

1. ON THE ROAD AGAIN: Annual Council concluded last Monday noon on a high note. Three weeks of high pressure and inadequate sleep had taken its toll and going home sounded appealing, but there was one more stop to go. We flew that night to New Delhi for a few hours rest, and then it was on to Hong Kong and Beijing.

After waiting a day in Beijing, we took one of the twice-weekly flights north over the Gobi Desert to Ulaanbaatar, capital of Outer Mongolia. This large, arid country of 2.8 million, nestled between the Russian giant to the north and China to the south, was under Soviet influence until 1990, and is distinguished from Inner Mongolia, which is a province of the Peoples Republic of China. Ulaanbaatar is the coldest capital city in the world with a year-around average temperature below freezing!

2. GOSPEL ENTERS MONGOLIA: Brad and Cathy Jolly, four student missionaries who are working with them, and a group of as-yet-unbaptized Mongolian believers, met our flight. The Jollys are a dedicated couple who have spent the last two years committed to planting the gospel in this previously unentered country. They are working in Mongolia under the sponsorship of *Adventist Frontier Missions*, a “supportive ministry” which has 12 similar, self-supporting, front-line missionary couples laboring in seven countries. We were here to celebrate with them the very first baptisms—fruit of their labors in Mongolia.

Friday evening about 45 Mongolian young people (most under 25 years of age) gathered to celebrate the Lord's Supper. After a rousing song service, Davaakhuu (one of the two young ladies, both in their mid-twenties, who were to be baptized the next morning) spoke to the group about the meaning of the Communion and the ordinance of humility. Her joy in the Lord bubbled out as she testified to her new-found assurance of salvation.

On Sabbath morning (two years to the day since the Jollys arrived in Mongolia) we joined about 50 others at an indoor pool for one of the most moving baptismal services I have ever attended. Just before

the baptismal service, all those in attendance at the pool gathered around the three new members who knelt in the center; and together we lifted them before God, pleading for the presence and power of the Spirit in their lives. Then Davaakhuu (meaning “Monday's child”) and Inkhbayar (meaning “peace and happiness”) stepped with me into the pool, and I had the joy of baptizing these first-fruits of the gospel in Mongolia. With Inkhtaivan, whom we accepted into fellowship by profession of faith, this brings our total Mongolian believers to three. By this time it was just after noon, but the regular Sabbath activities were just beginning!

After sharing a simple but delicious noon meal with all the group, we continued the program until 6 pm with a three-hour Sabbath School and a one- and-a-half-hour church service. In harmony with their normal procedures, most of the major presentations were by the three new members as well as several others who are still studying the three angels' messages.

Sunday we visited a community about an hour from Ulaanbaatar, returning in time for a reception we hosted for 70, high-level government officials.

Monday was a series of very profitable interviews, lasting most of the day, with the Ministries of Religion and Culture, Health, Education, National Development; leaders of Parliament, and two top presidential advisors. During the interviews, as well as the concluding banquet offered to the officials, we were received warmly, and doors opened for ADRA's development initiatives as well as medical and educational programs.

3. HOMEWARD BOUND: Tuesday evening we fly back to Beijing and begin the 24-hour flight half-way around the globe, arriving home on Wednesday night, after a month away. Next week, after digging through a month's backlog of correspondence, I hope to take my backpack and hammock and go to the hills for a few days and recover!

###