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SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

# Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

## Special *Christ Over COVID* Campaign Report from the Field: Your Prayers and Support Have Much Power!

### INSIDE: GOD IS RESPONDING TO YOUR FAITH

- ♦ Orphans in terrible situations find hope in Christ during the crisis.
- ♦ From Ukraine to Russia, your prayers and gifts bless many!
- ♦ First-hand reports come in on the turmoil in Russia and her neighbor countries.

*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)*



# SGA Partners Uphold Servants of Christ in Troubled Times

## *Christ Over COVID campaign reaches into Yakutia*

**Yegor Mikhalev**

**SGA-Sponsored Missionary Pastor in Yakutsk, Russia**



Families in Yakutsk receiving packages of food.

**G**od is great and He is in control of everything going on in the world. We believe that this situation with the coronavirus pandemic is also under the control of our Almighty Creator and Savior. We pray that He will end the pandemic soon, and that He will use the crisis to bring salvation to many people around the world in these troubled times.

In the Yakutsk region, we have had hundreds of people infected with the virus, with the majority being in the city of Yakutsk proper. As of this report, only a handful have died but the number of infections is rising. People were not allowed to go out of their houses, except to buy groceries and household items at the nearest store. If you needed to walk a pet, you could only do so within 100 yards of your home. Shops, restaurants, and other businesses were closed except for groceries and drug stores.



Buses were also shut down for most of the day, so people either had to walk or take a taxi. Those who are 65 years old and older were not allowed to leave their houses even to buy food! The authorities said that relatives or volunteers should take care of the elderly. Later in April, fines began being imposed on anyone who violated the lockdown.

The economic situation in Russia as a whole is also grim due to the pandemic and the fall in oil prices. People are losing their jobs and salaries. The authorities strongly recommended that all churches stop services and gatherings till the quarantine ends

in order to minimize the risk of infecting people, and our churches in Yakutia have complied. We record sermons on video and send it to church members via WhatsApp and Telegram, and we use phone calls in order to encourage our believers. We ask our brothers and sisters around the world to pray for relief, and for a spiritual revival in our country and around the world.

### Reaching Out with Christ's Love

In these times of trouble, some of our believers are doctors, so they are at work during the quarantine helping the diseased. Examples are Dr. Alexei Podoksenov in the village of Aldan or Dr. Ekaterina Moiseeva in Pokrovsk. Other believers

serve as volunteers. For instance, in the city of Yakutsk, Nikolai Sidorov serves as a driver for doctors. Since local buses are not operating, he decided to give doctors a ride to the hospitals. He wrote a sign on his car's rear windshield—"Ready to give a ride to doctors for free." **In Aldan, Pastor Igor Melnik and his wife have joined the local volunteer group bringing food packages to poor families and sharing the Gospel with these people.**

As a pastor, I spend time talking to people on the phone every day, trying to encourage them and helping them solve their problems. **This is just the right time for our believers to be actively involved in Compassion Ministry, bringing both food and the Gospel to needy people!** God has blessed us with faithful brothers and sisters through SGA who sent us financial aid, so that we can buy and distribute food for poor families and old people in Yakutia. Praise the Lord!

*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).* ♦

(Left) Medical masks for doctors and nurses. (Bottom L & R) Sharing the Gospel and giving out Christian literature with aid packs.





# Churches Reach Out to Orphans as COVID-19 Puts Them at Risk

**A**s the COVID-19 pandemic continues to exact a heavy toll across the former Soviet countries, orphan children are facing some of the most heartbreaking situations.

Pastor Yuri leads one of the SGA-sponsored **Orphans Reborn** ministries in western **Belarus**. He wrote to tell us that all the orphanages are closed, and that has direct impacts on the children, especially the “social orphans” who have living parents who are unable to care for them. But by God’s grace, even these situations lead to openings for the love of Christ to be shared . . .

*Nikita and Kseniya are brother and sister. They had to be removed from their mother’s home due to her alcoholism. A kind lady named Tamara has received the children into her home. She knew the situation and couldn’t refuse the children. **The social workers were very happy and asked Tamara if she would take one more boy named Yura into her family. His mother is in prison for drugs.** Our government is not able to help all the orphaned and abandoned children. Three orphan children have been living in Tamara’s home for the past three months. **We came to visit***



Tamara with Yura (L), Nikita (M), and Kseniya (R).

***Tamara and shared the Gospel with her.** She willingly listened with interest and accepted our witness for Christ. Tamara has a lot of worries about the children. She is in need of food for the children, along with clothes*

*and toys. She is also concerned about teaching the children. While we cannot help her with everything, we try to help her and do what is possible to take care of the children. We brought her some food and clothes from our children.*

The situation is just as severe in **Ukraine**, if not worse. Pastor Vladimir Nesteruk reports similar orphanage closures and great need . . .

*I want to tell you about our work among orphans during the quarantine. We can't go to the boarding school now because it is closed, and there is no one there at the present time. The children there are from dysfunctional families. But we visited about 50 of these children at their homes. We had the addresses of their dysfunctional families, and on our arrival we were appalled at the terrible conditions these children are living in now. **The children asked us and prayed that they would be taken back to the boarding school as soon as possible because at least they always had food available for them.** As to the parents of these children, they are alcoholics and the children are left without any supervision. They are without food, hungry and in unsanitary conditions. We purchased them food, detergents, everything we could. If it is possible to help us with these additional expenses, we would be thankful to receive it!*

The reports we are receiving from missionary pastors across the former Soviet Union tell similar stories. **The needs are urgent and truly heartbreaking. But thanks to you—our faithful partners—we are able to supply these pastors with the resources they need to reach out to these needy children and their families in the name of Jesus.** Pray that God will work in their hearts as their physical needs are met and the Gospel is proclaimed! ♦

# SGA's *Christ Over COVID* Campaign Reaches People Desperate for Physical and Spiritual Help

**T**hose of our partners who signed up for SGA's daily *Christ Over COVID* prayer email updates have been able to see many of the wonderful reports coming in from across Russia and her neighboring countries. As faithful SGA-sponsored missionary pastors reach out to needy families with much needed food, medicine, and hygiene items, doors are being opened for Gospel witness as Christ's love is demonstrated in action. Here are just a couple out of the many we have received:

## From Elena Liskina (Krasnoyarsk):



Serezha and Nastya

*These two children lost their mother and their father raises them alone. They were really glad to get food because the father does not have a regular income. Serezha is 10, he came to our church's Aid Center on a regular basis in order to play games and attend our clubs.*

*When he had no money to pay the bus fare, he walked and even winter cold did not stop him! I often would take him home, because he would not want to go home early and would stay at the Center till late. When he saw me, he ran to me and gave me a bear hug! He misses his mother a lot. I left him a book about Jesus Christ, praying that maybe his 14-year-old sister Nastya will read it to him, and through that would herself grow closer to God. Please pray for this family!*

## From Mikhail and Anzhelika Panasenکو (Rostov-na-Donu):

*We met with a young woman named Masha for the first time in a playground near our house. Her two daughters have cerebral palsy. I was concerned about this family, but did not know where they lived, and*

*rarely saw them outdoors. One day I saw Masha passing by with a stroller. I told her about our church participating in Compassion Ministry and **Christ over COVID**, and offered to bring her a food package if she needed it. At first, she asked about the kind of church it was and that she was not a Protestant. She finally said that she needed help, as they lived without the father of the children and had to pay her mortgage. Oh, what a God-given opportunity! I said that the food is provided in light of Jesus' words to do to others what you would have done to you. I told her that the help was given for the glory of God, and that when a believer brought in His name, they tried to bring the best. Then I saw tears sparkle in Masha's eyes.*

*The very next day when I entered their apartment with food, Lisa (the daughter who can walk) happily ran to the parcel and said she was waiting for a surprise. I took out the sweets and judging by the kids' eyes and exclamations, I could see they were not disappointed! Masha thanked us and said that she believes in God, she just does not go to a church. And then I heard more of her story. It turned out that her children were born out of wedlock. When the father heard about Masha's pregnancy, he immediately left her and denied the children were his. Masha refused to even consider an abortion, and said that she would raise her children alone. She worked hard to earn money for maternity leave. However, her pregnancy was difficult and ended with a premature birth, with her babies being kept in intensive care for a long time. Masha prayed to God for the children to survive. And they did!*

Please pray for Masha and her children as we continue to share the love and Gospel of Christ. And pray for faithful church workers as they distribute aid and share the Gospel with these needy families! ♦



# Six Struggling Families See Christ's Love in Action

*Your Support For Orphans Reborn Continues to Bear Much Fruit!*

Marina Zenchenko

SGA-Sponsored *Orphans Reborn* Team in Krasnoyarsk, Russia



Our dear friends! I cannot find the right words in order to describe our ministry at this time of crisis. What a blessing to see people face to face, to see the children and their difficult lives, and to provide them with physical help and the love of God! With your support, I was able to visit six families. All of the children in these struggling families have attended our club "Young Life" through *Orphans Reborn*.

Sadly, not all of these parents take responsibility for their children and care for them. I want to introduce you to one teenager named Danil who is 15 years old. A year ago his mother died and his father was not willing to take responsibility for himself and to care for his son. Danil was forced to care for himself. We try not to leave him without supervision—we are always ready to help him, and we are grateful to God that we could help him with food. In the beginning, he was surprised when we came to him with bags of food and he thought that he would need to pay for it, or that his father would need to fill out papers (his father was not even able to come out of the house). But when we told Danil that he does not need to give anything in return, he was overjoyed!

And the joy that we experienced is hard to express in words!

We also visited a large family where the mother was so grateful that she even told a friend of her older daughter about our youth club. **As a result, her two daughters and their friend came to our small group for girls two days after our visit to their**

**family.** The mother, Elena, wrote us a short note of thanks. We also received thanks from Diana and her mother Anna. They wrote, "Thank you very much for the very needed food. This very moment in the life situation as it is we have a real need of it. Thank you for your help and understanding, we want to express our honest gratitude."

(Top L) "Young Life" group; (Top R) Marina (L) and her team visit Danil (C); (Below) Vova with a pack of food.



Young Cyrill and his brother Dima wrote us as well. *“Thank you very much for the food, it was soooo important for us, as we had almost nothing to eat at that moment. Thank you very MUCH for all those things and thank you for all the good things and that you help us along the way!”*

I am grateful to God for your responsive hearts and I want to express personal gratitude with the words **THANK YOU VERY MUCH!** You are helping us be “kindness transporters” to many who need to hear of God’s love through Jesus Christ.



(Left) Cyrill; (Right) Diana

**Editor’s Note:** Marina herself is an orphan who was won to Christ through the ministry of the SGA-sponsored **Orphans Reborn** team in Krasnoyarsk. Her life was truly transformed, and the

Lord is now using her testimony to reach other orphan children just as she was reached. This is the fruit of **Orphans Reborn** that you help make possible. ♦

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

While the last few months have been focused on helping evangelical churches across the former USSR respond to needy individuals and families affected by the



COVID-19 pandemic, the **other vitally important ministries of the churches must also go on.** Your faithfulness helps SGA provide support for Bible training, children’s ministries such as **Orphans Reborn** and **Immanuel’s Child** Christmas outreaches, provision of Russian-language Bibles and Christian literature, **Compassion Ministry**, and so much more. We are deeply thankful to you—our partners—for all that you do. Please prayerfully consider how you can help today! ♦





# Canadian Connection

I am so calmed that we have a God who is not surprised by all that has taken our world captive. His assurance to us as followers is . . . *Even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me* (Psalm 139:10).

First, our global population was stricken with COVID-19 and more recently the racism that has caused reactions with severe repercussions. Through all of this, we must lean in, learn and listen to our loving God. How we respond at this time in history is most critical. We used to sing a chorus, "They'll know we are Christians by our love."



With all the hurt and trouble being experienced by so many, this is the time to extend a hand in the name of Jesus. Since mid-March, we at SGA have replied, "Yes, Lord, use me," and God has worked through every one of us. Your gifts collectively have reached out all across the former Soviet Union. Doors have opened and the Church has been there to become the hands and feet of Jesus.

While we have been restricted from travel, skills have ramped up to connect electronically at a whole new level.

Prayer has been crucial in this vital ministry with the motto, "**Much Prayer, Much Power**". The world that our founder came from in Belarus all those years ago in some ways isn't much different than what we face today.

Pandemic and prejudice have changed much of what was a life of complacency. Perhaps through prayer and positive response God will conform all of us to a greater extent of loving God and loving our neighbour (Luke 10:27,28).

Through **Christ over COVID, Much Prayer, Much Power**, God has worked His saving grace into countless lives from rural villages to large cities.

A "hand out" has become a "hand up" to a loving God. Let us remain our distance but not be distracted in showing the love of Christ to any and all.



Bill Ball  
Executive Director, SGA/Canada

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