

Dear Family and Friends,

Joyful greetings to you in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ! What a whirlwind of a year. So many things have come unexpectedly and perhaps not in a way that we would have chosen. It would be easy to fall into despair if not for the firm bearing that we have through our life in Christ. As God's children, what do we see? Have we had problems, sorrows, unexpected pain and suffering? Certainly we have. Should we pretend that we have not lived through these difficulties and behave as though everything is easy and fun? Certainly not! Paul reminds us that, "If we are children, then we are heirs: heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with Him, so that we may also be glorified with Him. I consider that our present sufferings are not comparable to the glory that will be revealed in us." (Rom 8:17-18) And so we shout joyful praises to our God, proclaim this incredible hope to our friends, and encourage our brothers and sisters with hymns of praise! Our sovereign God, through these unprecedentedly difficult and confusing times, has brilliantly set the stage for all of us to be His glorious lights shining in the midst of all this chaos! Oh, what mercy and grace we can see in times such as these.

It prompts us to pontificate on the day our Lord Jesus was born into this world. For followers of the LORD, God had been silent for 400 years. The Roman Empire was oppressing Israel with taxes and tyrannical rule. A census was being called for, thus the reason Joseph and Mary were forced to make the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem while she was so full in her pregnancy. A long and difficult unwanted journey to be sure, and upon arrival, they were not met with welcome and warm hospitality. All may have seemed out of kilter and wrong during that time. Feelings of hopelessness, despair, and anger were likely pervading the people of Israel. And yet, on that glorious winter day, the incarnation of Christ brings with it the glory of God to this unworthy, unfit world! These dark, difficult days ushered in a bright and glorious night! "An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were absolutely terrified." (Luke 2:9) This glory was the very presence of the Lord which had not been seen for over 400 years – and it was revealed to a small group of faithful shepherds who glorified and praised God, "and all who heard it were astonished at what the shepherds said." (Luke 2:18)

What joy fills our hearts as we look forward to celebrating the birth of Christ knowing that this same glory – the presence of God – dwells within us, as believers! What is more life-giving and thrilling than knowing this to be true in our own lives? As we finish off the year 2020, it is not with anger, despair, or complaint. No, it is with joy-filled praise to our sovereign King, who loved us so much that He chose to condescend to this fallen and broken world in order to lift us up to be with Him! All the more are we motivated to tell of this hope to all the hurting people around us. Troubles and restrictions to us cannot take the joy that we have as children of God. We recently had to cut back on yet more of our ministries due to another round of lock-downs and cerfews, more people are losing their jobs and businesses, and the police continue to "protect" us in large number. "We are experiencing trouble on every side, but are not crushed; we are perplexed, but not driven to despair; we are persecuted, but not abandoned; we are knocked down, but not destroyed, always carrying around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our body." (2 Cor. 4:8-10) Praise God with us that we are still able to meet for a couple of hours on Friday night to worship together corporately and will be able to have a time of worship and fellowship together on Christmas!

Thank you for your much needed prayers, love, and support. May your hearts be brimming over with joy and peace as we celebrate God's gift to us, the sending of His beloved Son into this world on Christmas Day! Merry Christmas and may your new year

be a reflection of God's grace in each of your lives.  
For the joy set before us,  
Joe, Karyn, and Angela Cavn

#### Praises and Prayers:

- Praise God for the ability to trust Him.
- Praise God Ishak and his family have recovered from Covid-19 and no one else in our church contracted it.
- Praise God for Ovgu, whom Ishak led to the Lord and is joining our fellowship.
- Praise God for opening Vemo's eyes to God's desire for our lives as believers. May He grow in this season leaps and bounds.
- Pray for continued good health.
- Pray for unity in the Body and kind consideration towards one another.
- Pray for people to realize the destruction of gossip and cease from participating in it.
- Pray for patience and trust in God during this second round of lock-downs.
- Pray for us to boldly share the gospel to our friends with a spirit of compassion, knowing their current state.
- Pray for Necip to have endurance as he cares for his son with cancer, divorced daughter and grand-children, and himself with little income. May he continue to trust in the Lord and see Him provide for all his needs.
- Pray for Aydan's protection from Covid-19 as she works at the hospital. May she remain healthy and be a light to her coworkers during this extremely busy and difficult time in the healthcare system.
- Pray for peace with the landlord of our ch building who is constantly trying to argue for more money.
- Pray for a sweet time of fellowship as a body of believers at our Christmas Celebration.
- Pray that the Lord would continue to provide for all our needs both physical, mental, and spiritual.
- Pray we would be able to get the boys here to celebrate Christmas with us. Many of the flights have been both changed and cancelled.
- Pray we would seek first, always, the kingdom of God and His righteousness in all that we do.