



# SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

## A NEW ERA!

Your Gifts are  
Supporting Biblical  
Leaders in the Former  
Soviet Union

### INSIDE: REASONS TO REJOICE

- ♦ Do you know a prodigal?  
Don't give up!
- ♦ Her mom didn't  
recognize her!
- ♦ 4 seminaries go all-out  
to transform nations

*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)*



# A Prodigal Son Comes Home

## SGA Partners Help Prepare Him for Fruitful Ministry

By Azimhan  
Almaty Bible Institute Student

I was born in March 1993 in southern Kazakhstan. I grew up in a family where my mother was a Christian believer. However, my father rejected the faith for a long time and even persecuted my mother

*"I began to have a deep desire to study God's Word, and the door opened for me to study at Almaty Bible Institute."*

for her faith. But later on, he repented and gave his life to Jesus too. Growing up, I watched their lives and saw what it meant to be Christians. My father had a very difficult experience in this world.

My parents used to take me to church all the time and they taught me Christian knowledge.



Azimhan is involved with youth and camp ministry.

However, when I became a teenager I left the church and decided to live in the world. But when I turned 19, the Lord began actively working in my life. I tried to apply myself to study and prepare for life but was unsuccessful. I began to think very seriously about my condition and spiritual state. You could see that my way of life was so much like how my father had lived a long time ago, and I knew where I would end up if this continued. I also remembered how my mother lived and decided to go to a Christian camp.

This camp's theme was "The Word of Living." God worked in my heart as I heard the sermons, and at the last day of the camp an invitation was given to repent. I responded, and the changes in my life were very visible. Afterward, I attended a local Bible school and the Lord continued His work in my life and character. Next, I returned home and began to minister with a Kazakh-speaking group. I began to have a deep desire to study God's Word, and the door opened for me to study at Almaty Bible Institute. I expect to graduate in 2019.

As I study, I am involved in developing a ministry to Turkic peoples, as well as street and tent evangelism, youth ministry, and camp ministry. I preach and participate in discipleship groups as well. Studying at Almaty is very helpful to me and helps me continue deep study into the Word of God. ♦



Azimhan

# The Most Memorable Day in the Life of the Team!

## Joyful News from a Summer Camp

From the Brest region in Belarus

With your help, a lot of teenagers came to our camp sessions and they were interested in learning about their need for salvation. After we prayed with them and most of them had left, a young boy named **Denis** came running up. He wanted to know if foul language was a sin and how he could be rid of the habit. After we talked for a while, he prayed and ran off again, but I saw tears in his eyes. At the evening camp service, Denis repented and trusted in Christ!



Denis

**Nastya** is from a non-believing family. Her mother told us that Nastya was uncontrollable, did poorly at school, her room was in disarray, she was both

*"Her mother said she didn't recognize her child!"*

insolent and profane. But that evening, Nastya also repented. She enjoyed the camp more than she had enjoyed her family's trip to Spain and the UAR. She couldn't stop telling her mother about all that had taken place at camp, and her mother said she didn't recognize her child!

Another boy named **Stepan** came to camp. We could tell by the seriousness of his questions that God was at work in him. He was saved that evening,



to the joy of his sister Azniv, who is one of our team members. She had been praying for her brother that day. But the very next day, Azniv was killed in an automobile accident. Please pray for Stepan and the rest of the family as they deal with this tragedy.

In all, there were 12 girls and three boys who repented at the camp's evening meeting. **Words cannot describe this, and it was the most memorable day in the life of our children's ministry team. Now these children are part of our Youth Center**

**church team, and we meet every Saturday for fellowship.** Dear friends, thank you for providing children's Bibles and other literature for our camp, and for your prayers and financial support! ♦



Stepan







# Your Gifts Are Watering a Fresh Crop of Brave Biblical Leaders in the Former Soviet Union!



Twenty-seven years ago, the Soviet Union collapsed. That means *an entire generation* has grown up with no memory of life under communism. Tragically, the spiritual vacuum created by seven decades of official atheism remains. The upcoming generation is being lured by many ungodly influences, including materialism, false religions, drug and alcohol addiction, sexual immorality, human trafficking, organized crime, and dangerous cults. The challenges are different, but the overwhelming spiritual need is just as intense.

*The challenges are different, but the overwhelming spiritual need is just as intense.*

Through your ongoing prayers and generous support, you have helped equip the church for their great task!

Through your gifts, you fund the training of a fresh crop of thousands of brave biblical leaders who are revolutionizing the advance of Christ's kingdom in the former USSR. This occurs through the Slavic Gospel Association's support of four strategic seminaries: Irpen Biblical Seminary in Ukraine, Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary in Russia,

Minsk Theological Seminary in Belarus, and Almaty Bible Institute in Kazakhstan.

Together, these biblically sound schools are preparing the next generation of men to serve as pastors, missionaries, and church planters, women for children's and women's ministry, and urgently needed worship and church music leaders.

Here are a few key developments over the past year that you helped make possible:

- Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary now training 86 students at four satellite locations. This is in addition to the 82 students now enrolled at the main seminary campus. The four satellites offer Bachelor of Divinity and Bachelor of Theology degrees.
- Four *Antioch Initiative* courses have been taught at Yakutsk in Far East Russia with 45 students enrolled.
- A total of 15 students graduated from *Antioch* training in Irkutsk.
- Graduate-level biblical counseling program



SGA supports 4 biblically sound seminaries in the former Soviet Union.

at Novosibirsk with 17 students enrolled.

- Certificate-level biblical counseling program started in Irkutsk with 25 students enrolled.

Thank you for making God's kingdom your priority! And for your commitment to making this truth lived out in the former USSR: "*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). ♦



Seminary students will go on to serve in all areas of church ministry.



# Changed Lives Lead to More Changed Lives

**Sergei Yakimenko**  
Graduate Student of Irpen Biblical Seminary

I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior in April of 1992. But God had been directing me toward repentance long before. I had been working in Far East Russia as a mine blaster, when one day an explosion went off with me nearby.

At that moment, my sinful life passed before me, and I started to look for answers to questions that worried me.

It wasn't long before I met believers and asked them for something to read. They gave me a New Testament and I started to read it. I realized right away that the words of Scripture were very important words, and the Holy Spirit was touching my heart. I was invited to a gathering of believers and began going along with them. On my fourth visit, I went with the intention to pray and receive Christ. But my wife did not yet know the Lord.

For the next seven years, I prayed about my wife's repentance. We ended up being on the verge of divorce, but then she repented also and that had great impact on my parents. They knew of the difficulties in our marriage, so when my parents saw her changed life it influenced them strongly.

When I became a Christian, I had a strong desire to mature spiritually and have a Christian education. I enrolled in various distance-learning courses and programs. Then in 2000 on my pastor's advice, I entered the Pastoral Ministry track at Irpen Biblical Seminary, graduating in 2004. Because of family matters, I was not able to continue my education at the Irpen campus, but I studied through a regional



Sergei Yakimenko

ministry training program in Cherkassy for 4 years. Then in 2012, I entered a ThD program and after completing it, went into an MDiv program.

*"When I became a Christian, I had a strong desire to mature spiritually and have a Christian education."*

My time at Irpen laid a good theological foundation, which helps me to discern false teachings and stand firmly on guard of the church that has been entrusted to me by the Lord. The resources and knowledge I obtained help me to better prepare sermons, and it was beneficial for my spiritual growth to have fellowship with instructors and other students.

Today I am a pastor in Bobritsa, which is in the Cherkassy region of Ukraine. In our church we have Sunday school for children, Bible study and prayer meetings. I participate in holding a small group in Kaniv and preach in other churches when needed. Whenever we organize local training programs, I teach there. During the summer I organize children's and youth camps and evangelistic events. We are also engaged in social ministry helping elderly people and local schools. ♦



Sergei teaching children at Sunday school.

## CIS IN THE NEWS

### PLEASE PRAY! Kazakhstan Eying Harsher Religion Laws

Kazakhstan's Senate recently passed new, wide-ranging, and restrictive amendments to the country's religion law and up to 11 other related measures. Forum 18 reports that the new amendments impose more restrictions on parents' and children's freedom to come to worship meetings and teach beliefs, more restrictions and punishments for teaching religion



without state permission, and possibly stepping up confiscation of religious literature that does not pass compulsory state censorship requirements. The amendments now go back to the lower house of the Kazakh parliament, and if adopted there, to President Nursultan Nazarbaev for signature.

It is disturbing to see these steady, incremental steps of governments across the former Soviet Union to increase pressure on evangelical churches and freedom of religion in general. The pressure is the most severe in Central Asian republics like Kazakhstan, but also exists in Caucasus nations like Azerbaijan and other Muslim-dominant regions. Please keep our brothers and sisters in these regions in prayer, and ask the Lord to grant SGA wisdom on how we can best support their ministries in the face of growing pressure. ♦



### HOW YOU CAN HELP

We're seeing rapidly multiplying open doors that are greatly exceeding the numbers of equipped ministers in the former USSR, often despite persecution in many of these nations. Churches are spreading. Opportunities for evangelism and discipleship are opening across these nations. **Yet hundreds of churches have no dedicated pastor.** So SGA plans to increase funding of four strategic seminaries in Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus.

At the same time, we need funding as our *Immanuel's Child* and *Orphans Reborn* outreaches increase those who come to need follow-up for evangelism or discipleship. And all that—in addition to the other opportunities God is opening.

**So please consider a generous year-end gift as the Lord opens doors.** SGA needs to finish 2018 strongly—on track with our carefully-planned budget projections. This will enable us to start 2019 strongly and equip churches in the former USSR to minister to more people! Just use the enclosed reply slip to send your gift. Thank you and God bless you!

# Insight FROM MICHAEL

## The New Generation of Godly Leaders Rises from the Ashes of the USSR!

As summer ended and fall began, students enrolled at SGA-sponsored seminaries and Bible institutes across Russia and her neighboring countries returned to their studies. I should say "formal studies" because these students study God's Word continually in or out of the classroom. The vast majority are also involved in ministry while they study, either at a main campus or satellite learning center. In the summer, these students have practicum assignments along with fruitful ministry in their home churches.

**I have personally gotten to know many of the students and have interviewed them for SGA's publications.** I've heard the passion of the young men intent on serving as pastors, as well as that of the young women who keenly desire to teach children or to disciple other women in Christ. Some students are musically inclined and want to lead worship.

Many of them come from non-Christian backgrounds and have made great personal sacrifices to be able to study God's Word and prepare for ministry. **Some have been ostracized by non-believing family members who try to pressure them out of serving Christ.** I truly count it a blessing and a privilege to be able to encourage them, and to share their stories with you—our faithful partners who help make their studies possible.

SGA-sponsored Bible training is more than just funding books and classrooms. Brothers and sisters are involved who need our help. **You are helping to get them ready to disciple men, women, and children, sowing the seeds of the life-changing Gospel as God opens the doors.** Bible training helps set the foundation for all else that happens in the ministries of the churches we serve. It's vitally important, and I am deeply thankful to God for the part He allows us to play in it. And I am thankful to you as well. It couldn't happen without you!

For our Savior,

  
Michael Johnson  
President



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