

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

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Diversity, Determination and Selflessness Identify Missionaries

Some seven thousand of Jehovah's Witnesses have been trained and sent out to serve as missionaries internationally since 1942, when what is now known as the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead began operating. The 56 students making up the 119th class have recently arrived in New York from ten countries to begin their intensive Bible study and missionary training.

During the five-month course, the primary emphasis is on knowing the Bible thoroughly and seeing the value of its counsel in everyday life. Seasoned missionaries will also share with the students such practical information as how to progress in learning a new language, how to become part of local communities, and what Biblical lessons apply when a person tackles modern-day problems.

The current group of students have already invested years of their lives in serving others unselfishly. They've lived in places as different as Kazakhstan, Colombia and the Netherlands, where they've overcome various challenges, including learning new languages, such as sign language and those using the Cyrillic alphabet and other character sets. Others in the group have had experience teaching people to read, building centers of Bible education in less-advantaged areas and working daily among displaced refugees.

The predecessors of this group, Class #118, graduated on March 12, 2005. John E. Barr was one of three members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses who spoke at the graduation ceremony that day. He chose as his theme, "You Are the Salt of the Earth," from Matthew 5:13 in the Sermon on the Mount. He focused on the preserving effect the words of those missionaries can have, protecting people from moral and spiritual decay, in addition to providing hope.

Missionaries from Class #118 hailed from 8 countries and went out to 19 countries. Their destinations included Albania, Bolivia, Burundi, Croatia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Tanzania and Ukraine.

The students of Class #119 arrived eager and intent on learning all they can so that they too will be prepared to go out to the ends of the earth.

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