

Travel Journal
Compilation of emails sent

AMAA Medical Mission Trip
in Gyumri,
Vanadzor and
Sisian, Armenia

December 2 – December 18, 2025

by
Christine Momjian

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

Disclaimer: reflections shared on these emails are personal and do not reflect the full team of nine individuals coming from the U.S. to serve. These emails are a result of many who are praying for us and wanted to pray specifically.

One of my morning devotionals was on how Jesus could show us the Father, and do I reflect/show Jesus? I need to surrender so Jesus is seen in me.

On my way. Anthony, Uber driver, picks me up. It's pouring. He has Handel's music playing and he has a kind disposition. Thank you Lord.

His daughter is an Olympic athlete, has won gold. He only drives to/from PHL airport when he feels like it. He's an avid fisherman, in the ocean on a kayak! 🐟 Loves the nighttime fishing, with all the stars, and claims he has all the safety gear/tools he needs.

On the highway, we pass by a pick up truck that is carrying a deer on the rack. (The truck ends up at our terminal!) Anthony tells me he's stopped hunting deer, used to do all the butchering himself, too much work. A friend comes to his property to hunt deer.

I have a few flight delays out of PHL, but that's ok since I have enough time in Washington DC, Dulles airport. I walk around. Admire the art on display.

Land in Dulles. Such a short flight. We got off the plane outside, the plane did not come to the gate. We walked to the terminal. That's usually only in tropical areas.

Please excuse my many pictures of planes. I'm still fascinated by how this heavy metal object can fly. It also brings sweet childhood memories of the Beirut, Lebanon airport. A fun family outing we'd do often, go watch the planes take off and land.

Take a shuttle to my terminal. All the gates are packed. I walk for a while and find a quiet area that has an outlet. I charge my phone. Eat something I had packed. How did I forget to pack some dark chocolate? 😞 I'm quietly working on my counted cross stitch with the good light here.

There is a man perhaps 5 yards from me. He's on a call with ear buds, but you'd think he's dictating a novel! At one point he says "but enough about me, what questions do you have?" But keeps talking! I think he needs to hear Badveli Heather's message on attentive listening! I think he's trying to sign an athlete to be his agent. One comment caught my ear.

"What is your body weight? If I were you I'd never wear a shirt. God bless you. I didn't inherit such genes from my parents." 😊

Bruce has been in China on business this last week, and he's now on his way to the airport. Lord willing, we'll meet up in Frankfurt, Germany.

My eyes are tired. I'll be boarding for my flight to Frankfurt in about an hour. You may wonder why I have a picture of my bed. I hope it reminds you to pray for the team, that we are well rested and can serve well. 😊

Thank you for your prayers.



Christine

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

The B777-200 from Dulles is full except the middle seat next to me! The young woman sitting in my row aisle throws up while we are on the runway waiting for our turn to take off. Flight attendants scramble to clean the rug since she missed the bag. The cabin smells.

I watch two movies to pass the time. 05:29 ET / 11:29 local time, we land in Frankfurt.

We are again stopped behind the planes, and are driven by bus to the terminal. The buses take a while to arrive and the crew apologizes that we need to wait. (We waited over 20 min). It's odd to be driving in a bus where the planes are moving around. A bit of interesting traffic!

I have a long layover in Frankfurt, Bruce got a room for me at the airport Sheraton. I find a kiosk and obtain my boarding pass for my next flight since I'll need it for passport control coming back in.

By 13:00, I'm washed up and I'm in bed. So comfortable. I've set my alarm and I wake up feeling refreshed, before the alarm, 4 hours later. I make my way back to the airport. Bruce has landed into Frankfurt.

I make my way through what I need to (security, passport control, etc) and make my way towards our gate. Due to Bruce's UA travel, he has access (+guest) to the Senator Lounge. He's waiting for me outside. So good to see him.

We eat, have some tea, and get caught up. He's anxious to show me something. He directs me to a room that has beds! In the lounge! Not much convincing to get me to lay down for a bit. He covers me, and leaves since he slept a good six hours on his flight.

45 minutes later, he comes to get me. We walk towards our gate and boarding has started.

30 minutes after take-off, there's a medical emergency on the flight. 🙄 They announce that there's a Dr on board and the young lady will be fine. As soon as things are settled with the crew on that, they scramble again since there's another medical emergency! Lots of walking back and forth on the crew. People are very curious, announcements to please stay in your seat..... You get the visual.

See the picture of God's goodness over me. I had requested a low sodium meal and my dessert was unique on this flight. No one else had it!

Thank you for your prayers. We're the first from the team to arrive.

We land on time. Local time Thursday, 03:48.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Thursday, December 4, 2025

Anna Ohanyan, from the AMAA office, was waiting for us at the airport! What a sweet surprise to see her there along with the driver. We got a bit caught up and they took us to the guest rooms at the AMAA headquarters on Baghramyan St in Yerevan.

(Side note, please excuse my tense in my verbs if they're not consistent. I add a paragraph here and there as the day goes along.)

We get settled in our room, I take out the minimum needed for us, and by 06:00 local time we are in bed. It takes a while for me to sleep, so I plug my earbuds to my sleeping aid - Matthew 5-8 being read aloud. I love listening to that section of the Bible as I try to sleep since it's basically Jesus talking. This morning, as I was laying in bed, I had the visual that Jesus was sitting on the bed by my head, speaking those words to me and His gentle hand was on my head. The way my մայր (mother) used to say goodnight to me when I needed it. She would move her hand from my forehead to the back of my head. So comforting. Jesus is the comforter. I pray that we each experience that to its fullness. As Badveli (Heather) recently shared in one of her Galatians sermons, that Jesus has all of the fruit of the Spirit in fullness/perfection, one of those being 'gentle'. His hand on my head was so solid and strong, but so gentle. I'm getting teary eyed as I type this, Jesus' personhood is so beautiful.

We wake up, feeling refreshed, (thank you for prayers for that), take our showers and find out that the cafeteria that's available for the AMAA staff is waiting to feed us as well. We were not expecting this until Sunday morning with the full team.

There's been more construction, and the guest rooms now connect to the security desk and the AMAA offices. We make our way out around 14:00.

We meet the security officer - Arshag - and he's very happy to meet us and we end up talking for close to 40 min (Bruce mentions). Basically he shares about his life, he's a believer, he's been in Armenia for 3.5 years with his wife and two adult children. His son served in the military. He was born in Aleppo, Syria, has lived in Lebanon, Saudi, Iran, Qatar, Istanbul and now here. I'm unsure the exact reason, but he shares some personal concerns. (Some of my children may find that last sentence interesting. 😊)

We then make our way to the AMAA cafeteria, which is more fully walkable internally, and find out that they had breakfast for us at 09:00. I apologize, explaining how we arrived this morning. Again, my understanding was that we would not be fed until Sunday morning when the full team arrived.

The woman in charge of the cafeteria is Gyulnara (Կոլլնարա) (see picture with her). A woman of strong faith. I've met her from previous stays and she remembers me by name 😊 and heats up some food for us. Towards the end of our meal, she sits with us and shares. She refers to me as Christine-jahn and it's so endearing. Another opportunity of sharing. She mentions a difficult time when her son was in the war a few years ago, and she had no word of his status. I love how the Lord puts the people in our path that need encouragement.

We then head upstairs to say hello to Anahit Simonyan. (I've written about her in previous visits concerning the AMAA camp in Hankavan, Camp Shoghig.)

Side note: if you would like to sponsor a child to be able to attend camp for a week during the summer, please see:

<https://amaa.org/summer-camps-in-armenia-artsakh/>

Anahit uses the talents and giftings that God created her with, for His glory. It's a joy to see her, give her a hug, and give her the baby gifts we brought for her first child who is due in May. Bruce and I are very happy for her and her husband Narek.

We have a few minutes with Aren Deyirmenjian, AMAA rep of Armenia, before he needs to leave for a meeting. We'll have more time with him tomorrow.

Dr. Gor, who is the AMAA medical person in Armenia, hears us and walks over and we get a chance to talk to him as well.

We then head back to our room and rest a bit. Bruce is speaking tonight at a Postgres users group in Yerevan, giving his talk "Databases in the AI Trenches". We decide to walk there since the Yandex (think of Uber) shows the same time (due to traffic) as walking. We noticed last December the increase of cars in Yerevan. Traffic is a real thing here, especially at certain times of the day.

While Bruce was in China, one of the companies there gifted him over a pound of crystallized sugar covered fruit candy. (See pic). We decide to bring it to the users meeting.

We bundle up, but at our brisk pace, we don't feel the cold. There are some challenges to get to the correct building, due to fencing. The meetup is happening at the Microsoft building in Armenia, which is near the PTI (poly-tech institute). We pass by Cascade and the main Grand Candy store by the Matenadaran.

<https://visityerevan.am/places/details/51/en/>

<https://matenadaran.am/>

It's well attended. We end up being in the elevator with the pizza delivery guy for the meetup! Before the talk starts, Bruce is already surrounded by a large circle of people who want to talk to him. Lots of real good questions from the attendees.

There are random ends to paths, streets with a gate or walls. So you have to turn around. See pics.

We leave around 21:30, and have to enter the AMAA facility through the back street, by being buzzed in. Arshag is still on duty, he works 24 hours then off 24 hours, then works again etc. He is excited to see us and walks us to our room. We talk for over an hour! Lots of adventures in his life. He shares more about his testimony and the challenges he and his daily life have had. It's very easy to understand him since he was born and raised in

Aleppo. I asked him this morning if he works for the AMAA, he said I wish. The AMAA has a great reputation here.

It's 23:00. We'll get ready for bed.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Friday, December 5, 2025

Today is Bruce's birthday! He's such a blessing to me.

I've been awake for a bit, and I hear Chris' voice. I look at the time, it's 04:50. The security guard, sounds like Arshad's voice, is walking him through the hallway to Chris' room, next to us. They talk for a bit and then it's quiet.

I have trouble falling back asleep, so I put my earbuds in to listen to Matthew 5-9. Matthew 9:1-8, there's a fragment as if Jesus is talking directly to me. "Rise and walk" He says to the paralytic (well, He doesn't really say that, but He asks if it would be better if He says that. Maybe you can check that passage.) I ask Jesus, where am I a paralytic and you're calling me to "rise and walk" through the power of the Holy Spirit? I will pray over this.

Chris sends a message to our (Bruce, Christine, Chris) chat group around 06:15. We talk for a bit. The last time I'm aware of the time, it is 07:00.

We get up, have our tea. Bruce has some loose items he has to take care of. We greet Arshad at the security area as he's getting off work and we head to breakfast at the AMAA cafeteria with Chris at 10:00. Levon from Armenia, who's a dentist and has served on the medical mission team for years joins us. His dad just had surgery and is in recovery. It's good to brainstorm together about the medical mission.

The air quality level is not good today. We noticed this last December as well, but not in the summer.

Plans can change at the last minute in Armenia. 😊

Last minute, Gor drives Bruce and me to the AMAA Aynilian Clinic in Yerevan. We've never been. This clinic runs year round, and we get a tour. I know the founders, Mr & Mrs Nerses Aynilian, and their children and grandchildren who continue to serve in their churches and the AMAA. What a legacy. We see some of the Armenia staff who serves with us, Gayane and Shooshan (pharmacy). We see brochures talking about the medical mission (see pic). I also meet Viktor Karapetyan, who was the AMAA representative in Artsakh. He still works for the AMAA. I've seen him through AMAA's pray+act and at AMAA general meetings. We talk for a bit.

Today is also Aren's birthday. We all gather in the AMAA lobby to wish him a happy birthday and have some cake.

Afterwards, Chris, Bruce and I meet with Aren and Narek for about an hour.

Bruce has some work related items to take care of, so Chris and I walk towards the restaurant Antep. I love their manti. Chris and I also want to look at the store next to it, Sharan,
<https://share.google/cr8kQXl014RWqDwDI>

where there's crocheted clothing items, mostly for children that IMO, are works of art. Chris wants to get a few pieces for his grandchildren. I also buy a gift.

We then enjoy a delicious dinner, and Bruce meets us at the restaurant as we're done.

From there we take Yandex (think Uber) to the figure skating school where my cousin's daughter Paleny has been taking classes. She's competed at international levels. It's the school's 10th anniversary today and there's a performance. As we're walking in they're playing happy birthday, and we pretend that it's for Bruce and sing to him.

The show was about two hours long. Well done. The senior skaters had solo pieces. They had also invited a local dance troupe, some gymnasts (for the ribbon climbs) and synchronized drumming which we all but Bruce loved. Paleny is circled in black in the group skate.

There's a music score they've used in between the pieces and I got a recording. Bruce and I had some fun with that.

We then took a Yandex back. Chris will go to the airport with the AMAA driver at 23:30 to pick up our next team member, Lucy, who's done this mission many times.

Thank you for your prayers!

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Saturday, December 6, 2025

I fell asleep a bit after midnight. I wake up a few times, and it takes me time to fall back asleep.

01:25, I hear Chris and Lucy in the hallway walking and talking.

02:30, why am I up so quickly?

05:00, I check my messages and there's a picture from my son Matthew and daughter-in-law Laura, they're buckled in their seats for their flight to Armenia! Can't fall back asleep. Somewhere around 07:00, I choose to listen to the gospel of John. My last memory is of John 19.... Somewhere after 08:30 I fall back asleep. We're purposely not setting alarms these few days. We need to be strong for the mission. I wake up and it's 10:20! There's a message from Chris that we're missing a great breakfast, which was at 10:00. 😞

I quickly take my shower and get ready.

10:30 local time, we get a message from Matthew & Laura that they've landed in Brussels.

Breakfast is homemade man-eh-ish (thin bread with spices/olive oil), and some other thin breads with cheese and i-rish-gid (cured meat with spices). So tasty. Of course other things, like olives, cheese, jam, beads...

After breakfast, Chris and Lucy walk around and then they have an appointment with someone they know. We will visit family.

13:00 we reserve a Yandex to go to the SAS food court near Kegham Keri (uncle, my mom's brother) and his wife Dalo auntie. All our Yandex's so far have been BYD (Build Your Dreams) Chinese electric cars. Very nice and comfortable on the inside. I don't know about lifespan. Bruce has been requesting the equivalent of "Uber black", maybe that's why we're getting BYD cars. We didn't see these in July. I later found out it's in the last two months.

My cousin Vartan has just returned from a trip himself and he greets us as well for a few minutes before he leaves for Paleny's choir concert. We have a 3 hour visit with Kegham Keri and his wife Dalo auntie. Bruce gets his favorite, khatchapoori (see pic). Dalo auntie suggests lehmejune with cheese, which sounds odd but it's delicious. They cut a lehmejune in half, folded it onto itself and added some Syrian white cheese. Heat the lehmejune, so the cheese is melted. There's a bakery there and there's bread with seeds and nuts that I love. We get that as well. Check out my concoction of mixed fresh squeezed orange juice with pomegranate juice. So yummy and refreshing.

My Keri looks well, I don't see a decline in his health since the summer, praise God.

We tried video calling auntie a few times, but she didn't answer. While we know it's early in the morning, we're concerned why she's not picking up.

We saw from the windows that it's raining outside.

At 15:50, Matthew sends a message that they've boarded their plane in Brussels, Lexi from the team is on that flight with them.

At 16:40, we're in a Yandex back to AMAA. It's about a 30 min ride. All the Yandex's reek of cigarettes. 😞 Air quality is bad again today.

The AMAA and ECA (Evangelical Church of Armenia) share the previous U.S. Embassy building. There's also a church which holds services in the auditorium of the embassy. It's known as the Baghramyan Church (after the name of the street it's on).

I have this for the ECA

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Evangelical_Church

To my brothers who are pastors, is the above link the best explanation in English? Seems light.

We have tickets for "The Nutcracker" performed by the Yerevan Ballet at the Opera House. It amazes me that you can get seven great seats one day before the event! Our seats were in row 11 on the floor, and at a really good price. Chris and Lucy meet us there, as well as Vartan, Sevan & Paleny.

Mom (my mother-in-law) started a tradition for us in 1997. Almost every year, my in-laws gifted us tickets for the Pennsylvania Ballet's production of "The Nutcracker". We have always gone as a family. Harder to find a date and availability with our children being adults, but the last time we went was last year! It's a tradition we look forward to.

In Philadelphia, it's George Balanchine's choreography and I was curious what they'd do here. The choreography was SO different, it was a bit jarring. The skill and technique was the same, maybe a bit better? but the costumes don't compare.

As far as differences. If this doesn't interest you, just jump ahead. I think my children will find it very interesting.

- *The first character is the uncle, not the children. The uncle is the narrator throughout the show.

- *The children are all shorter adults or older teens.

- *There's more men in this production.

- *The Nutcracker, instead of being a doll in act one was a person who was amazing as a puppet.

- *The king mouse is introduced very early in act one.

- *The mice fight scene is not as engaging.

- *Since there's no children who open the show, there's no scene of them telling the story to the fairy in act two. No walnut boat taking them away at the end.

- *Instead of a large boys choir singing, it was six women.

- *The orchestra was very good.

- *The coffee dance is one woman with two men.

- *The tea dance is two men.

- *No candy cane dance.

- *No woman with many children under her dress.

- *This production does a better job at the end in communicating that it's a dream.

- *I didn't think I'd remember this many, but I'm sure it's not a full list.

It was very enjoyable. This was a surprise for Paleny, it was her first ballet viewing and she loved it, her parents as well. I enjoyed seeing the smile on her face the few times I looked over.

From there we walked to Sorisso gelato on North Ave. We always go there for gelato in the summer. Half of us got hot chocolate, the other half got ginger lemon honey tea. The tea was delicious and the hot chocolate tasted like melted dark chocolate. Both were so good.

Got a message that Matthew & Laura, and Lexi had landed, so we got up to leave to meet them at the AMAA. Matthew said they were hungry. Vartan and I walked very quickly; Bruce, Sevan & Paleny were behind us at a slower pace. But they ended up catching up while we waited at traffic lights! Had some laughs about that. We were walking so fast, I was breathing quickly.

More and more Christmas lights and decorations each day.

We arrived and M&L were at their room door with Arshad talking to them.

Bruce and I headed to our room, while Vartan, Sevan, Paleny, M&L went out to eat. It's a Syrian Armenian restaurant. Matthew says, wow, the mouhammara here is so good.

I packed as much as possible.

Only Dr Al left to arrive from the U.S. He lands around 04:00 Sunday. Mission starts tomorrow.

Thank you for your continued prayers.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Sunday, December 7, 2025

A similar night for me.

We meet for breakfast at 09:30. It is raining today, so I'm thankful for the internal passageways. Dr Al arrived early this morning, it's wonderful to see him. He and his wife Sue started this mission 17 years ago.

The menu for breakfast, aside from the typical sides of olives, cheese, jams, is ful; which is a typical Arabic breakfast dish made with fava beans. It's prepared a bit differently this morning, there's the beans, olive oil and hammos. They've put it in individual bowls. It's not very garlicky. They've also made falafel. Both high in protein. Good way to start the day.

We then attend the worship service at the Baghramyan Church. My uncle and his family attend there. They have translation units, and a few church members take turns translating. My cousin Vartan is on that team.

Badveli (Pastor/Rev) Avetik Khachatryan is the pastor at this church. He's also the minister to the ECA. I've met him before a few times. He asks Chris to say a few words during the service, and for me to translate.

His sermon is from Matthew 6:25-34. 😊 Very good reminders. One of my go to verses for reminding me on where to focus is Matthew 6:33.

Anahit has come here to see us this morning. Lovely to see her again.

After the service we say our goodbyes for now to our family.

We have chicken kebab at the AMAA cafeteria and by 14:00 we are on a bus to Gyumri. Aren and Narek had come as well and Al, Chris, Aren and I have a chance to get caught up.

We are a total of 19, nine are from the U.S. You'll see a picture of the eight of us in the sanctuary. Karina is en route now. She's a post graduate student from CA and she rearranged her finals, took them early to join. She'll land early Monday morning and be driven to Gyumri.

Our bus driver's name is Grigor. The ride is about 90 minutes but it takes us 2 hours due to the weather.

Visibility is bad. One hour into the ride, it's so foggy, we're on a two lane highway, you can only see up to three white dashed lines ahead of you. Gyumri's elevation is 5,090', Yerevan is 3-4k' above sea level.

It's raining. We arrive and do a tour of the layout and figure out where to put what, and we get the stations set up. Fortunately, everyone who's here has served in Gyumri before. There's three changes from previous times, so we need to figure out the details.

1. We're seeing mostly returning patients. 240 planned for the two days in Gyumri, with 78 of those being new patients. Only new patients get urine tested.

2. The government has given us blood tests to check for:

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis C

HIV

syphilis

Bruce is doing labs. These four tests add a lot of time to our existing blood tests of:

A1C

glucose

hemoglobin

We have lots of conversations discussing the process, everything from the amount of time it will take, ethical, privacy, how to explain to the patient these tests, and then some. We decide on giving a paper to the patient to read explaining the new tests and that there's treatment if needed, and giving them a choice while getting their consent.

3. Patients' previous records have been digitized. The Drs need to pull up their chart digitally. Fortunately, records have been entered in English.

We have a delicious dinner prepared by some of the ladies of the church. And then head to our bus for the quick drive to our hotel.

Here's our team layout:

Dr Al (gynecological issues) + Dr Anna, she's serving as translator and is also a cardiologist, will see patients as needed

Dr Matthew + Ani as translator

Dr Chris + Saro as translator

Dr Laura, from Armenia

Bruce, lab

Karina - EKG and urine for new patients

Lucy (nurse) - education

Laura (nurse) & Lucy (translator) - vitals + triage

Lexi (nurse) & Lilit (translator) - vitals + triage

Christine - managing the flow & crowd control

Siroon - crowd control upstairs

We were thinking of going to get bonchig once we returned to the hotel, but it's raining, and all of a sudden I'm really tired. We get settled and call it an earlier night.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Monday, December 8, 2025

After three hours of sleep, I'm up. But it's the middle of the night. 🥱

I spend some time reviewing the devotional I'm going to share with the team this morning.

At 02:30, I try to fall back asleep. It takes time. I'm back to the gospel of John.

In Yerevan, in our room, I had left the 6 plastic bottles we used and it was horrifying enough for Bruce. We try to use the large water coolers as much as possible, and fill the two containers we brought. There's is so much plastic bottle usage here. 😞

We meet for breakfast at 08:00. And by 08:30 we are on the bus to the church.

We have our team's devotionals. I'm choosing to share things that have to do with advent. I shared about Mary. The state of the world at the time the angel came to give her the news. His first words to her were "Do not be afraid". And in the midst of our lives, Jesus is trustworthy and He calls us to "not be afraid". He wants to enter every part of our heart, if we just surrender it to Him.

At 09:00, we have our church service and Lucy shares her testimony. It's a beautiful message. And Badveli Aram Babajanyan gives a beautiful message as well that I thought tied to what I talked about. I love how God orchestrates that.

At 09:30, we were at our stations. Laura & Lucy took care of urine and EKG until Karina arrived. The US Lucy filled in as a triage nurse. We served 28 patients in the first morning shift. The flow was good.

The second church service was at 11:00. We were unable to join that one since we were still seeing patients. Lunch was at 13:00, but we still had patients. We decided to pause the Drs and send them to lunch. Triage finished at 13:20, and then went to lunch. During lunch we had the chance to do some minor tweaks to get things smoother.

The third church service was at 13:30, with patients at 14:00. In total we treated 124 patients today.

Various random comments/observations about the day:

We always start with a church service and in sharing the gospel. Not all the patients are church attendees.

Karina, our last U.S. team member, arrived late morning. It was such a joy to see her and hug her! She was eager and ready to serve. She served on urine and EKG which allowed Laura to do triage.

As people come in, I greet them, try to use their names. We have the handout about the four additional blood tests. I staple that handout to their patient sheet telling them about

the availability of these tests, and to please read the sheet as they wait their turn, and to sign with their consent or non-consent.

40/124 gave their consent. All were negative. We were very happy with the high percentage of participants.

It's important to keep people in their order as they're waiting.

I don't really find out much about the patients. Just small conversations and I try to be smiling. I am firm about no phone calls while they're waiting since it is disruptive.

We were able to have dinner at 17:30!

After dinner, we head back to the hotel and then 13 of us meet at 19:00 to walk to Independence Square to get some bonchig. (see pic). It's very tasty.

Afterwards, Matthew & Laura, Bruce and I walk around some more. We walk by St. All Savors Church, notice many wreaths placed in commemoration of the earthquake 37 years ago and the rebuilding of the church. There's also a fountain area which is closed now, and another monument that almost looks like a bell tower. There's many ornate khatchkars. ❤️

We also enter the Hotel Alexandropol which is very decorative.

<https://share.google/MgecggcZOhd2WVmkL>

We walk around a bit more and then head back to the hotel. Early morning tomorrow and we have to be packed to check out. And I want to write to you!

Thank you for your continued prayers. I've mentioned to the team that you're praying and it means so much to us.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

I forgot to mention three things yesterday:

Having the repeat patients' medical information digitally is working well.

Matthew told me that one of his patients had been seen last year and was diagnosed as having osteoporosis. She was given medication and is now diagnosed as having osteopenia! I can relate to that. These are the types of stories we like to hear. 😊

Bruce expressed relief on the concerns he had about the new blood tests. If a person consents, we need 4 drops of blood and it's a 10 minute wait. He was concerned about the backlog and how that would affect the three other tests we normally do. Fortunately, the lab team had 40 who gave consent on Monday, and it worked out.

I wake up around 03:30 and review the devotional for today. I try to get back to sleep around 05:00.

We need to be packed and out by breakfast time at 07:45.

At breakfast, I ask Al if he had any interesting cases, since I don't get to hear about it where I am. He shares about a church member who's been vomiting daily for about a year. He and Anna brainstormed and figured out that it's been since her pregnancy and it's not GI related and could be treated very easily. I remember her talking about this over the summer, and that she had had many tests.

We check out of the hotel and are on our way to church.

For our team devotional, I share about Joseph this morning, and how he was obedient from the moment of the first angel visit. How that obedience led to some suffering and how Christ was obedient and suffered. Sometimes even when we're doing the Lord's will there will be challenges/suffering.

Al gives his testimony during the 09:00 worship service. He speaks on the passage from Revelation to the church in Laodicea, Revelation 3:14-16. It was very powerful. My eyes fill with tears since that verse had convicted me years ago and I've prayed that off and on for myself, Bruce, and my children.

We start at 09:30. We have several patients this morning back to back with systolic BP over 200.

Patient number 180 is our last number during the morning two shifts.

The flow has been good. We are able to have lunch on time.

Karina is between urine on the first floor to EKG as needed on the 2nd floor. Only our new patients need a urine test unless the Dr. requests one, or A10 strip, since the repeat patients had their urine tested in July.

Last patient is number 250, so we took care of 126 patients today.

Bruce said it felt busier today. We found out that the lab team had 70 patients who had given their consent. This is for the special four tests. Among the 70 tested, we did have one positive for HIV, a woman in her 40s, and another positive for syphilis. This news was difficult and discouraging for Bruce.

One mother and daughter combo, mom is 79, daughter is 60 with mental disability. Daughter's BP was 240/x. Daughter is often angry. Lucy was so gentle with the mom. Difficult situation.

We had more male patients today. Most of them smoke.

One 31 year old man was in a knife fight 4 years ago with a big wound in his right inside upper arm that needed many stitches. Since then he has chronic nerve pain in his thumb, index finger, and middle finger. He was seen by Matthew. There was not much they could do for the numbness & pain. We think his nerves were cut during the knife wound.

One of Chris' younger patients was diagnosed with thyroid cancer by Chris last December. She needed surgery and her thyroid was removed. She came back and had another ultrasound and all looks good.

We are done at 16:30. We start tearing down the stations as they finish. Packing things.

After our team pictures, we eat our dinner at 17:30. The Gyumri team is very strong, and this is my third time here (winter 2024, summer 2025, winter 2025). I've grown fond of the two pastors and their families, and the AMAA staff.

Truck was supposed to come at 18:30 for us to load. We need to load all the boxes from the pharmacy and all the other boxes/bins containing supplies. We've been ready, and it doesn't arrive until 18:55. In 10 min, with everyone working, we load everything using the ant method!

Last goodbyes, and we're on the bus. It's a bit over a one hour drive to Vanadzor. We will need to set up the clinic tonight.

On our drive, it starts to rain. We arrive at the Armenian Evangelical Church in Vanadzor. We recognize so many of the helpers from the past. We do a quick tour to decide which

station is where. We realize we need another translator, Laura's translator Lucy lives in Gyumri and is a student. We contact a local translator from the previous times, and she agrees. Praise God. If not, we would not have enough for triage.

We will need a helper for Bruce.

After we're done setting up, they've set up a table of fruit and desserts with coffee and tea for us. We get a quick bite and then on the bus to the hotel. We're at Laguna Hotel. It's 21:45.

It takes some time at the front desk to get everyone their keys for their room.

Matthew & Laura have a large space that they say feels like an apartment in a separate building on the property.

Time for showers, unpack the things we need. This is our fourth hotel in one week.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

The two days we woke up and got out of bed in Gyumri, as I opened the curtains, it was still dark outside. Same here. We get out of the church at the end of clinics, it's dark.

I wake up around 03:00. I work on today's devotional a bit more.

After breakfast, we leave for church. We have our devotional. I share about the inn keeper. The little we know of him.

Ani shares her testimony today at the worship service. It's straight from the heart and the Lord is glorified.

Pastor Vartan of this church, talks about "do not fear". Psalm 56:3 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

He said, notice the Psalm says when I am afraid, not if I am afraid. And this is David writing this.

We see up to patient number 63 for the morning session.

Have a chance to talk with Badveli Aram who's recently relocated to Dilijan. Sometimes when the Drs are ahead, and we have patients who have not been triaged, they request to have patients sent up. As I send up a patient, they get confused as to why they're bypassing triage, as if they're missing out on something.

A nurse mentioned that she was happy to see a young man who had been advised by us to stop smoking, and he has for two years now. 😊

Another going patient who had issues with high BP and diabetes has been well since he's been good about taking his meds.

We see 124 patients today!

Triage is done around 17:00.

51 patients got tested for the special tests in the lab, all were negative.

After dinner, a few of us are invited to Drs Levon & Inessa's home for dessert. They're both dentists. Levon went through programs through the ECA and AMAA and he and his wife serve faithfully as dentists for the children. We are at his parents' home. He's originally from Vanadzor and comes here to see patients on Saturday & Sunday and their clinic is in Yerevan during the week.

We meet his parents. His father is looking great after his surgery. They have set a bountiful table of sweets and fruits. The fellowship is lovely.

When we return to the hotel around 21:30, I'm so sleepy that I need to sleep. That's why you're getting this late.

Thank you for your faithful prayers. Please continue to pray for us.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Thursday, December 11, 2025

When I woke up at 05:30, I had slept 7.5 hours!!! So grateful. I stayed in bed, resting, for a bit longer. I review what I'm going to share during our team devotional.

We need to be packed this morning before we head to breakfast.

There is so much frost on the front windshield of the bus that we're all confused how he can see through it.

Our count, on how many should be on the bus, changes each time! I'm just going by faces now. 🙄

The passage for our devotional was Luke 2:8-18. The shepherds went with haste to see what the angels said, and they shared the news with others. We have this great news, let's share it with others.

It was wonderful to see Badveli Khatchig from the Tumanyan church; he gave the message at the 09:00 service. I love how Badveli's message ties into our morning devotion.

I had asked Karina if she would share her testimony this morning and she had agreed. She talked about how her youth pastor, Matt Silverman, had such an impact on her life. One of her examples was at a youth group meeting, years ago, when someone asked Matt "what is faith?" Matt's answer has stayed with her to this day, and she has recalled it many times for encouragement. Her testimony brought tears to my eyes! Nancy and Badveli Calvin, you would have been crying alongside me, I believe.

Matt died at a young age in June, 2024. His strong faith and testimony continues to impact others, and glorify Jesus. I still hear about the fruit from his ministry. He certainly lived a life focused on the kingdom of God.

Here's his obituary, if you're interested:

<https://www.duggans-serra.com/obituaries/Matthew-John-Silverman?obId=31810860>

Here's his funeral service, almost two hours long:

<https://youtu.be/PnnS2xdGjqY?si=zxroQXvpQkiAPlyQ>

We start seeing patients a bit after 09:30. The patients have a full 8.5x11 sheet explaining the four new tests we can test for, and there's the option for them to sign their name either under "I consent" or "I don't consent". This takes time to read, so we can't start

with them right after they've registered. They read, then need to sign. Oftentimes they talk to each other as to what to sign. Even if I send them to the Dr without triage, and they've requested the test, there's a wait of at least 12 minutes in the lab. Again, this is a new thing requested by the government. It's good they're on top of it, and if a person is ill, there's medication. It just adds time.

Almost all the patients refer to Bruce as Dr. 😊

There's a mother with a baby. The baby falls asleep, and I ask if we can put her down somewhere so the mom can go through the clinic. As soon as the baby is asleep, I move the mom up. We find out the baby is one year old. She's very small for that age. I ask the woman who runs the AMAA if the mom qualifies for the AMAA children's milk fund.

<https://amaa.am/en/programs/social/milk-fund/>

I find out that the baby is a twin. Both babies were in the milk fund program for up to a year, which is the length, and the family's other children are sponsored children through the AMAA.

Baby wakes up, and mom is not done. I hold her, Laura holds her, a church member holds her. The baby has 5 layers on! I feel hot just looking at her.

There's a bus load from Stepanavan. We've met the Badveli from that church as well. Triage can go to lunch at 13:15, the schedule was for 13:00-14:00.

Patients start again at 14:00. I get the chance to be a translator for a few patients for Lexi since her translator goes through the clinic.

At times the crowd control is challenging since there are many young children who have come for dental education and fluoride varnish. They are running in the lobby area, or with their mom/grandmother.

Aren and Narek from the AMAA office arrive, and I ask them if they'd serve as translators with triage. I ask Aren to serve with Laura and Narek with Lexi.

We have a patient, an older man, with two prosthetic legs from the knee down. He had great difficulty entering the church, the walk in. I sit him down next to the door. The woman in charge of the AMAA program here, asks if we could ask the Dr to come down to evaluate, since going up the stairs would be almost impossible. I ask Lexi to take his vitals and history, then send a message to Chris. He comes down to assess.

The prosthetics are because he's a diabetic. 😞

Aren and Narek are thankful for the experience and Aren says he has a deeper appreciation/understanding.

Over the two days, the lab tested 119 for the four special tests. Today, one woman tested + for syphilis. She is an older patient and she did not take the news well. A few of the Drs need to talk to her to help her process. She was very upset.

At 17:00, we've seen our last patient. We've seen 253 patients over the last two days! We pack up triage.

The urine station has to stay open since a Dr may request a 10 stick. Karina passes some of the time by practicing on the piano. She starts with Mozart's "Turkish March". 🎵🎵

Badveli Krikor from Gyumri arrives to pick up his daughter Siroon, who's been serving as translator. I've enjoyed getting to know him, being in Gyumri 3x in one year and I share a prayer request with him.

We start our dinner at 18:15, and by 19:00 are on our bus back towards Yerevan.

On the bus:

I ask Anna, a cardiologist, who was paired up with Al, of any cases that she'd like to share about, from today: (she dictates)

"As a young woman, this (being paired up with a gynecologist) was very educational and interesting since I'm a cardiologist. Teaches me to focus on gynecological health since it affects the heart.

A patient has chronic aFib, palpitations, prescribed diuretic, other meds. To give her the best list of medicines. We pray for our patients, she's the only patient who prayed for us. She has no finances to get help before. This was her first time to visit a Dr in years. Had not been to a Dr since she's been in aFib.

Lots of patients have back pain. We're not a culture to exercise, especially the older patients. Their mindset is one of surviving. Some people use food as a comfort mechanism. Which adds weight and can lead to back pain.

A woman with breast cancer, her children buy her chemo, 400,000 dram/month now. It's good she has such support.

We saw 3 women under 35, no English, but very self aware, work hard. This was very encouraging to me.

Pattern in Vanadzor, low hemoglobin. They seem a bit hopeless.

From Stepanavan, we had repeat patients. More people talking about God."

I ask Laura, "Why do you come back?" (This is her 6th time). She says, "I feel called to." 🤗

At 19:50, we stop on a highway, since the truck in front of us is backing up. A truck a few cars ahead of us is on fire. It's carrying petrol and there's fear it could explode. We make a u-turn. But this is the only way to get from Vanadzor - Yerevan. We are at a standstill.



21:05, we're moving forward. Yay.

This long bus ride = long entry. Going on my battery pack now for power.

I love to hug. One observation, I noticed this on the second day. In the US, when I reach to hug someone, it always seems to default to me reaching to the person's right side, my left. Here it's the opposite.

We arrive at 22:40, the AMAA office and guest rooms. Narek is there to help us unload. We're back in our same rooms. It's just as we left it, since we were encouraged to keep our key. It almost feels like we're back home.

It's too late for Bruce and me to go out. M&L may be going out.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Friday, December 12, 2025

I wake up on my own before the alarm around 07:30!! Thank you for your prayers for solid sleep.

I appreciate the words of encouragement that I receive from my emails to you. I share them with the team when appropriate.

As I shared about the one needy patient who prayed for the Drs, one of you responded with the Biblical story when Jesus heals the 10 lepers and only one returns to thank Him. That convicted me, how often do I thank God for His continued blessings? Which leper am I?

Breakfast is at 09:00 in the AMAA cafeteria. The younger people from our group join us around 10:00. I tell Al about the leper story, which he knows. I tell him that someone replied to me with that reminder, and he's appreciative of the reminder. He also mentions how he recalls that patient vividly. How her prayer made such an impact on him and how that encouraged him.

Al and Chris, along with Gor and Aren, will be meeting with the assistant to the minister of public health this morning at 11:00, then they will drive to Vardenis to see if that is a possible site for future mission trips.

Some great discussions at breakfast. We get to know each other better. We brainstorm about this new set of tests, and other health issues in Armenia. It was very good to have this time together.

Karina hears some great news from back home. We're all very happy for her.

Through Harout of the AMAA back in North America, Matthew is able to shadow at a surgical hospital today. This was a last minute thought on Matthew's part on Wednesday night. Thank you Harout for making it happen. Matthew is very excited.

Around 11:45, Laura, Karina, Bruce and I venture out.

Delicious hot chocolate at Sorriso on Northern Ave. We toast Karina's news.

Walk the full length of the shops under Northern Ave towards Republic Square.

We then are on street level, I see a store selling fresh squeezed orange and pomegranate juice. We got one. So delicious.

Republic Square is all decorated for Christmas.

National Gallery of Armenia. We start on the 5th floor heading down since that's where the Armenian art is. So much beautiful artwork. I stop taking pictures of the ones I like, since there would be so many I would want to photograph.

We then walk to Gum, the covered farmers market. Matthew has never been, and he wants some soojook, so we go to the man Dalo auntie likes. We buy a few things. Walk around.

It's raining lightly.

We then go to the mall near Gum to stop at a shop for a dear friend. She's requested an item.

Matthew, Laura, and Karina have not experienced the subway. We head back to the AMAA offices via subway. It's so fast. The escalators are very steep and fast.

Quick walk from the subway stop. The AMAA cafeteria is open since the church's young adults meet on Friday nights. Good number of young adults.

We drop off our bags, have 30 min of rest and then head out again.

We walk to the restaurant. We are having dinner with family tonight to celebrate Kegham Keri's birthday which is in January. It's a memorable number. 🥰 We meet them at Abu Hagop. Kegham Keri and Dalo auntie had left their home at 17:00 by bus and they still had not arrived! That much traffic!

We have a fabulous evening. I order one of my favorites, madzoonov kofteh. Oh, it's so tasty. Vartan orders for all of us to share family style, and of course we get some chikofte. With extra Haleb-ee beeber.

They play special music through the sound system and we wish Keri a happy birthday. He's very surprised.

Vartan had parked his car by AMAA, so we all walked back. Long hugs.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Saturday, December 13, 2025

Thank you for your continued prayer support.

Al is from CA, and he has not enjoyed the cold and the lack of sun. But today, the sun is out and it looks like he's "warming up" to the cold. 😊

I text Nanor Balabanian this morning, hoping to see her. She started Hidden Road Initiative several years ago:

<https://www.hiddenroadinitiative.org/>

They have a full program today. I will see if I can see her between her full day and our scheduled events.

We have our breakfast at the AMAA cafeteria scheduled for 10:00. Very fancy today, plated hollandaise eggs with ham, sausage and guacamole.

During breakfast, we ask Chris about their day yesterday, the visit to Vardenis and the visit with the assistant to the health minister.

During the visit, they learn the news on what Vartan was sharing last night at dinner, that by January 1, those who are over 65 can get free scripts. This is a three year plan that will start with those over 65, and eventually cover each citizen. Vartan was saying some things may take time. We're unsure how this will affect the work of our medical mission.

As far as Vardenis, the church is very small. The community is very needy. Unsure how each of the stations would fit in the small church. The bathroom is outside of the church building. The nearest hotel we could stay at is 20 minutes away. Please keep this in your prayers as there is great need.

Bruce stays behind to do some work. The rest of us walk to Vernissage, which is about a 30 minute walk. As we're walking, we break up. Our group consists of Matthew & Laura, Karina and myself. Laura is looking for a few particular things. Karina is looking for two particular things. I'm looking for beakers that are meant for labs and I use them in the kitchen. I got two, two years ago, and they're super helpful. Straight up, no curvature at the top, so it's easy to wash.

Vartan joins us shortly since he's brought Paleny to the music school next to the opera house. She has a total of four hours of music classes on Saturdays!

Vartan helps us. M&L find all their items. I find the item for Karina, and Vartan helps with the purchase. I can't find the beakers, which would be in the antique section of Vernissage. There's so much crystal and china.

It's time for me to walk to the Moscow Cinema, for the HRI program. It's also time for Vartan to leave, so we walk together. I arrive at 13:50. Nanor directs me to the theater on

the second floor. I give her a hug outside of the entrance to the movie theatre since she says go in and grab a seat.

I sit and there's about 10 min left to the movie, an Armenian movie called *Մալինկա*. It's about a group of thieves preparing to rob a shopping mall on New Year's Eve encountering an unexpected obstacle: 11-year-old Aram, who accidentally gets left inside.

After the movie, Nanor leads the children into singing jingle bells, then Santa Claus, Nanor calls him Father Frost (*Յմեր Պապիկ*) arrives. After a few minutes they introduce the main child actor, and he sings a song. The producer of the movie also arrives.

Matthew sends us a message that they're on the move. Our next stop will be for hot chocolate. We will meet them at Cascade Chokolateria, near the Cascades, for hot chocolate. M&L had gone there last December and really loved the hot chocolate.

It's the five of us, the four of us + Karina. It's good, but the only drawback is that it's in a very small cup. The dark chocolate one. It leaves you wanting more. So we decide to go to Sorisso at the Cascades and get theirs (which we got yesterday, less Matthew) and compare.

Call us crazy, we joke that we're on a hot chocolate crawl. Sorisso is not even a 5 minute walk. We all agree that Sorisso is better.

From there, M&L and Karina walk to the AMAA guest rooms, since the bus will take the group from there to the restaurant. M&L have to get their suitcases. Bruce and I will walk to the restaurant.

On our way, we take a slight detour to Vernissage. Bruce wanted to see a pin. He also sees some vendors that I had missed and they have the beakers! I get four.

From there we walk to the Hovnanian Center to see the craft the children are doing with HRI. They are making thank you cards for their English tutor or their sponsor. Nanor is busy, but we see her in action. Again.

We then walk to the restaurant where we're having our celebratory dinner at 17:00. Some of the staff from AMAA in Vanadzor and Gyumri are there as well as some from Yerevan. We also have the full medical team from Armenia. It's a modern Georgian restaurant.

We have three tables. It's a busy restaurant. M&L need to leave by 18:45 for the airport.

Sometime around 19:30, we say our goodbyes. Al will be leaving for the airport at 02:00, we say bye to him.

Bruce and I decide to walk back. The streets are still packed with cars and people walking. All the Christmas lights are in place, and they'll be turned on tomorrow. The city is beautifully decorated, every store front decorated.

Lots of musicians on North Ave. We're impressed by the gentleman playing on glass bottles at the Opera house (see video).

At 21:40, M&L are boarding.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Sunday, December 14, 2025

Forgot to mention yesterday. Since Bruce left after me yesterday morning, he noticed some children practicing in the sanctuary (see pic).

Having trouble sleeping tonight. I'm up around 01:00, feeling hot with the covers, but cold without.

Al was going to leave for the airport at 02:00.

Got a message at 03:40, M&L landed in Brussels, and are in their hotel room. Immigration was quick.

I end up opening the window to let some air in. There's lots of wind noise. It must be very windy outside.

I need to pack again today. After an early lunch we will leave for Sisian.

Breakfast is at 10:00. They prepare ma-moon-yeh for us. I used to make it with water or milk and no sugar for my children when they were young and they called it "dak cereal" (hot cereal). My mother would put some string cheese at the base and the hot mamoon-yeh would melt it. So tasty. They had some string cheese on the table, so I added some.

Church service is at 11:00. Vartan is scheduled to translate for the service today. I love the piece sung right before the pastoral prayer. It's really a confessional piece and the words

and tune speak to my soul. I find out after the service that it's in the "Nor Yerk" hymnal. Badveli Heather, maybe we can consider singing it at AMCC (my home church)? 😊

The message is on "in the fullness of time". That's what I tell myself when I lose patience. Jesus came at the perfect time.

Young couples ministry is today at 13:00. The group meets once a month and they're working through a marriage work book. What a great idea! They eat a meal together, sing a few songs, watch a video and then the book. I look through it, it reminds me of the work books from the marriage conferences Bruce and I have attended. Vartan and Sevan attend when they can.

We eat lunch. They've prepared heriseh. And by 13:45, we are on our way. Only 10 of us, + driver. Six from the US, Shoushan (pharmacist), Gayane (in pharmacy), Anna (cardiologist), Saro (to serve as translator for Chris since he has not done his residency yet).

We have full views of Mt Ararat! No visible snow at the top.

I shut my eyes for a bit.

The scenery is stunning, as always. I will try to not take any pictures this time since I have so many from previous visits. As we go further south, there's snow on some of the mountains.

At 16:00, we are in the town of Vayk. We stop for 10 min at a food court.

A few of you had asked concerning Saturday's email about the hot chocolate. The main reason it's so tasty is because it's dark chocolate and very thick.

17:20 we arrive at the church in Sisian. The drive was a bit over the hours. It's great to see familiar faces. We walk in and have to brainstorm as to where to put what station. There's no urine station since all 200 patients were seen in the summer. We have a dedicated room for the lab, and Karina will be working with Bruce. We get some more tables in that room, and Bruce is teaching Karina how to administer the new four tests and our usual three (as needed). Karina will also do EKG if there's a need.

I show the consent form to Badveli Arman.

We have two doctors, Chris and Anna.

I will serve as Lexi's translator in triage.

We are asked if we can add 20 more patients. Chris says we can add 10 tomorrow and see how it goes.

After a delicious dinner, we get on the bus to drive to the hotel at 19:30. Our bus has some fancy lights on the inside. We're at Hotel Basen, which is a few minutes drive from the church.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Monday, December 15, 2025

It's 04:40. I'm up. Lots of messages from back home. Last night while we were setting up the clinic, my children at home sent beautiful pictures of the snowfall. 4-6" is the estimate I'm getting from family + email replies. I love how the snowfall transforms the back yard. Each tree limb is covered. There's a crispness in the air that I can almost taste. The sky is a solid blue peeking through the white branches.

M&L have arrived home. Praise God.

A few dogs are barking continually. 😞 We have the window open a bit since the room was so hot and you can't regulate the heat. I stay in bed.

07:30, Bruce is looking through headlines as he's getting ready. He says ground stop for PHL, EWR, JFK due to the snow. We're thankful M&L made it home.

By 08:30 we are on the bus to the church. I will follow the theme of people from Advent for our team devotional. At dinner Saturday night, Al asked me who I was going to cover Monday & Tuesday. 😊 I had planned on the wise men for Monday. He gave me a great idea for Tuesday.

Sisian team is also very strong. During our worship service, Shushan gave her testimony. She talked about the miraculous pregnancy she had and how her pregnancy brought her back to a deeper relationship with Christ.

As I mentioned yesterday, today I served as translator for Lexi in triage. Lucy did not need a translator. We saw 50 patients in three hours this morning! Triage was done at 12:30, 30 min before lunch. All the stations were very smooth.

The afternoon was just a smooth, we were done by 17:00 in triage. We saw 105 patients today!

At one point, Saida video calls Mari, the young woman who served in the lab with Bruce the first year. She's in Yerevan taking exams. We hoped to be able to see her.

I've served as a translator in triage only as filling for short amounts of time. I've never done it for a full day. It was fascinating. Some cases that stand out:

- * An elderly woman, very petite, commenting about extreme pain in her left leg the last five days. She showed a red swollen portion on her inner left leg.

- * There was one woman who was walking and was hit by a truck. She was bedridden for 2 years. Many bones were broken in her body and her head. She had to learn how to walk again. She has a crooked walk since part of her spine never fully healed properly. It's really a miracle that she's alive. She has a lot of pain throughout her body. And she's still taking care of her brother who is 65 years old and is bedridden.

- * Many cases of diabetes and hypertension. There are several who did not take their blood pressure medication this morning. It makes it very hard to do follow-up, since you don't know if the dosage they've been prescribed is proper or not. (Shout out to auntie who is so faithful with her meds). I explained to those who skipped how important it is to take their medicine as prescribed. Even when they're feeling well.

- * There was one woman who started crying as soon as she sat down. She's had breast cancer in both breasts. Started in her left one, and her breast was totally removed, five years later her right one was removed. She's also had spots on her liver. I prayed for her. Lexi gave her a hug.

- * Lexi takes the patient's blood pressure towards the end of the consult, since they've been sitting for a few minutes and it would be a better reading. While she is putting on the strap and telling them to be quiet, I found that to be the perfect time to pray for each individual. Everyone really appreciated it. 🙏

Karina multitasks. She only had one EKG for the full day. When the lab was light, she came over to triage to do vitals. That was very helpful. 47 out of 105 patients chose to be tested for the four special tests. All were negative.

Chris brought a special new tool for Anna. It's a mobile EKG tool. Fascinating! That's why we only had one "traditional" EKG.

<https://kardia.com/products/kardiamobile?srsltid=AfmBOopFF7EaB9xv11i5DaDY6z1WJQlqMLUdk2LZeNfSQ28lleksb5Mg>

Last night, Badveli Arman asked if Bruce would dress as Santa Claus for the team party.

Once we were done with triage for the day, I remembered a song from my childhood days. I pulled it up and asked if we could play it while Bruce dressed as Santa. Here's a recording if you want to hear it.

Gaghant Baba

<https://youtu.be/p3-2tMhvVi0?feature=shared>

Since we were done and the bbq was still cooking, they said let's do the party portion first. They had us sit in the room which we used as registering / waiting / triage. We rearranged the chairs. They put on the song and Bruce came in, saying "ho-ho-ho". Oh it was fun. Everybody loved it. Bruce really got in the role. It was so sweet that Badveli Arman and Saida had gotten gifts for each of the 10 people serving on the mission.

Badveli asked each person to say something, or dance, or sing. When it was my turn and "Santa / Father Frost (ձիւն պապիկ) called on "Bruce and Christine" I said something along the lines of I don't know if Bruce has been good. 😊 That got lots of laughs. (You'll see a picture of Bruce laughing a lot with a gift in my hand). I then thanked them (in Armenian) and said how the Sisian team felt like family.

I find out from Bruce later that the costume had fake white hair and a white beard but they did not need it for him. Saida asked if Bruce could stay until December 31st so he could be Santa for the children of the community.

We then ate a delicious BBQ. Levon and Inessa arrived! They'll see the children tomorrow for dental.

Had a most delicious tea with fresh oranges, grapefruit, lemon and herbs.

Badveli Arman shared a testimony about a young man who was with us today, how he was recently baptized, and had a miraculous healing, and is now serving in the church. The father is also now a beleiver.

Left for the hotel at 20:00. I'm in our room writing and I hear noises in the lobby.

Bruce stayed behind to help Badveli Arman set up his new tablet. That took quite a bit of time, and it was good Bruce did it tonight. He walked back to the hotel.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Tuesday, December 16, 2025

I should have added yesterday that we had a good mix of ages in our patients. Our youngest was 18 years old. There were several that came in as a well visit, which is very good! There were several who had stents (one had up to six), and a handful of those with aFib, as well as those who had shortness of breath. One was in her 30s had pneumonia 3x, and a few spoke of breathing issues after covid. We had a nice variety.

I wake up several times, but I'm able to fall asleep relatively quickly. Bruce opens the window at some point since he's hot and the room feels stuffy. I get out of bed around 07:00 to get ready.

As I turned on the water for the shower, I noticed a large yellow spot under the pipes. I held the hand held shower portion that is clipped to the top and the yellow spot got exceedingly soapy. So I just kept the cold water on aimed in that area until all the soap suds were done. It took a while for the water to drain so it's a good thing I did that first, if not, my feet would have been standing in the detergent water. 😬

The light to the bathroom automatically turns on a fan which is extremely noisy, to the point that we try to use the bathroom without turning on the lights.

Bruce was next, but his shower ran out of hot water very quickly. 😞

Beautiful sunrise over the plain.

After breakfast we head towards the bus and drive over. Al had said at the celebratory dinner on Saturday night, that it would be interesting to have the devotional on Simeon and Anna. So I read that passage and thought about it over the last few days and there were some points I wanted brought up.

Simeon and Anna had a heart for others and they both lived sacrificially. I shared how being on this mission we needed to do that. I expressed my thanks for how we sacrificed

some things to be able to come here and how that made an impact on those whom we were serving, and how it impacted us as well. I also mentioned how Christ suffered for us and the impact that His suffering had on us. It's really been a joy to be able to serve on this trip.

Patient numbers 106-162 for the morning. Triage finishes at 12:40. Badveli Arman says we have something special planned for lunch and it must be eaten hot, so we should keep to the lunch schedule of 13:00.

They have two soup options for lunch as well as leftovers from yesterday. One of them is a traditional Sisian soup and that's all I ate. It was delicious (see pic). Madzoon soup with red lentils, but not split. You add to that spoonful of sauteed chopped meat and onion. Great combo. I'll have to make that when I get home.

Patient number 211 is the last patient. Two days of clinics! Praise God for how smooth everything was. Triage finished at 16:40, and we started to tear down the clinic, my station.

There was one gentleman, he was 85 years old. As soon as he sat down I said his name and he said I have pain all over from my head to my feet so I was trying to get the basic information out of him and I asked him a question and he said I can't hear and I can't see I just have pain for my head to my feet. 🙄

We had a variety of ages and issues.

For Lexi and me, we saw:

- * Joint pain
- * Recognized some people from the summer
- * aFib
- * Skin issues
- * Thrombosis
- * Heart bypass
- * Lots of patients needing hemoglobin tests (common here)
- * Gallbladder
- * Few cancers
- * I wondered if one woman had sleep apnea (she wakes up at night from her snoring and others have said she snores and after 13:00 she just wants to sleep).
- * And of course enough patients with diabetes or hypertension
- * Lower percentage of people gave their consent to have the four viral blood tests

I tried to pray with as many patients as possible and all thanked me.

At the end of the day, there were some gatherings.

Badveli Arman and Saida asked to talk to Bruce, Chris, and me. They gave us a box of sweets. After saying goodbye to the Sisian team, Bruce, Chris, and I walked over to Sevag and Lena's home. We were invited for dinner.

The children, Astghig, Mari, and Haig have grown since summer. Haig is not walking yet. I asked Mari to see some of her workbooks, and she read to me from her books. She's grown in her English reading and understanding. Sevag's cousin, Anna, whom we've met before and lives in Goris, was also there. It was good to see her again as well Lena's parents. We had a delicious dinner of bbq / խոբոված. The table was full.

At 21:00, we got up to give them our gifts, and were thinking of walking back to the hotel. Sevag said they had some gifts for us. They presented Chris with an oil painting, and one for us. A friend of Sevag's paints. Sevag insisted on driving us back to the hotel.

Long day.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

I realized that I forgot to talk about the worship service in Tuesday's email! Badveli Sarkis from Goris (30 min away) had come with a bus load. He would give the message. Chris shared his testimony this morning. He talked about how God's plans are always best and he learned that when he did not get accepted into medical school the year he applied. But that allowed him to meet his wife Barb, and he would not have, if he was accepted to medical school. He's learned from that to listen to Jesus' direction and be obedient, even if it doesn't make sense. Chris' obedience to Christ is very clear, it shows trust.

Badveli Sarkis talked about trusting in Christ in all circumstances. I love how each day the testimony or our devotion time has tied into the day's message from the Badveli. I see God's direction in all this.

Badveli Sarkis also shared a story as an object lesson which will be easy to remember. I'll share briefly. "A ship load is traveling. Massive storm. Everyone runs for cover except a little girl who remains on deck playing with her toys. After the storm, someone asks her,

how did you remain on the deck, playing with your toys, and looking so peaceful? She says my father is the captain. I trust his ability to weather this ship through the storm." How much more can we trust our heavenly Father through life's storms?

Now for today. Today will be another long day.

I wake up several times since I'm too warm. Get out of bed at 07:15, I look outside, it's dark, but there is dusting of snow on the ground. Just a little, enough for Karina to be excited when she sees it.

Time to pack again. Once we get home, we would have been in seven different hotels during this stay. That wears on me.

We have our breakfast at 08:30. The fellowship around the table is sweet. Some gifts we were given get regifted among ourselves. 😊

By 08:50 we are on our way back to Yerevan. We will stop at Jermuk along the way. It will add a little extra time to our ride back home, but it will be worth it we're told.

Side observation, most of the doors here have a frame with the door. So whenever you're entering in and out of a door, you have to take a step. This doesn't apply to the outside hotel room, but most doors are like that. (see picture.)

The little bit of snow is beautiful on the hills and mountains. The way the sun shines/reflects on it.

As we're riding on the bus, I'm looking at the map. I notice that the offshoot road to Jermuk, passes by another church/monastery called Gndevank that we have not seen. I ask Manvel, our driver, if we can make a stop there as well, and he says yes. We're all excited to see a new church.

We arrive at the town of Jermuk. It is empty now, but Shushan says that you have to park way down in the summer months, since it gets so busy. We're able to drive all the way to the entrance of the path to the waterfall. Karina is so excited to see snow and icicles, her joy is enough for all of us. She gets excited by just putting her hands in snow and picking off icicles. (Karina is from CA).

Jermuk is a brand of bottled sparkling water. The factory to bottle the water is also there.

I've never seen a waterfall over iced water. It's beautiful. Shushan says that in the summer when it's all rushing water, it's so noisy and you can't hear each other.

We drive to the center of town. There's an area where hot water flows, and they've built a building around it, very elaborate. (see pic). It's called Gallery of Water. There's five natural spouts, (which they've added pipes and an urn to) each one with a different temperature! The water temperatures range from 30°C to 55°C. We put our hands under the water and it feels so good. You can see the steam.

There's a dog and two cats that follow us. Shushan does not like dogs or cats, especially stray ones. 😞 Bruce finds a piece of what looks like a hot dog, and pushes it with his feet towards the dog. He swallows it quickly, and then we see him laying down in a spot that's in full sun. 😊

There are several hotels and spas at this spot. There's also a beautiful body of water, Yotnaghbyur Lake. Mostly frozen. Bruce runs into the pink hotel, Grand Resort, to check it out. 😊

We then get back on our sprinter van to drive to Gndevank. If you look at the map, you'll see the off road separates from the road we were on. We rode on H42 for the ride to Jermuk, and at some point need to take H43 to get to Gndevank. (see pic). The two roads run parallel.

But after a few minutes of driving, once we're on H43, the single lane of asphalted road became a dirt road with lots of uneven caked mud/dirt which also had truck tire marks. I'm talking construction type truck marks. You would think they would be roads in the same condition since they both start with H and are parallel. There was concern if we blew a tire, we'd be stuck for hours. We still had another 20 min of driving to get to the church going at this pace of less than 5mph. The road is too narrow to u-turn. One side is the 90° side of the hill/mountain and the other is a sharp, dramatic drop to Arpa River. 😬 Start praying.

We're on this road for several minutes. It's clear to me our driver is also concerned. We reach a point where the road has a gentle turn slightly to the right side, and at that exact spot, the road is slightly wider. Bruce offers to step out to help him back up, but Manvel says there's no need since he has a back up camera. With a holding of the breath, he backs up. One boulder moving in the wrong direction at our back and we're done. Praise God, Manvel is a skilled driver and he makes the turn!

Thank you for your continued prayers for our safety.

I marvel at how people built this church / monastery in the 10th century with more limited tools and resources in the middle of nowhere. While I didn't see it, I saw pictures of it online.

Along the route, I see a handful of Zenith (Russian) hail disrupter units on the side of the road, here and there. It's basically a huge funnel sitting on top of an aluminum looking tent. Chris was aware of these. Apparently, if there's a hail storm, these units send waves towards the sky to disrupt hail. False advertising.

At one point we have to stop on the road to let a herd of wild horses cross.

We stop for 30 min at a food court in Vayk to get lunch.

13:30 see the top portion of Mt Ararat. It was all green on Sunday, today it's white with snow.

Back at Baghramyan at 14:30. It's so simple to just go back to our rooms. We've had our key with us from the beginning.

I take a quick nap. Chris and I have a meeting with Aren at 15:00. We discuss a few things, and Aren mentions how the medical mission has helped to bring hope and life to the churches we've served at. There's also the ramifications of being seen, that there's others who care about you. He's seen this change in Sisian, Vanadzor and Gyumri! Be encouraged, Al and Sue. 🥰

I then pack a bit.

Karina, Chris, Bruce and I walk to the Grand Candy store to get some chocolate. I notice that Karina does not have her coat zipped.... is she getting used to the colder weather? 😊 We stop at the Grand Candy cafe next to it to try their bonchig. Bruce tries their hot chocolate. The bonchig is not even close to the ones in Gyumri! They're oily and flat. The hot chocolate Bruce says tastes like water with chocolate particles. We have a good laugh and get powdered sugar over ourselves.

We then go to the store. It's an odd way of purchasing. All their products are in window displays. Multiple display units. You go to the unit that you want something that's displayed. You tell them what you want. They measure or get it from the shelves, not the display. They give you a slip, and you take that slip to a central cash register to pay. Once you have your receipt of payment, you go back to the display case you were at. They compare the receipt with the product and hand it to you. I went to two different displays, got my slips from them, then I paid for both slips, and then needed to go back to the two displays to pick up the items.

On our walk back, we stop at a supermarket. I wanted to get some fresh lavash bread for Catherine.

We then walk back. I pack. I came with lots of gifts and I thought I'd have lots of room. It's a challenge to fit everything in our large and small suitcase. (If you remember, Bruce had met me in Frankfurt on our way to Yerevan from China. He had the carry on). I had borrowed M&L's travel scale, and I got the large suitcase right to 23k! The carry on was maxed out, not in weight but in capacity. I had packed a collapsible backpack, and that was needed as well! There are several liquidy items gifted to us in the large suitcase. Fortunately I have lots of laundry as padding. 🙌

We then meet Kegham Keri and Dalo auntie in the AMAA cafeteria. Apparently an Indian congregation uses the sanctuary after our regular service. The young adults of that congregation had a gathering. It was a very large group. They meet in the cafeteria weekly.

We walked to a restaurant we had eaten at before with the AMAA mission team. It's a very short walk. Rehan. I think I over order for us? Everything is delicious. We get: fresh bread, roasted eggplant salad, souboreg, manti, madzoonov kofteh, sour cherry kebab, and toshka. We are very full.

After dinner, we walk basically across the street where the rest of the team along with the Yerevan medical staff are having dinner hosted by Chris. Sevan and Paleny arrive after Paleny's music classes. We say a final goodbye. We want to get back to try to sleep.

A few minutes after 20:00, we're both in bed with the alarm set for 01:30.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine

Thursday, December 18, 2025

I wake up twice but I'm able to get back to sleep. The alarm goes off at 01:30. Our driver will take us at 02:00 to the airport. Five of us - Bruce & I, Chris, Karina, and Lexi are on the same flight to Frankfurt. From there we separate.

Get a message that our flight is delayed by 25 minutes.

Ara, Chris's Armenian brother as Chris calls him, offers to drive us. The streets are empty, but all the Christmas lights are on. On Sunday, the lights at Republic Square were lit, and we will pass through on our way to the airport. Since the roads are so empty, Ara stops for a moment and we get out. It's so magical.

It takes us less than 30 minutes to get to the airport. The airport is also empty.

Chris has business lounge access and so does Bruce (for his status, not seat). Bruce is able to take me in as a guest. The three of us hang out at the lounge while Karina & Lexi want to go to the gate area to sleep. After some good conversations, I finish my email for Wednesday.

We are delayed a bit more once we've boarded. We need to get de-iced since while the plane was waiting, ice accumulated.

Take off at 06:00, it was supposed to be 05:05. It's a four hour flight to Frankfurt.

We're in row 15. It's a full flight. Bruce has the window, I have the aisle. There's a woman between us and we offer to switch. She says no.

There's a young woman and her mother (I believe) in the middle and window opposite me. They have a newborn. There's so much speedy conversation between the two women, non-stop, that everyone turns to look. It almost looks like they don't know what to do with this baby.

On the flight I think about the two things that I feel the Lord said to me during this trip: First, "rise and walk".

Second, which leper am I? The one? or one of the nine?

Land at 07:00 local time.

After goodbyes to Chris, Karina and Lexi, Bruce and I head towards the Senator Lounge in concourse B of terminal 1. There's beds in that lounge and we will try to sleep. We've landed in concourse B arrivals and we need to get to B departure. We need to go through security again. So dump our water.

When I go through the millimeter wave scanner (MMW), the man by the scanner tells me to pause. He looks at the outline drawing of my body and there's two yellow boxes at each of my feet. I'm used to having to take my boots off after scanning while I connect through Europe. I don't have problems elsewhere. So I imagine it's the same again. They send me over to the lady, she instead does a very detailed pat down front and back. Very uncomfortable. Then asks for me to take off my boots.

They also pull aside my backpack which has three zippers. I go to claim it, and she starts opening the first zipper and runs that plasticity thing over it. I ask her what's the issue, she says I have scissors. I say yes, they're for needlepoint, I can show them to you. She doesn't answer me. She opens up the second set of zippers and I say they're not there, I

can show you where they are. She opens the third set and I mention that it's in the Velcro section of that compartment. I can pull it out for her. She says no and pulls it out. Takes the scissors (they're small, needlework scissors), and examines it. She then puts it back in the ziplock bag, and moves away. I'm thankful my scissors are not taken.

This lounge has beds. We get ourselves settled and we both sleep.

I find that there's a container of Neuhaus chocolate squares in red and green at the front desk. 😊 This lounge is massive. We have some breakfast. There's a full spa and Bruce brings me the brochure and suggests I get one if I want. The sensitive skin facial for 30 minutes peaks my interest, but their next available appointment for that will be a conflict with our departure time.

During this trip, we were made aware of another person who could use help. Praise God for how each time, He brings one person to attention.

A bit later, we make our way to concourse C. We need to take a tram. Go through security again. My boots need to come off again, my scissors get looked at again, but no full body pat down!

At 12:45, we're in our seats for the last portion of our adventure. 8 hour 50 min flight time from FRA-PHL.

They serve us a meal. The option is beef or pasta, the way the flight attendant says it, Bruce hears it as "beaver pasta".

We finish watching a great teaching by Henry Cloud on community & relationships. He says the four types of connections are:

no connection

bad connection

pseudo connection

God connection

I work on my counted cross stitch for a bit. We watch the "Father Frost" movie made in 1963 in Russian, dubbed in English. Bruce thought of this after he was asked to dress as Father Frost (Santa) in Sisian.

We watched a one hour movie titled "CS Lewis: the Most Reluctant Convert", based on his book "Surprised by Joy". A few quotes I'd want to share:

"The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of man."

"If the whole universe has no meaning, I should never have known it has no meaning."

He refers to his time of conversion as "It was more like a man who, after a long sleep, he becomes aware he is now awake."

We land at 16:00. Exactly on time.

By 17:30, we're home!

A big thank you for following along. 🥰 I know this is a busier time of the year. I appreciate your time in reading, your responses, and your prayers.

Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Wk97g1m12LxQ8pEbA>



Christine