

# ARARAT-RAINIER EAST-WEST FELLOWSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

208-241-4900; 12402 N Division St. Box 110; Spokane, WA 99218



**Mark & Caren Musser**  
Summer 2021

## AREWF

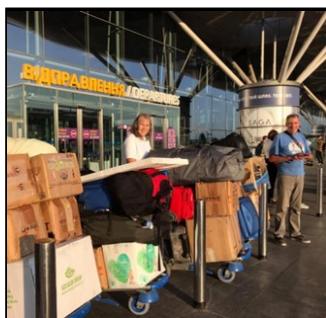
Ararat-Rainier East-West Fellowship (AREWF) is registered under the IRS Code 501c3. All contributions receive a tax deductible receipt. Please make checks out to Ararat-Rainier East-West Fellowship or AREWF and send contributions to:

12402 N Division St.

Box 110

Spokane, WA 99218

AREWF also has a Paypal account. Please contact 360-485-7240 for more information on how to support us electronically online.



## Moving Madness at the End of Another Fruitful Year

The Lord has never spoken to me personally, but I have personally learned much from Him by voluntarily using my God-bought gracious freedom to serve and submit to His wonderful, but disciplinary way of life which the Gospels historically present to us as discipleship – a divinely ordained process sanctioned especially in the Old Testament in the book of Proverbs, carried through into the gospel period of the New Testament, and then transferred over to the responsibility of the church after the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul himself soberly summarized this great responsibility of the church in Colossians 1:28, “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.” This is the Great Commission indeed.

Such sentiments Paul strongly emphasized in the face of the growing heresies ripping through the streets of Colossae at the time – which consisted of a religious-philosophical mysticism coupled with legalism and asceticism – the likes of which has swelled off and on throughout church history, and as of late have been growing by leaps and bounds over the last number of decades. Paul then goes on to encourage the Colossian Church in freedom and responsibility under the auspices of God’s law-free gospel, which is full of grace, but not lawless nor contrary to God’s holy standards, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father (Colossians 3:16-17).” Paul even

makes liberty at the very heart of the missionary mandate in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:19-23, which I have tried to emulate in my life as much as possible.



**The Armenian Stone Henge of Carrahunge in SE Armenia**

We thus are granted freedom to make holy choices in a very fallen world under the guidance of God’s gracious word. In other words, God never told me personally to go to Grace Chapel where I was

first exposed to strong Bible teaching by the late Pastor Ron Breckel of Kirkland, Washington. I went because I wanted to, and in those days, Sundays were big days – from 9:30-12:00 am in the mornings, and then 6:00-8:00 pm in the evenings. Neither did God personally tell me to go to seminary, but I went because I wanted to. God never told me to marry Caren, my wife of now 28 years, but I married her because I wanted to, and when I first asked to date or even marry her, I made sure she under-

# Armenia Ministry Report 2020-21

The virus and war chaos opened the door in Armenia for us greatly, not only to minister and teach four serious Bible courses for Dr. Ron Minton's International Baptist Bible College (IBBC) branch at the Bethlehem Church in Yerevan, but also to help lay a much better foundation (if not a real church plant) for a church group in a small village south of the capital, not to mention any number of good evangelistic opportunities as well in various parts of the country. Rather than group gatherings, home visits became our new focus this past year.

Since no visiting professor was able to fly into Armenia because of all the restrictions since March of 2020, the Lord granted me the privilege of teaching Romans (May 2020), Hebrews (November 2020), Proverbs (January 2021), and the book of Revelation (April 2021) - all within a year's time at the same church. All four college courses were very well received by the Bethlehem Church, and they are now looking forward to hosting me for more future bible college courses as well when I return to Armenia. Romans and Hebrews were eye-openers for them, but Proverbs, and particularly Revelation, provided brand new horizons for them to see not only how to practice the word of God daily with wisdom, but also to live in light of the biblical past and the apocalyptic future. While Romans says much about our past salvation, and Proverbs teaches us how to walk with God daily, both Hebrews and Revelation encourage and warn us to live in light of eschatological realities which also needs to be tended to as well in our spiritual lives. God has the past, present, and future all wrapped up in an incredibly gracious plan of salvation to deliver us all from the penalty, practice, and presence of sin - all of which will lead to great eschatological reward when such truths are implemented daily into our lives. One of the church students told me they began the year thinking they knew all about the Bible, but now openly admit, they know

very little about the Bible, but now want to learn more. Such Scriptures help to humble the saints into true discipleship, which is what the spiritual life is largely all about.

In addition to the IBBC college courses I taught at the Bethlehem Church in Yerevan, I was also invited by the church in August of 2020 to teach Acts 17:16-34, Paul's Athens Speech, at a Bible camp up high in the



**The Bethlehem Church of Yerevan, Armenia**

mountains near Lake Sevan. I was also on their monthly rotation of pastors/elders who taught regularly at the church on Sundays. Both Caren and I also led Bible studies for the both men and women of the church on occasion as well.

An hour south of Yerevan in a village called Sweet Town, we were able to get a church group up and going to meet regularly, something which they had never done in their history. Before the virus chaos, for a number of years, they might have met perhaps once a month at best. In January 2020, I taught there once. However, during the virus madness, this church group was completely abandoned, as so many churches were all over Armenia. This in itself, shows the more sinister aspect of the virus lockdowns. At a time of fear, when God's people needed real Bible teaching and fellowship, it was denied them. Others used the lockdowns as an excuse to stop caring about going to church. What-



**IBBC College Course at the Bethlehem Church**



Rather than leave this group abandoned, I, Artak Marandyan, the previous leader of the group from years ago, and evangelist Armen Grigoryan, decided to start ministering to them regularly. Even better, they have now been meeting usually twice a week since September of 2020. We taught them Christ our Substitute as their foundation, which really helped them understand the gospel which God so graciously gave them. This in turn, led to a number of evangelistic home bible visits as individual members of the church started telling their friends and family about what they were now learning—basic truths which they were not very clear on before thanks to too much gospel moralism being presented rather than the cross and resurrection of Christ as the only answer to man’s fallen, sinful predicament. The fact that one of the church group’s mother’s son died in the war with Azerbaijan fought in the Artsakh in October and November of 2020 also provided further opportunities for evangelism—particularly at one of the funeral services Armenians observe as many visitors from the village came. We presented a grace/faith gospel message from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:1-4 resting upon the death and resurrection of Christ based on historical testimony as the basis for salvation – not some form of religious mysticism—something which many hearers, in spite of Armenia’s presumed Christian background, had heard for the first time. Evangelist Armen Grigoryan, who works for Evangelism Expulsion, thus cashed in on these evangelistic opportunities, but so did Alex Alkakatsi, who recently moved to Armenia from Ukraine. Alex graduated from our Bible college in Kyiv in 2020. It was a real pleasure to work with him in Armenia—his native country.

While Armen Grigoryan and myself also did other home visits in other locations, Jamal, a Yazidi who became a Christian some 10 years ago or more, invited to me to do some teaching at his village high in the mountains where he grew up. Yazidis are actual Satan worshipers. They are Kurdish by decent, but very pagan by religion. Kurds are usually Muslims and thus worship Satan more indirectly, but Yazidis belong to a strongly controlled pagan religious cult. They are generally herdsmen in the mountains who live in various locations in Armenia. Since the Muslims hated their pagan background, the Turks and Kurds also persecuted the Yazidis along with the Armenians during World War I and the following genocide. Armenians Christians and Yazidi Satan worshipers thus make for a strange combination for sure, but this fallen world is full of bitter ironies. Thanks to Jamal’s efforts, however, the village is not as hostile to the Christianity as earlier. I was thus honored to teach there on occasion. This was the first time they had heard such lengthy messages.



**Teaching the Yazidis on the Virgin Birth, Deity & Crucifixion of the Messiah from the pages of Isaiah the Prophet**

**After a Funeral Service of a Fallen Soldier in Sweet Town, Armenia**

In addition to all such ministries, the Lord provided a great opportunity to teach on the grace of God for six weeks at an internet TV studio hosted by a Pentecostal group. Dr. Titus Kennedy, who also visited Armenia twice during the winter and spring, also taught on the historicity of the Bible on their internet TV programming.



Caren and I further continued our Sunday morning ministry each week with an embassy family who lived nearby as we taught them a personal Sunday school class for both adults and kids! It was a real joy and pleasure to minister to this family which the Lord provided us thanks to Caren’s positive Christian testimony at the international school.

**Teaching Christ our Substitute at Home Bible Study Group in Yerevan**



# Ukraine Ministry Report 2020-21

Amazingly, in spite of all of the lockdowns, we spent more time in Ukraine this past year than we have since we actually lived there between 1998-2004. All the while Ukraine had any number of lockdowns here and there all over the country, the Lord opened the door for me to teach in various places where there were no lockdowns. In October, I was able to teach the General Epistles (James, Hebrews, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John & Jude) for my very first time at the Bible college in Kyiv. Before I arrived in Kyiv to teach this course, thanks to transit rules, I was able to sneak into Mogilev, Belarus to encourage the church there, even though the virus restrictions in general were designed to keep me out.

December was very special in Ukraine as I taught Proverbs in Rivne, a new ministry place which opened up to us. Again,



**February of 2021 was very cold in Kyiv with lots of Snow and Wind**

with all of the virus restrictions, and with no one able to come in, the Lord opened up the door for me to teach here too as a Baptist church in Rivne also has an IBBC branch in its local assembly. Since Ron Minton had heard many good things about the courses being taught in Yerevan, they invited me to teach in Rivne too. On the intervening and ensuing weekends when I was in Rivne, since Lviv is relatively close by, we decided to finally do a DM2 Christ our Substitute worship there—which went very well – the only real DM2 workshop we did in 2020 thanks to all of the virus madness.

After my teaching time in Rivne, Caren then joined me for Christmas break in Kyiv, which was a great time. Not only did we look around all over Kyiv and purchase our townhouse in Irpin at this time, but we were able to continue teaching 1st Corinthians in a local Baptist church there, and even had wonderful opportunities to do teaching and evangelistic work with Iranians, some of whom are recently coming to faith in Christ, or who are simply wanting to know more. Such efforts have been spearheaded by Ali Taheri and Abbas, both of whom are from Iran. I have known them both for a number of years now. Ali was my former student from my teaching days at Ukraine Bible Institute. I know Abbas through Ali. One Iranian visitor told us after listening to the messages on Christ our Substitute that she was very surprised by the teaching



as she had never heard such things before. This, of course, is somewhat if an indictment on postmodern missions since so many groups come in and proffer religious clichés, Christian moralism, and banal contemporary music concerts as easy substitutes in place of delivering the true gospel of grace and the mediation of the cross and resurrection of the God-man in order to save a very lost world. One thing many American missionaries have certainly managed to export all over the world is their religious music—that’s for sure. Such songs are sung perfectly by the natives, even better than those who taught them, but spiritual depth is sorely lacking and missing in so many Christian circles these days. It sadly

seems that Bible teaching has always been secondary to the music when it comes to post-modern missionary work.

When I returned to Kyiv in February- March 2021 to teach Romans at the Bible college, we continued such efforts with Iranians in their own homes during the very cold weather, but also continued our 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians ministry in Regeneration Church. In April, I again returned to Ukraine, this time to teach Proverbs in another Baptist Church connected to IBBC in Vinnitsa. The church group in Vinnitsa heard about how good the class was in Rivne, and so I was invited to teach it again in Vinnitsa. Again, this was my very first-time teaching in Vinnitsa as well. Once again, the teaching was well received. Furthermore, we continued all year off and on to encourage the church in Baryshivka, a church we have been ministering to for more than 20 years now. We wrapped up the summer here in Ukraine by traveling to Dnipro to do some teaching on missions to a small Bible institute group of graduates.



**Teaching Iranians on the Deity of Christ and Salvation by Grace at a home Bible Study outside of Kyiv during yet another lockdown in the Capital City**

It has thus been an incredible year of ministry in spite of so many barriers and obstacles. The doctoral studies and moving madness only piled on more, but we survived it, and are hopefully on our way to a more stable future in the ministry to the former Soviet Union with our townhouse purchased in Irpin, Ukraine. When we bought it, it was only a roof with brick walls. Now it is slowly being finished week by week with different jobs which need to be done to finish it off and make the place livable. We also decided to sell our farmhouse to our nephew and niece since it was too far away to take care of, and our kids are now all grown up, and have other plans to live elsewhere in the future. Our nephew and niece have been renting our farmhouse the last two years, but it was time to sell it, even though we dearly love the place. This resulted in even more packing this summer, but somehow again, God’s grace was sufficient. In addition to doing deputation at four churches in July in the Pacific Northwest, Caren helped serve and teach with our daughter Rachel at a DM2 seminar for women in Montana. We are now finally in Almaty — our final move this year—at least we hope so!!

Furthermore, on our way back overseas, Rachel and her friend, Amber Walker, together with Katya and Kostya Grinyuk, graduates of the Bible college in Kyiv, worked with women in the Word of God Church from Kyiv to put on a very effective DM2 Women of the Word workshop over two weekends in a small village church. It was a wonderful time of grace, fellowship, and teaching for these women. Another group now wants to reduplicate the efforts nearby! I myself am now working on putting together our travel mission plans for this upcoming year and need much prayer!



**Gorodyshe, Ukraine at a DM2 Women of the Word Workshop**

stood it was her free choice too without coercion! When we first (see page 6) went to the mission field in Mogilev, Belarus, God did not tell us to go there either, but we went because we wanted to serve the Lord. The same was true when we first went to Kyiv, Ukraine in which we worked with Jim and Phyllis Myers for six very good years. When we returned home in 2004, the Lord did not tell us to do that either, but we are so grateful we did as there is now another growing church in Olympia, Washington called Grace Redeemer Bible Church—a church plant which was not there before, but is now, and still is! Neither did God tell us to go to Armenia in 2018 to return to the former Soviet Union, but we did, because again, we were willing to go. The same is true now even with regard to our recent move to Almaty, Kazakhstan – which has just happened – thanks largely to many of the difficulties and uncertainties which the madness of the covid cult has caused worldwide. This is not to say the virus is not serious, because it sometimes is - but it is to say that most of the decisions made to combat this virus have done little or nothing to solve its presence, and has come at exorbitant costs in any and all directions, including much economic chaos as well. The world thus not only still has a virus problem, but now along with it, grave social, political, religious, psychological, and economic upheavals which have been piled on us as well now too – the likes of which are actually far worse than the virus itself. I have never seen or experienced such a strangely suffocating atmosphere as to what is happening now. Making travel plans, in particular, is now very difficult and taxing—which is a big attack on what we have freely chosen to currently do with our lives.



**Almaty International School, Kazakhstan**

Since we too have been caught up in the fallout of the virus (see lower left picture on page 1 packing up and moving to Ukraine from Armenia), somewhat against our presumed plans, we were forced to make some decisions we were not quite ready to make. Yet we did. We will thus do our best by God's grace to play the hand we have been dealt. We thus decided to purchase a townhouse near Kyiv, Ukraine in which we will, hopefully sooner rather than later, eventually 'retire' in and work from there. If our world continues to lock itself down off and on again with no place to travel, or to travel with so much difficulty, Ukraine is the best place for us to be since we have so many ministries there. The townhouse will also help us get proper residency so we can live there with no visa problems. Yet the townhouse is not ready to live in yet, and we still need to work to pay all the bills, and so we have been sent now to Almaty, Kazakhstan this time around. Caren will be a second grade teacher at Almaty International School this year. I will be finishing up much doctoral work in Almaty this year working under the mentorship of Dr. Wayne House and Dr. Leroy Goertzen, but will also, by the Lord's travel mercies, to go to Ukraine, Armenia, and other former Soviet countries to continue our teaching ministry in those places as before.

Kazakhstan is a very beautiful country in the Almaty area, but also restrictive—at least on paper. Thanks to Almaty's strong Russian background and influences, among many other reasons, it is the most open city in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is a secular semi-Marxist Muslim state of sorts with a super surveillance system technocratically watching over its citizens pretty closely - allegedly in the name of fighting against corruption and religious extremism, but now also against the virus. We will do our best to encourage folks as best as we can around these parts, and develop good relationships, so that hopefully some good teaching ministries will arise in the future. Please pray for us! Like you as well, we live in very serious times.



**The Tien Shan Mountains above Almaty rise to heights well over 14,000 feet and are heavily glaciated in the higher peaks and mountain valleys**