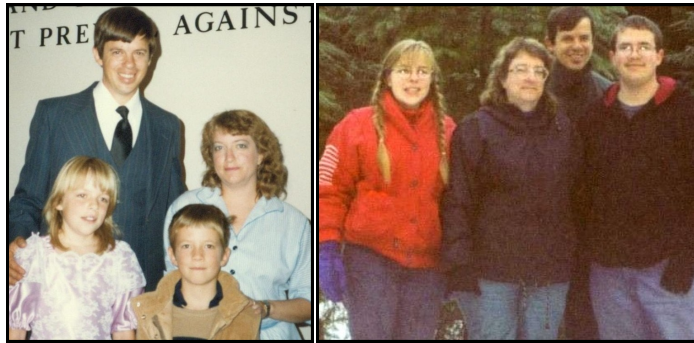




# The Bridge Report



Andrew and Diane Vincent with their two children in 1985 and 2005

The limited space in this Bridge Report does not give justice to the amazing past and present history of the Kalmyk people and the story of the courageous young American couple who bravely went with the Gospel to Kalmykia while still under Communist rule. So much more can be said, but we will share more on this at a later time. Here, I introduce you to Andrew (Andy) Vincent and share a few details from a conversation with him which will help set the stage for Sarang's subsequent testimony on pages 2 and 3:

Andy was born and grew up on a farm in Oregon. As a young man, he was captivated by Brother Andrew's book about his Bible smuggling behind the Iron Curtain. He was ignited with a call to go to Russia with the Gospel, but it took from 1970 till 1985 before this call became a reality. "God was refocusing and sharpening my vision during that time, as I learned that there were 130 unreached ethnic groups within Russia proper." In the meanwhile, he married his college sweetheart, had two children, and completed a Wycliffe college course in Bible translation.

When the time was right "I went overseas to Kalmykia, not because I loved the people, but rather for fear that I would be like Jonah, in disobedience to God, if I did not go".

When Vincent arrived... "I was treated like a movie star. Still under Communism, I was the first visitor to Kalmykia from the West since 1917 — the beginning of the Revolution!" This flung the doors open for sharing the Gospel, from the President, on down to the rural villagers. Vincent evangelized, baptized, disciplined the young believers, taught the Word, helped the nationals plant churches, and initiated the translation of the New Testament in Kalmyk! In short — Andy did the works of an apostle, which he is affectionately called by the Kalmyk believers! Sarang tells more... *cont...*

"And you also were included in Christ when you heard the Word of Truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit." Ephesians 1:13

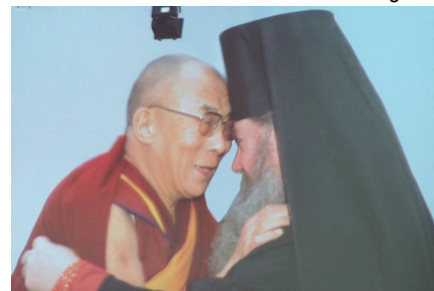
*I bring you greetings from your brothers and sisters in Christ who live in Kalmykia!*

Once you read my story and the story of my people, you will understand why these greetings are so precious to me. You see, it wasn't too long ago when there were no brothers or sisters in Christ who could pass on these greetings in my nation. For many generations, we have been a people outside of this circle of those who are "in Christ". We were oppressed, not only by Communism, but by bondage from this unseen government whose leader is the evil one, Satan. We lived in darkness without this "Word of Truth" in our heart language. He [Jesus] was in the Russian language, but very few Bibles were found, even among the Russians who lived among us Kalmyks.

It was in the early 1990's that I first heard this "Word of Truth". Having believed, I was "included in Christ". I, along with others of my people, were added to those in Christ.

There came a man from America who brought this Word of Truth. I only learned much later from him, that he was like Jonah. He came to us with this message out of fear of 'being swallowed by a fish'. **So he came to us, not because of his love for my people, but because of God's love for us. "For God so loved the Kalmyk people..."**

Andrew loved his life in Oregon. It



Andrew Vincent and Sarang Badeev today

was like heaven on earth for him. But finally he obeyed this "Word of Truth" and he brought us this Life with much joy. He was so full of life and joy. Just as Jesus became flesh and lived among us, Andy came from his "heaven on earth", and lived among my people and told us this good news. It was only after his obedience to God that he came to love my people. And we loved him in return. He is our Apostle.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, my people were almost destroyed. This happened again under Communism during Stalin's reign. We survived under his tyranny for 70 years. It was just before Communism fell that the very first missionary, Andrew Vincent, came to us. He preached the Gospel, with signs and wonders confirming it. He preached everywhere... in our university and schools, on the streets, in the villages, at weddings and funerals, and our big cultural events, to the President and the Mayor.

Soon there were groups of Kalmyk Christians all over. They met in homes and studied the Bible. Andy loved to lead us in singing to the Lord. As these groups grew, they gathered for meetings in our large national library. The Lord brought me to these meetings and I received Jesus.

With such beginnings, we had large Bible studies and began spreading the good news of Jesus Christ everywhere. With the encouraging power of the Holy Spirit, we were able to follow Andy's example. *Cont...*

## THE KALMYK PEOPLE'S JOURNEY TO FAITH IN JESUS

The Lord, with such beginnings, opened for us the vision to bring this salvation to all our people.

We have a village church, not too far from our capital city of **Elista**. This village church started with God doing miracles and healing to confirm His message... healing them from the most difficult of sicknesses. We experienced the power of God! But the most important thing was that the Word of Truth filled our hearts and minds.

**The Kalmyks are a Mongolian people that traditionally are Tibetan Buddhists. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Kalmyks embraced Christianity from the Nestorian (Assyrian of**



**the East) church.** Our people were guards for Genghis Khan and participated in his conquests across Asia and Europe. But after some time, the Nestorian (Assyrian) Christians, including the Kalmyks, were persecuted and asked to choose another acceptable world religion .

They wanted to accept the teachings of the Lutheran Reformation which came to them by four Swedish officers. **The Kalmyk King requested 100 evangelists to come from Sweden. But because of the Russian war with Sweden [1788-90], they were not able to send them. From this time forward, Tibetan Buddhism became the official religion of the Kalmyk people.**

One group of Kalmyks moved to Southern Russian where they settled on the North-West shores of the Caspian Sea.

**The Kalmyks, from the time of the Christian influence, have had a monotheistic mindset.** Even our Buddhist lamas admit to this. Therefore the teaching in the Bible about a Creator God was easy for us to accept.

Our people have come to the Living God in amazing ways. **One very old person received Jesus because she remembered that the Kalmyks long ago before Buddhism once believed in the Bible.** Another woman from our church came to faith after **her mother, before going into a comma, proclaimed loudly that all needed to believe in Jesus the Christ. Her daughter was saved after that miracle.**

After a time, Andy began to be interrogated by the authorities (former KGB). They did not want him to continue his missionary work, so they tried to entrap and deport him. They wanted him to break the law, but did not succeed.

**Andy, with the help of some in the church, began to translate the Bible into the Kalmyk language. In our church were linguists and writers who helped him with the translation. Now, for the first time, we have the New Testament in our mother tongue.**

In 1996, Andy placed me as a pastor, and shortly thereafter returned to the USA. From then on, he was not permitted to return to Kalmykia, **as the Russian government placed him on a black-list of missionaries who were denied entry into the Russian Federation.**

## FROM R.K.'S CORNER

Fifteen years, ago, sitting at my desk in The Bridge office, I received a phone call from Oregon. "Hello, my name is **Andy Vincent**, I have just permanently returned from living in **Kalmykia where I have been sharing the Gospel with the Kalmyk people.**" Having never heard about this ethnic group, I had a lot of questions - who are the Kalmyks and where do they live? As Andy, in his quiet, unassuming way shared his story on the phone, I was deeply moved and impressed, recognizing that I was talking to a man who had operated as an apostle in the true meaning of the Biblical definition! We exchanged information and, at his request, I placed him on our Bridge mailing list.

Fast-forward fifteen years. The other day, Andy called, again, and was surprised that I had not forgotten him. Could we partner together in helping serve the growing church and their pastor **Sarang Badeev** in Kalmykia? After immersing ourselves in learning about the people, talking with Andy, his wife **Diane**, and Sarang, then praying together - Steve and I have decided to enter a partnership with them. **We are honored to be included in serving them as they serve the only Buddhist people-group in the Western hemisphere with the Gospel! We invite you to join us in this partnership with your prayers and finances for the Kalmyk believers!**

I trust you will enjoy Sarang's testimony about his and his people's exciting journey toward faith in Jesus Christ through one obedient American!

*...cont.* After Andy left, the difficulties from the KGB continued toward us. They tried to close us down many times by removing our registration, and forcing us out of meetings. But the Lord saved us. We did not lose our faith which the Lord gave us through Andy. **Despite the persecution, we continued to preach. In time, new people came to Christ and became leaders in our church and started new churches in Kalmykia. So from our church, six new churches and many Bible studies have been born. They are located in different parts of Kalmykia. We want our whole nation to be saved!**

Since last summer, the building we rented in the capital city is no longer available to us, so presently, we are a homeless church. The outsiders look upon us as a sect. The official stance by the Russian government is to back the traditional religions which are Russian Orthodoxy for the Russians and Buddhism for the Kalmyks.

Part of our cultural way of thinking is that, to seek truth, it will be found in a "holy building", like a faith center. It is for these reasons and others that we are seeking God to provide us such a place. One of our members has provided a private property on which we can build a Bible school and a worship center. Although our church is rich in faith, we are poor in money. Perhaps God will move your heart to partner with us in this endeavor. [The cost is app. US\$70,000.00].



13762 State Road 84, Suite 423  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33325  
USA

Ragnhild K. Ulrich ("R.K.")  
Executive Director

Tel 1-954-916-0521  
Fax 1-954-916-8740  
E-Mail:

[TheBridge@BridgeInternational.org](mailto:TheBridge@BridgeInternational.org)

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

We're on the Web!  
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**If you want to contribute toward the building of the worship center for Sarang's church, please mark the memo of your gift: 8156 Kalmyk Church Building.**