



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION
Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

Christmas in September? Yes! It's Time to Prepare for a Huge Outreach . . .

INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ◆ Learn how you will help give hope to “hopeless” Ukrainian children this Christmas.
- ◆ See how you sent Siberian kids a merry Christmas last year.
- ◆ Read the exciting results from Summer Bible Camp!

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)

You Will Help Give Ukrainian Children the Hope of Christmas!

Usually when Christmas comes to mind, the joy and celebration connected with the holiday is paramount for many. For believers, we rejoice in remembering the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, yet even those who are not believers still enjoy the warmth and love of family togetherness.

However, in war-torn Ukraine, Christmas this year will come with many serious challenges for believer and unbeliever alike. **Despite the ongoing war, our brothers and sisters are intent on pressing ahead with SGA-supported *Immanuel's Child* outreaches, with their goal always to reach as many children as possible** with the life-changing Gospel and the true story of Christmas.

Last year, *Immanuel's Child* gave a warm Christmas to thousands of Ukrainian children. This year, they plan to give an *even more* special Christmas to refugee children who are confused, hurting, and in search of normalcy.

Ukrainian Children Come to Christ through *Immanuel's Child*

In Kiev, missionary pastor Vyacheslav reported last year:

"We were delighted to do a Christmas program along with presenting Immanuel's Child gifts and stars. We were happy to have over 100 children on the Christmas event, especially those 45 children from less privileged families with difficult circumstances living in our church neighborhood. Along with the new kids, we also had 65 adults, with many of whom were new visitors to the church. The children were very thankful to receive a nice Christmas gift: a set of candy, a towel and personal hygiene items, and other goodies."

In northwestern Ukraine, missionary pastor Vladimir labors, and he recalls just a year ago when his church celebrated a fruitful *Immanuel's Child* . . .

"Our church and the children who received gifts last Christmas send their sincere gratitude for your support and love for us! During the difficult times, we strive to continue reaching children and their parents."

*"In fact, 90 percent of the children who later attended our Christmas service for the children were from unbelieving homes and just a simple invitation would not always work. So, the camp was a good stage-setter for our *Immanuel's Child* outreach. At the Christmas service, we had a good gathering of*



The camp for children opened doors for church members to invite non-believing families to the *Immanuel's Child* outreach.



Children from unbelieving families sang songs they learned during the camp.

children and their parents. Those kids who are a part of our Sunday school had their own program, while the children from unbelieving families sang Christmas carols that they learned during the summer camp."

Parents Come to Jesus in Ukraine

Vladimir shared moving testimonies from parents:

"I am a mother of four. Our older children were in the camp and begged to come to the Christmas service. I asked my neighbor to babysit our little one



(Left to Right) Zoya with her three older children; Oksana and her family.

so that I could come with the older children to the church. I was amazed about how many good things they could teach our children in such a short time. All our older kids want to attend Sunday school, and I will come to church whenever I can. I am sincerely grateful to the Pastor and all those who are involved in making such a celebration!" (Zoya)

"I am so thankful to God for Pastor Vladimir, and for his continual care of our family. Through him, my husband and I heard about Jesus and we came to God, preparing now for baptism. Thank you all for being with us in prayer and all-round help in difficult times." (Oksana)

What Will Happen This Christmas?

Vladimir says, *"Our sincere thanks to all SGA partners! May the Lord give you peace, joy and strength in serving in His harvest field!"*

As the churches in Ukraine approach this year's Christmas season, please lift them in prayer regularly as they finalize preparations for *Immanuel's Child*. Pray for their safety and that of the children in the midst of ongoing bombardment. And above all, pray that God will open many hearts to their deep spiritual need, and to trust in Christ as Savior and Lord. ♦



How You Helped Send Siberian Children a Joyful Christmas

Preparation is already in motion—and you are part of it!

Pastor Artem and Snezhana

SGA-Sponsored Missionary Pastor Family in Russia's Irkutsk Region



The children with their Bethlehem stars and gifts.

I greet you, dear people in the Lord! Even as our Christmas activities came to an end last season, we were already planning for the next this year. We are happy that these are fruitful days for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Through SGA partners, we received books, Bethlehem Stars, parcels, and funds for 100 gifts for our *Immanuel's Child* outreach last Christmas. Because of the pandemic, we could bring together only 30 children at the Christmas morning meeting. Our Sunday school teachers prepared a Christmas puppet play for the children—they were happy and it helped them to understand the meaning of the holiday. We had different competitions with them, dividing them into three groups. Teachers gave a lesson devoted to Christmas, and we made souvenirs during the lesson. All the children received gifts and books.

Afterward, after the experience of what they saw and heard, several children received Jesus and asked Him to change their hearts and lives. Glory

be to the Lord! Our brothers and sisters then invited the parents for tea while their children watched a Christmas play. They sang Christian songs with guitar accompaniment. The parents enjoyed it and they agreed to let their children attend Sunday school classes! Then the children had tea with sweets and went back to their homes. All in all, approximately 60-70 children repented and trusted in Christ as their Savior. Many children asked

God to forgive them for their disobedience. May the Lord give revival to their souls!

After the celebration, we then brought the rest of the gifts with books and Stars to the homes of children who were unable to attend. We told the children and their parents about Christmas and prayed for them. We hope to share testimonies later about children and adults who began to attend the church after the Christmas meeting.

Please join us in asking the Lord for the opportunity to have more meetings with these children and their parents. We thank the Lord for you for the opportunity you gave us to take part in *Immanuel's Child*. Pray for this year's outreaches! ♦



Visiting a family at home.

UKRAINE: Difficult Ministry in Difficult Times, Yet God Provides Through SGA Supporters!

By Ivan K., SGA-Sponsored Missionary Pastor in Ukraine

We praise God for life, given to us by Him—and we thank Him for the faith He has given us, and for your support for our ministry. **Thanks to your support, I am able to visit different villages to carry out Gospel ministry in His harvest field.**

Our lives have challenges in these times of war.

My wife went to France to help our daughter with her children. This was before the war, and when the war started she was unable to return home. So currently I am alone in my ministry and household works. We also are greatly concerned for our son Ivan, who was drafted into the war. The squad he was in was under direct attack and two soldiers in his squad were wounded. Thus far, Ivan is safe and we are thankful!

We keep serving the Lord in villages and churches. I'd like to share a few snapshots of people in our ministry.

- In one village, Alyona and Yuri have repented and trusted in Christ. Yuri already serves in the church and helps with security. They, along with Natalya, want to be baptized soon.



From L to R: Natalya, Yuri, and Alyona

- Ivan, Inna, and their daughter Irina are a difficult family with whom we are working. They listen to God's Word and we read the Bible together, but thus far, they have not come to the church. We have been ministering to them for more than two years, but we trust in God to bring fruit in His time.



Ivan and Irina

- Pray for another man named Vitaly, who has a hard life. He lost his family and does not have a job. He periodically does handyman work for people in the village. **Sometimes he comes to the church for services, but not regularly.**



Vitaly

- In another family with whom I have been working for two years, Inna has repented and trusted in Christ. She is now in Poland with her children due to the war. Her husband Ivan drinks a lot, and the police took away his car.



Ivan and Inna's family.

- One other woman is also named Inna, and her husband is named Sasha. They were against coming to our church, but we began helping them during the war. Inna's attitude is changing and she wants to come to church, but is having difficulty taking that first step. Sasha is not against it, but he says his time has not come yet. Please pray for them!



Sasha and Inna

There are many other families with whom we are sharing the Gospel and visiting. Pray that these opportunities will bear fruit in God's time. **May the Lord reward you, your families, and your churches for participating in our ministry!** ♦

INITIAL REPORT: God Gives Fruit During Summer Camp in Central Asia

SGA-supported **Summer Bible Camp Ministries** are yet another example of how your faithful, generous support enables evangelical churches across the former Soviet Union to reach thousands of children with the life-changing Gospel. **In some nations, especially the Muslim-dominated countries of Central Asia, such outreaches can face significant opposition and must be carried out discreetly.** Despite these challenges, the camps continue to bear much fruit for the glory of Christ. We recently received the following report from a Central Asian nation, highlighting the impact of the camp outreach on one special young boy . . .

Maxim's Encounter with God

"Maxim (not his real name) is 9 years old. He is a very shy and modest boy. Because of his physical resemblance with another Central Asian ethnic group, children often mock Maxim. The reason is because in that region, there are constant conflicts between Maxim's ethnic group and the group native to this country, and they do not feel friendly towards each other.

He lives in a village where most of the inhabitants live on the poverty line, without any of the usual blessings of civilization. Among many challenges, they must endure constant shortages of water. There are no jobs and people are just surviving. Since there are no jobs in the village, Maxim's parents have to go for work in other places—his mother is a pharmacist in another town, and his father is a migrant worker in Russia. Due to the current economic situation, the money they make is barely enough for food and the family has a hard time making ends meet.

Maxim started attending a sports club at the church and we became good friends. He felt the love of God, because God loves everyone, regardless of their nation or appearance. When we announced the sign-up for the camp, Maxim was delighted and set his heart upon going to the camp. However, the boy realized that his family was not able to pay for the ticket. When we told him that God took care of that and the ticket was free for him, his joy knew no bounds. He never traveled far from home and had never been to the large lake/reservoir here. He was looking out the window all the way to the camp, admiring the scenery.

Once in the camp, Maxim settled down in a comfortable room, and we all went for dinner together where he could satisfy his hunger, because at home he would not always have a full meal. He admired many things in the camp— the delicious food, swimming pool, nature, and games. Besides, Maxim was active during the Bible lessons, where he could learn a lot about his Creator. He made many friends and he was truly happy these days, as in his village he felt largely neglected.

As we were returning home, he asked us to continue studying the Bible with him and not to forget him. God touched his young little heart and made him realize that he is important to God, and that God loves him!"

One young boy, an unexpected opportunity for the joy of being at a fun camp with believers who loved him, and the Gospel being communicated—and lived out—before him. **Seeds have been planted and your faithfulness in prayers and giving have helped make the opportunity possible. Please pray for Maxim, and for the thousands of other boys and girls who participated in Summer Camp ministries across the former Soviet Union.** May the Lord bring many to Himself in saving faith! ♦



Maxim at the camp.

CIS IN THE NEWS

Ukrainian Grain Leaves Port After Blockade

One of the serious problems related to the war between Russia and Ukraine has been the **blockade of Ukrainian ports, which has stopped urgently needed grain shipments** to other parts of the world. Ukraine is often called "the breadbasket of Europe," and many nations have expressed concern on what the blockade is doing to global food supplies. Late this summer, an agreement was brokered by the UN and Turkey that allowed the first ship carrying Ukrainian goods to leave the port of Odessa. **Ukraine is the fourth largest corn exporter in the world, and also exports an enormous amount of wheat.** Hulusi Akar, Turkey's defense minister, warned that the global food crisis

threatens to trigger "a serious wave of migration from Africa to Europe and to Turkey."

This is yet one more example of the heartbreaking consequences of war, and the **global domino effects** it can have. Ukrainian farmers are certainly bearing the most immediate of these consequences, depending on grain exports for their livelihood. And food shortages in other parts of the world have their own serious impacts even in Western nations including the U.S. Please continue to pray with us for an end to the war, and for God's provision for the thousands of families across Ukraine impacted by war's devastation. ♦

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Our SGA-supported brothers and sisters eagerly begin planning for their **Immanuel's Child** ministries almost immediately after Christmas is over for the year, and they are deeply thankful for the commitment and



Children with their Immanuel's Child gifts.

support SGA partners have shown for their labors.



Believers prepare a Christmas drama for an Immanuel's Child outreach in Russia.

Indeed, your prayers and support are vital for everything they do throughout the year, providing Bibles and Christian literature, support for other children's ministries like **Orphans Reborn** and **Summer Bible Camp** ministries, Bible and theological training, and so much more. Please pray about how you can help today! ♦

Insight FROM MICHAEL

Why *Immanuel's Child* Must “Ramp Up” Now

Since the war in Ukraine broke out in late February, so much of our attention at SGA has been focused on helping the faithful churches there as they continue to share the Gospel and minister to their people in such horrible circumstances. Yet even as ministry amid the war continues, we realize that other vitally important ministries across the other former Soviet countries must continue, and here we are ready to embark on yet another upcoming Christmas season and the *Immanuel's Child* outreach.



By now, most of our long-time partners and readers will know that *Immanuel's Child* is a very important ministry to me personally as I was deeply involved in its creation two decades ago. It is a truly wonderful ministry in that it reaches thousands of needy children each year with the Gospel and the true story of Christmas.

Immanuel's Child also helps the local churches build credibility in their communities as they see their children receive the special Christmas gifts, and the love of Christ in action.

Especially wonderful is that *Immanuel's Child* brings together churches here in North America with churches across Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and other former Soviet countries—united with the goal of seeing boys and girls, along with their parents and caregivers, come to saving faith in Christ. It also unites our individual

partners here as they send in gifts (and signed Bethlehem stars) for distribution to the children.

Everyone is working together to advance the life-changing Gospel—something that is all the more poignant and special in the midst of a horrible war in Ukraine. The

Everyone is working together to advance the life-changing Gospel . . .

churches there will be resourceful and flexible as they always are, and will continue on with their ministries despite the challenges and dangers.

In the days ahead as the Christmas season gets closer, please join us in interceding in advance for *Immanuel's Child*, and for our other ongoing ministries across the former Soviet Union. What joy and peace it gives us to know that our God is not hindered by war, a bad global economy, weather, or any other obstacles that get raised in this fallen world. He is always victorious, and His name will be glorified as the Gospel goes forth. Thank you for your faithful partnership in it all!

For our Savior,

Michael Johnson, President



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

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