



Keith Jobberns, General Director



Steppes of Kazakhstan (Photo: Michael Paech)

WHAT I HAVE SEEN

*In March 2004 **Keith Jobberns** took on the role of General Director at Global Interaction. Keith, along with his wife Marilyn, had served with Global Interaction (then ABMS) in Irian Jaya from 1983-1991. Now, seven years on, Keith reflects on what he has seen take place for Global Interaction over the years. Keith is preparing to conclude in the role of General Director in 2012.*

The Board of Global Interaction is presently in the process of identifying the next General Director, with my term concluding on or before the end of March 2012. As I look over the past seven years, I am aware of the considerable changes that have taken place for Global Interaction.

As an organisation with more than 127 years of involvement in incarnational mission, our core commitment to empowering communities to develop their own distinctive way of following Jesus is still as critical as ever.

To achieve this we continue to be a sending mission, responding to Jesus' mandate to be sent out as the Father sent him. The places where our teams are involved in mission are places where there is not a local church ministering to the particular focus group; whether that is in the towns on the steppes of Kazakhstan, the rice farming villages in north-eastern Thailand or the coastal towns on islands of South East Asia. The people in these communities are dependent on someone being sent to share the wonder of God's transforming love in Jesus. As Paul writes in his letter to the church at Rome, how will they hear if no one goes to tell them? (Romans 10:14-15)

In this, my final year, I have had the privilege of seeing the long-term results of sending out cross-cultural staff. I have represented our Australian Baptist family at the 60 year celebrations of the commencement of the churches amongst the Garo people in the northern Indian state of Assam, as well as at similar celebrations among the Enga people in the Western Highland province of PNG. On both of these occasions I have witnessed firsthand the long-term community transformation that the good news of Jesus has made. I have been overwhelmed by the expressions of gratitude by members of these communities that Australian Baptists cared enough to send cross-cultural workers to share the good news of Jesus' love with them.

Sixty years on, I see the same commitment to mission growing out of the same commitment to Jesus, as another generation of Australian Baptists willingly accept the challenge to go to make disciples in all the nations, and especially those least-reached people who have not had the opportunity to hear.

At a governance level, we have seen the Board go through a renewal process, with a reduction from 33 to 13 members, where we have emphasised the Board's role in setting the vision for the organisation and the staff's responsibility for implementing that vision. What has remained consistent through these changes is the State Baptist church representatives retaining their majority voice on the Board. This highlights the fact that Global Interaction is the global mission arm of the local Baptist churches of Australia. **If there weren't local Baptist churches, Global Interaction would not exist.** It is the current Board that has affirmed the mission of Global Interaction to empower communities to develop their own distinctive ways of following Jesus. I have had the privilege of leading the team of over 150 people in 16 countries focused on reaching some of the least-reached and marginalised people groups in our world.

One thing that has not changed over the last seven years is the persistent injustice that many people are denied access to the good news of God's love as manifested in the ministry of Jesus. As we move into the second decade of the 21st century, close to one third of the people with whom we share the Earth with have never had the opportunity to hear the name of Jesus in a way that would make any sense to them linguistically or culturally.

So our vision, to see growing, vibrant faith communities engaging least-reached people groups with Jesus, remains a hope to set our sights on.

KEITH JOBBERNS
General Director