

McCRACKEN MEMO

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CHRISTMAS 2004

Christmas is long past, but we can't help but tell you about it, even now. This Christmas, our primary outreaches took place at **three Christmas parties** designed for families and children. On two nights running, we invited **500 children and parents** to enjoy a cooked meal, live entertainment, and a family photo in front of the Christmas tree. As they left, each received a gift—something small for the parents and an overflowing backpack for every child.

Then, on the Saturday before Christmas, we made the ARC into a **Christmas Toy Village** for children. Each child was given a ticket that entitled them to "buy" toys in heaped toy rooms and grab some yummy hot chocolate and cakes in the "café" run by local school children. They were also able, in other corners of the hall, to have their faces painted, make a nativity scene, decorate cookies and choose nice children's clothes. It was a party and a half!



Steve & Kendra at Christmas Outreach

But we saw in the comments of a few refugees that there was something to these parties beyond giving people a little joy and a few toys.

"S" commented, just before he left the party with his wife and child, **"I pray to God that He will help me understand Jesus, because I have seen love in these people here."**

Then it was Mr. "G", still a Muslim, with his five children and wife, who said, **"We do not come here anymore for the food. We have food on our table**

every day now. We come because we are treated as friends."

And last was the comment of a young Afghani man, who spoke (positively) of the ARC as **"that place of Jesus."**



William and "N" (Afghani)

The true success of these parties was not the temporary happiness or the toys we gave to people. The heart of these parties was Jesus. He was there, and the people sensed it. They knew in their hearts what they couldn't yet understand in their minds: that Emmanuel was among us at the ARC this Christmas. And they felt welcomed and loved in His presence.

Thank you to those of you who gave towards our Christmas outreaches. Your donations helped make these parties a joyful memory for so many refugees, and gave opportunity for the Truth of Jesus to be proclaimed yet again among Muslims in Athens.



Scott and Sarah (Afghani)

NEW LIFE

(THE FOLLOWING WAS RECENTLY WRITTEN BY OUR IRANIAN TEAMMATE NADER)...

IT WAS TUESDAY MORNING AT THE ATHENS REFUGEE CENTER WHEN "A", A **KURDISH MAN**, SHOWED UP LOOKING FOR SOMEONE WHO COULD SPEAK WITH HIM IN FARSI. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN A MEMBER OF A POLITICAL PARTY IN KURDISTAN FOR 4 YEARS (WHERE THEY TAUGHT THEM TO FIGHT WITH GUNS FOR FREEDOM).

"I HAD NO INTEREST FOR RELIGION AND GOD BUT MY INTEREST WAS FOR A NEW GUN AND NEW TACTICS FOR FIGHTING," HE SAID.

IT TOOK 15 DAYS FOR HIM TO COME TO ATHENS THROUGH THE SMUGGLERS WHO HE PAID 4,000 EUROS. HE STAYED WITH OTHER KURDISH PEOPLE IN ATHENS. **ONE NIGHT HE SAW A DREAM. IN HIS DREAM SOMEBODY WAS CALLING HIM. HE LOOKED UP AND SAW WRITING IN THE SKY HE COULDN'T READ. HE HEARD AGAIN THE VOICE CALLING HIM, SAYING, "COME TO ME". HE WOKE UP CRYING AND SHAKING. HE TOLD THE OTHER KURDISH GUYS ABOUT HIS DREAM, HOPING THEY COULD HELP HIM UNDERSTAND. THEY TOLD HIM TO GO TO THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE AND ASK THEM ABOUT HIS DREAM, AND THEY DIRECTED HIM TO OUR MINISTRY CENTER.**

HE CAME AND TOLD ABOUT HIS DREAM. I WAS LISTENING TO HIS ENTIRE STORY AND I SAID, "I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS, BUT I KNEW GOD IS CALLING YOU TO COME TO HIM." I TALKED ABOUT GOD AND TOLD HIM THAT FOR MANY YEARS HE FOUGHT FOR FREEDOM AND PEACE THAT HE NEVER RECEIVED; TODAY MAYBE IS THE TIME FOR YOU TO RECEIVE IT THROUGH JESUS...NOT BY GUNS, BUT BY FAITH IN HIM. I TOLD HIM SEVERAL VERSES IN THE BIBLE AND HE LISTENED ATTENTIVELY. **HE TOOK MY HAND AND STARTED TO CRY. HE DIDN'T CARE ABOUT ALL THE HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE AROUND US (EVEN THOUGH, FOR HIS SAKE, I TRIED TO STOP HIM). I GAVE HIM A BIBLE TO READ ALONE FOR HIMSELF AND COME BACK TO ASK ANY QUESTIONS HE HAD. WHEN I WAS**

READY TO LEAVE HIM ALONE, HE TOOK MY HAND AGAIN AND HE SAID, "IF I READ THE BIBLE AND WANT TO RECEIVE HIM, WHAT SHALL I DO?"

I SAID, "JUST OPEN YOUR HEART AND LET HIM COME INTO YOUR LIFE."

HE SAID, "CAN WE DO THAT NOW?" SO WE PRAYED AND HE INVITED CHRIST INTO HIS LIFE!

I WAS SO HAPPY AND GRATEFUL TO GOD TO BRING HIM TO HIMSELF. I WAS HAPPY TO SEE WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THE HEART OF THE PEOPLE. THEN WE PRAYED TOGETHER.

PRAY FOR "A" AND OTHER LIKE HIM WHO COME TO KNOW THE LORD. AND THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR PRAYERS FOR EVERY SOUL FOR SALVATION. MAY GOD BLESS YOU FOR BEING PART OF WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THE REFUGEE MINISTRY HERE IN ATHENS.

Family Update

Our kids are entering new phases and we are thankful for their maturity and desire to be who God has made them to be.

***Kendra** (15 ½) is finishing up her sophomore year and we're starting to think about things like SAT's, ACT's, etc. She has a full load this year but has been handling it well, especially since she has quite a social life to juggle as well!*

***Cody** entered into his teenage years with style! We had a "rite of passage" ceremony, a family crest presented that his grandfather made, and a "book" from significant men in Cody's life, offering words of advice and wisdom. He is finishing 7th grade and has enjoyed home school, like his sister.*

***Kyle** is doing GREAT in 5th grade at Greek school and (like his older brother) is progressing well in his guitar and continues to work toward his*

black belt in karate.

***William** (6 ½) is thriving at his school and we are delighted and thankful for his progress. What a gift from God his school has been!*

Adding teaching to my schedule this year has given me a very "full plate"! But, I (Vicki) love it and am grateful for all that the Lord is teaching me! It's been a year of joy and growth, and now we are looking forward to seeing friends and family in the States this summer!

Yes, we are STILL in the adoption process, but have recently made some

changes that we hope will bring progress. Keep praying!

As always, we are grateful for you and the investments you have made in our family!

Athens Intensive Ministry School (AIMS)...



Students/Staff at Graduation Dinner

The first 6-month session of AIMS was recently completed. Much was learned by staff and students, and we are prayerfully discussing how and when the second session will begin. Changes need to be made, money needs to be raised, and potential students need to be prepared. PLEASE PRAY! Here is part of a letter one of the students wrote after finishing AIMS:

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I am from Afghanistan, one of the AIMS students. During the AIMS classes, God blessed me a lot and I have learned very important subjects. God bless all those who supported us by prayers and money.

My vision is to take the Gospel to Afghanistan and serve the Lord. By your support I am sure you changed by God's power lots of peoples life. I hope

to do for new believers the same you did for us. God bless you!

March Tea House Statistics

- **Over 8,000** refugees were served food and exposed to the Gospel
- **About 40 countries** were represented, including:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bulgaria, Burma, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Greece, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kurdistan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Libya, Mauritania, Moldova, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and the Ukraine

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR FAITHFUL AND GENEROUS PARTNERSHIP IN THIS MINISTRY. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOU.

For Financial Investments: Checks should be made out to **International Teams**, with an enclosed note designating to Scott & Vicki McCracken's account.

Send to:

International Teams
411 W. River Rd.
Elgin, IL 60123-1570