



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

As the Cold Hits . . . Christ's Gospel Melts Hearts

Your support helps churches to brave freezing storms for Jesus

INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ♦ Bombed out of their home . . . now this family is going to church!
- ♦ Two months of incredible ministry in Belarus—salvations, baptisms, and more
- ♦ A prayer changes *everything* for a worried young mom!

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)



Operation Winter Warmth Meets Urgent Needs of a Hard Hit Family

Your Gifts to SGA Make the Difference After a Crushing Blow

Oleh S.

SGA-Supported Compassion Ministry in Ukraine

Thank you for your help! The people were touched by your care, as they have not received such wonderful help for a very long time. We were very careful to buy good quality food and hygiene products.



Food package for a family.

Most families nowadays cannot afford to buy even the most basic things like sausage or laundry detergent, and even in large sizes. So, thanks to your help, people felt loved. We are very grateful to all SGA partners for your generous help! Small churches and groups are where displaced families and people in need come, and we always try to show them attention, compassion, and the love of Christ!

Yuri and Maryna Lost Their Home—But Found Hope

One such family is that of Yuri, his wife Maryna, and their two sons—Mikhail (10) and Alexander (14). The family moved from the Donetsk



Maryna and Mikhail.

region to Kropyvnytskyi at the beginning of the war. **Their home took a direct hit from a Russian missile.** The whole family attends a Bible study group in another village after being settled not far from the house where the Bible study meets. Both their sons have varying degrees of autism. However, the boys are quite social and have actively attended the group with their parents since 2022.



Other families helped through Compassion Ministry.

During this time, the family lost their property and their grandmother passed away. At the same time, they have developed friendships with all the members of the Bible study group. They learned about God and continue to study the Word of God. **During the period of loss of a loved one, they experienced what a Christian family is, and how to support and bear each other's burdens.** They are still on the way to making the most important

decision in their lives, but their hearts have become tender. **They know the truth, believe in God, and know very well to Whom they need to go to receive salvation.**

Maryna said, "Today we received a huge package of help from the **Winter Warmth** outreach. I want to sincerely thank everyone who supports us in this difficult time. The food and hygiene items we received are not only a material help that is so necessary for families who were forced to leave their homes, but also

"The food and hygiene items we received are not only a material help that is so necessary for families who were forced to leave their homes, but also a great testimony of love and care of Christians and God Himself."

a great testimony of love and care of Christians and God Himself. We especially appreciate the fact that this support comes from people with whom we meet weekly for fellowship and study of the Word of God. We really appreciate these meetings because they inspire us not to lose hope and move on. The constant reminder from our mentors and the Bible that "God loves and will not leave you in trouble" really gives strength and works through His people!"

This is a great testimony and demonstration for us that God is indeed with us! Thank you for your open hearts, warm words and effective help! May the Lord bless you a hundredfold! ♦

Editor's Note: Beginning this month, SGA will begin the process of using name spellings in the English alphabet that are relevant to a specific country rather than solely the Russian/English spellings that we have used for many years. The reason is that more former Soviet nations are reverting to their national languages although Russian is still spoken. There may be exceptions, for instance when a missionary pastor in a given country uses Russian/English spellings themselves. As always, our prayer is that we are able to best serve our brothers and sisters overseas as they share with us what God is doing through their ministries.

“For us, these two months have been a blessing from God!”

Salvations, baptisms, and changed lives in Belarus! Read the details . . .

Nikolai S.

SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Belarus

We especially felt God's presence in our church as last summer wound down. **God gave us the opportunity to hold another camp for needy children.** Since we could not accommodate all of them during the first three camps, there were still children who really wanted to be there. **With God's help, we were able to acquire the funds to hold the event.** Once again, a good, close-knit ministry team was formed. When I prayed with them in the morning, I saw how they spoke with love and joy about the previous days spent with the children. Together we thanked God for each day!



Children at the summer camp.

The children were from poor families and with special needs. **Some had nothing to eat at home.**

For example, young Vanya's father is dead, and his mother is raising four children alone. In addition, the mother is often ill. **Vanya is the eldest child, and he has to do a lot of housework and looking after the younger children.** He came to camp with worn-out shoes, so we bought him new sandals.



Vanya.

When Sasha on our team taught Bible lessons, Vanya listened very attentively. During the last session when Sasha taught a lesson on swearing, he asked everyone to watch their words and their tongues. Vanya often swore and he realized it was a sin. **After the lesson, he approached Sasha, and they talked. At the end,**

Vanya prayed a prayer of repentance. After camp, his mom testified that Vanya had changed his speech and now doesn't use swear words when speaking. He started coming to Sunday school!

September was also a special month for us. **There was a joyful baptism event on the banks of our beautiful river and a celebration at church.** Two sisters and one brother entered into a covenant with God. **I am glad that both young and middle-aged people are coming to the Lord.**



Baptism of new believers.

A young sister named Margarita and a young brother named David are actively involved in the church. Another middle-aged sister was baptized. Her mother used to attend church. Now she is with the Lord in eternity. At one time, she offered up her prayers for her daughter with tears in her eyes. The daughter came to church only a few times, although her mother's prayers did not go unnoticed. **After her death, God began to touch her daughter's heart. She began attending the services and at one of the services, the Holy Spirit touched her, and she repented.** Now she has been baptized. Glory to God!

For us, these two months have been a blessing from God. Many children and adults from unbelieving families have heard about Christ and His Gospel. I see the work of the Holy Spirit here. Praise God for using our church to spread the Gospel in our area. May God bless you, brothers and sisters, for your prayers for me, my family, and our church. We are also praying for you, your ministry, and your churches. Stay with the Lord! ♦

MUCH PRAYER, MUCH POWER IN ACTION

He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm (Psalm 40:2).

Often, when someone goes through very difficult circumstances, it isn't until they come through to the other side that they begin to see just how much God has been at work through even the darkest of times. Even in the midst of complete despair, God causes the light to break through. By the power of His Spirit and through His people, He shows His loving compassion to those who are in need of His grace and mercy.

Diana, an SGA Storyteller in Kazakhstan, shares about Regina and her difficult life. “Regina is 16 years old and comes from a small village, where she lives with her mother along with five brothers and sisters. Several years ago, her father left the family, and the way it happened left a deep scar on her heart. When she was still a little girl, her father began using drugs. The home was filled with constant arguments and tension. One day, Regina was in the hospital undergoing treatment with her father by her side. At that very moment, a message arrived from her mother. ‘If you don't stop using drugs, we will have to divorce.’ Upon hearing this, he took his own life. And the first person to witness his death was Regina herself.

‘I still remember that moment,’ Regina shares. ‘It felt like time stood still. All I could feel was pain and emptiness.’ After the tragedy, she withdrew completely. Whenever she did appear somewhere, she

was always silent, gloomy, and seemed to have lost all interest in life. It was during this difficult season that we first met her family. We began visiting them, bringing food, talking with her mother, and trying to connect with Regina as well. But most importantly, we simply tried to show love and compassion. Little by little, we noticed a change: a spark returning to her eyes, a glimpse of light breaking through.

We invited Regina to camp, and for the first time, she began to open up. Later she occasionally started coming to gatherings. We witnessed what we could only call a miracle—she began to talk, to share, and something deep inside of her started to heal. ‘At camp, I felt for the first time that I was accepted, that I truly mattered to someone,’ Regina recalls. ‘There I could laugh and enjoy life like any other teenager.’ Gradually, she opened her heart to God. She began reading the Bible and praying. Her encounter with Jesus Christ transformed her life. This summer, Regina was baptized and made a covenant with God. And this year, she came back to camp not as a child in need of care, but as a member of the team. She looked after the children, laughed, played, and brought joy to others. The withdrawn and gloomy girl was gone. Before us stood a different Regina; smiling, full of life, and filled with hope for the future. ‘I want to help other children the same way I was once helped,’ she says. ‘If God changed my life, then their lives can be changed too.’ Today, Regina is studying in college and dreams of becoming a lawyer. She also has a deep passion for volleyball. She has already earned the title of Candidate for Master of Sports and continues to move forward with confidence. ‘When I play volleyball, I feel strength and freedom,’ she smiles. ‘I know that I have a future.’”

Regina's story is a powerful testimony that even the deepest wound can be healed by God's love and the care of people. Her life is a shining example that no darkness is greater than the light of Christ. ♦



Regina's baptism.

Loving Prayer Opens a Door for Salvation!

Disappointed by false religion, she met Christ

Victor G.

SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Russia's Volgograd Region



(Left to Right) Praying for the village; reaching local people.

I went on two missionary trips last year—one to Georgia and the next to the Karachaevo-Cherkessia region of Russia. I helped with ministry to children from poor families and with the construction of the church house in Georgia.

In Karachaevo-Cherkessia, I was deeply touched by the testimony of a lady, Guldzhan (not her real name). More than 20 years ago, she used to profess another religion. Guldzhan has a husband and three children (two daughters and a son). One of her daughters and her son have a very aggressive form of autism. She was very weary with the behavior of her children and asked her god to heal her children, but nothing happened.

Then a Christian sister began to work with Guldzhan. She saw what Guldzhan was experiencing, especially because of the aggressive behavior of her daughter.

The Christian sister asked Guldzhan if she could pray to Jesus for her sick daughter, and Guldzhan agreed out of her despair. It was a simple prayer, filled with compassion.

At the end of the prayer, the

Christian sister said, "In the name of Jesus, Amen!" The girl suddenly calmed down. Her condition did not disappear, but the aggression she had shown disappeared completely.

Seeing this, Guldzhan was shocked and became fearful. She asked our believing sister about Jesus and Who He was. The Christian sister told her about Jesus, that He is the Lord and

Savior of the world. Guldzhan remained fearful and could not understand what happened. Guldzhan began to talk to Jesus at night in her bed. Then she kneeled and believed in Jesus as her Lord and Savior. Today, Guldzhan is a Christian.

The Lord gives her wisdom to tell people of her nation about Jesus correctly. Guldzhan, being educated in languages, takes part in the translation of the New Testament into her native language. Much can be said about the work of Christ through Guldzhan. Glory be to the Father in Jesus Christ! ♦



Visiting Guldzhan.

Equipping Stewardship

Garland Gould

SGA Senior Vice President of Partner Engagement

We took a break last month to look at Year End Giving Strategies and now we turn back to the four steps of *Biblical Estate Design*; **Setting Priorities; Becoming Familiar with the Rules, Tools and Vehicles; Gathering the Necessary Data; and Seeking Competent Council.** In setting our priorities, we look at **5 Biblical Principles.** As a refresher, these principles are:



Garland Gould

- 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

In October's issue, we briefly discussed biblical principle #1 and underscored that this principle is the foundation for all of our planning. Now it is time to discuss principle #2, *The Priority in Estate Distribution is Dependency.* This principle is the first

of two "directional arrows" for our distribution plans.

The biblical reference for this principle is . . . *but if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever* (1 Timothy 5:8). This is a blunt statement from Paul and it gets our attention. So we use this to inform us of whom we consider first in our distributions. Keep in my mind that this principle states the *priority* and does not exclude family that are not financially dependent on you. That is a different decision with a different principle that we will look at next time.

In our application of this principle, it most obviously includes minor children and spouses. Others that you need to consider may include aging parents, a sibling, or other family member that has been taken under your care, missionaries you support, and perhaps other ministries, especially your local church.

Please let us know if we can answer any questions about these principles, and if you would like to receive the brochure, *Principles of Estate Planning.* We also have an informational newsletter that you may find helpful and interesting. You can reach us for either, or both, at plannedgiving@sga.org.

This information and service is our ministry to you and not contingent on any future gifts. ♦

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Wintertime across the former Soviet Union is beyond harsh. The bitter winter temperatures of Siberia and the Arctic regions are legendary, often plunging to double-digits below zero. **This reality is what makes SGA-supported Compassion Ministry so very important, enabling churches to reach needy families with aid that they so urgently need.** Your gifts help provide so much more—support of sound Bible training, missionary pastors and evangelism, children's ministries such as Summer Bible Camps, *Immanuel's Child* and *Orphans Reborn*, plus distribution of Bibles and Christian literature. Please pray about how you can help today! ♦



Operation Winter Warmth in Ukraine.

Insight FROM MICHAEL

Your Heart of Christian Compassion Points Their Hearts to Christ Himself

If there is one thing we hear often from SGA-supported missionary pastors across the former Soviet Union, it is this: **Compassion Ministry** is used by the Lord to open doors for the life-changing Gospel!

Compassion Ministry can take several forms. It can mean a distribution of food and other aid to a needy individual or family, given in the name of Jesus. Each year, SGA raises support for **Operation Winter Warmth** in several former Soviet nations, and we have supported **Heat and Hope** in Ukraine to help churches serve their people in the midst of an awful, devastating war. We endeavor to do this in the most cost-effective manner possible. These days, SGA rarely ships aid overseas via sea container as we did during the 1990s, but instead enables the churches we serve to obtain the aid from where they are. And it truly makes a difference for many people.

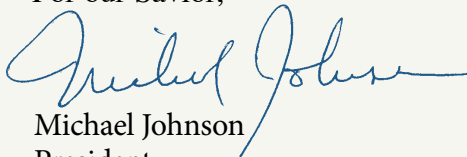
The Gospel element is the most important of all. I think of what James said in his epistle . . . *If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that* (James 2:15-16)?

Sharing the love of Christ and the hope of the Gospel is paramount when the churches engage in Compassion Ministry and distribute help to people. And the impact is profound. So many individuals and families have been moved by the love shown to them, and have **begun coming to the church in response.** They want to know more about what motivates believers to reach out to them, expecting nothing in return. And God gets all the praise and glory!

I'm so thankful to be a part of this wonderful ministry, and I trust you are as well. We

truly could not do it without you. Please know that you are helping to make an eternal difference in countless lives.

For our Savior,


Michael Johnson
President



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