



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION
Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

God is Finding Orphans and Bringing Them into *His* Family ... in Amazing Ways!



INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ♦ Tension at camp turns into sacred move of repentance!
- ♦ The Lord removes an obstacle to reaching children . . .
- ♦ Michael Johnson: God works in different ways.

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)

‘It Felt Like Something Was Going to Happen!’

Your Support Leads to Many Children Hearing and Responding to the Gospel

Pavel M., Camp Director in Kobrin, Belarus

Greetings brothers and sisters! This year is the 29th year of the ministry of the Little Pearl Children’s Camp (Zhemchuzhinka) for sick and needy children in Belarus. All of this has been possible because of the support the Lord has given through you. During that time, a whole generation of ministers has grown up who remember the camp as a place where new people were born again to faith in God.

This year was also a special year. Before the start of the camp season, we could feel tension growing in the team. The very stressful preparations had a very strong effect on us, and I could feel the nervousness. **The whole team experienced a very strong spiritual turmoil where we struggled with energy and the ability to work. It felt like something was going to happen. And indeed it did, as God moved in the prayers of the children!** Believers who serve in camp ministries rarely see such a widespread, mass repentance like we saw in this camp—much less in churches. I’ve never seen anything like this in all my years! Every day 20, 24, 27, even 60 children and teenagers came forward to the call to reconcile with God. Afterwards during the day, **the children prayed alone with their counselors and stated their desire to follow Christ.** During the day from the moment of the call to God, **71 children** repented and trusted in Christ!

There were more to come. **They didn’t stop coming.** I can’t say that there was a special program. The usual topics were studied—biblical examples of heroes, also looking at the sins and actions associated with their lives. **It is hard to estimate even the total number of children who prayed. Only from the photos, perhaps. We determined that at least 147 of the 204 children in the camp repented.** The counselors shared with us about the



Children gather in small groups to pray.

special, conscious prayers of children. They say that even adults rarely pray this way. **One testimony came from young Nikita, who is 10 years old . . .**

“I want to tell you a story that made me believe in God. It all started on my cousin’s birthday. For some unknown reason, my parents had a fight, I don’t remember exactly what it was about, but I do remember that they yelled a lot at each other, I remember lying in tears all night in my bed and crying. But I don’t think it was all for nothing! In some strange way, I decided to pray, yes, pray! My parents ended up in divorce, and after that my mom and I moved in with my mom’s brother. Now, I would like to thank them all so much for their kindness and help! It was very difficult for me. When my mom found us a place to live, things started to get better.

Now I don’t regret that I went through that. I don’t, because I received the most important thing for all people in this world—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. On the one hand, one might think and say, ‘Lord, why?’ but on the other hand you can think and say, ‘Lord, thank you for everything!’ Yes, it was very difficult. That’s what we sometimes, even I would say always, have to sacrifice for faith! God always knows what’s best for all of us. I am glad I am living by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!”

The counselor said that Nikita prayed during the camp like this—*“I’m sorry my little brother wasn’t born. Forgive my mother. Thank You for the Bible*

lesson today, through which I learned how to forgive. You took away my heartache. And I was able to forgive my father today.” Another counselor told how a child was talking to his parents on the phone and hearing his father’s swear words said, *“Daddy! We*

can’t say such swear words in front of God!”

Time is very short. The days go by quickly. Not everything can be heard and shared. But changes are evident in both the children and the counselors, and we thank God for what He has done! ♦

Four Come to Faith in Belarus!

Read the stories of four women who recently found faith—and how you played a part

Mark S., SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Brest, Belarus



Four women prepare for baptism.

Dear friends, I greet you with the love of our Lord Jesus Christ! Peace be with you and in your families! The Lord protects my family and our church, and we thank the Lord for all His mercies. **We recently celebrated a joyful day in the life of the church—the baptism of four women who are now your sisters in Christ.**

I would like to tell you about each of them. **Antonina was the head of the Society for the Disabled in our town.** In the evening from the window of her new apartment, she saw a bright red cross on the facade of our building and took it as a sign to go to God. **She came to the church without any fear or doubt, and began to attend the services regularly.** I talked to her about God, about forgiveness, and about salvation. God drew her to believe and seek Him always, and as she said, *“The Lord led me to come to church and now I am in Christ’s church.”*

Nadia is a girl from a large family of our church members. She is already helping us in our ministry. She has learned many a good things from her believing parents, and we pray that her faith will be strengthened.

Nastya comes from a family of unbelievers, but while attending children’s camps, she heard a lot about the Lord. She began to attend church, and her circle of friends also included believing brothers and

sisters. At the camp, she repented and dedicated her life to Christ. Her mother was at the baptism—she is an unbeliever, but was touched by her daughter’s decision to be in the church at a time when young girls her age are looking for something else, and are uncertain about God or church. It is a special testimony to her and I believe her daughter to be a good light in her family.

Meanwhile, **Lisa** was brought up in very strict traditions, but sin was stronger. She did well in school, but looking for freedom from her strict parents, she went to the side of friends who were bad company. Then problems started in her family, with her parents, and with her boyfriends. She was invited to a Christian camp, after which she began to come to church and her life began to change. Now, having traveled the path of difficulties in her life, she is glad that the Lord has shown her the way of faith!

Recently there has been increased control of churches by the state. **In previous years, we held baptisms on the canal of our power plant, but this year we bought a swimming pool and installed it on the territory of the House of Prayer.** It was unusual and crowded. The Sunday school children and our teen club attended the baptism.

Friends, thank you for your prayers and support that help us work with women like the four I’ve mentioned. Please continue to pray for the new members of our church, and pray for our young people as many of them are going to other cities and even abroad because of unemployment. I thank the Lord for you. You are in our prayers, and may God bless you! ♦

MUCH PRAYER, MUCH POWER IN ACTION

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

There are just people and circumstances in life that at times seem too much to endure. But as God exercises an amazing amount of patience with us, so also we who are redeemed in Christ are called to exercise long-suffering patience when proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples.

Artyom is an SGA-supported missionary pastor, and he is often tested while working with orphan and wayward youth:

"I met Denis when we had a Christmas outreach in a small village. We decided to organize a Christmas dinner in one of the houses in the village and we invited everyone who was willing to come. Only a few people came, and Denis was one of them. He felt uneasy, so, he tried to cover it up by stupid jokes, bad behaviour, and bad language. My patience was on trial on that night, and I could hardly keep myself under control and not blow up. I had not seen him for almost six months after that event, when in the summer he came to placement in a local Collective Farm. I noticed that within those six months, his behaviour had not changed a bit. He continued to make his jokes, which were a hindrance for others to meditate on the Scripture."

People like Denis take a lot of patience. Artyom felt tested, yet desired even more that Denis and the others come to know Christ. And eventually, there was fruit:

"A week later to my surprise, he came to the group again and continued through late fall. With each visit, he used less jokes and displayed more interest for God's Word. He started to ask meaningful questions, tried to pray, and practice things that he learned in the group in his life. During this time, the Lord changed my attitude towards this joking man. Denis decided to visit his parents over weekends so he could attend our group. From time to time, he asked me to come and pick him up. During our trips



Denis (left), with Artyom (center) at the Bible study.

together we had a lot of fellowship. His understanding of the Gospel grew deeper, and once he even said that the Lord calls him to follow Him. The change in Denis happened right in front of my eyes. Gradually the alcohol and bad language left his life. Within a few years, his faith grew stronger, and Denis even decided to be baptized, and to commit his life to Jesus Christ. In August, Denis was baptized! Praise God!!!" In those early meetings, Artyom could have given up on Denis, rebuked him, or kept him at a distance. But instead, with complete patience, he ministered to this young man. In time, Denis not only came to faith, but was baptized and desires to follow Christ with all of his heart.

What a good reminder for our current life situations, and for when we encounter those who oppose the Gospel and the ministry of God's Word. **Denis was a young man who opposed the message from God's Word delivered by Artyom.** He expressed his opposition with bad behavior in meetings, jokes about the truths taught, and bad language inserted at times in which he thought it funny. Artyom, by God's grace, continued to patiently teach God's Word while the Holy Spirit was ministering to Denis—**ultimately bringing Denis to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.** Thank you for praying for faithful servants like Artyom who face challenging people in their ministries. ♦

When God Opens Doors . . .

Official obstructing the Gospel is replaced

By Misha, SGA-Supported *Orphans Reborn* Team in Krasnoyarsk, Russia

It is the fourth year that we have held one of our camp ministries some 300 miles away from **Krasnoyarsk**, and with every year it becomes more expensive and much harder. **But God opens doors that no one can shut (Revelation 3:7).**

Four years ago, I received a phone call from my friend, who shared that there was an orphanage in that location, and after the call I decided to go and visit that place. It seemed that this would be a great opportunity for ministry, because we had a very warm welcome. We also were able to develop a very good relationship with the teachers. I thought that with the help of churches in nearby towns, we would be able to organise weekly lessons with those children. **But in spite of all the benefits, the director of that orphanage only allowed the children to attend our summer camp, and it was with great difficulty that we even held a Christmas outreach.**

The children fell in love with us, and each summer and winter they look forward to our visit. They call us a lot and even one of them became my foster child! But as the years went by, nothing changed, and I even thought of letting it go, because we were not able to have regular lessons for the children. **But this year started with a miracle!**

The director was replaced and now children are allowed to be with us at the camp all day long! The children were overjoyed that they were able to hear the evening Bible lessons and to stay in fellowship with us. It might sound like a little thing for many of us, but this was a real miracle for our team. The children from the

nearby village were really grateful, and they told us that they were eagerly awaiting us for the whole year.

We met one boy whose name is Oleg—he is 16. **Oleg called me two months prior to the camp and asked about the cost of the camp. I told him that the camp would be free for him.** But he replied to me, *"Misha, I do not want to go there for free, I have a job in the village, and I want to pay for my stay at the camp!"* In addition, Oleg actually came to the camp site a day prior to the beginning in order to help us to set the camp site, and he did it without being asked. **Oleg writes poems and many of them are about the Lord.**



Oleg helps to set up the camp site.

I hope that our weekly lessons will finally become a reality in that place as well. But even if that would not happen, they are within our reach and we will not leave them alone. In such a way, a single meeting over many miles can bring about changes. As an aside, it was this place where three years ago I had my accident when I was driving there with a Christmas play and gifts, and that was during the COVID quarantine. **But nothing was able to stop us: not a broken car in the midst of the forest, nor bitter cold—it was -40 degrees below zero—not even the quarantine.** Thank you, beloved friends, that you always support us! ♦



Children at the camp.

UKRAINE: God Continues the Spiritual Harvest

Your prayers and gifts matter!

In the course of SGA's ministry over the past 90 years, helping to provide a variety of humanitarian aid depending on the current need has always been a vital part. After the Soviet collapse in the early 1990s, SGA shipped over a significant amount of aid to help the churches minister to many in rampant poverty. When the Kosovo war broke out in 1998, SGA partners sent over a large amount of aid for distribution through the churches to war-shattered families. There are many other examples we could give of how your love and generosity have been used by God to change lives.

Today as we serve Ukrainian churches as they reach out to needy war refugees, we receive many reports about how gifts of food and other aid are being used by God to open hearts for the Gospel. An SGA-supported missionary pastor sent in the following glimpse of his day to day ministry helping these neediest of families and sharing the Gospel . . .

The small town of Snihurivka is located in the Mykolaiv region of Ukraine, almost to the border with the Kherson region. Therefore, from the first days of the war, this town was in the epicenter of hostilities. And after three weeks of fighting, this town was occupied and the invaders immediately started looting and carrying out repressions including the torture of those who did not cooperate. Some residents managed to evacuate before the occupation, but most were forced to remain. Among those who remained was Sergei and Natalia's family. These people saw all the violence of the new regime with their own eyes and experienced its new orders firsthand. Their house was also looted and destroyed.

At that time, their eldest son was at war in the ranks of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and their younger 17-year-old daughter who was with Sergei and Natalia had to hide. One day, one of their friends told them that they could escape from the town to a free part of Ukraine during the rotation of the Russian military, which was coming soon. They waited for the

right moment and left the town by their car. Natalia's mother was with them. Their daughter laid down on the floor so that no one could see her through the car window. A bus with other refugees was following them. It was a big risk, but it was extremely dangerous to stay in the town any longer.

At first, everything was fine, but then the car was spotted and they started shooting. In front of Sergei and Natalia's eyes, the bus with people that was behind them was completely shot up. Sergei pulled off the road into a field and drove at full speed, under the whistling of bullets, as far as the eye could see. The car was bumping up and down on the holes in the road with frightened passengers, and the shaking was so hard that the airbags deployed. They miraculously escaped from the shelling and made it through to a safe zone.

Next, their trip went through the Vinnitsa region. And then a terrible tragedy happened. The heart of Natalia's mother could not bear the stress and she suddenly died at the age of 72. She was buried in one of the villages in the Vinnitsa region, and the family found a temporary shelter in the same village. It is interesting that Natalia and her mother are originally from Russia—from the Far Eastern city of Vladivostok. And their village in eastern Ukraine remained under occupation for eight long months. We asked them, "How can we help you now," and Natalia answered, "Please, pray for us!" This was the answer of a person who had never been to a church in her life!



Sergei and Natalia



Sergei and Natalia are thankful for the food aid provided by believers.

Therefore, we are now praying for this family as well, asking the Lord to touch their hearts and grant them repentance. They are sincerely grateful for the food aid

provided by SGA, and to all of SGA's partners who so generously send it with such love! Blessings to you all as you serve our people! ♦

HOW YOU CAN HELP

It is so wonderful to read how God is working in the lives of lonely, forgotten orphan children across the former Soviet Union. Through SGA-supported **Orphans Reborn** teams who make regular visits to the orphanages, they are hearing the hope of the Gospel and experiencing the love of Christ through the selfless ministry of the teams. **Your faithful support helps accomplish this, as well as provision of Bibles and Christian literature, Sunday school, Summer Camps and other children's ministries, Bible training, Compassion Ministry, and so much more.** Please pray about how you can help today. ♦



(Above Left) Alina (in white) grew up in an orphanage, but was taken in by a Christian family after forming a friendship with one of their daughters at a Christian camp; (Above Right) Orphan children in a "Christian Family Home." Around 2011, Baptist churches in Moldova began a project of inviting Christian families to foster several orphans, along with raising their own children.

Insight FROM MICHAEL

Hard, Sacred Ministry Leads Recipients to Repentance

In this issue of the **Good News Report**, I was excited and moved to read the account about events at the **SGA-supported Little Pearl Camp in Belarus** and the way God is powerfully moving in the lives of children there. It is a wonderful reminder that when God moves, nothing can stand in His way when it comes to changing lives and bringing men, women, and children to Himself in faith. **It is also a reminder of how we as believers bathe our ministries and outreaches in fervent prayer, trusting in God to do what only He can.** Our founder Peter Deyneka's motto, ***Much Prayer, Much Power***, continues to ring loud and clear through the decades and generations.



One of the statements the missionary pastor made in the article was to comment on how comparatively rarely we see what could be called "mass repentances" in everyday church ministry. **That might be something that gives us pause at first glance, but that pause can come from our media-driven culture.** Here in North America and other Western nations, we may remember seeing huge numbers of people coming forward at televised evangelistic crusades in decades past. We might also read accounts like that in the book of Acts, as God called vast numbers of people to Himself as the Apostles proclaimed the Gospel after the Lord's resurrection. **But even then, there was the hard work of day-to-day witnessing and sharing as God gave opportunity.** Responses were not always *en masse*. And there was much opposition!

Such mass conversions are indeed not the norm as churches carry out their calling where God has planted them. Nor do we typically see it as individuals when we share the Gospel with people. **More often than not, it is a lengthy journey and loving labor of weeks, months, and even years before we see the fruit of our ministry.** We must always remember that God moves sovereignly, in His time and in His way. He calls us to be faithful. He calls us to be always ready, in season and out of season as the Apostle Paul writes in 2 Timothy. **At Camp Pearl, Pavel and his team discerned that God was about to move as there was much spiritual opposition to their ministry. Then God indeed moved, and the aftermath continues to bring great joy.** May we always be faithful, hardworking, and ready when God is ready to move in our midst.

For our Savior,

Michael Johnson
President



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