

Dear Family and Friends,

Happy New Year to all of you in the name of Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords! May the peace and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always and in every trial you face. It is with great joy that we welcome in and celebrate the new year (2021) that the Lord has given us. Last year seemed to have sped by, especially with all the unexpected twists and turns. Although we may have been confused and shocked at times, it is so extremely comforting to know that our God is always in control and faithfully working out His salvation plan.

In the spirit of Isaiah 61:3, it has been a blessing to see the Lord's hand moving in the midst of all the chaos, giving His people "garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of the spirit of fainting." Although we are currently under a second round of lockdowns and curfews, inflation is on a rapid rise, and job loss is at a high, this time of intense pressure has actually brought God's family here in Turkey closer together; they have not forsaken their faith and each other, but continue to draw ever closer to Him. We haven't been able to meet on Sundays or over the weekends since mid-December, and no one is allowed on the street after 9pm without a major fine (3500 Turkish Lira = \$500). As before, those under the age of 20 are only allowed out from 1pm-4pm and 65 and older from 10am-1pm. This left us with a very limited time that we would be able to meet as a body of believers, as most of our members have jobs, thus we wrongly assumed many would not want to make time to meet. Alas, much to our surprise, everyone enthusiastically desired to meet at least once a week for prayer, worship, and the reading of the word – garland instead of ashes!

On December 25<sup>th</sup>, we all gathered to celebrate the birth of our Lord. We were at maximum capacity by the following of the new restrictions and social and hygienic mitigation. It was a joyous time of singing hymns, reading the recount of Christ's birth from Matthew and Luke, and reflecting on how Jesus fulfilled the messianic requirements and what that means to mankind. Laughter, joy, and fellowship were shared in great abundance, to His glory. Unfortunately, due to a 4-day lockdown, we were unable to meet as a church for New Year's Eve to pray and sing in the New Year, as has been our tradition, but remained home as a family for the first time in perhaps 15 years. It too was a blessing, as one of our sons, Jacob, had come for a holiday visit.

As we are faithful with the tasks the Lord gives us to do, He continues to add to His church in a variety of ways. We have a new member who found us through one of our church member's FB page, where he posts many bible verses. She contacted him and he referred her to Karyn, who then was able to meet with her and bring her to our fellowship. She seems as though she will be a welcome addition to our family!

In addition to this, we are excited to share that the Lord seems to be sending us an answer to our prayers through 2 young, faithful men who have approached us and asked us to disciple them and help them to start a college-age youth group through our church. You have been praying for both of them, Ishak and Ovgu. They are growing in their relationship with the Lord and knowledge of His word. We hope to get this outreach group started within the next few months. Please pray with us that the Lord would grant much fruit from this effort and bring many young people to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

We have begun planning for this year, and now that the vaccine has come out, we are hoping to have our restrictions lifted soon and be able to renew our specialized women's outreach ministries. We are currently functioning in a unique way due to Covid restrictions which have inhibited our daily activities for women and children; however, we are still able to be a light in this dark age. Please go to this link – look for Battered Women's Center - and check out the highlight of what God is doing through this ministry,

and partner with us as the Lord leads you. [Www.christar.org/catalog](http://www.christar.org/catalog)

May the year 2021 be a blessed time for you all in which you see the glory of the Lord in a unique way in your life and the lives of your loved ones. Grace and peace be multiplied to each and every one of your lives.

For the joy set before us,  
Joe, Karyn, and Angela Caven

#### Praises and Prayers:

- Praise God Jacob was able to visit for Christmas. Pray that Josh can come this summer.
- Praise God for good health and sound minds.
- Praise God for a new year!
- Praise God for a blessed Christmas celebration with our group. May God use what they heard, saw, and even felt to draw them close to Himself.
- Praise God for a peaceful outcome in our relationship with the ch bldg landlord.
- Pray for God to send us His elect.
- Pray that our church would overflow with a spirit of humility, love for God and one another, and knowledge of the Word.
- Pray for AHT to understand and love the word of God and take solid steps to apply it to our lives.
- Pray for God to provide for the needs of our church as we seek Him and His kingdom.
- Pray for patience and trust in God during this second round of restrictions.
- Pray for us to boldly share the gospel with our friends in a spirit of compassion, knowing their current state.
- Pray for Sevil as she must wait more than 2 weeks for her gallbladder surgery. May God give her strength, comfort, and healing.
- Pray for Ovgu and Ishak whom we are discipling to launch a college-age outreach group. May God grant much fruit from this labor.
- Pray for Vedat as he seeks God to "inspire" him in his new song-writing career.
- Pray for Selma as she makes a decision to sell her house in order to buy a business. May God give her wisdom and discernment.
- Pray for wisdom as we plan activities during these unclear times.
- Pray that we would be ready in season and out of season to share our hope!
- Pray for perseverance and discipline as we press forward toward the goal.