

GO NEWS

AUGUST 10

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NEW HOPE THROUGH

Television

We have been working in Central Asia for eight years, in a Muslim-majority country overwhelmed by major economic and political crises. In our time here, one of our biggest encouragements has been witnessing a national believer's dream – that of broadcasting Christian television in the local language - grow from a vision into reality.

After Aibek* watched his mother struggling to understand a Russian-language Christian TV programme, he realised that the great majority of his people had no access to the Gospel in their own heart language. And God gave him a vision for using television to reach people for Christ. However, when Aibek shared it with Christian leaders in the city, many of them told him that while it was a good vision, it would never happen: no one could or would help, and most actively discouraged him. But when Aibek shared the vision with us, God put it on our hearts to not only affirm and encourage him, but to work alongside him in bringing it to pass.

That was almost seven years ago. And although it has not been an easy road for Aibek, he stuck to the dream God gave him and now heads up a television studio which produces local Christian programming. These programmes are broadcast twice a week in several strongly Muslim regions in our country; it costs about \$200 USD to air each slot, which is covered mainly by donations from local, indigenous churches. Each programme is based around a theme (e.g. forgiveness, family, testimonies of changed lives, alcoholism and other social issues), and contains a mix of teaching, testimony and music.

The vision of the studio is to eventually broadcast all over our

country. This seems a long way off at the moment, but we have seen our Father open doors that we never thought would open. The fact that the programmes are being transmitted to some of the more remote, strongly Muslim areas shows that our Father's hand is on the project. He is using this ministry to touch people who otherwise would never have the opportunity to hear the Gospel, and to bring hope and life to places where there is so little hope and so little to live for.

That Aibek is able to continue broadcasting with current restrictive religious laws is a testimony in itself. The director of the TV channel in one of the regions was strongly pressured to stop, but he told the Muslim community and officials that the programmes were good, and he would continue to show them as long as the studio continued to pay!

Television is particularly effective in reaching remote villages. Recently we received a letter from a mountain village in the south. These people have little contact outside of their village but do have television! Six of them had become believers through watching our shows: they have never met any other believers, and have no Bibles, but they meet with each other to share, and pray to the Father who has given them hope.

There are many stories like this, told through letters and phone calls, from people whose lives have been changed and transformed through the programmes. They include high ranking officials who contact us

in secret, wanting to learn more but fearful for their positions, and even for their lives and families if they were to openly ask.

So even though we have encountered a lot of very vocal and vigorous opposition, we continue to be encouraged by the testimonies we receive, telling us of God's salvation, changed lives, restored families, and how God's word, through television, is bringing hope in the hard places. ✨

The author and her family are Partners with Interserve NZ.

* Not his real name

▶▶ Turn over for
Aibek's testimony



Television is bringing life and hope to those who live in the hard places.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Deepening Spirituality! This is the first of our five Interserve 'International Priorities' for the next five years. I am excited by these priorities, especially by the fact that this one is placed first, denoting its key importance.

So what do we mean by 'Deepening Spirituality'? First of all we talk about deepening in relationship with God, individually and in community. This is where life originates – knowing God, being known by Him, and growing in intimacy and understanding of His ways. In our Western worldview we are reasonably open to doing that as individuals, but when it comes to community we are often less certain, and may carry wounds that keep us from truly opening up and sharing intimately. Secondly we also challenge ourselves

to practise worship and prayer in all Interserve life and ministry. Recognising that Interserve is a fellowship encompassing many spiritual traditions we rejoice in the rich inheritance that has been entrusted to us. I am often humbled by the commitment of our supporters, many of whom have given and prayed for many decades. We can celebrate this incredible gift God has entrusted to us, but we also recognise that any inheritance needs to be owned – or will be squandered. Making worship and prayer, in all facets of life, a vibrant reality is something we want to be intentional about as a mission.

Thirdly we aim for our decision making and leadership to reflect dependence on God. In this age of constant pressure, fast-moving events, and information overload it

is easy to rush, and forsake the quiet place of wrestling through issues with God first. Leadership principles are thrown at us from every quarter, but I am convinced that truly great leadership grows out of taking the time to intently listen to the small still voice of God.

These are great challenges that I think we can all identify with, and seek growth in. May the Spirit of our triune God grant us both the desire, and the intentionality to press through!

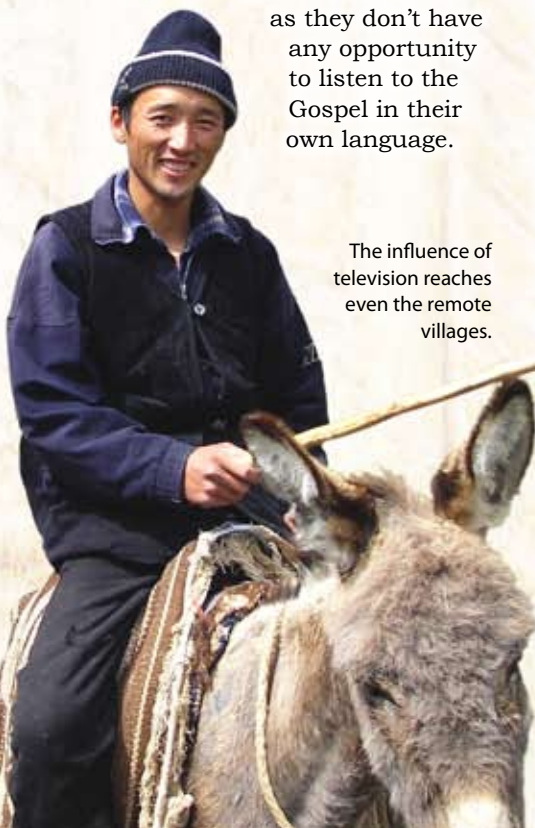


Aibek's TESTIMONY

About eight years ago, I noticed my mother watching a Christian programme on television. It was in Russian, my mother's second language.

When I asked how much she understood, she admitted, "only about 30%." And I realised that this was what it was like for most people across our nation: they hear but do not understand, as they don't have any opportunity to listen to the Gospel in their own language.

The influence of television reaches even the remote villages.



That is when God impressed on me the great need for Christian programming in our national language. Initially, however, I received very little support for this vision, and it took some years of fervent prayer before God started opening doors. But I never doubted that God was in this, and He put people beside me to encourage and support me when I really needed it.

The breakthrough came in 2004, when I was given the opportunity to attend a Christian summer school for training in TV and video production. On completion of my training I was given responsibility for producing and directing a 30-episode Christian television drama: this project marked the start of our studio.

Our country is one of the poorest in the world, and our government, police force, and education and health care systems are riddled by corruption. Our people are bombarded with lies and deception from every direction, and, in desperation, many of them start to seek help from God.

But if they never hear the truth about God they will believe whatever was taught to them in the past, mainly Islam mixed

with elements of Shamanism.

Christian television is such an effective way to teach our people the truth about God. They are able to watch in the privacy of their own home, and make the decision to receive Christ without the often negative influence of their extended family and community.

But there is a price to be paid for those who acknowledge their new faith publicly: they are viewed as traitors to their own culture, and are despised, ostracised, and often physically attacked. Persecution comes mostly from their relatives and close friends.

One young man, for example, was thrown out of his home after he became a believer. His father told him that he could only return home if he renounced Jesus, and studied the Koran. This young man refused; he said he could not throw away something that he knew to be true.

As followers of Christ in this country we strongly believe that God will send revival to our land and so, with God's help, we are trying to do whatever is possible. We are praying that one day we will have our own TV channel, as we believe that God can and wants to use television to reach the people of this nation and influence them for His kingdom. ☞

ON TRACK NEWS

Our On Track programme offers short-term service opportunities, that give a taste of what mission to the hard places is like. For ages 18-75+, On Trackers serve from one month up to two years. Planning a gap year, OE, elective, sabbatical? Or wondering what to do in retirement? Contact us to arrange your tailor-made service opportunity!

Purpose and hope in Mongolia

David and Margaret Dumbleton, farmers from the South Island, have just completed their second On Track experience in Mongolia.

"We had an extraordinarily good time, and have seen and done things that we will remember for the rest of our lives. Above all, though, we enjoyed seeing God change lives and give purpose and hope.

"We were based in a provincial town

on the edge of the Gobi desert, with only one other English-speaking family, so our immersion in the language and culture was total.

"My work was in two places: looking after a field of trial forage crops, that will be used for making hay to feed the nomad herders' animals during winter; and giving encouragement and instruction in the growing of vegetables in a five hectare field on the outskirts of town.

"The highlight of the week was going to church on Sunday mornings. We didn't always understand a lot, but the people welcomed and accepted us with warmth and gladness. None of them were financially well off, but they were content and happy in each others company, sang and laughed a lot, and worshiped God with passion. We were privileged to see the church as it can be - and gained hope from what we saw and experienced.

"Mongolian churches, especially in

the country areas, are unable to pay their pastors. So some of the people I worked with at the field were pastors who needed income to survive. These were men who had come from a background of alcoholism, into faith. They worked so hard, with humour and stoicism, to grow vegetables in a very difficult environment. I learnt much from them about persisting in the faith, and walking a path that is not always easy.

"We also worked with the staff at the YWAM Base Office: a group of young people wanted to improve their English. This was Margaret's task and one that brought a lot of enjoyment. We spent about three evenings each week at the YWAM base and it was a fun time for us all.

"We left Mongolia with a profound sense of thankfulness to God, for we had been privileged to see Him work on a far bigger canvas than we'd ever experienced." ✨

PARTNER NEWS

Long-term Partners form the core of our mission, serving some of the neediest people in Asia and the Arab world. We have more than 800 Partners worldwide, from many diverse cultures and nationalities. Contact us to learn more about how your faith, life experience and professional skills can change lives.

Offering hope in hard places

Lynn, a midwife, has recently returned from the Middle East after a total of eight years of service.

"I initially worked in a Labour Ward as a midwife at a local hospital, but part way into the contract God spoke to me about setting up a community midwifery scheme within the existing health system structures. So I did further study back in NZ, then returned to the Middle East and worked for the Ministry of Health as a senior midwife. During that time I set up a pilot community midwifery project, amongst other things.

"In my time there I saw so many needs that usual medicines couldn't help; it just seemed that a greater miracle was needed in many lives. I used to join with a group of believing expats every week to pray for the local people, but I sensed more and

more that God wanted me to step out of my comfort zone and offer to pray for my Muslim friends and neighbours one-on-one.

"I was afraid, though, that I would risk offending my Muslim friends by doing so. But the opposite was true: they were all delighted when I offered to pray, not one of them turned me down. That was amazing to me. What was even more amazing, though, was seeing the way that God answered the prayers.

"One of my work colleagues was pregnant, and kept being admitted to hospital with abdominal pain, with the fear of pre-term labour. It was a bit risky to offer to pray for her, as I was her senior, and didn't want her to feel like she had to say yes. But I approached her during one of her admissions, and asked if I could pray with her. Afterwards she said, 'I feel quite different - something happened when you prayed. I feel at peace now'. She was 25 weeks pregnant then, and didn't have to be admitted to hospital again until 34 - 35 weeks, when she had her baby by caesarean section.

"One of my local friends had been having health issues for a while, and also wanted to get pregnant again. A number of years earlier I had prayed for her when she wanted to conceive her third child: and as I prayed I just knew that God had answered the

prayer. Sure enough, within a few weeks she was pregnant. So when I started to remind her about that, she said, 'Yes, you prayed and God heard your prayer and I got pregnant'. She was starting to see the specific way that God does love and care for her, and that He does answer prayer. I have prayed with her several times since, as different matters arose, and she really appreciated it.

"My friends and neighbours have also commented on how Christians pray: they find it hard to comprehend how we can pray so personally to God. As I understand it, there are very few times that a Muslim can pray their own prayers. They have set phrases they have to use in prayer to Allah, during their five prayer times each day. They are blown away by the fact that we can lift up our every need before Jesus, our King of Kings, and that He answers our prayers. I think it comes down to the fact they see this wonderful and personal relationship that we have with Jesus and that is what touches their hearts.

"I used to feel a bit apprehensive whenever God would prompt me to pray for someone, especially my Muslim friends, but thanks to answered prayer, I'm finding it easier to step out when I sense that God is speaking to me." ✨

BOOK CORNER

***In His Image: Understanding and Embracing the Poor* is a challenging and insightful book exploring God's heart for the poor, and how we should respond.**

Author Andy Matheson, former Interserve Partner and now International Director for Oasis, introduces his readers to children who live (and die) on the street, young girls trafficked into prostitution, and people living with HIV, who are just not numbers, but are mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, sisters and brothers.

Andy argues that we can only begin to understand poverty, its effects, and possible solutions when we focus on the truth that all people are made in God's image.

"An eye opener! Andy clearly shows us that the greatest need of people is that of relationship."

Ivy Massenda, former street child from Harare, now working with Oasis.



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VACANCIES

Contact us to learn more about these positions. Many more vacancies are available on our website.

SOUTH EAST ASIA TEFL teachers are urgently needed, from 10 weeks to 1 year+. Paid positions. [413]

PAKISTAN Physicians needed for a Christian hospital (2+ years). [259,260]

ARAB WORLD An NGO requires a water engineer to carry out surveys in needy communities (2 years+). [81]

WEST ASIA A website designer with understanding of children's media is urgently needed (1 year+). [463]

CENTRAL ASIA A Country Director is urgently needed long-term for a relief and development organisation. [493]

INDIA A residential school has the following job openings for teachers: Arts, Business Studies (A Level), English, Maths, History. [407]

ARAB WORLD Social worker needed to help government develop a foster care system (2 years+). [454]

WWW RESOURCES

Here are some great mission resources available on the Internet.

>> <http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/>

In the run-up to the big Lausanne III Congress in Cape Town, this website is an attempt towards bringing together the global church to engage with important issues related to world evangelisation: sign up for free, and join any conversation!

>> www.islamawareness.co.nz

Have a look at this website and prayerfully explore how you can engage with your Muslim neighbours - even though Islam Awareness Week is over, you might get inspired...

>> www.gsungrab.org

Resources for reaching Tibetans: this website offers free pdf and audio downloads of contemporary Tibetan scripture materials that are a great way to introduce Tibetans in NZ to the Good News of Jesus.

INTERSERVE EVENING WELLINGTON 9TH SEPT.



YOU ARE INVITED to spend an evening with Johannes Balzer, National Director of Interserve NZ. Johannes will share about Interserve's current work and direction, some stories from our Partners in the field, and

how you can stay involved. Coffee and dessert will be provided.

7-9 pm, Unit 4, 63 Main Rd, Titahi Bay
Please RSVP by 6 September to Juliana Eu
0800 446 464 juliana@interserve.org.nz

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BUT WE DO NOT LIVE
IN THE SAME WORLD**



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