

# Christmas Greetings from

the **WALENT FAMILY**

Steve, Christina, Annika, Katarina & Emilie

Ministering in East Germany

Dresden, Germany in December 2008

*Dear Pastor, Family and Friends,*

We just got our first snow this last weekend (Nov. 22-24), and its beginning to look a lot like Winter around here! We want to share a new development with you leading into the Christmas season...one that expresses the heart of our Savior to those less fortunate. It still amazes me how true and effectual the Gospel is. When we apply it in love and faith, it always brings results....

*The true meaning of Christmas has come to the "Snow White" allotment!!*



Above: Ricardo with Jürgen

Below: Ricardo with Rene'



Our church plant in Kamenz has been sensing in an increasing manner that we need to be active in the community on an ongoing basis...touching people's lives with Christ's love in practical ways. The Gospel must be tangible, or else it has little effect on the dark world. The beginning of June a door opened to a very impoverished part of this city to minister to people who are for the most part, unemployed, struggle with alcohol, live in dysfunctional family settings, or have been thrown out altogether. They are hurting, their housing is below poverty level, and the city considers this the bottom of the barrel - it's the "Snow White" allotment (SWA) - old, run-down structures, lacking certain utilities...skid row.

Our church leader, Ricardo, initiated the contact and he ran up against open opposition from the inhabitants of SWA. They didn't want any "do-gooders" around feeling sorry for them. But that didn't deter Ricardo and several others from the church. We started by bringing them good, but used clothing; we had several grill parties just for them through the Summer months; Ricardo went weekly to visit with them, hear their needs, pray with them - for those who were open, and he even had a number of opportunities to share Christ (for Ricardo, that's as much a part of him as breathing!). Slowly the friends in SWA started warming up...they were seeing people who were showing genuine interest in them...many for the first time. Trust and openness was growing. In October (last month), Jürgen, who is wheel chair bound, was the first to respond. During one visit by Ricardo, Jürgen called him into his hovel of an apartment and said, "the gifts of clothing you bring us are nice, but I need something more....I need the Words that you share with us...tell me more from the Bible." Since then Jürgen has stopped drinking alcohol completely on his own...it's the Lord's doing.

Another young man around 30 named Rene' has also responded to Ricardo's friendship; of his own accord, he's given up drinking, and now, along with Jürgen and another young man are coming to our services on Sunday and during the week. Jürgen openly proclaimed a couple of Sundays ago in church, "I want more of Jesus in my life!" Another older man in the SWA spent 30 years in prison during the communist era. He had a death sentence on his head, but due to the fall of communism, this sentence was dropped and he was later released. As an ex-con he landed in the SWA. I met him in September at a grill party, and he wanted nothing to do with us. Recently Ricardo was visiting the allotment, and struck up a conversation with this man (surprisingly). The man had been watching Ricardo and the others from church over the months. He asked Ricardo, "you are good people....I can't understand it though, why do you come here to help us?" That's all Ricardo and the others needed to hear...

Friends, at this time we're talking about the lives of 10-15 people who no one else wants to have anything to do with. They live a 5 minute walk from our church, and the doors to their hearts are opening. This impact will undoubtedly touch many more lives in the area. Church Planting makes a difference, and your support and prayers are helping churches get planted here in Saxony. Thank you so much for your investment.

*Steve & Christina Walent*



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