



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

# InSight

August 2011

SERVING CHURCHES – REACHING RUSSIA



6,000 miles of opportunities and challenges . . . and preaching the Gospel!

## *Encouraging the Forgotten and Winning the Lost*

### *Gospel Expedition Concludes in Khanty-Mansiisk*

For most evangelical believers in North America, worshipping the Lord and fellowshiping together with like-minded believers requires little more than a short car trip across town. It's not like that out in remote Siberia, where you and perhaps four or five others might make up a congregation with no church building and no permanent pastor. For them, there are few opportunities to worship with — or to be encouraged by — fellow Christians from other regions.

For these Russian believers, poverty and isolation is a daily reality, yet they live

thankful lives and don't complain. They trust in the Lord and His promise . . . *For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes* (Jeremiah 31:25). And through their support of this spring's Gospel Expedition, SGA partners not only helped refresh the hearts of our brothers and sisters, but also helped them draw attention to the Gospel in a way they could not have done on their own.

By the time it concluded in March, the Gospel Expedition encouraged and refreshed local believers living in remote,

*Continued on page 2*

isolated locations across 6,000 miles of north central Russia. According to Boris Berezhnoi of the SGA-sponsored Blagovestie (Good News) music ensemble, the traveling teams endured bitter cold temperatures (as low as -65 degrees) and widely varying ministry opportunities along the 6,000 mile trek . . .



Siberian roads are frozen and treacherous.

*The final stage ended March 8, and covered towns and villages such as Nyagan, Oktyabrsky, and Pionersky, with stops in larger towns such as Urai, where there are only seven Evangelical-Baptist believers! In Kandinskoye, we found a very negative attitude toward Baptists, with local believers being called “sectarians.” We met with the town leadership and asked them why, and they said they had received a letter from “higher authorities.” Our planned concert in the community center was cancelled, but we held services in the church instead. Two people came and repented, despite the official pressure.*

*In Pionersky, it was different. We could hold our meeting in the community center, and the village administration actually*



*asked us to tell people how they could get rid of alcohol, drugs and smoking through knowing God! The director of the club listened to us very intently and told*

*us afterward that she didn’t hear anything that contradicted the Scriptures, adding, “People say various things about you!” All the people in the center prayed a prayer of repentance with us, and we gave away many New Testaments, and answered many questions.*

In addition to Boris, five SGA-sponsored missionary pastors participated in the Expedition along with Russian

UECB leaders from Moscow and other key regions. During the final evangelistic meeting in Khanty-Mansiisk, Pastor Piotr Konovalchik and



The Expedition team.

Dmitri Bogdanov led a communion service. The church was full to overflowing, even the kitchen, library and dormitory. More than ten came forward to repent of their sins and receive Christ as Savior.

We are thankful to the Lord for the many hearts that were encouraged in the struggling churches, and for each one who responded to the Gospel call in repentance. Pray for the local believers as they continue to lift the name of Christ, disciple the new believers, and live the Gospel before their neighbors.

Repentant hearts could be found in many towns.



And pray for the new believers, that they will be strengthened in their new faith.

# Tilling Hard Soil and Yielding Fruit

Andrei Yaroschuk  
Serving in a Muslim state of Russia

*of abandoning her faith. Please pray for Gulnas as she seeks Christ, and for the salvation of her soul.*

In recent years, it has been said that the spiritual hunger once seemingly so deep across Russia and her neighboring nations is growing less and less evident. In other words, in some regions, the ground can be so much harder to till and fruit harder to gather. Yet no heart is beyond the loving reach of our loving God — the One really doing the work, as the Lord Himself made clear . . . *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day* (John 6:44).

SGA-sponsored missionary pastor Andrei Yaroschuk knows something about difficult ground. He labors in one of Russia's Muslim regions. Men, women, and children who come to faith in Christ there often pay a heavy price. Yet the Lord is drawing them to Himself — one lost, spiritually hungry soul at a time!

Andrei told us the story of Gulnas, a single mother. . The pain in her life has driven her to seek answers . . .

*Gulnas is from an Islamic family, but her family doesn't live a strict Muslim life according to the Quran. Perhaps because of this, Gulnas visited the Orthodox Church, as her soul needs answers.*

*We met at our home Bible study, where she had been invited by Constantine and Marina of our church. She told us she likes such fellowships and she loves to talk about God, seek Him and understand Him. She often asks questions at the Bible classes and takes an active part in the discussions. Gulnas began to attend our church and we are hoping she takes the final step and receives Christ as her Lord and Savior. But she is receiving pressure now from her parents. They accuse her*

## A Small Group for Everyone

Andrei believes it's important that anyone coming to the church must see and experience the love of God's people. There isn't always enough time after Sunday worship to visit long with everyone, so Andrei and the church organize small or home groups so the church can keep up with what is going on in everyone's lives. At first, there were only two, but now there are five, with one of them strictly for men. Andrei says that not many attend these small groups, but that's not the point. The comfortable, more intimate atmosphere helps people feel free to discuss issues that are pressing for them. Andrei is thankful to God for the opportunity, and believes that this ministry will help his people grow spiritually as they are disciples. We want the Word of God to work in the hearts of men and in their families.

## Friend Telling Friend

In John 4, the beloved Apostle gives the account of the woman at the well, and how she ran back to tell others about her encounter with our amazing Lord. Andrei's accounts aren't quite on that scale, but the principle is the same — others hearing about the Lord and His people through word of mouth . . .

*One sister named Irene only recently began to attend our church, and she already told her friend about God's work in her soul. This lady became very much interested and said she wanted to come and learn more about us. We didn't have a chance to meet each other, but we already knew quite a bit from what Irene had already told us. I shared Christ with her, and she asked many questions. She was very much interested, and I found out*

*that her son also wants to know about God. She plans to bring her son with her to the church. We cherish each person who comes to us, whom God gives to us. Please pray for this lady and her son, that they will come to know the Lord!*

### **Blessings and Prayers**

The place where Andrei's church meets is a rental hall, and the previous tenants left and took all the chairs with them. Andrei sent out the word to local believers and to SGA partners for prayer, and the Lord responded to the need. The owners of the hall offered some chairs to the church for a time, and other friends donated funds so that they were able to purchase nice chairs for services. The chairs enable them to not only hold worship services, but also to use them



Pray for Andrei's growing church.

for outreaches. The hall can be used for multiple purposes including the viewing of Christian films and discussion groups.

Andrei knows that the SGA family is a praying family, in keeping with founder Peter Deyneka's motto . . . "Much prayer, much power!" He and his wife, Mary, ask that we pray for the ongoing development of home groups and leaders, for new people who come to the church and hear the Gospel, and for the faith of the church members to be strengthened. This Muslim city is a challenging place for ministry, and Andrei is thankful for the prayers of God's people.



# NEWS AND ANALYSIS

## **Russian Parliament Considers New Restrictions on Religious Freedom**

The Social and Religious Organizations Committee of Russia's Duma (lower house of parliament) is reportedly giving its backing to proposed new restrictions on distributing religious literature in the country. The news surfaced earlier this year, with Forum 18 reporting a possible ban on distributing religious literature by anyone except registered religious organizations. The news agency said it was the first time to their knowledge that such a proposal has had initial committee backing. The origin of the proposal was the local legislature in Russia's Belgorod region, but now the national Duma may consider making this change to the country's law on religion dating back to the 1990s.

If actually adopted, the proposed measure would also impose a fine for violations. Several

observers expressed doubt that the measure would pass the lower house or even get out of committee, as they considered it a clear violation of the Russian constitution. Of course, this issue is causing concern among human rights defenders and some religious communities. Similar proposals have regularly been made, but thus far have not gone anywhere. At this point, it is unclear how much support such a change would have among Russia's senior political leaders, especially with a presidential election coming up.

Please join SGA in making this a matter of intercessory prayer. So many have yet to hear of Christ's love for them, and our prayer is that our brothers and sisters may continue . . . *preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered* (Acts 28:31).

# Russian Youth in America . . . Celebrating a Rich Spiritual Heritage

By Jess Miller



Several thousand Russian youth packed the arena for worship.

During an action-packed weekend this spring, the city of Minneapolis played host to the North American Slavic Youth Congress.

From March 25-27,

thousands of Russian-speaking American youth attended a weekend full of singing, preaching and fellowship. Several representatives from SGA attended and had the opportunity to speak to the youth about the exciting things God is doing in their homelands of the former Soviet Union.

Ruth Deyneka Erdel, SGA missionary and daughter of SGA founder Peter Deyneka, attended and shared with the youth about her ministry with Russian-speaking people. Many of the young people came up to Ruth during the conference and listened intently as she shared with them the importance of retaining their Russian-speaking abilities for the sake of the Gospel amongst their people. According to Ruth, the theme of the conference was based on the Apostle



Ruth Deyneka Erdel

Paul's words to the church at Corinth . . . *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win* (1 Corinthians 9:24). She also noted that November 11 of this year has been declared a special day of fasting and prayer for Slavic youth — that they would come to the Lord and be dedicated to His Word. The SGA team also gave

away hundreds of books in both the English and Russian languages to the eager attendees.

The choral performances were outstanding and an illustration that God is both blessing and gifting the Russian-speaking people who have immigrated to the United States. A key emphasis of the conference was a reminder to the younger generation of the importance of remembering the intense suffering their forefathers endured for



God's blessing on the youth choir was evident . . . and edifying.

becoming followers of Jesus. The older generation of Russian-speaking Christians seemed eager to pass the torch of their rich heritage to the next generation of believers.

Another highlight of the conference was the obvious passion many of the younger Russian-speaking generation have for missions to their homelands. Many of the youth visited the SGA table inquiring about possibilities, and the role God may have in store for them to help reach Russia and its neighboring countries with the Gospel. What an awesome thing to know that God is stirring a passion for mission work in the hearts and minds of these Russian youth.

SGA is praying for partnerships to form between Russian-speaking churches here in the US and those overseas. We want to see the Lord further the Gospel in the lands of Russia and are asking the Lord to work in the hearts of the Russian-speaking American youth to participate in this wonderful mission.

*\*Photos provided by Valentin's Photography*



# Orphans Reborn

## Report on Veliko-Polovetskoe

Sergei Gladishko  
Director, SGA Regional Ministry Center  
Kiev (Irpen), Ukraine

Along with SGA-sponsored missionary pastor Dmitri Lyutiy and his team, I visited the orphanage in the village of Veliko-Polovetskoe, where we led an Easter celebration.

The orphanage director and her deputy met us with gladness, and after a brief meeting, we held the Easter celebration with the children and staff. As we began, I told the gathering about



the important meaning of Easter (Paskha). Then Dmitri's team from the church sang Easter

songs together with the children and read Easter poems. At the end, I invited children to pray. All children (and their teachers/caregivers) joined me in praying the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6).

After this wonderful celebration, we had time for fellowship. We brought Christian booklets and larger books for the children, including books on prayer for children and "The First Six Days of Creation." The booklets we brought included "The Truth About Smoking" and "The Truth about Alcohol." So many orphan children get caught up in drug and alcohol abuse as they get older. One boy and one girl admitted that they were smoking,

and then I told them about the harm it does them. I also asked them to give out the booklets to others who smoke. At the end of the meeting, they promised to give up smoking and asked us to pray for them. Please add your prayers to ours for them, that they will not only be freed from this horrible habit, but that they will also repent and trust in Christ for salvation.

In addition to the books, we also brought them some humanitarian aid that we received from our partners at SGA/Australia — clothes, shoes, and knitted bedspreads. Afterward, the orphanage director expressed her gratitude for the wonderful celebration and presents, and for everything that we had done for them before. We are seeing the fruit of this ministry already. Lyudmila, the director of the orphanage, visited the church twice, and her deputy (also named Lyudmila) repented and was baptized! In addition, two of the teachers



Christian children's books always bring joy!

and the secretary of the director are also Christians and church members. Praise God! Please pray for Dmitri and his team, who will carry on with the *Orphans Reborn* ministry there.

# Innercircle Perspective



*Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing?*

*The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed.....He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them (Psalm 2:1-2 and 4).*

The turmoil in the world today reminds me so much of the turmoil over the past 20 years in the lands of Russia: savage wars in the south, former communist bosses stealing corporations, currency collapses, vicious terroristic attacks, double-digit inflation, unsolved murders of journalists, uncontrollable fires, smothering smoke, severe flooding and droughts, and an alliance between the government and the national church to eradicate evangelical Christianity.

But praise be to our Sovereign God, there is another side to the story. Undaunted by adversity, faithful men and women have been advancing the Gospel across the lands. Christ is surely building His church! (Matthew 16:18)

I am writing on the way to Kirovo-Chepetsk, a city of 100,000 people in the Kirov Oblast (state) 600 miles northeast of Moscow. When I first went there 20 years ago, only one small church in the state had survived Stalin and Khrushchev. Then the Lord began to work mightily in Kirovo-Chepetsk, home of a chemical warfare factory that continually released toxic fumes and kept their hospital filled. Word had reached the UECB leaders in Moscow that a young woman had been saved, was witnessing relentlessly, and had invited a young deacon from southern Russia to come to help disciple the new converts.

The UECB leaders sent me to see how we might help. Through the zeal of the new converts, the Lord was changing the city. All they needed was prayer, material help, and training. North American pastors, churches, foundations, and individuals caught the vision and rose to the occasion. Now — 20 years later — I am on my way to Grace Church of Kirovo-Chepetsk for their anniversary celebrations.

The results of our partnership have been glorious. Faithful SGA partner churches in North America sponsored several Strategic Bible Institutes and the *Antioch Initiative* in the region. SGA partners have supported missionary pastors, *Immanuel's Child* outreaches, summer camps, an AWANA Club, construction of churches, and a sports

outreach facility. The mother church has grown to 300 members with 20 daughter churches, and eight groups forming into churches. Eight men have been ordained as pastors, and 30 as deacons. Fifteen missionary pastors are reaching more towns and villages. A newspaper is published, *Orphans Reborn* teams visit 14 orphanages, and three prisons are visited.

There are several other encouraging church-planting movements across the lands of Russia, but there are many states that remain virtually unreached. Bordering the Kirov Oblast is the Mari-El Republic with only one evangelical church of 120 members. In northwest Russia, the Republic of Korelia has no evangelical church, but a UECB missionary pastor has been sent. The Buddhist Republic of Kalmykia has three evangelical churches, totaling 100 members. The nearby Astrakhan Oblast has three churches, with 194 members. The Caucasus Mountain republics of Chechnya and Ingushetia have no churches, while the Republic of Dagestan has only one.

In the Far East, from Chukotka on a clear day you can see Alaska. There is one church with 20 members. The huge Kamchatka Peninsula has three churches, totaling 150 members.

I have shared a few examples from Russia showing how unreached it still is. Entire countries in Central Asia and Caucasia are still waiting to hear. There is simply no one to tell them. Please join us in prayer to the Lord of the harvest to thrust out workers into the vast, ripe harvest fields of Russia and her neighboring countries. And please share these tremendous opportunities with your missions committee and your Sunday school class. To see many other regions like the Kirov Oblast reached, it will require many more SGA partners, partner churches, and partner foundations.

In the meantime, there will be great rejoicing in Kirovo-Chepetsk. We cannot thank you enough for all your prayers, support, and encouragement that have made the difference for the glory of Christ there. Jesus Christ is building His church!



Dr. Robert W. Provost  
SGA President



# How You Can Help



Evangelical Russian-speaking churches are thankful for your partnership in taking the Gospel to their people!

Despite growing difficulties and outright persecution in some locations, missionary pastors across Russia and her neighboring countries are tirelessly sharing the Gospel in their communities throughout their



regions. Please pray for these faithful men and their families as they conduct worship services, facilitate small groups—some of which meet in homes—and visit orphans. Others travel vast distances ministering to fellow believers and witnessing to those who are lost and spiritually hungry.

Your faithfulness helps evangelical Russian-speaking congregations in so many ways:

- Support of faithful, Bible-preaching missionary pastors.
- Equipping youth to serve in their local churches and evangelize within their communities.
- Distribution of Bibles and Christian literature.
- Provision of theological training for pastors and teachers in Christian education.
- Reaching children through Sunday school, summer camps, and orphans ministry.

Thank you for prayerfully considering how you can support these faithful men and their families in their ministries.

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

**You can help Russian-speaking believers take the Gospel to spiritually needy lands!**

Here's, my gift to help reach more people across the lands of Russia with the Gospel. I'm enclosing \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (1000)

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