



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION
Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

Immanuel's Child
Praise Reports
Continue to
Flow in—
But You Have
Helped Beyond
Even That!



**INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS
 AND GIFTS AT WORK**

- ♦ Moldova joins nations blessed by *Immanuel's Child*. Read what happened.
- ♦ Who does the Lord reach? Read Artyom's story . . .
- ♦ *Antioch Initiative* Bible training is soaring to new heights! Read what your support is doing.

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)

Churches Reach Moldova with *Immanuel's Child* for the First Time!

SGA-supported congregations bring the truth of Christmas to needy children and their families



Michael Johnson and the team take part in an *Immanuel's Child* outreach.

SGA president Michael Johnson and a team from America traveled to Moldova to be a part of the first *Immanuel's Child* outreach there, with the Gospel being proclaimed to all who needed to hear. God's family truly shows no borders! SGA Storyteller Tatiana and her family had the opportunity to witness it all and participate. She wrote, "It is beautiful to see God's work all over the earth and how brothers and sisters from the richest country in the world support ministry in a small village in Moldova to proclaim the Lord Jesus, and to share love and joy."

In the village of **Ișnovat** wonderful things happened this Christmas season. Although the



A family listens during the Christmas program.

village does not have many resources, the people who live there are eager to serve the Lord and spread the good news. The Christmas outreach—organized with the help of SGA partners—was a true blessing and an opportunity to exalt the Lord through their deeds.

Gheorghe and his wife Irina, together with their three children, decided to get actively involved and joyfully proclaim the word of the Lord. **At the outreach, the room was full of people who listened to the word of the Lord and enjoyed every gift offered.** The children prepared carols and poems about the birth of the Savior. Adelina, an 11-year-old girl, became a living example of God's work in the village. She says,

"I love studying the Word of God. I feel closer to the Lord, and the songs and messages made me feel loved and accepted before Him. I love it so much that I would like to stay in this center forever! I am also happy about the gift I received. I can't wait to leaf through the Bible I received while drinking tea with the chocolates. I truly felt God's love and care in everything I saw. I love the Lord, and I want to be with Him as much as possible."

Adelina is an example of love and trust in the Lord, and her desire to learn and live in harmony with others encourages us all to be closer to God. As the Word teaches us . . . *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as to the Lord and not to men* (Colossians 3:23). Every action, every gift, and every song is a form of praise to the Lord.

Reports from other SGA-supported *Immanuel's Child* outreaches are still coming in from churches across the former Soviet Union. ♦

REQUEST: Please continue to pray for the many children and their parents who heard the Gospel, and for the follow-up ministry that will take place.

Making Young Disciples in Ukraine with Your Faithful Support

In his letter to the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul said . . . *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth* (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). In Ukraine, Polykarp—an SGA-supported missionary pastor—takes this to heart and is diligent in making disciples with great joy.

Polykarp wrote recently to tell us about a young man named Artem. "The first time he came to our group, he was a timid teenager. He was 14 years old then. He comes from a large family; they have seven children. This hardworking and lively boy repented in one of the camps that our team held. Through fellowship with the other brothers, time together, and studying the Scriptures, Artem began to change. He was fascinated by the fact that the Bible could be interesting. At that time, he was taking a course on the *New Testament Review* with me. He had many questions. Artem passed the exam for knowledge of this course very well. It was obvious from everything that he was growing up and changing. Every month, we gather for two days to take a course, for example: *Spiritual Formation, Church History, How to Study the Bible, Apologetics, Mentoring, and the like.* Artem himself began to gather boys from the street in the village church to read the Scriptures together. He was an active participant in each camp." Artem was a simple boy from a nearby village. Polykarp began to invest in him and guide him in his walk with Christ. God gave the growth and Artem soaked up all that he learned.

Polykarp's wonderful report on Artem didn't



Artem with Polykarp's family.

end there. "In the summer of 2023, he was baptized and this past summer his brother was baptized. He became friends with my sons, and they invited him to go to university together. Artem actively serves in the church and learned to play the guitar. He studies well at the university. How happy I am that young people are developing and that our communities have such potential—*young, intellectual, and dedicated leaders with a vision of helping the local church. Looking back, I can appreciate how a village teenager became a real diamond!*"

Discipleship can take a lifetime, and often does. It may seem to be a lot of effort for very little result in the beginning. But faithfulness over time can yield amazing fruit for the glory of God. What a joy it is to make disciples, the calling of all the redeemed. We praise God for your faithful support, which helps make the ministries of Polykarp and his fellow missionary pastors possible! ♦

Who Does the Lord Reach with Your Support? Meet Artyom!

From the orphanage and prison to God's amazing grace

From Russia's Irkutsk Region

My name is Artyom, I am 40 years old. I would like to share a testimony of God's mercy, which He has shown in my life by His grace.

I was brought up in an average family. At the age of 11, I lost my mother and father and was placed in an orphanage. By the age of 18, I was in trouble with the law enforcement. While serving a prison sentence, I was thinking a lot about the meaning of life. I realized that there was another life out there. **But no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't change anything on my own strength!** Our souls seek something bright, something better, something new. I needed a guideline in my life, a foundation on which I could stand.

And I was searching. I began to come to the Orthodox church. There I found some peace of mind, but my soul was still locked up, and the sin was still luring and holding me.

In 2015, I met **Pastor Artem** (supported by SGA in **Compassion Ministry**) who was serving at the prison where I was serving my term. **Artem witnessed to me about Christ. I saw a genuine sparkle in his eyes and heard the sincerity in his words.** He invited me to a meeting attended by believing prisoners, and so I found myself among the believers. **They were praying out loud for me, for my heart, thanking God that He had brought me to their meeting.** They were men with their own wounds caused by sin, but they have already had Christ in their hearts. Among them I felt truly at peace and realized that I wanted to belong there. I turned to God saying that I couldn't and didn't want to live like that anymore, asking Him for forgiveness of my sins and for changing of my heart.

I had another year and a half to go in my term. I exchanged phone numbers with Artem, communicated with him via cell phone, and **he even came to visit me, mentoring me and supporting**

me spiritually throughout the time before I was released from prison. As time went on, my faith was strengthening, and I was establishing in the love of our God! I made a covenant with the Lord by receiving water baptism.

The Lord granted me freedom from the addictions that were weighing me down and He did change my heart! My character began to transform, and my attitude toward the world around me has changed, as well. **I have true friends, my brothers, and sisters in Christ, who help me grow spiritually and draw nearer to God. By His grace, the Lord did not stop there. He also gave me a loving and caring wife!** Truly, without Christ I would not have it all. If you choose this path once, you must remain faithful to God! He is leading me step by step to the fulfilling life I once dreamed of! Today I am an absolutely happy man, and I am thankful to Jesus for my new life! To Him be eternal glory for all things! ♦



Artyom's wedding day.

MUCH PRAYER, MUCH POWER IN ACTION

After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers (Acts 18:1-3).

We have frequently noted the resourcefulness of our brothers and sisters across the former Soviet Union, and how they come up with creative ways to present the Gospel to their people. Alexander, an SGA-supported missionary pastor in Belarus, is the latest example. He and his church have a fruitful ministry to children, which began with mobile phones:

"Greetings, brothers and sisters in Christ! Glory to the Lord Jesus Christ! He continues our walk before Him and empowers us to work for His glory. Our Bible Post Group ministry has been very blessed. It is a very different kind of ministry to young people. The children receive various tasks and questions via their cell phones. In this way we tell the children about Christ. The meeting for introducing children to this ministry was held on the church grounds. There was an inflatable slide, trampolines, cotton candy, popcorn, rice pilaf cooked outside in a cauldron, and games with the children. This is how we got to know them, and to date more than 40 children have participated in the Bible school ministry—especially those who have not attended Sunday school but hear about Christ this way.

All the children to whom we have talked are from low-income and large families. It was a joy for me that these children received not only physical food, but they also received a special atmosphere of love and attention. The presence of the Lord and His



Children from the Bible Post Group ministry.

care was in everything, and everyone. Parents came up and thanked me with astonishment and wondered if it was all free! When there are festivals in town, the games and treats have a charge. I was happy to say yes, but this is the least that our Great God gives for free. He also freely gives eternal life to everyone who comes to Him!

One boy named Paul, with whom I spoke about Christ, began to attend Sunday school, and I can see that the Lord is touching his heart. The moms who brought their children received grocery support for the family, and I was able to talk to each of them individually about the Lord and the salvation in Jesus Christ. Being in difficult life situations, they felt especially keenly, some even listened with tears to the most important thing that a person should hear in his life. I pray to the Lord that all the ministries, all the words that were directed to save the lives of the people of this city will yield results—that they turn from their sinful lives and became new creatures in our Lord Jesus Christ!"

It is so beautiful to see when God begins to work in a heart that has been distant from Him. Pastor Alexander and his church found a way to bring people not only into the church, but also to share Christ's love. They began with ministering to the children, and the fact that they didn't attend Sunday school didn't stop them. Noting that many children and youth were tethered to their mobile phones and devices, the church hit on the idea to use that method of communication to get biblical truth to where it needed to go—before the eyes and into the minds of these children. God blessed their creative labors and opened the door for other types of ministry. How marvelous is our God, and what an example for us to note in our own ministry before the Lord. ♦

Your Support Helps Propel Antioch Initiative Bible Training

Dr. Larry Duncan

SGA Director of Training Ministries/Church Relations Representative



Studying God's Word during an Antioch Initiative class.

Not long ago, we received a brief but encouraging update from Pastor Artem in Ukraine regarding SGA-supported *Antioch Initiative* Bible training in his country. Last year, the Ukrainian Baptist Union announced a bold effort to raise up 1,000 new church-planting pastors and teams to work with them. They are praying, with God's blessing, to reach many Ukrainians for Christ and to form 1,000 new churches by the year 2036.

In Kozelets, which is in the Chernihiv oblast (state), they concluded a session with 23 attending. Holding such training is a challenge in the midst of an ongoing war, yet we are praying for more to be committed church planting pastors, and to receive further training. They are praying for both men and women committing to being part of a team to assist the church-planting pastor. Join us in

praying for them as they faithfully pursue their vision for Christ.

We also received a report from Pastor Yegori in Russia's Yakutsk region, who expressed excitement to see classes begin again after a two-year break. There were two young men who were so impressed by the classes that they made a decision to attend **Novosibirsk Biblical Theological Seminary**—one of the best biblical schools in Russia supported by SGA. One of these men is Nikita, a young brother who serves in a worship group and is a beginning preacher. He wanted to study so much that he came to Yakutsk for the *Antioch* classes right after he was discharged from the army:

"My first Antioch class was Hermeneutics. It was like an enlightenment for me in my Christian life. I've never heard so many biblical truths in just a few days, I had never approached the Word of God with such thoroughness and accuracy. This is what my heart wanted for many years. I long for knowing my Lord more and more. Not just to have knowledge, but also to serve my Lord better, and to serve His church better. I have a job and I hope that my boss will let me go to Novosibirsk three times a year. I pray for it and ask you to support me in my prayer. My church was encouraged by my decision to get a Christian biblical education, they all support my desire to study!"



Nikita preaching.

One missiologist aptly compares the growth of the Body of Christ in the Majority World to a bullet train and the growth of pastoral and ministry training to a bicycle. By the end of this decade, the

number of churches in the Majority World is projected to double. This also means the need for pastors and ministry leaders will significantly increase. Accelerating training, therefore, is a strategic necessity. Yakutia, the vast region of northeastern Russia, is part of the Majority World in which the Body of Christ continues to expand. SGA has been engaged in a strategic plan to train pastors and ministry leaders in Yakutsk. The *Antioch Initiative* and *Advanced Antioch Initiative* are having sessions this month. New students are attending the *Antioch Initiative* session, which enables those who are new to the training to engage in the process. The *Advanced Antioch Initiative* is enabling those who have completed the *AI* training to deepen their

understanding of Scripture and develop their skills as pastors and preachers. They together are being trained to reach more of their population for Christ and build the churches of Yakutia in the faith. The SGA-sponsored *Antioch Initiative* training has more than doubled in 2024 in the countries SGA serves. The *Advanced Training*, which is a new strategic training initiative of SGA, is gaining traction in other countries SGA serves. By God's grace, SGA is accelerating training as God opens doors and provides the means to meet the needs with which we are connected.

We rejoice at seeing what God is doing in **Ukraine, Siberia, and Yakutia!** Pray with us for God to send out more faithful workers into His harvest! ♦



Students in an AI training course.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Since SGA's founding in 1934, we have been abundantly blessed by God and enabled to help support so many ministries across the former Soviet Union. The churches that we serve together



Immanuel's Child outreach in Moldova.

with you are resourceful, and they joyfully seize every opportunity the Lord grants them to share the Gospel and the love of Christ. Your prayers and support help enable Bible training, Compassion Ministry, children's outreaches such as summer camps, *Immanuel's Child* at Christmas and *Orphans Reborn*, distribution of Bibles and Christian literature, and so much more. Please pray about how you can help today! ♦

Insight FROM MICHAEL

Through *Immanuel's Child*, You Help Reach Entire Generations of Children and Families!

Most of the time, SGA does not begin getting many reports from *Immanuel's Child* outreaches that we support across the former Soviet Union until later in the spring. So many of the churches that participate are in outlying regions away from major cities, and the challenges of communication plus the busyness of ongoing ministry can delay things somewhat. **But this year, I had the privilege of being in Moldova for the first SGA-supported *Immanuel's Child* ministry there, and Tatiana—our Moldova Storyteller—was able to get a report to the home office quickly.** We're blessed and joyful to share it in this month's **Good News Report**.



As I have noted before, these Christmas outreaches known as *Immanuel's Child* are very special to me, because I was a part of their creation and participated in the very first ones many years ago now. **I can't express how wonderful it is to see how these have grown in subsequent decades, and how God is using them to reach record numbers of children every year with the Gospel. More than just children are reached—parents, aunts, uncles, orphanage staff, foster families, and other caregivers also hear the true story of Christmas and the life-changing Gospel.**

And for many children, these are not just transient moments lost in time. We have known of people who were children and received an *Immanuel's Child* Bethlehem Star at an outreach you helped make possible . . . **and they still have that Star today as adults!**

Seeing the joy on the faces of the children as they receive their gifts and learn of our Savior's love brings us joy that is difficult to express in words. **So many of these children come from desperately needy families, and otherwise would have little for which to look forward at Christmas.** *Your faithfulness* has helped make an enormous difference in their lives.

Beyond the Christmas season, the many other ministries supported through SGA go forward. The faithful, hard-working missionary pastors are at the forefront of it all, and they are deeply thankful for you and all that you do—as we all are at SGA. **Thank you!**

For our Savior,

Michael Johnson
President



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