



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION
Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

LOVE CHANGES LIVES!
Your support brings
people to Jesus
by showing them
His love.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- ◆ Christ's compassion works . . . all over the former USSR
- ◆ A hardened young man's heart melts—he comes to Christ!
- ◆ Skeptical Ukrainians change their minds about Jesus!



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)

The Harvest Takes Time! Your Persistent Support Pays Off!

Ruslan Mandzyuk
SGA-Sponsored Missionary
Pastor in Pochaev, Ukraine

In addition to our regular meetings with youth, you made it possible for us to hold two camp sessions. This year, we had a lot of kids who had registered a good month and a half in advance. The camps were extremely blessed. Not only were the children happy, but their parents also came to us every day. **Over the past few years, the local attitude toward us has changed.** We used to be considered “sectarians,” but now people seem to be able to see Baptists for who we really are. The parents help buy products for the camp. One offered to help with transportation while another brought an ATV with a full tank of gasoline. We have built friendly relationships with several parents.

Our teenage camp was more difficult because so many seem to be near atheism even as young as 12! They are very skeptical. Even so, they all had a chance to watch us and see living examples of true faith. One boy named Mark came to us. During the entire camp, this boy had been disrespectful to us, and was caught smoking with his friends. They scoffed during Bible lessons and made their contempt clear.

But one night, Mark really acted up, hitting another boy who was smaller than him (we were celebrating the smaller boy’s birthday). It made me angry and I scolded Mark, then later called him aside for a conversation that lasted four hours. I found out that Mark had a bad relationship with his father and was lashing out because of it. As we talked further, I realized Mark had been paying more attention than I realized. He



had been watching all that was happening around him. **He could see that we not only talked about God, but that we really believed what we were teaching. Mark asked many questions about God, the Bible, and the Lord Jesus.** He then expressed the desire to come to our meetings after camp was over! Please pray for Mark and the other boys who need

Christ’s love so desperately.

One other ministry we have is family holidays in a local park. Last year, more than 200 children came to this event, and 100 adults. **This year, more than 500 people came—both adults**

and children! We had inflatable trampolines, cotton candy, popcorn, coffee, french fries, and face painting. These meetings lead to further family meetings in our church. Please continue to lift this before the Lord. Thank you for your prayers, and for your support of me and my family in our ministry! ♦

*Over the past few years,
the local attitude toward
us has changed.*

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary (GALATIANS 6:9).

Remember to Pray for *Immanuel’s* *Child* Follow Up Ministry!

As this issue of the *Good News Report* arrives in your mailboxes, SGA-sponsored *Immanuel’s Child* Christmas ministries will have taken place across Russia and her neighboring countries. We are trusting the Lord for the reaching of thousands of children with the Gospel as they joyfully receive gifts that you—our faithful partners—helped provide. Please remember to pray in the days and weeks ahead as the churches will be following up with the children and their families. Pray with us for a bountiful spiritual harvest, not only with the children but also with their parents and caregivers! ♦



Your Gifts Are Showing Needy Families Christ's Love in Action

Across the former Soviet countries, millions of individuals and families are mired in deep, heartbreaking poverty. Seven decades of atheistic communism and economic upheaval have ravaged their lives. And even though 27 years have elapsed since the chaos of the Soviet collapse, the majority still face an enormous struggle to make ends meet.

Scripture exhorts us to model the compassion of the Lord Jesus toward those who are ravaged by poverty . . . *So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion* (Colossians 3:12). And with your help, that is exactly what the evangelical churches SGA serves are doing among many despairing families.

“Who is this that cares enough?”

SGA vice president Eric Mock has seen the need first hand, as well as the eternal fruit that grows from the ministry. He writes:

In Central Asia, I have been in homes where it's 20 below outside, and they have their children underneath the table with their feet near a coal burner so they can at least stay warm while the ladies are staying around the outside. They are barely surviving and the children get little nutrition. There is even a risk where children can get sold into human trafficking. When we help the local church come with \$10 worth of oil, flour, rice, and beans—they can survive, see the



love of God, hear the Gospel, and have their lives transformed. The believers are walking the road with them and stay involved, teaching them a new way of living.

Then there's Belarus, where the poor people are going to local mayors and leaders asking for help.

And even though 27 years have elapsed since the chaos of the Soviet collapse, the majority still face an enormous struggle to make ends meet . . .

They don't have a welfare program, and since the churches have been distributing food through SGA-sponsored Compassion Ministry, the mayors now point them to the church, and then the church goes

out and visits them with help. The pastors tell me that this is the most fruitful ministry they've ever had, because people say, “Who is this that cares enough to bring me food?”

The answer, of course, is Christians compelled by the love of Christ. And behind them are SGA supporters like you. Thank you for blessing people across the world in Jesus' name! ♦

Two Stories of Compassion



From Siberia:

Pastor Oleg began visiting Dima and his large family. Dima is a war veteran who struggles with PTSD after seeing much death and destruction. He's even struggled with thoughts of suicide with his family in such need. But when Oleg visited the family and brought a food package, it was very gratefully received. Oleg is asking that we pray for this new opportunity, and that Dima and his family will respond to the Gospel.



From Georgia:

A family of three women and four children fell on hard times after the head of the family perished in an automobile accident. The husband of one of the daughters abandoned the family, and one of the sons went to prison, leaving his wife and children behind with his mother.

A grandfather

who had been helping died recently. One of the children is physically challenged. The adults work, but the income is so meager that they cannot keep the utilities turned on. The help of the church with food has made a great impact, and the family is very thankful to God for the help they receive from believers.

These are only two examples of how the love of God and your faithfulness is helping to meet enormous physical needs. More than that, this ministry of compassion is opening many opportunities for the life-changing Gospel, and the glorious harvest is eternal! ♦



Children and families in Georgia, and throughout the Russian speaking lands, feel Christ's compassion through this ministry.

What *You* Make Possible: SGA's Compassion Ministry at a Glance

SGA-sponsored Compassion Ministry takes place as God provides through churches and missionary pastors throughout Russia and her neighboring countries. Here are a few brief glimpses of the ongoing ministry sent to us by the churches.

Praise the Lord for the ministry with which God has entrusted us here in Birobidzhan, Russia (Jewish Autonomous Oblast). We thank you and our dear Lord for your financial support. There are currently 24 people located at our ministry, which we call the Mayak Center. We recently harvested our potatoes for the year. I had written earlier about a Jewish woman named Lena. Praise God that she is involved in our ministry and reads Scripture during our meetings. She also helped us in the potato harvest. At the end of last month, we had one woman who

entered into eternity. We had spoken to her about Christ, but her heart was closed. But then we have Inna, who heard the Gospel and repented. She married a man who has physical challenges, and we visit them in their apartment. They come out to our center for worship services. We rely on the Lord and His help, and we praise the Lord that we are able to minister together to needy people and bring them the message of the Gospel!

—Pastor Viktor Lokaichuk

In Central Asia, I visit a tuberculosis hospital and share the Gospel as I have opportunity. Through Compassion Ministry, many are hearing of Christ's love and are interested in hearing the Word of God. There was one man not long ago who was in very grave condition. I visited him and told him about Christ. He immediately repented and received the Lord. On my next visit, I found out that he had gone into eternity.

—Missionary Pastor in Uzbekistan

One of our pastors in Georgia visited a family with three children. The parents had fled the region of Abkhazia during their 1993 war and settled in Georgia. The parents recently divorced, and the children stayed with their mother. They had been living in an old military barrack, and this year the government gave them an apartment with no furniture and in disrepair. Then, the mother left for Italy to try and find work and left the children alone. The eldest daughter is 16, the next is 13, and the youngest son is 11. The oldest child left school to take care of the younger ones. We witnessed the cold and hunger in this household. We brought them food and will continue to visit them with help on a regular basis. Thank you for helping us help them!

—Sent from the Caucasus country of Georgia



CIS IN THE NEWS

Landmine Explosion Kills Children

This past fall, the Deutsche Welle news service reported that three teenaged schoolchildren lost their lives in a landmine explosion in eastern Ukraine's conflict zone. The three boys were aged 13 to 15, and accidentally stepped on the mine. A fourth child—a 10-year-old boy—was wounded by shrapnel and treated in a nearby hospital.

Ivan Prikhodko, who serves as mayor in the town of Horlivka, said that the youths had found an abandoned house and were just "looking for adventure." The mayor added that **landmines are a constant issue in his region** and something that they will be facing for some time to come.

This tragedy did not gain many headlines here in North America, but **such violence is a daily reality for the people of eastern Ukraine.** The Ukrainian evangelical churches we serve continue to send Compassion Ministry teams led by missionary pastors into this dangerous region. As they continue to distribute much-needed food and other humanitarian aid, pray for the safety of these teams. Also please pray for additional resources to supply them, as well as for continued openings for the Gospel to bring the peace of Christ to shattered lives. ♦



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Your support for SGA reaches people across the former USSR in *many* ways, because the needs are so diverse. Some people just need to hear the Gospel (rare in that culture) or good Bible teaching (also rare). Others, however, are in such dire material need that they need compassionate help before they will listen.

Jesus did it both ways. Often He would come into an area and simply preach the truth. But other times, He would come and heal the sick, and *then* share the good news.

That's the approach SGA takes: We make sure that we are preparing churches to minister to all people in all situations . . . so that the maximum number are reached!

But we cannot do it without your prayers and financial support. Your calling to advance God's kingdom in the former USSR through your support means you perceive this strategy. *You are a special and insightful believer!* So please keep praying, and as God leads keep giving to this ministry. To give today, just use the reply slip and envelope in this issue and return your gift. God sees your act of compassion . . . blessing the physical and spiritual needs of despairing children, families, women, men, and the elderly—just as Christ did. ♦



Insight FROM MICHAEL

Not “Either/Or”... it’s “Both/And”

Some people think you *either* have to only preach the Gospel at the sacrifice of compassion, or sacrifice the Gospel in order to concentrate on compassion. But it’s not “either/or.” It’s “both/and.”

As the Apostle Paul tells us in Colossians 3, **one of the most important characteristics for disciples of our Lord Jesus is a heart of compassion** (Colossians 3:12). Equipping our brothers and sisters across Russia and her neighboring countries to help the needy through Compassion Ministry has always been a key component of our ministries.

In the visits that I—along with other SGA team members—have made overseas, I’ve seen firsthand how a gift package of food and other urgently needed items can bring both smiles and tears to poverty-stricken individuals and families. Most often, the help they received was completely unlooked for and unexpected, and the fact that it was the local church reaching out to them helped open the door to share about Christ. In fact, **one of our missionary pastors in Belarus told SGA’s Eric Mock that it was the most fruitful ministry that his church has!** Won’t it be wonderful in heaven to talk to an untold number who will testify that it was a heart of compassion that helped bring them to saving faith in the Lord?

Of course, none of this would be possible without your faithful prayers and support. Because you respond to the Lord moving your heart, other hearts half a world away are being softened by the love and compassion of His people. As the harsh winter continues in the former Soviet countries, please pray for the churches and their teams who are out distributing food and other compassionate aid. Ask the Lord to open many opportunities for the Gospel, and to provide the additional resources needed to make even more help possible. In some of these nations, especially in Central Asia, the poverty that exists is staggering. Thank you as always for your faithful, generous partnership.



Michael Johnson
President



SHARING THE GOSPEL • EQUIPPING THE CHURCH
HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

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

Slavic Gospel Association
6151 Commonwealth Drive
Loves Park, IL 61111
www.sga.org
E-mail: goodnews@sga.org
Phone: 815-282-8900
Fax: 815-282-8901

To start, cancel, or change the mailing address on your subscription to Good News Report, please send your name, your old address, and your new address to the address listed above. Please allow six to eight weeks for the fulfillment of your request.

International Offices

Noble Park, Australia
Cambridge, Canada
Eastbourne, England
North Shore, New Zealand

U.S. Board of Directors

Dr. Rick Goertzen, *Chairman*
Warner Tillman, *Vice Chairman*
Michael Johnson, *President*
John Wauterlek, *Treasurer*
Brian Kult, *Secretary*
Harry Leopold
Dr. Bill Atkinson
Kelly Abbott
Dr. Les Lofquist
Dr. Rick Gregory
Rev. Bill Ball
Scott Rich
Dr. Robert W. Provost, *President Emeritus*

SGA is a charter member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.



Enhancing Trust