

From: Scott McCracken [mailto:scott.mccracken@iteams.org]
Sent: Thursday, January 24, 2008 9:56 AM
To: Scott McCracken
Subject: Skaife's 'Athens News' Happy New Year 13 Jan 08

Dear Praying Friends,

Athens Refugee Ministry Teammate Kallie Skaife recently wrote the following. Thought you might be interested. Thank you for standing with us in reaching the nations through Athens and beyond.

Grateful,

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-----Original Message-----

From: Jim and Kallie [mailto:jaskaife@ath.forthnet.gr]
Sent: Monday, January 14, 2008 1:16 AM
To: Scott McCracken
Subject: Skaife's 'Athens News' Happy New Year 13 Jan 08

13th January 2008

Happy New Year.

This letter was intended to reach you at Christmas time, but the Christmas period has been as hectic and full as ever and the week between Christmas and New Year was spent mostly in bed, fighting a very long lasting migraine accompanied by a virus which knocked me off for six!

This Christmas, at Helping Hands, we hosted three special Christmas dinners. One for 100 Turkish speaking people, one for about 100 Arab speaking people, and one for about 140 Farsi speaking people. We also took all the children that went to camp in the summer for a special day away to an athletic centre a little outside Athens. The intention of these parties was to build up our relationships with different people and to proclaim the name of Jesus. On both scores they were a great success. We sat together with our people at tables of six or seven and chatted away a few hours after the message of Christmas was given. They were wonderful times to us, yet God only has measured their value in eternity.

Allow me please to be a host and introduce you to one of the Farsi speaking tables.

Sari, is a young Iranian mother. She arrived in Greece three years ago with two young sons, one in arms, and no husband. The reasons that pushed her to try this solution were tragic indeed. **The Lord met her in Athens and she is walking with Him.** She has to face the struggle of surviving and raising up two sons alone

but she is discovering every day God's faithfulness. She has got now a steady job for the hours that her children are at school and comes to the Persian Fellowship on Sunday evenings.

Mani. Graceful, reserved, Afghani lady.

She arrived in Athens four years ago with a 16 year old son. Her other two sons were abducted by the Taliban, she does not know, ever since, if they are alive or dead. Her husband, a pilot in the army during the Russian occupation of Afghanistan, was killed by the Taliban 18 years ago. **She and her young son found the Lord in Athens and are greatly loved by all at H.H.** She is still struggling with the language, and is struggling to find a way to sell her weavings to earn her living. Trying to legalize Mani is a story of amazing interventions of God and when it is all completed, I will write her long story in full detail. She is in need of friendship and companionship.

Bani. A tall, noble Afghan woman with fine features and a face that portrays a most fine personality.

She is a new arrival in Athens. She has been here only a few weeks.

She has three children between 4 and 14 years, well brought up and with a good life behind them, but their eyes betray some sadness that is nesting in their heart.

She started coming to the Persian Fellowship on Sunday nights and to the little bible study that I lead for the Iranian and Afghan women believers on Sunday afternoons.

As we talked about Elohim, Eleyon, Elroi, the names of a Beloved God, I see that her face lights up and I know that her spirit drinks.

A few days ago, when I gave her a little card with the verse from the psalms, "the eyes of the Lord are upon the widow and the orphan and He thwarts the council of the wicked.." she buried me in her arms, held me tightly and whispered in my ear "you are my sister, you are my sister".

She has not disclosed her story yet, but I feel in my depths that she knows about Jesus.

Popi. An Afghan lady, with her husband and two children.

Two weeks ago she appeared at our little Bible study and asked if we minded her staying and listening to all that was said! Half way through the session she asked if she could tell us about a dream she had.

"A man came to my dream dressed in a white robe and I stood before him very amazed in my heart and very frightened. I knew who He was!

"You are Jesus", I thought in my heart. He turned and said to me, "What you said in your heart, this is who I am. Follow me"

She wanted to know what was the explanation of her dream!

Remember her in prayer, she is not in yet!

Nopi. A young beautiful verging on the anorexic, Afghani young lady.

Coquette, she has replaced the traditional Muslim scarf with a red knitted hat that suits her perfectly!

She carries with her two children, one 8 months old, a baby in arms and she has suspicion that a third one is growing inside her! She is only 22!

The children are full of scabs, face, eyelids, hairline!!!! They have chickenpox! The husband a song writer, a gentle man.

New arrivals, not a word of Greek or English.

One night, three weeks ago, as we leave H.H. with Jimmy and B,B, My beloved Iranian friend and translator, Nopi meets us downstairs in the alley.

"Could I tell you my story, in private"

And so she does. We have to hold her hands and keep her in our arms; she is shaking from top to bottom. What we hear is shaking our depths. Righteous anger, rage, compassion love, tears, all mingle together. It is ten o'clock on a cold night and we are on the pavement. When all is out we ask her if we could pray in the name of Jesus.

Next Sunday afternoon she appeared at our women's Bible study and sat to listen, but she could not listen for long.

“Jesus came to my husband in a dream,” she told us. “He wore a white robe and said, “I can bring you out of this mess you are in, but you must follow Me and not listen to any other voice”.

“Three days later I saw the same dream. He told me exactly the same thing. I said to Him, “Where can I follow, show me the truth....” “

Both she and her husband are very open, please pray for them.

Behind us is another table. Seven Afghan lads around this one. **Towards the end of the evening one of these lads tells Nader, our Iranian colleague, that he wants to give his life to Jesus.**

“As it is Christ’s birthday, I want to give my life to Him tonight so that we will have our birthdays together!”

And right there, between the leftovers of a Sudanese chicken dish and traditional Greek sweets, a young man reaches out to lay hold of God and enter into God’s salvation. **He is the 5th Muslim young man to come to the Lord lately out of the 7 that share the same room.**

Two to go!

Our dear family and friends, how much I wish that you could sit with us round these tables and meet these dear people one by one. People outwardly launched on a journey of finding a better life, but in reality launched on a journey of meeting their destiny in Christ Jesus.

These are very full, thrilling and utterly exhausting days for us. How much we wish we had two lives to give and the strength of our youth back once more.

2007 has been an extraordinary year for us on all scores.

There have been many miracles, many mountain tops and very deep valleys.

At times we wished we could pitch our tent on the mountain top and at others we felt utterly knocked down.

Knocked down, but not knocked out!

There was unlimited grace.

A BIG ENORMOUS THANK YOU to all of you who upheld us in prayer. We were throughout the year and are now in need of the Lord more than ever before.

Learning to live each day in dependence on Him, even financially, has been a great and breathtaking challenge for us. But breathtaking as it was, every time we came across a need that had to be met it was breath-stopping every time we tasted God’s wonderful, ingenious, magnanimous, timely provisions.

Nothing breaks a man’s heart as undeserved kindness.

Our hearts are broken and humbled at the end of year 2007. We have a loving Father that has provided for us and our ministry, above what we had guts to ask!

The glory is His alone.

To all of you who have stepped in at God’s moment and blessed us in such sacrificial ways, we pray that you may know God’s richest blessing always and the thrill of God’s own provision.

We are learning and humbled by your lives with Jesus and we thank God for you all.

May all God’s dreams for each one of you come true in the year 2008!!!

We send you are love,

Kallie {and Jim}