



Men waiting for work



Mosque in Central Asia

XPOSED

In November last year a group of pastors from NSW visited the Global Interaction work in Central Asia. One of those travellers, Phil Blair from Green Point Baptist Church, reflects on the experience and the impact it's had on his ministry back here in Australia.

Why go?

In 1999, Green Point Baptist Church made a commitment to 'adopt' the H* people through Global Interaction, pledging themselves to partner with other churches to reach this lost people group. Ten years later I arrived in the role of Senior Pastor to find this adoption struggling to find much 'traction', with a low level of ownership and involvement, meaning little more than a small percentage of the annual budget and a few faithful pray-ers. I felt God convicting me to make sure I didn't lead a church that only paid lip-service to a missional commitment made before Him.

But here was the problem: how could I call on this congregation to get serious about this commitment they had made unless I was equally serious? So, when the opportunity came to go to Central Asia with a team assembled by Global Interaction, I felt I needed to put my money where my mouth is, so to speak, and model to the church that I'm willing to practice what I preach. And I am so glad I did, for it was greatly impacting on me personally as well!

Unexpected experiences

Central Asia was full of unexpected experiences: great food that didn't make me sick (chicken feet, jellyfish, yak meat), a landscape far more vast and intimidating than any I've ever seen (driving along the edge of 2000m-drop precipices), and sleeping on a clay 'kong' with seven other people.

Another unexpected aspect to Central Asia was how embracing the younger generation is of Westerners, and how much they want to learn about our lifestyle, culture and beliefs. Due to the control and limitation by authorities of global information, there was no end to the questions we received from Uni students, and their desire to soak up anything we would share with them. It provided some great opportunities to share what matters most!

Valuable lessons

The greatest single lesson I learnt on this trip is that God is at work in Central Asia. In every city, town and uni campus we went to, there were stories of how the message of the cross is transforming lives. When we visited a village in the north-west where no foreigner had ever set foot, and where the gospel had never been uttered by a human tongue, we all sensed that we were not the ones breaking new ground... the Holy Spirit was already at work. I can't explain to you the chill that went down my spine as we sang *Lord I Lift Your Name on High* in the middle of this little village filled with people who have never heard the name of Jesus! However, as exciting as that may have been, it was sobering to leave these people in the knowledge that more than likely they will never hear the gospel message in their own dialect before they die.

Another lesson I learnt was that many more Christians in Australia could be overseas cross-cultural workers than we would often think. Cross-cultural workers are not Christian superheroes. Each team member we spent time with was humble, generous, encouraging, and amazingly inspiring. They are ordinary people with willing hearts. Willing to go. Willing to share their story. Willing to leave the comforts of home behind.

Future opportunities

I greatly appreciated the opportunity to be part of the team to Central Asia, and it has made an impact on ministry at Green Point already. We have another trip planned for April 2012, where hopefully we'll see another group of people personally impacted and thereby far more committed to the task of reaching this wonderful group of H people. It's all part of honouring the commitment we've made, and playing our part in taking the name of Jesus to all nations.

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*For security reasons we refer to this least-reached people group as the H