have for their rich heritage and contribution to the progress of humanity. One Armenian astronomer described accurately the world and the Milky Way hundreds of years before it was proven. The most important contribution is the translation of the Bible and Mesrop Mashtots' Alphabet. The oldest translation is from the 7th century.

By Pastor Steve Misarski

** Steve and his wife Jan have 4 children ranging from 9 to 24 years of age. He sings, plays guitar, and loves sports.*



Geghard

The most encompassing word for Geghard is "wow". Geghard is a monastery carved into the side of a mountain. The outside of the main church looks like many other old churches, but the inside is simply outstanding. Since it was carved rather than built, every room has textured walls, floors, surfaces, and even natural springs. All of this is beautiful and unique, yes, but it is the well-worn stairs leading to prayer alcoves that tell us the true story of this holy place.

By Sarah Merrifield

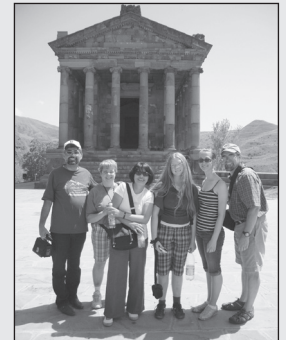
** Sarah will be a freshman at Keene State College in New Hampshire in the fall and loves how her summer has turned out so far!*

Garni

After an earthquake in the 15th century which destroyed almost all the religious temples, Garni was the only pagan temple left in Armenia from pre-Christian times (Armenia became the first Christian nation in 301 A.D.). Garni was also one of the favorite places of King Trdat where he built a bath house, parts of which still exist.

By Sarah Merrifield

** Sarah has one brother and one sister and will soon be an aunt.*



JRASHEN Summer YOUTH CAMP

A WONDERFUL experience for all! Three Spirit-filled and fun days! On the first day, prior to the camp program, several Project PAROS team members were invited to meet with the Director of Jrashen School # 107 for coffee, fruit, and pastry. She welcomed us to her office and proudly spoke of her students and country. The children greeted the team (and Henry IV—ministry van) each morning with open hearts. They really enjoyed the Bible stories, dramas, and games. It was obvious there was no "spiritual language barrier." The children were well-disciplined and eager to help. Four teams received prizes on the last day of camp after the completion of a "mini-Olympics." A teacher who helped organize the 70 kids who came each day expressed deep appreciation for the program and stated how it "touched all our lives in the village—children and school staff alike." During the closing, Dr. Kaarina again emphasized the spiritual truths of the week, expressing thanks to the director, teacher, and other staff. Hugs were exchanged with a few tears. It was clear that none of us wanted camp to end. *By Ruth Stone Dahlgren*



Kids from all three HOPE youth discipleship programs in Jrashen

** Ruth, a native of Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire, is a social worker who graduated from Eastern Nazarene College with Dr. Kaarina (many years ago!) and attends Bethany Bible Chapel in Winchendon, Massachusetts.*

EXCURSION to LIGHTHOUSE Training Center near Lake Sevan

Saturday, July 18



**arriving by bus
from Yerevan**



**American "cowboy" picnic
at the LIGHTHOUSE**



**hiking nearby mountains
overlooking Lake Sevan**



**presentation by Pastor Steve Misarski
about Army Chaplaincy in Iraq**

LIGHTHOUSE Training Center

HOPE website: www.wayofhope.am



We're pleased to report additional plastering and painting work in the LIGHTHOUSE dining room (light yellow) and living room (lavender)!

Step by step those visiting the Training Center can see progress in several areas. Here (to the left) members of our 2009 Project PAROS team are hard at work...



We are pleased also to announce the addition of a "photo archive" in HOPE website: www.wayofhope.am

This allows viewers to check back on our first two years of ministry (2006, 2007), while at the same time staying current with ongoing ministries.

ARMENIAN CHURCH HISTORY & TRADITION

"The Cross of Jesus Christ"

Armenian Apostolic Christians take a long and inspired view of God's miraculous presence through 1,700 years of conquest and persecution. Throughout Armenia, in courtyards surrounding ancient churches, beautifully carved "khatchkar" stone crosses can be seen (such as the one pictured to the right near Jukhtak Church in Dilijan), reminding everyone of the finished work of Christ on the cross, and the new life we have in Him.



In 301 A.D., Christianity was accepted in Armenia as the state religion. First King Trdat III and his family, then high members of the Arkhunik Kingdom, and then the entire Armenian nation, were baptized by the evangelist St. Gregory the Illuminator in the Aratsani River. Thus early 4th century Armenians confessed their sins, forsook pagan practices, and gave full allegiance to the Christian faith which had been established in Armenia by two of Christ's twelve disciples, Bartholomew and Thaddeus.

Throughout its 1,700-year history, the Armenian Apostolic Church has revered the Cross of Christ, as proclaimed by the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Church at Galatia: **"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."** Galatians 6:14

As part of its sacred calendar each year, the Armenian Apostolic Church devotes four special days to the Cross of Jesus Christ. The first, "The Appearance of the Cross," celebrated 28 days after Easter, commemorates the day in 351 A.D. when a bright, luminous light in the shape of a cross appeared over the skies of Jerusalem. The Armenian translation of St. Cyril's letter to Emperor Constantine in Byzantium (Constantinople) concerning this scene, in which he exhorts the Emperor to remain steadfast in his faith and stop defending the heretical movement of Arianism, has been preserved by the Armenian Church.

The second is "The Exultation of the Cross," celebrated in mid-September. In 610 A.D., the

Persian King Khosrov, with a large army, attacked Jerusalem. After imprisoning the Christian leader Zakaria, the Persians entered the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and took the cross that had been installed in the church by Hermine, mother of King Constantine, in the beginning of the 4th century. In 628 A.D., the Byzantine army led by King Heracles, together with Armenian soldiers, fought and prevailed against the Persians, removing the cross to the Armenian town of Karin, from where it was carried to Constantinople, and then to Jerusalem. As the cross traveled through Armenian territory, many people confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as Savior. Decorating the cross with special flowers called "rehan" (sweet basil), they made it seem that, wherever the cross goes, it flourishes and brings people to new life in Christ!

The third, "The Cross of Varaga," celebrated at the end of September, is exclusive to the Armenian Apostolic Church. It is based on an interesting historical tradition, whereby several women, including one named Hripsime, escaped the persecutions under Roman Emperor Diocletian and hid on Mt. Varaga in present-day Turkey. This tradition has it that a piece of Jesus' cross gradually made its way from a trash heap, to the Apostle James, to Hermine (mother of Emperor Constantine), to Hripsime. Understanding the dangers of being found with this Christian relic in a pagan kingdom, Hripsime hid it on the mountain. Eventually a Christian "Church of the Cross" came to rest on that place. In 1655 A.D., this piece of the cross was placed in Van, one of the cities in which the 1915-18 "Genocide Against the Armenian People" occurred, but after the Genocide it was lost.

The fourth, "The Discovery of the Cross," is celebrated in late October and commemorates the event in 327 A.D. when Hermine, Emperor

Constantine's mother, visited Jerusalem in search of the cross on which Christ died. A Jew named Judas assisted in the search. He converted to Christianity and later became Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem.

The second celebration mentioned above is given further honor as the most important of five main feast days of the Armenian Apostolic Church. This takes place every year on a Sunday near September 14. This celebration is connected to two very important events which took place after the death of Jesus. The first occurred in Jerusalem when the Apostle James (at that time Patriarch of Jerusalem) raised the Cross of Christ for the first time in the presence of new believers. As explained above, the second occurred in 610 A.D. when Byzantine King Heracles liberated the Cross from Persian King Khosrov, who occupied Jerusalem, taking it with him as a valuable treasure to Persia (present-day Iran).

Thus the cross of Jesus Christ, cruel instrument of death, has long covered believers with the healing blood of our Savior, and become instead a saving instrument of eternal life! For over 1,700 years, our nation has faithfully displayed many beautiful "khatchkar" replicas of the cross, which long ago became for us a symbol worthy of honor as the **Tree of Life** presented in Genesis 3:24, in relation to the curse; and in Revelation 22:1-2, for the healing of the nations.

By Mher Nahapetyan



* Mher serves on HOPE staff as assistant ministry coordinator for both youth and young adult discipleship programs. His acting, administrative, and large-event organizational skills, together with a willing spirit, enthusiasm for spiritual truth, and eagerness to share God's Word with young people, are great assets to HOPE ministries.

ANSWERS TO PRAYER

1. great finale to winter-spring ministry programs
2. a fine "HOPE Family" Excursion to Bdjni
3. American, Filipino, Armenian Project PAROS volunteers
4. God's healing touch on Steve Willard's life
5. \$14,000 in Henry V fund

PRAYER CONCERNS

1. August break for HOPE staff
2. preparations for autumn ministries
3. new participants for youth and young adult programs
4. safe delivery of Tatevik's baby in late August
5. purchase of just the right Henry V

"... In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope..." Peter 1:36

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