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SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN



**YOUR PRAYERS
AND GOD'S
POWER
CONTINUE
TO WIN OVER
COVID!**

INSIDE: GOD BRINGS HOPE IN THE MIDDLE OF CRISIS:

- ◆ Broken, starving families find unexpected mercy from God's people
- ◆ Food for the body—and eternal food for the soul—gives hope to an alcoholic's wife
- ◆ Pastors prepare to make disciples as non-Christians turn to Christ's light

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)

God Has Answered Your Prayers for Christ Over COVID

Compassion and the Gospel of Christ transform souls in Siberia . . . and beyond!



Five Roma families received food packages from the church in Omsk.

At the end of Genesis, the powerful story is told of how Joseph was reconciled with his brothers who had sold him into captivity in Egypt. Little could they have realized that years later, the young boy they had sold out of jealousy would become prime minister of Egypt where they had come to seek relief from famine. **And God worked through Joseph to protect not only his own family, but also an entire nation!** Joseph assured them . . . *As for*

you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive (Genesis 50:20).

Tragic events such as the COVID-19 pandemic can be hard to understand as we see the human toll they take. Yet since SGA began the **Christ Over COVID** prayer campaign and related food distributions to afflicted families, **we have seen example after example of how God is at work through His people in the midst of the sorrow.** Lives are being changed and souls are being saved as the love and compassion of Christ are on display, and you have been a vital part of it all through your prayers and generous support. As we ended our fiscal year at the end of June, you helped SGA-sponsored missionary pastors and church workers distribute grocery parcels across Russia and her neighboring countries. These food parcels helped provide the equivalent of 1.5 million meals! And as we have shared in our daily email prayer updates that went out to those who subscribed, these **food distributions helped open up many opportunities**



A missionary pastor in Omsk visits a family with four boys.

for missionary pastors to lovingly share the Gospel with those in need.

In the Russian city of **Omsk (Siberia)**, these timely visits from local churches are bearing much fruit . . .

*Families that have been visited often are always appreciative of our concern for them. When they see others in need, they let us know about it. A week ago, we learned about a family with four children. The only breadwinner in the family is the father, and his work hours have been reduced to only one or two days a week. The family is in severe need. We came to them, got acquainted, and gave them groceries. Also, **not long before the self-isolation period, a schoolboy and two preschoolers began to attend our Christian club for children and adolescents.** We made friends with this large family, who had just lost the father at the beginning of the quarantine. The family felt God's*

care and love as we gave them a grocery pack. We are grateful to God for His provision for these families!

Other evangelical churches in the Omsk region say **people are being drawn to the church through these encounters.** As the pandemic wanes, please pray with us

that the Gospel seeds being planted will take root and grow, with many coming to saving faith in Christ. And thank you for your part in supporting the **Christ Over COVID** outreaches! ♦



Bringing aid to a needy couple.

“Much Power”: Your Prayers Overcome Legal Hurdles in Central Asian Country

The door opens wider for the Gospel, and children are responding.

For evangelical churches in Central Asia and other nations of the former Soviet Union where Islam is dominant, obtaining legal registration for their congregations is a very difficult, long process. Some churches have been waiting for years without their registrations being approved due to opposition from governments and other religious groups.

In light of this, we are rejoicing with one congregation in a medium-sized city of 77,000 people. The pastor recently reported that the church has **received its registration** at last . . .

Glory and gratitude to the Lord for His mercy and love! Rejoice with us! There are still many organizational issues, but the ministry goes on. We have been making visits in groups to a village and

*another nearby city for compassion ministry, and visiting the sick and elderly. **This past Christmas, we had a fruitful ministry with many children.** We are thankful for your prayers and material support, which helps us to serve for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ!*

Please join us in continuing to pray for this faithful church as they continue their Gospel witness in a very difficult location for ministry. **Pray for the needy families who have received help, and for the children being reached with the Gospel.** Pray also that God will change the hearts of government officials and open the way for more churches to gain legal registration. ♦

Your Participation in God's Love is Changing Lives!

Christ Over COVID Stories of Eternal Dividends

Since SGA began the **Christ Over COVID: Much Prayer, Much Power** outreach in the spring, we have received an incredible number of wonderful reports from missionary pastors across Russia and her neighboring countries. We can't share all of them here—there are too many! But here are a few that powerfully tell the story of **the difference your prayers and support are making as food parcels and the life-changing Gospel are distributed to those in great need.**

A Lost Sheep Hears the Shepherd:

From Ryazan, Russia:

"We minister in one local orphanage and also work with social orphans (children from dysfunctional families). The ministry is very successful and is recognized by many parents. The girl in the photo went to our church for a long time when she was a teenager. **She is from a difficult, dysfunctional family with no father around and the mother often drank.** When the girl finished school, she left our city and began to live a troubled life. She met a man and gave birth to a child, then the father left her. The child was born with a severe hernia and had to have an operation. As a church, we prayed for the child and for the girl.



The girl and her baby.

Now, she has returned with her child and her mother to our city and, knowing of their modest situation, we immediately visited them with a packet of food.

They have very little money, and the girl was moved by our attention and care, since she had only heard about God's help. But now she has clearly seen it and was moved to the point of tears. We talked with her over the telephone and she was honest and open with us, saying that her heart is very heavy without God. **She is thirsting for spiritual support and comfort.** She understands that it is very hard to live without God and the church. This girl's mom has also become more open to hearing the Gospel and has been kind towards us. She stopped drinking and is helping her daughter raise and care for the little one. Currently, our relationship is developing and we are praying that soon this girl and her mom will come to the church!"

Orphans Found by God—Veronika's Story:

The lives of orphan children are hard. When a child is removed from a family due to dysfunction or the parents both die, their first response is to blame themselves.

They cry and pray that they will make it home somehow. Praise be to Jesus that churches

"They cry and pray that they will make it home somehow. Praise be to Jesus that churches minister to these orphans and bring them hope."

minister to these orphans and bring them hope.

Here is yet another amazing story of an orphan girl who graduated from the orphanage and returned to her family. And all she could think of is how to care for them:

"Our church—specifically the Orphans Reborn team—has known Veronika for a long time. She had been removed from her large family, and after

graduating she returned home to care for them. She is now in charge, cleaning and cooking for them.

The family remains in poverty, as the children, who are under 18, have to work in order to provide food for themselves. They have lived without their mom's care for a long time and after their father comes back home from working in Moscow, they usually see him drunk.



Bringing aid to Veronika.

Many have COVID-19 in the town where she lives. She was really happy to receive the food from us. Most of the time there is just no money to buy food, and they were running out of what had been purchased before. It'll be a great help for her and her two younger brothers. **Veronika has heard about God and has been to church. She wants to read the Bible, and sometimes she does.** We believe that God is working in her heart, and we see how she craves fellowship with believers, with whom she found love, friendship and support. We are thankful to SGA for the help!"

Church Youth Bless the Elderly in Georgia:

First and foremost, we are thankful to the Lord for during the time of crisis, He gives us patience and the opportunity to continue serving in His field! For several months, we have been continuing our ministry, visiting people at their homes. **It is hard to explain the joy of those whom we visited, especially who are elderly.** Particular attention was paid to providing material assistance to pensioners and people with disabilities. **All in all, we distributed about 400 food packages.** Our youth helped us with delivery, as the churches were located some distance apart from each other, so it required a lot of effort. Here in Georgia, this outreach was a great testimony for many unbelievers, since no one has received any governmental help, so it is hard to imagine how people could survive if not with our support.

The distribution process has made a

considerable impact on unbelievers, making it the best preaching of the Gospel to the world. For

"The distribution process has made a considerable impact on unbelievers, making it the best preaching of the Gospel to the world."

example, in **Tetritskaro**, the people were in great shortage of food because of the lockdown. The church was able to send food to each needy family several times. When the isolation period ended, two families were looking for us and ended up in the Tbilisi Church. It was a total surprise for us! **They have already been in the church for a couple of times now and expressed a desire to connect their life with the Lord!** In the village of **Sabatlo** on the border with Azerbaijan, we made several visits, and unbelievers would invite us to their homes and asked us to pray for their needs.



Delivering aid to families in Georgia.

In fact, some time earlier, our prayers for several unbelieving families were answered by the Lord and they will probably share about their blessings with others. **Everything that was done could not have been accomplished without your help. Thank you so much!** May the Lord reward you in His timing for all the goodness that you render to poor and less privileged families in a mutual effort with us! ♦

Your Support for SGA-Sponsored Bible Training Helps Lay a Solid Foundation for Troubled Times

Mark Zhuk

Graduate of Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary



Pastor Mark Zkuk

problem, I as a pastor had many additional questions to answer.

- What is a worship service?
- What do we do with communion?
- Is having the Lord's Supper online a legitimate option?
- What is the role of the church during the pandemic?
- What is the connection of the pandemic with biblical teaching about the end times?

Because I had the good biblical foundation that I received at Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary, as well as wise counsel from other brothers in our church, **we were able to provide biblical answers to all of the above questions.** Having sound, biblical theology shapes the proper ministry of the church and the right philosophy of ministry.

I completed my studies at NBTS in 2016, having

received the Master of Theology degree. All seven years I spent at the seminary were a great blessing for me as well as a strong impetus for pastoral ministry. I am confident that every pastor needs a good biblical theological education because pastors today constantly encounter challenges from society that require a biblical response.

Besides biblical theology, NBTS also puts a great emphasis on expository preaching. Every pastor needs to have the right approach to the Scriptures, proper interpretation, and the **ability to clearly and comprehensively deliver biblical truths to listeners.** It is expository preaching that helps a pastor to reach the maximum results in the exact communication of biblical truth to his listeners.

I accepted pastoral responsibilities at Holy Trinity Church in 2014 and began to preach through the Gospel of Mark, pondering together with our congregation the Person of Jesus Christ. My training at NBTS also opened opportunities for me to teach biblical truths in Christian educational establishments. **In our church we launched a Bible school where we train future church leaders.** Every believer has the opportunity to be a student in our Bible school so they can learn to get deeper insight into Scriptures, and most importantly, to know deeper and to grow closer to our Lord Jesus Christ.

We also opened a distance learning center of NBTS in 2019. The students consist of 18 brothers from Bashkortostan and the nearest regions of Russia who are already involved in ministry. I do hope that many more brothers who are ministers will be trained at NBTS, and that their studies will become a blessing not only to themselves and the churches they serve, but also for our whole country as we pray that the Lord would send a revival in Russia. ♦

CIS IN THE NEWS

Extreme Heat and Wildfires Plague Russia's Arctic North and Siberia

When thinking of the Arctic regions, extreme heat normally doesn't come to mind. But **above Russia's Arctic Circle in the town of Verkhoyansk, the thermometer hit 100 degrees Fahrenheit**—a new record high. At the same time as the heat wave, numerous wildfires were raging across Siberia and into the Arctic region. At one time, firefighters extinguished more than 330 forest fires in 49 different regions of Russia, and as of early summer, there were 72 active wildfires burning. The Sakha region reported at least 680,000 acres burning according to the government. This also comes on the wake of **an enormous fuel spill in the Norilsk region** that is

causing heavy environmental damage to a key river. Cleanup efforts are still underway.

Adding the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is proving to be a very difficult year for Russia, and the evangelical churches SGA serves are not immune. The impacts on the usual summer ministries that take place with children and youth have yet to be fully realized, and those who live in the affected regions are having to deal with the potential health impacts. Please pray for the fires to be brought under control soon, and that the churches' ability to minister and share the Gospel would not be hindered. ♦

HOW YOU CAN HELP

It never ceases to amaze how God can take the most difficult, tragic circumstances in the lives of His people and bring eternal good out of them. It's no question that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought much sorrow both here in North America, and in the former Soviet Union. **Yet when sorrowful events happen, God opens up wonderful opportunities for His people to demonstrate His love and proclaim His grace—pointing the way to salvation through the Lord Jesus.** Your support of SGA's many ministries gives evangelical churches the resources they need to conduct **Compassion Ministry, Bible training, children's ministries, Bible distribution, and so much more.** Please prayerfully consider how you can help today! ♦



Canadian Connection

Regardless of where you call home on Planet Earth, you have been affected in some way by this global pandemic called COVID-19. The year 2020 will go down in history as one not soon to be forgotten for many reasons. Life has changed for everyone in some manner.

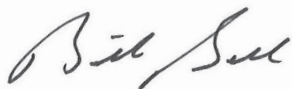
As we write to you, Canada is coming back through stages of reopening that are bringing people back to work and children the freedom to enjoy summer activities outdoors. Some restrictions will be with us indefinitely, even though government policies are changing almost daily. Unfortunately, this is not the case in every country due to increasing numbers of infections still on the rise. This would be the case in many of the former Soviet Union countries.

While we may see much of this news as negative—and even depressive—you will read in this issue of the **Good News Report** that God is allowing His glory to shine. Believers are rising up all over to the task at hand caring in Christian love and sharing the hope that we have as followers of Christ. With many having lost jobs, their income is sparse so we have responded with large food distributions giving people the basic necessities of life. Each of you have had a part in this massive undertaking through the partnerships we have with missionary pastors all across these lands. Houses of Prayer, though unable to meet, have gathered to go out in Jesus' name meeting thousands of people who would most likely never come near a church.

A wonderful truth is repeated in both the Old Testament and New Testament. Obadiah verse 15 reads . . . *For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.* We also read in Matthew 5:7 . . . *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.* This is being lived every day right now in 2020 throughout these Slavic countries so many call home. God is at work displaying His glory through our good works (Matthew 5:16).

Thank you for your part in making this one of those highlight moments in time when the church rose to the task at hand! Your gifts and prayers have made this possible in unprecedented ways. While we were planning on sending tens of thousands of children to camp this summer, God had another plan to bless nations through His people in a whole different manner. God's ways are always better than ours.

As we ramp up for the fall, the challenge will be to resource our churches to reach many orphan children who have been neglected during the last four months. Many were sent out of the orphanages and went back to conditions worse than where they were in government homes. Please pray for the children we have the privilege to visit and share the hope of the Gospel. Your support in these ongoing efforts will be blessed of the Lord.



Bill Ball
Executive Director, SGA/Canada



Good News Report is published to report religious news about Russia, the rest of the CIS and the ministries of:

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