



NEWS

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# HELPING HANDS

*A full-service station, demonstrating the care of God for the refugees on the Athens exit ramp of the Refugee Highway*

## A Gift of Shelter

Many answers can be given to this question.

When I think of Christmas, my mind goes to the words of Luke 2:7: **"There was no room for them in the inn."** There was not a **shelter** for Joseph and Mary to deliver her baby. They found a place with the animals, and there Jesus was born.

When I think of Christmas, I think of Jesus who said, **"The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."** (Matt. 8:02)

When I think of Christmas, I think of the hundreds of refugees who sleep in Athens' parks at night because they do not have any **shelter**. When I think of Christmas, the word **"shelter"** comes to my mind again and again.

When I think of Christmas, I think of the Greek lady who found two refugee families that had broken into her uninhabited house to find some shelter and said to them, **"Do not be afraid. You can stay for a few months and I will even pay all the**

**utilities."** What a gift it was for these refugee families with small kids!

When I think of Christmas, I think of a true story I read about Mrs. 'D' and her family. At the age of 39, she had a heart attack and bypass surgery. A year later, her daughter 'H' became paralyzed as the result of a car accident. Mrs. 'D' had to quit her job to take care of her daughter, and the bills started piling up. Soon they would be facing eviction. The mother was so angry with God that she stopped praying. But God never left her. On Christmas Eve of 2004, a young girl knocked on her door, gave her an envelope, and left. In the envelope were a note and a check covering the cost of the house for a year. The note read, **"Please accept this gift in the honor of the Man whose birthday we celebrate on this holy night. Long**



**ago, His family also had a shelter problem."**

Jesus understood Mrs. 'D's' troubles. He brought her hope and met her needs through others who contributed funds. In John 6:1-14 we read how Jesus used the offering of a little child-five barley

loaves and two fish-and fed thousands of hungry people. As we are serving God by serving the thousands of refugees in the center of Athens, we see people who need food, clothing, and medical help. We see mothers with newborn babies who don't even have a stroller to carry them. **We see so many who need a shelter... and**

**we pray to God to do something.** Jesus is still looking for a few common folk like you and me who are willing to commit through ordinary, intentional acts of selfless sacrifices so He can turn our offerings into His glory; so He can meet the needs of the people around us. After all, this is what Christmas is all about. God

saw our need and sent Jesus for our eternal salvation.

**Will you pray with us about the refugees and their needs?**

**Will you allow God to use you to meet some of the needs these people have?**

**Will you offer your gifts and abilities at the feet of Jesus?**

**Will you?**

With love and prayer  
Your partner  
in God's ministry

**Nikos Stefanidis**  
*Director of Helping Hands*

# Unbelievable True Stories

Praise God as He continues to reach the nations through Athens by saving people in amazing ways!

## The chain of spreading the gospel of salvation

"One Thursday morning, a young man from Iran and a young man from Afghanistan showed up together at our refugee ministry centre. They introduced themselves as believers in Christ and had been part of the Persian Church in Turkey during their stay in the country as they were journeying west.

As we listened to their story and heard how they first understood the Good News and believed in Jesus, we learned something VERY ENCOURAGING from the young Iranian, 'R'. Apparently his brother, 'CH,' on his way to the West where he sought a better life, had come through Athens in 2001. He came to our refugee ministry centre for food and shelter, but he found far more than he expected. He heard about our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ and became a believer. Although we have not heard from 'CH' since he left Athens, we learned from his brother 'R' that he went on to live in England where he is currently attending an Iranian Bible School.

'CH' could not keep the Good News for himself. He was thinking about his family back in Iran. As he was communicating with his family on the phone he was able to share with them the Gospel of sal-

vation through Jesus and encouraged them to watch some Christian programming on satellite TV. This is how 'R' finally decided to believe and put his trust in Jesus (while in Iran), and subsequently had the privilege of LEADING SEVERAL OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS TO CHRIST, who are currently following Jesus while living in Iran!"

It is amazing the chain of people God is using to save souls and collect His children from around the world. God used the **Helping Hands** ministry to save 'CH' then God used 'CH' and the **Christian programs on Satellite TV** to save his brother 'R' and used 'R' to save other members of his family... and in Heaven we will know the final number of people saved through this chain of sharing the Good News from one to another. **And all of you who are praying and supporting this ministry are also part of this chain of salvation of dear men and women for whom Jesus died.**

**Thank you for partnering with us and please pray that God would protect these new believers from persecution. Pray for the protection of our team members and our ministry center in Athens. Pray for God's will to be done here in Athens as it is done in heaven.**

## "Faith on trial..."

"We have written to you before about "M" from Afghanistan who lost his whole family in an earthquake in Iran, remarried and lost his second wife and their two children after she divorced him when he became a Christian, had scalding water thrown on him by a relative the day of his baptism, and who has been beaten up for his faith a number of times by fanatic Muslims in Athens.

Recently, he rented a small studio apartment and, after being there for only few days, returned one afternoon to find that the police had chained the doors and informed him that the man who had "rented" it to him was not the true owner, and was being taken to court, so "M" would have to find somewhere else to stay.

He ended up with some Muslim Afghans who

allowed him to stay with them for a few days while he tried to find another place. While with them, he discovered that they were reading the New Testament! Not wanting to reveal to them immediately that he was a believer, he began to read it with them, "discussing" their questions with them. Finally, he revealed to them his own faith in Christ and shared the Good News with them. The first Sunday after he lost his apartment, one of those

other men accepted Jesus as well!"

**Please pray for his spiritual growth and protection and that the others will come to Jesus as well. Thank God that we have been able to find a suitable building for our "NEST" ministry (read more below) and please pray that God will provide all of the money to maintain this shelter for refugee believers and seekers.**

## Encouraging news from Iran

We often hear good news from refugees who have been in Greece, become believers, and are now living in other countries. Here is a true story as shared by our Iranian teammate, Nader:

*"We heard wonderful news from "A," our Iranian brother who came to the Lord while in Athens. He was an alcoholic, but as "A" began to develop his walk with the Lord, the Lord completely delivered him from alcoholism. About four years ago, his wife told him that if he did not return to Iran she was going to divorce him, so he returned. Some time after returning, he led his wife and kids to the Lord, then his parents and siblings, then his wife's parents and siblings. They started meeting in his home for worship and Bible studies.*

*Soon, men in police uniforms with I.D. papers were showing up during these house meetings and beating "A" severely. These beatings actual-*



*ly began to draw the attention of the neighbours who asked "A" why they were doing this to him. He told them it was all about Jesus. This gave him the opportunity to share Jesus with his neighbours, who started coming to Christ and joined the home fellowship!*

*One of those neighbours was a policeman who investigated and found out that there was actually no order from the police department for beating to be carried out against "A," and that the men coming to do this were imposters! This neighbour promised protection against any further beatings.*

**THERE ARE NOW FIVE HOME FELLOWSHIPS THAT "A" HAS STARTED IN HIS CITY SINCE LEAVING GREECE FOUR YEARS AGO!"**

**Please pray for the protection of brother "A" and of the other believers in his area and in the whole country of Iran.**

# Update on different ministries

## Tea House Ministry

Each Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday we provide food, tea and a place where refugees can sit, play, and talk with their friends and with our staff. Our hope is that they would also learn something about Jesus through the videos shown, and the tracts and Bibles that are available.

During each Tea House we run many other ministries. We have a room for the little children where sisters from our team and volunteers keep them occupied and shower them with the love of Christ. We have an activity room for the older kids who do not yet go to public schools. We distribute Family Care Packages to families with special needs. You can

read about other ministries that take place during Tea House below.

**We are thankful to God for moving His people from abroad and from Greece** to provide the means to keep the center open. **We regularly experience miraculous providence**, such as the Greek cheese maker who not only donated 1½ metric tons of feta cheese worth about \$15,000.00 US, but also paid to ship it from his warehouse 400 kilometers away.



## Give Away Ministry

With so many refugees living in Athens, and so many new ones coming to Greece every day, the need of clothing, sleeping bags, shoes, underwear, socks, etc. is always great. We never have enough, and all of us are daily put in the difficult position where we have to say, "Sorry, I cannot help you today." But through the donations of local churches and things brought to us from abroad by short-term teams, we are able to help many of the refugees.

**We thank all of you who have partnered with us to make it possible to say "yes" to needs and, in this way, demonstrate God's love to the refugees in Athens.**



## Shower Ministry

For many refugees, their need for food is not as great as their need for a place to take a warm shower. Seeing this need, especially with so many newly arriving refugees, we extended the days and hours for more refugees to have the opportunity to have a shower each week. We know that this means higher bills for water and electricity, but we proceed in faith that God will provide. While waiting their turn, the refugees have the opportunity to watch a video, to read the Bible, and to talk with our staff. Through this ministry, many refugees have heard about Jesus and felt His love for them.

**Please pray that the Lord will continue providing the funds to cover the cost. Above all, pray that the Holy Spirit will save many.**



## Laundry Ministry



Many of the refugees, both individuals and families, are living in poor housing where they cannot have a shower or wash their clothing. Seeing this need, we prayed and God provided washing machines and driers through one of His children. Though this new ministry has increased our water and electric bills, God has faithfully provided since we began offering this opportunity for refugee men and women last April.

A member of our staff takes each load of clothing, washes them, dries them and returns them to the owner. In this way we protect our washing machines and make sure that a variety of people are given a chance to wash some of their clothing. This ministry is

just one more opportunity to show God's love to the refugees. And while they are waiting for their clothing, they can talk with us, read something from the literature available or stand and talk with their own friends.

**Please pray that the Lord will continue to provide the necessary funds. One day we dream of a larger place where we can have more machines and allow more refugees to walk the streets of Athens in clean clothes.**

## Language Ministries

Any of us who have visited a foreign country where the people did not speak our language have experienced what it is like to be unable to communicate or to even ask simple questions about where to find water, food, a shower, or other basic necessities. Imagine the communication problems the refugees face coming out of totally different cultures and speaking foreign languages. Seeing their need, we continue trying to teach them the basics of Greek and English. We have a staff that is responsible for this ministry, but we desperately need volunteers to come and

teach.

Looking in the past, we can testify of how much these classes have been used by the Holy Spirit to lead people to salvation.

**Please pray that the Lord will move the hearts of local believers to come and volunteer in this ministry.**



## Family Ministry

As time passes, more and more refugee families are coming and staying in Athens. The needs of families are different from those of single men and women, so we try to reach out to the families with special programs such as Family Night. About twice each month we have a special program at the park or in our center for the families, and especially for their children. We also provide monthly Family Care Packages to ten families with particularly great needs. These include dry food items, personal



hygiene and household cleaning products, and items such as diapers and milk needed for babies and young children. Over the past year we have also been able to buy many strollers for new mothers.

Our prayers are that the Lord will touch the whole family.

**Please pray with us that the Lord will put a special burden on the hearts of some Christians to help these refugee families.**

**Pray also for the ladies of our staff who are working in this important but emotionally draining ministry.**

## The "NEST" Ministry



As you may remember, we had to close our "NEST" Ministry (temporary shelter/discipleship ministry) in June 2005 due to financial and managerial problems. We never stopped praying and waiting for the Lord to provide the funds to start it again. Lord willing, it looks like we will be resurrecting this ministry soon. As you are reading this, the first refugees are probably moving into the NEST. We have a new teammate, Brett Sanner, who will oversee this strategic ministry.

**Please pray, as we have 50% of the monthly costs PLEDGED, but are trusting God to bring in the remaining €1,000 Euros/month as we take this step of faith.**

## Persian Christian Fellowship



Greece is more or less a stepping stone for refugees to go to the West. Many people come to our Helping Hands ministry centre for a period and then move to another country. This frequent turnover also affects the Persian Christian Fellowship.

Our teammate, Nader Mohajer, who is responsible for this ministry, writes: *"Our Persian Christian Fellowship in Athens has entered a new season. Many people who have passed through Athens from Afghanistan and Iran have left to find a better life in another country in Europe. This is both good and bad. It is good that many of them became believers while in Athens, but it is bad that we did not have enough time to help them grow in their faith. On the other hand, the Lord is working in their lives in His own ways. Through their struggles and weaknesses, they learn to trust the Lord and to depend on Him more.*



*"We are happy to see that they are growing in their faith and witnessing to their own people in the countries where they are living now. Many of them moved to Germany, Italy, France, Norway, England, Switzerland, and Holland. I can say that 2007 is the year of refugee believers moving from one country to another. We know of many people who have left, gone to another country and called to tell us that they were grateful to the ministry of Helping Hands for the love, friendship and acceptance they found.*

*Just recently, we heard news about "S" the Afghani, who has a heart for the Lord. He went back to Afghanistan, but because of his difficult situation soon went on to Pakistan. We just pray that the Lord will protect him and help him to grow in Christ."*

**Please pray for Nader and Ella as they are serving the Lord among refugees. Pray that the Lord will continue providing for their needs and using them to lead others to Jesus.**

## Russian Fellowship

Every Saturday evening, our brother Alexei Bolbi opens our centre for the Russian-speakers who live in Athens. A group of about 30 to 50 people come to the fellowship each week, sharing food, taking clothing and hearing about Jesus from one of their own people. Alexei has lived in Greece with his wife and four children for many years. God freed him from alcoholism and put a burden in his heart for his own people.

**Please pray that the Lord will encourage Alexei and his family. Pray that many Russian-speakers will repent and believe in Jesus.**





The summer is over and with it, children's summer camps. With your prayers and support we were able to send 25 refugee kids for 20 days to the Christian Camp of the Greek Evangelical

Church. Two of the group leaders were young refugee men who became believers through our ministry a few years ago and are now serving God in many ways. At the Christian Camp, the refugee children had the opportunity to meet Greek Christian kids and to learn a lot about our saviour, Jesus Christ. Our prayer is that these new friendships will lead some of the refugee families to begin attending Greek churches.





Also thanks to your help, we were able to organize a four-day Kids Camp specifically designed for refugee children at a seaside retreat center outside Athens. This year we

had a record number of children attend our camp... 39 to be exact. The camp theme was "JESUS

LOVES ME" and the song that became

most popular began with the words

"Jesus, You are here with me...." It was

very moving to hear all of them singing

that Jesus loves them. We had the oppor-

tunity to teach them about God's love

through the parables of Jesus and

explained to them in simple ways how to

pray and why everyone needs Jesus per-

sonally. On the last day of

camp, some of them prayed

asking Him to become Lord

of their lives.

**We are thankful to God for**

**every short-termer who**

**came just for the Kid's**

**Camp. Without them we**

**could not have done it. We**

**praise the Lord for the way**

**He motivated His children**







from abroad and throughout Greece to provide for the cost of both camps.

Please pray that the Lord will cultivate His word in the minds and hearts of the little ones and that he would bring them, as well as their whole families, to salvation in Jesus Christ.



## Short Term Teams



Our organization is called "HELPING HANDS" because we are in Athens to give a helping hand to refugees. But we also need HELPING HANDS to come alongside us and help us. We are so thankful for every short-term team that has come to work with us among the refugees. Without them we could not have done as much as we have.

I wish I could honor all of them by posting their pictures here, but this space is not adequate to detail all that they have done for us. I do want to say **thank you** to every single person who came to help us from around the world.



Please pray that God will send more people with a heart burdened for the refugees.

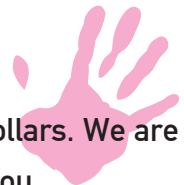
Please encourage people to pray, to give, and to come for the need is great.

## HOW TO INVEST

We depend on God to provide for monthly costs which are currently about \$18,000 US Dollars. We are thankful for the way God is providing for the needs of this ministry through people like you.

If you want to invest in this ministry from:

**USA, CANADA, UNITED KINGDOM or AUSTRALIA,**  
you can make the check out to:  
**INTERNATIONAL TEAMS**



clearly indicating IN A SEPARATE NOTE that is for the "HELPING HANDS" ministry in Athens, Greece and send it to:

**INTERNATIONAL TEAMS**

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

or

**INTERNATIONAL TEAMS**

**P. O. Box 11  
Brecon, Powys  
LD3 9WJ  
UNITED KINGDOM**

**INTERNATIONAL TEAMS**

**1 Union Street  
Elmira, Ontario N3B 3J9  
CANADA**

or

**INTERNATIONAL TEAMS**

**P. O. Box 1123  
Baulkham Hills  
NSW 1755  
AUSTRALIA**

*All financial donations in the above locations are TAX-DEDUCTIBLE*

**DO YOU WANT TO  
COME TO GREECE AND HELP?**

If you want to invest your time in this ministry, you can do so.

We are thankful to God for the many short-term teams and individuals who are coming and providing great help in this ministry. If you are interested to come serve the Lord among the refugees in Athens for any length of time, please write to us for more information.

You can write directly to **Kate Cami** who is the Athens contact person for short-term teams and individuals.

Her e-mail address is:

**[ilir.cami@iteams.org](mailto:ilir.cami@iteams.org)**

## DO YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE WITH US?

For any questions you may have, you can write to the Director of HELPING HANDS:

The NEW MAILING ADDRESS of NIKOS & MARIA STEFANIDIS &

of "HELPING HANDS" is:

Rev. Nikos Stefanidis

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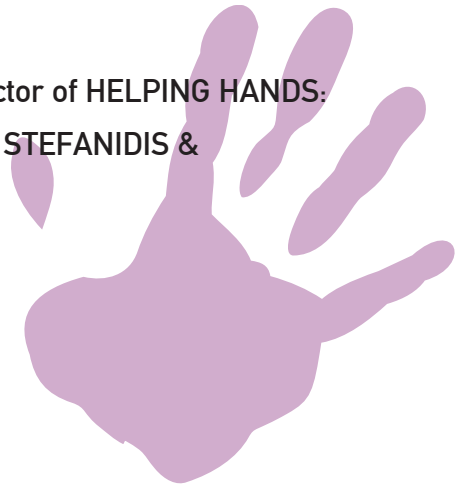
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## DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT US?

Look at our web pages:

<http://www.helpinghands.gr/>

[www.ITRefMin.org](http://www.ITRefMin.org) (click "Teams", then click "Athens")

[www.iteams.org](http://www.iteams.org)

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



OUR ATHENS TEAM

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