



God's Mission in Almaty, Kazakhstan

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Praying to the Lord of the Harvest, LCMS World Mission, in collaboration with its North American and worldwide partners, will share the Good News of Jesus with 100 million unreached or uncommitted people by the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

International Women's Day

March begins with one of the most important holidays in this country. On March 8th women of all ages are honored and showered with love and respect, which is quite evident when one sees the long lines waiting to buy cakes, flowers or small gifts for that special someone. This is a national holiday and businesses are closed so women have the day to be pampered! Here some of the staff poses before being treated to a "lunch of sweets" and presented roses.



Children's Ministry

The children in Sunday schools have been busy preparing skits and songs under the guidance of Svetlana, Coordinator of Children's Ministry. The different congregations then invite the neighborhood children to come and enjoy an afternoon of fun. Over thirty children were present at Christ the Savior earlier this month. The clown opened the program and entertained the group with some action songs. God's Word was shared using the parable of the Fig Tree and how Jesus brought salvation to Zacchaeus' home. The afternoon ended with a message conveying that through faith in Jesus we have the promise of eternal life with Him. At the close of the program the children were invited to Sunday school classes and then



Lutheran Hour Ministries presented each child a gift.



More Religious Restrictions???

Draft versions of proposed changes to Kazakhstan's Religion Law are circulating which would place significant restrictions on "religious freedom."

One draft of the Law, divides religious communities into three categories:

- “Associations” with more than 50 adult members would be required to obtain “legal” registration with various department of justice to carry out Religious activities. Under the current law, 10 members are enough to found a new religious community.
- “Groups” with less than 50 members would be required to “formally” register with local authorities. This category has significantly less rights than “associations.”
- Any religious gathering that is not “formally” registered with local authorities would not be allowed to carry out any activities. This category essentially would have no rights.

Thou Shalt Not?!?

According to a new Article of the draft law, a religious “group” that is formally registered with local authorities may NOT:

- Publish, produce, export, or import items that carry religious significance, theological literature or other informational documents with a religious content.
- Set up companies to distribute theological literature or produce religious objects.
- Establish or maintain open spaces with general access for services or religious meetings.
- Appeal for or accept financial donations or other forms of aid.
- Carry out charitable work.

“Mother May I ...?”

Almaty-based law professor Roman Podopgigora, who has long studied religious freedom issues is concerned over how small religious “groups” are to gain formal registration from local authorities as required in the draft Law. He states “I find it very alarming that the draft Religion Law says nothing about the procedure for formal registration. Theoretically, the procedure should merely be a question of notification.” He is concerned that if the law does not clearly state that it is sufficient to simply inform the local authorities of its existence, then they could endeavor to find inaccuracies in the documentation and then refuse them registration.

Any advice?...

During a period in Bible times when the Apostles were being persecuted, a Pharisee named Gamaliel offered some advise: “Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God” (Acts 5:38-39).

Pray, Praise and Give Thanks

- Please include the government officials of Kazakhstan in your prayers as they give consideration to changes in the Religious law.
- Praise God for the people of Kazakhstan who know and trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
- Give thanks that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8:28) -- even amidst persecution.

(Note: Portions of the above are in association with information provided by Forum 18News Service. For additional information visit the Forum 18 web site at: <http://www.forum18.org>)

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