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SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

Frontline Pastors and their Churches Sacrifice—and Harvest Souls—in the Former Soviet Nations!

INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ♦ Siberian wildfire tragedy opens doors to the hearts of the lost.
- ♦ The Lord GROWS an outreach to abandoned moms and orphans.
- ♦ Pastor and wife host Summer Bible Camp . . . in their home!

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 Empower Siberian Pastors and Churches During Disaster

Pastors and Christian doctors help the hurting and preach the Gospel during widespread fires.

The news headlines in the U.S. for the past several months have been filled with the tragedy of raging wildfires in the Western and Great Plains states, with thousands of acres burned and homes lost. Yet the U.S. is not the only region in the world that faced high heat and fires this past summer. Russia's **Arctic and Siberian regions** were also the scene of wildfires—all the more remarkable because these regions are mostly known for their frigid cold in winter.

Many Russian brothers and sisters in Christ live in these regions, including **Pastor Yegor Mikhalev in the Yakutia region**. In a report to SGA vice

president Eric Mock, Yegor wrote to share about what is happening in his area, and more than that, **how your prayers and support are helping them to reach out** to those in need . . .

*We've had hundreds of forest fires in the Yakutia region. Fires are active on an area of more than 2 million acres. It's impossible to extinguish the fires by any means, so we have only hope for God's help. Towns and villages are in smoke, it's hard to breathe—it's bad especially for those who have health problems. **Some of our brothers in outlying villages joined volunteer firefighting brigades in order to protect their homes from fire.** Our churches pray for rain and*



(Above) Firefighters and volunteers work together to fight fires in the Yakutia region. (Top Right) The lingering smoke and ash make it difficult for residents to breathe.



The youth team on a missionary trip.

a wind change, so that we could have less smoke.

*As scientists say, this summer in Yakutia is the driest in the last 100 years. We had very little rain and the average temperature outside was higher than normal. Local authorities issued a high alert and are prohibiting people to go into the forests. And this all happened in the midst of the worsening COVID-19 situation in Yakutia. But we know that the Lord holds everything in His control. **So our responsibility is just to carry forth His Gospel and to show His love to the people around us.** That's what we've been trying to do all this time.*

Our youth team is involved in ministry in the



*midst of these days, going on missionary trips. We went to the village of Pokrovsk to hold ministry, helping the local church and sharing the Gospel with non-believers. Meanwhile our **Christian doctors team** recently came back from a missionary trip to the village of Cherkekh. They helped locals with medical care and told them about salvation through Jesus Christ. Please pray for Yakutia and that the fires will stop. But most of all, pray that more souls will be saved during these hard times for our land. Let them hear the Good News about the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation! ♦*



The Christian doctors team.

Frontline Pastors Christmas Campaign Will Bless SGA-Sponsored Missionary Pastors and Workers!



The Shevkunov family.

Each year, SGA partners contribute to the Frontline Pastors Christmas Campaign. They generously send gifts to help provide special Christmas gifts for missionary pastors, children's workers, and their families across Russia and her neighboring countries. **These faithful laborers in the Gospel have very little, and what income they do receive mostly gets put back into their year-round ministries.** They joyfully receive the generous gifts you help send, and we would like to share some of their thanksgiving with you!

Here are some thanks from last year, which we know will be repeated this year!

*Dear brothers and sisters, we greet you! Our family sincerely thanks you for the financial gift for Christmas. **It is wonderful that people who live so far away and have never met us choose to help us***

on such a blessed holiday—the birth of our Savior! You helped not only embellish our Christmas table, but also to make gifts to those who need our love—this is one of the best times to tell them about our Savior. God bless you!

—The Larkov Family (Ukraine)

*I am very grateful for your help and prayers, and thank the Lord for your open, kind, and sacrificial hearts. Many thanks from our entire family—you **helped us purchase Christmas gifts.** May God richly bless you in your life and work!*

—Sergei Kirilenko (Ukraine)

*I greet you with the love of our Lord Jesus Christ! Our family warmly thanks you for your annual Christmas gifts. **We are so happy that someone thinks of us and helps take care of us in our ministry.** We are glad that our children see it as God's provision and care for our family. May the Lord bless you and your families!*

—The Shevkunovs (Russia)

I am serving as a missionary pastor in Dzerzhinsk. God blesses and adds those who are being saved to the church. But in many ways, the results of my ministry depend on those who support it.

*I am very grateful for your gift—it is wonderful to **know that there are those who remember me and my family.** Your gift gives my family the opportunity to bless our children. My wife and I also get a “piece of Christmas cake.” Your gift helps us have something for Christmas that we couldn't afford otherwise. Thank you very much for helping us to not be in need during the holidays!*

—Sergei (Belarus)

Helping Mothers and Orphans in Crisis

Your Support Helps Bring Christ's Love Into Tragic Circumstances

In Russia's Far East, faithful SGA-sponsored missionary pastors and church workers have been building **fruitful, effective outreaches to families in crisis**. One such team is in the city of Komsomolsk-na-Amur, from a church led by Pastor Yevgeny Zakharenko. Your prayers and support have helped them make a vital difference in the lives of young mothers and orphan children in need . . .

*One of the things we are doing is contracting for a "Crisis Apartment." Young mothers are being provided with some aid, and a plan developed to resolve difficult life situations. One person we have been working with is an orphanage graduate. She is a mother with many children and received our aid—food, clothing, some legal help, psychological assistance, and we are now ministering to this family. **These outreaches have led to cooperation with other orphanages.** We signed an agreement with Aftercare Services for Orphans, plus another orphanage administration expressed the desire to work with us. Little by little, the Lord is entrusting people to us for ministry. We distributed 12 grocery packs and five clothing kits to families in need.*



Bringing a grocery pack to a family in need.

*One mother came to us to help look after her children because her alcoholic husband was a real threat to them. Their daughter had previously been in a shelter because he physically abused her. The mother had been in a penal colony so she was unable to look after them on her own. We helped this family with all-around assistance, and now all the children have been reunited with their mother. More aid was provided to another pregnant young woman who has other children. It is a dramatic testimony—the father was recently released from prison and has had problems finding work, **but both of them are now coming to the church!** Pray with us that God's love will draw them to saving faith in Him!*



Providing aid for a young pregnant woman.

*We praise God that we have been able to actively work with governmental organizations, social welfare, Child Protective Services, orphanages, the police, and maternity care hospitals. **Our Crisis Center is now moving into a three-room apartment because we need more space.** Our staff and volunteers receive training on working with crisis families and the prevention of infant abandonment. We see a great need locally for prevention of "social orphanhood." **Our Heart of God Mission is aimed at taking care of these children.** We thank you for your generous, big hearts, and pray that God will bless you in everything!*

This report from our brothers and sisters in Komsomolsk-na-Amur is a wonderful example of how your support is making an eternal difference in many lives. As physical help is rendered, the love of Christ is displayed and the Gospel is proclaimed. Glory to God! ♦

Summer Bible Camp in Belarus

A “Home Camp” for Orphans

Pastor Pavel

Grodno Region of Belarus

During the summer, July is our busiest month because we traditionally hold our summer camp for children from local orphanages, family-style orphanages, and from foster families—all in our own home.

This past July was no exception, and you helped make it all a blessed success! **Our home was filled again with many joyful children’s voices from the orphanage.** They were really looking forward to this moment—this is not the best time for children due to loneliness and other difficulties. We spent a lot of time outside, fellowshiping, eating together, praying together and talking. **They went to church with us, attending special services for teenagers and children.**

Given the pandemic, it is amazing that we were able to hold the “home camp” for orphans. We were not sure the orphanage directors would allow it, but by God’s grace, we had **30 children**—actually 40 in all with the staff. Several children were also from disadvantaged families who live nearby. One weekend when we were away, several children from these families came and found a hidden key to get into our house. They made quite a mess and we had to talk to their parents. That is when we discovered the really unfavorable circumstances in which they live. When our home camp began a week later, one of these children came to us again and asked if she could be a

part of it. We made the decision to allow her, so we could show mercy and love to her. After a week with us at camp, it became clear that it was love and care that she needed and that could change her, not punishment.

Our planned program involved **teaching God’s Word in the morning and evening.** We talked about our Creator, what we were created for, and how to find a way out of our sinfulness. Our invited guests shared about their own life examples, and about how we need to believe in the Lord Jesus to change our lives. **Over the week, we saw the guys changing and some of them prayed a prayer of repentance on the last day.** With great gratitude, they told us that it was the best camp they had ever been to. Several shared their thanks . . .



Igor

In this camp, I really seriously thought again about what is important in life. I have heard about God many times from my adoptive mother, but I see now that I was leading a double life. With my friends who do not know God, I was like a complete unbeliever in word and deed.

On the last day, my prayer to God was to make me not hypocritical, but a true, sincere believer! —Igor

This is the first time I have been to such a camp where people talk about God. I really enjoyed the fun activities, and we were well treated. I would like to go again! —Vika

It was a very cool camp! I realized that without God, life would be wrong and that you need to be a friend with Him in order to not live as an animal, but as a man created by God! —Sasha

Please continue to pray, and to participate in our ministry! ♦



Studying the Bible together during the camp.

CIS IN THE NEWS

Churches Help Those in Kazakhstan Amid High Suicide Rate

The oil-rich former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan now has one of the 20 highest suicide rates in the world according to a recent report from Radio Free Europe. The rate stands at around 17.6 per 100,000 of the population, and a significant portion of those suicide attempts are by adolescents and people in their 20s. **The rate was already high before the COVID-19 pandemic, but cases have increased markedly in recent months.** Police said there were 248 suicide attempts by young people in the first quarter of 2021, with 84 of them fatal—compared with 300 attempts throughout all of 2020. Experts cite pandemic-related social isolation and uncertainties about the future have impacted people's mental health, but also say this is a

complex issue, with a vast array of underlying factors.

Our hearts break at so much hopelessness in our world, and the challenges posed globally by the pandemic and related political turmoil have no doubt contributed. But our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ and the life-changing, life-saving Gospel. **The faithful evangelical churches we serve in Kazakhstan and the other former Soviet nations are rescuing many from this deadly hopelessness.**

Yet those who hope in the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary (Isaiah 40:31).

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Day in and day out, **the missionary pastors that you help sponsor through SGA carry out the ministry to which God has called them—many in regions where opposition to the Gospel is intense.** Their faithfulness both inspires and encourages us, and it is a joy to hear from them that your support and prayers are a blessing and encouragement in the challenges they face. All that SGA does across Russia and her neighboring countries is with the intent of undergirding their Gospel outreach. **Your support of Bible training, church planting, children's ministries, provision of Bibles and Christian literature in the Russian language, and Compassion Ministry helps make their fruitful labors possible.** Please pray about how you can help today! ♦



Orphan Haik (left) came to faith after meeting Pastor Tomic (right) and his father at an *Immanuel's Child* Christmas program.

Canadian Connection

We exist to resource Christian ministry in the region of the former Soviet Union with a focus on sharing the Gospel, equipping the church, and helping those less privileged. This statement is what we often refer to as our Mission Statement. As a mission, we cannot do everything, but what we can do, we do with passion and purpose.

The middle phrase states we “equip the church.” That is the bridge to “share the Gospel” with “those less privileged.” In every local church around the globe are leaders we call pastors who shepherd the flock. Our task is to train these dear servants so they can lead congregations throughout the Eurasian world. With Bible schools and training facilities, opportunities are given for men and women to learn together.



This edition of Good News Report aims to share the way in which God is using ordinary people to do miraculous works of God. We have the joy of meeting these individuals and their families, sharing how fellow believers in other parts of the world are supporting them through prayer and resources. This link we have created with hundreds will be forever celebrated both now and in eternity.

Right now, over 2,000 are enrolled in biblical courses in several locations, preparing them for the next adventure as God would lead. Thousands have been trained before them and serve faithfully in villages, towns, and cities. As older leaders retire, young men and women stand ready to come alongside, being mentored and released to further Kingdom purposes.

At Christmas, one of the ways we encourage these servants is with a one-time special financial investment. This can only be done with gifts received by you the donor. How much is given is all dependent upon what we receive before Christmas. Won't you consider making this part of your Christmas list this year? Just designate to “Pastor's Christmas Gift.”

Your investment in these lives is bearing eternal dividends. Heaven is going to be a wonderful reunion meeting those we never knew on earth but had a part in without ever knowing so. Some may have the opportunity to meet these chosen ones by going overseas with us. Interested? Contact us for further information.

Serving together,

Bill Ball
Executive Director, SGA/Canada

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