

A House of Prayer for All Nations

Level: Pre-K to 3rd Grade

Theme: Orthodox Missions in Mongolia

- Objectives :**
- To familiarize the students with the Mission field of Mongolia – the country, the Church, its people and outreach goals to bring the Orthodox Church to Mongolians.
 - The students will understand how they can be involved in this ministry of building the Church in a region where Christianity is the minority religion.

Teacher Notes: Orthodox Missions - In the mission field, building a place for people to gather and worship God is an important part of establishing the faith. In Mongolia there exists one beautiful Orthodox Church, the community of Holy Trinity in Ulaanbaatar, lead by Fr. Alexy which has just recently (1998) been built. The Church is a place of pilgrimage for nearly 1,000 Mongolians, even though the parish itself is only 160 members. Under the guidance and vision of Fr. Alexy, Holy Trinity is a welcoming and inviting parish that has begun various ministries that have assisted in the growth and development of the community.

Church buildings - Historically, one of the pillars of Orthodox Missions has included building Churches that offer a physical witness of the presence of God. In a recent presentation His Beatitude Anastasios, Archbishop of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania to the General Synod of the Church of England 8th June 2011, shares in his address 'Sharing Good News and Building the Church Today' some personal reflections. "It was July 1991 when I arrived for the first time in Albania. Together with a small group of old men, we made our way from the airport to the ruined Cathedral of Tirana. In order to express the most essential message of my mission, I asked each one of those present to take a candle, and inquired how to say the greeting 'Christ is Risen' in Albanian. I lit the candle exclaiming 'Kristi Njalle', that is Christ is Risen! One after the other, the candles of the few believers were lit, and they answered 'Vertete Njalle', Truly He is Risen! And their eyes were full of tears and light. People began to come together and hear the Gospel message and liturgies most of which took place in the open air under trees or in the ruins of old churches. ... There followed the creation of a seminary to provide basic theological education for future Albanian clergy. ... A fundamental element in Christian missionary work throughout the centuries has been the construction of places of worship so that hymns and thanksgiving can be raised to God in the ages of ages."

Mongolia shares her story - The Holy Trinity Orthodox parish in Ulaanbaatar is the only Orthodox Church in the country. It was founded in 1998 by Russians living in Mongolia. The first priest was appointed by the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church and the focus was primarily on the Russian community in Mongolia. Since that time, Fr. Alexy Trubach has begun to focus increasingly on bringing non-Christians to the faith.

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The Church in Mongolia has translated the liturgy, prayer books and Orthodox newspapers into Mongolian; catechism classes have been conducted; about 40 Mongolians have been baptized; and two students have been sent to an Orthodox seminary in Moscow. The Church building was completed and consecrated in 2009. The church compound includes the church, a parish building, a power station, a sport court and a small park. The parish has a Children's Center, mostly for Mongolian children with painting, ceramic, Russian language, boxing and ice hockey being offered. Throughout the school year, about 150 children participate in these programs at varying degrees.

Fr. Alexy has a vision that the Orthodox Church will be seen as the true faith for all nationalities living in Mongolia. He continues to teach the Orthodox Faith and hopes to begin offering English language courses on the Bible. The goal is to ordain indigenous clergy and establish parishes outside of Ulaanbaatar.

A Church that has an open and welcoming atmosphere for visitors does not happen by accident. As we see in the story of Cholon, it is not just the role of the clergy or adults to invite others to their Church. All members can participate. By understanding at an early age that Orthodoxy is a faith for all people and that our Churches are a place of worship for all people, we are preparing ourselves and our parishes to be welcoming and inviting places for people intent on worshiping Christ and a place of learning for those who are beginning on this pilgrimage. At a very simple stage, young children are able to actively participate in this.

Christ wants us - children and adults - to transform the world around us. By emphasizing that our parish is a place for prayer for all nations and understanding that our parish and each of us are directly connected to the world-wide Orthodox Church, we can begin to prepare ourselves for the change that is necessary for us to be that place where we and others can pray.

Pray:

Dear Lord Jesus
 We pray for all people from all nations around the world
 that they may know that your house is a place for them to learn about Your love.

Help me to be a good example of your love to others
 that I may be bold to welcome new believers into your house
 and that people will know that I am a Christian by my life.

Verse:

"...My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" Isaiah 56:7

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Assemble students at their desks and begin lesson with a prayer. **Read** the Bible verse to the students. Ask students to repeat the verse with you as you read it a second time or, if able, ask a student to read the verse.

Then **ask** "whose house is the verse speaking about?" "what does all nations mean?" "How can our Church be a house of prayer for all nations?" (all people)

Next **ask** students "how do you prepare for something important?" Children may remember the first day of school, a birthday party, a piano or dance recital, the birth of a younger sibling or cousin. Whatever the experience, you want to draw out what was involved in preparing for this event (practicing, cleaning, making invitations, cooking, setting up a new bedroom, decorating, etc) and that children have an active role in important things. Our preparations for making our Church a house of prayer for all nations also needs some type of preparation by individuals of all ages. Tell the students that they will hear a story of a child who lives in Mongolia and that they are to listen very closely to how he tries to make his Church a place of worship for all people.

Activity #1: The story of Cholon

Exercise: Mention that Mongolia is a far away country. If you have access to a world map, point out where it is. Read the story of Cholon to your class.

Story: My name is Cholon and I am a Mongolian boy. I live in a very big city called Ulaanbaatar. You might think that it is funny, but I want to tell you that my name means 'stone' and my grandmother told me it is a very good name for a boy and that it reminds me to be strong like a stone. My sister's name is Khongordzol but we call her Khongi, which means a small, purple flower surrounded by thorns.

In Ulaanbaatar there is one Orthodox Church named Holy Trinity. It is a beautiful building that is clean and tall and very strong. Maybe it is made of stone, like my name. The name of the priest is Fr. Alexy. He is very kind and I like him very much. The name Alexy means 'to defend or help'. Most people in Mongolia are not Christian. Hardly anyone knows about Jesus Christ.

In Ulaanbaatar people live in apartment buildings but, in the villages, people live in 'gers'. A 'ger' is made of wood and felt and leather. Every year my family visits my grandparents who live in a ger and raise sheep. They live with my aunt, uncle and cousins. It is very fun to be in the countryside with them. Everyone has to help out when we visit the village. Sometimes I get to watch the sheep and my sister gets to milk the sheep and horses.

When we visit them it is time for the Nadaam Festival. That is a special time of year for my family and for all Mongolians. We have three days of celebrating, singing and eating special festival foods. There are horse races, archery and wrestling competitions too. My whole family likes to be a part of all the fun.

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We drink warm tea and also have a special drink called arak, which is made from the milk of a horse. We eat meat pancakes that are called khuurshuu and ice cream. When someone offers you something to eat or drink, you can never say no!

Because my family is Orthodox we share stories about our faith with our relatives and other people who are not Orthodox. I like to show my icon of St. Peter who is my patron Saint. His name also means 'stone'.

The Parish of the Holy Trinity is the only Orthodox Church in Mongolia. Fr. Alexy told me that every year we have about one thousand visitors. I tell everyone to come and visit our Church because we are the true faith that teaches people about God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Many people want to visit Holy Trinity because I tell them that it is God's house and they can learn about how much Jesus loves them and wants all of the world to know about Him.

Activity #2: Discussion with Pictures

Exercise:

Hold up each picture and read Picture Notes for each picture. Ask students to describe what they see in that picture. Try to draw out points that highlight the differences and similarities between life here in the US and life in Mongolia.



Horses play an important role in traditional and modern Mongolian families. Horse races are part of the annual Nadaam Festival. The Mongolian horse is a small, hardy pony well adapted to the cold weather in Mongolia.

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Mongolian child - All bundled up to spend the day outside with her parents and siblings, this Mongolian child will help her mother cook, clean and care for the animals. Public school begins at age six.



Archery competitions for all ages are part of many of the Festivals that happen throughout the year. Due to the nomadic nature of the lives of many Mongolians who do not live in the big cities, these Festivals play an important role in bringing people together throughout the year.

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Known as a ger, many Mongolians live in this traditional home, made of sheets of felt, wood poles and leather strapping. The ger consists of one large room with a stove in the middle. Gers are well adapted to the nomadic life of rural Mongolians. A ger can be taken down and moved when the family moves their herds to different grazing areas.



Mongolia has large cities with tall buildings, schools, universities, grocery stores, museums and parks. Ulaanbaatar is the capital city with approximately 1 million people.

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Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Ulaanbaatar is the only Orthodox building in Mongolia. It is very similar to many Orthodox Churches in the United States. The community is made up of individuals of all ages and ethnic backgrounds. The Church invites people to learn more about Christ and the Orthodox Church.

Activity #3: Drawing Similarities

Exercise: Ask students to draw an item that is part of their life and a corresponding Mongolian item depicted. For example if they draw their house, they would then draw a picture of a ger. If they draw their car, they would then draw a horse.

Activity #4: Coin Boxes

Exercise: Take home the coin boxes and save money between now and Pascha that will go to help send more people to Mongolia to share our faith with people like Cholon and his family.

Follow-Up

In the coming weeks ask students to listen carefully to the services and prayers at Church to hear the Bible verses and hymns that confirm God's desire that our Churches are places of prayer for all nations. Encourage them to invite their family and friends to come to Church with them.