



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION
Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

Light and Darkness Clash in a War for the Souls of Children!



INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ♦ Hard ground—but SGA outreach plants seeds!
- ♦ Young people—orphans—turn to faith and repentance.
- ♦ God is raising up a new generation to follow him in the former USSR!

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)

Jesus Uses Your Gifts to Transform Young Lives!

Team builds loving relationships that soften hearts

Vladimir K.

SGA-Supported *Orphans Reborn* Team (Krasnoyarsk, Russia)

Dear friends, thank you for your partnership and support! Through our joint effort and ministry, **the Kingdom of God is being expanded** and our Lord is **glorified!** One example is the move of God's Spirit in Russia's Krasnoyarsk region.

Since last year we have been ministering to the **children** here, as through our activities they were learning about Christ. I especially want to mention how the Lord is reaching Lina and Daniil; they recently decided to join our **ministry to troubled children and teenagers**. Lina and Daniil are developing their relationship with Christ.



Vladimir with Daniil and Lina.

Daniil comes from a single-parent family, and is living with his mother and grandmother, without a father. **He is very open to Christ and already comes to Sunday church meetings.** This month, Daniil is participating in conducting classes for children in the neighborhood and is glad that he can serve them in some way. At the Women's Day festive gathering, Daniil was given two bouquets for his mother and grandmother; the first flowers, which he would give to his loved ones. He was very shy and said that he did not know how to do it. No one had taught him to give flowers to his loved ones before, and it became a good experience for Daniil. He is very inspired by such an attitude towards him, as he experiences the care and love of God on himself.



Class for neighborhood children.

Lina comes from a crisis family and finds it difficult to build relationships with other people. She recently shared about her changes, *"Before, I would have yelled and been rude if I was not respected or listened to, but now I want to support the kids and help them with their assignments in the class. They started treating me differently, and I was even surprised how I could influence them with a kind attitude and love!"*

On the Women's Day holiday, we organized the sale of flowers in the neighborhood and invited Lina to help, so that she could make some cash for her family, helping her mother financially. She was very happy about the opportunity to earn money (at other part-time jobs people often cheat and do not pay). I also offered her to choose flowers for her mother, sister, and niece (we made nice large bouquets for Lina's loved ones).

When we congratulated Lina and gave her a bouquet of beautiful pink tulips, she was touched and almost burst into tears. **Those were the first flowers she had ever received in her life.** Lina invited her friend to this festive activity who was very impressed, and we also gave the girl her flowers. **We are grateful to God for the opportunities to build relationships with these special teenagers.** All glory be to Christ Jesus! Thank you and blessings from the Lord! ♦

God Gives Fruit in Belarus With Your Support!

He makes paths through difficulties

Sergei is a faithful missionary pastor supported through SGA in Belarus. He loves the Scripture passage about God's hand being . . . *not so short that it cannot save* (Isaiah 59:1). His recent report demonstrates that wonderful promise in action.



Nikita's repentance.

"The new year began with another soul reconciled with God. Young Nikita responded to the call, stepped forward, and in a prayer of repentance committed his life to God. He had attended Sunday school, joined the youth ministry, and traveled to Christian camps. Praise God that Nikita is one of those youth for whom we pray,

that they will stay in the church and not trade their faith in the Lord for the values of this material world. Please pray that the Lord God will strengthen him to follow Him faithfully.

Our Christmas outreaches were very fruitful, with more than 150 children taking part, including from the local orphanage, followed by a conference for couples in February. I'd also like to share about the events related to a meeting with unbelieving students at a recreation center over a weekend. My daughter Ulyana and I were to talk about the father-daughter relationship. We were asked to talk openly about relationship problems, psychological traumas, and how we coped with it. This was a very open and important discussion for teenagers who are currently going through a difficult period of life.

When we left for the event, I felt prompted to bring my work clothes with me and about halfway there, the coolant temperature started to rise in our vehicle. I pulled over and noticed that the car was leaking antifreeze. I changed into my work clothes,

climbed under the car, and was able to determine the cause of the leak—a worn out and cracked hose. My wife, daughter, and I prayed for wisdom in making a decision as the students were very much looking forward to seeing us! After melting the snow and refilling the radiator, I was able to drive to the nearest gas station. After a slight delay, we were able to reach the destination! The fellowship with the students was just great! After the meeting, the guys and girls came up to me and sincerely thanked me for the help. I prayed that they understood the biblical principles conveyed during our conversation. The goal was worth it, overcoming difficulties to conquer the problems and challenges that arose along the way! We talked for a long time, sharing our experiences and worries. We returned home well past midnight, but our hearts were at peace and deeply satisfied with the ministry we had done.



Meeting with unbelieving students.

Once again, I want to thank you, dear brothers and sisters, for your prayers for us! We need it so much!"

Please continue to pray for Sergei and his ministry among orphan children. We praise and thank the Lord for the determined, selfless example he is setting, modeling Christ's love before them. ♦

MUCH PRAYER, MUCH POWER IN ACTION

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things (Romans 8:32)?

Tatyana is an SGA storyteller in the former Soviet republic of Moldova. She recently shared about one family powerfully impacted by God's love, grace, and mercy.

"Maria is from a mountainous region of our country. Maria is a kind woman. She is 65 years old. She is the light and joy of her home. She is a widow and a pensioner. She belongs to a local church, Jesus the Saviour Church.

She is a beautiful example of a woman who cares for her children and grandchildren with kindness. Even though the conditions in which they live are bad, she has not driven her children away in need. Maria has two children—Vitalie and Angela. Vitalie was left by his wife. He takes care of his daughter. He lives in the parental home. Vitalie works for a public company. Their salary is enough for their basic needs. Angela is separated from her husband and has two daughters. They all live in Maria's house. Vitalie and Angela started going to church because of their needs. The food aid from Jesus the Saviour Church helped these people understand the goodness of God. They came to the church at first just to be helped, but they heard the Gospel and they received Jesus into their hearts. Now they are members of the church."

Vitalie and Angela saw, felt, and heard the love of God in Jesus, and are now following Christ. And the love did not stop with Vitalie and Angela, for they in turn began to show that same love to others that was displayed and shared with them:

"Now they are a great help in God's work. They get involved in the church with different services: cleaning, prayer, and other work. The children attend Sunday school regularly. They love church and learning about Jesus. They want to be Sunday school teachers when they grow up, helping other children to know Jesus. The family shared, 'Thank you for your help. It is a great blessing and joy for us. May



Supporting Maria's family with aid.

the Lord bless you a hundredfold.' This help was brought to their family the day before their youngest granddaughter's birthday. When Grandma Maria saw it, she told her granddaughter, 'Look what a gift Jesus sent you!'"

In thinking of God's great love, the Apostle Paul said . . . *He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things (Romans 8:32)?* Paul marveled at the infinite love of God that was demonstrated in the Father giving His Son for unworthy sinners. As Paul grew in his understanding of God's infinite, unique love, he was compelled to tell others, at great cost to himself, about the love of God and call those who heard to repent of their sin, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He deeply desired that sinners come into a true loving relationship with God.

Just as Paul was moved by the love of God, so too believers in our current age are moved by the love of God to tell others of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Maria is compelled by the love of God toward her to let others know of the love of God for them in Christ Jesus. Thank you for praying for ordinary believers in countries like Moldova who seek to make the love of God known to those around them! ♦

Their Hearts Were Ripe—and Your Support Sent the Gospel!

God breaks through to children despite hard lives

Alisa, SGA-Supported Storyteller in Russia



Paul talks with the children during a visit to the orphanage. Vanya sits at the end of the front row.

On weekends, a village in the Irkutsk region is visited by a team from the local church. They give Bible lessons, sing songs about the Lord, and play games with children of elementary school age, teenagers, and young adults. **In this village, there are many dysfunctional families, where perhaps the parents lead unhealthy lifestyles, drink, and swear.** Many do not have a job, so some families have a fairly small income. Because of that there is no opportunity to buy new clothes for the children, or to treat the children with some sweets and so on.

One Saturday afternoon the team, as always, came to the orphanage in order to spend time with the children, who of course were eagerly waiting for them. Team leader Mary went into the topic of peace in Christ with the children and told them of the Gospel. Continuing the theme, Mary encouraged the children that if they had any questions or if their heart wanted to turn to the Lord, they could come after the lesson to have a one-on-one conversation, and of course pray. After the lesson, there was a small group of three boys, among whom was 11 year old Vanya. **They came to Mary and said that they**

had a great desire to turn to the Lord and asked her to pray for them.

Mary agreed and they sat down together. **The children actively began to ask questions and talk about the difficulties they faced, especially being provoked to fight.** Mary thought it would be better to entrust this conversation to her co-leader and husband Paul, as he had more experience and had been through similar situations himself. **Paul, in turn, clearly conveyed to the boys the idea that they can go through all the difficulties only with the Lord, that it is important to seek His will, and that**

the Lord helps us.

The team could not come the following week. Instead, they met with the boys two weeks later, which is a long time and they thought the boys could have forgotten about their desire. But not Vanya! **When the team arrived, he came up to Maria and said that he really wanted to pray before the beginning of the lesson, and that he also wanted to pray the prayer of faith and repentance at the end.** Vanya was the only one who came from that group of boys to whom they had talked two weeks ago. He is reading the Bible on his own, but there are still many things he does not understand. He also has a great desire to attend church. **Please pray for Vanya and his family. Pray that Vanya can be a light for them and that the Lord will give Vanya the opportunity to be in church.** Pray also that Vanya's parents will be willing to let him go to the Christian summer camp, which is held every summer. Also pray that other children will also have a desire to get to know the Lord, read His Word, and be in the church. ♦

Candid Stories Show What We're Up Against

Please pray for young souls like these!

SGA-Supported *Orphans Reborn* Ministry
Novosibirsk Region, Russia

Gospel Theater Outreach

In the last two months, we continued communicating with orphan children in the new format of a theater club, which turned out to be interesting and effective. **At all of our theatric productions, we share the Gospel, although in the past we were not allowed to conduct Bible classes.** But now the children, as they participate in performances, are able to take time comprehending this or that event, **asking questions and learning about Christ.**

We are currently working on a performance of *Kolobok and Easter*. The performance is to tell about the essence of such a special holiday, conveying its meaning to each child on a personal level. Kolobok (a character from a well-known Eastern Slavic tale) meets all the animals and they tell him what Easter means to them. **But then they all come to the church and learn the true meaning of the resurrection of Christ.** Each character reflects on it and draws important conclusions about the meaning of Christ's resurrection in their lives. We have selected very talented children who enthusiastically spend their time on creativity instead of destructive pastimes. **We use sound recordings, as the special needs children have a hard time memorizing the texts.** During the classes and rehearsals, we communicate very closely with the children, which means a lot for them and for us. Please pray for a permanent team to lead this club. It is very difficult to find someone who will be able to travel often and devote their time, energy, and all of them to God through ministering to these children.

A War Against Darkness: Katya's Story

There are very few orphan graduates who can find a job without falling into crimes, alcohol, or



Katya and her boyfriend.

drugs. Katya is one of these few. She tries very hard, although it is difficult for her. Katya is 21 years old, and she has already changed jobs at least ten times, but she has never lived at the expense of others. Even if she borrowed money in tough times, she would always pay it back. We worked actively with her before, but she somehow quietly drifted away since she lives and works far away. **Katya always spoke about God in no uncertain terms.** She believed that He was either unkind or He does not exist. She would come to the church and participate in projects, but had never showed any interest. But we developed a relationship. Since we have not seen each other for a long time, I even forgot to pray for her. And recently she sent a text that she was pregnant and seemingly living with a boyfriend. She did not ask for anything, she just shared with me about her situation. **Please pray for wisdom, and**

for God to soften her heart and help us start communicating again, so that I can be able to guide her in the right direction.

A Warning Against Fear: Yura and Nastya

Yura and Nastya are very dear people to us! These are the first graduates with whom we started working. Recently they lived with us for some time while they completed legal paperwork, as Yura had



Yura and Nastya.

received a certificate for an apartment. **Once Yura was even going to be baptized, but when he had to complete membership requirements, he got intimidated and stopped coming.** This was a serious blow to us, but Yura could not understand why he had to meet the requirements. He would tell everyone that he is a Christian, but this did not stop him from occasionally engaging in crime and drinking. **While they lived with us, we spent a lot of time talking, praying, and discussing, but it seems that Yura is afraid to trust God, as if he is afraid of betrayal.** He had a very difficult life, but he needs to take this step of faith toward God, and God will heal him! **Nastya, his fiancée, is a friend of Katya.** Nastya graduated from medical college and entered the medical institute! She is a very interesting girl and **seems to be softer than Yura toward the Lord,** but she also is afraid of something.

Both Yura and Nastya heard about Jesus, they heard about His sacrifice, about His atonement for the sins of His people. **But they cannot take the first step and trust God. It feels like a big spiritual battle going on in their hearts, in which we can also take part, praying and fasting for the salvation of these two souls.** Please pray with us, and thank you for your active prayerful participation in our ministry. ♦

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Reaching lonely, forgotten orphan children is a vital ministry for the evangelical churches we serve across Russia and her neighboring countries. SGA has been blessed to support *Orphans Reborn* ministry teams for many years now, and we praise God for the eternal impact of this fruitful outreach. You help make this possible, along with many other areas SGA supports—**Bibles and Christian literature, missionary pastor sponsorship, Compassion Ministry, other children's outreaches, Bible training, and so much more.** Please pray about how you can help today! ♦



Bible study for internally displaced people in Ukraine.



Orphans Reborn ministry in Belarus.

Insight FROM MICHAEL

Jesus loves the little children—and so must we!

We know from the Word of God that Jesus places a high priority on children. When the disciples rebuked some parents who brought their children to Jesus for His touch, He said . . . *Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these* (Matthew 19:14).

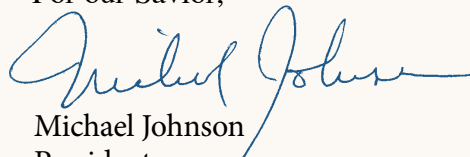
The faithful churches SGA serves **take the Lord's statement to heart**, and they place high priority on reaching children with the Gospel. In our focus this month on the SGA-supported **Orphans Reborn** ministry, you can see the love our brothers and sisters have for these neediest of children, and how the children respond to Christ's love as shown through His people. **It isn't just ministry to orphans, either. Sunday school ministry, summer camps, Christmas outreaches, mobile playgrounds, and sports activities are just a few of the ways the churches reach out to children and youth.** It is a joy to see the impact over time as young lives are transformed through faith in Christ.

Did you know that for churches in the former Soviet Union, the word "youth" can mean early young adulthood as well? It isn't just adolescents and teenagers. Entering the world of young adulthood poses many challenges and new experiences, and the churches try to help them face their lives grounded in biblical truth. And that brings me full circle back to orphan ministry.

I don't think anything gives us greater joy at SGA than seeing an orphan boy or girl coming to faith in Christ while in the orphanage, and then on reaching adulthood, joining with the *Orphans Reborn* teams you support to reach other orphans as they were reached. Their testimonies are deeply moving. **Many of them have such heartbreaking stories of being in dysfunctional families where there was horrific abuse and neglect.** Being removed from the custody of their parents, they find themselves as one among many in an orphanage, looking forward to only bleak futures. **Then they meet believers from a local church who visit the orphanage, loving them, spending time with them, and serving as living examples of the hope found in Christ.** And their lives are diverted from gloom into a future of hope, mercy, grace, and blessing.

I hope and pray that you take joy—as I do—in the fruit of this ministry. You truly have a share in it all!

For our Savior,



Michael Johnson
President



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