

Subj: **Christmas in Athens 2006**
Date: 9/21/2006 1:33:20 A.M. Central Standard Time
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(If you have high-speed internet connection, and would like the Word document of this with photos, let us know)

September 15, 2006

Dear Praying Friends,

As you know, our opportunity to reach Muslim refugees in this city is a strategic one. The Christmas season affords us an even greater opportunity as questions and discussions about the REASON for the holiday naturally arise. It is also a time of year when the giving of gifts (even in some Muslim cultures) is emphasized as one way of expressing love for friends and family.

As our team has been attempting to hear God's voice, there seems to be a common understanding that this Christmas the Lord is leading us to do MORE for LESS, to remember that LESS is MORE, and to emphasize LONG-TERM over SHORT-TERM. This year, we will NOT be trying to buy as many gifts as we can to give to as many refugees as we can.

The Athens Christmas Outreach 2006 has a 2-fold emphasis: Smaller Large Group Celebrations and More Small Group Celebrations. Allow me to explain...

Emphasis #1...Smaller Large Group Celebrations: We will host 4 separate celebrations (1 for children, 1 for Persians, 1 for African and other English/Arabic speakers, 1 for Middle Eastern and other English/Arabic speakers), which will focus on people with whom we have some kind of relationship, with no more than 100 people at each.

We would like to give practical long-term gifts that will include school supplies and a gender-relevant toy for the children. We would like to distribute gifts to the adults that will include a backpack, raincoat, sleeping bag, and New Testament in their own language. Our celebrations will include good food, decorations, and a program that uses preaching, testimonies, music and drama to share the "reason for the season".

Emphasis #2...More Small Celebrations

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

We are estimating that these combined celebrations will cost an average of \$50 USD per refugee. However, ANY amount the Lord may lead you to invest will be helpful. EVERY gift will be used to help reach the nations through

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Athens.

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 Outreach will be FOCUSED on the above-mentioned people.

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.

Cheques should be made out to International Teams, with a clear designation for "CHRISTMAS IN ATHENS". Financial investments may be sent to...
International Teams/USA, 411 W. River Rd., Elgin, IL 60123

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

International Teams/Australia, PO Box 1123, Baulkam Hills NSW 1755

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

International Teams/New Zealand, PO Box 15-142, Auckland 1232
Note: gifts received above and beyond our needs for Christmas will be used for other programs that serve refugees (i.e., feeding and shelter ministries, sleeping bags, etc.)

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

On behalf of the Leadership Team (Themis Sirinides, Scott McCracken, and Nikos Stefanidis), we are, together with you, His HELPING HANDS,

Nikos Stefanidis

Executive Director,
HELPING HANDS

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Web pages:

www.ITRefMin.org (click "Teams", then click "Athens")

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www.iteams.org

<http://refminathens.blogspot.com> (some refugee stories)

www.geocities.com/scripturecalligraphy (purchase beautiful art and support our teammates)

www.helpinghands.gr/en/default.htm

www.helpinghands.watchmyshow.info

Our ministry is striving to be a FULL-SERVICE station on this exit ramp of the Refugee Highway by partnering with churches to offer practical services which demonstrate the love of God for the refugee as a whole person, and which invite the refugee to be a part of advancing His kingdom among the nations.