

Christmas Greetings From Austria

Have you ever really stopped to consider what it would be like, even for one day, a day without God? Without our Savior? Without our comforter? Counselor? Without our Peace? How many sermons have I heard, through the years with this Christmas theme? I'm sure that there were a few that touched me in the moment, but quite honestly, I don't remember a Christmas where the message has become so real to me and pierced my heart in such a deep and profound way as this Christmas. How many hundreds of years, was the voice of God silent on the earth? I struggle to make it through even one day when I haven't spent time with the Lord, listening for His voice in the Word, waiting for His Spirit to strengthen and sustain me, let alone hundreds of years. Stop and consider it for hundreds of years, no sound, not even a simple whisper from God. Humanity without Hope, dying in their sin, what a dark, dark place – only a remnant remembering the ancient scriptures, waiting for the prophecies of old to be fulfilled, living and longing to see them in their lifetime. Suddenly, a cry is heard in the cold, dark night, the sound of heaven speaks once again to His creation. It comes in a simple and yet powerful cry of a baby... announcing the arrival of God's voice once again into the world - Emmanuel - God with us.

This year the ministry in Austria has exploded with a cry - most significantly within the last three months. It is the cry of mankind calling from the dark, voices calling out **for** Hope. We are so blessed to have been allowed the privilege to be this voice of Hope to many this year and over this Christmas period. There are so many stories, and stories behind the stories that we could share but time and space just doesn't allow us the opportunity in this update. However, our Christmas gift to you this year we give you a brief highlight of the fruit of **your** many labors and prayers.

- At our annual Thanksgiving outreach we shared our table with 32 people from all across the globe, including 4 refugees from Iraq! Stories and lives were shared, including the gospel message of our reason to be Thankful and the many blessings we have received from the Lord. We watched in awe as the Lord brought reconciliation and healing



between the Iraqis and an ex-British military man who had previously served in Iraq. Also, at our table this year was the unbelieving spouse of one of the 5 believers present, who was so surprised by the love and acceptance she experienced in our home, saying she felt like she had come home.

- There are presently 4 refugees who attend church each week, one of them: Hydar, recently shared the news from His wife that his four-year-old son had been injured by a bomb exploding outside of their home in Iraq. His son underwent surgery to remove the shrapnel from his eyes and face and is expected to be in the hospital for the next three months. We were privileged to pray

for him during the time of his son's operation (which took place on a Sunday) and following the service receive news that the operation was a success. Hydar speaks a little English and is learning German, but through the power of prayer he is learning about the faithfulness of God and the unconditional love of the father.

- At our annual Christmas tea outreach we hosted 19 Ladies, of which five were from the Refugee Heim. Following a silly game of snatching and stealing gifts from one another, the gospel message of "The one gift that can never be taken away from us" was shared, first in German (yes, my German is improving!) and then translated into Arabic. The message was warmly received by everyone, and further discussions were had between several of individuals as they indulged on Christmas goodies.



- Daniel's increased contact with his Arabic teacher Mohammad, has provided an open door for Daniel to share the message of peace and comfort to him when Mohammad's father died unexpectedly in December. God is using the experience of Daniel's grief following his own mother's death this year to speak into Mohammed's life. Daniel has had the privilege of being a voice of hope, love and forgiveness to him as he wrestles over his grief and guilt of leaving his father behind in Syria.



- Through the Lord's increased provision for the refugee ministry, by several generous gifts, we were able to provide 15 Christmas shoe boxes, provide Christmas gifts to 5 families, provide 150 individuals from our local Heims with gift vouchers for winter boots, clothes etc, and prenatal care is currently being provided for a sixteen-year old Kurdish woman. Your faithfulness in serving the Lord through your giving is touching many and seeds are being sown into the hearts of these refugees!



- Fruit is being seen in the life of Abdullah, a young Muslim from Iraq a few weeks ago at church weeping as he cried out to the Lord to show him His plan and purpose for his life. Just a few days ago, Abdullah sent Daniel a Christmas greeting including the Scripture passage from Acts 3:22-26 and comments by John Piper! The ensuing conversations were awesome and we are confident and believe that God is leading Abdullah into his Kingdom.

(Abdullah, also helped repair Daniel's car...)



- Our Gemeinde has enjoyed a time of great blessing and growth, not only through newcomers, but also in sensing the increasing vision of His plans and purposes of our various ministries with the refugees.

These are just a few, only a smattering, of the numerous opportunities that we have experienced in being a voice of Hope in the darkness. We want to take this opportunity to thank you for partnering with us in the mission here in Austria. We are thankful for your prayer support, for your financial giving towards our personal mission, and for the generous contributions to the Refugee mission work.

On a personal note, we three are in good health, Ava is flourishing in her schoolwork, dance and music. The Lord continues to introduce us to people who are in need of Him and who bless us by their friendship and support. We are doubly blessed to have family visiting for Christmas as well as helping and working alongside us in the ministry to the refugees.

This Christmas, we pray that God's blessing of joy satisfy your heart, may His blessing of peace quiet your soul, and may His blessing of love refresh your spirit. May God bless you and keep you in His hands for His good purpose. And so it is with this that we wish you a Very Merry and Blessed Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

Daniel, Kathleen and Ava