

June 18 – July 17, 2015

FBCG 30-Day  
**Turkey**  
Prayer Focus

Calling the church  
to pray for the  
unreached Turks  
of Turkey





# *Adoption Covenant*

We, the people  
of First Baptist Church of Geneva,  
covenant with our Lord and one another  
to adopt the Turks of Turkey.

We promise to do whatever it takes  
to share God's transforming love  
and build up His church among them.

This includes:

- Learning more about the Turkish people
  - Praying regularly for their salvation
- Supporting the Lord's workers in Turkey
- Sending additional workers to serve there

We trust in our Lord's faithfulness to provide  
both the will and the way  
for us to carry out our promise.

We make this agreement beginning  
March 13-14, 2004  
until a healthy church  
is established in Turkey.



# 30 Days of Prayer

Dear FBCG Friends,

By committing to pray for the Turks, you're joining millions of believers praying for Muslims during the Islamic month of Ramadan. Each day's devotional in this booklet will help you pray with understanding and urgency for the salvation of Turks—the unreached people group that FBCG has “adopted.”



*Christians around the world  
pray for Muslims during  
Ramadan.*

## Days 1-3

provide background on why our church chose the Turks for a special missions emphasis, what we hope to accomplish with the Lord's help, and how you can pray and participate.

## Days 4-11

focus your prayers on news that has impacted the spread of the Gospel in Turkey during the past year and information about Turkish society to help you better understand its spiritual darkness and need.

## Days 12-22

lead you to pray for key mission partners in our Turkey outreach including FBCG members, career missionaries, and Turkish ministries we support.

## Day 23-29

prompt prayer for Turks and other groups in Turkey—believers bravely standing for Christ in tiny Christian fellowships, seekers being touched by the truth of the Gospel, and Muslims still in darkness or even actively opposing the church.

## Day 30

encourages you to persevere in your own commitment to do whatever it takes to reach the Turks until our adoption covenant is fulfilled.

Though FBCG's outreach to the Turks involves financial support and hands-on projects, its foundation must be built on our prayers. Thank you for taking this prayer journey with us during the next 30 days and beyond.

**- The Turkey Task Force**

# The Country of Turkey

## Population

76.6 million (18th largest in the world)

70-76% Turks / 16-18% Kurds

42% under 25 years old

Life expectancy: 76.9 years

Literacy: 98% for men, 90% for women

Labor force: 28 million

Economy: \$8.21 billion (17th largest GDP in the world)

## Climate

Black Sea coast - mild summer and winter with heavy rain.

Mediterranean/Aegean coasts - hot summer; mild winter.

Marmara coast - hot but not dry summer; cool winter.

Central Anatolia - hot summer and cold snowy winter.



*Turkey's highest peak is Mt. Ararat, believed to be the resting place of Noah's ark.*

## Geography

Area - 302,500 square miles (a little bigger than Texas).

Location - 3% in Europe, 97% in Asia.

Largest cities - Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa.

Best-known rivers - the Tigris and the Euphrates.

## Time Difference

8 hours later than our time.

## Currency

1 Turkish lira = 47 cents at the current exchange rate.

## Did you know that Turkey is...

- The resting place of Noah's ark and birthplace of the apostle Paul.
- Home to the legendary tribe of "Amazon Women."
- The site where the Trojan War was finally won by the Greeks hiding inside a large wooden horse.
- The modern name of the area Asia Minor on Bible maps.
- A member of NATO and host to an active U.S. military base.
- Home to the real Santa Claus – St. Nicholas was a real person who went about Turkey doing good deeds in the 3rd century.
- The world's largest unreached country, with 99% Muslims and only about 5,000 self-declared Turkish believers.

# About the Turks



*Students often wear uniforms in school.*

## History

Turks originally came from Turan, a region in central Asia. They arrived in Anatolia (the ancient name for Turkey) as conquering Muslim warriors in the 11th century AD. By 1299, the Turks had established the Ottoman Empire that ruled most of eastern Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa until 1923 when the Republic of Turkey was formed.

## Appearance

Most Turks have dark hair and brown eyes, but there is no distinctive physical type because of intermarriage with other peoples. Some Turks have blond or red hair and blue eyes.

## Language

The national language is Turkish. Because Turkish spelling and pronunciation are phonetic, one can learn to read aloud in a single day. Since 1928, Turkish has been written in Latin letters, with many English terms flooding into the language.

## Education

Schooling is compulsory between the ages of seven and twelve, after which many rural children move into the world of work. Some traditional Muslim parents break the law by not sending their daughters to school at all. Teaching in the best high schools and universities is carried out in English.

## Religion

Many Turks insist that “to be a Turk is to be a Muslim” but rarely practice their faith. Very few Turks study the Qur’an or regularly follow the rituals of Islam. They prefer to choose the Islamic doctrines they will adhere to.

## Role of Women

Today the Turkish constitution guarantees women full equality with men and outlaws polygamy. In cities, women are reaching into the higher levels of business and politics. However, in smaller towns, a girl’s life depends on how enlightened her father’s attitude is; marriages are often arranged by parents, and a wife may be controlled by her husband.

## Housing

Most Turks live in high-rise apartment buildings with central heating and elevators. Extended family members often have separate apartments in the same building. Newlyweds usually live with the husband’s family.

# What Turkish Muslims Believe

The period for this call to prayer coincides with Ramadan, the Islamic month of prayer and fasting.

The dates of Ramadan change each year, depending on the sighting of the new moon. Muslims fast each day of Ramadan from sunrise to sunset as an act of submission to Allah (Arabic for “the one God”). Ramadan celebrates the time in 610 AD when Muhammad, the founder of Islam, claimed he began receiving revelations that were later written down in the Qur’an, Islam’s holy book.

The Qur’an teaches that Allah is unique, all-powerful, gracious, and merciful and that it is necessary to adhere to these “five pillars” to have any hope for salvation:

- **Confession of faith** every time the Muslim prays: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.”
- **Ritual prayer** five times a day (at dawn, midday, mid-afternoon, sunset, and evening) facing toward Mecca.
- **Fasting** during the month of Ramadan when Muslims refrain from food, water, tobacco and sex each day between sunrise and sunset.
- **Almsgiving** to the poor annually totaling 2.5% of what is owned, not just what is earned.
- **Pilgrimage** at least once to Mecca, birthplace of Muhammad.

Though many Turks pay only lip service to religion, even Muslims who faithfully observe these pillars have no guarantee of salvation. They hope that on Judgment Day their good deeds will outweigh their bad deeds, and Allah will decide to send them to paradise.

Muslims revere Jesus as a great prophet but do not believe He is God’s Son. They reject the fact that He died on the cross to be our Savior and then rose from the dead.

As you pray for the Turks, ask the Lord to enable them to hear and believe the Gospel, that they may know assurance of salvation and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

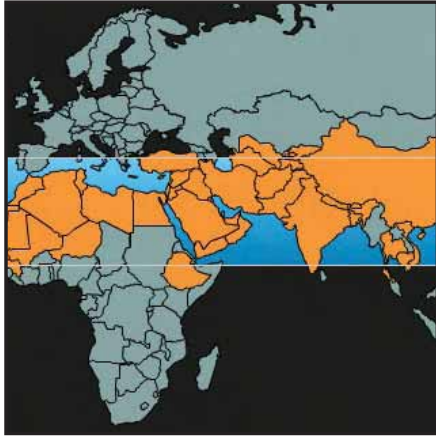


*Muslims hope that by following religious rituals, they can earn God’s favor.*

# What Is an Unreached People Group?

Day 1

Bruce McEvoy, FBCG Pastor of Family & Serving



*Most of the world's unreached people live in the 10/40 window.*

Years ago, I was corrected when I used the term unreached people group without an accurate understanding of its definition. What I remember more than anything was not giving the “correction” enough attention! Now that I have been overseeing FBCG global missions, I am blown away by what it means.

An unreached people is an ethnic group in which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize their own people. Let me try to translate that definition into everyday language: unreached people have almost no chance of grasping the truth of Jesus because there

are not enough Christians among them to win and disciple new converts.

Try to imagine being born into an unreached people like the Turks of Turkey with only about 5,000 self-declared Christians in a population of more than 76 million Muslims. Many Turks never have the opportunity to meet a Christian or visit a church to learn about Jesus; Christianity seems like a strange foreign religion. Turks have almost no chance of coming to faith without outside help. Numerically it seems impossible for them to get to where believers can multiply and reach out to all areas of the country.

Turks are far from the only unreached people. Consider these factoids:

- Out of 16,465 people groups in the world, 6,759 are still unreached.
- 86% of unreached groups live in the “10/40 window” (between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator).
- That adds up to 2,740,064,000 unreached individuals (2 ¾ billion)!

I share all this in order to equip you with an understanding of why FBCG has made a covenant to reach the Turks of Turkey for Christ and His Kingdom. We want to be exceptionally purposeful in sharing God’s love with those who would not otherwise have the opportunity to be exposed to it.

## Pray

- *That the population of believers in Turkey will grow sufficiently in numbers and influence to become a “reached” people group.*
- *That the Lord will call, equip, and send more mission workers to Turkey.*
- *For creative ways to reach Turks who have never heard the Gospel.*



## Day 2    A Land in Darkness

Turkey, our prayer focus during the next 30 days, is a country rich in biblical history but now shrouded in spiritual darkness.

For more than 1,000 years Turkey was a bastion of Christianity. The New Testament is full of places that are now within the borders of Turkey, such as the Roman provinces of Asia Minor, Galatia, and Cappadocia.

The Apostle Paul was born in the southern Turkish city of Tarsus and traveled to towns like Iconium (today known as Konya), Lystra, Derbe, and Perge on his missionary journeys in what is now Turkey. Believers were first called Christians in Antioch (now called Antakya), and all seven churches to which Christ wrote letters in Revelation 2-3 were in Turkey.



*Many Turks never have the opportunity to meet a Christian or hear the Gospel.*

Constantine, the first Roman ruler to embrace Christianity, moved the empire's capital from Rome to Constantinople, now Istanbul, Turkey. Byzantine Christian emperors ruled the region until the late 1000s.

By the time Muslim Turkish invaders from Central Asia conquered the Byzantine Christians in the 12th century, little remained of the vibrant fellowships founded in New Testament times. The Eastern Orthodox state church was all but dead, and scarcely anything was known of salvation through faith in Christ.

The conquering Turks did not force local residents to convert to Islam. However, many of the Byzantines, mostly nominal in their Christianity, became Muslims out of expediency and apathy.

Today Turkey is one of the world's largest unreached nations. 99.8% of its citizens are Muslim. Few Turks have ever heard the Gospel or even had the opportunity to meet a follower of Jesus.

### **Pray**

- *That seeds of the Gospel, dormant for so long, will begin to grow again and bear fruit all over Turkey.*
- *For a gradual change in the cultural belief that to be a Turk is to be a Muslim, even if only nominally so. A millennium of wars with "Christian" Europe has made conversion seem like an act of treason to Turks.*
- *That the Lord will strengthen the small Turkish evangelical church, grown from only 10 believers in 1960 to more than 5,000 today.*





*Our 2015 short-term team will minister to the children at Kucak camp in eastern Turkey.*

God promised to send messengers to lands “that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations” (Isaiah 66:19).

FBCG wants to be God’s messenger in Turkey, proclaiming His glory and salvation to people trapped in the darkness of Islam. Muslims have no peace now and no hope for eternity. With only about 5,000 Turkish believers in a nation of more than 76 million Muslims, many Turks never have the opportunity to hear the Gospel, meet a Christian, or visit a church.

God led FBCG to “adopt” the Turks in 2004 and commit to do whatever it takes to share Christ’s love and build up His Church in Turkey. Adoption involves ministering among the Turks until there are enough local churches and believers there to reach the population.

Fulfilling our commitment requires a long-term partnership with missionaries and churches ministering among unreached Turks. We can contribute prayers, financial support, and additional workers from our congregation.

The Lord is calling some of our people to serve at home, others to join yearly short-term missions to Turkey, and a few to go for several years or more as career missionaries who will learn the Turkish language and culture in order to do the deeper work of missions.

Our adoption of the Turks has not ended FBCG’s commitment to other mission fields we have been supporting, but this outreach has a high priority. The Lord is providing additional resources and people for this mission, that His glory may be proclaimed in Turkey.

## Pray

- *For FBCG’s Turkey Task Force, which leads our outreach among the Turks and needs more volunteers.*
- *For more people in our church to commit to pray regularly for the Turks and our efforts to reach them.*
- *That the Lord will show each of us the part we can have in reaching Turks, whether at home, on a short-term mission, or for a longer period of service.*

## Day 4 Politics Turkish Style

### R. Andrews, an American Businessman in Turkey

The erosion of democracy in Turkey continues with the officially non-political President Erdoğan assuming more powers each week and the opposition parties demonstrating their inability to cooperate. It's surprising how many people in Turkey are willing to condone the collapse of a free press, the abuse of the opposition, and the consolidation of power because of their tribal values.

For a tribal people the idea of good and evil is tied to what is good for them and their group in the short term. Few here seem to have any long-term view of what is good for the country. Those with a broader view feel powerless to stop those in charge and spend their time complaining on social media.

If the AK Party keeps its majority as expected in this June's parliamentary elections, Erdoğan will have an opportunity to achieve his goal of a strong presidency. His model seems to be Russia, where Vladimir Putin makes and enforces the laws without interference from courts or elected assemblies. Erdoğan has referred to the checks and balances in Turkey's current system as "too inefficient." His strategy for the election seems to be further polarization and demonization of the opposition, who are labeled as terrorists for not supporting his draconian new security law.

Meanwhile, recent policies of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank have created difficulties for Turkey's vulnerable market economy. The dollar has gotten significantly stronger and the Turkish lira has tumbled against it, making all imports more expensive.

These developments bring great tension to the country. People are very much polarized into "love Erdoğan" and "hate Erdoğan" camps, with the majority of media outlets acting as mouthpieces for the government. The voices calling for clarity or longing for justice are few.

While the country is badly divided, I think having these divisions so clearly laid out has produced a widespread negative reaction to the government's strong-armed Islamist agenda. We're seeing more visitors to churches and more respondents to evangelistic advertisements and Christian radio and television programs. People throughout Turkey long for real peace—shalom, in the Biblical sense. May they find peace in the truth of Christ that can set them free.



*The president's election strategy is polarization and demonization of the opposition.*

## Pray

- *That the people of Turkey will be able to see through the politicians' lies and distorted facts.*
- *For those seeking an escape from the shrill voice of political hate speech to find refuge in God's Truth.*
- *For our brothers and sisters in Turkish churches to live the whole Gospel of love, self-sacrifice, and joy, so that those who would try to stop the growth of Christianity will see their righteousness and be drawn to the truth.*



*Pastor Carlos Madrigal leads local officials in a prayer at the public Christmas tree lighting.*

Last December a historic celebration occurred in İstanbul when a city-wide Christmas service took place in a government-owned cultural center. The İstanbul Protestant Church Association together with Maltepe Municipality in İstanbul hosted an exciting international program of music, dance, singing and drama. Traditional Christmas carols were joyfully sung by a packed audience that far exceeded the center's 600-person capacity.

Ali Kılıç, the local mayor of Maltepe, stuck his neck out when he allowed the city's Protestant churches to use the Maltepe Cultural Center free of charge. He also set up a huge Christmas tree in the main square across from a large mosque and let a local pastor pray a prayer of blessing at

the tree lighting ceremony. This isn't the first time Mayor Kılıç has shown bold leadership in his desire to seek peace and unity among different religious groups, despite criticism from opponents and even within his own political party. He has visited the Maltepe church for special events such as the Easter breakfast and attended celebrations of other minority religious groups such as the Alevis. He has demonstrated that he understands the importance of showing respect for other faiths. In his quest to treat each religion fairly, Kılıç has encouraged the leaders from different religions to take part in each other's celebrations, such as breaking the fast with Muslims at Ramadan, distributing aşure pudding during the Alevi Shiite holy month, and lighting the tree with Christians at Christmas.

So many Turks were shocked by the unprecedented İstanbul Christmas celebration that it became the most talked about item in social media across the country during that time. Although lots of negative comments came from devout Muslims, many Turks responded positively and congratulated Mayor Kılıç for his courage.

According to one longtime mission worker in Turkey, "We are astounded by the things happening in the society these days, things we would not have even dreamed of 15 years ago. When's the last time a church choir has sung Jesus-glorifying hymns across from a huge mosque with the permission of the local mayor?" Truly, God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20)!

## **Pray**

- *For more government officials like İstanbul Mayor Kılıç who seek to promote peace and understanding among Turkey's religious groups.*
- *That Turkish churches will find creative ways to enlist the cooperation of local officials in reaching out to their communities.*
- *For effective follow-up of seekers who attend holiday outreach events sponsored by the churches.*



On the surface Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's promise last January to provide land and allow construction of a new Syrian Orthodox church in Istanbul seems like a real breakthrough. If he keeps his promise, this would be the first new church built with government approval in the history of the 92-year-old Turkish Republic.

Unfortunately Christians have been given such promises multiple times over the last six years—often as part of election campaign rhetoric—only to have them forgotten after the voting.

At other times churches' efforts to obtain necessary building permits have been stonewalled in bureaucratic red tape and the changeable moods of agency officials, who have been known to seek a less "controversial" applicant to approve for the building instead.



*Istanbul's only Syrian Orthodox church can hold only 300 of the city's 17,000 Syriac Christians.*

With little hope of constructing new buildings, evangelical church leaders in various Turkish cities have turned their attention to renting space or getting permission to use old vacant church buildings for their worship services. Unfortunately these efforts also encounter roadblocks. Muslim landlords are often unwilling to rent to a Christian fellowship due to their religious conviction or fear of vandalism, and old buildings may be controlled by equally unreceptive government agencies or orthodox hierarchies.

Despite the challenges, Turkish churches will continue to seek a public presence. In a country like Turkey, having a place to meet for worship and Scripture study gives legitimacy to a Christian community. New and immature believers often feel uncomfortable worshipping in a private home, which seems unnatural and even suspicious in a society where the mosque has always been the center of both religion and everyday life. Also important is the fact that having a public meeting place forms the basis for a church's eventual application to obtain legal government status and constitutional protections.

### ***Pray***

- *That the Lord will compel Turkish government officials to keep publicly-made promises to allow Christian fellowships to build new places of worship or refurbish old churches.*
- *That God would provide resources for the establishment of churches throughout Turkey.*
- *That the Lord will bring in a great harvest of new believers in Turkey, to the glory of Jesus Christ.*



*Those who plotted to murder this pastor in 2012 still have not been convicted.*

Remarkable resemblance exists between the 2012 plot against young Pastor Emre Karaali of the Izmit Protestant Church and the grisly 2007 murders of Pastor Necati Aydin and two other Christian workers in Malatya. In each instance the young attackers attended worship services and feigned interest in Christianity to gain the trust of the pastor. Fortunately, local police in Izmit were able to arrest 13 would-be attackers just before their deadly plans were carried out. Pastor Karaali, his family, and his congregation praise the Lord that the attack in Izmit was averted.

In both Izmit and Malatya, later investigations revealed that police and military officials had conceived the plots and recruited the young perpetrators. Criminal links to Turkey's National Intelligence Agency (MIT) have also been uncovered in the Izmit plot. Initially reluctant to implicate these officials, Judge Yusuf Coskun eventually filed a criminal complaint and ordered the arrest of a police chief, an army captain, and at least one MIT official.

As victims' families in Malatya learned, such measures are no assurance that justice will prevail. The Malatya murderers, who were caught eight years ago at the murder scene with blood on their hands, still have not been convicted. In fact, they were recently released on bail pending another new trial, as were the persons implicated in the Izmit plot.

When Christians are attacked by Turkish Muslims hostile to our faith, the wheels of justice get bogged down by media incitement, legal maneuvering, trumped-up counter-charges of fictitious "missionary" plots, and long drawn-out trials.

To guarantee religious freedom, fundamental reform of the Turkish legal system is needed. Even more essential is reform in the hearts of the Turkish people that can come only from the love of Christ.

## **Pray**

- *For God to protect pastors and other Christian workers in Turkey from the plots of evil men.*
- *That the upstanding lives of believers will silence and defeat their opponents.*
- *For the Gospel to flourish in Izmit, Malatya, and throughout Turkey despite opposition from Islamic extremists and the government.*

Last fall the Turkish Ministry of Religious Affairs announced plans to open an Islamic University that will compete with Egypt's Al-Azhar, the world's oldest and most respected center of Muslim learning. This initiative intensifies Turkey's strained relationship with Egypt since a counter-revolution ousted the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood led by Mohammed Morsi, a protégé of Turkish President Erdoğan.

Opening an Islamic university is another step in Ankara's efforts to regain the leadership of the Muslim world held by Turks as rulers of the Ottoman Empire until its collapse in World War I. For six centuries, the Ottomans controlled everything from Eastern Europe to the Arabian Peninsula, including the caliphate claiming direct spiritual descent from Islam's prophet Muhammad.



*Turkey's government refuses to reopen this orthodox seminary near Istanbul.*

President Erdoğan seems to be pursuing a “neo-Ottoman” political agenda intended to recapture Turkey's glorious past. Critics think he wants to make himself a new sultan and give Islam the central place it had in Turkish society during the Ottoman era. Many experts claim there is no hope of Turkey's new university displacing Al-Azhar with its thousand-year history as the global center of Muslim scholarship.

Announcement of the new Islamic university was not welcomed by Turkey's Christian minorities, who have endured decades of government stonewalling in efforts to build their own seminaries and reopen training centers closed by official decree. Today, if a Christian desires theological training, he must study with his pastor, attend a Turkish-language seminary abroad, or move to the West for training in English. Only a handful of Turkey's approximately 50 Protestant pastors have a formal seminary education due to the language barrier and high costs of study abroad.

Religious freedom expert Mine Yildirim of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee said she believes the situation could change if Christians seek judicial remedies in the Constitutional Court of Turkey and the European Court of Human Rights. They can assert the right to establish seminaries guaranteed under agreements like the Lausanne treaty Turkey signed.

### ***Pray***

- *That President Erdoğan will not succeed in his “neo-Ottoman” goal to replace Turkey's secular society with a repressive Islamic regime.*
- *For the Turkish people to recognize that the real reason for undertaking costly projects like the Islamic university is Erdoğan's own aggrandizement rather than the welfare of the nation.*
- *That Turkish churches will gain the legal right to open their own seminaries.*





*Mardin believers remove debris in the courtyard of the abandoned church they hope to renovate.*

One hundred fifty years ago American missionaries built a church in the center of Mardin. When the missionaries left Mardin in 1973, the church came under the control of Syriac Orthodox leaders before being abandoned when its small congregation left Turkey to escape persecution.

The Syriac Church (known as Assyrian in Iraq and Syria) is one of the oldest branches of Christianity in the world. Its churches in Mardin date back to the 4th Century. Since the Ottoman Empire's massacre of hundreds of thousands of Armenians and Syriacs in the early 20th century, only 20,000 Syriacs remain in Turkey with 3,500 in the southeast region.

Soon after Turkish Protestant pastor Ender Peker and his family were sent out from the Diyarbakir Church to minister in Mardin, he began cultivating relationships with Syriac Orthodox leaders. Whenever he drove by an Orthodox church or monastery, he'd stop and talk with the clergymen. He told them his vision was to preach to lost Muslims, not orthodox Syriacs or Armenians. Recently Father Akyuz, the Syriac priest, agreed to transfer Mardin's abandoned church building to Pastor Ender and his Protestant fellowship with the condition that no Orthodox or Catholic worshipers would be allowed to join. Had the property not been transferred, it would have been confiscated by the Turkish government under the law that property unused for 10 years or more reverts to state ownership.

On a Saturday in late March, a group of 20 volunteers from the Mardin fellowship went to the abandoned church and cleaned out broken chairs, a cracked pulpit, old books and other debris. In the corner was a 100-year-old organ. Pastor Ender estimates the cost of repairing the church will be about \$75,000. When renovated, the building will hold about 50 people.

The transfer of this church represents a first step of reconciliation between Turkish Protestants and Orthodox believers separated by 200 years of bitterness and mistrust. Praise God for this breakthrough!

## **Pray**

- *For a revival among Orthodox leaders and clergy that will spread to their churches.*
- *That the Lord will provide the \$75,000 Mardin Protestants need to rehab the church.*
- *That Pastor Ender and his fellowship will continue to cooperate with the Orthodox church in aiding hundreds of Syrian Christian refugees living in Mardin after fleeing Islamic State attacks in their homeland.*

## Day 10 Church Closed by Authorities

Turkish authorities shut down a Protestant church last August in the southeastern city of Gaziantep. They also ordered its American pastor Patrick Jensen fined \$1,350 and deported for violating Turkey's law requiring a work permit for legal employment status. Jensen declined to pay the fine and has appealed his deportation, contending he is an unpaid volunteer serving in the church. Lawyers representing Turkey's Association of Protestant Churches have also filed a court appeal to postpone Jensen's deportation, calling it an "absolutely arbitrary" ruling against the Gaziantep congregation. Jensen's Turkish residence permit has been cancelled, but he has remained in Turkey on a series of temporary permits until the court rules on his appeal.



*Gaziantep police seal the door of the New Life Church.*

Jensen started the small Protestant fellowship nine years ago when he and his family moved to Gaziantep. Between 30 and 40 adults attend the Turkish worship services each Sunday. Since the church building was closed, the fellowship has gathered for worship in a park when the weather is nice and in private homes on other Sundays. The fledgling congregation has not yet applied for official status as an association, the only legal option open to register new Christian congregations.

Despite an estimated 5,000 Protestant Christians meeting in 120 small congregations in Turkey, the government prohibits institutions for the theological training of their clergy. The same ban prevents the traditional Orthodox communities from opening seminaries. As a result, these congregations need foreign clergy, but cases like Patrick Jensen's illustrate the difficulties they encounter with Turkish laws. Officials can easily find an excuse to punish foreign-born church leaders and deport them as illegal workers. "Foreign clergy are experiencing problems with work permits," stated General Secretary Umut Sahin of the Association of Protestant Churches after closure of the Gaziantep church. "It is not clear according to which criteria officials say yes or no. Currently only four foreign Protestant church leaders have been able to obtain this visa status."

Despite government harassment, the church in Turkey remains strong. Persecution has never hurt the church historically and has even brought out the best in God's people. As Christians brace for difficult times, they are confident that the Lord knows the way and will accomplish His perfect plan.

### ***Pray***

- *For the Turkish government to grant foreign Christian clergy the same work and residence permits routinely given to Muslim clergy from other countries.*
- *For the faithful perseverance of pastors and fellowships facing government harassment.*
- *That Turkish churches will continue to fight for their legal rights.*



*The 13th century Hagia Sophia church in Trabzon was recently converted to a mosque.*

Turkey is home to many old orthodox church buildings, some dating back to the 4th century. A few are still maintained by orthodox clergy, but many were converted to mosques centuries ago. They now stand empty or function as historical museums administered by the government. For example, the well-known Hagia Sophia in Istanbul was built by the Byzantines as a Christian church in 537. After the Ottoman Turk conquest, Hagia Sophia was transformed into a mosque in 1543 and eventually ended up as a museum in 1935 under the Turkish Republic's secular government.

Today ancient structures like Hagia Sophia are caught up in a conundrum of red tape and legal wrangling. The use

and ownership of Turkey's many state-confiscated places of worship raise questions about how to address past injustices and the present needs of religious communities. Christians want the government to give back churches converted into mosques, and many small fellowships would gladly renovate these old buildings as their meeting places. However, the fact that Turkish law does not allow most of these fellowships to own property makes it difficult to find a legal body to which an old church can be returned. Foundations and associations with legal status have sought to get control of confiscated religious buildings to which they have historic links. However, some of these organizations are not Christian communities and may have plans for the buildings that would cause more controversy.

The problems caused by state confiscations are unlikely to be resolved anytime soon, given the ruling party's Islamist political agenda. Recent government decisions to turn two old churches—the Hagia Sophia museums in Iznik and Trabzon—into mosques have raised Christians' fears that the same fate awaits Istanbul's Hagia Sophia and many other historic worship places.

The outcome of this dilemma seems to serve as a thermometer of the religious climate in Turkey. Is the country headed for an ultra-conservative Islamic future, or could the Lord be shaking up this society in a way that will eventually allow the resurrection of worship in these old churches? We must be praying for the Lord's wisdom and will to prevail.

## **Pray**

- *That the Turkish government will grant legal status to Christian fellowships, including the right to own property.*
- *That Christians will be allowed to reclaim state-confiscated church buildings.*
- *For the Lord to empower His people to "rebuild the ancient ruins" of worship places, as predicted in Isaiah 58:12.*



## Day 12 Meeting the Real Turkey

John and Marilyn Hayes, Members of FBCG's 2014 Turkey Team

Before going on our mission trip last fall, we had been to Turkey four times as tourists. We had cruised the Aegean and Mediterranean with friends and visited many Turkish historic and religious sites including Ephesus, Cappadocia, Antalya, Perge, Pamukkale and Saint Nicolas' church in Myra. As tourists we saw the country through the lens of history and natural beauty. We interacted with the Turkish people based on their jobs as guides, hotel and restaurant workers, and ship's crew. We made friends and learned about their lives, but not their beliefs.



*John and Marilyn visited the biblical site of Mt. Ararat during their mission trip.*

Our mission trip experience was very different. We learned to see Turkey and its people through the eyes of the local Christians and foreign mission workers who live and serve there full time. From them we learned about Turkish identity—the common belief that to be a Turk is to be Muslim—and what Turks are taught about the West—that so-called “Christian” countries are immoral, polytheistic, materialistic, and degenerate. We heard about the great hunger many Turks have to learn about Christ, and the enormous danger and sacrifice if they decide to accept Him as their Savior. We saw the commitment and sacrifices that the full-time workers have made to reach out to people. They serve in a country that doesn't want them there with a government that actively works to eliminate Christian outreach and encourage the growth of fundamentalist Islam. The work of these Christians in reaching out to the Turkish people is not measured in years but in decades and lifetimes.

If you have never been to Turkey, we encourage you to go on a vacation there. See Istanbul, one of the great cities of the world. Take a tour to the sites of the seven churches that Christ wrote to in Revelation. Meet the people and see where Paul first preached to the Gentiles. Learn about the past and observe the present in a place that was an early center of Christianity.

Then, if God moves you, join an FBCG mission trip and meet the Christian workers. Go to eastern Turkey and feel the difference between its traditional Muslim culture and the lifestyle of cosmopolitan Istanbul straddling Asia and Europe. You will bless the workers and they will bless and enrich you.

### **Pray**

- *That God will continue to strengthen those workers that have committed their lives to reaching the people of Turkey.*
- *That FBCG will, with God's blessing, continue to support His churches and workers in Turkey.*
- *That God will strengthen your commitment to mission work in Turkey and call you to join an FBCG short-term team.*



*Kucak's director Ibrahim Devici knows from experience the difficulties young believers face.*

As you read this, I will be ministering with my three teammates (Carol Migacz, Cindy Shuler, and Lorrie Ruh) at Kucak Christian camp near the eastern city of Elazığ. From June 28 through July 3, we will assist the small Kucak staff by preparing and serving meals and overseeing some other activities for about 50 Christian children ranging from 7 to 15 years old. Though we don't speak their Turkish language, we will have a translator with us. We can also share God's love at the camp through our smiles and hugs, as well as through the ziplock bags of fun stuff donated by FBCG families for the treasure hunt on the last day of camp.

Since Turkey has so few believers, daily life is difficult for the Christian children we'll serve at camp. They feel like outsiders because all their classmates, neighbors, and teachers are Muslim. They eat different foods, wear different clothes, and use different words in their religion. They are often ignored or bullied by Muslim kids their age and ridiculed by their teachers, especially in compulsory religion classes that refer to Christians as "infidels" going to hell.

Even the children's home life can be stressful. Some have suffered when their fathers got fired, arrested, or assaulted, and all worry about what might happen to their parents. Often Muslim neighbors and relatives refuse to associate with Christian families. A family crisis had a major impact on the youth of Kucak Camp's director, Ibrahim Devici. When he came to faith in Christ as a teen along with his mother and sister, his Muslim father issued the ultimatum "It's Jesus or me" and abandoned the family when they refused to give up Jesus. As an adult, Ibrahim leads Kucak camp out of love for Christian children who are experiencing many of the same difficulties he did.

Camp is the one place Christian kids feel safe and accepted. They make friends, learn about the Bible, worship, and play games with others their age. They don't worry so much about their problems at camp; it makes them feel better to hear that other kids have the same struggles and to pray with the counselors for their families. Best of all, they hear that if you invite Jesus Christ into your heart, you are going to Heaven! For one precious week, they are NOT different. What a privilege for our team to bring some joy into young lives that are otherwise filled with so many challenges and hardships!

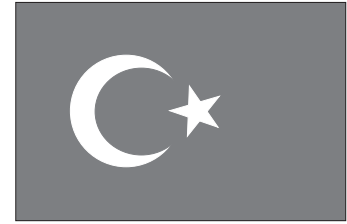
## **Pray**

- *For Kucak to have all the resources needed to run its two camp sessions this summer in Cappadocia and in Elazığ where our team will serve.*
- *That FBCG's short-term team will successfully carry out its camp mission and bless the children and staff.*
- *For the spiritual, social, and emotional growth of the children who come to camp.*

# Exploring Turkey

*National motto:* "Peace at home, peace in the world."

*Turkey's flag:* Adopted in 1936, the crescent and star are symbols of the Islamic faith.



## *Facts of nature*

*Size:* 302,500 square miles, just larger than Texas

*Lowest point:* Mediterranean Sea (sea level)

*Highest point:* Mt. Ararat (5,166m)

*Natural hazards:* earthquakes in the north





# Key Places

- 1) ***Istanbul:*** contact point between Asia and Europe
- 2) ***Tarsus:*** birthplace of the apostle Paul
- 3) ***Elazığ:*** site of FBCG 2015 mission at Kucak Camp
- 4) ***Efes:*** splendid ruins of ancient Ephesus
- 5) ***Ankara:*** Turkey's capital since 1923
- 6) ***Mt. Ararat:*** possible resting place of Noah's Ark
- 7) ***Kayseri:*** home of our partners Nat and Abby
- 8) ***Diyarbakir:*** city with a thriving protestant church
- 9) ***Midyat:*** site of our 2012 church restoration project
- 10) ***Erzurum:*** where FBCG's long-term ministry is focused



## Day 14 Outreach With a Ripple Effect

Dan and Devri W., Americans Serving on the Island of Cyprus

Soon after our move to the Turkish village of Başpınar, an ever increasing number of children started to drop by our house every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. As time went on, we decided to hold a special kids club on Saturdays. To entertain the children, Devri supervises games and crafts. Dan is teaching them chess and set up an archery range to show the boys how to shoot a bow and arrow.

Little did we know that our kids club would end up reaching the entire community. Some moms started coming and inviting Devri to visit in their homes. Devri recently had the privilege of leading one Turkish lady to faith while exercising with a group of women. This lady is now on fire for the Lord and has already told her husband, mother, and father about her decision to become a Christian.



*What a joy to hear the children singing Turkish hymns of praise!*

Sometimes we have to deal with misbehavior at our kids club. When the fun is disrupted by arguments, fights, and threats to leave, we stop and pray to bind the spirit of strife. These are very needy and troubled children; one of our goals is to use their conflicts as opportunities to teach them principles of Christian behavior from the Scriptures.

Our kids outreach also gives us the opportunity to help families in need. When the father of three children lost his job not long after their mother died, we started purchasing groceries for them each week. The owner of the shop where we made our purchases was touched that foreigners like us were helping the family. She offered to help too and has come twice with brand new clothes for each of the children.

Most importantly, we are finding ways to share our faith with the children by telling Bible stories and helping them sing Christian hymns in Turkish. They enjoy learning how to play the guitar and blow the shofar, a ram's horn used in ancient Israel. What a joy to hear them singing hymns of praise as they leave our house! At Christmas we got the parents' permission to have a party and told 16 children about the amazing birth of our King. The following Sunday one of the children started attending the worship service each week at our home, and Devri recently had the opportunity to lead a 14-year-old girl to Christ.

### **Pray**

- *That Dan and Devri will find a less damp and moldy rental house in the same neighborhood, so they can continue their kids club.*
- *For those who attend their kids club to follow Jesus someday.*
- *For children throughout Turkey to grow up with a greater awareness of other faiths and less prejudice against Christians.*



*Through Christian TV, Turks in isolated rural villages hear the Gospel.*

Thousands of Turks all over the country tune in to Christian satellite television programs. Following are a few examples of Christian TV's amazing impact.

Church leaders were amazed that a first-time attendee seemed so mature and trained in the Scriptures even though she admitted this was the first church she had attended in her life. "I've been watching Christian TV for years," she explained.

Two believers came to visit a man in a city with no church. When they met him in public, they saw that he shared his faith freely with others. In fact, several had believed through his witness and a fellowship group was being formed in this city. His two visitors were the first believers this man had ever met in person. His faith and fervor to witness had come through Christian TV presenters.

A farmer lived alone and couldn't travel easily due to his elderly mother and his animals needing daily care. One day Christian visitors called on him and discovered everyone in his village had heard about this man's faith in Christ and were curious. How had he believed? Through Christian TV.

A new fellowship started in a significant city where several previous efforts had failed. A group of twenty local believers officially opened a church in a rented facility, putting up a sign for all to see. How did these individuals come to faith and meet each other? The answer for each person was Christian TV.

Some friends from the same city were doing construction work away from home and living together on the site. Their daily routine was work, eat, watch TV, and sleep. After discovering Christian TV, they requested Bibles and began a study that went on for over a year.

Through Christian TV, a rural couple believed in Christ. Persecution soon drove them from their village, and later they had to move again. Now in a third rural location, the man has good employment and they both witness openly.

## **Pray**

- *That God will help those in isolated locations without a church to find Christian TV programs to draw them to faith.*
- *For those developing new Christian program concepts, and for the presenters, actors and producers who get them on the air.*
- *For more Christian workers willing to travel great distances to encourage TV viewers who request a personal visit.*

## Day 16 Businesses that Build the Kingdom

R. Andrews, *an American Businessman in Turkey*

A couple of years ago a friend told me that a man named Melih had just been baptized at another church in town and shared in his testimony that meeting Christians in my factory had helped him come to faith.

I was stunned. Our company had four believers out of about 25 employees. Melih was a Muslim worker who had been badly burned about 10 years earlier after foolishly pouring kerosene on an open fire in the boiler. The other believers and I struggled through his recovery, visited with his family, and grieved over the pain he went through. He appreciated our visits but never indicated an interest in our faith. He had been an average worker; and after we had to shut down operations at the end of the contract, I'd lost touch with him.



*Working for a Christian-owned company helped Melih come to faith.*

While we believers tried to live out our faith in the workplace, we knew we had to be very careful about how openly we shared. Turkish society is very anti-Christian, and we were concerned that we could be labeled as “misyoner” (missionaries), which would have ruined both our business and our testimony. Like all businesses, we depended on relationships with neighbors, suppliers, regulators and employees. Bad gossip can ruin a business.

Melih’s testimony demonstrates one of the ways God works here. Rarely do Turks respond to a Gospel presentation. And rarely do they come to the Lord through one person’s testimony. More often the process takes years with many different Christians involved, as well as encounters with the Scriptures and occasionally even through dreams or other unexpected acts of God. Melih watched the believers in our company and saw that we did what we said we would do, refused to lie or pay bribes, and cared about our people. He knew we were Christians. Over the following years he thought about what he’d seen and had some other encounters. Then he found a church.

The business community in Turkey is a totally unreached group that takes time and patience and strong relationships to win for Christ. Doing business there is hard, but good business can honor Christ in remarkable ways.

### ***Pray***

- *For Christians trying to run Christ-honoring businesses in Turkey.*
- *That God will work in the lives of the employees, customers, and suppliers of these businesses.*
- *For more Christians to hear the call to work in Turkey’s marketplace and share their lives with the many millions who will otherwise never meet a follower of Jesus.*





*Christian teachers in Turkish schools find ways to share their faith without words.*

In a country of 76 million, Turkey has more than 16 million students in grades K-12 and another 5 million in universities. Christian English teachers like Theresa Harris (not her real name) may start to wonder what good they are doing five days a week in a Turkish school with a mere 150 students. What lasting value is teaching them how to say, “I play basketball” in the present continuous tense, using a foreign language that rarely speaks to young hearts?

Those doubts started to disappear for Theresa one Teacher’s Day when she walked into class and saw what her students had written across the board: “Mrs. Harris we love you and we think you love us!” Obviously something had spoken to their hearts. Theresa was

encouraged to believe that God will use this love the children see in her to point them to the source of love in Jesus Christ, whom they know she worships.

It is inappropriate for Christian teachers in Turkish schools to explain their faith overtly in their classrooms. Instead they should be guided by the old saying, “Preach the gospel at all times and use words when necessary.” The Turkish educational system traditionally relies on fear and intimidation to indoctrinate students. Each Christian teacher has daily opportunities to show students a better hope and a better way to live.

Some of Theresa’s students have openly attributed the source of that hope to her faith in Jesus Christ. As a result, their preconceived Muslim prejudices against Christian “infidels” have changed. The following note Theresa received from a formerly belligerent 6th grader is typical of the appreciation many Christian teachers receive: “Happy Teacher’s Day! You are the best teacher I have ever seen. I love English with you. You are lively, you are energetic, you are the best. I can’t forget you all my life. I love you!”

When a student recently came to Theresa saying she had decided to be a Christian, Theresa contacted the girl’s mother and received permission to answer her questions. By sharing Christ’s love through the way they teach and being prepared to give the reason for their hope “with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15), Christian teachers in Turkey don’t just give answers: they inspire life-giving questions in the minds and hearts of their students.

## ***Pray***

- *For the 20 million students in Turkey to be open to the Gospel they see and hear.*
- *That all Christian teachers in Turkey will have wisdom and courageous hearts as they teach and share their hope.*
- *For God to raise up more Turkish teachers to model the hope of Christ among their own people.*

## Day 18 Hands-On Discipleship

Matt B., A Canadian Serving in Erzurum

Almost all of the local believers in Erzurum are young university students living away from home for the first time. They often feel lonely, untrusting of others, and fearful of their beliefs becoming known. Only one has told her family about her faith, and she has suffered the consequences by being cut off from their support. This has made the other believers even more hesitant to be known as Christians. They are reluctant to come to fellowship gatherings, out of concern that people will see them there and tell their families who their friends are.



*Building a cedar canoe is generating meaningful conversations with young believers.*

However, these young people desperately need fellowship and discipleship in their new faith. To provide this, our team is developing a one-on-one model of relationship.

We “do life together” with our young brothers and sisters, inviting them individually into our homes and letting them see first-hand what our daily lives look like. Many of them have never seen a loving, healthy marriage or a respectful, caring parent-child relationship that conforms to God’s Word.

I have also started a hands-on project with some of the young men, giving us something to work at together in a safe and natural space that encourages meaningful conversations. I chose a canoe-building project, because canoes aren’t available here and some of the local believers want to go canoeing with me. We’re building a cedar strip kayak like the ones I made with my father years ago in Canada. Our first challenge was finding cedar in a city where very little wood is used and there are no Home Depots to sell it! Fortunately a local friend’s father helped us find a spot with cedar roofing boards for sale. We drew quite a crowd curious about our use for the wood and intrigued by my description of the canoe, which most had never seen or heard of before. I can’t wait to show them what we build.

Even more than producing the finished canoe, my main motivation is to work alongside the young believers and disciple them in an inviting way. The process of building the canoe together will build relationship, inviting them into my life and sharing the way the Father is teaching me. As we shape the rough pieces of wood into something beautiful and useful, may our discussions allow the Father to smooth the rough edges of these young men.

### **Pray**

- *For young believers in Erzurum to grow spiritually through their relationships with our partners.*
- *That the young men will have the commitment to complete the canoe project and hearts open to benefit from the discipleship conversations.*
- *For more creative approaches to discipling new believers in Turkey.*



*Susanne Geske with her three children.*

Three evangelical Christians were brutally murdered on April 18, 2007, in the southeastern Turkish city of Malatya. Tilmann Geske, Necati Aydin, and Ugur Yuksel were tied up, tortured, and killed by a group of young men at a Christian publishing house. In the midst of this turmoil, Susanne Geske, widow of the German-born martyr Tillmann, was interviewed on Turkish television and quoted Christ's words on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

This one sentence had an immediate and profound impact in Turkey. One reporter commented that what missionaries couldn't teach Turks in a thousand years, Susanne Geske did in that one sentence about the meaning of true forgiveness. In a country where offering or accepting an apology is seen as weakness, one of the defense lawyers publicly apologized to Susanne on behalf of the perpetrators at the start of the murder trial. Today, eight years after Susanne forgave those that murdered her husband, her testimony continues to impact lives. Many Turkish converts to Christianity say that since the killings, interest in Christianity and tolerance toward converts have grown exponentially—doubtless the last thing the killers had in mind.

After the murders, many people urged Susanne Geske to leave Malatya. Motivated by her love for Turkey, she decided to stay and recently applied for Turkish citizenship. Miraculously, Susanne's small fellowship in Malatya has been able to obtain government recognition as an association—the only legal status available to churches—and rent meeting space instead of holding services in people's homes (technically illegal in Turkey). On April 18, 2014, the seventh anniversary of the killings, the first Protestant church in Malatya opened its doors.

Susanne's testimony serves as a powerful example of what can happen when believers choose to forgive. Unfortunately this story is not over yet. The five suspects who all confessed to the murders were released on bail last March after seven years of trials with no convictions. Since then, the U.S. Embassy has issued warnings about potential terrorist activities against our brothers and sisters in Malatya. Christ's church there presses on, confident that God is in control and ready to share His forgiving grace with enemies of the Gospel.

### **Pray**

- *For the continuing safety and bold witness of Susanne Geske's family and other believers in Malatya.*
- *That Christians throughout Turkey will follow Christ's example and extend forgiveness during conflict situations.*
- *For many Muslims to be drawn to Christ as they learn the Good News of His forgiveness and salvation.*

## Day 20 Building Trust

Jayson Knox, FBCG Partner in Turkey

Beginning a business in Turkey is both adventure and education. We offer Biblically-based consulting services to leaders of secular companies. This year we assembled a team of six experienced business professionals to deliver our services. Only one of them follows Christ, though all of them are falling in love with him. We experience Christ's irresistible presence and the power of His Word through team-building activities I've developed over the years with ministry leaders.



*Jayson leading team-building activities with his coworkers.*

My primary team-building aim has been to intentionally foster an environment of deepening trust. Team members who trust each other are primed for doing higher quality work with greater satisfaction. One might think that a relational society like Turkey would be more trusting. Turns out that international studies rank Turkey at the bottom for levels of interpersonal trust. A common Turkish proverb advises, "Don't even trust your own father."

This slow process of trust building is good for more than business. Trust is closely aligned with faith. When we can trust someone, we have faith in their good intentions toward us. As the Father's ambassadors, our role can be summed up as helping others trust God's good intentions toward them.

One trust-building activity I have introduced is the purposeful affirmation of one another. My goal is to make this practice normal for us. Saying something true and positive to another person, without a hidden agenda, is rare in our broken world and certainly in Turkey, where the corrosive habit is to criticize. The powerful impact resulting from the simple kingdom practice of intentional encouragement often surprises me. The smallest mundane but positive affirmations can bring tears. These successful business people have seldom, maybe never, been in a healthy environment where they are openly, uniquely valued.

One result: team members now practice encouraging one another with lessening awkwardness. Even better, this subversive Kingdom activity of "blessing" has spread beyond our conference room table and now shows up in their families and friendship circles.

### **Pray**

- *That Jayson's team of yet-to-be-confessors will joyfully experience the life-giving presence of Jesus and be ruined for anything less.*
- *For Jayson to have the discipline and patience to maintain a listening, abiding dialogue with the Spirit, who knows best how to start a business in Turkey.*
- *That all mission workers who have close contact with not-yet-confessors in business or professional capacities will nurture trust relationships as preparation for faith in Christ.*



Nat Wibberley, FBCG partner in Turkey



*Kayseri Pastor Muammer (center) and an Iraqi refugee family his fellowship is helping.*

Last summer's news of the Iraqi city of Mosul falling to the Islamic State (ISIS) sent shockwaves through the Middle East. The shock eventually gave way to desperation and waves of refugees pouring into Turkey. The fellowship I serve in Kayseri has been directly affected by these events since a group Chaldean Iraqi families settled in our city and were soon joined by fleeing Syrians. Our fellowship responded by starting a fund to buy grocery cards and hire preachers to lead services for these traumatized and displaced refugees.

Ministering to the refugees has been an exciting and eye-opening experience for our congregation, underscoring the importance of the hope we have in Christ. Listening to stories of the evil committed against them, one can

forget the hope that God provides. Yet regardless of how hopeless their situation may seem, His hope is real and powerful.

As God's Word affirms, "Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. . . .And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5: 2, 4).

It would be easy to shrink back in the face of ISIS evil and the overwhelming need of its victims in Kayseri and throughout Turkey. But as people who have been saved and justified through faith, we should be filled with an eternal hope. It is this hope that drives us to serve and comfort the displaced in our midst and in so doing proclaim the Good News.

We see the evil perpetrated so blatantly by ISIS in our backyard, and much less obvious evil around us as well. Trusting and serving a God that has overcome this evil world cultivates a hope from which all can benefit. Only in our Lord is there true peace, prosperity, and freedom. This world will pass away but His hope and truth never will. Let us live for this hope and impart it to all who will receive it.

## ***Pray***

- *For Christian fellowships like Nat's to effectively minister to the refugees nearby.*
- *For many of the refugees to come to faith as they experience the love of Christ and hear the Gospel through their interactions with believers.*
- *For fellowships to grow in faith and number through refugee ministry as they share the hope we have in Christ.*

Christian compassion is helping southeastern churches gain credibility with local governments, their cities, and the refugees they are assisting. Christian pastor Ender Peker in Mardin was surprised when a Muslim imam asked him to take over food distribution for local Yazidi refugees from Iraq. The Yazidis' unorthodox beliefs blend ancient Iranian religions, Christianity, and Islam and are derided by Muslims, who consider them "devil worshippers." Yazidis fled to Turkey at the same time as Muslim refugees. The government set up refugee camps, but Yazidis feared living with the Muslims.



*Church members distribute food to Yazidi refugees.*

Fortunately Pastor Ender and his small congregation, along with the Diyarbakir Protestant Church, agreed to the imam's request and started helping the Yazidis soon after they arrived. Some were living in a city park and others in empty schools and municipal buildings. Assisted by the local government, Christians set up a separate Yazidi refugee camp in a vacant airplane hangar and donated large tents that had been used for summer church camps. The churches raised thousands of dollars from their worldwide network of prayer supporters to purchase tons of food, clothing, and other necessities for the Yazidis.

At first the refugees were mistrustful and rebuffed help. They were understandably wary due to lingering trauma from brutal Islamic State (ISIS) attacks in their historical home in northern Iraq. There thousands of Yazidi men, women, and children had been killed, raped and enslaved. Once the refugees got settled in Turkey, the faithful service of the Christians began to calm their fears and build their trust. The Yazidis expected the Christians to help and then leave quickly. Instead the refugees received steadfast care and complimented the Christians for following through on their promises.

The churches' work with refugees has also improved their relations with local government officials, who have said they are deeply grateful for the help of the believers. Two mayors from neighboring towns have begun to work closely with the Christian community. In a region where Christian faith is barely tolerated, these mayors have even visited the Diyarbakir Church! Its pastor, Ahmet Guvener, sees God at work in Turkey's refugee crisis: "God never causes evil, but He can do wonderful things by using the church in difficult situations. In the last eight months, people's attitudes about Christians have changed completely."

### **Pray**

- *For the churches to continue receiving donations to purchase food and other necessities for the refugees.*
- *That the believers' compassionate service to the refugees will be a powerful witness to everyone in their cities.*
- *For improved relationships with local officials to reduce discrimination against Turkish churches.*

Frank and Caroline M., *Americans Serving in Turkey*



*Yazidis in Iraq pleading for asylum.*

“7,000 people have lost their future, and I am one of them” said a young man at the Fidanlık refugee camp in southeast Turkey. Learning the story of his family helped us see the human side of the tragedy caused by the Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria. This young man was the son of a Yazidi refugee named Jamal we met earlier in Tucson, Arizona. As a translator for the U.S. military in Iraq, Jamal had come to the U.S. on a Special Immigration Visa. He was waiting for his wife and eight children to join him when ISIS terrorism started in Iraq and the immigration process had to be aborted.

When Jamal found out we were going to Turkey, he asked us to visit his family in a refugee camp near Diyarbakir. We agreed to try but had heard the Fidanlık camp was closed to outsiders. With terrifying faith, Jamal gave us a large sum of money and a cell phone for his family, and asked us to pray for them. In Diyarbakir we reached two of Jamal’s oldest sons through a cell phone number he had given us. We went with them to meet the rest of their family at the camp. There a group of 42 refugees—Jamal’s children and mother plus the families of his brother and cousins—welcomed us as friends. They lived in four of the 500 tents lined up in neat rows at the camp; each 10x20-foot tent had a foam floor mat, pillows, blankets, and an electric space heater. Their few possessions came from the local Christians ministering at the camp. Food trucks came three times a day and necessities were provided, but little else.

We formed an instant bond with Jamal’s family. They told the heart-breaking story of having to flee for their lives on foot when ISIS attacked Mosul. They ended up trapped by ISIS on Mt. Sinjar for seven days along with 200,000 other Christians and Yazidis without food, water, or shelter. Eventually U.S. air strikes and Iraqi Kurd ground fighters broke the ISIS seige and dropped humanitarian relief by helicopters to the refugees. Miraculously, almost all of Jamal’s family was able to escape together to Turkey.

When we asked to pray with the family, they were overjoyed and began to praise God that they had been spared. They wanted to pray for the thousands of Yazidis still trapped on Mt. Sinjar. Knowing their loved one Jamal is in the U.S. gives them hope for the future.

## **Pray**

- *That the Yazidi refugees will have hope and steadfastness as they endure hardships in Turkish camps and seek a permanent place to live.*
- *For other countries to offer the refugees asylum to help Turkey bear this burden.*
- *For the refugees to discover the comfort, hope, and strength that Christ freely offers.*

## Day 24 Assyrian Christians Flee to Turkey

A harsh Islamic State (ISIS) offensive began in late February against Syria's dwindling Christian population, accelerating a steady stream of refugees to Turkey, northern Iraq, and Lebanon. Their future is far from guaranteed in Muslim-majority Turkey, where the government recently sealed its two border crossings with Syria. Since then Assyrian refugees have paid smugglers to help them cross. Most have made their way to Mardin and Midyat, southeastern Turkey's historical homeland of Syriac Orthodox Christians whose mother tongue is closely related to Jesus' Aramaic language. Although only 3,500 Syriac Christians remain in the area, ancient monasteries and churches still dot the city skylines.



*One of the Assyrian leaders overseeing aid distribution to refugees.*

When the Turkish government built a refugee camp near Mardin, only three Assyrian families were willing to stay there and risk further persecution by the Muslim residents. Christian refugees outside the camp do not receive any government aid except basic health care, so local Syriac church leaders have stepped in to help them. Gabriel Akyuz, the priest of Kirkklar Church, raises funds from the Assyrian diaspora in Western countries to pay for food and lodging for the approximately 150 Assyrian refugees in the area at any given time. According to Akyuz, refugees stay in Mardin and Midyat for up to a year and then go to Europe if they get the chance.

Assyrian refugees in Turkey can trace a history of genocide against their people. The first massacre occurred in 1915 when the crumbling Ottoman Empire killed as many as 1.5 million Armenians and 300,000 Assyrians, who fled to Iraq's Mosul province. In 1933 when Iraq launched the second Assyrian massacre, most Christians crossed the border into Syria. Today many Assyrians believe ISIS is continuing the genocide against them.

Fr. Akyuz sees some hope for Assyrian Christians in Turkey. Nearby Artuklu University offers courses in Syriac language study, which were illegal until a decade ago. The Turkish government has promised to give Syriacs permission to build a new church in Istanbul. "Our future is connected to the future of Turkey," he said. "If the Republic endures, then we will be able to endure."

### **Pray**

- *That God will raise up forces able to take back all areas controlled by ISIS and stop its campaign of terror.*
- *For the Lord to provide food, shelter, comfort, and restoration for the Christian refugees in Turkey.*
- *For God to use the turmoil in the Middle East to draw many to Himself and build His Church.*





*Turkish and Armenian believers praying together at a conference.*

Our partners in Erzurum have been working to bring Christian Turks, Kurds, and Armenians together to start a process of reconciliation. These communities have been divided by hatred and conflict since the early 20th century when more than a million Armenian Christians were killed or forced to flee from eastern Anatolia by Muslim Turks and Kurds under orders from the Ottoman government. Last February a gathering in Istanbul drew more than 200 believers from Turkey, Armenia, Europe, and North America to talk about the impact this reconciliation process has had in their lives.

A Turkish pastor told the conference about a huge oak tree planted in his childhood village by the Armenians. When the killing started 100 years ago, Turkish people in the village decided to get rid of the tree, which left a huge hole in the land and, according to the pastor, a hole in their hearts as well: “I believe that tree will be planted again and bring healing to the Armenian and Turkish people.”

Shushan and her father had just returned from a trip to his grandfather’s homeland in Van. They went in a group of Armenians and Turks sent out to bless the land where their ancestors had become enemies. At the conference Shushan shared, “It was really heartbreaking to see the old and glorious city of Van completely cleared of any evidence of Armenians and Christianity. If not for the fellowship with our Christian brothers and sisters, we would come home with heavy hearts and need to go through the forgiveness process again.”

John, an Armenian worship leader, told of meeting a man named Orhan who turned out to be Turkish. Turks were a group that John had been taught to hate since childhood. Connecting with Orhan face to face made John realize the futility of holding onto bitterness for so many years. He wrote a song about reconciliation that he recorded and sent to Orhan, who added a violin accompaniment. At the conference, these two friends played and sang this song together for the first time, leading their fellow Turks and Armenians in worship.

Three Armenians from North America told of visiting the ruins of an Armenian church on the outskirts of Erzurum and realizing that hundreds of these churches had once filled this province until being decimated with their villages. The visitors prayed and wept for the sins of the past and their hope for the future.

## Pray

- *For Turkish and Armenian believers with open hearts, ready to bless and forgive, to participate in future reconciliation initiatives.*
- *That those leading the reconciliation project will be guided by God’s prophecy in Isaiah 58:12: “You shall be called the repairer of the breach.”*
- *That the Father will use this reconciliation process to bring about revival and cooperation among the Turkish and Armenian populations.*

## Day 26 Confronting Child Abuse

Among the many forms of child abuse in Turkey, arranged childhood marriages are often overlooked. Two recent films spotlight the plight of adults still afflicted by their experiences as child brides and grooms. The filmmaker explained, “There is the sadness of them not experiencing childhood. They were taken away from their schools.”

One former child groom in the film recalled, “They performed a ‘hodja’ [religious] wedding. She was crying in the corner of the bedroom on the wedding night. I also went to a corner and started crying. We were like siblings. She would sleep on the bed; I would sleep on the floor. If I had not been married, maybe I would have gone to university.”



*In two films about forced child marriages, adults describe their sad experiences with only their hands showing.*

Forced child marriages and other forms of abuse in traditional Turkish society arise from the pre-eminence of family honor and the absolute authority of elder relatives. Usually young daughters are married off to older men for the bride price paid to the parents, but sometimes a young son will be forced into marriage if he has no sisters at home. The abuse continues after the wedding when the young bride is expected to move in with her husband’s family and become a servant to her mother-in-law, who often repeats the harsh treatment she received as a girl.

The lingering effects of childhood abuse are felt by many adults in Turkey. In a poll of 125 Turkish Christians aged 18 to 30, 98% of the women and 80% of the men admitted to having been abused as children. Abuse leads to a lifelong inability to trust; the people who should love you most either hurt you or failed to protect you. Lack of trust is a key barrier to healthy churches.

A group of church leaders has started a ministry to provide intensive counseling to abuse survivors online and in small groups. Counselors have been trained, materials translated, and support groups formed in several cities, with a more extensive program planned in the future. Without providing healing for abuse victims, the Turkish church will be stunted in its growth and witness.

### **Pray**

- *For the films on child brides and grooms to raise dissatisfaction about the many destructive Turkish customs related to marriage and child-rearing.*
- *That the church will have the resources needed to help victims of childhood abuse experience healing through Jesus Christ.*
- *For God’s light to shine through the marriages and families of Christians in Turkey, motivating spiritual conversations with their Muslim neighbors.*



*Hakan (at right) led several Erzurum university students to Christ.*

Many experienced mission workers offered us advice before our three families moved from Istanbul to the northeastern city of Erzurum, known for its Islamic fundamentalism and strong resistance to the Gospel:

“Progress will be slow moving!”

“The ground out there is hard!”

“It could be YEARS before you see any growth!”

“Don’t expect too much!”

Comments like these were spoken in love and concern, and we found some truth in these descriptions of Erzurum, where no Turkish church had ever been established.

However, we came trusting in our all-powerful God, and He has not disappointed us. From the beginning we have worked with a gifted Istanbul evangelist named Hakan, who had been making visits to Erzurum before our arrival and introduced us to several university students he had led to Christ. We started meeting with these new converts, and our circle has grown as their friends and other seekers join us.

Today our fellowship consists of approximately ten local believers that we have the privilege of discipling on a regular basis. While all ten are not weekly attenders, we can count on a core group of about five to be there. We meet once all together during the weekend, and then off and on throughout the week. Since being out east, we have witnessed four of these amazing young people be baptized and publicly commit their lives to Christ. They are quickly becoming like “family” to us.

Please join with us in praying for our fellowship. Several of the believers set steady examples to the others of a life lived for Christ and, though young in their faith, are also very vibrant and enthusiastic witnesses. However, most of them struggle with emotional issues, family opposition, unhealthy romantic relationships, and battles between old habits and new life.

Yes, progress is slow moving in Erzurum, and the spiritual ground is hard and difficult to cultivate. But we have seen growth already in the two years we’ve been here, and we DO expect our Father to continue a mighty work in this city!

## Pray

- *For the positive influence of a partner fellowship in Istanbul whose members travel to Erzurum regularly to provide sound teaching and mature examples for the new converts.*
- *That Erzurum believers will learn to trust and enjoy each other enough to faithfully attend Bible studies, worship services, and informal gatherings.*
- *For several attenders who seem close to making professions of faith because of their relationships with believers.*

## Day 28 Fortitude Against Fear

Billy Graham said, “Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened.” It is easier to stand for a cause, if you know others are with you. Fear is contagious as well. When we focus on fear, it somehow traps us and brings others into its prison.

Fear is one of the primary reasons Turkish Christians don’t share their faith in this 99%-Muslim country. They may fear losing their lives, family support, reputations, or any number of other consequences that can lead them to keep their beliefs a secret. How can Christians find courage in these situations? What should they do to combat fear?



*The Turkish church can be a family to believers rejected for their faith.*

The biggest concern for young believers in Turkey is whether they should share the truth about their faith with family members and how to broach the subject if they decide to take this step. National believers who choose not to share their newfound faith with their family may fear rejection, disownment, or even physical harm if relatives find out they are Christians. They hear about cases in which a father or older brother forbids the believer to associate with other Christians or go to fellowship gatherings. Some have even been locked in their homes to avoid further contacts. Such fears trap young people and make it hard for them to be bold.

However, remaining silent about their beliefs also has negative consequences. One new convert, a 17-year-old girl, said that not sharing her faith with her family makes it seem like she is living a lie. She wants to be truthful with them, no matter what happens. It was refreshing to hear her boldness and her willingness to be upfront about her beliefs.

Church leaders who disciple young Turkish believers encourage them to take their eyes off possible problems and focus on their Almighty Father, who is more powerful than our worst fears. The Holy Spirit can be their guide and help them know what to say at the right time. Christ’s followers can pray for divine opportunities to witness boldly, with confidence in their church family’s love and their Savior’s promise to be with them always.

### **Pray**

- *For more believers to overcome fear and have the courage to share the Gospel with their family members.*
- *For church leaders to show by their example what it is to live a courageous life for the Kingdom regardless of the outcome.*
- *For the Turkish church to be a family for believers who are rejected for their faith.*





*A Christian's witness can have a powerful influence on family and friends.*

Turks who “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matthew 5:6) encounter many obstacles on the road to faith. Yet, they find encouragement for the journey from different sources.

Elma was originally unhappy about her daughter's new faith. After dreaming of a prophet standing with a cross in his hand, Elma began secretly listening to Christian hymns. When Elma came to the Erzurum fellowship meeting for the first time, she agreed to let her daughter be baptized, asking to learn more about what it means to make that commitment to Christ.

Dilek had been curious since her older sister shared her new faith in Christ. After talking with some Christian workers, Dilek told her sister she was ready to believe but wanted to tell the workers in person. Her older sister was so excited, she couldn't wait to pass on the good news!

Samira is a covered, conservative grad student in Erzurum. A mission worker found out about her through an online ministry and invited her to his home. She came to the fellowship's Christmas outreach, heard a Gospel presentation, and spoke with the guest preacher. Soon after, she left to work on her thesis in Ankara but began to attend a local fellowship there. While she has yet to make a profession of faith, she seems very close.

A Muslim named Ahmed sent for a New Testament online. A mission worker offered to answer his questions about it. When Ahmed texted, “Do you actually do what this book says?” the worker wrote back, “For instance?” and Ahmed answered, “Adultery.” He was reading the Sermon on the Mount and, like many Muslims, was shocked by the words and authority of Jesus. Ahmed asked to meet the worker again to talk about Scripture.

Sinan came to the Erzurum fellowship once, and a mission worker came to the apartment Sinan shared with his two aunts. One of the aunts said, “Sinan has dreams about Jesus. You need to explain the Bible to him.” The worker proceeded to walk them through the Gospel, beginning with John's proclamation of the Lamb of God. The same lady interrupted and spoke to Sinan's other aunt, “Do you hear this? No animal sacrifice can take away our sin! It had to be a man. I believe that Jesus was the sacrifice for my sin.”

### ***Pray***

- *For more seekers in Turkey to come to faith as a result of the loving witness of their Christian friends and family members.*
- *That God will send more dreams and visions of Christ to spiritually hungry Turks.*
- *For the media to continue connecting seekers with Christian literature, workers, and fellowships.*

Turkish Muslims will mark this 30th and final day of Ramadan by celebrating *Eid ul-Fitr*, which means “festival of breaking the fast.” They’ll donate food to the poor, put on their best clothes, and attend communal prayers at the mosque followed by feasting and visiting relatives and friends.

Your 30-day prayer journey through Turkey is also ending today, but FBCG’s ministry there will continue for years to come. Our church has committed to do whatever it takes to share God’s love and build up His Church among the Turks. Whatever it takes will certainly include our fervent, sustained prayer. International workers and pastors in Turkey often say that nothing happens there without prayer. Our congregation’s intercession, added to the prayers of believers in Turkey and around the world, fuels the advance of the Gospel and the growth of the Church in this unreached nation.



*Eid ul-Fitr is a day of feasting and thanksgiving for Muslims at the end of Ramadan.*

Try some of these suggestions to continue interceding for Turkey. Keep this booklet handy to guide your prayers throughout the year. Email [rjwest11@comcast.net](mailto:rjwest11@comcast.net) to start receiving occasional prayer requests from our mission partners. Be alert for news reports on Turkey and offer short impromptu prayers about anything that might impact Christian outreach there. Check out some of the books and websites listed on the facing page. Reach out to a Muslim in your neighborhood or workplace or at a nearby university; thousands of Turks have already emigrated to the U.S.

The Lord of the Harvest did not call FBCG to this work just to keep us busy. He desires fruit-bearing of us as a congregation and as individuals for the sake of His name among Turks. Nor has Jesus left us powerless in this endeavor. He has promised that “whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you” (John 16:23). Because Christ gave us this mission, our prayers become incredibly powerful as we earnestly seek to fulfill it. So, let us hold the course and pray with confidence in the Holy Spirit!

### **Pray**

- *That God will prompt you to continue learning about the Turks and praying for Turkey throughout the year.*
- *That FBCG may bear much fruit among the Turks through our faith-filled prayers and outreach ministries.*
- *For God’s Kingdom to come and His will to be done in Turkey as in Heaven.*



## *Learn About Turks and Islam*

### **Books and Videos in Our Church library**

- *Turkey: The Lost Land of the Bible* by Andrew Jackson
- *Praying Through Turkey* by Andrew Jackson
- *Dispelling the Darkness in Turkey* by Mary Serratt
- *The Cross and the Crescent* by Phil Parshall
- *Answering Islam* by Norman Geisler
- *Sharing the Gospel with Muslims* by Kraig Meyer
- *New Life for Muslims* by Don McCurry
- *Reaching Muslims in North America* by Roy Oksnevad
- *Islam and Terrorism* by Mark A. Gabriel
- *Behind the Sun* (Open Doors video)
- *Unreached People: The Turks* (Caleb Project Video)
- *Malatya: Story of the First Turkish Martyrs* (Video)

### **Websites – Christian sites are marked with \***

- [www.two-fot.org](http://www.two-fot.org) - Turkish World Outreach\*
- [www.itnet.org](http://www.itnet.org) - International Turkey Network\*
- [www.sevenchurches.org](http://www.sevenchurches.org) - Seven Churches Network\*
- [www.answering-islam.org](http://www.answering-islam.org) - Answering Islam\*
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey) – Wikipedia Article
- [www.goturkey.com](http://www.goturkey.com) - Gateway to Turkey Travel
- [www.turkeycentral.com](http://www.turkeycentral.com) - Turkey Forum
- [www.turkeytravelplanner.com](http://www.turkeytravelplanner.com) - Travel Planner
- [www.hurriyetdailynews.com](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com) - Daily News
- [www.about-turkey.com](http://www.about-turkey.com) - Learn About Turkey
- [www.turkishculture.org](http://www.turkishculture.org) - Turkish Culture





## ***FBCG's Global Vision***

*To be a community of faith that shines like a beacon of hope to the Turks of Turkey, doing whatever it takes to share God's love and build up His church among them.*

**For more information on FBCG's Global Outreach, call  
630/584-1429 or email [rjwest11@comcast.net](mailto:rjwest11@comcast.net)**



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