



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION  
**Good News Report**

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

# “Unloved” Orphans Changed by the Love of God!

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*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit . . . (MATTHEW 28:19)*



# Thank You For Christmas Gifts!

*For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God (2 Corinthians 9:12).*

Each October, SGA typically asks our partners to prayerfully consider helping us provide a special Christmas gift of \$100 for the faithful, hardworking missionary pastors and their families. Also included are SGA-sponsored *Orphans Reborn* teams and other church workers who so selflessly give of their time and resources for the sake of the Gospel.

*We would like to express to you our heartfelt gratitude for your help in our families' lives. We know of your prayers and desire to do all that is possible to meet our needs, as well as those needs in our ministries. We thank you especially for your prayers and material support. On behalf of all SGA missionaries here, we thank you for the Christmas gifts, and our hearts are filled with love and warmth through your sacrifice. We pray for you and ask the Lord to reward you hundredfold for your ministry to Him!*

—from Belarus

*Dear brothers and sisters, please accept our heartfelt gratitude for your care for us, and for your participation in our ministries. The Christmas gifts you sent us are a great encouragement and help for us, and for our families. We thank the Lord for you, and pray for God's blessing with gratitude.*

—from Central Asia

Faithful missionary pastors and church workers across the CIS are deeply thankful for the Christmas gifts you sent!

We are thankful to the Lord and to you for the way you responded for this year's Christmas. **Thanks to your generosity, we were able to provide more than 1,000 pastors and church workers with Christmas gifts!** Here are a few excerpts from their letters of thanks . . .



# Orphans Reborn Comes to the Children of Vladivostok!

*"A small family of our own where we talk about Jesus." – Katya, 18*

Marina Yagodinets, Team Leader

Greetings from Vladivostok, Russia! I want to thank you so much for your support! The stage for our ministry was set last summer when we held a camp made possible by SGA partners. **Since then, several of the children have started to be more serious about prayer.** We visit a boarding school for children with cerebral palsy. We walk and talk with the kids, and tell them about Jesus. The teachers there love us and are very open. We are hoping to begin teaching the children how to cook, then eat together and talk like a real family. We are waiting for full approval from the administration before beginning.

Luda is one of the graduates who we met at the boarding school. She is now studying to become a teacher. I am helping to provide her with clothing, and we are cooking together, talking and reading the Bible. She also attends a group for teens and has started to go to church. Luda has become like a sister to me.



The younger children at the orphanage are very appreciative of the guidance they get from the graduates.

and regular families. We read the Bible together, encourage each other and pray for one another.



The girls who have graduated from the home meet weekly.

There are around nine girls in the group right now. Eighteen-year-old Katya was once a ward in the children's home, and wanted to share her heart with you . . .

*I am happy that I wound up in this comfortable group atmosphere. It is like a small family of our own where we talk about Jesus. Ever since I started to attend this group, I have felt that something inside of me is changing. I have learned how to pray and how to be a bit more patient with people. Words cannot describe our love for Marina! She helps us, supports us, and tells us about God and she loves us with all her heart! I want to learn more and more about God. It is incredibly cool!*

As you read this, we will have **nine graduates from the children's home and boarding school participating in our local Immanuel's Child outreach.** Please pray for the children who hear the Gospel, and for the girls as they engage in ministry for the first time. Thank you for making *Orphans Reborn* and *Immanuel's Child* possible! ♦



# “Unloved” Orphans Changed by the Love of God!

*But so many remain unreached, thinking no one cares.*

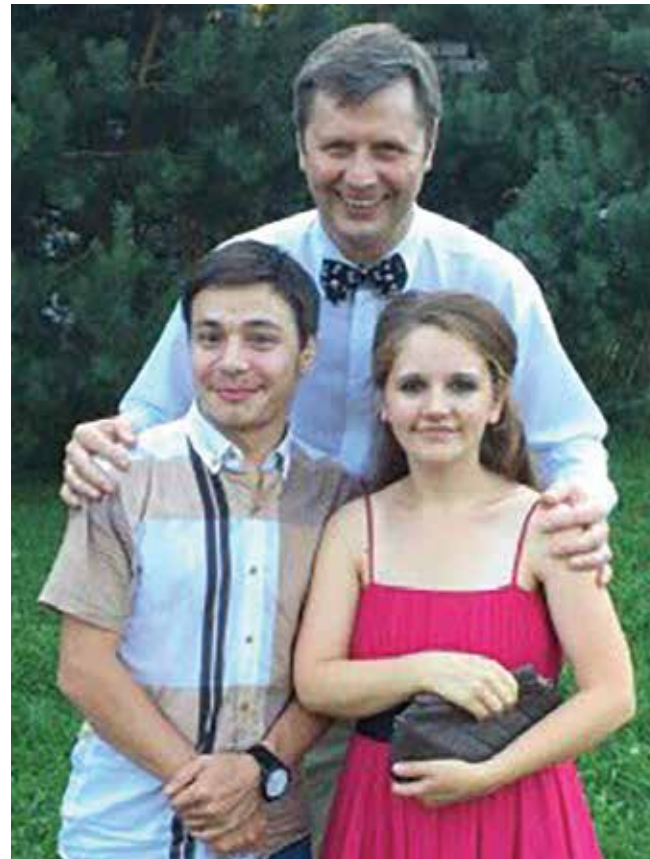
Smolensk is one of the oldest cities in Russia, founded in 863 A.D. It is also home to some 30 orphanages and children’s homes where hundreds of lonely, forgotten children are housed.

The emotional wounds they bear are deep. Reaching them is not easy. But with the help of your faithful support and prayers, Ivan Popkov and the *Orphans Reborn* team he leads in Smolensk is making an eternal difference in the lives of almost **1,200 children** in **14 orphanages**.

Not long ago, Ivan related a wonderful story from the Demidov orphanage where a young man named Ilya had grown up. Ivan’s loving, faithful witness through the years made quite an impact on Ilya and his siblings . . .



Ivan and Ilya



Ivan, Ilya and his sister Veronica

*Ilya is 22 now, but I have been ministering to him at the orphanage since he was in the first grade. Ilya is very short in stature, but it was impossible not to notice him. He was very active in our lessons, asked a lot of questions, and was the first to answer questions we asked of the children. **After he graduated from the orphanage, Ilya got married and gave his heart to the Lord.** He attends church every week along with his wife, but Ilya’s sister Veronica has still not repented yet. We are praying for her. Ilya told me that a lot of his former classmates at the orphanage are either in prison or are alcoholics now. He said that he did not want to end up the same way, so he chose another way—to follow God!*

We are so thankful to God for the way He has changed Ilya’s life forever. But for Ivan and his team, the ministry must continue as there are hundreds more children that need to be reached. **Without the Lord, a significant number of these children will end up in crime and drug addiction when they**

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***Pray for the additional resources needed to expand Orphans Reborn into more locations across Russia.***

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**grow up.** With every *Orphans Reborn* event that he organizes, Ivan tries to add a biblical lesson and to tell the children about the love of God. And they desperately need to hear of it.

As is the case with most orphanages, **the children often say that nobody loves them, and nobody cares about them.** But with your support, Ivan is teaching these neediest of children that God loves them, and the kids say they can see God’s love in the team’s visits.

At the end of last August, Ivan organized several picnics and games for the children. They also distributed fresh fruit and other items such as medicines and personal hygiene products. **Bible lessons focused as always on God’s Word, prayer, friendship, obedience, kindness, and mercy.** Please pray with us for the children who are participating in Ivan’s ministry. Pray also for the additional resources needed to expand *Orphans Reborn* into more locations across Russia and her neighboring countries. The need is so great! ♦

Through your support, *Orphans Reborn* can be expanded into more locations to save even more children.





# “God Touched My Heart and It Was A Miracle”

## Lilya's Story



I was born in Kobrin, Belarus. I attended kindergarten, graduated from school, and received two earned degrees. I got married and had a daughter.

At that time, people began to bring merchandise over the border from Poland and earned a lot of money. I also desired to earn more money, so I began bringing in alcohol and cigarettes.

*“I want to serve God, and to do something for other people as He did for me!”*

And then I began smoking and drinking. I poisoned other people and myself. As a result, my daughter was taken from me and I was divorced from my husband. I drank for 18 years, and went through personal degradation, lost my home, lost my contacts with family, and lost all the goals I had for my life.

Later, I was told by the authorities about an opportunity to get my daughter back. I would have



Lilya attends services at Vifaniya Church in Kobrin, Belarus.

to take a rehabilitation course in the Baptist rehab center. I had nothing to lose, so I agreed. I began reading the Bible and was taken to the church, but I had no faith in my heart that I could change.

But then God touched my heart and it was a miracle. **When I thought of myself as useless, I was told that I was important to God.** I went through rehab in 2014, repented of my sins and received Jesus Christ in my heart. I then followed Him in baptism in 2015. Now I truly live. I now have a lot of friends, and very good relationships with my daughter and other relatives. I have a church family at Vifaniya Church in Kobrin, along with dreams and desires. I want to serve God, and to do something for other people as He did for me!

*Editor's note: This wonderful testimony came to us through SGA-sponsored missionary pastor Vladimir Yarmoluk. Thank you for making his fruitful ministry possible! ♦*

*How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!  
How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity,  
And in whose spirit there is no deceit! (PSALM 32:1-2)*

## CIS IN THE NEWS

### UN Confirms Urgent Winter Need in Ukraine

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says **up to 4 million people in Ukraine are facing a “desperate situation” as winter progresses** in Ukraine. The country is in its fourth year of war in the eastern regions—a conflict that has claimed up to 10,000 people and injured 23,500 others. Spokesman Jens Laerke said most of the people in urgent need are in the separatist



Khreshchatyk street, Kiev, Ukraine

regions, while there are pockets of need in government-controlled areas. “One of the results of this deteriorating crisis is that we now estimate that 1.2 million people in Ukraine on both sides of the contact line are food insecure.” He added that 600,000 people in eastern Ukraine are not able to access their pensions, which are critical for their survival.

**Please pray for SGA-sponsored missionary pastors as they distribute aid to needy families through our Crisis Evangelism Fund.** Find out more at [www.sga.org/crisis](http://www.sga.org/crisis).

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

**A**cross Russia and her neighboring countries, thousands of boys and girls are housed in orphanages and children's homes. Some are true orphans while many are “social orphans” who have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect. **Their parents or caregivers are often alcoholics, or are too poor to care for their children. For most of these children, despair, crime, and drug abuse lie ahead unless someone rescues them.** That's where SGA's *Orphans Reborn* ministry can step in—reaching these little ones with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, giving them . . . *a future and a hope* (Jeremiah 29:11).

**Your prayers and generous support accomplish so much more** in serving Bible-preaching churches in the CIS—providing Russian-language Bibles and Christian literature, Bible training, children's ministries, compassion ministry, and help for missionary pastors in the field proclaiming the Gospel. Please pray about how you can help today! ♦



With your help, we can bring hope and Christ to orphans in need.

# Insight FROM MICHAEL

I will never forget my first visit to an orphanage in the former Soviet Union. The children I met there broke my heart. They had such a mixture of wariness along with a clear hunger for love—love that was tragically absent from their young lives. So many had come from homes where their parents were alcoholics or so poverty-stricken that they were unable to care for their children. The physical and emotional needs were obvious.



And then I noticed the joy and eagerness in their faces as the faithful *Orphans Reborn* workers arrived to spend time with them and hold Bible lessons. The games and activities were certainly an important part of the visits, but most important was the clear message that the Lord Jesus loves them, and could give them a future and a hope. Seeing Christ's love in action and truly making a difference resulted in me wanting to do all I could to see this ministry expand. And more than a decade later, this passion has not changed. Much has been done, but there is much more to do.

I am so very thankful to each and every one of you, our partners in ministry. You help sustain *Orphans Reborn* and all of the other vital SGA ministries through your prayers and generous support. As we continue to expand outreach into Russia's Far East, pray with us for many open doors. The needs are so great, and so many have yet to hear the Gospel.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Johnson".

Michael Johnson  
President



Michael Johnson (back row) with *Orphans Reborn* Graduates in Belarus.



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Good News Report is published to report religious news about Russia, the rest of the CIS and the ministries of:

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