

September 2002



Dear Praying Friends,

We have seen God do **AMAZING** things the last several Christmas seasons in Athens where several thousands of refugees were impacted with practical gifts and exposure to the Gospel! This year, we are expecting more **AMAZING** things from God, but in slightly different ways...

As our team has been attempting to hear God's voice, there seems to be a unanimous understanding that this Christmas the Lord is leading us to spend **MORE FOCUS** on **FEWER PEOPLE...**to INVEST **MORE** in a "**SELECT**" FEW...to **STRATEGICALLY SOW SEEDS WHERE THE SOIL IS GOOD.**

This year, we will **NOT** be trying to buy as many gifts as we can to give to as many refugees as we can.

However, a **GOD-SIZED** plan is being pursued and we are asking you to pray. Pray that we will understand and pursue this plan in a way that will glorify God. Pray about being a part of this plan yourself and communicating it to others who may want to take part. Pray that refugees will be drawn to Christ and grow in Him because of it.

"So, what is the plan?" you ask. Good question. Thanks for asking. **The Athens Christmas Outreach 2002 has a 4-fold platform. In remembrance of that first Christmas night when our Savior "homeless" with His earthly father and mother, I will share the biggest one first...**

**PLATFORM #1...Four New "Nests"**



Currently, we rent two small apartments in which we temporarily house up to 24 homeless refugees at a time. This is our "Nest" ministry ("nest"—a temporary domicile for creatures of flight). At the top of our "Christmas Wish List" is to be able to pay **one year's rent and set up costs for FOUR additional Nests.**

These apartments are not merely shelters from the elements. They are "**nurturing centers**" for new believers. They are "laboratories" for believers to grow together and be a true community seven days a week. They are a place to prepare these young disciples before they "spread their wings" and leave the Nest. And we have found that when new believers have a place to sleep (most refugees in Athens live on the streets) they are **more likely to stay longer in Athens and go further in the discipleship process.**

Due to the transient nature of the refugees it is difficult to project with complete accuracy how many will stay in our Nests in one year, but based on past years' experience we estimate that **about 200 refugees will impacted by 6 Nests in one year's time.**

**PLATFORM #2...Our Volunteers**



Every Christmas we try to have a special celebration to express our gratitude to our **local volunteers** who serve in this ministry. We plan to have a simple program at the **Athens Refugee Center** where we will eat, sing, play, converse, and give gifts.

**PLATFORM #3...Ethnic Fellowships**



There are currently 4 ethnic fellowships that are associated with our ministry: **The Persian Christian Fellowship, The Kurdish Christian Fellowship, The Albanian Bible Study, and the**

**Russian Bible Study.** We would like to have a special Christmas party for each of these groups that includes food, decorations, and small gifts.



**PLATFORM #4...Individuals and families**

As a team, we would like to treat refugees with whom we have formed relationships to a warm **family-style Christmas** celebration that would include food and small gifts.

As usual, our regular programs at the Athens Refugee Center will continue to proclaim Christ and to especially make clear to those who don't know Him the true meaning of Christmas. However, this year's special Christmas focus will be on the above-mentioned people.

The budget we are trusting God to provide this year is **\$50,000**. As you have probably surmised, **Platform #1 will be about 90% of the budget**. As mentioned earlier, it is a **GOD-SIZED task**. We believe that where God guides, God provides. We also believe that God's primary channel of provision usually comes through His people.

So **please pray**. No guilt trips. No pressure. No psychological tricks. We know that there are many other worthy ministries and pressing needs to invest in. However, we also know that this is a ministry where God is working, and we want to invite you to join Him and us as we work together to bring Jesus to the nations through Athens. Thank you for caring. Thank you for praying. Thank you for giving if God so leads you.

Checks should be made out to **International Teams**, with a clear designation for "CHRISTMAS IN ATHENS". Financial investments may be sent to...

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



OR

**International Teams/UK**  
PO Box 11  
**Brecon, Powys**  
LD3 9WJ  
United Kingdom

OR

**International Teams/Canada**  
1 Union Street  
Elmira ON N3B 3J9  
Canada



God bless you as you continue to live for the advancement of His kingdom among the nations!

Grateful for You,

Scott & Vicki McCracken  
And the **I.T./Athens Refugee Team**