



God's Mission in Almaty, Kazakhstan Blaze, Spirit, Blaze, set our hearts on fire . . . September/October 2006

Furlough Update

Our 26 hour return trip to the USA on September 1 began with the plane departing two hours late from Almaty. We were a little perplexed when they reassigned our seats right before boarding and told us we would not be sitting together. However, our disappointment soon changed to delight when they showed us our seats in first class for the flight to Amsterdam! Additional security measures were evident at the Almaty, Amsterdam, and Memphis airports. The only near mishap was when one of our carry-ons was mistakenly claimed by another passenger at our final destination in Lafayette, LA. Fortunately the suitcase was spotted near the car rental counter before the unsuspecting woman departed. Since then, we have traveled many miles while sharing about God's Mission in Kazakhstan.

Although our grandson Eli did not meet us at the airport we became quickly acquainted early the next morning. Eli is now 2-1/2 years old. For a week we did those fun things that little ones enjoy. One day Eli informed his mother that Bobi Jean and Dedi Morrie took him to a HUGE park. It was fun to see him zip from one piece of playground equipment to the next with his blond hair flying in the wind. Once he had tried everything he then spent the rest of the time going up and down the slipper slide and pushing Dedi Morrie down (because he needed help) :-)

The drive to Memphis, TN, which was our first stop, took us through some of the devastation that Hurricane Katrina had done. The people affected still need our help and prayers as there is still much work that needs to be done in this area. In Memphis Morris had the opportunity to meet with Pastor Terry Tieman at the Mid-South District office where they discussed the possibility of a group coming over to Almaty, plus other business matters. Please contact us if anyone has a group interested in volunteering their time and talents to support the work in Kazakhstan.

In Troy, TN we enjoyed the hospitality of Thomas and Cindy McWilliams (former Eurasia business manager). Thomas had arranged for us to make a presentation at Faith Lutheran. It was an enjoyable evening visiting with the group and we had the opportunity to meet some good cooks of the congregation!

Our next stop was Frohna, MO with an eight o'clock Sunday School presentation. The congregation worships in the gymnasium since their church is undergoing remodeling. Again there were lots of questions and we even met a couple that had been to Almaty in the earlier years. This was our first time at Concordia Lutheran which is now one of our TIM congregations.

From Frohna, MO it was time to head to our home state KS. We shared with Morris's home congregation, St. Johns, Palmer, some of the highlights and struggles that are encountered in the mission field. We also had a very special celebration at St. Johns. Morris's parents had waited for us to return and share in their Open House for their 60th wedding anniversary. That was a very special day! We thank God for the many blessings to Morris's parents during their 60 years of wedded life.

At St. Lukes, our home congregation in Manhattan, KS, we met with the college group and encouraged them to think about volunteering in the mission field. Several of the students shared experiences of already having been involved in short term mission trips. Who knows what God has in mind for these young adults.

Calvary Lutheran in Kansas City, MO surprised us with some really nice picture postcards of us. Thank you, Rita Wiese, for all the work you did on this project. Now others can know where we live/work by just looking at the map on the back of the postcard! We enjoyed a fun evening with members of the Evangelism Committee at the Wiese residence and met some wonderful people at Calvary Lutheran. This also was a first time visit with another TIM congregation. We are thankful to have them as part of our team.

At Concordia University, Seward, NE we had an opportunity to dialog with some faculty and administrative personnel, as well as listen to two students share about their mission experiences in Thailand this past summer. We followed their presentation by sharing about God's mission in Kazakhstan.

In was then on to Atwood, KS where we reconnected with friends that we had met years ago at a Lutheran Camp in CO. They arranged for us to share at Redeemer on Wednesday night during the Mid-Week youth program. It was great to spend a few days together and reminisce with our friends. Also, the GIGANTIC steak dinners at Big Ed's were wonderful!

From there it was on to Brighton, CO where we met our faithful supporters from Zion Lutheran for the first time. Zion's Adult Bible Class has encouraged us faithfully with prayer and financial support since our early years in the mission field. We were invited to share with the students at the parochial school the following Monday. It was surprising how insightful children can be. Our son lives near Denver so it was good to spend a long weekend with him since Hurricane Katrina and then Hurricane Rita prevented him from traveling down to LA for a visit last September.

Our next stop was Concordia Lutheran School in San Antonio, TX where three presentations were arranged. Once again the school children had many questions. They were fascinated with the Tenge, which is the currency used in Kazakhstan, and the different foods. They also asked us about how we became overseas missionaries and how we were paid.

After a short weekend with our daughter and family in Baldwin, LA it was on to Warsaw, VA to speak at Good Shepherd Lutheran and to meet with administrators associated with Hospice care in the area. Don and Lola Goretsas (former volunteers in St. Petersburg, Russia and Almaty, Kazakhstan) shared their home with us and treated us to a "crab feast" in their backyard. This was our first visit to this part of the country and the beauty of the land was just awesome. While in the area, we decided to take a one-day bus tour in Washington, DC where we saw many things and watched the Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery. That was a very moving experience.

We are now at Fairhaven Ministries near Elizabethton, TN enjoying the beauty and solitude of the mountains and nature that surround us. Next week we will share with St. Stephens in Hickory, NC and Concordia Lutheran in Conover, NC about the ministry in Kazakhstan.

The past two months have passed quickly and been filled with many good memories. We are grateful for the opportunities we have had to share about God's mission in Kazakhstan, to rest and to be with stateside family and friends again. We also look forward to our return to be with our church family in Kazakhstan after another month of furlough. Although we were not able to visit all our faithful supporters this trip we look forward to the opportunities that will be provided to meet more of you next year to share about God's Mission overseas.

For now, thank you all for your faithful support and many prayers. We know that the Lord has a plan for each of us and through Him all things are possible. Continue to pray for the people of Kazakhstan and that as the doors for Gospel touches are opened more people throughout the world come to believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Prayer requests:

- ~~ Thanksgiving for safe travels and time to visit family.
- ~~ Thanksgiving for the many opportunities we've been given to share about God's Mission in Almaty, Kazakhstan and the wonderful people we've met on our travels.
- ~~ Morris's father is experiencing health problems--pray for the Lord's healing hand to be upon him.



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