

It was a damp, cold cellar with a very basic wooden bench covered over with a rug. Even though it was very warm outside, our feet were cold and those of us sitting on the bench could feel the damp rising out of the wood and the rug. The very air we breathed seemed damp. A net curtain behind us separated the cellar into two rooms. We were sitting in the living area but we could see four beds neatly covered over with colourful knitted blankets. The walls were running with damp and we could only imagine the streams and draughts that would flow into that cellar down the stairs once the rains, winds and snows started. There was no door even at the entrance of the cellar room. Our host and hostess were desperate to show us hospitality so they brought grapes from their vines and walnuts from their walnut tree. The woman's neck and upper chest were hugely enlarged by an untreated goitre. In stark contrast to her plain shabby clothes, her grey damp walls, her lack of any comfort the lady had an unexplainable joy on her face. Her smile and her conversation were centred round the Lord and His blessings in her life. Her relationship with Him had made a noticeable difference in her life. AM has been helping this lady; indeed a number of you will have been responsible for the colourful knitted blankets, which were the only evidence of any protection against the coming winter. We met this lady when she turned up at our church and it was some time before we realised the dire need she lives in. The thing that touched me most about her is that she must walk about half an hour along a track and then endure two hours of bus journey – overcrowded, uncomfortable and hot (in the summer) – to get to our church, and yet she hardly ever misses a Wednesday ladies meeting, Friday mid-week meeting or Sunday church.



Greetings from all at Armenian Ministries. Ivan and Sona have just returned to Armenia having had a few months in England in which they were able to visit several churches and friends. They intend to stay in Armenia until Christmas. Ruth will be returning to England in early November and will be available to give updates of her work. Michael and Perouz have

just returned from the summer in Armenia. We want to thank everyone for their support and prayers. Thank you for the lovely letters, notes, phone-calls and emails that have been coming in during the summer. Thank you to the many people who expressed concern over Talitha Harrison's broken leg. It is now fully healed and she is as active as ever!

Helping where we can

During ten days in late summer, Michael Harrison hosted a mission trip for a small team from England. It was a time of good fellowship, hard work and an opportunity to see different aspects of the work of the charity. We thank the UK team very much for the hard work they did - in visitations, aid distribution and renovation work to the charity's campsite. On the first day of their trip, we went to visit the home of a young girl who attends our clubs. Her home was in serious need of repairs before the winter – the roof in particular. A group from the charity, and the UK team were able to go and weather-proof the roof and walls and give the entire place a coat of paint.



The charity's visitation team have been very busy since the end of the camps in preparing and delivering food, wood and clothes to needy families. During one visit in the village of Baghranian, I was astonished to hear an old lady say that the only money entering her home was her pension (between £25 and £50 per month). She told us that she uses her pension to go and buy bread and vegetables and that's what they eat – when the pension finishes they stay hungry for the rest of the month! This truly stark reality, while sad to contemplate, nevertheless helps to put our food parcels into context. Much of the goods that are sent in the containers are given in parcels to exactly such families as these. The money given to the "People in Need" fund is all spent on food, fuel and medication for these people. As we visited the families we were able to hand out soft toys to the little children and clothes

and blankets to the parents or elderly. These things are all sent in our containers from England and we cannot thank you enough for all the goods that you regularly donate. We thank you also for the many schoolbags which were handed out in September this year. We hope to send even more for next year as we still met many children who could not go to school this year. I would like to take this opportunity to remind you, our dear supporters and prayer partners, that the people we write about in this newsletter are examples and represent many like them. We cannot tell you about each one due to lack of time and space but also because it is not always possible to photograph families without invading their privacy and causing embarrassment. However when donations are made to these families via the "People in Need" fund all the families that AM supports are helped from these donations.

A Summer of Camps

We praise God that the children's work went very well this summer. "Selah Camp 2009" was held for a total of nine weeks, during which a few hundred children attended. The theme this year was "The world of miracles" and the children were told about the miracles of the Lord. The young teens and teens groups were told the story of Joni. During each camp we run a camp shop for the children, full of all sorts of different prizes. They earn gold coins for attendance, keeping their rooms tidy, good behaviour and learning their memory verses. The camp shop is stocked full of goods that have come from England in the containers. During the last camp the goods from the container that were appealing to children had run out and we had to go to the market in Armenia to stock the camp shop. This made us very aware of how much money we save when gifts are sent in the containers for the children. The large number of children means that even the smallest toys purchased in that quantity amount to a large sum of money. So we wish to thank you and also to appeal for items that can be given to children – during camps, Christmas, birthday presents and during yearly visits to their homes. Examples of useful items include colouring books, jigsaws, colouring pencils, craft kits, toys, soft toys, hair accessories and footballs. These items do

have to be new as they will be given as presents to the children. One of the camps was run for the children from the village of Yervandashad - a border village with Turkey which has no Christian work or activity other than our Bible clubs. It is such a special privilege to meet with these children. The majority of the villagers live in very dire poverty and yet the children always look clean and so very happy to see the children's team arriving for the weekly clubs. During the summer I must confess that I think I enjoyed the camp with these children the most. In that week the camp shop had a prized possession that everyone wanted. It was a large and cuddly cushion in bright yellow, and in the shape of a chick with a lovely smiley face! We thank our dear friend in England so much for buying that chick and sending it to Armenia. One young girl from a poor family had set her heart on winning that chick and all week she memorised her Bible verses and patiently won gold coins. I wish you could have seen the smile on her face when she came out of the shop and asked me to take her photograph with this chick!



Then about a week later we went to visit some of the poorest homes to take aid to them and among those visited was this girl's house. There on the greyest, drabest wall was the chick, still in its bag, pinned to the wall – the very pride of the whole home!

In the early summer, a small team from King's Church, Wisbech went to Armenia to help in two of the summer camps. They write for us...

“ Don't try to learn the language!"; yet we found the mutual exchange of language,- at times being the teacher, then the pupil – this proved to be one of the most engaging activities we shared with the children at Selah Camp 2009. Yet, language was only one of the sensory adjustments we had to make. We were dealing with very different smells, food, climate, transport customs and overwhelming need!



A few hours sleep across the seats of Moscow airport hadn't lessened our excitement and anticipations as we encountered the heat and confusion of traffic in Yerevan - just in time to join with the evening congregation at the church. We were there for two weeks primarily to work in the children's camps. But as an introduction to the work of this ministry we were given the privilege of visiting quite a few families in their homes. Entering into their very (small) personal space often gave an opening into some understanding of their most intimate circumstances. We were aware of the need to be sensitive in our conversation – we did not want to appear as the 'tourist' satisfying our own curiosity and looking for a good story. We were all deeply moved by the depth of poverty creating conditions in which people were just managing to survive. Our overall impression was that for most there seemed to be no way out of this cycle of despair – even with the support of AM - the need is overwhelming.

Our camp day began at 7.30am with a blast of Jungle Book music (never wanting to hear that again!) and ended, approaching midnight, with a team prayer meeting. A bond quickly built as we were with the children all day (and night), sharing their dormitory, their (and our) 'free time', and in all the activities; games – lots of volleyball, football

without any rules, swimming; meetings (enthusiastic singers) and Bible stories; craft workshops; meals of bread and vegetables (sometimes varied by being vegetables with bread); the final party and bonfire. We had to speak with Ruth as our interpreter but of course, in those informal times with the children we were trying to understand each other – giving hours of fun with lessons in English and Armenian, then, as one child reported, because we had mastered Armenian (in reality a few words) he was now going to teach us Russian! With our experience of 'camps' and children's centres in the UK the first impression can be to question what is so special about this camp on the outskirts of Yerevan. The structure and facilities are basic, the resources very limited, yet we are told for some children this is the highlight of their year! Go to their homes and you will see why.

We were very impressed by the dedication of the church workers, providing the children with a safe and happy place, and having a genuine care and concern for them to which the children eagerly responded. And the amazing ability to produce three meals a day for so many on so little!

One questions what one can give and achieve in so short a space of time, having to make so many adjustments so quickly. Whatever we gave was more than matched by what we received from fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. This came in many ways, such as the generous invitation to share meals in their homes; the fellowship in the church (proving again the universal truth of the unity of the 'Body of Christ' that surpasses culture); the joy of being workers-together. We were privileged to be there and have our lives changed in a most surprising way and through some amazing people.”

Franek, Becky, Clive – the King's Church, Wisbech.



Becky, Clive & Franek overlooking Yerevan with Ararat in the background

The weekly Bible clubs are of course, all running again from September through to Christmas. The children of the village of Arteni are now in excess of 150 and could no longer be accommodated in one Bible club. As Arteni is almost two hours drive from Yerevan we decided that rather than going twice in a week, the children's team would go the whole of Tuesday and run one morning club and one afternoon. This fits the school day of the children which also splits into morning group and afternoon. Please pray for the children's team as these long days are very hard work. There are no facilities at all in these villages. Thursday is the day the team goes to Ervandashad and on Saturday they go to the closer village of Baghramian. On Wednesday some of the team runs the club in Yerevan whilst two members go to the village of Hankavan, where they run a club in the home of a very poor but hospitable and receptive family.

“You will not be alone”

It was a hot, summer camp day when we received a phone-call from a parent of a child who comes to the clubs in Baghramian. It turned out that Romaan, one of the most pleasant and well-natured lads in the clubs, was playing in the back part of their home and it had collapsed on him. This terrible accident had happened just a few weeks after he had been at camp, mercifully his life was spared but his pelvic area and legs were broken. The family were facing very large medical charges. AM was able to help them partially but we nevertheless heard that he had been removed from hospital early as the family had run out of finances. We went to visit Romaan and took him a pair of crutches (from England). It is a privilege to be able to physically and spiritually help these children. During the camps Ruth had told the story of when the Lord had sent the disciples out over the water (following the feeding of the 5000). She explained to the children that the Lord had known that there was going to be a storm and it was all part of His great plan to teach His disciples an important lesson. One lesson she brought home to the children was that in no way was this storm the disciples' fault. She said “When you leave camp you will all come to storms at some

time in your life - maybe soon. Remember when you do that it is not your fault. Also remember that the Lord Jesus will be right there in the storm with you. You will not be alone!” When Romaan talked on the telephone to Ruth, directly after his accident, he said that he was determined to trust the Lord, that the Lord knew what was best for him and that he was not going to be discouraged. We were all in tears! It is to make this difference in their lives that the children's team goes out week after week. Romaan had taken the lesson to heart and it changed his life – the camp was worth all the effort.



Romaan with Michael Harrison

Finally, the translation of the Old Testament is continuing at a steady pace; some of it has been submitted for final proof-reading! Meanwhile the New Testaments are distributed freely wherever the charity takes aid and into many of the children's homes. I would like to tell you about a very encouraging letter which we recently received from a prisoner in the city of Kirovakan. He wrote to AM's headquarters explaining that he had been given a New Testament and has read it. He says he is very disturbed about the future of his soul and would like someone to come and explain what he had read to him. How encouraging!

Yours by Grace alone,

Perouz Harrison

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