



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

KIDS FOR CHRIST:

Youth are
Receiving the
Gospel . . . and
Some Are
Delivering it in
the Harshest
Areas

INSIDE: REASONS TO REJOICE

- ♦ In Far East Russian villages, guess who's advancing for Jesus?
- ♦ Problems in Ukraine. Details . . .
- ♦ Uplifting reports on summer youth Bible camps!

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)

A Faithful Witness in the Fires of Persecution Bears Eternal Fruit!

Former prison officials publicly honor the faith of those they once incarcerated.

Victor L.

SGA-Sponsored Missionary Pastor in the Caucasus Region

Under the 70-year rule of atheistic communism, Christian believers endured severe persecution, with many giving their lives for their faith in the Lord Jesus. Many others were sent into internal exile in remote regions and lived in the most difficult conditions. When the older generation tells us of



The general told of the exiled Baptist believers he had met years ago in Kolyma, Far East Russia.

these things, it seems like it would have been unbearable. But God preserved His church in a miraculous way.

The believers humbly carried their cross and expressed love to their persecutors. And they planted seeds that even today are blossoming to God's glory.

One day, we went to visit prisons in the North Caucasus. We had to visit the prison administration to receive permission, and a general of the directorate met with us. He was a rather elderly person with grey hair, but he was asked to continue his work because he has much experience, a kind heart, and respects his co-workers. As we sat at the meeting table, he began to tell us about his life and

we were amazed. We finally understood why we were being treated so respectfully.

The general was once a young militia officer in Kolyma, which is a place that many political and religious exiles were sent. It was a difficult place that the authorities did not maintain, with a lot of snow in winter and mud in the spring. Several Baptist families were sent there and he was put in charge of them. He told us that when he checked up on these families as part of his duties, they always met him with hospitality. **He never saw gloomy faces and their homes looked tidy.** Women were of gentle, kind spirit and the children obeyed their parents.

When the next spring came, they began on their own to fill an embankment on the streets after a day of heavy labor to cope with mud and deep puddles. The other villagers did not come out to help them at first, but then their consciences got to them and they began to come out and help put the streets in order. In time, this village became the best village in Kolyma. **He witnessed how godly Christians behaved in their places of work. Other people stopped using bad words when the believers were near.**

Many years had gone by since then, but the general still remembers their names. He concluded by saying, "Those believers were Baptists. That is why I know your faith very well and that it teaches kind things. That is why the doors of our prisons are open to you! Then unexpectedly, the general's secretary came in with an official award—we all received medals that read, "For contribution on behalf of the penal system." He shook our hands and thanked us for the work that the churches do.

I was so thankful and deeply touched by his words about the testimony of these believers who are now with the Lord. Their names are unknown by us now, but the light they left behind continues to shine and bring forth fruit! ♦

“WE NEED TO GO!”

Young Believers Respond to the Desperate Need, and Open Door, in Spiritually Desolate Villages.

Eric Mock

Vice President of Ministry Operations

The vast, harsh landscape of Far East Russia contains hundreds of villages that have never heard of God, much less the Gospel. Miles upon miles can lie between these remote outposts of civilization, and some villages are only accessible by either air or by snowmobile when the rivers freeze over.

The forbidding climate is not the only thing to consider. **The people living in these villages are steeped in paganism of varying varieties. They offer vodka to the “gods of the river” for a good catch of fish or to the woods for a good hunt. Life there is truly harsh and hope is virtually non-existent.** Yet the evangelical churches SGA serves hear the call of God—the same call expressed in the hearing of the Prophet Isaiah . . . *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* (Isaiah 6:8). **In the Far East city of Khabarovsk, young believers are answering “Send us!”** I had the blessing and privilege of meeting some of them earlier this year, along with Derek Maxwell who leads SGA/United Kingdom.

One morning we worshipped with Pastor Benjamin Livtsenyuk and his congregation, which is located in an inner-city neighborhood. With its population of 607,000 people, Khabarovsk is a

natural hub for ministry activities in the Far East.

Benjamin called out to his son, Vadim, and a

youth group that

had recently made an excursion to six remote villages to provide a report.

They told me that **these villages have no church, no Christian presence, and the people there have no hope.** This was the third time the young people had travelled there to build relationships and share the Gospel. **Now they plan on making visits to the villages at least twice a month as God provides.** As they related their experience to me, they said it was both exciting and scary. **They spoke with one man in a broken-down village who said, “People have forgotten about God.” Another woman related her near-death experiences and wondered aloud if God was protecting her for some reason.** They broke into smaller groups and prayed with people they met.

Wonderfully, in almost every case the adults and children urged the youth to return and talk with them more! There was one exception when they encountered a man with a shovel who made it clear he did not want to talk to the youth. As they finished telling me about their journey, one youth spoke up and declared, **“Praise God that we have a pastor who told us that we needed to go, or we never would have gone!”** Everyone in the congregation was asked to form groups of two or three and pray for the villages, asking God to open the hearts of the villagers to the Gospel. Derek and I joined them in prayer. **God Himself is Reaching Russia Now, raising up a generation ready and willing to go.** Will you prayerfully consider helping send them to reach even more people with the love of Jesus? ♦



Eric Mock and Derek Maxwell with some of the outreach team.

48 Physically Challenged Children Say '

Pastor Dmitri in Belarus

This past July was a joyful, unforgettable time for our church, and especially for 48 children, their friends, and parents. The children have a variety of physical challenges, and we had the joy of holding **Camp Vozrozhdenie (Revival)** in western Belarus.



The children who attend the camp have a variety of physical and mental disabilities.

The children who attend our camp have a very difficult time. They often are not accepted by their peers, but here in the camp they find new friends and happily interact with each other. **Our society does not accept children with physical or mental challenges, but they feel loved and accepted in the camp.** Our theme was “Conqueror of Mountains.”

During the session, we held numerous activities, sports, lessons, and music. We discussed God, the Gospel, and God’s purpose for our lives. The parents were there in the camp with their children, and it was a joy to have them all participating together.

Although the camp session came to an end, our ministry with the children and their families did not. We followed up afterward, visiting their homes and bringing them food parcels, and then inviting them to come to the church. Thanks be to God for this ministry, and I am very thankful to you for your help in purchasing food and the colorful children’s literature. The seeds of God’s Word have been planted and will bring fruit in His time! ♦

Letters from the Campers’ Parents

*We were left with a great impression through the camp and had a wonderful time with you all. **We will never forget it. You have strengthened our faith and it is very important for us.** Thank you for the good stories from the Bible. We look forward to coming to the camp again.*

—Roman and Olya

Thank you for inviting me and my mother to the camp. What a joy it is to come to know new friends. We loved to be in the camp together. We are in need of the church and the Lord. I cannot run and know that I am probably like a lost sheep. I want the Lord to heal my brothers and help me. He is the Good Shepherd!

—Violeta

*Every child came into this world to bring joy to parents and friends. Different obstacles make people suffer, and this camp was a great joy for the parents and children. It was a territory of love and joy! **We heard of a loving God and the ultimate source of joy in this camp.** We want to thank you for this opportunity to find new friends, with love and gratitude!*

—Svetlana and Maxim



The children, parents, and staff all came t

THANK YOU!



Learning about Jesus was a highlight of the camp for many of the children.



ne together at the camp.

God is Opening Doors for Evangelism

By Oleg Bobkin

SGA-Sponsored Missionary Pastor in Voronezh, Russia

We are so thankful to SGA partners for your prayers and assistance in preparations to hold our **camp for orphans**. Ongoing bad weather forced us to postpone the camp until August 4 - 11. Part of the activities scheduled include taking trips and going on hikes. Please pray that the Lord will touch the children and their caregivers, so that they will trust in Christ for forgiveness and experience the love of our Lord.



The camp for orphans ministers to both the children and their caregivers.

We continue to bring the Word of God to **local prisons, homes for children with special needs, and orphanages**. God has been very gracious to us. We see His hand in opening doors for us where we had not been able to previously go, and to witness about His love. Praise God!

There is an additional opportunity to share with you. We were able to put up posters for evangelism in one of the earliest Houses of Prayer that was established in the village of Borisoglebsky Sands, which is in the Voronezh region about 155 miles from the city of Voronezh. Also, we are planning a **large prison evangelism** effort in the city of Borisoglebsk, where there are 1,500 inmates.

Pray that the Word of God will penetrate the land so that every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord! May blessings in the knowledge of our God be with you! ♦

Broken Young Lives Need Christ's Love

Every year, our church organizes a Christian camp. We have children from poor families as well as orphans. Sometimes reaching these children takes time and not just one event. I'd like to tell you about two boys named Daniel and Vlad, and to ask you to pray for them.



By the end of the 12 day camp Vlad wants to continue to go to church and Sunday school.

Vlad came to camp and caused quite a few issues. It was his first time in a Christian camp, and he comes from a very dysfunctional family. His mother was recently remarried and had a baby. Vlad has been completely forgotten. His reaction to everything was aggression. He did not want to be part of the activities at all. He always kept to himself and was aggressive with all adults. **But over the 12 days of the camp, his behavior began to change.** He began to sit with the other kids, and eventually began singing songs with us, and answering us in a quieter voice.



Daniel was able to go to camp when another child gave up his spot.

After one conflict, I had a sincere talk with him at night when the other boys were sleeping. He began to cry and told me about his family. I gave him a hug and he burst into tears. **His heart melted at last.** He wants to go to church and Sunday school, and we are praying that this desire will stay with him.

Daniel's mother and grandmother died in a car accident two weeks before the camp. He had already lost his father earlier. One of his classmates who goes to church along with his parents learned about this tragedy, and they wanted Daniel to be able to go to our Christian camp but we had no vacancy. **So Daniel's Christian classmate gave up his place in the camp so Daniel could come.** We tried to give him as much love and care as we could, but there was still some tension. We planted seeds into his soul. Please join us in praying for these boys, that God will bring them to Himself in saving faith. ♦



The children at the camp participated in games as well as learning about Jesus.

CIS IN THE NEWS

PLEASE PRAY! Evangelicals and Religious Groups Targeted in Eastern Ukraine

In late July, authorities in Ukraine's Lugansk region declared on their website that they have banned activities of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, calling the churches "extremist." Forum 18 reported that armed men have been raiding Baptist churches and other religious communities, halting worship services and seizing literature. A UECB spokesman said that he had seen no court documents or other legal orders about such a ban, though officials forcibly closed some churches including one in Molodogvardeisk in June. Worship services were halted in Gorodyshche, as well as a related medical ministry that helped needy people in the region. Courts have been handing down fines of several weeks' average wages to punish the worshippers.

This tragic situation vividly underscores the dangerous situation in the eastern conflict zones in Ukraine, where separatist forces and Ukrainian government troops are still fighting. The churches SGA serves are committed to proclaiming the Gospel in these regions, and ministering to the humanitarian needs of the people regardless of what happens in the political world, and until peace comes. Pray for the safety of missionary pastors and church teams in the region. Also please pray for more Crisis Evangelism Fund resources to equip the churches for outreach. ♦



HOW YOU CAN HELP

There's a special time of year coming—an opportunity for you to be a blessing to men and families who sacrifice so much for our Lord Jesus. These are the missionary pastors and ministry leaders in the former USSR who often must work two or three jobs while pastoring or leading a ministry. They work their hearts out.

So every Christmas, SGA supporters conduct a **MISSIONARY PASTORS CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN**. It's a special love collection we send to these missionary pastors and their families at Christmastime. This campaign provides them an extra boost of funds for **clothes, food, medicine, and other essentials**. But the biggest help is this: **the spiritual encouragement they need so much** as they do the difficult work of the Gospel. It tells them, *"You're not forgotten by your brothers and sisters in America. We love you. We pray for you. We want to give you a special blessing this Christmas."*



"You're not forgotten by your brothers and sisters in America. We love you. We pray for you. We want to give you a special blessing this Christmas."

Our 2018 Campaign Goal is \$110,000 by November 30 to bless more than 1,000 missionary pastors and ministry leaders (such as our *Orphans Reborn* leaders) as another harsh winter approaches. If you would like to participate this year you can make a secure gift online at sga.org/gifts.

You can support all of SGA's ministry outreach by completing the enclosed reply card and mailing back to us with your gift. Thank you!

Canadian Connection

The Apostle Peter writes to those who were exiles of the dispersion during his time in history. Life was difficult beyond anything most in North America today could understand. His words of encouragement were:

*Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed,
but let him glorify God in that name (1 Peter 4:16).*

In this package of material, you read of countless, unnamed heroes who suffer for the glory of God. They are both young and old, but all with a hope of seeing Jesus, their Saviour, and spending eternity with Him. Servants of the Lord practice what they preach regardless of the outward circumstances. As committed followers of Christ, the world cannot take away that which has been born from above.

Read and rejoice with me of children who are not wanted, some physically and mentally challenged, yet loved by Christians. Prisoners being freed from the shackles of sin. Orphanages being visited every week bringing hope through age appropriate, dynamic programs sharing the love of Christ. This is all done through local churches filled with people who have a heart for evangelism.



Children's shelter

Billy Graham preaching, "Follow the steps of Christ. Accept the burdens that come, for God will carry them on His shoulders. Accept the blessings that come, and humbly give them back to God." No matter our lot in life, God will walk with us every step and we will never be alone. It reminds me of that poem, "Footprints", written by Margaret Fishback Powers, whom I have met on numerous occasions.

May I encourage you to encourage them? One way we do this at Christmas is to give a gift to the local pastors we support. Each year, we send them something extra beyond their monthly assistance. I know for a fact that many share that gift with others as an avenue of evangelism.

Be greatly blessed with these reports of how God is building His church. Camp season has passed with exceptional results and many prepare for Harvest celebration and Christmas just around the corner. The cold weather will settle in for several months, but it will not dampen the Spirit of God at work in the former Soviet Union.

I only wish everyone could travel to these lands where no tourists visit and see God at work in miraculous ways. Pictures that you view in this Good News Report speak a thousand words.

Bill Ball
Executive Director, SGA/Canada



A Bridge of Hope

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Slavic Gospel Association Canada

766 Hespeler Road, Suite #204

Cambridge, ON N3H 5L8

www.sgacanada.ca

E-mail: info@sgacanada.ca

Phone: 519-621-3553

Fax: 519-621-7571

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