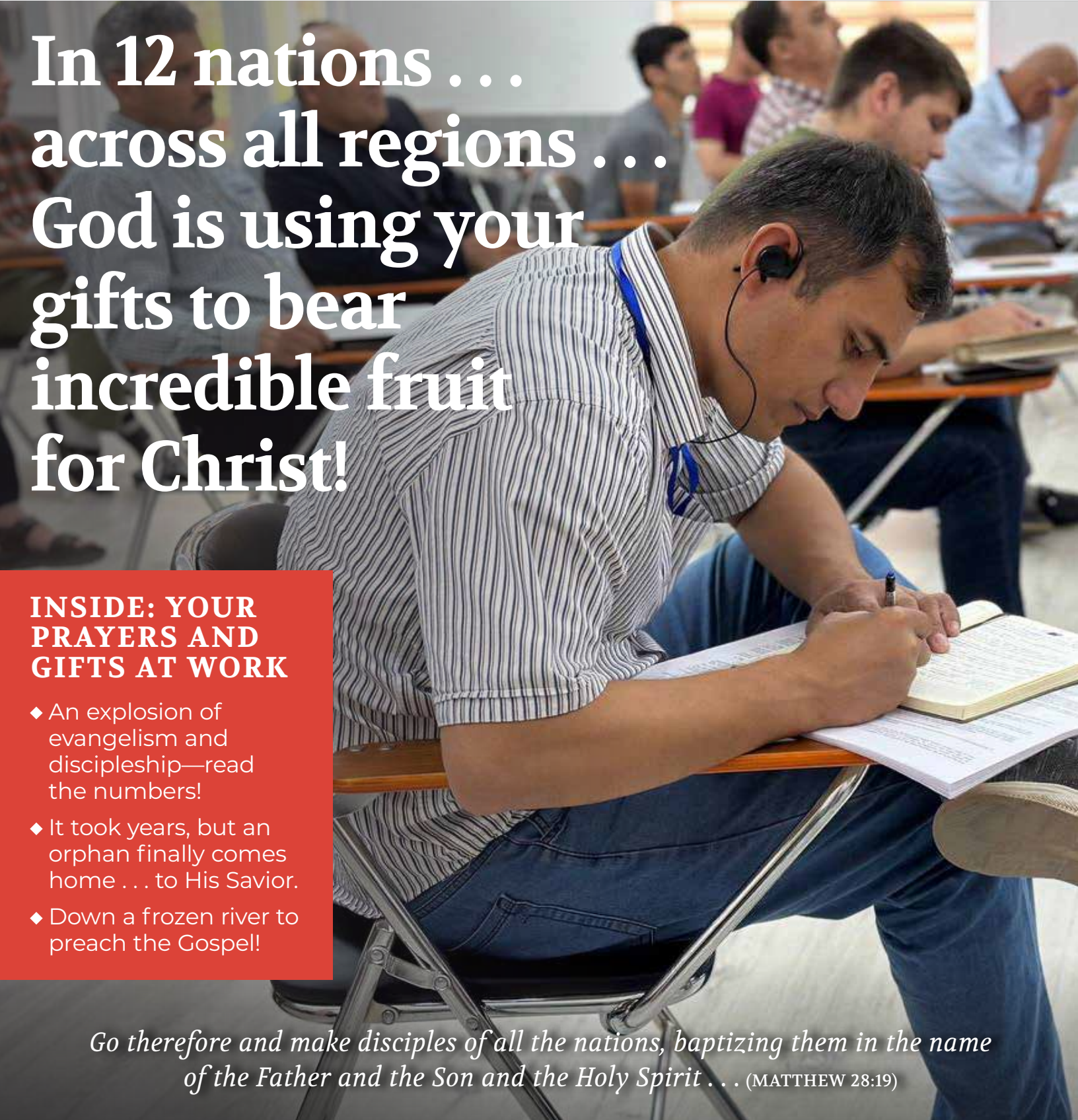




SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION
Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN



**In 12 nations . . .
across all regions . . .
God is using your
gifts to bear
incredible fruit
for Christ!**

**INSIDE: YOUR
PRAYERS AND
GIFTS AT WORK**

- ♦ An explosion of evangelism and discipleship—read the numbers!
- ♦ It took years, but an orphan finally comes home . . . to His Savior.
- ♦ Down a frozen river to preach the Gospel!

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)

Read About the Fruit of Your Giving!

Bible training . . . evangelism . . . changed lives . . . grateful hearts

Eric Mock
SGA Senior Vice President of Ministry Operations

After the war broke out last year, **Irpen Biblical Seminary in Ukraine** sustained significant damage from shelling. By God’s grace, I was able to visit recently and got to see how much restoration work has been accomplished. The teachers and students have scrubbed the soot off of the floors, helped restore the building, and strive now to stand in the gap for the sake of the Gospel.



Graduation ceremony.

While some students had to leave, others remained. They are trained through the seminary and are heading **back to their churches to serve**. We are praising and thanking the Lord for the **50 students who just graduated**. This

is a smaller number than before the war, but the graduating class was filled with those ready to face adversity for the sake of the Gospel. I was blessed to be there for this amazing event. **They too heard the nightly explosions, have seen the horror of this war, and yet pressed on for the sake of Christ.**

My travels this year also took me to the nation of Poland, where many refugees from the war in Ukraine have fled. While there, I met with Polish Baptist leaders and we rejoiced at what God is doing in that country. **Last summer, we had talked about all the Ukrainian refugees in Poland and the potential for planting many new Bible-teaching churches. There are more evangelical churches in Ukraine than most any country in Europe, and by God’s grace, they are being spread to the ends of the earth.** In the book of Acts, Luke records what happened when the believers were scattered through persecution and adversity . . . *Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the Word*



Irpen Biblical Seminary graduates stand in front of the damaged seminary building

(Acts 8:4). The same thing is happening today with the same outcome. What men mean for evil, God means for good!

When we stop and consider it all, the past year-plus has truly been amazing from a ministry perspective. **While the war in Ukraine truly consumed the last 16 months, all ministries of SGA have pressed forward.** God has enabled us to continue support of:

- 356 national missionaries in 10 countries,
- Ministry to over 14,000 orphans in eight countries,
- Training of about 2,200 students in three seminaries, three Bible Institutes, and many church-based locations of training.

Across **12 countries**, the Gospel is going forth through faithful, indigenous churches with a love for Christ and those in their communities. Add in **Summer Camp** ministries, the *Orphans Reborn* outreach, drug rehab centers, and ministry to the elderly. **As the churches reach the varied needs of people, SGA is there to serve the churches.**

I was told many times that without the support of SGA, these ministries could not happen. And I

SGA-Supported Bible Training Enrollments for 2022-2023

School	Students
Irpen Biblical Seminary	799
Almaty Bible Institute	241
Minsk Theological Seminary	233
Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary . . .	247
Tajik Bible Institute	27
Israel College of the Bible and Four Extension Centers	158

told them many times that without the support of faithful churches and individuals who give to SGA, it would not be possible. Thank you for all your prayers and support, for much fruit is being gathered. To God be the glory! ♦

HOW YOU CAN HELP

At SGA, our highest priority has reflected the highest priority of the evangelical churches we serve across Russia and her neighboring countries—the provision of biblically sound Bible and theological training for pastors, church-planting missionaries, worship leaders, youth and children’s ministry leaders, and lay workers.



Children’s Sunday school class in the Grodno region of Belarus.



Antioch Initiative in Tajikistan.

Your prayerful, generous support of SGA helps provide this along with Bibles and Christian literature, children’s ministry, food and other humanitarian aid through Compassion Ministry, and so much more. Please pray about how you can help today! ♦

Renewed Hunger for Sound Bible Training

Your Support Helps the Antioch Initiative Come Roaring Back Post-COVID

Larry Duncan
SGA Director of Bible Training

For the first time since the devastating COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, we are so thankful to report that **all** SGA-supported *Antioch Initiative* locations across the former Soviet Union were in session. *Antioch* was launched years ago under the leadership of SGA president emeritus Bob Provost, with the original focus to **help train missionary pastors in Bible and sound theology, enabling them to be sent out from home-sending churches to plant new congregations in unreached areas.**

This past spring's *Antioch* session had **329 students attending in the 10 locations** where the training ministry is taking place. This represents an **increase** of 59 students over the same period last year. If the attendance holds or increases, there will be a **record attendance** at the *Antioch Initiative* locations. This is quite possible since we are adding a new location in Russia beginning this December, Lord willing. This demonstrates the hunger of men for further training in ministry, and God is continuing to raise up men for ministry in and through the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists churches that SGA serves. We give all praise and thanksgiving to God!

In the nation of **Tajikistan**, 38 students are enrolled in Hermeneutics, which teaches the principles, practice, and research of accurately interpreting God's Word. The session stresses a foundation in prayer, asking the Lord to keep His pastors preaching only the Word of God, that the Word penetrates the hearts of those who hear and those who preach it, and that the young pastors will serve well as they prepare their sermons from Scripture. The session was taught by a Russian-speaking instructor, and was only the second *Antioch* session since COVID restrictions ended. The men enrolled—including a number of younger brothers—



A man takes notes during a Hermeneutics class in Tajikistan.

have a great hunger to reach their people with the Gospel and to evangelize as God provides open doors. The Lord graciously continues to equip and build His church in Tajikistan, which is largely Muslim.

SGA also supported a special Training Conference for Tajik churches—Training in Discipleship. A brother

named Dilbar joyfully shared the blessing he received at the conference. *"I was very happy when we gathered this past March in the church with other brothers and sisters. When I pointed out how many Tajik people have salvation in Christ, I had great joy. I thank God for organizing such a conference! We are people who live far from the city, yet thanks to such*



Dilbar

events, we can come to the city and meet brothers and sisters, and learn more about each other's lives. The topics that were taught during these days were very impressive. I learned a lot about practical discipleship. Thanks to those who organized this conference. May the Lord bless you all!"

This training conference was not an *Antioch Initiative* conference, but instead was a general

training conference for all who attend UECB churches in Tajikistan. At least 60 percent of the total number of believers who attend UECB churches in the country were present, and they were richly encouraged! Thank you for your prayers and support of all SGA-supported Bible training in the former Soviet Union. The Lord alone knows the eternal impact! ♦

God Uses Outreach to An Orphan Leading to Salvation—Years Later!

Your gifts make a difference now, later . . . and forever

From *Orphans Reborn* in St Petersburg, Russia



Sasha

pastry chef. After graduation, he worked in his profession. Sasha eventually married a girl who was also an orphanage graduate.

At the time, he thought he had achieved everything of which he had dreamed. The couple had a child who is now six years old. **Then a sorrowful event hit Sasha hard.** He ended up divorcing his wife because she had left him for another man.

After such a betrayal, Sasha experienced intense anxiety. In despair, he moved to St. Petersburg to work there and began drinking to alleviate the pain of not being able to see his daughter. But that did not help him at all. Worse still, he had several suicide attempts and was admitted to a psychiatric hospital. After leaving the hospital, Sasha tried to cope with the emptiness inside him.

Then he remembered that when he was a

Sasha's parents left him in an orphanage when he was a baby. He was raised in the orphanage, yet had a great dream of one day having a family of his own. When he reached young adulthood and had to leave the orphanage, Sasha enrolled in a technical school to receive an education in the specialty of

student at the orphanage, some kind men who turned out to be believers came to visit, and he saw the light of Christ in them.

Sasha decided to try to find these believers who had been such an example to him. He contacted a Christian girl from Belarus on the internet who might be able to help him. She gave him the contact information for Viktor, our *Orphans Reborn* coordinator for the region. After meeting with Viktor and speaking with him, Alexander wanted to live again. He had already made up his mind to commit suicide, but at that meeting, they talked a lot about God, about new life in Christ, about hope and freedom from the past, about eternal life, and the love of God!

Sasha wept like a baby, and already at that moment he felt a change inside, even though he did not understand what was happening to him.

Christians offered Sasha a job and a place to live. He was frightened at such a drastic change in his life, but God had used the attention and care shown to him by his new Christian friends to lead him to Christ. Today, Sasha has repented and has become a child of God. He has also begun to prepare for water baptism. He prays and believes that God will restore his family or give him a new one, but only in the Lord! ♦

MUCH PRAYER, MUCH POWER IN ACTION

But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you" (Acts 3:6).

Are there people you tend to avoid? They might be an odd sort, or maybe very unclean. Maybe there is something a bit frightening about them. If it isn't a person, it could be a place that makes you feel uncomfortable like a doctor's or dentist's office, or maybe a dark alley.

But what if you knew there was such a person in such a place who needed to hear the Gospel? How would that change your thinking? Sometimes, God so burdens your heart that you have to do something—venturing outside of your comfort zone and following His lead.

Serik ministers in **Central Asia** through **SGA-supported Compassion Ministry** and is himself an **SGA-supported missionary pastor**. God recently placed a person in his life who he struggled to reach. He wrote:

"I took my mother to visit her relatives a long way away, as she had asked me to take her there one last time. She ended up hospitalized there, yet God had everything under control. I was sent a photo and a video of a man who lived in a cemetery there. He had no documents and was missing one leg. While my mom was in the hospital, I attended a church service on Sunday, after which I felt a strong impulse to meet the man. I tried to push away such thoughts, but they seemed to come over me.



The cemetery where the man was living.

So, I prayed and asked a brother who lived there to take me to the cemetery located outside of town. There, I met the man. I was able to speak with him

and pray for him. It turned out that the Lord had already prepared his heart. After our conversation, he prayed a prayer of faith in Jesus and of repentance. We clearly saw how he was literally transformed before our eyes. His eyes lit up with hope for life, and he started to rejoice like a little child."

Serik rejoiced that God gave this poor man new eyes to see. Yet even with this joy, he remained stuck in the cemetery with seemingly no options.

After the incredible transformation of this man's life, the fact that he remained in the cemetery weighed heavily on Serik's heart. Here's what he told us followed this:

"I lost my peace, since I did not know what to do with him. For several days, I pondered that situation and prayed, contemplating various options. And, praise God, He showed me the way. I found another rehabilitation center, which just happened to be located 932 miles away, that would accept him without any documents or money (wasn't that a miracle?). Praise God, we were able to get the man there using a car. He is humbly amazed that our great God came down to visit him living in a cemetery and had mercy on him, while also preparing for him such a trip across the country, providing shelter for him and securing his future. I think the miracle of saving even one person for eternity is priceless. I thank our Lord Jesus Christ for making it possible for us to be a part of it."

With great clarity, Serik saw the work of God. **It just required him to be**



At the rehabilitation center.

faithful. It required that He **trusted** God, whose ways were higher than his ways and even worries. Through exercising such faith and desiring to serve Christ, he was able to experience the joy of seeing a life with no hope turned to Jesus and be

truly transformed.

Thank you for praying for faithful servants like Serik, who labor in the difficult Central Asian countries. Thank you for partnering with SGA. Together, we are servants of our Lord Jesus Christ! ♦

Your Gifts Help Take the Gospel Down a Frozen Russian River!

Pavel B., SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Russia

As I write this, the cold and long winter is over. We are grateful to God for warm weather and always look forward to summer. But even the cold months had fruitful ministry.

Together with brothers from the Chita region, we organised a February mission in the north down the Yenisei River. **We called it *The Gospel to Every House*.** These are the villages which can be reached only during the winter when the river is frozen. There is no road there in summer. The brothers made arrangements at their work, with some taking vacations while others took leaves of absence. **They all committed themselves to missionary work for three weeks.** We went far into the north. In one village, we even had to fly by helicopter, which was a miracle from the Lord. We knocked on every door in the village and offered people a copy of the New Testament. **We had different reactions, but the further we went from civilization, the more**



Visiting villages on the Yenisei River.

hospitable and open the people were. We distributed *several thousand* New Testaments, having many prayers and conversations. In some villages, we even were able to hold meetings with the villagers in the local House of Culture.

We had many meetings with people who are known as "Old Orthodox." They live in closed communities. They allowed us to enter their homes but did not allow us to use their dishes, so we wouldn't defile them. They did not take the New Testaments we offered, but they asked for children's Bibles. So we gave them all the children's Bibles we had! One special joy of this wintertime mission was that by the end of it, the local brothers were really inspired and encouraged. They even decided to continue the mission by making additional trips to the villages nearby.

Later in March, we took a long trip to **Mongolia** where we had a discipleship conference for youth and teenagers. It was attended by 120 young people from nine different towns. The goal of the program was to teach youth about regular fellowship with God. The material was very practical. We want to help young leaders in Mongolia to grow through this training.

In addition to all this, we continue to run two Bible schools in our church, one for new believers and one for training leaders for home groups. This is very important for the life of the churches. Please pray for us, and pray for our country. **Pray for Christian boldness, that we will be able to redeem the time and use the freedom that we have for Gospel proclamation!** ♦

Insight FROM MICHAEL

You are participating in the work of godly, humble servants of Christ!

Several of us on the SGA staff have been able to visit the seminaries and Bible institutes that our partners help support across the former Soviet Union—me included. **Each time I get to participate in one of the graduation ceremonies, I'm so very thankful to God and to you.** His provision—shown through your prayers and generous support—help to make this very special day possible for hundreds of future pastors, missionaries, and ministry leaders in the churches.

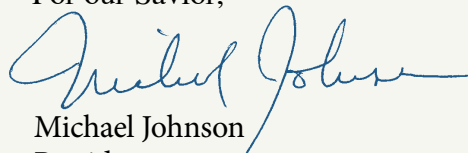


Most of the students who are enrolled follow along a similar path to get there. Many of them begin serving in their local churches in various ways. After demonstrating giftedness over a period of time, they are then set apart by their pastors and elders to receive Bible and theological training at seminary. One of the main qualifications they seek for pastors and leaders is humility in keeping with biblical teaching. And it shows. **The pastors and church workers I have come to know are some of the most godly, humble servants of Christ that I have ever met.** It truly blesses me and excites me to be even a small part of putting them on the pathway to fruitful Christian service for a lifetime.

As you pray for these future students and their ministries, pray that God will protect them, encourage them, and grant them a hardy spirit along with boldness. **Being a pastor or church leader across Russia and her neighboring countries is not an easy task.** Just reading the account in this month's **Good News Report** of a team of evangelists heading up a frozen Russian river to preach the Gospel for three weeks amazes me, and it's something many of us would find challenging. Yet they did it with *great joy!* They know that there are hundreds of towns and small villages who will hear the Gospel in no other way. So they make the commitment and go. Pray with me that their ministry will yield much fruit in the days ahead.

And as always, let me thank you again for the part you play in all of this. I hope and pray you will find this as much of a blessing and encouragement as it has been to me.

For our Savior,


Michael Johnson
President



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