



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

Thank You! Your Support of *Immanuel's Child* Brings the Gospel— and Joy—to Children in the Lands of Russia!

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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)

Father “no longer describes himself as an unbeliever”

By Victor Korshunov
SGA-Sponsored Missionary Pastor in Krasnodar, Russia

We'd like to thank you, dear brothers and sisters, for your prayers. Your sacrificial help is of great value in our lives and ministry as we share the Gospel in southern Russia.

In the town of **Goryachiy-Kluch**, there is a special couple we have been discipling named Mikhail and Kate. They have a large family with several children, and we minister to them in visits, over the phone, and they all come together to the church on Sunday. We are so happy about it. They visited us at our home with their children and we returned the visit at their home. We use every opportunity to share Jesus Christ and the need for faith in Him, and we are seeing the Lord work in their souls. **Mikhail no longer describes himself as an unbeliever, he reads the Bible and asks**

many questions.

He prays and sings, and all the children come to the church with pleasure.

Not long ago, we urged Mikhail to visit a small home Bible study group in their town, and to

welcome a Bible study group in their home as they cannot take all their children to the church with them in their car.

One reason is that local child welfare authorities asked Mikhail and Kate to adopt two more

children into their family—a brother and sister of 12-14 in age. We pray that the Lord will always be present in their lives, and that they will fully commit their lives to Him and teach their children the way of salvation.

And this story leads me to a prayer request. My wife, Valentina, and I want to begin caring for orphans as foster parents too. We have to attend special courses, pass exams, and prepare a lot of documentation about ourselves. Through the process, social workers, a lawyer, and teachers ask us, **“What church do you attend? Tell us about your faith.”** And we tell them about the Living God who acts in our lives.

We thank you for sharing in our lives and ministry. May the Lord bless you abundantly, and reward you for your love and faithfulness! ♦



***We pray that the Lord will
always be present in their lives,
and that they will fully commit
their lives to Him . . .***



Mikhail, Kate, and their children.

THE MOUTHS OF BABES:

Eleven-Year-Old Preaches to Fellow Children at SGA-Sponsored *Christmas Event!*

More jaw-dropping events occurred in Russia during Christmas season.

Pastor Benjamin Livtsenyuk and his church is located in a more impoverished area of **Khabarovsk** and ministry there is difficult. But God has raised up an effective ministry team, and **the entire Christmas program was led and conducted by the youth** in the church. They sang, performed a skit about the Christmas story, and taught about 30 children and their parents who had come. And then



A young man of only 11 years preached at the event.

according to SGA's Eric Mock, a young man of 11 years of age stepped to the pulpit to preach:

*"I had tears in my eyes as this boy preached and challenged the kids there—and the parents. It was a joy to see the impact these kids had. As part of **Immanuel's Child**, the children who had come received the gift of prayer from the many who signed stars, the gift of God's Word, a gift of warm items and candy, and more importantly, they were offered the gift of grace in Christ Jesus!"*

Later, Benjamin and his congregation went



The children learned the Christmas story at the event.

to several street corners in their neighborhood and sang Christmas carols. These beautiful songs clearly proclaimed the true message of Christmas . . . *To us a Savior has been born!* **Most all the locals responded with encouraging words and stopped to listen to the singing.** Even a policeman drove up, watched the singing for a bit, and drove on. God not only was present, but His protection was clear. Praise God for these faithful churches, and for His gracious provision for their fruitful Christmas ministries. ♦



Pastor Benjamin Livtsenyuk and members of his congregation singing Christmas carols

Immanuel's Child: Your —to C

Since SGA's *Reach Russia Now* initiative began in late 2017, we have been praying for opportunities to help evangelical churches in the Far East to step up their ministries in this huge unreached region. The Lord answered those prayers in a wonderful way through *Immanuel's Child* outreaches this Christmas. And not just in the Far East.



Children throughout the CIS need the hope of Christ.

Wonderful ministry took place across the Commonwealth of Independent States (most of the former Soviet Union) including Belarus, Ukraine, and in Central Asia.

SGA's Eric Mock filed this report from a train traveling to Khabarovsk from the Pacific port city of Vladivostok, where

he observed ministries led by Pastor Vladimir Trohimenko and his church:

"Vladimir took us to a local shopping mall in

Vladivostok. As we walked up to the mall and entered, I was a bit confused. I was almost certain that we were to participate in an Immanuel's Child Christmas outreach. We walked in and went to an area where children were playing. And Pastor Vladimir said, "This is where the planned ministry will be." He led us through the play area to a meeting room in the back. Then one by one, the children and parents came in. Eventually, about 20 children were there, of which 18 were from unbelieving families."

They invited the children to be shepherds, angels and animals, and assist them in telling the Christmas story. Can you imagine the spiritual impact? Eric's report continued:

"It was awesome! The play ended with a message from one of the team members about the true meaning of Christmas. The kids were engaged and the parents were smiling. A parent told us afterward, 'I never



Through Immanuel's Child children learn of God's love.



Support Brings the Gospel—and Joy Children in the Lands of Russia!

really understood what Christmas was all about, and now I know.”

And then they received their **Immanuel’s Child** gifts, along with a Bible and Bethlehem Star:

“I explained that the stars are from people in North America who wanted them to know the real message of Christmas, about Jesus, and they will pray for them.

The kids first looked at all the gifts that they had received and scanned through the Bible, and then one by one they began to crowd around us. They each wanted to hear the name of the American family that had signed the Star. There in a shopping mall halfway around the world, 18 unbelieving children and their parents heard the Gospel, and heard there were people in America that cared for them, loved them, and wanted them to know God.”

SGA president Michael Johnson and his wife Erin, as well as U.S. Russian staff members Alex and Lana Yusov, observed similar fruit as they traveled to different locations across the CIS.

Now that **Immanuel’s Child** has concluded for another year, Eric and Pastor Vladimir discussed



SGA President Michael Johnson and his wife Erin, with children receiving their *Immanuel’s Child* Star of Bethlehem and Children’s Bible.

ministry plans for this strategic region in Russia’s Far East. They have identified two locations of missionary work, two locations for youth ministry, and four locations for **Orphans Reborn** ministry that we hope to develop on 2018 through support from SGA partners. We are thankful to God for these opportunities to share Christ’s love . . . *even to the remotest part of the earth* (Acts 1:8). ♦



ONLY GOD! Russian Officials Ask SGA-Sponsored Church to Evangelize 100 Troubled Russian Youth

Only God could have done it. When SGA's Eric Mock visited **Pastor Gennady Abramov's** church in **Khabarovsk**, he learned that officials of the Russian government had turned to this congregation to help young people reform their lives!

... the request by government to take on more kids at a Christmas outreach is astounding!

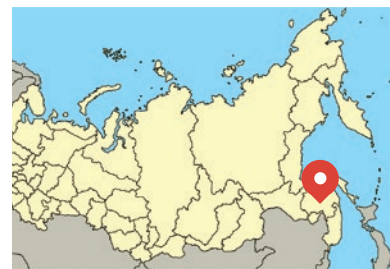
Pastor Gennady had been working with the ministry leaders and the youth of his church in preparing their Christmas outreach. Before it began, Gennady received from the local government, saying they wanted 100 "troubled" youth to attend the Christmas program at the church!

In fact, these officials had prepared their own information card about the Christmas program at Gennady's church, and worked hard themselves to get the kids to come! This is an overt work of God. In the face of government pressure on churches to suppress evangelism and outreach in Russia, the request by

government to take on more kids at a Christmas outreach is astounding!

There was one problem: no gifts.

Gennady happily said yes to the government request. But he had no idea how he was going to buy more gifts. He prayed, and that night a call came from SGA's Moscow Regional Ministry Center. SGA was sending *Immanuel's Child* stars, Bibles and funds! And through *Immanuel's Child*, SGA was able to serve a church that was reaching kids with the Gospel—*young people sent to them by unbelieving leaders.* ♦



Pastor Gennady Abramov's church youth choir singing at Christmastime.

GOD BE PRAISED FOR SUCH A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE!

CIS IN THE NEWS

DANGER: Eastern Ukraine Contains “one of the most mined areas in the world”

A recent article in the Washington Post reports that civilians in the conflict zones of eastern Ukraine are facing deadly land mine dangers connected to the ongoing fighting between government forces and separatists. **Farmers and gardeners are having to scan their fields with metal detectors and remove vegetation carefully to avoid triggering a mine.**

According to the United Nations, the so-called “Donbas” region is becoming one of **the most mined areas in the world**. Anti-vehicle mines are reportedly **killing more people there than anywhere else in the world**—even including battle zones like Syria, Yemen, and Africa. The HALO Trust, which is a humanitarian mine-clearance organization, estimates 1,796 casualties in Ukraine from land mines, with 238 civilians killed.

What you can do: This tragic situation underscores the need to support faithful SGA-sponsored missionary pastors as they deliver humanitarian aid through our **Crisis Evangelism Fund**, and share the hope found only through the Gospel. **Please pray** for their safety as they travel across the region, and pray for a peaceful end to the conflict. ♦



Landmine warning sign in Eastern Ukraine



Through your prayers and support we can bring Christ's love to children across the CIS.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

We rejoice with thanksgiving at the opportunity to share with you—our faithful partners—what God has done through the SGA-sponsored *Immanuel's Child* ministry across the CIS. These joyful reports are a key reason why we felt it appropriate to rename our monthly newsletter as the **Good News Report**. In its pages, we endeavor to show all the ministry that you help make possible—from children's ministries, Bible training, Christian literature, provision of humanitarian aid, and so much more. The Gospel opportunities are many, and please pray about how you can help today. Feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions at info@sga.org, or by our toll free number, 1-800-BIBLE-50. ♦

Insight FROM MICHAEL

As you'll see from this issue of the Good News Report, this past Christmas was a very special one for the SGA team. **Several of us were able to travel over to Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, where we participated in wonderful *Immanuel's Child* outreaches.**

For me, it was especially a blessed time as my wife Erin was able to accompany me on a ministry trip to the CIS for the first time. We visited **vibrant children's ministries** in Grodno, Belarus, as well as in Kiev, Ukraine—and capped it all off by a quick tour of the Chernobyl “dead zone” that remains dangerously radioactive 31 years after the horrific nuclear plant explosion.

Because I had been directly involved in launching the *Immanuel's Child* outreach in my previous tenure with SGA, I was thrilled to visit today and see what God has done through this fruitful ministry. **In most cases, while the needy children who were part of the church family were certainly blessed, a large percentage of the kids there were from unbelieving families.** It was a tremendous evangelistic outreach!

At the orphanages we visited, the impact was just as profound. The Christmas ministry was not looked at as just another nice celebration where children received gifts and then went home. Instead, it was in the context of an ongoing, loving relationship that had been established between the children and the *Orphans Reborn* team—a relationship that involved regular discipleship and evangelism. And this went beyond the children to include the orphanage staff, who were incredibly blessed and encouraged.

Erin's heart was touched throughout the whole journey, but in particular during a stop we made in **Ukraine**. It was for an *Immanuel's Child* outreach held—remarkably—at a public school. Here is what Erin said, in her own words:

“One little boy's eyes say so much about the love he has that fills his heart from our visit and the gifts that were distributed. His face is in my heart forever. I felt such joy to see all of their faces in person, and to tell them that they are not forgotten and remembered always in our hearts and prayers.”

*“Later, it was fitting somehow that our journey ended with a visit to the Chernobyl Museum in Kiev, Ukraine. While it is filled with sad images, there is one display that is impactful on a much different note. The photos on the ground are a memorial those who did not survive the disaster. However, the tree, cradle, fabric, and apples are symbolic of new life and hope. **That is the purpose of SGA's ministry—to bring faith and hope to those of the former Soviet Union, and to all those who feel forgotten.**”*

Thank you for your faithful prayers and generous support of *Immanuel's Child*, *Orphans Reborn*, and all the other SGA ministries across the CIS. You are truly having an impact for eternity in thousands of lives.


Michael Johnson
President



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