

Dear Friends in Christ,

December 2005

This letter comes to you to wish you a very special and blessed Christmas and New Year!

We are looking forward to rejoicing this year, more than ever. We hope that you too anticipate celebrating Christ coming to earth and into your heart. I am glad that He lives in my heart. This makes Christmas so very special. How tragic that most Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Europeans, and Americans don't know yet this special relationship.

What makes this Christmas so special is that we have seen Christ come alive in the hearts of our children. They have always been extraordinary in both good and bad ways, but this year Maria and I witnessed the Lord working in their tender, innocent hearts. We want to shout loudly that Christ is alive in His children. It's Christmas everyday!

Our oldest daughter, Gina, went to two weeks of leadership camp this summer. When she returned home, she sat the family down and opened her heart to share what the Holy Spirit did inside her and confessed very private issues. The tears brought transformation. She sings in worship band. She teaches youth group on Wednesday now that Ruth Adams is in the USA. She witnesses and prays with her classmates. She writes emails and letters to counsel her friends. Of course, Maria and I would never brag, but look what the Lord is doing! Christmas is alive in Gina.

Daughter number 2, Christiana, was baptized earlier this year. She is usually the quiet one of the three. She confessed also, following Gina's opening her heart. Her faith is solid and growing. She talks of sensing the Lord's presence. She listens to praise music. It is great to see her play the piano with Gina on guitar and Kali on bass, as the youth lead worship occasionally in church. Christmas is alive in Christiana.

The youngest, Kali, did so badly in school last year that we considered sending her to a very expensive American school. Then during the family meeting, she admitted her bad attitude, wanting only to be popular and not to study. She changed her attitude then and is doing better in school this year. She helps Maria in the bookstore. She is the friend that holds the youth group together. Christmas is alive in Kali.

One of our girls' missions is to be a family for two families in church with absent fathers and mothers. This means that most Saturdays, in addition to our three, five more children sleep in our home, go to church with us, and are included in everything that we do. Slowly, but surely, Christmas is coming alive in them too.

Please don't think our kids are that great. We just highlighted their positive qualities and give glory to God for His working in their lives. Christmas is a good time to stop and reflect on what Christ has done in our lives.

Merry Christmas!

Michael, Maria, Gina, Christiana and Kali Long