**REASONS FOR BUILDING PROJECT**

Eighteen years ago, when our church started in the rented apartment of a Swiss missionary, we were just 22 people! But with such limited space and it’s unknown location our church had no way to grow. But when we were able to rent a building for our church activities, our church grew more quickly. We are now 150 people. But this still, is only a temporary solution. I want to share with you the most important reasons why both the congregation and other pastors in Turkey know that we must move forward to purchase property and build an adequate church building.

1. **IDENTITY:** Turkish people are very suspicious about home churches because before the 1980s, there were many communist and other illegal groups that met in homes for their activities. If we use homes for our church gatherings, people suspect we are doing illegal things. A church building legitimizes our group as an open group. Outsiders feel free to come and visit us and they see that we are not doing anything illegal. The building is also very important for our identity as a Turkish church. In Turkey, there is a mindset that if you are a foreigner you should be a Christian, but if you are a Turk, you should be a Muslim. Most people in Turkey believe that Christianity is a Western religion. The area that we are renting for our church meetings now is full of Western foreigners. When unbelieving Turks visit this center and see so many Westerners present, they often dismiss it as a place only for foreigners. But, if visitors see a Christian place of worship full of Turks it will be far more interesting to them and it will break the mindset that Turks can only worship as Muslims.
2. **WITNESS:** A building is a very good evangelistic tool. If anyone is interested in Christianity, or if they have questions they want to ask, they look for a place to go and get information. We have had a lot of visitors in the last ten years. Most of our church members came to Christ this way. When they visited our church building, we had the opportunity to sit with them and talk to them about Christ. They could see first-hand who we are and what we are about.
3. **SECURITY:** A building is important because of security issues. In Turkey, there are groups and individuals who don’t like Christians. We are aware of that. When we first meet someone, we cannot invite them to our home. But, with a building we can invite them to come visit anytime. A church building is also protected by the police. During our services, police come and check on us.
4. **AVAILABILITY:** As a church we are renting the cultural center for our church activities. But, during the last four years, the cultural center became open to many other groups for their activities. Now, it is a very busy place. We are limited in how much time we can use the building for our church activities. We pay rent every month. If we want to use the building for any extra time, we also have to pay extra. The Turkish church’s financial situation is not great because we don’t have regular support. Sometimes it is very difficult for us to pay our rent and other costs. If we have our own building it will be easier on us financially and as a church we can do more outreach activities for youth, homeless people, and other forms of community outreach. With a building we can become a more active and effective church for our community.
5. **COMMUNITY:** It is very important for us to have a church building for the fellowship of our believers. Some of our church members work on Sundays. But, if we have our own building, they can come anytime during the week for fellowship. We can provide counseling, teaching, and encouragement for them. For the Turkish church, a building is not only a place to worship, it is a place to build deeper relationships with each other. Believers often gather together at the building during the week for informal times of fellowship.
6. **LEGAL PRESENCE :** As a church, we can start an association that will be recognized by the Turkish government. Our building can then function as a business that can support its own needs. We can have a cafeteria or rent our space to other groups to bring in some revenue.

Here are the six most important reasons that I am asking you, your friends and your congregation to consider a gift to help us move forward on building the first and only Christian church in Antalya, a city of over one million Turks. This is the most urgent need of our church. Your gifts will greatly bless the Turkish church and assure its continuing and growing ministry in the years to come. For the reasons mentioned above the vital presence of Christian witness will be seriously constrained. Your partnership in ministry with the Antalya Evangelical Church will stand as a witness to the power of the gospel and the faithfulness of God’s people. Your support won’t just affect the Turkish church in the short run, it will bless us well into the future. This building will be used for years and years to come and with our prayers many people will come to Christ. It can and will be a place for believers to learn and grow in their faith. We will be grateful for your support for many years in that building. We know that without your support and prayers it wouldn’t have been possible. God bless you! Thank you so much for considering to support us.

Ramazan Arkan

Pastor of Antalya Evangelical Church