



Through faithful missionary pastors and church workers, children are hearing the Gospel across the Caucasus!

Christ at Work in the Caucasus



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Russia's Caucasus region is a notoriously difficult, dangerous place. Tensions between Muslim separatists and the government have frequently flared out in violence, especially in the regions of Chechnya and Dagestan. The Caucasus is also home to the city of Beslan, where a 2004 terrorist attack on a public school left 334 dead, including 186 children. The scars left by years of ethnic and religious hostility run deep indeed.

But not all is dark in this war-torn, violence-weary region. Christ is at

work through the faithful Bible-preaching churches of the Caucasus. Even now, He is drawing many to Himself — revealing His unparalleled power to change even the most hopeless lives.

Ruslan's Bold Witness for Christ

Two years ago in the Russian town of Maisky, a 45-year-old man named Ruslan came to SGA-sponsored church planter Viktor Levashov for help. Ruslan, an ethnic Chechen who grew up Muslim, had been in the throes of drug addiction for 20 years. Warmed in his heart by Viktor's loving ministry, Ruslan repented of his sins and placed his faith in Christ. Once set free from the iron grip of drug abuse, Ruslan boldly began sharing his new faith with everyone who would listen. As

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Viktor relates, it was sometimes at great personal risk . . .

Chechens are very proud of their Muslim roots. Ruslan knew that if his relatives found out about his Christian conversion, they would turn against him very aggressively. But Ruslan received freedom in Christ, and he boldly told his relatives about his new faith, and finding the freedom that had eluded him for so long. Today, he is an active church member, visiting clinics for drug addicts and even a tuberculosis clinic. The doctors know him very well because they had tried to help him in the past. They are surprised at the miracles and changes in Ruslan's life, and they are open to him. He also began talking to doctors at a local orphanage, and the way was opened for our church to help with repairs to their building. Now the sisters in our church work there with the children, visiting them every week. The leaders at the orphanage saw the freely given work



God has opened the door to reach unwanted Caucasus orphans with His love.

of believers, and now they allow us to have Bible classes with the children. The kids there are developmentally challenged, but they respond to the love shown to them. They are precious and need to know about God and His love for them.

A New Hope for Chechnya?

Viktor's ministry also takes him on occasion to Chechnya and its capital city of Grozny. The city was largely destroyed in the wars between Russia and Muslim separatists, but since large-scale hostilities ended, there has been a rebuilding program in progress. Even so, the tiny group of believers in Chechnya has known much heartbreak and trial — something Viktor knows first hand . . .

I was a youth leader before the war, and had friends among the young people in the Grozny church. The war devastated everything. Some people were killed and others left the city. The Baptist church is in ruins, but as Solomon said, "To everything there is a season . . . a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together" (Ecclesiastes 3:1,5). It is time to gather stones in Grozny. Only three elderly Christian sisters remain there, and we visit them to share the Lord's Supper. We found out that a woman who lives nearby prepared false papers saying she had bought the house where the church was, and she was trying to sell the place. Other neighbors who live nearby are Muslims,



Viktor (right) with the local Chechen Mufti (center). Pray for the rebuilding of the Grozny church!

and they treat Baptists with respect. They advised us to appeal to the Chechen Mufti, who has a lot of local power and resolves many conflicts. He agreed to meet with us and was very friendly. He told us decisively that he would not allow the house — which belongs to the church — to be taken away or sold. He promised to learn the details and to ask the government to restore the church building. Then he invited us to have lunch, where we learned why he respects Baptists and our faith.

In the luncheon with Viktor, the Muslim official said that he had served in the Soviet army 30 years ago, and had met several Baptists in his unit. This was under atheistic communism, and people suffered greatly for their faith. They tried to force believers to reject their faith and their

Christian principles. Christians were promised vacations and other advantages if they would renounce their faith, but they stood firm. According to the Mufti, the light in the believers' lives and their faithfulness showed that they were God's people. He retains his respect for them to this day.

Please join Viktor in praying that this wonderful, yet quiet, meeting will result in greater fruit for the glory of Christ, and for revival of the church in a dark region where the light of the Gospel is so desperately needed.

SGA NEWS AND ANALYSIS

Moldova Leads World in Alcohol Consumption

A recent report by the World Health Organization claims that Moldova tops the globe in per-person consumption of alcohol. According to the Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health, the average Moldovan citizen consumes 18.22 liters of alcohol annually, which is three times the average of 6.1 liters. Other former Soviet nations on the list of heavy alcohol consumption are Russia, Ukraine, Estonia and Belarus. In Moldova, there is a special provision in the government budget for treatment of alcoholism.

The evangelical churches SGA serves are deeply grieved at the level of alcohol abuse in their communities. Many have begun Bible-based drug and alcohol rehabilitation ministries, which SGA partners help support when possible. Please pray for the resources needed to help the churches expand this effective method of outreach, which has helped so many find true freedom and deliverance through Christ.



Alcoholism remains a devastating social problem in the former Soviet Union.



SGA partners have generously supported Camp Joy, now under significant pressure and persecution.

Uzbek Believers Fined Over Imported Bibles

Forum 18 recently reported more moves by the government in Uzbekistan to pressure Christian believers — this time by censoring Bibles. Natalya Pitimirov, wife of Camp Joy director Dmitri Pitimirov, was fined for “violating procedures over the import of two shipments of Bibles and children’s Bibles in 2008 and 2010.” In addition, the government has refused to release the Bibles despite appeals from Christian churches. They are ordering the Uzbek Bible Society to return the Bibles to Russia at their own cost.

The Forum 18 report quoted a Justice Ministry official who said, “There is no need to import Bibles into Uzbekistan since there’s an electronic version on the internet.” However, as we have seen numerous times in recent months, governments in various nations have shut off access to the internet, for political and other reasons. Please join us in prayer for our Uzbek brothers and sisters as they face ongoing and increasing persecution. Also pray that God will move in the hearts of officials so that they would not hinder the progress of the Gospel in a land where millions are waiting to hear.

Gospel Expedition 2011

Russian Evangelists Trek Across Russia's North

The north and the south, You have created them (Psalm 89:12).



Siberia is known for its brutal winters.

Even the mention of Russia's northern Siberia regions during the winter can make those who have

been there shudder as they remember the bitter cold. But this past January, a spiritual fire was kindled across 6,000 miles as Russian missionary evangelists embarked on their latest Gospel Expedition — “The Gospel to the Peoples of the North.”

This year's trek began January 9 in Tyumen and concluded March 6 in Khanti-Mansisk. The first leg from Tyumen to Nizhnevartovsk was 1,200 miles, with the team visiting 12 churches and groups, with other meetings in clubs and believers' homes. Boris Bereznoi, leader of the SGA-sponsored Blagovestie (Good News) ensemble, provided music ministry, while a rotating group of pastors, including former Russian UECB president Yuri Sipko, preached evangelistic messages.

Boris arrived in Tyumen on January 8, and on the 11th, Piotr Zhuk, Yuri Sipko and a team from Ufa joined the group. As Boris describes, the work then began in earnest . . .

We formed three teams and took part in worship services in three local churches. We went to Zavodoukovsk, where political prisoners and believers were exiled. Such prisoners had to walk miles to their forced labor camps. More than 100 came to the community center where we held our meeting, and six people came forward at the invitation. Local believers were joyful for the visit, and for the opportunity to tell their neighbors about the Lord and His grace.

Next came Bogondinka, where 10 more people responded to the Gospel. Then it was 248 miles to the village of Novoselezniovo, home to 10,000 people. The church is located in a former post office, which was given to local believers by town authorities. The entire church knelt in response to

Pastor Zhuk's call for rededication and renewal, and several unbelievers knelt in repentance. In Isham, Boris said that they participated in the funeral of a respected elderly deacon who had recently gone to be with Christ. The funeral made quite an impression on the village . . .

Unsaved relatives and friends were surprised and glad to see so many pastors from Moscow and other regions. No one had ever heard such singing coming out of a morgue! Many came into the hall to find out what was happening, thinking that someone famous was being commemorated. They had the opportunity to hear a clear, understandable explanation of life's meaning, and the promise of eternal life to all who believe in Christ.

From Isham, it was on to Tobolsk on an ice-covered, decaying road. Tobolsk is where Soviet dictator Josef Stalin brutally executed some 1,900 prisoners in one day — many of them evangelical believers. The bodies were buried in a tunnel under the icy Irtysh River, and the team visited the site to hold a moment of silence in memoriam.



Prayers of repentance . . . the fruit of Gospel preaching.

There were many more villages and meetings over the course of the Expedition. In spite of temperatures ranging from minus 35 to minus 50, there were people waiting and wanting to hear the life-changing Gospel! Please pray as follow-up ministry takes place. May those who repented be strengthened in their new faith, and may the Lord refresh the hearts of His people in these isolated villages. They have not been forgotten, and are greatly loved by our Father in Heaven!

A Tale of Two Orphans

Orphans Reborn in Kazakhstan

By Larisa Zotova

Orphans Reborn Coordinator in Kazakhstan

During the fall holidays in November, we were able to organize a trip to the mountains for the children at the orphanage. A brother in our church offered to let us use his house for the holiday, and our team set out. When I asked one of the children if she liked the spot we had chosen, she said, "Two days of happiness!" There were fruit trees, birch trees and spruces with rabbits playing underneath. In the distance lay the snow-covered mountains.



Zhenya

Thirteen-year-old Zhenya was one child who registered to come. He is physically weak, unbalanced and nervous. His mother gave up her parental rights, but comes nearly every day to the orphanage under the

pretext of "raising him." Because of this, Zhenya is even more nervous and actually tried to end his life. Twice he had to be rescued from hanging himself, and the last time he tried to throw himself off of the fourth floor at the orphanage. When the caregiver told me of this, I had a talk with the class and asked the children to help Zhenya feel comfortable, to show him attention and befriend him.

During our mountain vacation, I asked the brothers to especially focus on Zhenya and talk to him about the Lord. While watching him, I noticed that he began to pray and then stopped. He told me,

I want to talk with God, but inside, someone is hindering me. It's as if a voice inside me is telling me to be quiet. It's very frightening and it makes me stop speaking.

In the evening, I invited one of the brothers to join us and we all prayed together. It was difficult for Zhenya, but nevertheless he prayed, and asked us to give him a Bible.

Then there is Yaroslav. His father left for another city and the boy remained behind with his mother, who began to drink and live a very loose life. The stepfather beat Yaroslav and made fun of him. So the mother lost her parental rights and Yaroslav was brought to the orphanage. He does have an elderly grandmother who visits him and worries over him. Yaroslav went to camp for the first time last summer and really enjoyed it. He is open, kind and attentive. After camp, his grandmother came to see him and he said to her,

That's enough, Grandma. I have decided not to be upset with my parents. The Bible is a holy book, which God gave to those He loves. It teaches us not to judge others, to love everyone and forgive. Second, I learned a verse at camp, 'Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.' Of course, it's not easy, but I will try.



Yaroslav

The grandmother thanked us that there have been such changes in Yaroslav's life, and for what he said about God. The Bible helps him make sense of his life.

I am grateful to the Lord for the joys and sorrows in this work. I am grateful to you, dear friends, for your prayers and financial support. May the Lord bless you and meet your needs. Pray for our ministry, that the children will come to know the Lord!

Working Tirelessly to Share the Gospel

And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

National missionary pastors work with urgency—and sensing that their time is short. Many of them labor long hours every day, visiting people in the multiple villages where they serve. They press on, knowing that God will meet their needs and answer their prayers. Yevgeny Kupchenko ministers in Kharkov, Ukraine . . .

Every day from morning till evening I am involved in the ministry to our Lord. During the day I visit several villages with the Word of God and return in the evening after my children are already asleep. Sometimes I feel tired, but this tiredness is good because I know that I am serving our Lord. . . Brother Viktor and I keep visiting villages – we preach the Gospel to the unbelievers and do the Bible study for those who have repented.

In addition to conducting Bible studies in surrounding villages, Yevgeny also continues to conduct discipleship programs with brothers from five different churches. One of these men, Sergei (who lives in the village of Noviy Aerchik), has been able to lead two families to Christ and is now discipling them. He continues to use the knowledge he received from Yevgeny over two years of training, which included lessons in how to tell unbelievers about God, preaching the Word of God, and reflecting Him to others in everyday life. Sergei is a tremendous example of raising up . . . *faithful men who will be able to teach others also* (2 Timothy 2:2).

Another national missionary pastor, Andrei Bandura, conducts weekly ministry in Lyubeshov and Lyubyaz. On Sundays, he is in Lyubeshov conducting a morning service for those who want to learn more about God. Then he conducts a Bible study for 8-10 people in Lyubyaz. Furthermore, God has given him a ministry with disabled children, many of whom suffer from cerebral palsy. As he takes time getting to know them, he learns of needs that they have and spends time obtaining food and clothes for them, as well as medical items they

need such as wheelchairs. The children—especially those who are bedridden—look forward to his visits, and he considers it an honor to serve them. While Andrei is helping to care for their physical needs, he is able to share with them about their Creator, who loves them.



Ministry to the disabled is an important part of Andrei's ministry.

While small groups and visiting the sick are the core of local ministry, occasionally national missionary pastors conduct special events. Vasily Shevelenko and his congregation took the opportunity to host an event called “Day of the Bible.” Three other churches participated in the planning. They rented a local House of Culture facility and passed out 1,000 invitations—approximately 250 people attended. Vasily relates . . .

During the outreach, the life-changing message of the Gospel was explained and the adult and children's choirs performed.

One woman repented. Praise God! Please join us in praying for the planted seeds of God's Word to grow in the hearts of those who heard the message that day. Also pray for the spiritual strengthening of a new sister in Christ.



Vasily (left) ministers in Kherson, Ukraine

These national missionary pastors and their stories are just a few examples of the nearly 400 SGA-sponsored faithful men who are taking the Gospel to the unreached in their communities. Please continue to pray for them and their families as they continue to serve our Lord. And please also join us in praying for sponsors for the more than 600 faithful, qualified men who are ready to be sent as missionaries throughout the former Soviet Union, but their churches lack the resources to support them.

Innecircle Perspective



This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder; that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles (2 Peter 3:1-2).

Nearing death, the aging Apostle Peter had a great burden to awaken his fellow Christians concerning the awful judgment that awaits all who fail to trust in Christ alone as Savior and Lord. While Peter's words were intended to stir up the sincere minds of his contemporaries, they have also served to cause a great stir in my mind.

I cannot wait to see Christ, to be gathered in the air, and to be transported supernaturally directly into His presence in heaven. The last words of Christ recorded in the Bible are in Revelation 22:20 . . . *He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.* This is my prayer and joyful anticipation.

At the same time, the Apostle Peter is reminding us of other important, solemn realities. This stirring chapter directs our attention to the horrible plight of those who are left behind. He emphasizes that the coming judgment of God is not a new thing. Concerning the catastrophic judgment that had been manifest in Noah's flood, Peter says, *the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.*

Just as those who were destroyed by the flood, the people whom we leave behind will be utterly without hope. For them . . . *the Day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3).* While we are blissfully secure forever in Heaven, seven years of terror will be upon those who remain on the earth. But this is only the beginning of their suffering. The Scripture tells us . . . *the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up (2 Peter 3:10).*

999 in 1,000 Are Unwittingly Headed to Destruction

Think about your unsaved relatives, neighbors, classmates, and co-workers. My heart especially goes out to the people around the globe that have little or no opportunity to hear the Gospel. I just returned from Moscow, a city of more than 15 million people, where more than 14.9 million are

mindlessly heading to eternal destruction. And yet many of the youth and young professionals are open and searching. A wonderful new church, the Moscow Bible Church with more than 100 young professionals, spends considerable time in their worship service praying for one another as they witness to co-workers and relatives. They are praying for a larger facility to rent, which will enable continued growth, but so far the required rent levels are beyond their means.



Dr. Robert W. Provost
SGA President

99,995 in 100,000 Are Unknowingly Headed to Destruction

In a Muslim country — one of the poorest countries in the world — the 245 church members that are spread out over nine little churches don't let frequent harassment by the authorities slow down their constant witnessing. But how can five believers out of every 100,000 unbelievers headed to destruction win their countrymen to Christ? Three zealous pastors, one of them a converted Muslim teacher, have trained up three more faithful disciples who are praying for modest support to become missionary pastors. How can we not help them?

9,999 in 10,000 Are Blindly Headed to Destruction

In Georgia — a very poor country that loves America — 24 little churches are sharing seven pastors. They have three young men ready to serve, but they cannot pay them. A small level of support would make the difference. An exciting new church in the capital of Tbilisi needs help with a modest church construction project. What can we do to help them make progress on their building?

Thank you for considering these great burdens of my heart. The Lord has blessed your faithful prayers and generous support, so that our ministries have been able to continue in these uncertain times. We praise Him, and thank you very much. However, many faithful SGA partners are encountering growing financial challenges. Please join us in praying for them, and that the Lord would also send us new partners to help keep our vital ministries going forward for His glory. Tens of millions are still waiting to hear . . . and even wanting to hear. Pray with us that the Lord of the harvest will send forth workers.



How You Can Help



Help SGA-sponsored missionary pastors reach Russian-speaking people today!



Russia alone spans nearly 4,000 miles and nine time zones — 11 time zones if you include the other former Soviet nations. Across Russia and her 11 neighboring countries, there are 300 million people— and a full 90 percent of their cities, towns and villages remain without a Bible-preaching church. God is raising up a new generation of national missionary pastors and lay church workers to reach the lost for Christ.

Your partnership in the Gospel helps equip national missionary pastors and their congregations with the necessary resources to continue reaching their people with the Good News. Your generous gift helps provide:

- Bible and theological training for pastors, worship leaders, youth and children's workers and teachers in Christian education.
- Distribution of Bibles and Christian literature.
- Resources to equip youth to be the arms and legs of the local church.
- Orphans ministry through *Orphans Reborn*.
- Supporting faithful, local missionary pastors.

Please prayerfully consider how you can help equip faithful Russian-speaking pastors and lay workers with the necessary resources to proclaim the Gospel to people across Russia and her neighboring countries.

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

Together with your help, Russian-speaking believers are reaching the lost!

Here's 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)

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

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