

ATHENS MISSION BRIEFLY



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Greetings Again from Greece,

I have intentionally waited before preparing our last Newsletter of 2004. Time has gone by so quickly. Not only is it difficult to believe that 2005 is around the corner, but it's hard to believe we have completed our first five months here in Athens.

We are continuing to make adjustments into a new culture. Experts on culture shock say there are four phases you go through that's spread over two years. We are at the end of the first phase called the Tourist Phase. The next phase is the Emptiness Phase, which can be the most difficult period for missionaries adjusting to a new culture. Imagine yourself after a long hard day of work. You are tired and your mind is almost numb with fatigue. Now imagine placing yourself in an environment in that condition where you cannot understand the language you are hearing and you cannot read anything you see. The feeling that races through your senses is called culture shock. A few months ago, I was speaking to my Dad on the phone. He was asking how we were coping. I told him that the best way to endure the culture shock was to have a sense of humor, but at the moment I wasn't finding any of this very funny, but as time and the Lord permits, we will be fine.

Everyday has in it something new, both good and not so good. God has richly blessed us to be able to experience these new things while we serve Him here.

For Thanksgiving Robin managed to find a turkey and all the traditional fixings. We invited American and Greek guests to enjoy a great meal and fellowship. It was an international Thanksgiving. Even the turkey was shipped from Brazil.

AIBI NEWS

Sunset International Bible Institute has been working very hard to find a couple willing to become a part of the team in Athens. Having someone to work with us here is vital to the longevity of the work. We are thankful to be able to announce that Ron and Diana Kretz

have accepted the invitation to consider the work. Ron and Diana are from Scottsbluff, NE where they have worked with the church there for the past eight years.



They are in a similar stage in their lives having grown children, two sons. They are 1993 graduates of Sunset International Bible Institute where they also attended the Missions Program. Before they attended Sunset, Ron was in the military as an Army Officer, 2nd Lieutenant to Major and holds a Bachelors of Arts degree in Journalism and Public Relations. Diana graduated from the Women's program at SIBI. She also holds a Bachelors of Science degree in psychology and is presently working with a Center for women's domestic abuse.

Last month Ron and Diana made a survey trip to "spy out the land." In a short time, we discovered that we would be a compatible team here in Athens. They have informed SIBI that they will commit themselves toward preparing to move to Athens. We are hoping they will be able to join us by May 2005.

While Ron and Diana were here with us, we were able to assist another soul into the kingdom. I received a phone call one Sunday evening explaining that someone wanted to meet with me at the school. The next day Ron and I met with Roseline. Roseline is Nigerian. She told us she wanted to "know all about God and Jesus Christ." How many requests like this do we get here? Not many! We scheduled a Bible Study for the next evening. Ron, Diana, Robin and I studied with Roseline for almost four hours. At the end of our study, she was baptized into Christ. Robin and I are continuing to study with her teaching about the life and teachings of Jesus. She has a very bright eleven-year-old son who is now attending our studies.



Another study we are involved in includes one with Nikos Palavidis. Nikos is the landlord of the apartment rented by Sunset for our visiting instructors. He is Greek born in Alexandria, Egypt. Together with the visiting instructors, we are “explaining more accurately the Way of the Lord.” Nikos has been searching. He has spoken to Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons and people involved with Eastern Oriental religions. He tells us that what he is learning from us makes more sense than anything he has heard. He knows and speaks English fluently, but studies with us using his Greek New Testament. The most fascinating thing so far has been his discovery that Jesus is the LOGOS in John 1:1. LOGOS, in Greek means Jesus is the Word, the Cause, the Reason; He is all in all. This is causing him to want to learn more. We are continuing to study and he is inviting his friends.

Last evening Robin and I attended a small meeting of Cameroonians who live in the city, one of which is a full-time student of ours. I was asked to discuss the subject of Church History. I began by establishing from scripture the foundation of the church, when and where it began, then proceeded saying that Church History is a record of error, compromise and departure from the Lord’s church and God’s word. With my student as my interpreter and partner, we began at the beginning. It was such a joy to see them understanding how distinctive the New Testament church was designed to be. Their background is mostly Roman Catholic. They love the Lord very much and want to do His will, but were never taught New Testament Christianity. Present with us was the President of the Cameroonian community. He presides over 50 Cameroonians in Athens. He was very impressed and we were invited back to the next meeting to discuss more. Our hope is to help establish the Lord’s church among their number. The Restoration still has its appeal.



Other News

We are near the end of another term and trimester. We have good news and sad news to pass along. The sad news involves one of our students, Joseph Iwuoha and his wife, Elizabeth. Elizabeth was two months away from delivering their second child when the baby developed complications and died. Her pregnancy had been a difficult one, but they were hopeful the worst was past. They are mourning their loss. Please remember them in your prayers.

We have good news to share. Isaac Osagie is doing well with his weekly kidney dialysis. He wishes to thank everyone who is continuing to remember him in prayer. His condition has prevented him from being able to attend most of the classes, but he does so when his strength permits.

Our Visiting Instructors

Last month we enjoyed Marvin and Fern Honaker from Edmund, OK and Royce Sartain from PA. While I taught Revelation, Marvin and Royce did a great job teaching The Scheme of Redemption, Titus and Evangelism. This term we have Bill Day from Oklahoma City. The students are enjoying his study on the Gospel of John, Acts and 1, 2 Timothy. I am teaching Homiletics and Historical Christian Evidences. Bill is a former missionary to Athens. He and his wife Becky lived here for nine years. They speak Greek fluently. He has been preaching to the Greek congregations since he arrived. Bill has been a great inspiration to us. We are thankful to all who take the time and expense to help us in Athens.

Graduation

We will be graduating four more students on December 12th. They have done well in completing the requirements. Most of all they are sound in doctrine and ready to leave as spokesmen for the Lord. They are Ayodele Adomfe, Joseph Iwuoha, Jude Ogbedeagu and Simon Parfait. Simon could only speak French when he came, but now preaches in both French and English and is working to lead the Cameroonian community to Christ. The other three are from Nigeria. I can remember meeting these men two years ago. To think back and now be able to see how they have matured in the faith since then is amazing.

Our Needs

We are very thankful that our needs are being met in all areas, but one. We are in desperate need of our own transportation. Funds are needed, however. We will be seeking out those who would be willing to contribute toward the purchase of a car. Without transportation of our own, our abilities here are somewhat handicapped. We are very dependent upon others for transportation, which can become burdensome at times.

The value of the dollar continues to decline. Presently, it is \$1.35 to 1 euro. This, of course, creates the rise in the cost of living. Our cost of living has risen 15% since July of this year. It is predicted to worsen. Please pray for the U.S. dollar to strengthen overseas.

Home For The Holidays

Robin and I will be returning home for the holidays on the 16th of this month. Because of the holidays and the limited amount of time we will have, we will not be able to visit very many of you. We will be returning to Athens January 18, 2005. So, Robin and I want to express our gratitude for your continued support in so many ways. Your emailed messages, the cards and

letters have made us smile. May the Lord richly bless you all. And may the happiness of the holidays give warmth to you and yours.

Darrell & Robin