

# Notes from the Edge of the World

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***"Where is the one who was born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:2***

## **The Star in the East**

Just as the wise men came from the East to worship Jesus at the time of Epiphany, we, too, are seeing people from the East coming to worship Him in ever-greater numbers. The literal translation from the Greek text of Matthew 2:2 is "the star rising up". Perhaps that phrase is an even more appropriate fit considering the expanded opportunities for Christian witness in Mongolia's increasingly democratic environment. The interest of Mongolians in the Gospel is becoming more

and more remarkable with every visit I take. Making comparisons, I can see Christianity growing at the rate in which it grew in South Korea over the last half century. The Lutheran Bible School in Darkhan has been in operation for two years now and is not the only Protestant or Catholic Bible school working in the country. We are always adding new, eager students to our classes from a variety of backgrounds.

So yes, the star is indeed rising in the East, and while Buddhism is far from dead, the interest of people from all age groups in the hope that Jesus Christ brings is encouraging. Perhaps the symbolic picture of the lone Buddhist temple in an empty field (in the picture above) is more than illustrative of the spiritual emptiness and lack of hope that it offers to Mongolians. We pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to shine His light in the hearts of our new Mongolian Lutheran believers this year.



*Above: A shepherd dressed for the cold in the Gobi Desert*

### **Return to Light of the Gobi Lutheran**

I had the opportunity late last year to revisit my friends at Light of the Gobi Lutheran Church in Mandalgov, a city of about 10,000 inhabitants in the central Gobi Desert. At first glance I was disappointed, mostly because I expected to see familiar faces from my first visit almost two years

ago. But while I was surprised to see only a few faces I knew, I was impressed when I learned the reasons for that. With the growth of the mining industry in the southernmost part of the Gobi bordering China, a large exodus of the unemployed has begun to migrate there and find work, including many parishioners from Light of the Gobi. So the congregation has quickly been replenished while the former parishioners have carried their faith with them to the south!

Still problems remain. The church service I attended in November was heated by an old pot-belly stove in the back of the rented room, eliciting a smoky haze while making the inside just slightly more toasty than the frigid -10 Fahrenheit temperatures outside. Nonetheless, despite the cold parents and children came (about 40) to the service, further proof to the Finnish Lutheran Oversea Mission (FLOM) of the need to purchase a building with central heating in order to allow for more mission outreach possibilities.



***Prayer Requests:***

***Please continue to pray for healing and God's grace for my cousin Shawn Nunnink, battling cancer. She will soon have a body scan to see how the past year's treatment of chemo has gone. Thank the Lord with me for safe travels and a wonderful Christmas celebration with family. Pray for a safe journey to Georgia and Russia in February after classes in St. Louis during January.***

***Please pray for the Light of the Gobi parishioners and their outreach, as well as the faith of former parishioners who have migrated to the south Gobi. Pray also that they will be able to get a warm building to expand their work in Mandal-Gov.***

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To support my work financially, you can send a tax-deductible gift to:

LCMS World Mission; Missionary Support; PO Box 790089; St. Louis, MO 63179-0089 -----**Make checks payable to LCMS World Mission. Mark checks "Support of Matthew Heise."**

If you would like to partner with me in my ministry with ongoing support as an individual or congregation, please contact Debra Feenstra for information on Together in Mission or Mission Senders at 1-800-248-1930 Ext. 1651 or [Debra.Feenstra@lcms.org](mailto:Debra.Feenstra@lcms.org) Thank you; wishing you all of God's blessings in the New Year!



***Above: Camels grazing while the grazing is still good!***