



*...the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world and it is bearing fruit and increasing...*



Dear friends,

Thank you! That's the word in our hearts and on our lips. God is kind and generous, as are our friends too. We are so thankful for many warm wishes and continued support as we walk through this season of change. We are ensconced in our little house, unpacking boxes, acquiring furniture and generally trying to adjust to life here in England. We haven't settled in a church yet but have been warmly welcomed at those we have visited.

This is not an easy adjustment and a lot has changed in our absence. Just the sorting and updating of the ordinary details of life takes time and seems more complex than we remember, although things are slowly getting reorganised. We smile at the English reserve. No one has asked how much we earn, how much our rent is or whether they can come and look inside our house. Strange!

However, one thing has struck us and that's how loud the culture of the day shouts. It even touches the church and, as one pastor noted, popular culture, rather than biblical truth, can influence and define some Christians. Much in this land may appear broken, even lost, but God and His truth do not change.

For us, it is a steep learning curve as we listen and observe life around us. In our efforts to understand, we find ourselves asking God for wisdom to help us to live so that we might have opportunities to share the gospel and be witnesses in this place.

Conversations with Mongolian pastors, local leaders and missionaries continue. There have many challenges. Nadmid, who pastors a church in Ulaanbaatar, feels the deep shame of poverty. Last summer flood water devastated his house. The local government promptly declared their district too unstable for dwellings and offered no compensation to residents. Since then, he and his family each spend their time living with different relatives.

Our Mongolian pastor Bayar and his wife recently moved to Austria. Both are involved in translation work, and both have significant health issues, yet they clearly know what God has called them to and so they continue. Likewise, Joshua and Tsetsegay in Bishkek face so many hurdles, all of which naturally seems insurmountable. The only thing which holds them in place is the call of God on their lives and He has not told them to leave, and therefore they keep on going each day.

There is humility and submission to God in each of our friends' hearts. They have not chosen the easier way, but diligently cling to God from whom comes their hope and strength. Their dogged trust in Him is a lesson to us as we begin to branch out and allow God to stretch us. New

names and new faces enter our lives, the beginnings of friendships with some serving in Central Asia and some in Europe.

We value these new friendships and are thankful for the ministry of others, although the continual stretching and expansion of our vision is far less comfortable - and definitely less tidy - than perhaps we'd like. However, God graciously reminds us of the privilege we have in partnering with one another in the gospel. Of course, He is right.

There's also the beginning of a fragmented picture forming in our minds, vague and indistinct but growing. Of Brazilian missionaries going to Portuguese-speaking countries and Western Africans training to take the gospel to neighbours. Churches in Ethiopia and Burundi are receiving cross-cultural training and looking at opportunities to serve in and beyond Ethiopia and into the Middle East.

Our tiny picture of what God is doing may feel insignificant, but it's a picture repeated right across the world. Through simple servants, preaching and teaching, while hearers listen and respond, God's message is diffusing throughout the world. His salvation word carries authority. Living and active, it has an inherent power to bear fruit when it falls into soil that He has

prepared. Of course, each of us needs to make balanced application of that word and grow up in Christ. Not that we should be trying to *make* Jesus Lord, rather we need to allow God, in His mercy, to make us His servants. Simple, fundamental truth, but truth nevertheless of which we remind ourselves often.

Our God is great. We want to hold on to the reality of His greatness and avoid the dangers of diminishing who He is with religious vagueness and the sense of defeat that ensues as our natural eyes look at the world around us. There is much death and destruction, we do not deny it. But God is also at work, empowering His church for evangelism, opening hearts and minds to His word and planting His global church. As He touches people's lives and changes them, we realise that each of us is part of His story and He gives us all the command to go into the world, to be a blessing and serve. It is a task that will run until the end of the age. Go and tell. Proclaim the gospel and make disciples. There is no neat formula, just the need to walk day by day in obedience. And as we continue to walk through this transition, we trust that God will keep us and enable us to flourish in Him.

*Mark & Gill*

***Please pray:***

***That we will continue to settle into our new home and role within UFM;***

***that the Mongolian church would support those who have experienced loss during this winter;***

***and that we would be open and flexible to listen and learn as we slowly become aware of God's purposes in mission.***



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