



Summer camp is a great opportunity to reach Russian children and youth with the Gospel!

Campfire Stories

Russian Teens and Orphans Drawn by Christ’s Love

Ifat has been through much in his short life. A boy of Muslim birth in Russia’s Ufa region, Ifat had been living an uncertain existence, but found it hard to talk about it. He had lived at the orphanage, then experienced the brief hope of being adopted, only to be “given away” by his adoptive parents. Ifat ran away and ended up back at the orphanage, running away again, and then finally began to live on the streets. For this 15-year-old, even discerning the difference between truth and fiction had become a challenge.

But then he met Victor and Natalya Slobodyan and the SGA-sponsored *Orphans Reborn* team, and received an invitation to summer camp ministry. Amid the river rafting, camping

and fun, the muddled mess in Ifat’s mind and heart began to unravel, and the love of Christ began to draw him toward the light. Natalya says Ifat’s need was great.

When I say his mind is a ‘muddled mess,’ it is the truth. It is a combination of beliefs — reincarnation, Christianity, other worlds and a lot of other things. But he was never afraid to tell us about everything he thinks in this regard. It seems that no one ever listened to him.

The first few days of the river trip were hard for him. He didn’t have his cigarettes or alcohol. However, he got hold of himself.

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By the end of the trip, he admitted that he never trusted anybody in his life, and that he really wanted to follow us in following Christ. But he was afraid to trust. He prayed and asked God for help.

After the trip, Ilfat remained at the camp to work as a stoker tending the furnace. He turned out to be a very disciplined and hardworking young man. Most importantly, every morning he was seen on the riverbank with a Bible in his hands. During the youth camp sessions, Ilfat remained as one of the campers, but he was often drawn to the furnace. Every morning, he got up before the rest of his group and took the Word of God and went off to pray. Natalya adds,

Praise God for him! It seems that he is finally beginning to understand what a real family is.



For lost children like Ilfat, camp opens hearts to the love of Christ!

Ilfat and some other campers are from Bashkir families. They are viewed as “more moral” and are not supposed to drink. Nearly half the children who are on the street are Bashkirs and Tatars. They are children from families that identify themselves as Muslim, and are taught only traditions with a fundamental education and no love. Yet should these children go to church, even the alcoholic parents who are on their last legs say, ‘We are Muslims! We can’t go to church!’ They do not allow their children to go and they threaten us, even though they don’t go to the mosque themselves. Please pray for Ilfat, that he will come to know the Lord as his Savior!

Asamat is another boy whose young life has been a mess. He was homeless and is a former drug addict. He went through rehab and worked at our camp during the summer. He made friends with Ilfat and Raushaniya,*

and knows how to talk to them. Pray for Asamat. Soon he will go on trial for crimes he is alleged to have committed in “his past life.” We are really praying that he won’t be sent to prison. God is powerful to deliver him.



Pray for Asamat in the coming days!

When the prosecutors and government officials check us out (our organization is called ‘Opportunity’ and works with local homeless) and inspect us during their scheduled and unscheduled visits, they make a list of the children with whom we work. As soon as they see Bashkiri and Tatar names on the list, they immediately ask, ‘What are you doing with these Muslim children?’ We tell them that we feed them, of course, and give them medicine, and if they need clothing, we clothe them! They reply, ‘But you are Christians. You work with Russians. You don’t work with Tatars and Bashkiris.’ We have to answer them, and we do. ‘If, during our patrols, we see a hungry child, are we supposed to ask him his nationality and only then feed him?’ These are the kinds of conversations we have all the time!

In Ufa and all across Russia, our brothers and sisters strive to live out the example of our Lord, teaching that . . . *in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him* (Acts 10:35). This especially resonates in a land like Russia, where there are more than 130 different people groups, some of which face serious challenges. It is especially meaningful to these children at the summer camps you help make possible in Russia and her neighboring countries. Please pray as summer camp season nears, asking the Lord to provide the resources needed to enable even more children to attend. So many have yet to hear of the Savior’s love!

**Editor’s Note: Raushaniya’s story is told on page 4.*



NEWS AND ANALYSIS



Historic Ukrainian Church Destroyed by Fire

Late in October, one of the great historic Baptist churches of Ukraine burned to the ground — the Dnepropetrovsk Baptist Church. At this point, investigators believe the fire's cause was electrical in nature.

This church is more than 100 years old, and has more than 1,500 members. SGA president Bob Provost has preached there and had assisted in the construction of the present building. While



While grieved at the destruction of their historic church, Dnepropetrovsk believers are determined to carry on their ministry.

heartbroken over the loss of their house of prayer, the congregation is undaunted and its Gospel ministry in the Dnepropetrovsk region will continue. In a statement on the church's website, the congregation said that they carry the words of the prophet Habakkuk in their hearts . . . *I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my*

place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us. Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places (Habakkuk 3:16-19).

Please be in prayer for the church leaders and the congregation of Dnepropetrovsk Baptist Church as they seek God's direction and provision for rebuilding.

Arsonists Hit Churches in Caucasus Region

Authorities in Russia's Republic of Karachayev-Cherkessia say unknown assailants burned a Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (UECB) church and two Orthodox churches to the ground in the fall. Thankfully no one was injured in the fires, according to local officials, and authorities continue to investigate.

Karachayev-Cherkessia is located in the Caucasus Mountain region of Russia. Mt. Elbrus, at 18,442 feet the highest mountain in Europe, is located here along the border with Kabardino-Balkaria. The region is heavily Muslim, but thus far, vandalism against churches has been relatively rare. The region is also the location of Chechnya, a Russian republic that has been the center of ongoing violence between the Russian government and Islamic separatists. Please be in prayer for evangelical churches and individual believers in the region, asking the Lord to protect them, and to grant them opportunities to proclaim the peace and reconciliation found only through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Another Blessed Summer

Russian Evangelical Churches Get Ready for Children's Camp Season

As people across Russia and her neighboring countries begin thawing out from a brutal winter and celebrate spring, evangelical churches are finalizing their preparations for the 2011 summer camp season — one of the key children's ministries of the year. To help prepare the way and encourage advance prayer, we'd like to share a wonderful report from last year's ministry that we only recently received. It's yet more spiritual fruit that you helped gather through your faithful prayers and support.

In Russia's Ufa region, Victor and Natalya Slobodyan eagerly anticipate camp season. It affords them a unique opportunity to reach orphan children with the love of Christ, as well as needy or homeless teenagers. Natalya says that last year was "another blessed summer," and trusts that this season will be filled with more opportunities for the Gospel.

Last year, we had four sessions — two river excursions and two stationary camps. One of the river expeditions was for a group of high-risk children. All in all, we had more than 200 children and teenagers attending.

Tragic Fires and a Heaven-Sent Opportunity

It was a difficult summer for everyone. The children and adults both witnessed the forest and peat fires, and dried-up streams. Our kids even participated in putting out

the forest fires. The local governmental administrators praised them for this. Here



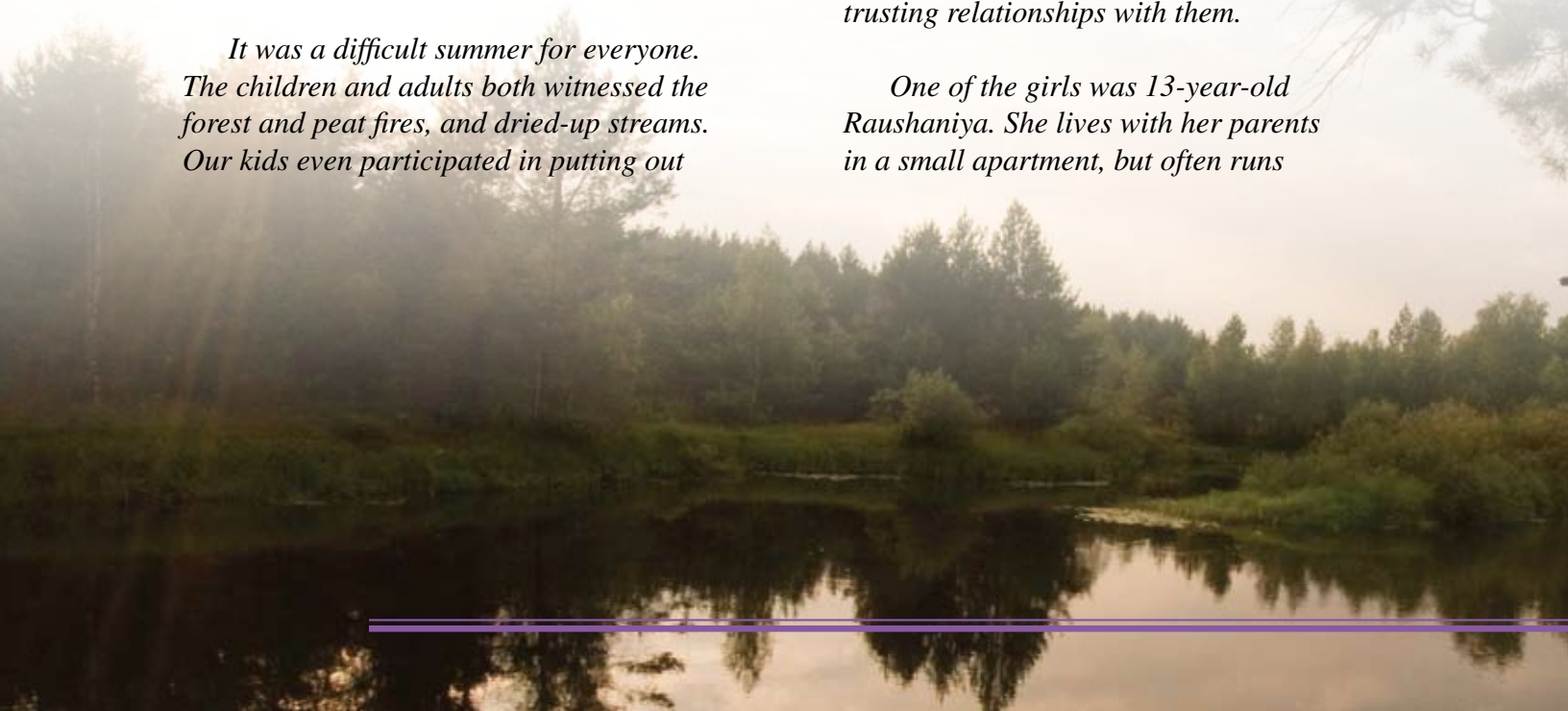
Sitting along the Sim River was a beautiful place to share about Christ's love and His creation!

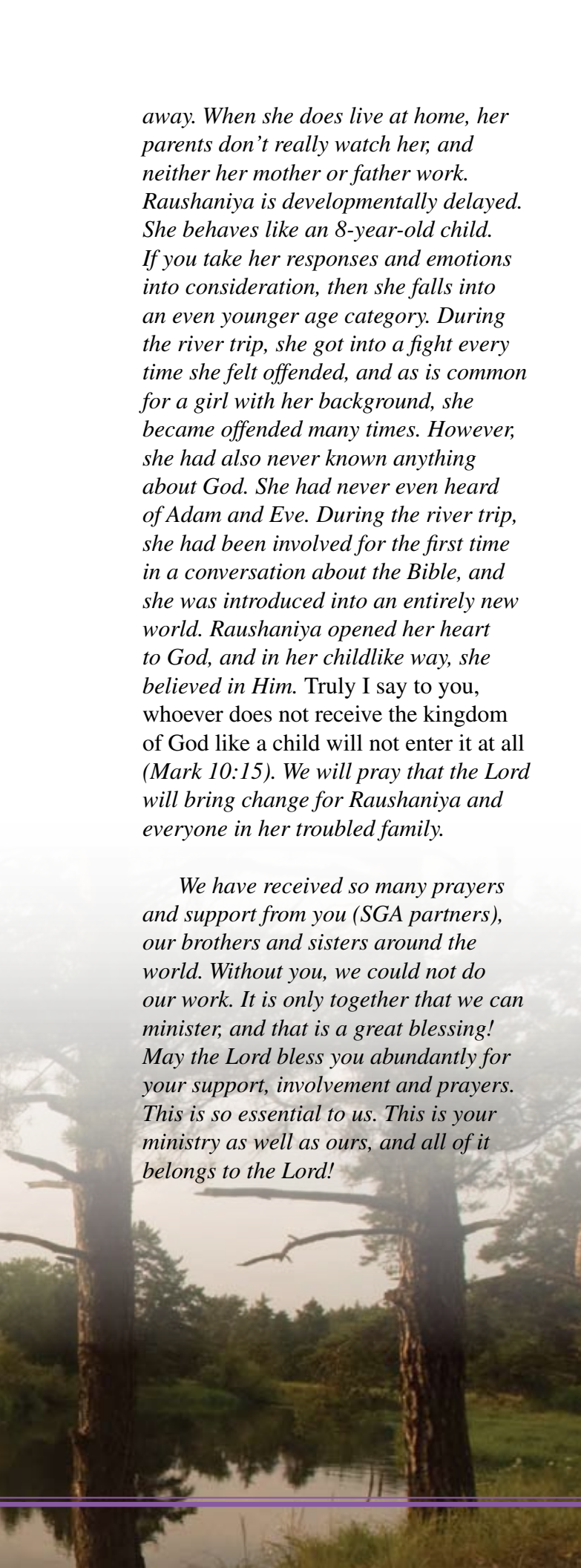
is a little miracle — the children went to swim in the river and saw the fire burning little more than 800 yards away. We were able to put it out, and thank God for the opportunity to serve for His glory.

Raushaniya's Story As Told by Natalya

In June and July we took a trip with the teens on the Sim River. The kids were 11 years and older. Some of them were homeless and neglected children, and this trip gave us the opportunity to reach children from so-called "high risk" families. Our kids brought us their friends, brothers and sisters, and the river trip brought us closer and helped us develop trusting relationships with them.

One of the girls was 13-year-old Raushaniya. She lives with her parents in a small apartment, but often runs





away. When she does live at home, her parents don't really watch her, and neither her mother or father work. Raushaniya is developmentally delayed. She behaves like an 8-year-old child. If you take her responses and emotions into consideration, then she falls into an even younger age category. During the river trip, she got into a fight every time she felt offended, and as is common for a girl with her background, she became offended many times. However, she had also never known anything about God. She had never even heard of Adam and Eve. During the river trip, she had been involved for the first time in a conversation about the Bible, and she was introduced into an entirely new world. Raushaniya opened her heart to God, and in her childlike way, she believed in Him. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all (Mark 10:15). We will pray that the Lord will bring change for Raushaniya and everyone in her troubled family.

We have received so many prayers and support from you (SGA partners), our brothers and sisters around the world. Without you, we could not do our work. It is only together that we can minister, and that is a great blessing! May the Lord bless you abundantly for your support, involvement and prayers. This is so essential to us. This is your ministry as well as ours, and all of it belongs to the Lord!

Sensible Stewardship

Estate Planning and Beneficiary Designations (Part Two)

Last month, we began discussing how problems can arise if you complete a Trust or Will, and think that the distribution plan you created so carefully will control all of the asset distribution. It will not.

Typical of these assets are life insurance, annuities, defined contribution plans (401k, 403b etc.) and all Individual Retirement Accounts. Indeed, any brokerage account on which we place a TOD (Transfer on Death) designation and any bank account on which we place a POD (Payable on Death) designation will be distributed to the designated beneficiaries.

History is replete with decedents who had intended to make adjustments in regards to the funds they were leaving, but had forgotten to complete the paperwork and thus left large insurance payouts and sizable retirement plans to individuals they did not intend. Such distributions were intended at the time the designation was made, but things change, people change and people die. Therefore, as important as it is to create and maintain the currency of your Trust or Will, it is equally import to finish the job and ensure that your beneficiary designations are consistent with the distribution intent so carefully laid out in your documents. The process takes work and a bit of time. Finish the job!

There are so many things that we can and should utilize as good stewards of the assets God has provided. Slavic Gospel Association has made special arrangements for you to look into such matters with the help of an independent group called PhilanthroCorp, a nationally known Christian charitable planning firm that works exclusively in the areas of estate and gift planning. There is no cost or obligation to you for this service. To learn more, visit our website — www.sga.org. Or, you can call PhilanthroCorp at 800-876-7958 to visit on the phone with one of their Estate Specialists.

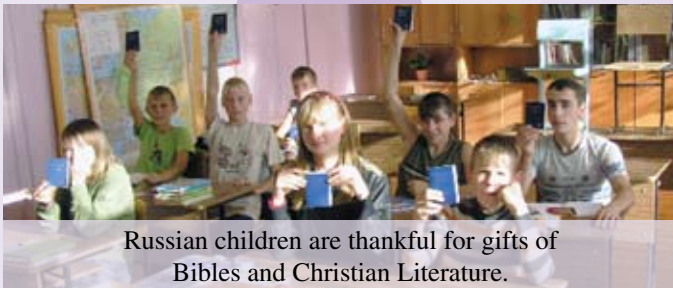


Orphans Reborn

“We Want Them to Love the Bible”

In the Russian city of Smolensk, orphan children love to dig deeply into God’s Word. According to *Orphans Reborn* coordinator Olya Ignatenkova, each child who attends Bible classes receives the gift of a personal New Testament — made possible by SGA partners.

We realize that one hour each week is not enough for the orphans’ spiritual growth. One of our goals is to help them study the Bible and pray without us being there. This year, we have decided to focus more and more on the New Testament. We gave a New Testament to each child and will read it together with them at each lesson for the whole year.



Russian children are thankful for gifts of Bibles and Christian Literature.

Olya says they were surprised at the level of the children’s positive response.

We want them to love the Bible, and you can see from their faces that they do, as they hold their New Testaments.

Working with Foster Children in Belarus

SGA-sponsored church planter Vasily Shemetov and his family decided to take ministry

to orphan children to a new level this past year in becoming a foster family. He says it has been difficult, but worth every moment.

Four years ago, we began by accepting a little boy named Maxim into our family. He is a Roma (gypsy) child, and was abandoned by his mother after his birth. Then less than a year ago, the authorities advised us that there should be no less than two adopted children in a foster family. We were offered a brother and sister, both of whom had been taken away from their parents. The boy, Yuri, is 10 years old and his sister Olya is 16. They are of the same mother, but with different fathers. The mother is incapable of caring for the children and has been deprived of parental rights. Yuri’s father is in prison, but nothing is known about Olya’s father. She has never even seen him.

Olya has mental challenges and studies at a special school, while Yuri is a fifth grader at a comprehensive school. Because of his parents’ neglect, it is very difficult for him to study. Vasily believes this is a unique calling for them as they live out Christ’s love before these hurting children.

As a foster family, we are trying to replace these children’s parents somehow. We are trying to bring them up in a Christian spirit and in the fear of God. From the first day, we told them about the Lord Jesus Christ, His love for people, and that He died on the cross in order to save His people. We read the Bible in the evenings and lift our prayers to the Lord. And we serve the Lord together at the church. Pray, dear brothers and sisters, for me and my family so that God will give us strength and wisdom to raise these children — Maxim, Yuri and Olya — so that they will find Him in the future.

Innercircle Perspective



Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen (Mark 16:5-6).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is not a theory. It is not a hope. It is absolute, irrefutable reality! And because He lives, we, too shall live . . . forever!
Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!

One of the great mysteries of Russia is how the meaning of Easter survived the suppression of the 70+ year atheistic communist era. Churches were closed and destroyed. Countless pastors and laymen were exiled or executed. Bibles and all Christian literature were banned. Celebration of Christmas as a holiday was programmed out of existence. But amazingly, this was not the case with Easter.

A few months after the November 1989 collapse of the communist empire, I decided to experience Moscow on Easter morning. I didn't want to be a distraction for pastors preparing for their first free Easter celebration in seven decades, so I told no one that I was coming. Early on Easter morning, I took my Bible and my video camera and allowed considerable time for interviewing people on the way to church.

First, I approached several sidewalk passersby as I headed to the Metro station. All of them knew that it was Easter morning, and some of them even greeted me with "Christ arose." Next were several people on the subway car. All of them knew it was Easter, and some proclaimed the Easter greeting. Later in the day, upon entering a restaurant, I was greeted with the words, "Christ arose!" Many times since we have been in the lands of Russia at Easter time. Everywhere we go in public we are greeted with the words, "Christ arose!" We always offer the expected response, "It's true He arose!"

I asked Pastor Eugene Bakhmutsky, first vice president of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, to comment on Easter. He said, *There are*

two big holidays in Russia - New Year's and Easter. Christians and non-Christians celebrate Easter. This time is the best time to preach the Gospel - almost the whole country is open to hear and to listen to Christian preaching. Even when you congratulate strangers on the street - Christ has risen - they are not offended, but will talk with you! We need to maximize that special opportunity.



Dr. Robert W. Provost
SGA President

SGA's chief Russian-language editor, Sergei Omelchenko, had this to say about how the celebration of Easter generally survived the communist era, which had a goal of ridding the country of all Christians and all Bibles. *I think the meaning of Easter survived through the communist era due to the difficult life, influence of the traditions that were passed on, respect for the older generation that held on to them, search for the unknown, and a natural longing of souls for spiritual things, which were very scarce in the communist diet.*

As we approach the celebration of our Savior's glorious resurrection from the dead, please remember our evangelical partners in the Gospel across the lands of Russia. Pray for the Easter outreaches in their communities. What could be more tragic than entire nations celebrating Easter without knowing the awesome truths about it? The goal of our partners in Russia is to see 1 % of their countrymen saved . . . it is an aggressive goal. To grow from one in 1,000 born again to one in 100 born again is a huge undertaking.

May all your Easter celebrations be blessed beyond measure for you and for all your loved ones. Your partnership in the Gospel, your faithful prayers and support help to make all of our ministries possible, and is deeply appreciated.

Christ is Risen! He is Risen, indeed!



How You Can Help



Help Bible-preaching Russian churches reach their people with the Gospel.

Even though there is still snow on the ground throughout the lands of Russia and Easter has yet to be celebrated, Russian believers are starting to prepare for summer camp ministries. There are programs



to be developed and facilities that need maintenance—all in preparation for the few weeks this summer that children and youth will be spending a week learning more about their Heavenly Father. For many, it will be the first time that they hear a clear Gospel presentation. For some, it will be a vacation from the reality of living on the streets. Summer camp is something that often has an eternal impact on not only the children that attend, but also their caregivers.

Your gift will help local churches reach youth and children alike with the Gospel message through ministries such as:

- Children's Ministries – through Sunday school, summer camp, and follow-up ministry to other programs throughout the year.
- Orphans Ministry – through *Orphans Reborn*.
- Bible and Christian literature distribution.
- Resources that equip youth to passionately be the arms and legs of Jesus to the lost and hurting people in their communities across the lands of Russia.

Please prayerfully consider how you can help our partner churches reach their communities with the Gospel.

Thank you!
Please return the enclosed reply form with your gift.

With your help more people across the lands of Russia can hear the Gospel this summer!

Heres, my gift to help reach more people across the lands of Russia with the Gospel, I'm enclosing \$ _____ (11000)

I would like to stay better connected! Please e-mail me with periodic ministry updates, key prayer requests and needs. (400)

Sign me up to be part of SGA's special e-mail Prayer Team. (400)

My e-mail address is: _____

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