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FIRST YURT OF THE NAZARENE - MONGOLIA

by Dave Hane

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In the year 1206, Genghis Khan founded the Mongol Empire. Today, three million people live in the vast expanse of high plains called the country of Mongolia. It is the most sparsely populated nation in the world. Most Mongolians are either Tibetan Buddhists or atheists.



Nazarene missionaries Sunny and Lisa Um moved to Darkhan, Mongolia, in 2012. The temperatures in parts of Mongolia are below freezing from November to March, and -40 degree weather is common (-40 degrees happens to be the point where the temperature is the same for both Fahrenheit and Celsius). Many of the people still live in heavily insulated "Yurts," locally known as "Gers." They are round structures covered with tarps and animal skins with thick carpets inside and an oil or wood stove as the heat source.

Their initial assignment, besides surviving the dark, bitter, cold winter, was to learn Khalkha, the language that 90 percent of Mongolians speak. Language acquisition would be critical if they hoped to make Christlike disciples in this nation with a Christian population of only 2 percent. For many months, their Sunday worship service consisted of Sunny, Lisa, and their daughter. But slowly, they began to see fruit in their ministry and others joined them.

In 2014, they obtained a long-term lease on property in a poor community outside of Darkhan. Sunny and Lisa observed that many people in that community were sick, since their water sources were shallow wells or dirty streams.

nazarene.org/generosity

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations. – Matthew 28:19a



In the dry, cold grasslands of Mongolia, water is a precious commodity. So, one of their first projects was to drill a deep well on the property that would help provide water for the community. During the week, they charge a minimal fee for the water to help maintain the equipment. But on Sunday, the water is free to everyone! What a beautiful expression of the Gospel Message. "On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.'" (John 7:37)

One way the Ums have shared about Jesus' love with the people is through the JESUS film. To make this possible, the Christian Motorcycle Association donated a motorcycle, which they use to reach people with the film. Before Easter one year, they took the film to a community where 30 to 40 adults watched JESUS, and from that group eight began regularly attending worship. Of 20 children who watched the film, about 13-15 regularly attend the church. On Easter and Christmas, the church prepares a feast and invites neighbors to come eat with them. Afterward they watch the JESUS film together. They also gathered and distributed rice, flour and cooking oil to struggling families on Christmas Day.



As they formed a small congregation, they needed to construct a simple place of worship. With the help of the community, they built a yurt. Every Sunday, a group of faithful Mongolian believers meets in the "First Yurt of the Nazarene." The next year, a second yurt was constructed.

Although Sunny and Lisa are currently on their home assignment in Korea, a Mongolian believer continues to lead the group each Sunday. Sunny says, "She is doing well as a disciple who disciples others. She already opened a Tuesday Bible group at her friend's house and, through this meeting, three new believers come to church... all without my help! Wonderful!"

Last year, the Ums were able to move from just leasing the property to purchasing it. Their next step is to construct a permanent Mongolian-style building, one of the requirements for official recognition by the government. Also, two other Nazarene missionary couples have now joined them in Mongolia, resulting in a growing Nazarene presence in three of the nation's major cities.

Pray for those who are laboring to make Christlike Disciples where the Church is not yet established in the nation of Mongolia.