



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

“GOD LOVES YOU!”

A Spiritual Army Prepares to Reach Russian-Speaking Children This Christmas! Read more . . .



INSIDE: REASONS TO REJOICE

- ♦ Prayers Answered for Russian Youth in Yakutsk?
- ♦ Whole Families Reached!
- ♦ New Restrictions in Uzbekistan. Details...

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)

Royal Queen
★ Since 1981

Yakutsk Woman Prays for Local Youth. God Uses You to Help Answer Her Prayers . . .

Eric Mock

Vice President of Ministry Operations

As Luda told her amazing story, she had one prayer—that the generation growing up today would have the same zeal as their forebears.

She quietly began her testimony by telling me the shocking statement, “If I had a good husband, I do not think I would have been saved.” But as this gentle Yakutsk woman shared her story with me, it all comes together as a powerful testimony to God’s saving grace. More than that, it also underscores the significance of **your prayers and faithful support for the evangelical churches** who are reaching people just like her every day!

. . . her passion and prayer is for youth—that the next generation will take the torch of faith and spread the flames.

A Broken Life Redeemed by Grace

Luda is a zealous evangelist for Christ who lives in Oktyom, a small village on the Lena River in Russia’s Yakutsk region. But her life was once broken and filled with heartache. It was 1993 and she was newly married. Although her husband had served prison time in the past, she rationalized that she could change him. Yet for the 18 months that followed her marriage, she was beaten, emotionally abused, and constantly hospitalized. Finally, after she and her sister sustained one more terrible beating, Luda called the police. They came and arrested her husband, and he eventually was sent back to prison.

But she grieved that that she had somehow failed her jailed husband. Filled with anxiety, doubt, and hopelessness, Luda began drinking to mask the pain. **As a child, she had heard from her father that God exists, but the Communist Pioneer youth meetings explicitly told her there was no God.** Even so, in total despair she cried out to God to



reveal himself.

The next day, Luda’s friend knocked at her door to tell her about Jesus. Being invited to the small, young church in 1994, she was brought to tears and to saving faith in Jesus. **Luda—overwhelmed with her new faith—began putting up flyers all over town, inviting people to come to her home and hear about Jesus.**

Praying for Her Local Young People

And by 1998, newly married to a new believer (who would later become a pastor), she began traveling with him along the Lena River taking the Gospel from village to village to all who would hear. But her passion and prayer is for youth—that the next generation will take the torch of faith and spread the flames.

That is when I was excited to tell her that the youth in Yakutsk have a plan to conduct “Gospel Missions” each month to both support existing missionary pastors in reaching their village and to evangelize unreached villages throughout Yakutia. And she was thrilled to see the answer to many prayers.

Walking in Luda’s footsteps, this new generation of youth, supported through SGA’s *Reach Russia Now* and *Youth IN Ministry* initiatives, is now reaching out to those who literally have never heard the Gospel nor any form of Christian faith. God be praised! ♦

Spreading the Word About Christmas Ministry

Editor's Note: *Immanuel's Child* integrates with other SGA outreaches such as *Orphans Reborn* to form a web of ministry to bring people to Christ and grow them as His disciples. Here is a good example from Luda Yatsko, from last year's Christmas outreaches!

Luda Yatsko

***Orphans Reborn* in Ivanovo, Russia**

Last Christmas, SGA partners helped make it possible for us to visit 12 orphanages and boarding schools, distribute 585 Christmas gifts to the children, and travel a total of 1,200 miles to all the locations.

At one of the orphanages, I was approached by one of the caregivers who asked me about the other places we were planning to visit. I told her that we visit places where we have been invited. Another woman listening told us that she also worked as the director of a local Community Center, and she invited us to hold a Christmas program there as well. The only spare day we had on the schedule was New Year's Day, so we agreed to hold another outreach for these children who are from disadvantaged or dysfunctional families in crisis. That led to us having a standing invitation—whenever we go to that orphanage for ministry, we are invited also to hold a program in that Community Center for local children in that area as well. God also opened doors

for us to have outreach among the townsfolk.

Our ministry can even have impacts down the road that we do not expect. Back in 2014-2015, we went to a village for our Christmas outreach and met a young mother and her children. As it turned out, she now works as the director of the local Community Center and House of Culture. She had been trying to find us since then going from church to church, asking the village administration. She finally located us, and we quickly agreed to hold a Christmas program in her Community Center this past January. It brought together children of different ages, from families with large numbers of children, from single-parent homes, and from very poor families. There was some opposition from another religious group who forbade the woman from inviting the Baptists in. But when she asked the priest to hold a program for the children, he replied, "Am I a millionaire, or what!?" Today, this lady and her family are attending the local Baptist church! We praise God for His work in many hearts. ♦



“GOD LOVES YOU!”

Last Christmas SGA supporters helped reach more than 25,000 children

Evangelical churches across Russia and her neighboring countries are in the final stages of preparing for their 2018 Christmas outreaches using SGA's *Immanuel's Child* program. Considering God's blessings last year, we are praying for even more spiritual fruit this year. And you can still be part of the blessing!

Last year, *Immanuel's Child* reached more than 25,000 children, with many children and parents repenting. The program gives Children's Bibles, Christian literature, and connects children with local churches for life-transforming discipleship. And the Star of Bethlehem Ornaments saying “God Loves You!” in Russian—signed by SGA supporters in America—are a highlight. Children keep them year-around, touched to know that someone in America loved them enough to tell them about Jesus and pray for them.

Pastors, children's and youth workers, and their congregations are thankful for the faithful support you show for the SGA-sponsored *Immanuel's Child*

ministry. SGA president Michael Johnson and his wife Erin were able to participate in Ukraine last Christmas at Pastor Yaroslav Machinsky's church, and Yaroslav wrote us recently to sum up the fruit of the

ministry that took place while they were there . . .

We praise God for the opportunity we had to conduct two Christmas

services—one was at Revival Church December 31 and then in the Chernobyl zone on January 2. We are thankful to SGA for the funds to help purchase Christmas presents for the children. We are especially thankful to Byron Center Bible Church in Michigan for their signed Immanuel's Child stars that were distributed along with gifts. We were able to bring joy to 200 children who attended the program at our church, as well as for 140 children who live in the Chernobyl zone.

At each program, the children were happy to listen to the Christmas story and receive a Bible along with a Christmas gift. The children from Revival Church invited their friends to the service. It was fun! In the

You can help reach thousands of needy children with the love of Jesus Christ . . .



Michael Johnson and his wife Erin at an *Immanuel's Child* Christmas celebration.

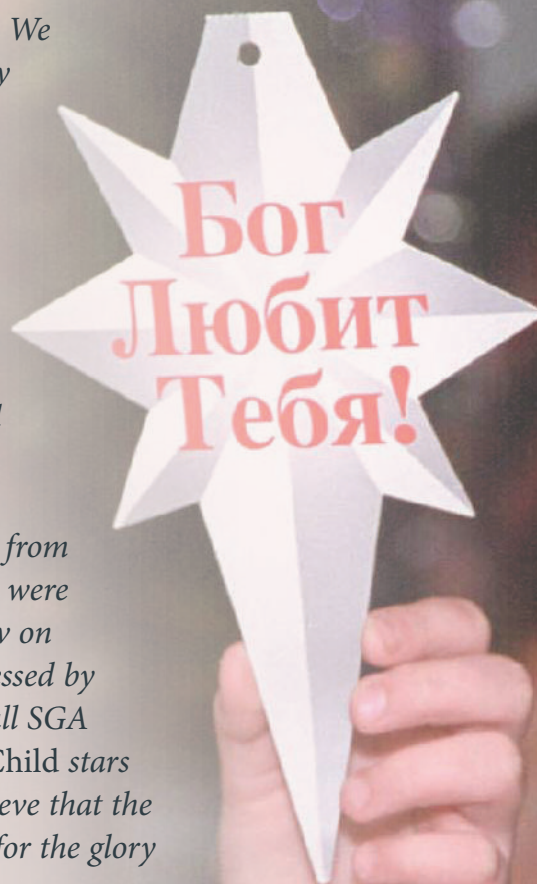
Now is Your Moment to Help Reach Children Through *Immanuel's Child*—and the final lap has begun for 2018 ...

Chernobyl zone, God has been blessing the planting of new churches in that region. I began ministry there in 2006 and the first church was in Mlachevka. We are thrilled with the missionary vision of the sister church we planted there, and they have now begun a new ministry in the village of Lugoviki. We are thankful for the Immanuel's Child outreaches you helped us hold in those villages.

Michael and Erin visited the Prolesok orphanage in Vovchkiv, which today is a temporary shelter for children from disadvantaged families. There were not many children in Vovchkiv on Christmas, but I was so impressed by God's providence. Thanks to all SGA partners for the Immanuel's Child stars and for their concern. We believe that the ministry has been performed for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Please begin praying now for the upcoming Christmas season and the *Immanuel's Child* outreaches that are being planned. If you or your church would like to participate in this year's program, it's not too late! Contact SGA at 1-800-BIBLE-50 and ask for Sandy Tallacksen. You can help reach thousands of needy children with the love of Jesus Christ and the life-changing Gospel this Christmas! ♦

Children treasure the Star of Bethlehem Ornaments signed by Americans—ornaments that say, "God Loves You!" in Russian and open hearts to the Gospel and discipleship.



The Fruit of Last Year's *Immanuel's Child* Ministry

Participating CIS churches 487

Immanuel's Child
stars sent 15,247

Children reached 25,795
(996 repented)

Adults reached 11,711
(208 repented)

Children starting
sunday school 1,435

Adults starting to
attend church 547

Join us in praising God for the impact of this fruitful ministry, with thankful anticipation of what He will do this coming Christmas season!



KEEP IT UP!

Your Prayers, Compassion, and Support Are Reaching Whole Families with the Gospel!

Pastor Sergei in Belarus

... the kindness of God leads you to repentance
(Romans 2:4).

Over the last three months, my wife Nadezhda and I got to know three more needy families in our region, and we began to provide them with food aid. This has led to friendly relationships, and now we meet regularly and have opportunity to share about the Lord.

If you remember Olga from one of our previous reports, she and her children have begun to attend church regularly. Now I am happy to share a joyful piece of news. **Olga got saved and reconciled with the Lord in Sunday worship on April 8!** Our hearts rejoice when new believers are born into Christ's Kingdom! In tears, Olga asked the Lord to forgive all her sins. She asked for God's mercy for her and her home. I knelt down with her and thanked the Lord for granting His mercy to Olga and her family!

I'd like to tell you the unusual story of how we got to know Valentina and her family. One day she came to our worship service. The congregation is small so we immediately spot new people. She stayed for the entire worship service and listened closely to the messages preached. It was obvious that she was burdened with something. Afterward, Valentina approached me with tears in her eyes. I asked her if something had happened, and she responded that she needed my help. She wept even harder and said, "My daughter is dying. She is only three weeks old. She is in ICU and the doctors report that she is getting worse. She has blood contamination and pneumonia along with heart problems. I asked her again how I could help, and she asked if I would go to the hospital and pray over her baby named Dominika. I asked Valentina if she believed God was able to heal her baby, and she responded firmly, "Yes, I do!" I called our church members who had not left yet and we had prayer for Dominika's good health. We also made



Olga and her children in church

plans to visit the ICU and pray for Dominika there.

At the appointed time, I came to the hospital to pray over the newborn girl. Valentina and her husband arrived and went inside to talk to the doctors so that they would let us in for prayer. But when she came out, she looked really surprised and happy. She announced that Dominika had gotten better and was transferred to a regular unit! I lifted up my eyes and thanked the Lord for His grace to Dominika and for hearing our prayer.

We went over to the children's unit and they allowed me to come into a special meeting room in order to pray over Dominika. The baby was weak and had a feeding tube. I opened my Bible and we read several passages of the Bible. Then I laid hands on Dominika and prayed over her asking for her healing. Then I left them with their baby. After a week Valentina called me. She was happy to report that Dominika's lungs were clear, her heart was okay and her blood tests were good! This is the way we got to know Valentina and her family, consisting of her husband and three other children. A week later, Valentina called me to say that they are out of hospital. My wife and I have visited them since that time. We help them with food and continue to share Christ in friendly conversations. Please pray for their salvation in God's timing.

These are the kinds of things we are able to do in our region due to your prayers and faithful support. Thank you very much for not leaving us and helping us to minister in our country. May the Lord bless you spiritually and financially and meet all your needs. ♦

CIS IN THE NEWS

Uzbek Laws Underscore Urgency to Reach Souls Quickly

Authorities in the Central Asian nation of Uzbekistan have reportedly added two new restrictions for any religious communities seeking legal status. According to Forum 18, many communities—including Christian churches and groups—are afraid to seek legal status because those who have sought it have been punished in some way.



The new restrictions require any religious community seeking legal status to provide a notarized copy of Uzbekistan's official recognition of any official foreign or Uzbek religious education that has been completed by the head of a religious community. Also required is a notarized copy of the state's official recognition of any foreign or Uzbek religious education that has been completed by the head of any religious educational institution run by the religious community. At the present time, there is no indication of what type of

education is covered by the second new requirement. Nor is there any formal official agency to recognize foreign religious education, which makes fulfilling the requirement impossible. Forum 18 reports that these requirements violate Uzbekistan's binding international human rights obligations.

Please continue to intercede in prayer for our brothers and sisters in Uzbekistan and throughout Central Asia who face varying degrees of oppression. We trust that the Lord will continue building His church no matter what the hand of man will attempt to stop it. ♦

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Every year at this time, *Immanuel's Child* is your opportunity to reach across thousands of miles and into the hearts of children in the lands of Russia. You can help provide:

- Your signed **Star of Bethlehem ornament** that says "God Loves You!" in Russian. These are treasured by kids who often feel unloved.
- **Children's Bibles—the boys' and girls' first ever**—or other Christian literature to help as church workers follow up. Your gift to supply many ornaments, Bibles, and follow-up discipleship will transform whole families, entire neighborhoods, and total communities!
- Special **Christmas gifts**—purchased locally, lovingly prepared, and presented by Russian-speaking church workers.

If you or your church would like to participate in this year's program, it's not too late! Contact SGA at 1-800-BIBLE-50 and ask for Sandy Tallacksen. You can help reach thousands of needy children with the love of Jesus Christ and the life-changing Gospel this Christmas!



Insight FROM MICHAEL

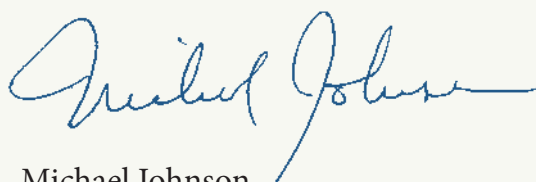
Last Christmas makes me excited for *what's coming!*

I am glad this month to be able to share Pastor Yaroslav Machinsky's article on his local *Immanuel's Child* outreaches this past Christmas. As he notes in the article, my wife Erin and I were blessed to be a part of these outreaches in several Ukrainian villages including some in the Chernobyl region.

The tremendous fruit that we observed while in Ukraine was a vivid reminder of how important your prayers and support are to faithful missionary pastors like Yaroslav. He had begun planting churches in the stricken Chernobyl region years ago, and now one of the daughter churches he planted is eagerly **sharing the Gospel and conducting their own Christmas outreaches** among needy children in nearby villages! God's wonderful chain of grace continues to change young lives for eternity.

As we prepare to support the upcoming *Immanuel's Child* outreaches this Christmas season, it is also exciting to review the statistics from last year's ministries. **You'll see that in addition to the children reached, hundreds of adults have also been impacted and reached with the Gospel.** Many have begun attending church and are getting saved as they hear the Gospel message being lovingly shared with their children. What began with *Immanuel's Child* continues on throughout the year with discipleship, home visits, Bible studies, and warm fellowship in the love of Christ.

None of this could happen without you, and I am ever thankful to God for your wonderful partnership in the Gospel! Please pray in advance for this year's Christmas ministries, as well as for all the other ministries of SGA that go forward year round.



Michael Johnson
President



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