

Northern Asia-Pacific Division



NEWS & VIEWS

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A Great Awakening of Evangelism in Mongolia

A unique country & evangelism

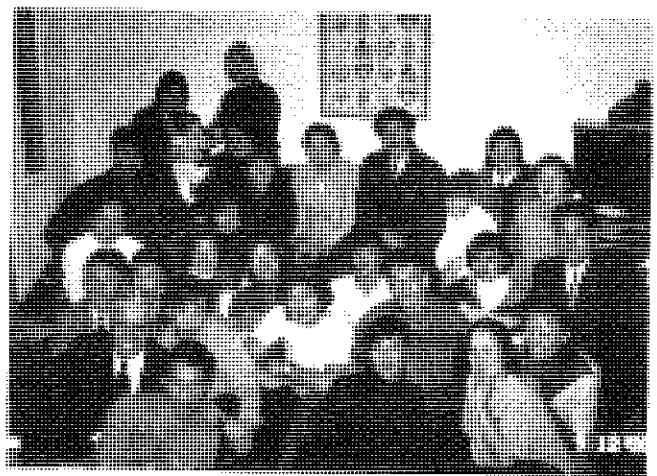
Even though it has a relatively large territory, Mongolia has a small population of about 2.6 million. The country has some unique features: it is one of the highest countries in the world, with an average elevation of 1,580 meters (5,190 ft.); it has the coldest capital city of the world, with an average of -2 C; and it was the core of the largest empire in human history. During the 14th century the Mongol empire extended from Korea to Hungary and from Siberia to Vietnam.

For more than 70 years Mongolia was under the influence of the Soviet Union. Russian troops entered into Mongolia in 1921 and soon it became the world's second Communist country. Children in primary schools were taught Russian. All religious practices were forbidden and Christianity was proscribed. However, soon after the fall of the Soviet Union, Mongolia relaxed its laws and the first missionaries ventured in the country in the early 90's. The unbroken communist rule ended on June 30, 1996.

Eight years ago there were no Adventists in Mongolia. Brad Jolly came under the sponsorship of Adventist Frontier Missions in 1992. Robert Folkenberg came to officiate the first baptismal ceremony of two in 1993. When Brother Jolly died from cancer in 1998, Pastor Dale Tunnell assumed the leadership of the work. Until one and a half years ago all the members were in their 20's. Three parents were baptized so far. Presently the membership of Mongolia Mission Field is 67. In Mongolia there is one organized church and five other incipient congregations, mostly established by missionaries sent from the Ulaan Baatar church.

In December 1999, I came to Mongolia for the first time to offer a training session on evangelism and church growth. We discussed about public evangelism, and they arrived to the conclusion that the best time would be during winter since Mongolians will use their short summer to travel, visit relatives, and go to the countryside. We agreed to offer an evangelistic series in Darkhan, the country's second largest city.

Bold Batshuk is 25, and he was chosen by the church to be their Mongolian pastor, according to the law of the land. He volunteered to go to Darkhan to pioneer the church in the city. After a few months he already had a small group of people who gathered every Sabbath to study the Bible. About six months ago two volunteers of the 1000 Missionary Movement joined Bold and his wife in Darkhan. For one year Bold offered Bible studies and offered Sabbath services. By the time of my arrival there were 13 people ready for baptism and he had many other people studying the Bible. In my experience I have learned a simple rule of thumb, that at the end of my series there will be a total of baptism equal to double the amount there were ready before my arrival. Ground preparation is indispensable for successful evangelism! Thanks to Bold's excellent ground preparation we could expect great results in Darkhan.



The evangelistic team met three hours a day.



Non-baptized believers sharpening pencils before opening night.

Bold designed a beautiful brochure, organized the distribution of 10,000 invitations, and put 500 posters in strategic places. Because there are only two flights a week to Mongolia, I arrived to Darkhan four days before the opening night. At the time of my arrival to the missionaries' house in Darkhan, I found about 15 non-baptized people praying over piles of invitations that they were about to distribute. They even assigned me a partner and sent me to the streets to knock on the doors of the huge apartment buildings of the city, typical of the Communist era. While distributing brochures I saw a man from the countryside unloading two camels carrying sheepskins; he allowed me to take a ride on a camel...

Evangelistic effort in Darkhan

Darkhan, as well as all Mongolia, is covered by snow. The country has a very long winter of about seven months and a short summer. During these two weeks temperatures fluctuated between -12 C at noon on the warmest day and -31 C (-21 F) on the coldest night. The average annual temperature in Darkhan is 30 F (-2 C). Perhaps one fourth of the population in Darkhan uses a warm traditional dress which may be described as an overcoat, usually tied with a yellow belt. Most people use boots, hats, and long underwear.

Darkhan is a city of about 80,000, but it does not have houses: it only has huge, monotonous apartment buildings with virtually the same facilities. As a legacy of the Communist system, the state still provides free heating system and free hot water. The Communist era also left a mark on the people's mind, with many professed atheists; however it also created a void in the people's soul. They were one of the targets of our evangelistic effort.

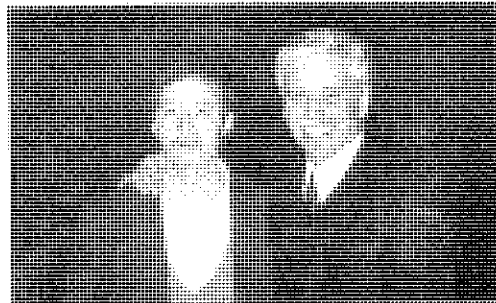
Tibetan Buddhism adopted elements from Shamanism, the traditional religion of Mongolia, and developed its own forms. Lamas, or Tibetan monks, are very influential in Mongolian society. Lamaism is divided in two major sects: the "Yellow Hats" follow Tibetan Buddhism, but the "Red Hats" have incorporated many forms of witchcraft and sorcery. Most Mongolians claim to follow Buddhism. They were the other target of our this evangelistic series.

The meetings took place in the Darkhan Cultural Center, the only public auditorium in the city. The building was initially built for meetings of the Communist Party. It has a capacity of 900 seats. Pastor Bold honored God by stepping by faith and aiming high, and God honored his faith. Our hearts were filled with gratitude to God when the main floor was totally occupied with 550 and the balcony partially occupied, with a total of more than 600 on Friday night! The topic of the first night explored the universe in search for clues on the existence of a personal God.

In my presentations I use a giant screen of 10 x 4 meters (30 x 12 ft.), three video projectors, and three computers which I handle by a single remote control. I spent days and weeks studying, researching, and searching for Mongolian pictures that I could use in my PowerPoint presentations. I used my own digital camera to take pictures of the Mongolian Bible, people, and scenery. I related the gospel as much possible to their culture and history. I avoided as much as I could pictures showing Western people. The goal was that Mongolians could see themselves on the screen in order to facilitate their acceptance of the gospel message. Of course, all Bible texts were in modern Mongolian, which use Russian characters.

However, one of the video projectors stopped working! Satan was trying to disturb our work. We had to work about 8-10 hours every day to adjust our presentations from three to two projectors. In addition to the evening meetings we had 3 hours of class every morning, and unlimited time for Questions and Answers by night. My sleeping time was reduced to 2-4 hours a night. Only three nights I did enjoy 7 hours of sleep. Thanks to your prayers, the Lord gave me strength and health.

On the second night we had an attendance even higher than the first night. At this time I dealt on the sources of truth. I compared Buddhism and Christianity, Buddha and Jesus, in a positive way. I also compared the sacred books of Tibetan Buddhism, the Kanjur (108 volumes) and the Tanjur (225 volumes), and the Bible. I then explained to them what the Bible is, I showed evidences that demonstrate that it is reliability, including prophecies. Finally, about Jesus' death and resurrection. What a privilege to tell them that the founder of Christianity is alive!



A baptized Muslim from the minority Kazaks ethnic group (left) and Carlos G. Martin (right).

Pastor Dale Tunnell attempted twice to get to Darkhan during the first weekend but in both occasions his vehicles broke down while travelling and he had to return. A broken car half way between Ulaan Baatar and Darkhan is very dangerous. Pastor Dale Tunnell almost froze while walking 20 kms under a temperature of -25 C. Finally he made it for Sunday.

The third night, on Sunday, I answered an apparent contradictory question: Is it possible to have eternal happiness? Buddhists say, no! Happiness, they say, is a temporary illusion because life is suffering. Nirvana cannot be easily described because it is not a conscious existence. In Nirvana there are no emotions--it is not necessarily a happy place, but for sure is the end of suffering. I showed to them the hope of the second coming of Jesus and tried to describe the glories of the new earth, where there will be eternal happiness. Did they want to know how to secure a place in heaven? Then they had to come back the following day! And they did!

During the week we had a consistent attendance of about 500. I had a Question Box that soon received so many questions that I was not able to answer all of them on the platform. So we invited those who had questions to come to our apartment. We had between 30 and 50 people sitting on the floor, asking questions! People will not be baptized unless their questions are answered.

Many pastors in our Division have a distorted view of evangelism, which will not produce church growth; they equal evangelism with "seed sowing" or "ground preparation." However, evangelism is the presentation of biblical doctrines with the aim of persuading people to accept Jesus and to be baptized. Nightly presentations during the week dealt with the Plan of Salvation, Forgiveness, Law, Sabbath, Baptism, Death, Health, and Stewardship. During the time of Questions I explained the Sanctuary, Millennium, and Spiritual Gifts.

Every morning I offered classes on Church Leadership to 23 Mongolians (several of them not yet baptized). Of course, I also gave them instructions on Personal Evangelism so that in the afternoons they went out to visit people in their homes. Their reports were so exciting! Many said that several had stated that they were searching for an opportunity to become Christians! Others shared with the Bible workers that our presentations made sense to them. They found many who were willing to keep God's commandments. We were willing to receive them with open arms.

A significant response

The auditorium was available for us at 5:00 pm, when many were still working. However, that facilitated the attendance of people from the countryside. They came dressed in typical Mongolian dresses. Most of them had never been exposed to Christianity before. Some even said that they had never heard the name of Jesus in their entire life! But the gospel attracted them and kept coming.

A meeting without an attempt to persuade people to accept Jesus may be a witnessing event, but it is not evangelism. Starting on the third night I made public appeals to signify their acceptance of Jesus as Savior. In a progressive way I led the audience from their hands, to stand up, to fill out a decision card, to come forward, to request baptism. Most Asians will never make a decision for Jesus if they are not invited to do so. On Friday night I showed several video clips of baptismal ceremonies and I invited them to be baptized. A crowd of more than 100 responded! About 50 of them were children and early teens. I encouraged them to be faithful to Jesus, but I explained that the law forbade us to baptize people under the age of 16.

On Sabbath we went to our new church. A few days earlier we had rented a meeting place that we now share with three Protestant congregations which meet on Sundays. We built a baptistry and on that Sabbath 38 were baptized and 4 joined the church by profession of faith. Praise the Lord! The eldest person to be baptized was 65 years old. Most of the new members are in their 20's but with 10 baptized adults the new Darkhan church now has more adults than the Ulaan Baatar church! This is a blessing because adult Asians in general do not like to join a "youth club." Age is very important. Seniority counts. I reviewed the doctrines and Pastor Tunnell took the baptismal vow. I was aware that I was in the presence of a miracle when the group responded "Amen!" to his questions, and I could not avoid some tears of joy.

The first to be baptized was the senior group and the youngest were the last. Some expressed their joy with tears, many with smiles, and all baptisms were celebrated with the clapping of hands. At the end of the service they received a Mongolian Bible, a book with all doctrinal studies, and a T-shirt saying "Jesus loves you" and "Darkhan Adventist Church."



A new believer in Mongolian traditional dress.

Among the newly baptized, one man was different. He was born in Mongolia but does not belong to the ethnic majority of Khalkh Mongols (86%) but to the Muslim tribes of Kazaks. He is 25 years old, a University student, and was a practising Muslim. Several nights he attended the Questions and Answers private meeting in our apartment and bombarded me with sincere questions. Honestly, I did not expect to see him coming to the front on Friday night. I already gave him a couple of simple sermons I want him to preach as soon as possible. I am praying that somehow the Lord will open the door for him to study Theology and return to his unreached ethnic group. A Kazak girl is also requesting baptism.

We still had one more meeting on Sunday. At least five people said that they were not ready to be baptized on Sabbath, but that now they wanted to do it. The church we rented was fully booked by the three Sunday congregations, so they agreed to be baptized this coming Sabbath. On this last meeting we announced the new series, the Mongolian version of Mark Finley's ACTS 2000 series, which started the following Wednesday. This series will be excellent for the follow-up. Pastor Bold is also offering PowerPoint presentations.

Please, keep praying for Pastor Bold Batsukh for the new converts in Darkhan, and praise the Lord for what He did in Darkhan! Pray for the five evangelistic series that Pastor Bold is committed to offer during 2001 in different non-entered towns and cities of Mongolia and for the new congregations that are being planted in Mongolia. The work of God will never be finished by "seed sowing" but through "harvest evangelism." Pray with me for a revival of evangelism in the Northern Asia-Pacific Division.

Carlos G. Martin, NSD Ministerial Association Secretary

Coming Events ...

- NSD Prime Time/Spiritual Emphasis Week**
January 2-5, 2001 Ilsan, Korea
- Revival Meeting for Medical Students**
January 5-7, 2001 Seoul, Korea
- South East Korean Conference Session**
January 8-10, 2001 Kyungsan, Korea
- East Central Korean Conference Session**
January 11-13, 2001 Seoul, Korea
- Youth Leadership Training Seminar**
January 12-14, 2001 Taichung, Taiwan
- West Central Korean Conference Session**
January 15-17, 2001 Seoul, Korea
- Youth Leadership Training Seminar**
January 19-21, 2001 Hong Kong
- Japan Union Conference Session**
January 21-23, 2001 Tachikawa, Tokyo, Japan
- Japan Union Ministerial Council**
January 23-25, 2001 Tachikawa, Tokyo, Japan
- Middle West Korean Conference Session**
January 29-31, 2001 Daejun, Korea

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