

Subj: **Happy New Year from Athens!**
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Dear Friends,

We hope you had a wonderful Christmas, and that the new year will find you experiencing more of God's ACTIVE presence in your life!

As God is in the business of bringing new life and new growth into the world, JANUARY is one of His many gifts that He has given us for helping us to "start new" (see the quotes at the bottom related to the New Year). Here are some things that are new from our end of the world...

* NEW JOB FOR SCOTT...As of January 1st, I (Scott) have turned over the position of Team Leader to Kenn and Lisa Dirrim. This is an answer to prayers I have been praying for 17+ years!!

I will be "coaching" Refugee Ministry Team Leaders in Turkey, Italy, Athens, and possibly another European country (we are working on the possibility of starting a new one soon--details later). I will also be involved in the following ministries: helping with writing funding proposals, 2 Bible studies a week, hospitality ministry, and the development of a "different kind" of discipleship training program for refugees in Athens (details later). I also hope to work more on improving my Greek (which needs MUCH improvement). I will also continue to preach at least once a month at St. Andrew's International Church, and occasionally at others.

On the home front, I will continue teaching two subjects in homeschool (Bible and Algebra), taking Ellie to the physical therapist twice a week, playing taxi driver for our kids, and trying to do better at serving Vicki however she may need me.

I am NOT "retiring" as some have suggested. I am re-focusing on something NEW, and asking God to do something NEW here... through someone NEW. Thanks for your continued prayers for me, the Athens Refugee Ministry Team, and the Leadership Team.

* NEW REPORT OF CHRISTMAS OUTREACHES...Our Christmas Outreaches went well! Some heard about the Gospel for the first time. Some learned more. Others were drawn deeper into Him. Many practical gifts were given, as well as New Testaments in the major languages represented.

MANY THANKS to all who had a part in this year's attempt to share the reason for the season. (If you sent a financial investment for this, you should be receiving a thank-you letter from the Helping Hands director soon).

* NEW ADDRESS BOOK...I know, I know--we should have recently backed up the data, but we hadn't in a long time, and we lost 1000+ addresses in our Outlook address book. If you haven't heard from us in a while, this is why. If you received this and you don't want to be on our list, let us know and we will remove you. If you know someone we know and they did not receive this, PLEASE tell them to email us their address and we will restore them to our KNEE-MAIL list.

* NEW "ELLIE" BLOG POSTS...Ellie is doing well and we all adore her. It was her FIRST CHRISTMAS WITH US!! I recently put a few comments, as well as new pics and videos on Ellie's blog. If you need the blog address, let us know (some anti-spam programs keep out e-mails with URL's listed in them).

* NEW NEST, AND NEW LIFE FOR "K"...PRAISE GOD that our "Nest" ministry (temporary shelter for homeless refugees) was re-opened in late November, under the management of Brett Sanner. One of the first residents, a young Kurdish man, spent several nights talking about Christ with the house leader (a young Persian Kurdish believer), and just this past week (at a Christmas service in a local church) publicly decided to follow Jesus! Please pray for "K", that he will grow in Christ and be re-joined with his wife and child soon.

* NEW LIFE FOR AFGHANIS...many Afghanis have recently arrived in Greece, some have come to faith in Christ and are leading others to Him already. I hope to share more detailed stories in the coming months.

* NEW ADVENTURE FOR KENDRA...Kendra and her friend/teammate Becky Sirinides begin their missions trip on January 16th when they will fly to Austria to serve for about a month at The Oasis (the ministry to refugees that Vicki and I helped start over 20 years ago). From there, they will go to Costa Rica, then Elim Bible Camp in Colorado, then the Philippines, then Nairobi, Kenya. They will return to Athens in August 2008. They have their tickets in hand, and just under 1/3 of what they will need for the entire 7 months of service. Anyone desiring to invest in this mission trip can send their tax-deductible donation to:

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

Please make out the checks to: International Teams and enclose a note indicating your desire for it to go in Kendra McCracken's account. Thank you for any prayer and/or financial investment you may make in this way.

THANK YOU SO MUCH for standing with us in this ministry. We NEED you more than ever before. The Lord is using you to help us reach the nations through Athens (and Istanbul, and Rome, and ?).

Grateful,

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NEW YEAR QUOTES...

* "Youth is when you are ALLOWED to stay up late on New Year's Eve. Middle age is when you are FORCED to." --Bill Vaughn

* "We spend January walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives...not looking for flaws, but potential." --Ellen Goodman

* "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old has passed away; behold, all things have become new." 2 Cor. 5:17

* "We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day." --Edith Lovejoy Pierce