

JOY IN THE JOURNEY CHRISTMAS EDITION

RON & BONNIE STOKES *SERVING WITH AMG, INTERNATIONAL*

DECEMBER 2011



6815 Shallowford Road
Chattanooga TN 37421
894-6060

Our trip to Greece was completely remarkable! This was definitely one of the most exciting times that we have spent in our years of serving the Lord in missions. The team we were privileged to travel with enjoyed the time, and our knowledge of biblical history was truly enlarged. Before our biblical tour began we ministered to refugees from many countries at "Helping Hands" in downtown Athens. We also visited the Greek Bible Institute and an Evangelical Greek Church on Sunday morning, both of which were in Athens as well. Two of our team members, Robby Gallaty and Tim LeFleur, taught at the GBI and preached on Sunday morning. Our tour began at the



Acropolis Museum. We climbed to the Parthenon and then walked to Mars Hill. It was hard to believe we were actually standing where Paul preached! We traveled many miles through the beautiful country of Greece. Our tour guide, Costas Tsevas,

was a walking Biblical Historian; even on the bus we kept the questions flowing. We sat at the creek where Paul baptized Lydia, visited temple ruins and an actual battlefield, and saw the ruins of Philippi. The theater of Philippi was still intact, and we saw where the lions were kept before being loosed to devour Christians. Our visit to Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece, included a visit to St. Lukes Hospital, a ministry of AMG. It was thrilling to stand in the very gate of the city wall where Paul walked the gospel into Europe. While

in Thessaloniki we went to the town square ruins and also visited the Royal Basilica, dated back to 300 AD. One fascinating morning was



spent at a monastery, which included a walk up more than 300 steps. Several monasteries were clustered on mountain peaks but only one is open to the public. Hearing some of the practices of the monks and their daily routine was inconceivable. Corinth, where Paul visited at least four times and wrote three letters (two survived), was our last stop in Greece. It was mind-boggling to see the city ruins and to actually see where Paul was chained and beaten for preaching the gospel. That afternoon, as we drove back to Athens to pack our bags and fly home, we could not help but think of God's power and perseverance to "keep" what He has created, so that many can know His Son more abundantly. God also kept Bonnie well. After more than seven weeks of vertigo, still experiencing dizziness, she flew without incident and stayed on her feet, climbing

and trekking with the rest of the group. Only God and her doctor were sure she could manage the trip, so in faith she went and did well. To God be the glory!

Just as we are getting used to writing 2011, we are saying good-bye to the year! Ministry has been full. Ron is busy in conferences, meetings, working on projects in the office and spreading the news about AMG's work around the world. He has made two trips to Haiti this year. His comment is "you just have to see it to believe it." AMG is at work in several areas of the country, and we continue to seek child-sponsorship for many more children that need to go to the schools to be fed one meal a day. The medical clinic is also progressing, but more equipment and a well are needed.

Bonnie's Mondays have been few and far between from May to October. When able to go in, she finds herself mostly in the National Workers Department. Reading and typing the testimonies of National Workers in the many countries where AMG ministers is very humbling. Many with sponsors still need additional support. Others are looking for at least one sponsor to support their work with AMG. These workers write precious letters to their sponsors, so we document them on our computer system and send them on. Another aspect of the job is to send letters from the sponsor to the National Worker. Whatever the task, it is never dull and always a joy.

God has blessed us with much. We are very grateful for our work with AMG International. We are grateful for our support team as well. You make it possible for us to continue. As 2011 has been a challenge financially, we have seen a drop in our support. Yet, God knows our every need, and we rest in that certainty. I am sure many who read this letter can agree things are getting tight. As the economy continues to spiral downward, our hope is not in finances or the political system but in God. Paul's words have become so dear to us since our Greece adventure. In Philippians 4 we are told *"Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable, excellent, worthy of praise...and the God of peace will be with you"*.

And so, we strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize!



Ron and Bonnie



Now for a little family news.....

THE SOUTHERN KIDS:

Trenton and Dana are still in Greenville, SC. Their boys are growing up, which means we are growing old!! Brent is in his second year of university. He spent several weeks in the Dominican Republic working with a mission this past summer. He is considering spending more time there next year, possibly teaching English with the same missions agency. Brent enjoys playing his guitar and recently received an early Christmas present from us—his great grandfather's four string banjo. Shaun is a sophomore at JL Mann HS and he too went to the Dominican on a mission trip during the summer. He has picked up the guitar and plays quite well. Shaun is an avid reader and enjoys his youth group at church. Timothy, a high school freshman, is now the tallest in the family. Almost 6'5" and sporting a size 15 shoe—you will find him on the basketball court! Tim played AAU ball this year and is now playing JV basketball for JL Mann HS. He also plays video games and is involved with his youth group at church. Need I say he eats like I have never seen a kid eat. Trenton and Dana are working to keep this household afloat! Dana is the best nurse in the country according to Trenton, and we believe it. She has everything running "tip top" in the operating room of St. Francis.

THE NORTHERN KIDS:

Mark and Denise are still in Springfield, Ohio. Denise is homeschooling the three older children and they have named their school, appropriately, The Smithsonian Institute. Caleb is in fifth grade, Madelaine (Maddie) is a third grader and Amilia (Mili) is in second grade. Caleb played baseball this past spring and is now enjoying soccer. Maddie is taking violin lessons and loves to read. Mili can now read chapter books and loves to ride her new bike. Both girls have had some sewing instruction from a dear lady at church and love fashion! Isabella is a show-off! She loves life and keeps you in stitches. Her vocabulary is scary for an almost 3 year-old, and I think she may be the family animal lover! Harper turns 1 in a couple of days. What a doll she is, and she is a dancer (before a walker)! She swings to any music that plays. Mark continues his teaching at Cedarville University and keeps us abreast of political happenings. He is frequently asked to participate on the radio and quoted in the news for his political views. Oh my! It's getting ready to heat up again!! Denise is very busy with her beautiful family, and she does a remarkable job with the gifts that God has given them. The family fills an entire pew at their small rural church.

We are blessed beyond measure. Thanks for reading. We wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and for 2012 many days of joy and gladness.

Joy to the World the Lord has Come!