



Almost 25 years later, thousands of children are still being affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

Overcoming Opposition with Truth

Bless our God, O peoples, and sound His praise abroad; who keeps us in life and does not allow our feet to slip (Psalm 66:8-9).



Vasily Trubchik
 Kobrin, Belarus

For a majority of the people in Belarus, life is more than hard. The country faces so many challenges. The economy remains stagnant two decades after the Soviet collapse. The 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster continues to cast a broad shadow, as more than 70 percent of the nation was contaminated with the

fallout and thousands of children suffer the effects. Tensions between the national government and Western countries remain high, and evangelical churches face ongoing opposition on many different fronts.

But for SGA-sponsored church planter Vasily Trubchik and his congregation, obstacles only present an opportunity for the Lord to declare His power. Over the summer, multiple evangelistic services were held in villages dotting the regions

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of Brest, Mogilev and Vitebsk. As Vasily describes it, the Lord drew people in!

There were unbelievers attending in every place in each service. We especially rejoiced at the service in Lahva, where we had a tent that seated 300 people and was full to overflowing — the majority there were unbelievers. One of our brothers there said it was a real breakthrough for the village because people rarely attend the church!

There was significant opposition, according to Vasily. The pastor of the church in Klimovichi was threatened with fines for distributing flyers advertising the service. The pastor in Senno was forced to go through multiple bureaucratic hoops beginning with a fire inspection and sanitary/epidemiologic inspections. Then came the religious opposition.

The Orthodox chose the days of our services to bring the relics of a saint from Moscow, and spread rumors in town that the Baptists were “sacrificing.” But our brother in Senno overcame everything and was able to hold a three-day event called ‘Healing Love.’

It is impossible to describe every service because scores of musical



The service in Lahva was full and overflowing.



The grounds where we held the Lahva service.



Another packed tent in Klimovichi – despite opposition



There were games for the kids in the village of Zhabinka.

groups participated, different brothers were preaching, and lessons for children were being conducted. We had 150 children attend in Lahva, and we are glad because they heard a clear presentation of the Gospel. After the events, believers and unbelievers alike expressed their thanks. Many unbelievers wrote that they needed pastoral help, while others told us of their repentance before God. Others said that these days had strengthened them spiritually. May God grant that it be so!

In each location except for the village of Zhabinka, special youth services were also conducted, along with sports ministries. In Klimovichi, several youths from a local soccer team came to the service and got acquainted with the pastor. Afterward, they made commitments to come to the next church meetings.

Vasily asks that SGA partners join him in praying for their ongoing ministry.

We grieve for those who are languishing in sin’s captivity. Therefore, we are compelled to continue ministry here for the glory of God. With all my heart, I thank all of our brothers and sisters who are praying for us and supporting our ministry.

Blagovestie . . . Proclaiming the Gospel in Song

Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion; declare among the peoples His deeds (Psalm 9:11).

The SGA-sponsored Blagovestie (Good News) Ensemble spends much of their time traveling across Russia presenting the Gospel message through their music ministry. Whether they are encouraging a body of believers or ministering to lonely people in a nursing home, they press on, knowing that the Lord is using their outreach to draw people to Himself. Recently, leader Boris Berezhnoi shared some highlights from a recent tour.



Boris Berezhnoi

Loading their minibus with instruments, sound equipment and a generator, the group prepared for the busy days that lay ahead.

First, we participated in the 10th anniversary celebration of a church in the town of Novgorod the Great. Not only did guests come from all the regional churches to share in the joyous celebration, but church members also invited people in the local community through distributing invitations as well as running notices in the local paper. As a result, many people — those who normally wouldn't set foot in a church — came to church for the first time! On Saturday night, 32 people repented. Again on Sunday, people responded to the invitation, and an additional 20 people repented, while another 30 rededicated their lives to the Lord. Praise God!

In addition to their participation in church celebrations, the ensemble has also been invited to lead worship for baptismal services. Typically, these services are held along a riverbank. One example

of such an event took place this past July. A church from the village of Tuchkovo, located 40 miles northwest of Moscow along the Moskva River, invited the group to participate. The baptismal service gave Blagovestie the opportunity to preach the Gospel to those who might otherwise not hear it — to curious onlookers that were passing by. With the help of a sound system and generator, people were able to sit on the riverbank and listen to the ensemble's instruments and singing. The songs that were chosen had lyrics that communicated spiritual truths that unsaved people could understand. There were eleven members of the audience that dedicated their lives to God that day!

Another example of the breadth of Blagovestie's ministry is their outreach to invalids. The ensemble had the opportunity to visit a house for war veterans in the Kursk region. While there, they sang songs that proclaimed the Good News and shared the Gospel message in addition to being able to offer comfort and hope to the residents. Since this was the second time the ensemble had sung at the home, the elderly audience gave the group a warm welcome.

Please continue to pray for the ministry of Blagovestie as they continue to share the Good News with everyone they meet.



People of all ages enjoy Blagovestie's blend of Russian folk and Gospel music.



NEWS AND ANALYSIS

Russia Remembers Beslan Tragedy Amid New Terrorist Attacks

As the Russian people observed memorials for the bloody September 1, 2004, terrorist attack



Bombed-out Public School No. 1 in Beslan

on Public School No.1 in Beslan, a suicide/homicide bomber struck at a market in the nearby city of Vladikavkaz. At least 17 were killed and more than 130 wounded. Vladikavkaz is the capital city of North Ossetia, the same oblast (state) where Beslan is located. Russia’s North Caucasus region — which includes the war-torn republic of Chechnya — has been frequently ripped by violence for many years. There are myriad factors contributing to the violence, including Muslim extremism, separatist uprisings, deep poverty and corrupt government officials.

Fruitful Ministry Rises Out of Tragedy in Beslan

In the 2004 Beslan terrorist attack, more than 330 people were killed at the school including 186 children. As with the Vladikavkaz

incident, Islamic separatist militants are believed responsible. But even in the midst of such tragedy and bloodshed, our faithful God and Father is working through His people to heal wounds and change lives through the unstoppable power of the Gospel.

The families of Russian pastors Sergei and Taimuraz Totiev together lost six beloved children in the school attack, but since then have



The Beslan attack claimed more than 330 lives.

been working tirelessly to proclaim the peace of Christ, which *surpasses all comprehension* (Philippians 4:7). According to Sergei Totiev, the Beslan Baptist Church continues to develop what they call a “prevention ministry” in 20 North Ossetian schools. Along with the Gospel, they teach children and youth about the dangers of being caught up in drug and alcohol abuse. Sergei also prays that these ministries will continue to open more doors for further outreaches in the schools and local orphanages. Hearts that have been changed and won to Christ will turn deaf ears to the lures of the terrorists.

Background photo: Beslan Public School No. 1

Sharing God's Love Through Example



Yuri Romanchik

Yuri Romanchik
Grodno region, Belarus

SGA-sponsored church-planting missionaries know that being summoned by the authorities can mean serious trouble. In many regions across the lands of Russia, there is substantial opposition to evangelical churches. Yet for Yuri Romanchik, his summons had a much happier outcome. He explained to the local authorities in the town of Ostrino what his church was doing in the community and why they were doing it. The city council was impressed with the church's outreach to children and youth in the city, as well as with their ministry to alcoholics and the poor. As a result, the local government allowed the church to conduct a summer school and other activities. The Lord had declared His power and opened the doors for the church to advance their ministry in Ostrino.

As Yuri relates,

One way our church reaches out to youth is through hosting youth meetings—inviting non-Christian teens to fellowship with youth from the church. During this time, the youth of the church share their testimonies and devotionals with them. The Gospel message is clearly presented and the youth are invited to dedicate their life to the Lord. Yet, we see that many of the unchurched youth that come are hesitant to do so—they were apprehensive of the reaction from their peers as well as being mocked at home for their decision. Please



Youth meetings in Ostino

pray with us that these teens will continue to attend church programs and that the seeds planted will bear fruit.

As important as outreach ministries are, it is also important for pastors and church planters to edify one another through fellowship with each other and with their families. Yuri recently had the opportunity to organize and host such an event for pastors and church planters in the Grodno region. During the conference, Yuri spoke to the group regarding how to strengthen a church in addition to the natural development of a church. There were also seminars that discussed topics regarding families ministering together and how to develop family relationships while avoiding family life crises. Finally, there was time for the families to fellowship together and be refreshed before returning to the mission fields. Please pray for these faithful church planters and their families.

After the pastors' conference, Yuri traveled throughout the region, putting his lectures into practice by assisting national church planters in developing their ministries. In addition, he visited people in their local communities, sharing his testimony and telling them of God's love for them. In the town of Berezovka, Yuri also helped the church planters lay the foundation for a new House of Prayer. The work was hard, but it was an example to the unbelievers in the community of God's love in action. *By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another* (John 13:35).

Yuri is thankful for your prayers and practical assistance with his needs and those of his congregation. Please continue to pray for his ministry—that new families will start coming to the church—that those who come will be receptive to the Good News and that from those people, God will raise up people to serve Him in ministry.

Coming Soon . . . *My Mission: A Gospel Adventure*

SGA's New VBS/Sunday School Program

Are you trying to find a new, unique program for your church's Sunday school or VBS ministries? Then please prayerfully consider *My Mission: A Gospel Adventure*, a wonderful new project being developed by SGA. The goal of this new program is to get children excited and motivated to reach orphans and other children with the Gospel — not just across the lands of Russia, but also in their own communities.

The Enormous Need of Russian Orphans



Today, there are at least 700,000 orphan children across Russia alone. The vast majority are so-called “social orphans” who have been either abandoned by their parents, or taken from them due to alcoholism,

abuse and neglect. They are in urgent need of Christ's love, and SGA is committed to helping evangelical churches reach them with the Gospel.

Offerings received through *My Mission: A Gospel Adventure* will be dedicated to that purpose.

Adventure Kits Coming Soon!

For churches interested in participating, SGA is preparing “Adventure Kits” consisting of a special video, songs, curriculum and other teaching materials, plus suggestions on how to implement the program. The kit can be used as a missions segment of Vacation Bible School or as a project for Sunday school. As your kids learn about Russian children and how the Lord Jesus is changing their lives, they will also be motivated to reach out to their own friends and neighbors with the Gospel. We hope to have these kits available soon. Call 1-800-BIBLE-50 for more information, or watch for updates on *My Mission: A Gospel Adventure* at www.sga.org.

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world (James 1:27).

Don't forget to check out the SGA website, www.sga.org and come find us on Facebook!



Innercircle Perspective



Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven. (Acts 1:11).

Will this be the year that our Lord Jesus Christ returns to the earth? This is the question that His beloved Church has been asking since He went back to heaven. The promise of the two angels that Jesus would come back, descending from the sky, became the great hope of the early church. Either they would go at their death to the place in heaven that He had prepared for them (John 14:1-3) . . . or He would come back to personally escort them through the clouds to heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). These same awesome promises also gave strength to severely persecuted Christians in the Soviet Union and kept them faithful in the worst of circumstances.

Heretofore in America, Christians have been spared persecution and, by God's grace, have generally led comfortable, unthreatened lives. We have not only enjoyed religious freedom, but as Christians in America, we have enjoyed the favor of our government, and even the general respect of our fellow citizens. With such relatively cushy lives, we can become absorbed in our earthly existence, virtually oblivious to our futures beyond this life. We expect to go to heaven, but many of us seldom think about eternity or about the return of Christ.

The Bible, however, is replete with references to the second coming of Christ, and includes the promise that *a crown of righteousness* is laid up for *all who have loved His appearing* (2 Timothy 4:8). Of the more than 330 references to the coming of Christ, 2/3 of them refer to His second coming. Yet for many of us, our emphasis has been only on His first coming.

It is most interesting that several passages deal with both His first and His second coming. For example, Isaiah 9:6-7, verse 6a reads, *For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us*, and clearly refers to His first coming. Verse 6b and 7 however, refer to His second coming, and read, *And the government*

will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God . . .

A righteous and devout man in Jerusalem was living to see the Lord's Christ. When Jesus and Mary brought the baby Jesus into the Temple, *Simeon took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, 'Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation'* (Luke 2:29-30).



Dr. Robert W. Provost
SGA President

Another passage that refers to both the first and second coming of Christ is found in Isaiah 61. Verses 1 and 2a refer to His first coming, *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted.* Verses 2b and 3 refer to His second coming, *And the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes.* According to Luke 4:17-19, when Jesus began His ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth, He stood to read, was handed the book of Isaiah, and opened it to this exact passage. He read only the first portion that applied to His first coming, and concluded by saying, *'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'*

The Lord has put the urgency of the second coming of Christ upon my heart. Throughout this new year, I invite you to join with me in a concentration of study of the passages that deal with this glorious prophecy. And may our anticipation of His appearing determine our priorities, and how we approach each day for His glory.

In the meantime, your precious partnership in the Gospel is deeply appreciated. Your faithful prayers and your generous support sustain and advance our ministries in the lands of Russia. *Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen* (Revelation 22:20-21).



How You Can Help



Help national church planters reach their towns, cities and villages with the Gospel!

National church planters use community celebrations, baptisms, funerals, weddings, and special Christian conferences to reach their communities with the life-changing message of the Gospel. They know the language and the culture—they are the most effective witnesses.



Your faithful partnership provides SGA the opportunity to provide national church planters with the resources they need to reach their local communities with the Gospel. Your gifts help

- Provide outreach programs for children such as Sunday school, camp and orphans ministries. These programs minister to children, parents, grandparents and caregivers alike.
- Equip national church planters with doctrinally-sound Bible training.
- Plant Bible-preaching churches in towns or villages with no prior Christian witness.
- Equip youth to passionately serve—to reach their communities with the Gospel.

Please prayerfully consider how you can help Russian evangelical churches reach their people with the Gospel. There are so many who are still waiting and wanting to hear.

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



You can help impact the lives of men, women and children across the lands of Russia!

- Heres, my gift to help reach more people across the lands of Russia with the Gospel, I'm enclosing \$ _____ (1000)
- I would like to stay better connected! Please e-mail me with periodic ministry updates, key prayer requests and needs. (400) My e-mail address is: _____
- Sign me up to be part of SGA's special e-mail Prayer Team. (400) My e-mail address is: _____

To make your gift by credit card, see reverse side. >

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