



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION  
**Good News Report**

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

# Summer Camps are Coming!

## Read How the Lord Uses Them to Touch Children, Parents, Grandparents, and More!



### INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ◆ Resistance in one nation to God's work is overwhelmed by God's grace!
- ◆ How an "aging" church became younger—and bigger!
- ◆ Camp story: By Day 6, repentance broke out in the 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)*

# Schools Warn Against Christians. And Then More Children Come to the Church!

*Your Support Helps Reach Belarus Children Through VBS Ministry*

Alexander, SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Belarus

Dear brothers and sisters, I greet you with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ! Praise God, our church in a local village held a Vacation Bible School (VBS) for children and teenagers. There were **29 children in attendance, and 17 of them were from unchurched families**, mostly from large families. Each day we had general assemblies, Bible lessons with children divided up into squads, art lessons, camp sport games, and of course meals together.



Children work on crafts during the camp.

We prayed a lot in advance for this children's ministry, because **in the spring the local schools issued a negative testimony about Baptists and their influence on children.** After this false information was released, some parents did not allow their children to attend Sunday school. **But praise the Lord, there were more children in VBS this year than in previous years, and they were mostly from unbelieving families.**

We distributed Christian literature on developing faith. The older children came out and took the book, and agreed that they needed to have a source of faith. **All the children had positive feedback about their time in the VBS.** Some children learned to pray to the Lord themselves and

for their parents in their squads.

**We have the addresses of all the children, and we made home visits in September with small gifts to get to know the parents.** It was a way to witness to the parents about Jesus Christ. As we visited the children and parents, we realized that for most, faith and spiritual life is in last place for their lives. They let their children go to the VBS due to the help and care for their children. However, we have new acquaintances and we pray for the children and their parents.

## Ministry in a Local Prison

I continue to visit the penal colony. Meetings are held every Wednesday, and it is a good spiritual school for me because each person I meet has needs for spiritual enlightenment, support, and prayer. I also communicate with relatives of convicts, and with those who have been released from prison, and want to start a new life. For example, Dima served 14 years in a penal colony. He had an alcohol addiction, basically did not work anywhere in life, his family was destroyed, and his children were placed in an orphanage for some time. After the last release, he had a desire to change his life and he came to the church for spiritual help. Now he has a regular job and visits the House of Prayer with his children. **While visiting with this family, we can see that by the grace of the Lord, the ruins of Dima's life are being rebuilt.** While we meet together, we pray for repentance of the whole family.

Please pray for strength, and for our ongoing ministry. **Pray especially for the children reached over the summer, that they will come to faith in Christ.** Thank you for your prayers and concern for me and our ministry. ♦

# You Helped Provide *Immanuel's Child* in Belarus

*Your Gifts Bless Foster Children at Christmas*

Yuri R., SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Belarus

Greetings, dear brothers and sisters. We held an SGA-supported *Immanuel's Child* outreach for 50 children from foster families during the Christmas season. This time we held it on December 29. **We invited orphan children from foster families in our village.** All the children received wonderful gifts including candies, chocolates, and fruits as well as children's Bibles for home reading. At this event, children and adults heard the Gospel through the story of Christmas.

Almost all of the children were **from non-believing families** and had not previously attended Sunday school. Nevertheless, they were eager to participate in our activity. After my short message at the beginning of the event, we presented a puppet show about Christmas, telling the whole Christmas story through it. Then we played games with the children to consolidate what we had seen and heard. Finally, I shared about Christ, God's love and salvation, after which I encouraged everyone to turn to God in repentance.

The atmosphere was very positive and it was evident that the children and adults enjoyed hearing the Good News. Prayers and reflections filled this Christmas Eve service. May God grant that this joy and light may settle in the hearts of each one who



Children with their *Immanuel's Child* stars.

heard! Five new children enrolled in Sunday school. Ten children prayed the prayer of repentance, and two adults also prayed.

**At the end of the service, all the children received IC Stars and gifts. I told them about the people across the ocean who are praying for them, and have donated funds to create this celebration.**

Everyone was delighted and thanked us with warmth and joy for this ministry, promising to attend church in the future. Valentina is one of the parents, and she said:

*"Today it was the first time I was in this church, and I confess that I felt some wariness. I imagined that the insistence on religion and Christ would be too intrusive, boring, and incomprehensible for children. However, all my fears were relieved. Everything happened so easily and engagingly that I myself listened with my mouth open, and the children also watched and listened attentively! No one had to be persuaded to listen, reassured, or reprimanded. I feel like I got closer to God today than I have ever been before. Thank you so much for this evening and for the gifts we received tonight. I enjoyed my stay with you, and I am sure I will come here many more times with my children."*

Thirteen-year-old Vlad also expressed his joy:

*"Thank you so much for this exciting play today! Learning about Christmas was so interesting and it was so fun. The puppets were absolutely amazing, especially the funny moments! My brother and I just laughed to tears. And thank you so much for the gifts and the children's Bible! Now I want to come here more and more often. It was great!"*

Thank you, our dear friends, for the opportunity to organize this outreach and the gifts provided. **Thanks to your prayerful support, this celebration was made possible, the Gospel word was heard, and God was glorified!** May God bless you! ♦

## MUCH PRAYER, MUCH POWER IN ACTION

*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves (2 Corinthians 4:7).*

Pastor Nikolai grew up in a home where his father read him the Bible. He knows how powerful an impact God's Word can have on a child and their future. He shares, "Since I was a little boy, I have loved the Lord. I loved to listen to my dad read the Bible and I would ask him questions. As I grew older, I had a desire to help the pastor in the church. Soon I was chosen by the church to be a deacon. A few years passed and the church elected me pastor. **I saw that if there were no children in the church, the church would die quickly. As there were no other children in the church, we held a children's camp in the summer, and afterward 11 children expressed a desire to come to church. We opened a Sunday school and started working with the children. I saw the hand of God in this. The children started coming more and more, and now we have a Sunday school. We held camps in the summer and even at other times. Through the children, the parents began to come as well.**"

**Dwell for a moment on the last words he wrote, that through the children, parents came as well. God raised up children in this church to be His ambassadors, His heroes in pointing others to Jesus. No special training, just the faith of a child.**

God was at work through the children that began to come to Nikolai's church, especially young Karina. Karina's grandmother, who is 76 years old, says:

*"I am pleased that my granddaughter asked me to go to church with her at Christmas. I have lived all*

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***"I have lived all my life and knew nothing about God."***

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*my life and knew nothing about God. Only here, I heard about Christ, and thanks to my*



Karina at the summer camp.

**granddaughter. I learned that Christ is the Savior of people, that He loves people. I realized that only He can give me eternal life. Now I have started going to church with Karina. I realized that I am the one who came to God at the 11th hour when my life is already coming to an end here on this earth. I too want to ask God for forgiveness and repent."**

God be praised for the little children who, with love for Jesus and faith in Him, desire all to share in the joy they too have found. May we as well have that same childlike faith that leads us to be heroes and point those lost in this world to hope in Jesus!

**Thank you for your prayers—and gifts—used by God to reach these children and the adults around them, and to keep Pastor Nikolai's church expanding to touch souls both young and old. ♦**

## "Why Didn't I Know About This Earlier?"

*But when God used your gifts to tell her—Gulili's soul and face began to shine!*

How heartbreaking it is to read the words of Gulili, "Why didn't I know about this earlier?" She is speaking of the words that she had been reading in the New Testament.

After a very difficult life and not leaving her home for two years, Gulili showed up at church one day where she was greatly loved on, both physically and spiritually. Now through her new glasses, she has been reading through the New Testament and seeing more clearly in more ways than one.

She has recently been reconciled to the Lord. **This woman went from someone who could barely hold a cup of tea, to a woman whose face is always shining. That is the work of the Lord!** Please pray that Gulili's future will be filled with a new "life story." SGA-supported missionary pastor Dr. Levan shares more about Gulili . . .

*"This is a woman named Gulili, who is fifty years old now. We had an opportunity to meet her when she was initially brought to our church by one of our parishioners. Her hands were shaking, she could hardly move, and she could barely drink a cup of tea. When we questioned what was wrong with her and how we could help her, we found out that she had not left her house for almost two years after her son died. She didn't have enough money for a doctor or medicine, so she didn't know what her illness was or how to treat it. And when we learned Gulili's life story, it turned out that she had been stolen at the age of fourteen and forced into marriage. Her husband was a drug addict who abused her and spent many years in prison. Her son followed in his footsteps and went to prison, where he died. Therefore, her entire life was filled with constant distress and fear, in which she spent many years of her life. Against the background of all those events, she was very worried and began to suffer from a mental disorder. Since Gulili had no means of livelihood, she did not even visit doctors,*



Gulili with her new glasses.

*which made her condition more complicated. Furthermore, her eyesight was so poor that she was unable to read anything at all.*

*We took care of the lady. We took her to a doctor, who identified her condition as chorea and provided a prescription for medication to improve her ability to control her arms and legs. Likewise, we paid for an eye doctor's appointment and bought her glasses so that she could read. She took a New Testament from us to read, and the past Sunday she was reconciled to the Lord. Now she is almost through reading the New Testament. She has many questions, and her face always shines. Gulili keeps saying, "Why didn't I know about this earlier?" ♦*

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***" . . . the past Sunday she was reconciled to the Lord."***

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# “By the 6th Day, the Children Began to Change!”

*Thank you for providing Christ’s transforming love and Word in Central Asia.*

Sergei O., SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Central Asia



Children at the camp.

Last year, our church held a seven-day Christian vacation, which was based on a program called “Believe like Paul.” God entrusted us with **27 children, 14 of whom were of Muslim backgrounds.**

It was an unforgettable time! Talking to children about God is a great mercy from the Lord. Our church has held camps for 20 years, and for us 2023 became a jubilee year! At first, we were nervous in starting a seven-day program because of the aftermath of COVID. But God led, inspired, and gave us a wonderful group of children and a team!

Among the Central Asian children, eight of them did not understand the Russian language at all! **Since saving children is God’s work, God also took care of the translators!** With great pleasure, we sang with the children in both the Russian and local languages. From the first days of our vacation, the Name of Jesus sounded in two languages. **Each morning and evening, we all praised the Lord like King Jehoshaphat in the Bible (2 Chronicles 20:21).**

By the sixth day, the children began to change. Their faith and love for each other began to grow. Their hearts began to open.

On the sixth day, we hiked, and my wife was honored to walk with an 11-year-old boy named Arsen. **All the way they talked about spiritual issues.** He said that he heard about Jesus five years ago, when his dad brought him and his brother to our church for the *Immanuel’s Child* Christmas outreach.

Later he learned more through the Internet. Arsen asked, **“Is there a sin that cannot be forgiven? Why should we go to church? Who should I talk to—the Father or Jesus?”** My wife was surprised to hear such serious questions asked by a boy who looked so ordinary, just like any other boy. When they returned from the hike to the base, my wife invited Arsen to pray and ask God to help him understand the truths.

To her joy, Arsen accepted the invitation and



Children participate in activities at the camp.

they prayed together. It was also a great joy to give the Bible to a Kazakh boy named Madi, who is 14. Previously, I was told that Madi, while talking to other boys about the gifts that were given on the last day, said that he did not need any other gifts but a Bible!

In August, I took our teenagers to a rural recreation area where there was a camp. During the next six days, we talked about fears—fear of the unknown, fear of pain, fear of people, and finally, fear of the Lord. In the evening, there was a service where the same topics were discussed. **On the fourth day, there was a call to repent. Many children hesitated and did not come up in front to repentance.**

**But toward the end of the camp, teenagers began to go forward asking God for forgiveness for their sins.** The teams were small, from six to 11 people. All six people from my group repented.

Praise God! They were able to overcome human fear in order to gain the fear of God. Then there was a wonderful farewell party. **Three guys from my team were given a Bible, and encouraged to testify about their decision in their churches.** It is amazing to watch how the Lord works with hearts and transforms them!

Please remember us in your prayers. May God richly bless you in His mighty ways! ♦

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

While spring is not yet over, the preparations for SGA-supported summer camp ministries beginning in June are in full swing. We praise and thank the Lord for yet another season of



Eric Mock, SGA’s senior vice president of ministry operations, with children at an SGA-supported summer camp in Kazakhstan.

helping evangelical churches reach children for Christ across the former Soviet Union. Your support makes this possible, along with provision of Bibles and Christian literature, Compassion Ministry, sound Bible training, *Orphans Reborn*, and other children’s ministries—and so much more! Please pray about how you can help today. ♦



SGA-supported camp for children with Down Syndrome in the Voronezh region of Russia.

# Insight FROM MICHAEL

**How many? One day, you and I will learn the number. Only the Lord knows how many lives we have touched together!**

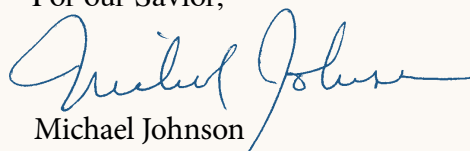
For most children here in North America, the summer months mean lots of fun. In addition to a three-month break from school, they might take a family vacation or road trip, or get involved in other activities to occupy their time.

For many evangelical churches across the former Soviet Union, the months of June through August mean Summer Camp ministry. **During the communist years, the authorities would hold what were known as Pioneer Camps, where children took part in the usual camp activities, but also were taught communist ideology.** After the fall of communism, those camps dwindled away, leaving parents looking for ways to keep their children occupied. **This is where the churches stepped in, beginning to hold summer camp sessions throughout the summer where kids could have fun, and most importantly of all, hear the Gospel and see the love of Christ modeled before them.** SGA has been blessed and privileged to help support these church-based summer camps for many years now, and none of it would be possible without your prayers and faithful support.

As I consider these outreaches along with the other SGA ministries you support, I can't help but wonder **how many children will enjoy eternity with Christ because the Lord drew them to Himself at a summer camp.** How many orphans have, or will, come to Christ through the SGA-supported *Orphans Reborn* ministry? As **thousands of pastors** have gone through and graduated from an SGA-supported seminary or Bible institute in the former Soviet Union, **how many have, or will, come to Christ in faith through their diligent, tireless ministry?** What will be the final tally of men, women, and children whom the Lord drew to Himself through loving **Compassion Ministry**—faithful churches delivering urgent help for their physical needs while sharing how they can have their greatest need met—the need for a Savior? Only in eternity will we know this for certain. But what a glorious day of rejoicing that will be.

**In the days ahead, please intercede in advance for all the summer's outreaches—asking for God's faithful provision and for many hearts to be prepared to hear of His love. Thank you for all that you do!**

For our Savior,

  
Michael Johnson  
President



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