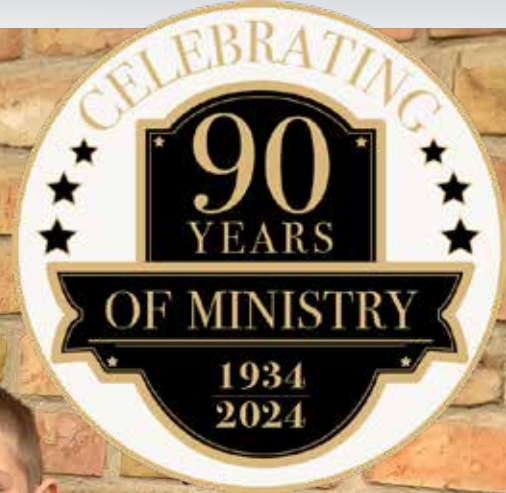




SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

Read how the joy of Christmas is already building up—as we get ready for *Immanuel's Child!*



INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ◆ Also, exciting stories from last Christmas.
- ◆ Christians leave no child behind—even the hurting.
- ◆ The amazing impact of battery units in Ukraine!

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)

This Year, How Many Children Will God Reach Through Immanuel's Child?

Pray for another record Christmas—needs are growing!



Children perform at the Christmas event.

During the last quarter of each year, preparations step into high gear for SGA-supported *Immanuel's Child* Christmas outreaches across the former Soviet Union. By God's grace and provision, the past few years have seen record numbers of

children reached with the Gospel, and we are praying for an even greater number this Christmas season.

We get back hundreds of exciting reports at the conclusion of each year's outreaches and we simply can't share all of them. But here is one from Alexander, an SGA-supported missionary pastor in Belarus, who praises God they were able to reach two families where children had physical challenges:

"Greetings! . . . Children and church members staged a presentation about the birth of Jesus. Between December 24-25, then January 7 and afterwards, there were visits to the homes



Visiting children in their homes at Christmas.



Children at the Immanuel's Child outreach.

of children who for various reasons could not participate in the outreaches.

I want to tell you about two different families with similar difficulties. The kids are raised by their grandmother as the parents are in prison. In one family, the little girl in the arms of the boy is disabled. She cannot walk on her own. These children are especially poor and we try to visit them and spend time with them. They love it very much when we come—we are not forbidden to come, and we can talk to them freely about Jesus. We have sent them greetings from you and in return they send them to you.



Children being raised by their grandmother.

We also visited another girl with physical challenges whose name is Kamila. We wished her a Merry Christmas, sang a song and talked about the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Kamila was at the Immanuel's Child celebration and after the service, her parents brought her up and asked us to pray over her and bless her. I was a little surprised by this request, but then after reading about how Simeon

blessed Jesus, I prayed over Kamila and asked the Lord to keep her safe and protect her from dangers and evil, so that she could grow in faith in Christ the Savior and belong to Him. Kamila's parents promised to come to church services and to send her to Sunday school as her daughter grows up.

After the outreaches, the children and their parents felt a lot of joy and varying emotions, and they also expressed a desire to attend church and Sunday school. Children who had never been to the church before came to the festivities even from neighboring villages, for which we give glory to God. Now our prayer to God is for the Word that was sown to bear fruit, and we do not miss the opportunity to continue fellowship with those who came. Thank you again for your prayers, and may God bless you all!"

We join Alexander and his church in praise and thanksgiving to God. Please intercede in advance as the preparations continue for this year's Immanuel's Child! ♦



Kamila with her IC gift.

MUCH PRAYER, MUCH POWER IN ACTION

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

There are times in our lives when we likely cry out, "What more can go wrong?" There are exasperating, perplexing times and events that can alter or delay our plans. **But the answer to the problems isn't in God eliminating all of our trials, but in our recognition that God allows them for His purpose.** Simply, God is sovereign and we are not. Solomon writes . . . *Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand* (Proverbs 19:21). We should always plan and prepare, but also recognize that encountering difficulties can be God's lessons to draw us closer to Him.

In **Belarus**, Pastor Dima leads a team of youth at his church who love to travel out to villages and encourage pastors.

"We were also able to be in a special pre-Easter "All-Night" service this year. On the way to the church in the town of Berezino where we were meeting for Easter, one of the cars stalled. We could not get it started again. We left it right on the road and kept on to the service. It happened that a sister from the church had died that day, and many had gone to the house to hold a funeral. Therefore, there were not many people in the church. But it did not prevent us



Service in Berezino.

from remembering once again all the sufferings that Christ endured for our sins and, after the prayer at midnight, rejoicing and celebrating the resurrection of Christ, encouraging each other and singing songs of resurrection!"

Dima and the youth **considered their trials were nothing** compared to the suffering that Christ endured on their behalf. In what could have been a deflating time, instead everyone rejoiced in light of what Christ secured on the cross.

After a wonderful night of worship, it was time to head home. But now they had to deal with a broken-down car. *"We came back for the car, which was standing on the road. By the way, in our haste we even left one window open. The engine started and the car was able to return to Minsk on its own. It was also a special moment where we saw the fact that God allows some situations and events in our lives, although we do not know why. Nothing happens for nothing!"*

In 1 Thessalonians 5, the Apostle Paul urges us to rejoice always, to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in all circumstances. How is it that believers during the current era of the Church can apply this same exhortation? Paul had a clear grasp upon the truth that God is infinite, separate and distinct from we human beings, that He created all things, and is working all things according to the counsel of His will. He also learned that being in the will of God was the most blessed and purposeful place to be in life. **He knew that whatever he experienced God had planned for him.** So, he practiced what he preached, and he preached what he practiced about God and His Word. May we too be reminded and encouraged to put this exhortation into practice. Thank you for praying for faithful servants like Pastor Dima and those who serve with him! ♦

SGA Supporters Provide Physical and Spiritual Light

God uses solar units for churches to help draw souls in Ukraine

Eric Mock

SGA Senior Vice President of Ministry Operations

You might recall, as part of SGA's **Heat and Hope** campaign, that we partnered with SonSet Solutions to provide **Solar Power Survival Systems to front-line churches** in Ukraine. Two of them went to the city of Avdeevka and were used there until extreme bombardment and shelling destroyed a large part of the city.

Vlad, who rescued many from that city and distributed much SGA-provided aid, sent a brief update on the use of the systems.

"Greetings to you! Since I am constantly on the road, I am sending an audio recording. We delivered one of the solar systems to the church in Avdeevka in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine. Thanks to this solar panel, people could come and recharge their phones and power banks. The system could serve about 50 people at a time. This is a very worthwhile cause. Also, the panel was a blessing for the church itself, where people would come and not only could recharge their phones, but also at the same time hear about Christ and salvation in Him. So it's a great thing to see how a church can witness with a solar panel.

We installed another solar panel in an Avdeevka bomb shelter, where many people also came and could use the panel to charge their devices. Here too, we had a good testimony for the people who came. We told them that the church does all this for them in the name of Jesus Christ. Also at this bomb shelter, the church provided people with Christian literature. This is also a testimony to them, because there has been no electricity in Avdeevka for a long time. Unfortunately, now all this is destroyed, as it was before. Even the bomb shelter has been destroyed, and the churches have been destroyed. Only one battery is



(L to R) The church in Avdeevka has been destroyed; Vlad at the church.

left of everything we had there. The people who stayed there used it, and now it is an occupied territory.

The solar panel project was very necessary! What benefits did it bring? The people in Avdeevka not only charged their devices, but Christians had the opportunity to witness to them about Christ and preach the Gospel. The Christians who were there told people that the solar panel that provides them with light and electricity is an illustration that Christ is the light of the world and salvation for people."

With bombardment from the Russian military increasing day by day across Ukraine, the need for Compassion Ministry like this is certain to increase. **Please pray** for Vlad and his fellow church workers as they deliver aid in very dangerous conditions, and model Christ's love through ongoing Compassion Ministry and the life-changing Gospel. ♦

Your Gifts Help Reach 200+ Children in Russia's Altai Region!

Viktor K.
SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor

Peace be to you, dear servants of the King of kings, our Lord Jesus Christ! We praise the Lord and thank you for the support you provided in holding *Immanuel's Child* outreaches from December 2023 through January 2024.

Three churches participated in the ministry this past year. We were able to also visit the children of non-believing families at their homes. We held a Christmas event at the local Community Center with the permission of the district administration, as well as visiting a number of homes in villages on the invitation of non-believing families. Those who attended the celebrations were thankful for the opportunity to be among Christians, and **expressed their interest to attend the church, and the children were eager to start coming to Sunday school.** On the following Sunday, we were delighted to see some of them at our service. **In total, we were able to reach 200 children!**

The celebrations that were held at the churches were full of activities, like singing of **Christmas songs, reciting of poems, games, and playing musical instruments** such as piano, violin, guitar, and balalaika. Their parents who attended the

celebration were very thankful for the gifts, delighted with the program, and grateful for the attention to their children. Nine-year-old Polina said:

"I really enjoyed the celebration. I am happy that my stepfather took me to the Christmas event, as I was not sure that I could make it with my broken leg. I made



Polina works on a craft.

a craft - a glass pendant in the shape of an angel. I surely want my grandmother to see it. We answered questions on the Nativity and decorated Christmas trees in teams. I would really like to come here again. My mom, grandmother and stepfather were delighted to hear about the celebration!"

A young woman named Anastasia brought her 10-year-old son Roman to the event, and **Roma came to church again later with his grandfather.** Said Roma, *"I will come*

again, I won't miss it. I really enjoy being here with all of you. I'll ask my Mom to let me come and celebrate the New Year with you." Anastasia echoed her son's joy and expressed her thanks.

Dear brothers and sisters, our fellow servants of God, I praise the Lord and thank you for your prayers and help in carrying out this ministry. May the Lord meet your needs, and may His mercy accompany you all your days! ♦



Roma and Anastasia.



Children at the *Immanuel's Child* Christmas event.

Equipping Stewardship

Garland Gould
SGA Vice President—Partner Engagement

In past installments of Equipping Stewardship, we have discussed the four steps of *Biblical Estate Design*; **Setting Priorities; Becoming Familiar with the Rules, Tools and Vehicles; Gathering the Necessary Data; and Seeking Competent Counsel.** Then we began looking at the **Five Biblical Principles**, which are:

- **God is Owner of All**
- **The Priority in Estate Distribution is Dependency**
- **The Motivation for Estate Distribution is Love**
- **People are More Important than Dollars**
- **It is Required That a Servant be Found Faithful**

At this point, we have discussed the first two *Biblical Principles*, and you may recall that we describe *Principles #2 and #3* as our "directional arrows" as they guide our decisions about our distribution. **The Motivation of Estate Distribution is Love** is *Principle #3*. Our Scripture reference here is well known . . . *for God so loved the world, that He*

gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16).

No greater display of generosity has ever been shown and it guides us now. So practically, how do we apply this? *Principle #2* instructs us that those financially dependent on us are our priorities, so family members no longer under our responsibility do not qualify for distribution, but under this principle they do. While this principle doesn't guide you in amounts or percentages to distribute, it does eliminate a common consideration, *tradition*. We do not believe distributing assets entrusted to you by the Owner because of "tradition" is biblical. If they are not financially dependent on you, and you are not distributing the assets to them out of love, then you are likely missing God's plan for your estate.

If these principles, or any others, raise questions, please remember we are pleased to serve you. We have two booklets to help you, the *Estate Planning Guide* and the *Estate Inventory*, at no cost to you. We look forward to speaking with you and serving you as you consider God's plan of stewardship for your estate. ♦

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Here we are at yet another summer season come and gone. September is when the fall season begins, but even



Children at an *IC* event in Russia's Altai region.

as the leaves begin turning color, **our brothers and sisters across the former Soviet Union begin planning for SGA-supported *Immanuel's Child* and other winter ministries.** Your

prayers and support are a great encouragement to them, and your gifts help accomplish so much throughout the year—**children's ministries, Bible and theological training, distribution of Bibles and other Christian literature, Compassion Ministry, and much more.** Please pray about how you can help today! ♦



Summer Camp in Belarus.

Insight FROM MICHAEL

Immanuel's Child grows into a movement for Christ

This issue of the Good News Report is special to me because the lead feature is about the SGA-supported *Immanuel's Child* Christmas outreach. When SGA president emeritus Bob Provost first invited me to join the staff in the mid 1990s, I began working to help raise urgently needed support for the wonderful ministry being carried out by the churches we serve across the former Soviet Union. In those days shortly after the fall of communism, the doors for ministry in those countries were still relatively wide open. The communists had done all they could do to keep children from hearing the Gospel and being taught of Christ. We wanted to develop an effective way to help the churches minister the love of Christ to needy children and their families. By God's grace, provision and direction, *Immanuel's Child* was born!



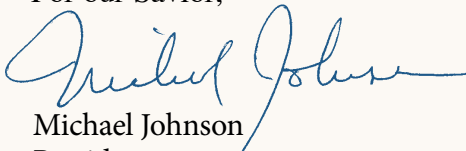
Since then, the Lord has enabled SGA to help the churches reach an ever-growing number of children. Last year, *Immanuel's Child* outreaches were used by God to reach a record **61,095 children, with 44,711 of those kids coming from unbelieving families.**

More than 3,000 repented and trusted in the Lord Jesus as their Savior. And the fruit didn't just come among children. We saw **22,850 adults** participate in the outreaches, and 636 of them trusted in Christ! **A total of 4,102 children began attending Sunday school, and 1,755 adults began attending church services.**

What a cause for rejoicing and praising God for what He has done! I trust this encourages your heart as well, because you have been a full partner in ministry through your prayers and generous support.

In earlier days, the *Immanuel's Child* outreach took place on or around January 7, which is celebrated as Christmas in Russia and the other former Soviet countries. **But we have seen more and more churches decide to also hold outreaches during Western Christmas December 25.** In fact, Ukraine even made it official to celebrate Christmas on December 25. The extra day helps open doors to help reach even more children and their families with the Gospel. **I am looking forward to this year's celebrations, trusting in the Lord to help us set yet another record attendance and participation.** Won't you join me in praying for this in advance? I can't thank you enough.

For our Savior,


Michael Johnson
President



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