



Care & Share

EMMANUEL: GOD WITH US

By Dr Marno Retief

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matthew 1:18-25, ESV)

When people hear about a husband and wife who are going to have a baby, there are usually two questions people love to ask. The first question: Is it a girl or a boy? And the second question: What will the child's name be? Many times there's, of course, intense debate or even a quarrel about the child's name. Should it be a completely new name? Or does it have to be a family name? Or should it be a combination of the mother and father's name? Or should the child be named after a celebrity? The latter is, of course, the reason why some people are named Elvis, J-Lo, or Cher. But no matter how you look at it, most people realise the importance of names.

Your name is important, not only because it might sound beautiful, but also because names have meaning. Each one of us – our names have a specific meaning. No one understood the importance of this better than people in the ancient world, especially the Jews. In biblical times, people believed that someone's name said something about that person's unique character, something about the person's true identity. That's why we read in Proverbs 22:1 (ESV), "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold". Your name was important because people got to know you through it. Thus, we read in the Bible, when parents chose a name for their child, they chose a name they believed would fit their child's character and calling. But more than that – naming someone also means that you have authority over that person. And if you agree that parents have authority over their children, how much more does God have authority over people?

When you study the Bible, you will notice that, when the Lord calls someone for a particular task, He often changes that person's name. For example, God changed Abram's name to Abraham, Jacob's name to Israel, Simon's name to Peter. In doing so, the Lord made it clear that He had absolute authority over that person's life. And in each case, the new name said something about God's specific calling for that person's life, and something about that person's character and identity. So, with this in mind, when we're dealing with the different names of Jesus in the Bible, we're dealing with different aspects of Jesus' character and identity. Getting to know the names of Jesus helps us to know Jesus personally. The purpose of my message today is to focus on just one of Jesus' names – namely, Emmanuel – so that we can understand how this name of Jesus can help us get to know Jesus better. Of all the names of Jesus revealed in the Bible, Emmanuel is probably one of the most important names. In fact, I would go so far as saying it's the name that teaches us most about who Jesus is. So, let's see why the name, "Emmanuel", is so important to us as followers of Jesus.

Consider what Matthew says in verses 22 and 23 of our opening passage: "All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)". Now note – the passage that Matthew quotes, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" - this passage comes from Isaiah 7:14. So, Matthew connects this passage from the book of Isaiah with the person of Jesus. Matthew says, at Jesus' birth, He will be called Emmanuel. And then Matthew immediately explains what the name, "Emmanuel", means: "God with us".

Now that's extremely interesting – if I were to ask you, "Is there anywhere in the New Testament where Jesus refers to himself as Emmanuel?" What would you answer be? Well, simply said, the answer is no. Nowhere do we read about Jesus calling himself Emmanuel. In fact, neither do we read about any of Jesus' apostles or other followers calling him Emmanuel. Yet Matthew says here: Jesus will be called Emmanuel. So how should we understand this? Did Matthew make a mistake? Well, no - because remember what I said earlier, in the ancient world, people believed someone's name says something about their character, about who they are. When Matthew says Jesus will be called Emmanuel, he means Jesus' character, Jesus' identity, Jesus' being is that of Emmanuel – he is "God with us." Jesus is "God with us"! That's who he is! God with us! Just think about it! What a statement! What an incredible truth!

The name, "Emmanuel," reveals some essential aspects of Jesus' identity to us. So, what do we learn from this name of Jesus? What do we learn from the name, "Emmanuel"? One of the most important things it teaches us is the fact that Jesus is God. As we've seen, when Matthew quotes Isaiah 7:14 - which speaks of the virgin who will conceive and give birth to a son named Emmanuel - Matthew makes clear that Emmanuel means "God with us". Right from the beginning of his gospel, Matthew emphasises Jesus is God, but here's my question? On what basis did Matthew and the other New Testament writers have any reason to believe that Jesus is God? It's a huge statement to make. So, what was their evidence? Why were they so convinced of this? As the well-known astronomer and scientist, Carl Sagan, once said, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence". Ironically, as brilliant as Sagan was, he wasn't prepared to look at the evidence the Bible provided. Maybe some of you reading are struggling to believe that Jesus is God. You've got questions - you're uncertain. Well, then I want to invite you to take a serious look at the biblical evidence. Scripture alone is able to help us answer this question. Don't do what many people do and say you want to remain neutral, without ever looking at the evidence. So, let's look at the extraordinary evidence the Bible offers that Jesus is God.

Firstly, there are quite a few scriptures where the Bible directly declares Jesus is God. Let me just mention a few examples. In John 1:1 (ESV) we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". In the context of John's gospel, we know Jesus is the Word. And John makes it clear - Jesus, the Word, is God. In Romans 9: 5 (ESV), Paul states Jesus is "God over all" and that he is "blessed forever"! And in 1 John 5:20, John refers to Jesus as "the true God". So, there are quite a few Scriptures which clearly state Jesus is God.

But then there are passages of Scripture which indirectly refer to Jesus as God. For example, we read how different Names of God are applied to Jesus. Isaiah 9: 6 (ESV) - which is a prophetic declaration about Jesus - calls Jesus "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace". We also read how the Bible describes Jesus with characteristics that only God can have. In Colossians 1:17, Paul says Jesus already exists from eternity! At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples that he is everywhere and always with them. Jesus says, "I am with you forever, even to the end of world history" (Matt. 28:20, ESV). In Revelation 2:23 (ESV), we see Jesus knows everything – He's the one "searches mind and heart". In Revelation 1:8, we learn that Jesus is almighty - He is "the Alpha and the Omega", the One "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty"! And the writer of Hebrews tells us Jesus is unchangeable - "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13: 8, ESV). Jesus is worshiped as God - the apostle Thomas falls before Jesus and cries out, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28, ESV). And then there are other scriptures where Jesus is described as Creator, as the one who has the power to forgive sin, as the one who will raise believers from the dead, as the one who will judge all men. I ask you: Do you believe Jesus is God? Over and over – directly and indirectly – the Bible makes it clear: Jesus is God. So, when you and I call Jesus Emmanuel, we are, in effect, confessing this fundamental truth of the Christian faith: Jesus is God in the flesh.

As we celebrate Christmas this year, may our awareness of the divinity of Jesus intensify our worship of him, the God who became human to save us. As the Nicene Creed puts it,

One Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
begotten from the Father before all ages,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary . . .

Emo CRC, on behalf of myself and my wife, Benita – as well as our three children – we wish you a merry Christmas!

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

We live in a depressing time. How long can we keep COVID19 at bay here? How will that affect us as we approach the time of Advent and Christmas? Advent is a time of expectation. The coming of Christ. Maybe we may have more quiet time. How will we experience Advent? Jesus, coming down from Heaven to earth was a turning point in history. We cannot even imagine everything that happened surrounding his coming. When Mary gave birth she was just living her life in her “bubble”, just as we find ourselves doing. Even though celebrating Christmas this year may look a little different, we still have so very much to be thankful for. We wish you all a blessed Christmas!

Jack Wielinga has been released from the hospital and is now waiting for more tests. Continue to keep him and Ann in your prayers.

We want to express our condolences to the Wielinga family with the passing away of Ann Bosker. Ann was a sister to Linda, Ynske, Arend & Jack Wielinga. Ann passed away at her home in Edmonton where her and her husband, Pete, had lived only a couple of months. Before moving to Edmonton, they had resided in Lethbridge. We wish Pete and family the Lord's love and care.

On the 6th of November, Ron Sikkema was taken home to be with his Lord and Saviour. Our sincere sympathy goes out to Christine and her sons. Our thoughts and prayers are with you. It made it so much more difficult for Christine's family not to be able to join them at the funeral. We extend our condolences also to Ted & Ynske, Arnold & Carol, Dale & Kathy, David & Kristine, Paul & Karen and families. Please keep this family in your prayers.

Congratulations to Jacqui Hunsperger after becoming a great grandparent for the 10th time. Ryan Wade Desserre was born on October 13. His parents are Kurt (son of Wade & Kim Desserre) and Kyra. The young family lives in Pinewood.

From Arend & Wilma Wielinga:

- Our daughter, Cynthia's, father in law passed away suddenly from a massive heart attack a little over a week ago. The funeral for Jacco's dad will be in Holland, but he cannot attend with all the restrictions at this time. That is rather hard, being the eldest son in the family of three.
- To everyone, who in any way helps to plan the church services, teach Sunday School, play the piano, run the sound system, send the emails, serves on Council, etc., etc., you are appreciated!! Thank you!
- With Christmas coming up this month, we also want to wish our church family a “Blessed Christmas” and God's continued love and care in the coming New Year.

To our church family:

Ted would like to thank the seniors for the bouquet of flowers and the beautiful get well card he received after coming home from the hospital after receiving a new pace maker. He also thanks everyone for continued prayers for him. (He is doing fine.)

Also we thank you for the many prayers and beautiful sympathy cards we received with the passing away of our son in law Ron Sikkema, who passed away on November 6 and entered into the loving arms of Jesus. During the eight months Ron had COVID19 and then the cancer which took his life, Ron fought a hard and long journey. While Ron spent those many months in the hospital, he shared his faith with so many workers there. We know he touched and changed many lives through his testimony!

Christine and the boys have a long hard road ahead of them but we are so thankful for the many prayers for them!

We all feel that that is where our help and strength and comfort and His word comes from! Thank you!

We all feel blessed to belong to a loving and caring church family!

Ted and Ynske

Happy Birthday to everyone who is celebrating birthdays in this special month. Our seniors celebrating in December are Janice Wiersema on the 4th, Hilda Schryvershof and Eltjo Wiersema on the 7th, and Peter Van Heyst on the 12th and Darlene Byma on the 30th.

Our seniors celebrating anniversaries in December are Larry and Dove Stahn on the 10th, Henry & Thea Kaemingh on the 19th and Louis & Darlene Byma on the 27th.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

From Resonate Global Mission:

Thank you for supporting God's mission! Your giving is making a special impact this year. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, ministry has been so challenging for your missionaries and church planters around the world. We've received many special requests for funding and resources—and your support has made it possible to keep proclaiming the gospel. When you give to Resonate Global Mission, you are investing in overcoming the challenges of this crisis and helping lead people to faith in Jesus Christ. You are investing in the future of this denomination and declaring that gospel mission is essential! Around the world, people are anxious, stressed, grieving, and searching for answers and support. Thank you for being there for them. Thank you for sending people to walk alongside them, pray with them, and encourage them. Ministry leaders around the globe couldn't do it without your support. Thank you for standing with us. Thank you for your partnership in living out the gospel. In Christ, Kevin DeRaaf, Acting Canada Director

From the Hettingas:

Emo Christian Reformed Church,

Thank you SO much for your recent donation to us/our ministry. We are very grateful for your faithful partnership with us!!!

Wishing you much JOY in the coming holiday season.

Justin & Tammy

From CRC Communications:

- FREE ADVENT DEVOTIONAL - He Will Be Our Peace is an email devotional series put together by World Renew, Resonate Global Mission, and the CRC Office of Social Justice that features reflections from CRC ministries around the world during Advent 2020. Each devotion will be delivered to your email inbox every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, starting December 2, 2020, through Christmas Day. Join us as we journey through lamenting injustice to looking forward to the coming of the Prince of Peace using the book of Micah. Go to justice.crcna.org/advent to sign up today!
- ADVENT DEVOTIONAL SERIES FROM TODAY - It's been a rough year. Let Advent help you see God's story in Christmas. This special devotional series takes you deeper into the true meaning of Christmas, the coming Savior. Subscribe at todaydevotional.com/advent. It's free!
- DIVE INTO KIDS CORNER'S NEW WEBSITE - Kids Corner has a brand new look! And we've got loads of new faith-building resources to help your child discover their part in God's big story. Begin each week with a KC devotion for kids, with Bible readings, reflections, and prayer. And you'll meet fun new characters in the Casey's Day comic strip. You'll also receive a weekly encouragement just for parents. Be sure to watch the encouraging Kids in Action videos, and of course, join the fun with Liz and Friends. Don't miss any of it! Subscribe to Kids Corner at kidscorner.net.
- HANDEL'S MESSIAH SING-ALONG - Messiah is a 101-year tradition at Calvin University. This year, a true "pick-up chorus" of Calvin students, faculty, and staff joined the Calvin Orchestra to keep the tradition alive! Join us for the Messiah Sing-Along Premiere on the Calvin University YouTube Channel on Friday, December 4 at 8 p.m.
- WORLD RENEW CHRISTMAS CATALOGUES are in your mailbox at church. You can also see the catalogue at <https://worldrenew.net/gift-catalog>. The Gift Catalog gives you the opportunity to choose how you want to support families around the world achieve sustainable, healthy lives. Whether it be a goat, a chicken, a handwashing station, or an empowerment training for at-risk youth, your gift could be just what someone needs to move forward with hope.
- For more CRC updates go to crcna.org/resources/church-resources/bulletin-announcements.

Going through my envelope of different notes I have received over the years, I came across this one which was given to me by Nick Schryvershof:

Modern Christian Symbolism

- Christmas Tree—evergreen as a symbol of eternal life; tree is a biblical reference to the cross.
- Ornaments—In general remind us of all of the beautiful things Jesus did; Star or Angel on top of tree represent the Star of Bethlehem (the one the wise men followed) and Angels who announced Christ's birth; lights remind us that Jesus is light of the world; ball ornaments remind us that our world was created by God; the different colors remind us that the Gospel is for all different nations and people on the earth; sparkles and tinsel remind us to be generous and kind to the poor.

Bible Verse—John 5:25

HE WAS ONE OF US by Helen Steiner Rice

He was born as little children are
and lived as children do,
So remember that the Saviour
was once a child like you,
And remember that he lived on earth
in the midst of sinful men,
And the problems of the present
existed even then;
He was ridiculed and laughed at
in the same heartbreaking way
That we who fight for justice
are ridiculed today;
He was tempted ... He was hungry ...
He was lonely ... He was sad ...
There's no sorrowful experience
That the Saviour has not had;
And in the end He was betrayed
and even crucified,
For He was truly "One Of Us" -
He lived on earth and died;
So do not heed the skeptics
who are often heard to say:
"What Does God up In Heaven
Know Of Things We Face Today" ...
For, our Father up in heaven
is very much aware
of our failures and shortcomings
and the burdens that we bear;
So whenever you are troubled
put your problems in God's Hand
For He has faced all problems
and He Will Understand.



The Christmas Story

S	G	B	A	U	G	I	I	S	T	F	O	E	H	C
E	H	R	S	I	K	N	T	I	C	B	U	R	F	K
M	B	E	F	L	C	A	R	H	S	U	S	E	J	Z
M	A	T	P	E	R	I	A	Y	N	L	G	O	L	D
A	S	N	N	H	P	B	E	T	H	L	E	H	E	M
N	G	S	G	S	E	K	W	D	Z	S	A	M	M	D
U	E	U	Y	E	N	R	X	S	I	Y	N	P	A	R
E	M	L	Y	O	R	F	D	T	T	D	G	E	R	C
L	O	A	D	N	E	M	E	S	I	W	E	E	Y	A
H	W	O	G	Q	L	Y	A	X	B	H	L	H	K	D
B	T	F	I	I	T	E	U	R	G	B	R	S	M	J
G	C	O	A	Y	T	J	O	S	E	P	H	R	H	C
Y	R	W	P	I	A	F	J	W	D	A	Q	N	Y	I
N	I	F	G	V	C	D	Q	N	Q	E	L	T	H	M
J	M	X	G	M	J	R	R	B	G	H	I	W	U	I

ANGEL
BETHLEHEM
CAMELS
CATTLE
DONKEY
EAST
GIFTS

MANGER
MARY
MYRRH
SHEEP
SHEPHERDS
STAR
WISE MEN

GOLD
HOLY SPIRIT
EMMANUEL
INCENSE
JESUS
JOSEPH
MAGI

From Ian & Jessica Strydhorst:

Hello CRC family,

We have been here for a month! How the time has flown by. Thank you for your emails of prayers and encouragement! It has been so wonderful to hear from you, and we hope that you are well. Tomorrow, students start back at school every day (just for the mornings) for the first time since March! For the last few weeks we have only seen each of our classes one day a week in person and the rest of the week, online. We are super thankful for this long awaited transition to being in-the-flesh with our students on a regular basis. It makes us think of the incarnation with fresh appreciation for the Son dwelling among us - this season of virtual meeting builds a healthy yearning for our heavenly union with unveiled eyes! The school year began totally online, switched to a couple days a week per class at school, and now will be every day - a blessing that we as teachers aren't taking for granted!

Thanks for your prayers, notes of encouragement, and financial support! Thank you especially to those who have supported us financially. As you may notice on our prayer letter, we do not have a budget update included. This is because since our arrival here, we have been unable to access the site where we receive our financial updates as it is a "flagged" site here. We are working on setting up a VPN in order to do so (hopefully) soon. All that to say, we are super thankful to all of you who have given! We want to thank you by name, but right now we can't.

We continue to pray that Pastor Marno and his family would be able to travel, arrive, and settle into ministry in Emo. Please keep us updated with any developments to pray (or praise God) for.

Please also see our prayer letter (next page) for prayer requests, praises, and some updates on our life here.

*Blessings,
Ian & Jess*

Traveling mercies

Thank you so much for your prayers as we travelled here! What a journey! Our Father watches over us and the Shepherd leads us - even if it's along a cliff's edge, we're safe where He leads. Being separated along our travels (due to untimely COVID test results) was very challenging - not our ideal entry. Nevertheless, we saw Him at work through these hurdles - causing us to reflect on our faith, and to consider the humanity of our fellow travellers: noticing the stories represented and on display in these places of transit.



His provision!

We were so warmly welcomed here! Fellow teachers gifted us with many practical provisions (blankets on our beds, food in our fridge), taught us how to get/use bus cards and taxis, and invited us over for dinner. Exploring various local attractions and authentic local foods (see next page) helped us adjust to jet lag and begin to get a feel for our new stomping grounds.

He gives the gift of laughter!

It has been wonderful to be at school with our students, to see their excitement to see their classmates for the first time since March, to look over their shoulders as they work out math problems, and more often than not, to laugh together.

Laughter is a big part of our life these days! We laugh as we mis-pronounce the Russian words we are working hard to learn, as we search the aisles for familiar foods, and accidentally buy hot sauce instead of pasta sauce! A week ago, we took a taxi to go get groceries, and in our shaky Russian, we asked the driver

*“вы понимаете по-английски?”
 (do you understand English)*

to which he replied “нет” (*no*) and with a laugh and a smile, he promptly reached for the radio to turn up the volume.

Pray for...

- Our Russian learning.
We are thankful for a wonderful teacher!
- Our school community. Last week, one of our drivers suffered a stroke and a security guard lost his mother.
- Our students who are still learning online because of travel restrictions.
- Us to find a place of worship to join.

Engaging People. Embracing Christ.

CONTACT US

Ian & Jessica Friesen
ifriesen@crnapartners.org

Ian: (807) 276-2109
 Jess: (807) 633-9742

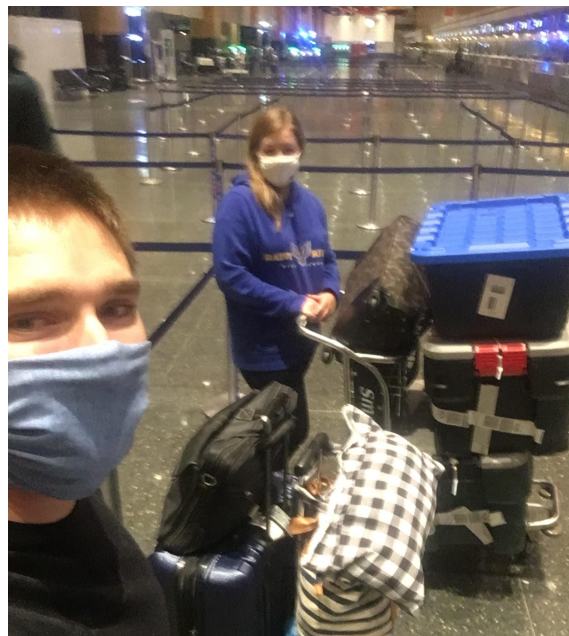


CANADIAN OFFICE

3475 Mainway
 PO Box 5070, STN LCD 1
 Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8
 P (905) 336-2920
 P 800-730-3490

US OFFICE

1700 28th Street SE
 Grand Rapids, MI
 49508-1407
 P (616) 726-1144
 P 877-272-6205



Day 2: Out for a walk along the canal that runs by our apartment.



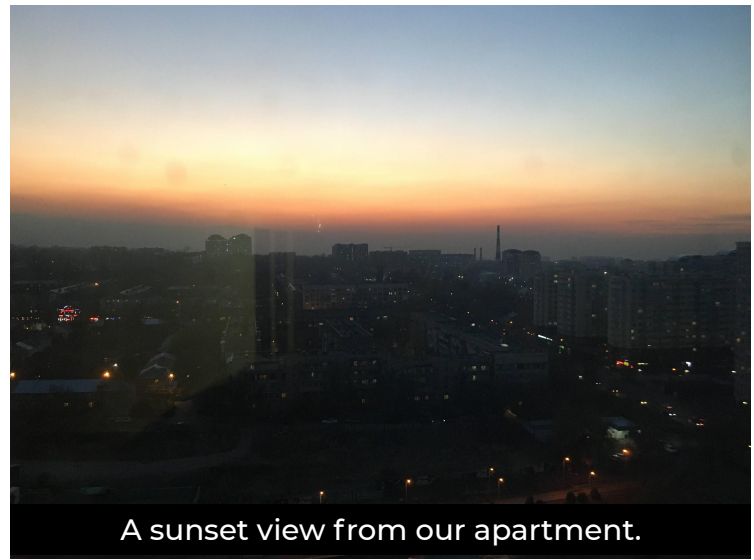
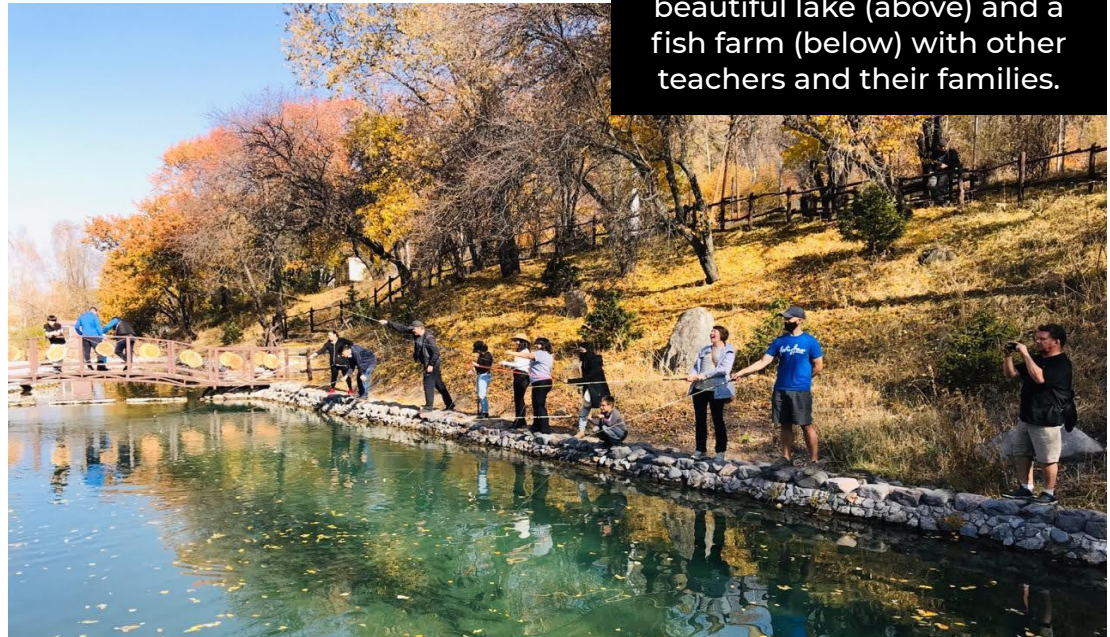
At this point Ian's COVID test has not arrived - hoping to obtain a boarding pass in Boston regardless



Ian's first day here we went to beautiful lake (above) and a fish farm (below) with other teachers and their families.



Fried trout for lunch and a local dish (Plov with horse meat) for supper!



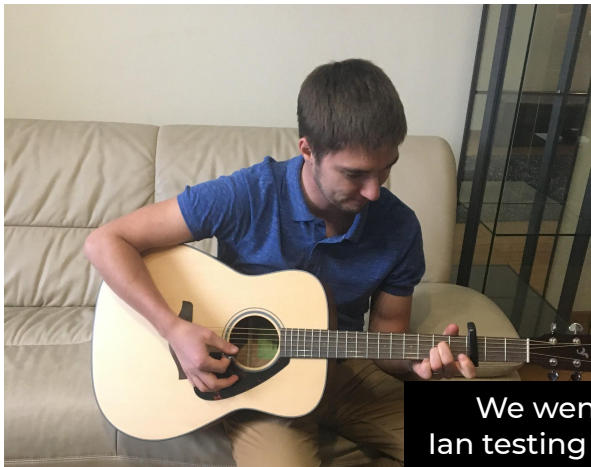
A sunset view from our apartment.



Above: ice skating with a co-teacher.

Right: looking south from our bedroom window. We love to see the mountains!

Below: standing outside our apartment on the first day of school waiting for our ride!



We went to Yamaha and got a guitar!
Ian testing out some teaching demos/tasks.



December

2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4 Janice Wiersema	5 Timon Kaemingh Donna Sinnghé Alexa Veldhuisen
6 Jackson Arpin 10:00 WORSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL	7 Levi Kaemingh Jessica Marissen Hilda Schryvershof Eltjo Wiersema	8	9 Luke Esselink	10 Dan Veldhuisen Larry & Dove Stahn (31st)	11 Emma Kaemingh	12 Peter Van Heyst
13 Liz Vanderveen 10:00 WORSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL	14	15	16	17	18 Tina Geerdink Dwight Stang	19 Kerrilyn Esselink *Henry & Thea Kaemingh (62nd)
20 10:00 WORSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL	21	22	23	24 Paiton Veldhuisen	25 	26
27 Theo deGroot (Snr.) *Louis & Darlene Byma (46th) 10:00 WORSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL	28	29 Grace Kooistra	30 Darlene Byma	31 Mindy Van Zwol		