

CMML fund for Turkish national full-time workers

THE NEED

The Church in Turkey is young. Most evangelical churches have been started by foreign “m”s and many are still led by the foreign church planter. For as long as this is the case, there is no need for local churches to financially support their elder(s) in any way, and the necessity of a small fellowship putting forth much of their own money for a meeting space is minor. That being said, we always teach the importance of tithing and giving of one’s own means to support the local assembly. Most churches do collect modest offerings. However, when the foreign worker has to leave or retires, or in places where there really is no active foreign input/involvement, the local church is faced with the serious challenge of meeting their own needs completely. Sadly, in recent years, dozens of foreign worker families have been forced to leave (banned re-entry), along with many who found it necessary to move away for personal reasons. This has left a gaping hole in both practical economic “funding” for local churches as well as the spiritual leadership support.

It can be very hard for a fledgling group of 15-20 local believers to collect enough tithes monthly to pay for rent and utilities (normally equivalent to 1.5-2 times a monthly minimum wage, and up to 3-4 times that in larger cities), let alone covering the other physical needs of a church or doing mercy ministry. As any fellowship begins to grow there is a great need for local Turkish families to serve in shepherding and discipleship full-time, especially in smaller cities where they are the first and only church group. Spiritual hunger and the need for Bible studies, teaching, personal counselling, sermon preparation, etc. far outpace the time any believer has, who is already employed secularly, no matter how good their intentions. Nonetheless, the prospect of the congregation being able to support such a full-time worker is next to zero. Even larger, “mature” churches of 70-80+ members rarely can make ends meet for both building costs and support of full-time ministers.

A WAY TO HELP MEET THIS NEED

Since the early 1960’s, a dozen or more CMML/MSC and other Brethren workers have played an integral part in the establishment of numerous local Turkish churches and other ministries continuing on today. Currently however, all but two have had to leave the country for various reasons. We have set up this Fund with CMML in order for any who feel led to be able to contribute toward the support of both local “Gospel workers” serving the Turkish church and local churches who have an acute need for a meeting space. CMML-commended workers who have served in Turkey are committed to ably managing and distributing funds designated for this purpose.

Let us introduce you to some of those who will be helped by this fund:

Bayram is a mature believer from the Altinozu district of Hatay (near Antioch). He began following Christ in 2001 and has been active in his local church since then. Bayram also tirelessly served the communities in his province since massive earthquakes killed tens of thousands in February, 2023. Since October, 2023, with the encouragement and involvement of Jerry Mattix and ourselves, a small group of believers has been gathering



with dozens of interested earthquake victims in the town of Samandag (ancient Seleucia) every Sunday. Most have come initially after being touched by the Tiny House and Kaya Projects that CMML workers initiated along with others in the earthquake relief. Over time a number of people have professed faith in Christ and the meetings have begun to resemble a local church. They also meet every Tuesday evening with the more serious ones for a Bible study. Bayram has been a key leader in this since the beginning, humbly serving with both

music and teaching the Bible. He and Yashar continue working together as shepherds of this fellowship and a second group that started near Antioch. He also does a lot of visitations to earthquake victim families around the community throughout the week.

Bayram comes from a large family, the youngest of many siblings, and he still lives with his aging parents to take care of them. They have traditionally been subsistence farmers, making a minimal living through their olives and other small crops. Consequently, Bayram has never had another good means of making a living. Despite his humble circumstances, and the long commute from his village, he genuinely gives all the time and energy he has to serving these meetings.

Yashar and Munevver have been a believers for several decades. They are from Antakya (Antioch) and Yashar ran a small café/bookstore for many years before they lost it completely along with their house in the 2023 earthquake. Yashar had been leading a



small house church there for years as well. Since the earthquake, he too has been actively serving the people of the region primarily in spiritual ministry. He continues to be a key leader and shepherd in the Samandag fellowship along with Bayram, and also serves in a second meeting that has started in Defne, nearer to Antioch as a result of earthquake relief ministry. Besides a small pension, Yashar & Munevver do not have any other income to live on. They have committed themselves to serving the Christian community and reaching out to the many seeking families that join weekly meetings. They especially have a huge heart

for the children in Defne and faithfully help many kids to learn scripture and songs each week.

Emre and Funda

Emre is from Antakya (Antioch). He studied piano at conservatory in Malatya, Turkey. He first went to church and got a New Testament while at high school in Antakya, then gave his life to Jesus in 2012 while in Malatya for university. Funda is from England and moved to Turkey to serve in 2012. They met at a conference in 2013 and got married in 2016. In June 2020 their daughter Atiye was born, followed by twin sons Aren and Erdem in April 2022.



Their ministry started in Malatya until Emre finished university, after which they moved to nearby Elazığ to support a small group gathering there. After Emre’s mandatory military service, they spent two years in Istanbul for some church training. In 2020, with the Lord’s clear leading, they moved to Kütahya to help the small group of believers who had recently lost their leaders to cancelled visas. They’ve been based there ever since. Emre leads the small church in Kütahya and meets with seekers and believers there and in the neighboring province of Afyon. Emre has been actively discipling a couple other young men so as to give them more leadership responsibilities. As a family, they are like the anchor for a very young and dynamic group of believers. They have almost single-handedly (with the Lord’s hand over them, of course!) carried this flock through many crises and battles, all the while humbly giving of all they have. Most recently the fellowship was evicted from their rental space and denied all their requests to rent anywhere else around town. They continue to save up funds to purchase their own small church space while meeting in homes in the meantime. We have been privileged to mentor and support them over the last 6-7 years. Receiving regular financial support will enable them to continue in Kütahya long-term; otherwise they might likely have to move in order to find a good job in larger cities to support their growing family.

Ali and Esin

Ali and Esin are from a small village in the province of Diyarbakir in SE Turkey. Ali comes from an Alevi Muslim family and after some years of “wrestling” with his old beliefs and the new propositions he was hearing from Christians, he accepted Christ at the age of 21 in the late ‘90s. His older brother, Ahmet, and sister Elmas had become believers several years before and their witness initially caused him to embrace Sunni İslam more seriously. But after seeing the lack of peace and assurance in his life compared to theirs, he finally began reading the Bible and trusted Christ. There had really been no active protestant Christian presence in their corner of Turkey until around that time when a

small group began assembling in the city center, led by Erich and Diane Wieger. That formed what is now the Diyarbakir Protestant Church.

Ali married Esin in 2004 and the Lord has given them two sons and two daughters. After continuing to live in their small village for 20 years, working as farmers, they have obeyed the Lord's call to embark on a whole new life serving Him full time in another needy city of SE Turkey. Despite living in the village, over the years Ali has been able to join numerous training seminars and became more and more active in the Diyarbakir fellowship, commuting on weekends. They recently spent a year in residence at the Diyarbakir church getting valuable experience in servant



leadership. Last summer (2025) the Diyarbakir congregation commended and sent them to the city of Adiyaman to lead the ministry center that has been built there since the 2023 earthquake. Their vision is to help see a local assembly begun in that city with the many contacts that the church has made over the last 2+ years. Indeed, already 15-25 people gather every Sunday since the building opened in November.

Please pray for all of these servants of the Lord, and for fruit in their ongoing endeavors for His Kingdom. If you would like to specifically receive news and prayer items from any one of them, you can reach out to us for those at tluibrand@gmail.com.

You can send support to the fund through this link:
<https://www.cmml.us/ministry/turkish-ministry-fund>