

### **The Mission Society celebrates 15 years of ministry in Kazakhstan**

(Norcross/Atlanta, GA – April 28, 2009) –The Mission Society recently celebrated 15 years since the founding of its work in the Central Asian country of Kazakhstan. In addition to the team and national staff in Kazakhstan, Mission Society staff members Dick McClain and Jim Ramsay traveled there to celebrate this milestone. Dick was involved in the sending of the first team to Kazakhstan. Jim and his family lived and served there from 1996-2006.

It was on Easter in 1994 that the first baptism was held at the Church of the Living Vine in Karaganda. Since that year, many people have experienced the love of Christ in the church. The church has even sent out its own to help begin other churches – the daughter church in the northern city of Atbasar recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. Many of the people who were once part of this church have since then immigrated to countries around the world, and there continue to serve God. We know of former church members who now live in Germany, Israel, Russia, China, England, Uzbekistan, Canada, Turkey, and the United States, as well as other parts of Kazakhstan.

The team in Kazakhstan has also worked in a number of practical ministry areas, including teaching English, small business development, outreach to children at risk, the operation of a primary and secondary school, and ministry to families of alcoholics. Several of the organizations created to facilitate this work also celebrated 15 years since being chartered. These include the Small Business Training Center, Friendship Corporation, and Friendship School.

When the team first arrived 15 years ago, this former Soviet country was in chaos as the infrastructure was still in collapse following the breakup of the Soviet Union. In the ensuing years, much has changed. The economy made great progress during that time – a middle class began to develop, infrastructure in the cities was rebuilt, the impact of Kazakhstan's oil reserves began to be felt. So the team and the church has had to adjust to a very rapidly changing environment.

The Mission Society is committed to being a positive impact to the people of Kazakhstan as they continue to build their future. This involves both the practical ministries in education and outreach as well as working alongside the church. We believe the church has a very important role to play as the nation develops, and that the church is uniquely equipped to reach out across their borders to the neighboring countries. Religious freedom, denied in many of the surrounding countries, hangs in the balance in Kazakhstan. We pray that the government will see the positive impact that has been made by religious workers and the churches in Kazakhstan and continue to allow them grow and serve. We pray that the national believers will remain strong so that they can be salt and light in Kazakhstan and beyond.



## The Mission Society

Founded in 1984 in the Wesleyan tradition, The Mission Society recruits, trains, and sends Christian missionaries to minister around the world. At present, The Mission Society has more than 225 missionaries in 32 countries. The Mission Society develops diverse programs and ministries in accordance with its missionaries' unique callings and gifts, ranging from well-drilling and the arts to more traditional ministries such as teaching English and church planting. Its church ministry department provides seminars, workshops, and mentoring for congregations in the United States and overseas, helping equip churches for strategic outreach in their own communities and throughout the world. For more information on The Mission Society, call 1.800.478.8963 or visit [www.themissionsociety.org](http://www.themissionsociety.org).

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