

Subj: **AIMS vision meeting**
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Dear Praying Friends,

Tuesday evening, March 9th, some of us in Athens will be meeting together to begin "VISIONEERING" about the Athens Intensive Ministry School (AIMS). The aim of AIMS will be to effectively equip (in the short period of time they are in Athens) refugees who want to serve the Lord. It will be a full-time intensive MINISTRY training school. An initial vision draft is included below for those who want more info. However, this evening is our FIRST corporate meeting about this potential ministry opportunity.

Right now, we have some quality guys BEGGING us to do something like this. Please pray that we will be unified and hear from God regarding the how and the when and the who.

Thanks,

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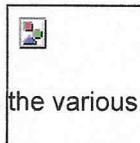
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A Vision for the Nations Reaching the Nations
 ("From the Harvest to the Harvest")

In addition to meeting temporary needs of the refugees, it is an integral aspect of the I.T./Athens ministry to disciple people who come to Christ and help them to become well-grounded in Him. As they continue to grow in their faith, they share Jesus all along the "Refugee Highway". While various part-time methods of teaching and training are being implemented in these days, ***it is the vision of the Athens Team to eventually establish a full-time intensive ministry training center*** for those refugees who demonstrate a more serious desire to grow in the Lord and be used by Him. **Solid Bible teaching**, which would include exegetical studies as well as systematic theology, combined with an emphasis on **character development** and training in **practical ministry experience**, will result in a well-rounded educational experience for these enthusiastic disciples of Jesus.

Instructors in the program would include full-time staff from the IT/Athens Team as well as local pastors and short-termers from abroad.



Students could be housed in the shelter facility and practice their ministry skills in the various ministry opportunities that will take place at the **Athens Refugee Center**.

Scholarships would assist in providing for daily needs so that they will be able to focus on their education with a minimum of distractions. Scholarship funding would also provide for committed and qualified translators.

Our Greatest Challenge = Our Greatest Opportunity

Tuesday, March 09, 2004 America Online: Macnmony

In a word, our greatest challenge in this ministry is the **transiency** of the refugees. They come with high hopes and are quickly disillusioned with life in Greece. They understand that there is no "normal" life available for them here, so after a short stay in Athens they move on to other countries. Our time with them is limited. Discipleship efforts must be intensive. In normal cases, "rooting" and "grounding" takes time. Here, we want to make every effort to help them grow in Christ and be equipped to help others know Him as quickly as possible. Through our New Believers Classes, Intensive Biblical Studies, Timothy Projects, and New Life Training Center programs this is happening on a part-time, limited basis.



However, even in this limited way, we are encouraged to see how God is growing up new babies right before our eyes! Their **transiency** then becomes an **opportunity** to "send them on" as dispensers of hope along the refugee highway. "Bring them in, Grow them up, and Send them out!" has been our unspoken rallying cry! Their **transiency** helps take the Gospel to the nations!

But how can we do better? How can we more effectively equip them before they move on? How can we narrow their focus while they are in Athens? How can we minimize distractions while they are here? How can we give them more comprehensive training that will help develop their character, increase their Bible knowledge and life-application of the Scriptures, while giving them practical ministry experience? And how can we better equip them to equip others in the limited time we have with them?

**A Full-Time Intensive Ministry Training Center
(The Athens International Ministry School--AIMS)**

IMAGINE... (mostly Muslim) refugees coming from "closed" countries, meeting Jesus in Athens, growing in their new faith, trained to minister to others, impacting friends and family from their home country, sharing Jesus with friends and family in Athens, and then (as they move on to one, two, three, or more other countries) impacting the world with the Gospel!

IMAGINE... refugees whom God has called and gifted to serve as church-planters and pastors of ethnic fellowships around the world! Some even return to their home countries as ministers for Him!

IMAGINE... refugees who are not only willing to share their faith along the Refugee Highway, but who are also able to EFFECTIVELY demonstrate the character of Christ and accurately handle the Word, as workmen who do not need to be ashamed.

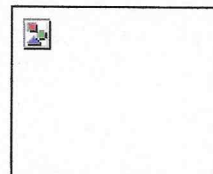
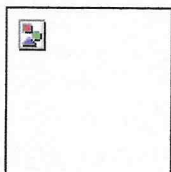
IMAGINE... refugees who are new believers, on fire for the Lord, living together, studying together, learning and growing together, ministering together, experiencing a balanced Christian education in the context of community.

IMAGINE... refugees who are hungry for the Word and being fed for hours every day by qualified teachers from around the world, who come from different denominations but focus on Christ, emphasizing what unites us instead of what divides us, teaching the students not only how to spiritually feed themselves but also how to feed others.

IMAGINE... refugees who are daily experiencing exegetical Bible study, systematic theology, character development, and on-the-job ministry training; they are learning to be and learning to do, growing, sharing, and impacting the world for Christ!

IMAGINE... refugees who are not distracted with the daily necessity of looking for work in order to basically survive but, due to the generosity of caring and strategic investors, have been provided with scholarships for their schooling as well as their daily needs.

What an opportunity for prayer! What an opportunity for strategic investment in the advancement of God's kingdom! THIS IS ALREADY HAPPENING!! JUST IMAGINE HOW IT CAN HAPPEN MORE FREQUENTLY AND MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH AN INTENSIVE FULL-TIME SCHOOL!



Returns on Investments

Although many incentives exist for investing in such a ministry, a few are significantly worthy of immediate mention:

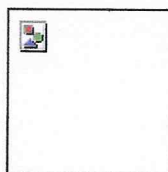
- 1. God loves refugees (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)
- 2. God loves the whole world (John 3:16)
- 3. God loves reaching the world through refugees (Acts 8:1,4)
- 4. God is pleased when we invest in His plan to disciple the nations (Matthew 28:18-20)

This school is not about one more ministry into which we can pour money and time. It is not merely about expanding the IT/Athens ministry. It is not only about helping refugees to grow in the Lord. ***This is about joining the Lord in His plan for the redemption of the nations!***

It is a ministry worthy of investment for many reasons, including the following...

- A. "Unreached" people groups are being reached
- B. "Unreached" people that are being reached are reaching others
- C. It is an extremely strategic time of their lives to focus on spiritual growth
- D. It is not simply a ministry of addition but of multiplication

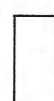
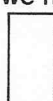
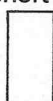
God has promised to bless and reward those who work with Him in the Harvest. God has promised His presence and His provision. God has promised His power and authority. He is ready. He is already working. It is time for His people to join Him in intentional, sacrificial, and strategic ways. God will be blessed. The lost will be blessed. The new believers will be blessed. And we will be blessed. It is a win-win investment.



Now Is The Time!

God has been at work ***preparing*** the nations and preparing the peoples for this opportunity! He is shaking the nations where it has been difficult to take the Gospel so that the people will flee to places where they can hear it.

This is not merely the result of men and politics. We are convinced that it is part of the Divine plan of a loving God to bring all peoples to Himself. God Himself has led us here. God Himself is at work, drawing refugees into His family. We believe that God Himself has given us the vision to make disciples and to equip them in the most effective ways possible in the short amount of time we have.



We don't know how long these opportunities will be available, but we know that they are available **now!** We don't know when the doors will close, but we know that they are open **now!** We don't know when the privilege of serving in this way will end, but we know that the privilege exists **now!** In this place, in this time, in

this context (a “transit station” on the Refugee Highway), right **now**, God has given us an incredibly strategic opportunity for reaching the nations. We want to work with Him in what He is doing! And we want to do it now. We want to call others to join us, and we are asking them to join us **now**, before it is too late.

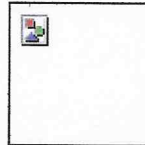
What Will It Take?

To see the vision fulfilled, many general plans as well as specific details need to come together, including the following...

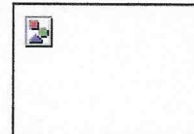
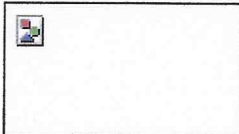
- A **PLACE** for students to meet for several hours every day in a secure, private, and quiet setting that provides an environment conducive to studying. We are estimating that such a place will cost approximately \$700 USD/month.



- **INSTRUCTORS** who are qualified and willing to teach on a full-time basis. They will be occasionally assisted by short-term part-time volunteers from Athens and abroad. Currently we do not have enough full-time staff to meet this need. We hope that in the near future, this will be rectified. Until then, we can recruit a number of part-timers to “team teach”, meeting the need in a temporary “less-than-ideal” way.



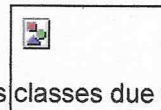
- **CURRICULUM** that is Biblical, relevant, intensive, inclusive, eclectic, and transferable (and can be taught in a **6-month time frame**). We are currently investigating and experimenting with ideas and resources that we trust will provide a balanced education that focuses on Biblical knowledge and application, character development, and ministry training (the N.L.T.C. and practical experience at the A.R.C. would be included).



- **TRANSLATORS** who will faithfully and accurately communicate in the language of the students. Scholarship funds would enable us to assist such individuals so that they are not distracted with other job opportunities. We are estimating the need to raise approximately \$800 USD/month (\$40/day x5 days/week, x 4 weeks/month).
- **STUDENTS** who are hungry, teachable, and committed to an education at this level. **We have them already!** However, due to their transient circumstances and desperate living circumstances they have also found it necessary to seek available employment in order to eke out a basic existence and perhaps provide some monetary assistance for family members who remain behind in their home country. Most of the refugees in Athens live on the streets, in abandoned houses, in the parks, or in run-down overcrowded rooms for which they must pay. Efforts would be made to house as many students as possible in the shelter facility of the HELPING HANDS ministry. However, as there may be more students in the school than can be adequately housed in the shelter facility, this may prove to be too limiting.

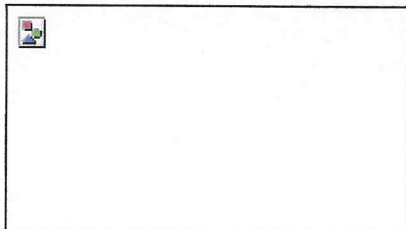
Scholarships helping to support students in this **Athens International Ministry School (AIMS)** would allow them to **exclusively** focus on their schooling for **6 months**, without the distraction of needing to look for work.

Scholarships would encourage **daily** participation, so students will not miss classes due to possible job opportunities. It would encourage **mental concentration**, so that students ~~are not worrying~~ about where they will sleep, what they will eat, or how their families will survive. Scholarships would help meet daily **needs**, as these



are people in desperate circumstances unable to provide for even their most basic necessities. Scholarships would be a **strategic investment** in reaching the nations for Christ. Scholarships would be an investment in the **leaders** of tomorrow in the **Muslim world**.

Of course, everything must happen in God's power, according to God's timing. He is our Ultimate Source, and we will continue to wait upon Him. But as we pray for this vision to come to pass, will you join us? Will you pray that we will be faithful to do what God has called us to do **today** while pursuing the vision He has given us for *tomorrow*? Will you pray that these precious refugees who come to Christ in Athens will be sufficiently trained for following Jesus whole-heartedly? Will you pray about how God may lead you to become a part?



Any questions or further clarifications may be addressed to Scott McCracken at:

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God bless you as you continue to work and live for the advancement of His kingdom among the nations.