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**LINKING GOD'S PEOPLE TO
REACH THE UNREACHED**

www.BridgeInternational.org



2005: Sheasbys and R.K. with nearly 100 Field Workers at mountain retreat.

Last Christmas, Yuri called me and said, "RK - *The Bridge* came alongside with us and has helped finance Agape's work every month for all these years. We are very grateful for it, and thank you so much for your friendship and help. I am happy to tell you that we are now finally fully self financed. From next year on, you do not need to send us any more support funds. I know that this is a fulfillment of your vision for us. We would now like to begin sending money through *The Bridge* in supporting the Gospel in other more needy parts of the world".

The vision God gave *The Bridge* is complete: in Kazakhstan—twenty years ago a largely unreached, Muslim nation—the Gospel has taken root through an indigenous church that is now self-propagating, self-financed, and pioneering churches in other nations of the world! We thank the Lord for the privilege of serving them shoulder to shoulder. **Congratulations, Agape Evangelical Center!**

FROM R.K.'S CORNER

Last Fall, Yuri Shumayev, Director of Agape Evangelical Center in Almaty, Kazakhstan invited Steve and I to be guests at their 20th Anniversary Celebration on May 29-31. He also asked me to write a story for their newspaper to give a brief background on the history of Agape. I have published this article in its entirety in this issue of The Bridge Report. I trust it will be a testimony to God's love and power in and through a people who responded to God's call and are committed to working together in fulfilling His purpose on this earth.

Looking back, two things stand out: faithfulness and multiplication. The vision and seed of faith was planted by the Holy Spirit in one man, Baikal. By God's grace, he imparted that vision into others, who imparted it into many more, creating a multiplication factor, so that today there are thousands who have heard the Gospel through Agape.

To those of you who over the years have invested prayers and funds into Kazakhstan through us — THANK YOU!! You are partaker of the fruit!!

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LINKING GOD'S PEOPLE TO REACH THE UNREACHED

The Bridge Report

MISSION AGAPE KAZAKHSTAN: 1989-2009



1998: Yuri Shumayev with his wife (in back) and staff

The Bridge International, along with our co-workers and partners in the United States, join with our brothers and sisters at Agape Evangelical Center in Almaty, Kazakhstan in joyous celebration of the 20th anniversary of the founding of their mission.

We thank the Lord for Agape's present leader, **Yuri Shumayev**, and the members of his leadership- and support teams, and honor them for their faithfulness and labor of love.

We also thank the Lord for the hundreds of young people who have been raised up, trained, equipped and sent out, and are now laborers in God's Kingdom in Kazakhstan and other countries.

As we celebrate, we also honor the many teachers and other gifted men and women who, at their own expense, came from other parts of the world to Kazakhstan on short term mission trips and, by God's grace, imparted their knowledge, wisdom, and ministry gifts into the young believers at Agape.

Last, but not least, we honor the many faithful believers in America and Europe who prayed and financially sponsored Agape's Bible school students and pioneer church planters, as well as a variety of projects. Above all – as head of *The Bridge International*, and on behalf of our many partners, I thank our Father for the bond of friendship that has endured between the leaders of Agape and ourselves during twenty years of walking side by side in serving the Lord and His people as we serve one another in the love of Jesus Christ!



1992: Mission Agape's first leadership team, from left- Baikal w/wife, Natasha, Yuri, Nikolai

The first time I heard about Agape Mission – as it was formerly called, was shortly after the Iron Curtain fell. The Bridge office in Holland helped organize the very first conference with **Derek Prince**, a renown Bible teacher, inside the Soviet Union - in the capital city of Moscow. People came from all over Russia – some traveling for a week one way by train - to hear the man of God who was going to lay out the Word of God. Thousands gathered; there was such a spiritual hunger and openness for the Gospel as the Holy Spirit swept over the hearts of the young generation of the Soviet Union!



1992: Piet (in red) praying for new believers

A young man, **Baikal Dzoziev**, who had met Jesus dramatically after being buried in an avalanche in the

mountains where his best friend died, heard about the event in Moscow. He traveled through many time zones all the way from the hinterland of Central Asia to Moscow to attend the conference. While there, he approached The Bridge team and introduced himself, *"I am Baikal. God has given me a vision to reach Kazakhstan for Jesus through Mission Agape, which I started two years ago. We are just a handful of people, but we have a big vision, so we need help. Can you come to Alma-Ata (now Almaty) and help us?"*

The Bridge Outreach Director, **Piet van Walsem**, responded to Baikal's plea. A few weeks later, he traveled to Kazakhstan where he found a small group of new believers who gathered for fellowship in an old wood-frame house. Piet was introduced to Baikal's team: **Nikolai, Yuri, and Natasha** who together were the initial core leaders of Mission Agape. Piet spent a week with them and shared his heart on evangelism outreach and pioneer church planting. He then returned to Holland, but promised to return to Almaty four times a year with a leadership team who would continue to help teach and train. From 1991 through 1993, by the spiritual input and mentoring of the

visiting teams directed by Piet, Mission Agape's new believers and leadership team grew in faith, numbers and maturity. Nikolai, who pastored a small underground church, merged his congregation with Mission Agape's new believers, and Agape Church was formed with Nikolai as pastor.



1994: The very first Graduating Class

The quarterly meetings developed into quarterly leadership conferences which included other churches. They helped strengthen relationships among the believers and between the leaders in the city. As the church and mission expanded, so did the need for more teaching and training.



1996: Graduates with Kent and Ruth Beahler

In August of 1993, Piet called my husband **Steve** and I and told us, *"Baikal is asking if we can come more often – I am not sure what to do."* Steve asked, *"What about starting a Bible school to train these new believers how to plant churches?"* We sensed the Holy Spirit affirming these words and give us direction, so we decided to pursue this plan. God's grace was with us.

Two months later, in October 1993, the first Bridge sponsored Bible school opened its doors to 23 students who attended the school full time for eighteen months.



1999: R.K. (center) visiting the Bible School



2002: Stohls (center) teaching at the Bible School.



A modular approach was used as teachers came in from outside for one to two weeks per month to impart the Word of God into the students; the remaining time was spent studying and applying the Word to practical life situations under the guidance of the local leadership. After graduation, most of the students were sent out to do pioneer church planting in other parts of the country. Today we can see the fruit in the many district churches and ministries established throughout Kazakhstan and in other nations.

From the start, Baikal and his leadership team administered the church, the mission, and the school, and planned the leadership conferences. Nikolai did pastoral care. Piet and I



Leaders in a Korean district church

organized teachers and conference speakers from Europe, America, and Australia who visited Agape and imparted their faith, wisdom, and Bible knowledge. Steve called on believers in America to financially sponsor students



and church planters, which then cost monthly US\$25.00 per person! I did the administrative work of The Bridge in the States with the help of a lovely local couple, **Jim and Judie Wolfe**. Together, we were all an effective team spanning over three continents!

Sixteen years later, the outcome of this partnership is seen in hundreds of graduates who have planted churches and are witnessing for Christ in a variety of capacities throughout Central Asia. **“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase”** 1. Cor 3:6-7.

When Baikal later immigrated to Germany with his family, **Yuri** took his place as Director of Agape. In 1995, The Bridge sent

Kent and Ruth Beahler from the State of Washington to live in Almaty and help serve the leadership at Agape. They stayed for three years and then returned to the States.



National worship dance

In 1998, when Piet pulled back from the C.I.S. to pursue his original call to serve the Muslim nations of Iran and Afghanistan, Yuri was ready to embrace full responsibility as head leader of a thriving, expanding mission.

Yuri and I began working closer together through the Stateside Bridge office, allowing me much opportunity over the years to watch his growth in faith, maturity administrative abilities, and leadership. By God’s grace, he has become a statesman among his peers and a respected Christian leader among government officials. Yuri’s hallmark is his integrity, humility and constant readiness to serving others. Yuri has faithfully mentored the other members of his leadership team, as the same character qualities are reflected in them. He follows the simple steps Jesus used in preparing his disciples to exemplify a life of faith on earth after He had returned to heaven:

1. you watch me do it, 2. we do it together, 3. I watch you do it, 4. you do it alone.

Today, Agape Evangelical Center, one of Kazakhstan’s largest indigenous ministries, is the umbrella covering a broad specter of indigenous churches and ministries:

- a main, downtown church with over a hundred satellite churches,



missions, and mercy ministries in and outside the country.

- **Agape Bible College** (formerly Bibleschool) where young people with

apostolic hearts for evangelism and church planting receive discipleship and Biblical leadership training .

- a central, thriving drug rehabilitation center with several centers in other regions of the country, where governmental officials come for advise on drug problems in their communities.
- a Christian publishing house, printing press, and monthly news.
- a weekly TV program.
- leadership among other churches and pastors, as Yuri is presently the elected head of the Association of Indigenous Evangelical Churches in Kazakhstan.
- Oversight over a number of mercy ministries, i.e. feeding of the poor and elderly, caring for the homeless and orphans, outreach to prisoners.



Baptism of new believers in a district church