



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

# Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

## Churches Prepare for Record Summer Bible Camps and Rejoice Over a *Remarkable* Winter!

### INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ♦ “Eight” was a blessed number in Minsk!
- ♦ Vlad, from a non-Christian family, shed tears of joy and repentance.
- ♦ Natalia’s life was “broken” until Jesus put it together . . . better than ever!

*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)*

# Your Gifts Help SGA-Supported Churches Bless Children through Camp Ministry

*Record numbers of boys and girls expected this summer!*

Yakov Franchuk, SGA-Sponsored Missionary Pastor in Khabarovsk, Russia

**Editor's Note:** We are praying for 40,000 children to attend Summer Bible Camps this year. It has proven to be one of the most effective ministries God uses to draw people to Christ! Please pray for Pastor Yakov Franchuk and all camps this year.

Greetings to you, God's dear, beloved servants! We had been planning to run a children's camp as early as the beginning of 2020, and then something happened that no one expected—a pandemic!

It seemed that fear of COVID-19 spread as fast as the virus itself. Under the circumstances, we had to temporarily halt Sunday school, although we never quit holding our worship services. Then the question was raised about what to do with summer camps. All the circumstances seemed to be against holding them. We had quarantines and self-isolation imposed, restrictions on mass events, and churches cancelled children's activities because of high concerns about the children's safety.

## Persevering in Christ

But we continued meeting with Sunday school teachers, discussing ideas for the camp and praying with hope that things might change for the better.

Several months passed by and we started really missing our kids, **being concerned even more about their spiritual state and about them being disconnected from church life.** Therefore, we planned to set up an **open-air playground** for the children. Next, we started actively preparing for the camp. But then other challenges cropped up. We became understaffed—the people on whom we counted were not able to participate for different reasons. Finances were also a challenge.

We could have given up, but we are God's



Children's camp at the church.

children, and we have the One Who is above all the circumstances, the One Who holds everything in His hands, and the One Who gives peace that surpasses every fear and doubt.

Through our prayers, **God showed us that we should proceed no matter what and follow through, remaining faithful to the end.** God's plans are far better than we can imagine.

## The Lord Answers!

As we were preparing for the camp, God sent us people who committed themselves for this ministry. **God not only sent us ministers, but through you, He also helped us cover all financial expenses!** Nothing is impossible for Him! We had **children who came to the church for the first time and were able to hear about Jesus Christ and what He did for them.** The time of the camp flew fast and along with our children, we were sorry it came to an end.

**We would like to express to you our deepest gratitude for your participation, prayers, and understanding** that we are one Church and one family, no matter the distance! There are no restrictions and limits for the Gospel. God's Word is alive and active in all times and situations! ♦



# A Young Life Redeemed by Christ Through Your Support for *Orphans Reborn*

*Orphans Reborn* team in Krasnoyarsk, Russia



Orphan-graduate Nina.

**W**e met Nina at an orphanage during our classes when she was only 9 years old. Today she is 26 and lives in the **Siberian city of Omsk**, where she moved when she got married. Nina has a family—her husband and children. And wonderfully, all of them are believers and they faithfully attend the church.

Our friendship with Nina grew through **weekly meetings at her orphanage** where we led **Bible study clubs**. Sometimes on Sundays, we would



Nina graduated from university and Bible college.

take her to visit with us and together we would go to church. Also, we went with her to **Christian camps** and to a **Christian Art Festival**.

We motivated Nina to be a good student and **she was able to**

**graduate from the university, majoring in finances and credits.** We even helped her in her career choice, and she was employed by Sberbank, the largest bank in Russia. We advised her when she was looking for an apartment, then with refurbishment and relocation. We also inspired her in ministry, and she **graduated from Omsk Bible College** as a Sunday school teacher.

**Today, Nina serves in a Sunday school and tells children about Christ.** The Lord has changed her a lot over the years. From being a very thoughtless, careless young girl, she grew into a loving wife, caring mother, and godly Christian lady. Thank you for your participation and support of the SGA-sponsored *Orphans Reborn* ministry. **The Lord is changing the lives and destinies of these orphans because He is the God of widows and orphans.** Now a few years down the road, it is wonderful to observe the good fruit in which God allowed us to participate. Praise Him! ♦



Nina and her family.



# Eight Days of Blessings

*Your Support Helps Bring Children to Christ at Summer Camp*

Dima Podrez

SGA Regional Ministry Center in Minsk



A camp leader talks with some of the children who repented and came to Christ.

**G**reetings dear friends! Looking back at the summer camp season held by Golgotha Baptist Church in **Minsk**, it was a special blessing for the children and the church team. We had to postpone the dates for the camp two times, but **at the end of August, the camp finally took place.**

The wonderful eight days flew by in a moment.

Our time in the camp was filled with many different events, blessings, and failures but we praise the Lord for everything.

**It is a huge blessing that eight children came to Christ in repentance.**

## **Vlad's Story**

I would like to write to you about Vlad. **He is 15 years old, and he comes from a totally unbelieving family.** It was his third time in the camp. Vlad's neighbors are believers. They invited



Vlad is the first believer in his family.





Top to Bottom: Meal time; camp counselors lead the children in a time of singing; studying God's Word during a Bible lesson.

him and his sister to the camp. While Vlad's sister caught the flu and couldn't attend the camp, Vlad was able to join us.

The children were asked in one Bible lesson, "Who is your authority?" and Vlad's answer was "Uncle Piotr, my neighbor."

After two days of camp, there was an invitation to pray and with tears in his eyes, Vlad opened his heart before the Lord. Vlad prayed with tears and

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***"Vlad prayed with tears and didn't care about what the other children thought about him."***

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didn't care about what the other children thought about him. **God is mighty and His deeds are powerful. Vlad was concerned for his parents as he didn't know what their reaction would be to his repentance.** By God's mercy, his parents have allowed him to attend the church and youth meetings.

### **Other Children God Touched**

A few of the children gave us their thoughts after the camp was over . . .

*I was in the camp with my brother. I waited for the camp for a whole year and wanted to stay as long as possible. **I was encouraged to read the Bible and search for God in the camp.** I would like the camp to take place for three weeks. I enjoyed it. —Sofa*

*I went to the camp from our Sunday school. I enjoyed the camp as we had a lot of fun. **I have decided to read the Bible more after the camp. I also plan to attend the meeting for teenagers.** I keep in contact with the friends that I made at the camp. I learned a lot about God in the camp and a lot of stories about David. I wish the camp would go longer. I thank you and our mentors so much as they teach us to respect others. I came to know many good people. —Kamila*

I thank you for your prayers and material help to hold our wonderful camp for His glory! Please pray that the seeds of the Gospel will take root and grow in the children's hearts. ♦



# Praise God for Another Record-Setting Year for *Immanuel's Child*!

*And the Lord was bringing salvation to “hopeless” families*

Despite the pressures and restrictions globally caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are praising the Lord for another year of gracious provision for the SGA-sponsored *Immanuel's Child* outreach. With your prayers and generous support, the faithful churches SGA serves were able to reach a **record 39,915 children** with gifts you helped provide, as well as a clear presentation of the Gospel. Of that number, **24,380 children were from unbelieving families**, and **1,903 children** trusted in Christ as their Savior!

In addition, **503 adults repented** and **1,048 began attending church**. A total of **1,965 children** began attending Sunday school.

*Immanuel's Child* outreaches took place in **10 former Soviet countries**—Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, as well as in Israel among Russian-speaking congregations.

## A Story of Amazing Redemption!

We received many wonderful reports, including this one from Russia's Yakutsk region . . .

*In the town of Pokrovsk, Immanuel's Child was attended by 60 children. Believers also visited poor families and gave them grocery*



Aital

*parcels and gifts for their children. The young boy in the photo is named Aital. His mother is a believer, but her husband is unsaved. He drinks and mistreats Tatyana and her children, so they have been staying with Tatyana's mother. The children were*

*happy to attend the Christmas meeting! It is especially precious for children from problem families, where they are abused.*



Natalia and her family.

*Another lady named Natalia and her family were in a desperate situation. She gave birth to her 6th child while her husband was in prison. Her life was broken, and she did not see any hope. They live in a dilapidated house—the children cried and were hungry. We began to visit them and help with food and clothing. We prayed for her husband. They reconciled and recently her husband was released from prison. Natalia works in the kindergarten. Her children go to kindergarten and school. Her husband helps her with all things. He took his three children to the Christmas meeting. We met him and talked. He is very grateful for everything. We are happy about them. Praise God!*

Join us in praising and thanking God for His abundant blessing on this year's *Immanuel's Child* ministry. As the churches follow up with the children reached and their families, pray that many will come to saving faith in Christ. ♦

## CIS IN THE NEWS

### Kazakhstan Abolishes Death Penalty

Earlier this year, Kazakh president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev signed a decree that abolishes the death penalty in Kazakhstan. In a statement released by the president's office, the decree makes permanent the existing moratorium on state executions that had been introduced in 2003 by Mr. Tokayev's predecessor Nursultan Nazarbaev. The country had committed to abolishing capital punishment in December 2019 at a meeting of the UN General Assembly. This leaves Russia, Tajikistan, and Belarus as the only three countries in Europe and Central Asia that have not yet signed or ratified an international protocol aimed

at abolishing the death penalty. Belarus is the only country in Europe to carry out executions. The UN Convention still allows executions for war crimes or terrorism.

Despite occasional reforms that take place, **human rights groups continue to cite several former Soviet nations as regions where individual rights are often oppressed, especially those of religious believers.** Our continued prayer is that the respective governments will continue to move toward more freedom and less oppression of churches as they worship and carry out the Lord's command to proclaim the Gospel. ♦

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

After such a long winter and the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the thought of warm temperatures and summer can't help but brighten our outlook. The churches SGA serves across the former Soviet Union are already in the midst of planning their summer camp outreaches with a goal of

**40,000 children!**

Camps took many different forms last year in light of pandemic precautions. **Your prayers and support are a great encouragement to our brothers and sisters amid such challenges.** You help them accomplish so much—not only in children's ministries, but also provision of **Bible training, Russian-language Bibles and Christian literature, humanitarian aid, sponsorship of missionary pastors,** and so much more. Please pray about how you can help today! ♦



Children at a Belarussian summer camp hold welcome cards signed by SGA partners in America.



# Canadian Connection

*You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth; you have made summer and earth (Psalm 74:17).*

It is comforting to know that with all that has happened in our world over this past year, God is still in control and gives us wisdom to navigate these challenging days. Many have faced sickness with this pandemic and have come through well while others remain on the journey. These have been large teaching moments for all of us relying upon the One who is God alone.

With the seasons now changing, we realize that fresh opportunities await us. Thousands of children in Eurasia were disappointed with little to no summer camp last year, or at best were offered a simplified day camp. This summer, we are gearing up for a full camp experience with certain safety protocols in place as deemed appropriate in each region.

Our Christmas program called *Immanuel's Child* reached nearly 40,000 children in various places. Almost 2,500 children and adults trusted Christ as their personal Saviour in the 10 former Soviet Union countries in which we serve. To God be the glory for what He accomplished as faithful servants took the Gospel to homes, orphanages, parks and local churches!

Bible schools are celebrating the return to a new normal with new online learning for those who cannot afford to travel distances. An entire new wave of open doors for education has come about with restrictions forcing a pivot in methodology. These changes have brought into action technical skills for this component of ministry. Record numbers are being reported in every school. At UBTS in Lviv, Ukraine, the seminary is anticipating nearly 1,000 students for the fall 2021 season. Right now, they are operating with almost 850 students. Many are receiving instruction from their local communities.

Won't you consider sending one or more children to camp this summer? Any gift that you provide will go a long way to changing a child's life for all eternity. Camp is one of the most spiritually productive weeks that we can provide in their life. Approximately \$50.00 will send a child to camp, so your gift is extremely important right now in preparation for the summer. Once we receive the funds, we pass on the good news to our church planters letting them know how many children we can sponsor. For some it is tents beside a river or lake, while others might take a raft down a river, stopping each evening at a different location.

Let us do our part this year to bringing back a people group from such a difficult year. Let us point children to the One who fixed the boundaries of the earth in place and can hold them safe in the hollow of His hand. God bless you each one for faithfully encouraging believers across these Slavic nations.



Bill Ball  
Executive Director, SGA/Canada

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