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The Church in Kharhorin, Mongolia

Dear all,

Well, we're almost ready to leave Mongolia after an amazing 2 months here. We have had very varied experiences - both in the town and the countryside. Mongolia is a fascinating country and the Mongolians we have met are really friendly and hospitable.

So what have we been up to?

The first month was spent in the capital city - Ulaan Bataar (UB). It was very cold with freezing temperatures most of the time and some snow. Luckily we were staying in heated flats and had hot water most of the time so were sheltered from the elements. Not so for some of the people we were working with. We helped at a soup kitchen for the homeless and also went underground to help some street kids who have no where else to go but underground near the heating pipes (and sewers). It was a real eye-opening experience and very sad to see such poverty and hardship. We were able to sing with them and pray for them as well as give them food and clothing. Vicki was also able to diagnose and treat some cases of frostbite, scabies and impetigo as well as giving advice to the mums and vitamins to the toddlers who visit the soup kitchen.

Chris also had the opportunity to use his training, as JCS (Joint Christian Services) the non-governmental organisation we were working with in Mongolia, needed lots of computer assistance and email troubleshooting. It was great to be able to serve in such a practical way, although the task seemed endless as nearly everyone had something wrong with their computer!



Vicki and some other team members were also involved with helping at 2 state run orphanages in UB. The children there seemed well fed but otherwise they were in a poor way, with no care or supervision. They were filthy and had no toys or personal belongings and very little to do. No formal schooling was provided for them and they weren't even allowed to play outside as so many had tried to run away. One little fellow had bandages and bruises all over him and we heard that he had tried to knot sheets and escape from a window but had fallen and injured himself. We provided lots of badly needed love and attention, plus piggyback races, games with balloons, bubble mixture and origami. We went to these orphanages with an American missionary from JCS who is completely blind. She was an inspiration to us.

One week of our outreach was spent in a smaller town, northwest of UB called Erdenet. We had a jam-packed programme and had the opportunity to meet with Mongolian Christians in the church there and some who were students on a YWAM training course like us. In Erdenet, Vicki had plenty of opportunities to use her experience with children - she worked in the pre-school project each morning for children of poor families (4-8 years old) doing crafts, games and teaching about hygiene, and also met with the Sunday school leaders of the church to share ideas about children's ministry. We also took part in a children's small group and helped at the Easter Saturday fun day enjoyed by about 200 children!

Another highlight of our time in Erdenet was a visit to the local prison with some people from the church. Chris gave the talk, based around the story of the prodigal son, and afterwards two of the prisoners said that it was really relevant to them in their current situations.



For the last two weeks we have been working out in the countryside, helping with food distribution for the victims of a famine in Mongolia. This year the weather has been even more harsh than usual with temperatures getting as low as -50°C and so the animals have been starved of grass and been exposed to extreme conditions. Many families, who usually earn a living by herding horses, sheep goats, cows and yaks, have lost all their animals and are now facing the future with no income, food or fuel. We were distributing food on behalf of World Vision in 7 areas of the province of Ulverhungi, one of the worst hit areas. We spent 2 weeks travelling around some amazing countryside visiting remote villages, staying in gers, eating some interesting food and experiencing traditional Mongolian culture. It was not always easy - there were a lot of dead animals everywhere and some of the stories we heard from the herdsman were really tragic. Many

people seemed without hope for the future. It raised many questions for us too (how could this have happened? who should receive the food aid? what can be done to help the herdsman now?) - difficult and challenging issues. We value the experience and insight it has given us into these complex problems.

Well it looks like this newsletter is rather long, although I feel we've hardly touched on our experiences! We look forward to telling you more about our adventures and showing some of our photographs at some point.

Mongolia is a wonderful country (despite the pickpockets and vicious dogs - more stories!) We would highly recommend a visit to anyone, or better still - working there long term; particularly for people interested in relief work, health or education.



Thanks for your support!

Love,

Chris Vicki xx

What's next?

We have a further 4 weeks of the DTS in Scotland and then we will be taking a short holiday before joining Mercy Ships, hopefully in August.