



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION
Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

Immanuel's Child Reaches Record Number of Children at Christmas!



INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ◆ A Muslim mom berates Christian pastor . . . then dreams of Jesus! She changes fast.
- ◆ God is impacting the lives of many refugees through your support.
- ◆ Ministry report written during missile attack contains encouragement for us all!

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 You Helped Reach Over 81,800 Young Hearts and Adults at Christmas

Muslim mom berates Christian pastor—then has a dream about Jesus!

The numbers are in, and we rejoice at the impact of the SGA-sponsored *Immanuel's Child* outreach across the former Soviet Union. By God's grace and faithful provision through your faithful partnership—more than 55,600 children were reached with

- Christmas gifts,
- Star of Bethlehem ornaments signed by SGA supporters,
- and the life-changing Gospel!

In addition to the children, more than 26,200 adults were also reached.

In northern Ukraine's Chernihiv region, Pastor Piotr's church held seven *Immanuel's Child* outreaches from December 22 through 27 for children, youth, and adults. As he reports, about 1,200 came to the Christmas events, and most of them were unbelieving families . . .

"These people were able to hear from God's Word and learned more about the true meaning of Christmas. Currently, many children who live in the neighborhood come to our Sunday school, which was in turn a fruit of Summer Bible Camp ministry we held last year.

The children took part in the Christmas celebrations with songs, poems, and greeting all who came.

Denis is a 10-year-old boy whose grandmother Svetlana is a retired lawyer. Because of the war, she came to our church for humanitarian aid. When we needed volunteers for help with aid distribution, Svetlana was one of the first to respond to the call.

Denis' father and mother did not want Denis to come to Sunday school at first, but eventually they allowed Svetlana to bring him. It was his first Christmas in the church, and he was very pleased to get his

first Bible—the first Bible the family has ever had!"

In Azerbaijan, Pastor Khafis reported even more opened doors . . .

"One Muslim woman did not want to communicate with us because we are Christians, and she did not want her child to come to the church. Anyway, the boy somehow managed to come to Immanuel's Child with other children.

We had a Christmas drama, poems, and songs that we had been preparing for a month. We learned that the boy came without his mother knowing about it, which we didn't know. At the end of the service when we were giving out gifts, I saw the boy's mother approaching me. She demanded to know where her child was, saying, 'You are a Christian, and you want my son to become a Christian?' I tried to tell her that



Immanuel's Child celebration in Azerbaijan.



Denis and his grandmother at the Immanuel's Child celebration.

we did not know the boy came by himself and without her permission. Eventually, she took her son, grabbed a gift and went off.

Three days later, I was driving by some women on the street and pulled over to offer a ride to one of our neighbors.

Then I saw the same Muslim woman, and surprisingly she came up to apologize for her behavior. As it turned out, she had a dream in which she said that 'The Prophet Jesus came to her' and gave her the same kind of gift that we would give to the children during the IC outreach. And in that dream as she opened the gift, all the bad things in her life—resentment, offences, worries—all went away.

When she told her neighbors about this dream, they told her that it would be right for her to come and apologize, because 'those people sow good seeds,' and so she did! This shows the living nature of our Lord Jesus, who said in Matthew 5 to . . . Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you. I praise the Lord for providing gifts in bags with Stars, and pray for that woman so that she will find faith in Jesus. I am grateful to you for the gifts, and I thank God for you. May He bless you and be with us all!"

We praise and thank God for these wonderful testimonies! Please join us in praying that many will come to saving faith in the days ahead. ♦

Helping Refugees Wherever They Are in Jesus' Name!

Viktor S.
SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Kazakhstan

Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy (Proverbs 31:8-9).

The warmest greetings to you with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ! In October, we had lots of refugees from Russia come into Kazakhstan. It turned out that there were not enough free apartments to accommodate all of them. We took



Hosting refugees from Russia.

the opportunity to receive people at our homes and provided accommodation in the church. Every day we conducted services, and it was a good chance to gather the non-believing people together to hear the Gospel.

One family consisting of a husband, his pregnant wife, and two teenage children stayed with us for more than a month. We took them with us to the church, to a conference in Astana, and to a special worship service in Akkol. We became very good friends with them, and before the family left, **they repented and received Jesus into their hearts.** The church prayed for them to be blessed and follow Christ. Praise God, He is merciful!

Also, my sons and I delivered sacks with potatoes to needy families. All were grateful for our care for them and the gift. When needy families come, brothers and sisters in the church are always ready with cooking and fellowship. We praise God for them! Please join us in praying for everyone who was with us and heard the Good News. Pray that they will believe and follow Christ! ♦

Your Gifts Help Provide Growing Ministry to Youth and Families in Far East Russia!

Steady progress as the Holy Spirit works through SGA-sponsored outreach

Denis T., SGA-Sponsored Missionary Pastor in Russia's Amur Region

Peace be to you, dear brothers and sisters! Our God is good and in His mercy, He gives us the opportunity to serve Him. I want to thank you for your prayers and participation in support of our family. This is always very precious help to us.

We continue to minister to a group of youth in a local village. We have our meetings with them on a weekly basis. At the moment, the youth are not studying the Bible on their own, but we convey biblical truth to them by means of short stories. This time, we also brought Christmas gifts for them. We pray that the youth will be able to come with us this summer to camp, where we will have the opportunity to meet with them on our ground. In addition to the youth meetings, we were able to hold a Christmas outreach for special needs children this year. We had a visiting team from Blagoveshchensk and we organized the outreaches with them. Many people enjoyed it, and we hope this helps prepare good and fertile ground for future work with the children. Their parents were really grateful!

We are praying for the opportunities to meet with these children and their parents on a more regular basis. God also opened a door by giving us



Event at the central library.

an opportunity to hold a Christmas event at the central library in our town. The children presented a Christmas program and listened to Christmas carols, as well as to the Christmas story. We pray that in our town, we will have many more opportunities of holding mass events, especially during such celebrations as Easter and Christmas.

Family visits are also an important part of our ministry. We plan to make regular visits to the family of Kolya and Olesya from another local village. They are open to Bible reading. They are on the path toward God, but have not yet made a profession of faith. Their children received Christmas presents. Also please pray for Natasha and Alena. They are open to Bible study, but they have been hindered from participating. We are thankful that their children attend our church events and trips. We also made contact with the family of Ivan and Vika. Ivan wants to read the Bible and to understand it, but so far they are not ready to participate in joint Bible study.

Please, pray for our church's ministry team. We have a shortage of workers right now, and those who are in the ministry are overwhelmed. Pray as well for a more reliable vehicle for ministry travel. Thank you once again for your prayers and participation. May God bless you and your ministry, and may He reward you for your sacrificial hearts! ♦



Natasha and Alena.

MUCH PRAYER, MUCH POWER IN ACTION

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).



Meetings continue despite the war.

We recently received the following report from Vasily, an SGA-supported missionary pastor in western Ukraine. As you will read, he writes while under missile attack, yet his faith is unwavering. May the Lord bless his work, and continue to use us to advance His Gospel even in difficulty.

"I continue my ministry as the pastor in our local church in western Ukraine. This is in addition to being the regional senior pastor in the Baptist Union. Church gatherings, seminars, conferences, and meetings with other pastors continue despite the war. Now there are many refugees all over the world. Therefore, our work to a certain extent has become more complicated. We take part in providing assistance to the people who came to our region from eastern Ukraine.

As a result of Ukrainian power plants getting bombed, we have power outages. There is electricity for two hours, then there is no electricity for four hours, and so on. You try to do all the work you can in the two hours that you have power. Right now as I write this letter, electricity is gone, but the laptop

battery is still holding, so I hope that I will finish the report.

Many men are now being mobilized to the army. These are husbands and sons of sisters in the church, our neighbors. Coffins arrive from time to time containing those who died in the war. We continue to get cruise missile attacks on the critical infrastructure of Ukraine. Once four rockets flew about 65 feet above my house when we were at home. We have air raid sirens every day.

During such alerts, all institutions have to close and people hide in bomb shelters. As I'm writing this letter to you, one of the largest air attacks on Ukraine is taking place. These are the realities of life in Ukraine now. We pray, serve, work. Thank you for your support of my ministry!"

The Scripture verse cited at the beginning of this article is a favorite for many believers, and one we have read—and heard—quite often in our walk with Christ. If we take our eyes off of our Savior, it isn't long before we can easily fall headlong into despair. The Lord Himself cautioned us that we cannot add to our lifespans by worrying, and encouraged us that He knows what we need even before we ask.

Vasily, his wife Anna, and the believers in his church are modeling the peace of Christ before their people, reaching them with the life-changing Gospel and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are thankful for their example, and pray that we can likewise model such faithfulness in the opportunities God grants us to serve. ♦

BELARUS: The Gospel Reaches Foster Families

Your Prayers and Gifts Help Bring Families to Church for the First Time

Yuri R., SGA-Sponsored Missionary Pastor in Belarus

My heartfelt thanks to you, my dear friends and workers in God's field! **My family and I cannot stop thanking God for your sacrificial hearts, constancy, and sacrifice.** Even in difficult times, you have remained faithful and dedicated to the preaching of the Gospel, and because of you we are able to do ministry in our country.



Sunday school with new children.

We continue a lot of work with children and teenagers. **Several new children came to our Sunday school from foster families we have been visiting for a long time.**

Basics Class and Bible Workshops

We started a **new class to explain the basics of the faith** and to tell them about God, **since they had not heard anything from the Bible before.** And we also held workshops along with Bible classes for kids and teens during the week. The foster children along with their parents came to church, and then we worked separately with the parents and children, teaching them the truths of Scripture. We taught adults and children some skills through workshops and games, and they were very interested. Thank

God, people are still coming and have not lost interest! Some of the adults came with their children for the first time to the Sunday worship service. We continue this ministry and hope to see more fruits from it.



Teaching foster children and their parents.

Home Groups and Women's Study

Thanks be to God, our home group also continues to meet—this is where I study the Scriptures with people. Eduard's wife has now joined our group. **Eduard was baptized in the summer and the changes that have taken place with her husband have made an impression on her.** She got interested, and now regularly attends our group and asks many questions. Recently, she has begun to take an interest in repentance and baptism. Pray for her—her name is Galina.



Home group Bible study.

My wife Natalia held a special service for women called "Woman's Way," where more than 70 women received edification, support, and encouragement as they move forward in their lives. They had tea together, shared stories, and prayed for each other. **Several women are now coming to church as a result!**

As always, I preach at Sunday services and continue to lead home groups, as well as holding regular weekly prayer services. I am thankful to God for my family and their help in ministry. **My oldest**

son, Pavel, now preaches regularly at church, and it's a great joy for us and the whole church. Please continue to pray for our financial needs, and for our family. We are also praying for you and your health and for all your needs to be filled. May God bless you! ♦



Pastor Yuri's son preaches during the Sunday service.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

It is always a great joy to be able to report back to you with wonderful fruit from the ministries of the faithful churches SGA serves across the former Soviet Union.

As we see so often, fruit from one ministry often leads to even more opportunities later,

such as a child reached during summer camp ministry attending an Immanuel's Child outreach at Christmas and coming to faith in Christ. Or a missionary pastor sharing the Gospel while delivering food and other aid leading to entire families coming to worship services for the first time. Your support of SGA helps accomplish so much—provision of Bibles and Christian literature, Bible training, children's ministry, and so much more. **Please pray about how you can help today!** ♦



Christmas outreach for children with special needs.

Insight FROM MICHAEL

Steady, ongoing, unrelenting ministry in cities, towns, and villages through hundreds of churches . . .

When you consider the course of SGA's ministry in the former Soviet Union since 1934, we have seen many difficult and tragic circumstances faced by the downtrodden people. Before SGA was founded, evangelical Christians faced severe persecution under the tsarist regime, and then even greater persecution under communist rule, which lasted more than 70 years. Then came the Soviet breakup in 1991, and that ushered in a time of freedom for the churches to proclaim the Gospel and plant new churches.



In the 32 years that have elapsed since 1991, there have been many heartbreaking events across Russia and her neighboring countries. We remember the tragic terrorist attack on a school in Beslan, several wars in the Caucasus region, the ongoing Nagorno—Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and periodic bloodshed in some of the “stan” countries of Central Asia. And of course, the ongoing war in Ukraine continues with no end yet in sight.

These are only a few of the things that have brought great sorrow to many individuals and families. Yet through it all, there has been a steady light of hope that has shone forth and continues to shine.

That is the wonderful hope of the Gospel, faithfully proclaimed in the love of Christ by the Bible-preaching churches SGA serves across the former Soviet Union. The Lord is fulfilling His Word in building His church. And nothing can stop Him from doing so. His light always prevails over darkness.

Each report we receive from hardworking missionary pastors illustrates this. The results are not typically seen in mass crusade evangelism. Instead, they are seen in the steady, ongoing, unrelenting ministry carried out in cities, towns, and villages where an evangelical church is centered. From those centers, dedicated believers take Christ's love into every opportunity the Lord opens to them, and many souls are being drawn by the Holy Spirit as the Gospel is preached. Through your prayers and generous support, you are right there with our brothers and sisters as they obey the Lord's command to go. The fruit of this ministry is eternal, and I can never thank you enough!

For our Savior,

Michael Johnson
President



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