



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION
Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

Your Support for Missionary Pastors is Bearing Great Fruit for Jesus Christ!



INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ◆ The Gospel spreads as children repent, trust Christ, and enthusiastically praise Him!
- ◆ A 12-year-old skeptic pursues Christ!
- ◆ Despite war and hardship . . . pastors point people to the rock of Christ.

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)

Pastors Harvest a Fruitful Year in Kazakhstan!

Your gifts and prayers help faithful servants keep their hand to the plow

Sergei O.
SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor

During this past year, God helped us to perform some ministry for which we had been praying. This was during a festival called Nauryz, which is a holiday of the Turkic peoples similar to the New Year.

We decided to hold a service partially in the Kazakh language, and to invite all our friends. It was the first time we did this. We sang, read the Word of God, and prayed in Kazakh. At the end, the guests were presented with small gifts. They received a box in the form of a yurt (a traditional tent-like structure) with some candies. We also gave gifts to those with whom we have been visiting at their homes and sharing the Good News with them.



(Above Left) Opar with aid from believers; (Above Right) Visiting Opar's family.

We have been sharing Christ with a former school principal named Mark. My youngest daughter and I visited him again. Previously, he had not really wanted to listen to us about Jesus, but this time he was attentive—**he listened to the Gospel!** Please pray for him to be saved!

Through a sister from our church, we learned about a friend of hers named **Opar**. We met with her and she told us that her husband was sick, her mother had died, and her husband's relatives deceived her, kicking her out of the home. They brought all her belongings to her and told her not to come back. Opar's parents were very dismayed, because they are retired and can't afford things for themselves. **Now they have their daughter and her three children with them.** This woman asked for help. We took food and went to her place about 43 miles away from us. We met her parents, talked about the problem, and prayed for them.

We were able to witness to them about God and present them with the Word of God in the Kazakh language! Opar's father thanked us. Please pray for them so that they will follow the Lord, and read the Word of God.



Drilling the well.

to another school, and she again asked us for help. Again, love was shown by good deeds! **We had a**

Our church had the opportunity to help one school. They wanted to drill a well to water the green areas. The principal allowed us to work with the teachers and cleaning staff. We handed out calendars, testified, helped with planting flowers and other plants. It is the school where our children studied. Now the principal has been transferred

conversation with the director, and I was able to witness and distribute Bibles to the workers I had hired to drill the well. I hope that they will read the Word of God and their life will change.

My wife managed to visit an elderly woman named **Rosa**, who is 90 years old. My wife asked Rosa about what she believed, and she said that she believed that Jesus was on earth and recognized herself as a sinner. Then my wife encouraged her to improve her relationship with God and repent. At that moment, Grandma Rosa had a very serious look. She leaned in as if she wanted to hear the words and didn't want to miss anything. **My wife rejoiced in her heart at this goodwill towards the Gospel message and prayed that Satan would not interfere.** She invited Rosa to pray together with her.

Agreeing to pray, **Rosa thanked God and in prayer asked Him for repentance, and for the forgiveness of sins. Praise God!** May the mercy of God be upon all of us, and may He bless you! ♦

SGA's Harriet Ishii Now With Christ

On August 6, 2023, former SGA staff member Harriet Ishii went to be with the Lord. She had been in declining health for some time, but continued on being a faithful, constant witness for the Lord until He called her home. While we are saddened at her passing, we praise God that she is now with her Savior whom she loved and served throughout her life.



Harriet Ishii

Harriet served at SGA for 24 years—from 1994 until her retirement in 2021—first as executive assistant to SGA president emeritus Bob Provost until his retirement in 2017, then for a short time helping current president Michael Johnson when he returned to SGA that same year. Prior to that, she

had worked with Bob at both The Master's College in California and at SEND International. Bob had the honor of delivering the eulogy at Harriet's memorial service in Rockford Tuesday, August 29.

Harriet's service to Christ was diligent and always with joy. She was a blessing to many SGA partners through the years as she communicated with them sharing what God was doing in the former Soviet Union through our ministry. She will be greatly missed. Please be in prayer for Harriet's family during this time. Memorial gifts for Harriet can be made to Slavic Gospel Association or to Fairhaven Christian Retirement Center in Rockford, Illinois. ♦



Bob Provost delivers the eulogy.

You Help Pastors Seek the Lost for Christ in Belarus

Pavel P.
SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Belarus

Go out to the main roads, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast (Matthew 22:9).

We greet you, our dear brothers and sisters in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! This past summer was very busy and we had time to do a lot of things.

I often have to go out to remote villages to invite people to church. One day I was out driving, and I prayed that the Lord would send unsaved souls on my way. I was passing by a garbage can when I **saw a woman who was looking for food there.** I immediately stopped and went over to meet her.



Driving Masha to church.

Her name was Masha, and as it turned out, she went to our church 20 years ago! I immediately invited her to come to the service on Sunday. Surprisingly, she agreed. One week later I went to pick up Masha in the village to take her to church, and I was hoping yet uncertain whether she would go or not. **When I arrived at her house, I saw that she was waiting for me, and Masha had brought a friend with her. On that Sunday, God touched Masha's heart and she came out to repent. Now every Sunday, the two of them come to church together.** Glory to our Lord for this! We have many more exciting things ahead of us!

We organized a Vacation Bible School at our church. Many children gathered from our village and the neighboring villages in the region. It lasted three days. The children came at 9 a.m. and left at 7 p.m. **The outreach was designed so that each child would get to know the Lord Jesus Christ.** For this purpose, we printed manuals for the children, which



Studying the Bible with children.

they used throughout the camp. There were creative activities, outdoor games, and of course Bible lessons. With God's help, the VBS/camp session went very well, with some of the children wanting to keep attending Sunday school. Praise our Lord for this, and pray for these children.

One final activity this summer involved taking our children to **the Bible Quiz at the Zhemchuzhinka (Little Pearl) Camp supported by SGA.** Children

from across Belarus gathered there. As a result, there were 13 teams. Children demonstrated their knowledge of the Book of Luke and performed different tasks. Our children managed to take 8th place. We thank God for helping us to bring children to such events. **Through them, the children grow spiritually and get to fellowship with other believers.** We thank the Lord, remembering you constantly in our prayers. Thank you for being with us in our labor. May the Lord bless you abundantly! ♦



Bible Quiz at the camp.

MUCH PRAYER, MUCH POWER IN ACTION

He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (Luke 19:40).

Praise is an amazing gift from God. Our praise and thanksgiving to God should be filled with a hunger to know Him more and to magnify His name over all the earth (Psalm 34:3). This is a different kind of praise, a praise that exalts God and lifts Him up (Isaiah 40:9). Such praise is fueled by the Holy Spirit, and so overwhelming that we can even praise God in the darkest of times.

Pastor Oleg is an SGA-supported missionary pastor in Belarus. **This past Easter, he desired to fill his service full of praise to Jesus.** And one young girl stood out to him for her desire to lift up her voice:

"In April we held two worship services on the occasion of Easter, and we invited all the parents of



Katya sings during the service.

the children who attend our Sunday school. Most of them didn't come, but we are happy that the majority of the children came to these services and actively participated with poetry and singing. I am especially happy about one girl Katya, she is 10 years old. Her parents are not believers, and they are afraid to even cross the threshold of the church. Yet Katya is one of the most active participants in Sunday school. She recently started

specifically to learn songs to sing during the worship service. Her interest is not just to sing for some kind of praise or fame before others, but she wants to glorify God. We are praying for this family, that Katya will be a little evangelist there and they will believe in God."

In his Gospel, Luke tells of the Lord Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and how He rebuked the Pharisees for wanting to silence the crowds . . . *He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (Luke 19:40).* The disciples of Jesus were ready to break forth in praise, adoration, and declaration that the Messiah, the King of Israel, was arriving. The whole multitude erupted with joyous praise to God with loud voices because of the mighty works that they had seen, which greatly disturbed some Pharisees. They urged Him to rebuke His disciples for such declarations. At this point Jesus answered them and made it clear that the praises of the people were appropriate.

Pastor Oleg and his congregation were greatly motivated to give the Lord Jesus praise on the Sunday set aside to celebrate the very events spoken of by Luke. It was Easter and the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the focus of the worship service, and those who confessed Christ as Lord and Savior were asked to participate. The unbelieving parents who did not attend were blind to the realities of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. **Katya, a child, a young believer in Christ, was one who delightedly participated in the Easter praise service. Her parents did not attend, but she was undeterred from giving praise to her Savior.** We thank God for faithful pastors like Oleg who lead their church families in the praise and worship of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Thank you for praying for such faithful servants! ♦

The Gospel is What Summer Camps and VBS Are All About!

Your support and prayers are vital to impact!

Valery O.

SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Belarus

As we think back and remember our earlier years, quite often a favorite memory might be of a week at a Vacation Bible School or summer camp. We remember a certain counselor or a new friend. We might remember the games or even a special food treat. **But for some of us and best of all, we fondly remember hearing the Gospel for the first time.** God may have called us to Himself in repentance and faith through such a time. The importance of these opportunities to share the Good News of Christ with young children cannot be dismissed.

Valery O. recently sent in a wonderful report about his summer camp ministry that you helped make possible.

“We heartily thank you for your prayerful support of the children’s ministry, and in particular ministry to children with physical challenges. In late June, the Lord allowed us to conduct a Vacation Bible School for children from our Sunday school, their friends, and for children with special developmental needs. In total, more than 30 people worked in the VBS and more than 110 children!”



Vacation Bible School at Paster Valery's church.

Testimonies from Children and Camp Workers:

Before this camp, I did not 100% believe in the existence of God, but a couple days after the camp started, I began to believe in Him. Before that I didn't pray at all, now I started praying before meals, and at home I started talking to God in the morning and in the evening. I like this camp. —Katya, age 12

*Today a miracle happened—the mother of a disobedient child came to the camp. Her child behaved so inadequately and even aggressively that many people did not know what to do, so we had to call his mom. We met her and had a very warm conversation. Zina was crying, telling us about the problems in their family—her husband is very jealous, beats and hurts her and the children, and does not allow her to attend church services, but she sometimes secretly comes when her husband is not at home. She told us how hard it is for her with the disobedient children. **In response, we invited her to bring her children to Sunday school and told her that there was hope if she would attend church and become an obedient disciple of Christ.** With God's help, we were able to plant good seeds of the Gospel in Zina's heart and in the hearts of her three children. We will wait for the sprouting! —Natasha, camp counselor and psychologist at a Center for Corrective and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation*

*The mother of some of the children who visited the VBS told me that **her children started to read the Christian literature and books** as soon as they got home, and even put their phones aside to read!. Thank God for this! —Olga, VBS and Camp Coordinator*

*After the Bible lessons at the camp, I wanted to **pray more. I stopped being shy, and I want to get to know each other more and make friends.** Today before the sports game I prayed and asked God for help and won a prize. I don't want to be rude; I want to be friends with everyone. —Milana, age 10*

*I was invited to the camp by Pastor Valery. I liked it very much—here I was taught to love my neighbor and God, and the most important thing. **I realized that in this world, only God really cares for me, He died for me.** The food here is delicious, **the counselors are friendly and kind, not like in other camps where they swear and yell at kids for nothing.** And also, I really liked to help. I want to serve God, help everyone, and praise Him. —Yura, age 21*

Our main task was to bring the message of the Gospel to the children in a clear, interesting, and memorable form, so that they understood the essence

of the Gospel. Most of all, we prayed that the Holy Spirit would move in their hearts so they would receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Praise God, more than 25 children prayed in repentance at the end of the VBS. About 15 new children wanted to enroll in Sunday school, and some of them came to our church immediately on the first Sunday after the VBS!”



Singing together during the VBS.

Valery stressed the importance of this ministry as having impact far beyond the event itself. **“I would like to point out that after repentance, the students of VBS and tent camps become real helpers in future ministry and in the church. They become active members of local churches in our region.** Almost every year, we take them to other cities in Belarus and Russia, where they get married, go to study, or work after graduation, and where they become good helpers to the pastors of the local congregations. **So, the effect of the VBS is huge. Special thanks to all those who donate funds, print, and supply us with Bibles and other Christian literature.”** ♦

HOW YOU CAN HELP

We are so very thankful to God for the faithful, dedicated missionary pastors that you help support across the former Soviet Union. They labor in different locations and in greatly differing local ministry environments, but their commitment to preaching the Gospel and bringing glory to Christ is the same. Your prayers and ongoing support is always a great encouragement to them, as is your support for SGA's many other ministries—provision of Bibles and Christian literature, children's ministries, Bible and theological training, Compassion Ministry, and so much more. Please pray about how you can help today! ♦



Believing youth in Belarus go out into their city, testifying about Christ to the people they meet on the streets.

Insight FROM MICHAEL

Your sacrificial support helps hundreds of pastors keep sacrificing for Christ!

Having visited many SGA-supported missionary pastors through the years, I can testify to their faithful, constant witness for the sake of the Gospel. Sometimes the conditions in which they live are deeply humbling to observe. They often get

“They often get by on very little and have to hold down full-time secular jobs in addition to their full-time ministries.”

by on very little and have to hold down full-time secular jobs in addition to their full-time ministries.

Much of their income if not most gets put right back into their ministries. Some live in cities and towns where conditions aren't much different than the American Midwest. Others live in places most of us wouldn't dream of considering, like Yakutia in

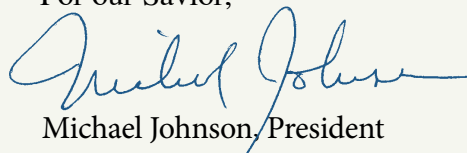
Russia's Far East. Imagine going out to evangelize when it is double-digits below zero cold, and sometimes at considerable distances from home. We know of others in Siberia who can only make it to some villages when the rivers freeze over and then they can drive vehicles on them! Their ministry is not for the faint-hearted.

Wherever the missionary pastors are, they all express their love and deep thankfulness to SGA partners for supporting them in prayer and in giving. With every report they send in to us, they are sure to express their thankful hearts. We are only able to share a fraction of them in the Good News Report, and we do our best to post as many as possible on our mission's website. As you read them, I hope that you are able to get a glimpse into their daily, loving sacrifices of service to God. Be encouraged by them, and join us in lifting up praise and thanksgiving to God for each one.

Above all, join us in praying for all **358 missionary pastors** supported through SGA across the former Soviet Union. Pray for their ongoing health and strength, for their daily encouragement in their labors, and that God will bring many to Himself in faith as the Gospel is proclaimed.

And above all as the Lord Jesus said . . . *The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest* (Matthew 9:37-38). There is so much more to do, and so many more who need to hear of Christ's love!

For our Savior,



Michael Johnson, President



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