



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

PUSHING INTO THE FRONTIER!

Read How Your Support is Reaching Orphans and others in the Vast Expanses of Russia

INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ♦ Missionary pastors press into unreached villages and schools
- ♦ Amazing *Immanuel's Child* Christmas report from Ukraine
- ♦ Your support reaches farther than you could imagine!

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)

Your Gifts Help Missionary Families Reach Far East Russia

Valery Sidorenko
Yakutsk Region of Russia

My wife Valentina and I have lived in Yakutia for 34 years. Recently, we began traveling to outlying villages and towns in the region for ministry. Our plan is to visit the existing churches in our region to encourage them, and to help them begin different ministry outreaches. We want to help strengthen God's people so they will be able to share the Good News and the love of God with the lost. In that way, new souls will be added to the Lord's church!

"We joyfully taught a Bible lesson for her class of seventh graders."

One weekend this past November, my wife and I flew to the village of Nyurba located **500 miles from Yakutsk**. It was very cold in the plane, and the engines labored very loudly with a lot of vibration during the flight. Our suitcases were with us on our seats. But still it was much better than driving to Nyurba on a bad road for 16-18 hours in the cold, and without warm places to stop on the road. It would have been so much worse for people of our age and for our backs!

One of the places we visited was the village of Antonovka where one of the ladies we met is a teacher. Svetlana Mihailovna invited us to her home along with three of her unbelieving relatives. We witnessed to them about faith in Jesus Christ and about miracles that the Lord has done in our lives.



The children were eager to listen to the lesson and the songs.



The students learned about Christ's love for them.

Svetlana also invited us to come to her school and tell the children about Christ! The church sisters also talked with the village administration seeking permission for me and Valentina to go to the local school to have a Bible lesson for children. Permission was granted, so we went to a school located not far from Nyurba.

When we arrived, another teacher was waiting for us and she invited us to come into her class right in the middle of the lesson. We joyfully taught a Bible lesson for her class of seventh graders. **We shared with the children about the Lord and sang songs in the Yakut language.** All the children were smiling and were very open to fellowship with us. Then we went to another room where children were gathered together from several classes and were waiting for us. We told them about the Lord, sang for them, and prayed for God's blessing on both the children and the teachers. The next day, Svetlana invited us again to come to her school in Antonovka. **About 65 older children were gathered in a large auditorium, where we shared with them about God, salvation through Christ, and faith.** Then my wife had a session with the girls while I talked to the boys about Jesus and prayed a blessing over them.

We are so grateful to you for your love toward us, and toward the people of Yakutia. Thank you for your desire to participate in the work of the Gospel, and in building up the church of Christ. Thank you, and please keep praying! ♦

Young Christians Take the Gospel to Rural Yakutsk Villages!



Egor Mikhalev and Dmitri Tatarenko
UECB Church in Yakutsk

In November, our team of young people visited the mountain village of Myttah Berdigestyah in Yakutia. This is a small community consisting mainly of elderly people and their grandchildren. Pastor Nikolai Alexeyev has seen many years go by. Nikolai usually performs social services in November, such as preparing drinking water for the winter by cutting out ice cubes from a frozen lake. A portion of these ice cubes he takes himself, and then he distributes the rest to the believing and unbelievers. When he hands out the ice for drinking water to the unbelieving families, he shares the Gospel with them.



Sharing the Gospel with children and young people.

While we were with Nikolai over two days, we had talks with children and young people. **Some of them were non-believers, and we were able to witness to them about faith in the living God and His Son Jesus Christ.** We invited some of the young men to the youth conference in Yakutsk, and we trust that we will have the opportunity to show them the love of the Lord Jesus in action. We also held a Sunday worship service in the community, then visited a small group of believers in the village of Berdigestyah Hill Tracts. **There are eight sisters who**

meet together but they have no pastor or believing brothers, so they are always in need of spiritual support from other churches.

"Pray with us that we will have even more opportunities to share the Gospel with unbelievers."

In December, our youth team visited two villages in the Aldan region of Yakutia along with Pastor Said Protopopov. We split into two groups, with one staying to **help cut firewood for the villagers** to last into spring. The second group left for **evangelism**, sharing Christ in a local bakery, as well as with some people on the streets of the village. Afterward, we went to the village of Lower Kuranah, where we met with the youth of the three churches of the Aldan district. Unbelievers and young children have been invited to these meetings. There was one unbelieving girl named Angelina present, and we shared the Gospel with her. We pray that the Lord will open her heart with His love and His Word.

I am so happy we went with Pastor Said. He is fluent in the Yakut language, and he is able to communicate biblical truths to the people, and this is very important to us! Thank you for helping to make these possible, and pray with us that we will have even more opportunities to support the brothers and sisters, as well as the opportunity to share the Gospel with unbelievers. ♦



Helping local residents cutting firewood.

Immanuel's Child Report from Ukraine: Forgotten by the World, But Not Forgotten by God—or You!

Eric Mock
Vice President of Ministry Operations

It has been an exhausting few days, but they were wonderful days of ministry. Blowing snow and a combined 14 hours of driving—yet rewarding ministry in **two orphanages**, visiting **eight families** with aid, a worship service, and an *Immanuel's Child* Christmas outreach in an elementary school to 100 kids. *Amazing!*

I'll just share a brief story from the ministry in Mlachevka, Ukraine.

It showed me once again the answer to this question: What does God do when there is an impoverished village full of neglected, hungry children? Answer: *He plants a church.*

His instruments—Pastor Nikolai and his wife Maria—found themselves with 100 children nearby,

50 of which come to their small home, which has turned into a church. Maria tells us of answering a knock at the door to find a child in tears pleading for food. **She cares for the children of a family of three, each with a different father, who suffer in deep poverty and an alcoholic mother.** Maria shares with us her broken heart for the state of these children. Yet in this village, forgotten by most and near the dangerous Chernobyl exclusion zone, **God raised up a church with love, compassion and a heart to see these children and families loved, and reached with the Gospel.**

While we were there, Nikolai and the church held an *Immanuel's Child* outreach. The children were so excited for the gifts, the Bible, and the Bethlehem Star signed by SGA partners. **Many heard the names of those who had sent the Star**

and committed to pray for them. These precious children found out that their family was bigger than they could have imagined.

“Maria tells us of answering a knock at the door to find a child in tears pleading for food.”

Through *Immanuel's Child* and the year-round ministries of SGA, this dear couple and their church minister to these children who have been **forgotten by the world, but not forgotten by God.** We praise God for raising up faithful servants in Ukraine and the other CIS nations, and for all those who support



The children particularly appreciate the signed Bethlehem Stars.

ministry to hurting and lonely children like these. **And with the addition of Sunday school material through *Immanuel's Child*, discipleship will continue all year.** Thank you for all that you do! ♦



FILLED TO CAPACITY!

In Krasnoyarsk Region, Your Support Reached 1,120 Orphans at Christmas



With your support, we were able to organize a bright, colorful Christmas play for local orphan children. In addition to the orphanage programs, we also had an opportunity to present the story of Christ's birth to children from dysfunctional families, in four local churches, and in five remote villages. **Altogether, the Krasnoyarsk Orphans Reborn team had 20 performances for more than 1,120 children.**

The two programs were necessary because of all the people who wanted to attend!

One great blessing for us was the participation of two older orphans, Artem and Yuri. Yuri graduated in 2018, and he regularly participates in our meetings with children at different orphanages. This past December 28, Artem had his birthday and we took our play to the very orphanage where Artem had grown up. Earlier, we had served and reached him there, and now Artem is serving others in like manner. This helped set a good example for the orphan children now resident at the facility.

One of the programs where Artem and Yuri participated took place in Bogotol, a remote town some distance from Krasnoyarsk. *Orphans Reborn*

team member Andrei Shalygin relates that the outreach was a tremendous success . . .

This year, we were able to put together three performances, two in Bogotol and one in Bolshaya Kosul, where 69 children and more than 20 adults were waiting. In Bogotol, the two programs were necessary because the building was not able to hold all the people who wanted to attend! The number was over 110 children, and about 60 adults. At least 90 percent were children and adults who did not know Christ. They all were invited to our Sunday services, and the children were invited to participate in our Christmas day camp, which is held over a six-day period. We assembled gifts for children with physical challenges and took them to their homes. Then we organized Christmas visits to children in four villages. This is a wonderful time where God opens doors for us. We are so thankful to SGA partners for your participation in our ministry! ♦



Artem and Yuri

CIS IN THE NEWS

Anti-Missionary Prosecutions Spike in Crimea

A recent story in the news source *Forum 18* documented an **increase in the number of anti-missionary prosecutions in the Crimean peninsula, which was annexed by Russia in March 2014** shortly after the Ukraine crisis broke out. The article says the number of prosecutions nearly **doubled in 2018**, and affected a variety of religious groups including Russian Orthodox, Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal, and Muslim. The offenses included failing to have proper signs on buildings to conducting missionary activity, and actions taken ranged from warnings to fines. Of 23 prosecutions for sharing faith or holding worship at unapproved venues, 19 ended in some kind of punishment.

As Crimea is effectively under Russian law now, these prosecutions are taking place using the 2016 "Yarovaya" anti-missionary law that has had



The Russian-annexed Crimea region of Ukraine.

sporadic enforcement across Russia proper. Human Rights groups say that the prosecutions violate religious freedom rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. **Please pray with us for our brothers and sisters who are encountering these difficulties, asking the Lord to take what the enemy means for harm and bring new Gospel opportunities out of it for His people. ♦**

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Many groups of college-age Christians have started taking time off to drive to villages that have never heard of Jesus. There are hundreds of unreached villages like that, especially in Far East Russia—a region bigger than the whole continental United States.

And out of these encounters have come: Evangelism. Conversions to Christ. Churches. Orphan outreaches. Literature distribution. And many other different kinds of ministry!



God is doing things through SGA's *Reach Russia Now* and other community-based, village-to-village outreaches that are astounding. SGA-trained missionary pastors bring the Gospel and plant churches in these communities. And in turn, the new churches have become outposts from which to send *even more* passionate, biblically-grounded believers into *more* unreached villages.

But SGA needs more resources right away to keep the momentum going. Your special gift this month will help us keep supplying these SGA-trained Russian believers and church leaders with the resources they need to keep reaching out. May God bless you as you send His Gospel to *"the end of the earth"* (Acts 1:8) in Far East Russia and all the former USSR. ♦

Insight FROM MICHAEL

“... and to the end of the earth”

Jesus commanded us to take His Good News to “*the end of the earth*” (Acts 1:8). If Far East Russia isn’t part of the “end of the earth,” I don’t know what is!

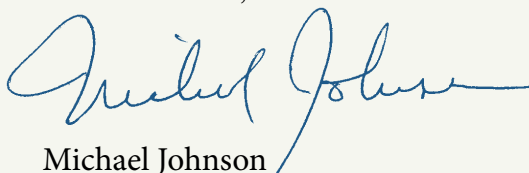
If you were to mention the “Far East” to most people, I’m guessing it would call to mind an image of some exotic place of mystery and intrigue—most often visualized on a movie screen. By contrast, the region encompassing the Far East *in Russia* can be harsh and unforgiving, especially the weather! This issue of *Good News Report* focuses on the Yakutsk region in Far East Russia, where winter temperatures can plunge below minus 50!

Yet the men, women, and children who live in this amazing region **really aren't any different from you and me**. They all have hopes and dreams along with joys and sorrows. Most of all, they share our great need for a Savior. In thinking about this not long ago, it struck me forcefully to realize just how few workers were out there taking the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ to this vast harvest field. It is not the easiest place in the world for travel, and yes, that is quite an understatement. **Can you imagine being in a tiny village so isolated that the only access is either by air, or by waiting until winter when the river freezes over enough to get there on a snowmobile or other vehicle?** It's hard for us to imagine, but it is a daily reality for them.

SGA is privileged to serve a group of **faithful missionary pastors who willingly sacrifice a more comfortable life to go live in these regions**, and to take the hope of the Gospel to poor individuals and families who so desperately need it. But there aren't anywhere near enough workers. We must pray even harder what the Lord commanded . . . *The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest* (Luke 10:2).

I am thankful for you—our faithful ministry partners—because you share our burden for these lost souls. And I am trusting that He will indeed provide for His great work!

For our Savior,



Michael Johnson
President



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