



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION
Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

Wherever Orphans Suffer in the Former USSR, God is Opening Hearts . . .



INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ♦ Near the Ukraine Border, Thousands of Orphans Hear of Christ!
- ♦ “Now I believe in God!”
- ♦ Repentance, Baptisms, and More *Orphans Reborn* Celebrations.

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)

How SGA Supporters Helped Reach Refugee Orphans With Christ's Love

Your gifts help churches get the Gospel to thousands near the Ukraine border

Sergei K.
SGA-Sponsored *Orphans Reborn* Team in Volgodonsk, Russia



Children and their parents gather for the drama performance.

I am thankful for the opportunity to share with you our ministry over the past several weeks. It was a very productive time. In early March, we made a trip to Taganrog near the border with eastern Ukraine. **Taganrog is serving as a temporary location for people evacuated from Ukraine's Donetsk area—for the most part, children from orphanages.**

We have been putting on performances of a children's drama we call "Wolfaritan." It was about helping people in need and **based on the Bible's parable of the Good Samaritan**, only with animals. The performance uncovers the theme of self-confidence versus helping the needy. We showed five performances in one day. **There were a little over 300 children and about 20 adults.** We had been asked to show a performance that would be good for different ages. So we could not use the previous one. We prepared another performance, rehearsed and then got on the road. Everyone enjoyed it and they were glad that we came.

Then we wrote a completely new drama. This was meant for the locations we visit, but for now they are closed for live performances. So we did it via video recording and saved it on a flash drive. We wrote a script, made a sound recording, shot video against a green screen. And then assembled it. So it was a long process. **The performance is entitled "Where is Your Home?"**

It is about a girl who married and then was left a widow with her husband's parents. She fled from that home and from these elderly people who were not her blood family. She hitch-hiked and that was how she met a long distance truck driver. He listened to the young woman's story and shared with her **the story of Ruth from the Bible.** Then he brought into focus the fact



The children at the orphanage watch the recorded drama with interest.



Hundreds of people were reached through the performances.

that people remembered her because of her kindness to her mother-in-law Naomi. And God rewarded Ruth. She became the great grandmother of the king. She also became a part of the Christmas story. Joseph and Mary were descendants of Ruth and Boaz. They came to Bethlehem because that was where the family estate of Ruth and her husband was.

Bible Truths for *Hundreds of Orphans*

As you see, the main character in our drama heard the story of Ruth, and she decided to go back to the parents of her deceased husband and care about them. **After the performance we spoke about caring for neighbors and old people.** Of course, we gave out chocolate bars to every child after the performances. We were able to take flash drives with videos to all 27 locations. **This time there were 840 children and about 100 adults who participated!**

In late March, we were **invited to come to Taganrog again to minister to refugee children.**



The children with their chocolate bars.

The first location was the one we had visited last time and all the people there were already excited to see us and they remembered "The Wolfaritan." **We were given a big auditorium and we had 346 people in two shows.** There were about 20 adults among them. In the afternoon we went to two more locations very close to the border with Ukraine. There were families with children in those locations. We did performances there, one in each location. The total number of people in our performances that day amounted to 550; almost 500 of them were children.

This time we used an older program we have used called "**The Prodigal Son**" based upon the parable. It includes a contemporary story about a boy who loved entertainment and did not care about his mother's moral teachings, nor wanted to work. He spoke rudely with his mother and said he wanted to live on his own. In reply to this his grandma told him about the prodigal son. Before the performance, we spoke to the children about how life cannot all be about entertainment. Even electricity and food is something that we have because somebody worked for it. Then we discussed the prodigal son and what he did. We also spoke about the love of the father who forgave his son. **In two locations with the families, we spoke about the love of our heavenly Father who forgives all sin.** Altogether, we reached out to about **1,800 people**, for more than 300 of them we did it twice. Thank you so much for your support for our ministry during this time! ♦

“Now I Believe in God”

Vadim, Kristina, Alexei, and Natalya
SGA-Supported *Orphans Reborn* Team in Krasnoyarsk, Russia

Peace be to you, dear friends. As we visited one of the local orphanages recently, God led us in our fellowship with children in a special way. We had gone there with a regular lesson, but we did not teach it. The fellowship was built around the Gospel and **Nikita’s** testimony. This young man is 17 years old. He tested God. **When his best and only friend (also an orphan) almost died from a drug overdose, Nikita prayed for the first time in his life and asked God to save his life.** And God answered him. Now he says that God exists and he believes in Him. He promised God to quit drug abuse.

For the last two years, Nikita had tried every drug he could get his hands on. He stole a lot and neglected his schoolwork. **Today, Nikita says that he has no desire for drugs and he claims that this was the result of his prayer.** We prayed today with the children for Nikita especially. And we invite you, beloved friends, to pray for him as well, asking God to help Nikita to be faithful to the promise he made, and above all to repent and trust in Christ as his Savior.

Bible Lessons Lead to Baptisms

The orphanage in Primorsk is a special place for us. **Every Wednesday for over 20 years, we have traveled there in order to have a Bible lesson with orphans.** We see how the Lord works there in a special way, and in His mercy He allows us to see some fruit. **Danil** wrote through a social media network to different people, asking them to foster him, which is almost impossible for a 16-year-old boy, yet one Christian family was able to foster him. When the papers for adoption were processed, it so happened that together with Danil that family fostered a girl named **Lesha** from that orphanage. Now just a little less than two years have gone by. **Lesha is in the process of preparation for entering into covenant with Christ and Danile attends the baptism preparation class.** We can see God’s special mercy for those children!

Marina lived in the orphanage beginning at four years of age, and she always actively participated in our lessons. When she graduated, she had no place to live and Elena accepted her in her house. **Today Marina graduated from her studies and now lives alone, but she attends a group for older orphans in the church.** **Nastya** has a similar story. She is from the same orphanage and she also had no place to live. Elena accepted her as well and helps her to settle in life, with her own life she demonstrates to her what it means to walk with Christ in everyday life.

Masha is a great testimony of God’s work in that orphanage! She was pregnant and very close to the due date when the blessed family of Zhenya and Yulia decided to adopt her. **The Lord leaves the doors of that orphanage open for our ministry, and it is always of great joy for us to go to those children.** Pray with us for their salvation!



Masha and her daughter are now part of Zhenya and Yulia’s family.

A Time of Tragedy . . . and Open Doors

Many children have their own understanding of God. We really hope to convey to them the most

important biblical truths about Christ and pray that one day, they will realize their need for a Savior. Another young girl is **Arina**. She has three brothers who are with her in the orphanage. **Their mother died and their father has a new family. During the lesson, we talked about God being always near, that He hears our prayers and answers them.** After that lesson, Arina thought a while and said that it was a pity she did not know that earlier. Arina is a willful girl with clear leadership qualities, and she asks many difficult questions. Please, support us in

prayer that the Lord will reveal Himself to her.

In the light of all the tragic events that take place in Ukraine and its consequences for our country, all other news and issues seem to be so minor and insignificant. We believe that even during crisis times, disasters and wars, each one of us needs to realize our own calling and diligently fulfill that calling before God and people. Therefore we continue our involvement with this ministry that was entrusted to us and we want to share this with you. May God bless and strengthen you as well! ♦

Young Orphans Find Hope in the Word of God

Thank you for providing the resources to give them biblical truth!

Pavel R.
Orphans Reborn Team in Grodno, Belarus

Greetings to you, dear friends! As we continue to perform the ministry of visiting a family-type orphanage by God’s grace, we thank Him for **the opportunity to reach children who have been abandoned by their parents and are in difficult circumstances.**

As I write this, we as believers commemorate one of the most important events in all of history—the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And in our fellowship with the children, a lot of time was devoted to this event. Studying the Scriptures together and reading John 14—specifically Jesus’ last words to his disciples and **His promise to “not leave us orphans,”** but to send us the Comforter—encouraged many of the children with hope! We pray that the Word we’re reading will touch the hearts of these kids and lead them to faith in Christ!

As is traditional, we visited a cafe with our friends—young Danik asked for it very much. They are really looking forward to it! And especially for such an occasion as it was Easter! On the way to the cafe, **Danik began to ask many questions about**



Pavel and the children at the cafe.

what he had heard in our Bible lessons—why was Jesus killed, where did they put Him after His death, who were the Romans, why exactly Jesus was crucified, and many other things! We can see the impact of God’s Word in his life.

Danik needs **extra intense prayers**, since his parents are planning to take him away from this home (which he doesn’t want) and our connection with him may be lost. We are concerned for his life, but the main thing is that the seed that has been sown in him will bear fruit! We are grateful for your help and prayers, and ask that you please continue to pray for these children! May God bless you! **CHRIST IS RISEN!!!** ♦

Many Orphans Come to Christ this Spring!

You give children an “Orphans Reborn” Easter

Easter is a special time of the year, and the Lord opens many hearts to the Gospel. This year the SGA-supported *Orphans Reborn* team in Russia’s Nizhny Novgorod region prepared an Easter ministry focused on Jesus suffering for our sins, His way to the cross, His glorious resurrection, and salvation for everyone who will trust in Him as Savior.

The team took this outreach to a special needs orphanage in a nearby town. They met 16-year-old Olga who was expecting a baby very soon. She graduates from school this year and will bring up her



Olga with the baby carriage.

baby with her mom, who will have custody. The family is poor, and the team supplied her with supplies including a baby carriage and a cot, which opened the door for more ministry. *Orphans Reborn* workers write:

“We realize that Olga needs not only financial support, she needs friends and love in this rather challenging situation in her life. We encouraged her to keep her child and be a loving mom instead of making this child into another orphan. Olga heard the Gospel and believes that God can forgive her and take care of her future life. This time she was especially touched by the episode with crying women who loved the Savior so much that they followed Him without fear of society’s disapproval. We will keep in touch and pray for Olga to entrust Jesus with her life completely.”

Then the team shared about 17-year-old Artyom, and the impact of *Orphans Reborn* in his life:

“When we first met Artyom in the orphanage, his head was totally shaved. Our volunteer Tatyana who talked to him said that he did it because he wants to be special. Our next visit involved lessons where we

taught children that God created everyone special!

Children were lining their hands and writing their talents and gifts as well as their personal features on them.

Artyom was participating actively. After this meeting, he said that he never realized how special

he is. This is a story of real transformation. When we came with the Easter program, Artyom helped us throughout the whole program—he turned on the projector, helped to turn on music and was organizing the other children for the program. **After the Easter story, 25 children heard the Gospel and asked Jesus into their lives!**”

Dear brothers and sisters, we are so very thankful that we have such friends, helpers and coworkers as SGA partners. **Thanks for your support, we are able to make more visits and share the Gospel to more children and adults.** We need your help, especially prayer for orphans’ salvation and transformation of their lives. May God bless you abundantly in your ministry! ♦



Artyom

CIS IN THE NEWS

Ukraine War Worsens Severe Child Hunger

According to a recent Radio Free Europe report, the UN’s children’s agency says that the war in Ukraine—one of the world’s largest grain suppliers—**threatens to throw the world into a “spiraling” food crisis.** That in turn will exacerbate the problem of severe hunger among a growing number of children. The UNICEF report also said



that the cost of life-saving treatment for the most severely malnourished children could spike by as much as 16 percent due to the invasion. **The war has already added to strains on the food system created by the COVID-19 pandemic**

and weather issues. Executive Director Catherine Russell said, “The world is rapidly becoming a virtual tinderbox of preventable child deaths and child suffering from wasting.” The report said that raw ingredients for ready-to-use therapeutic food have jumped amid the global food crisis, and global financing to save the lives of children suffering from wasting is also “under threat.”

Since the Ukraine war broke out in February, we have seen its tragic impacts on thousands of individuals and families as they have been forced to flee their homes and become refugees. It remains to be seen what the final global impact will be as Ukrainian agriculture is disrupted, but the needs of the destitute people will remain for some time. **We are thankful to SGA partners who help make it possible for the churches we serve to help the refugees with food and other aid, and most importantly the life-changing Gospel.** ♦

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The SGA-supported *Orphans Reborn* outreach across the former Soviet Union continues to be used by God to make an eternal difference in thousands of young lives. The past few years have seen many challenges and hurdles, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the awful war in Ukraine.



Bible lesson at an orphanage.

Yet fruitful ministry continues, and your faithful, generous support helps to undergird it all—and so much more. We are thankful for your help in providing:

- Bibles and Christian literature
- Bible training
- Support for summer camp and Christmas ministries
- Compassion Ministry

Please know that you are truly having an impact for the glory of Christ. Please pray about how you can help today! ♦

Insight FROM MICHAEL

God is Bigger Than War—and He is Opening Doors!

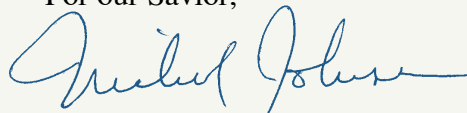
The summer months are historically very busy in terms of ministry for the evangelical churches we serve across the former Soviet Union. This is especially the case for children's ministries that SGA supports such as summer camps, as well as the year-round *Orphans Reborn* ministry that is the focus of this month's newsletter. **But unlike last summer, the churches must deal with the impacts of the war in Ukraine, which has destroyed cities and caused the evacuation of thousands of families—and yes, orphan children.** Some have been relocated to other former Soviet countries, while others have been evacuated to Poland and other parts of Europe. It is truly a devastating situation.

We don't know how much longer the conflict will continue. **But since the war broke out in late February, SGA partners have helped sustain a steady flow of aid to the churches for distribution to needy individuals and families impacted by the war.** And ministry must go on—in **Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and the other former Soviet countries.** The churches will continue discipling and loving orphan children through *Orphans Reborn*, summer camp ministry, at Christmas, and throughout the year. **It is the faithful prayers and support of SGA partners like you that help make this ongoing outreach possible, sometimes in the face of challenges that can seem overwhelming.** But nothing overwhelms our Lord and Savior, and He is working in the midst of this tragedy to bring many to Himself in saving faith. And you are such a vital part of it.

It is a human reaction when terrible circumstances arise to ask, "Why?" The answers to that question are not always fathomable to us. But as God's Word demonstrates repeatedly, the Lord works in wondrous ways in all kinds of circumstances to accomplish His purpose. In Genesis 37, when Joseph as a young boy was sold into slavery by his brothers, he could not have foreseen that one day he would be prime minister of Egypt. But God had ordered the events in advance, and placed Joseph to get Egypt—and his own people—through an awful famine. That is only one of many examples. **Who knows how God will take today's tragedy in Ukraine and work through people He has redeemed to accomplish His good purposes in ways we can't see?**

Please continue to lift SGA's ministries in prayer, along with our faithful brothers and sisters in the former Soviet Union. May God ever use us for His glory as He builds His church!

For our Savior,



Michael Johnson, President



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