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SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

Your Prayers and Support Sustain Faithful Churches in Ministry in a Time of Tragedy . . .

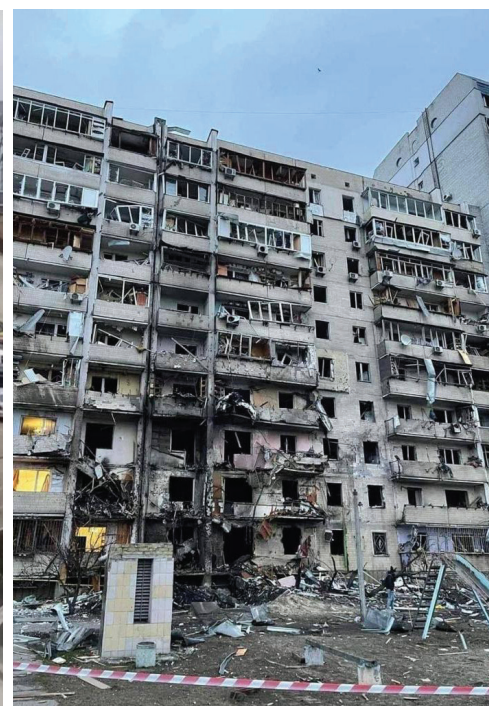
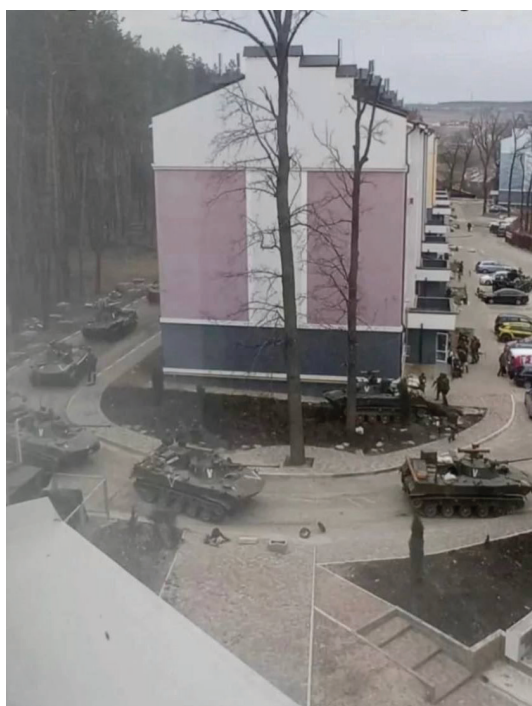
INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ♦ Ukraine refugee update!
- ♦ What God can do through Summer Bible Camps!
- ♦ Testimonies from transformed young people.

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)

The Heartbreak of War . . . and the Hope of the Gospel

Michael Johnson, SGA President



(L to R) A burning bridge; military tanks in the street; a residential building hit by shelling.

And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end (Matthew 24:6).

For weeks, the world heard the news about the Russian military buildup along the border with Ukraine. And the “rumor of war” indeed spread—until February 24, 2022, when the rumor became reality. Russian troops went into Ukraine from several fronts, and a new round of violence,

bloodshed, and sorrow began. Like most of the country, we watched in horror as the bombs began to fall in Ukrainian cities on live television night after night. Our hearts broke for the people of Ukraine, and for the many across Russia and the former Soviet Union who were just as heartbroken at the outbreak of another war affecting their homelands.

Immediately, we knew that SGA would have to act swiftly. Our Regional Ministry Center (RMC), Irpen Biblical Seminary, and the lives of many SGA-sponsored missionary pastors were in grave danger as the bombs began falling. We are thankful to God that our staff, and the Irpen faculty and students, were able to evacuate, yet some of the seminary staff decided to remain behind so that the school could function as a temporary shelter for local residents amid the bombing. Yet even as they evacuated their wives and children, missionary pastors and their churches across Ukraine were already making ministry plans. They knew that thousands, if not



Faculty, students, and local residents gather for dinner at the seminary while the fighting continues outside.



Believers worshipping in a bomb shelter.

millions, of despairing refugees were being driven out of their homes and would be looking for not only a safe place, but also for a reason to hope. They needed funds and resources, and needed them fast!

And God provided as only He can, using your love, compassion, and generosity. SGA partners across North America began calling and giving, as did many new people who learned about the ministry and wanted to help. As a result, we have been able to connect with a network of 20 faithful evangelical churches in Poland and supply them with resources to reach some of the millions of Ukrainian refugees that have flooded into the country. While ministering to these refugees, we are also working tirelessly to get funds for food and other essentials into the hands of 40 churches and SGA-supported missionary pastors in Ukraine for distribution to meet desperate needs in various locations. Pastors on the Russian side of the border are helping refugees who are coming north into Russia. The funds you provide are purchasing items such as food packs, blankets, medicines, and other items. As the pastors and their teams distribute the aid, they are doing it in the name of Jesus, and sharing the life-changing Gospel as they have opportunity.

The reports, video, and photographs we are receiving from overseas tell a grim story. Some of them are so graphic that we could never share them publicly, and the devastation has been truly horrible. One of SGA's supported missionary pastors named Mikhail sent the following report from northern

Ukraine near Kiev, and it vividly illustrates the situation on the ground where he is serving . . .

Fourteen days of war as I write this. The pain of war breaks the heart, especially when you see a whole block of residential buildings destroyed by aerial bombs. On the night of March 7-8, explosions destroyed 22 houses here and claimed the lives of civilians—19 adults and 3 children. Like many other settlements, our city is surrounded and periodically fired upon and bombed by the invaders. Our church is constantly in prayer

and continues to serve people by preaching in word and deed. From the very beginning of the attack on our country and our border area, we began to help people with a word of encouragement, prayer, and food distribution. At first, together with local businessmen, we distributed locally produced eggs and chickens. And later we began to buy products and make food bags. Since food supplies are blocked due to the blown up bridge and the control of roads by the occupiers, there is less food in the city every day. We try to distribute food bags to everyone who needs them. We have tried to help bring people to buses for evacuation. Pray for me and my family. Even now, as I write this message, we are hearing bomb explosions that are being dropped on our city.

Enabled through your prayers and support, another missionary pastor named Vladimir has been reaching out to needy individuals and families in the regions of eastern Ukraine, which has been ravaged by war since 2014. God is working in many families amid the violence and bloodshed of war . . .

Alexei and Galina have three children—two boys named Nahum and Nathan, and a girl named Sulamita. They are between the ages of six months and seven years old. Due to the war and all (continued on the back page)



Alexei, Galina, and their three children.

What God Can Do Through Your Support for Summer Bible Camps

Students and parents turn to Christ as Savior and Lord!

Pastor Pavel

Vitebsk Region of Belarus

We greet you, our brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! Please accept our deepest gratitude for your help in conducting our camp this past summer.

Our outreach was held on church grounds. We invited non-believing friends, neighbors, and children from nearby villages. And to our surprise, everyone we had invited came! We had **56 children** and **26 adults** who participated in the camp. All the children came at 9 a.m. and went home at 7 p.m. The children were divided by age into groups. In each group, Bible lessons, games, and craft lessons were held. After lunch, there were camp games and evening services where each group sang a song and showed what they had learned on the biblical topic of the day. The atmosphere in the camp was blessed for us and for the children. Everything took place without any negative incidents.

Most importantly, at the end of the service on the third day, nine children prayed a prayer of repentance. These children's hearts turned to the Lord. They all were praying, crying, asking for forgiveness from God, and for help to follow Him. Please support these young souls in prayer so that this desire does not fade in their hearts until the



56 Children and 26 adults participated in the camp.

coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Then on Sunday, **our church was filled with the unbelieving parents** along with their children. All the children who were in the camp participated during the service by singing songs, reciting poems, performing Bible skits, and at the end of the meeting, two parents came forward to repent! **How glad we were that two more adult souls turned to the Lord.** Glory to our Lord for this! We are very happy and thankful for the camp in our small town. This joint work unites us and helps brothers and sisters grow spiritually and serve our Lord by guiding lost souls to Him! May God bless you for your kind and sacrificial hearts! May He keep you and your families in this difficult time! May He reward you a hundredfold or even more! ♦

Summer Camp 2021

It is wonderful to contemplate what God has done through SGA-sponsored summer camp ministry across Russia and her neighboring countries. Rejoice with us as we review a record-setting season in 2021, and with expectation about what God will do this summer!

Camps Held 660
Children Attending 39,989
Unbelieving Children 24,361
Orphan Children 2,844

Children Repenting 3,382
Children Starting Sunday School 2,928
Adults/Caregivers Starting Church 791

Loving Medicine and God's Eternal Hope

Your Gifts Help Point Ill and Needy Children to the Savior

For many years now, SGA partners have faithfully provided support to the Zhemchuzhinka (Little Pearl) Diagnostic Children's Camp in Kobrin, Belarus. **This Christian camp serves children who are battling cancer or other illnesses related to leftover radioactivity from the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster.** They also reach orphans and needy children from dysfunctional or large families. In addition to limited treatments and diagnostic services, **the children also receive Bible teaching and loving discipleship from caring believers.**

This past summer, your support made it possible for the camp to host **1,245 children** ranging in age from 8 to 17 years of age. Camp director Pavel reported that God's grace was evident throughout the season . . .

*We took maximum security measures to prevent any spread of COVID-19 in the camp. All workers had negative tests, and God blessed us. Not a single case of COVID was recorded despite the large influx of people from various regions. We organized groups for disabled children and those with cancer. We had craft lessons and other activities which took account of their physical condition. **Some of the unbelieving parents or their caregivers began attending Baptist churches after the camp.** They saw how believers conducted themselves, became interested, and even began studying the Bible on their own.*

The session for teenagers began in August and lasted for 15 days. A pastor from a nearby city led the Bible lessons. He talked about nominal believers in the



Studying the Bible.

*churches and young people who consider themselves Christians, but in fact were not. **He talked about what it meant to be truly be born again, and the Lord moved.** The result of the first lesson was overwhelming. Many teenagers were turning to Christ with tears, and even the camp workers from the*

churches said they had never grown so much spiritually in such a short amount of time.

Especially valuable was the personal time spent with the children, and in prayer. The camp provides a wonderful opportunity to reach the hearts of the children, living with them, rejoicing with them, experiencing their problems, successes, and achievements. The Lord changes their lives and destinies, and young people decide to devote their lives to the Lord. **More than 100 children repented and trusted in Christ during the camp sessions.** 1,245 children—1,245 destinies—1,245 life stories—heard about Christ. This is a blessed time and place! ♦

Testimonies from Camp:



Margarita

I like absolutely everything that surrounds me in Zhemchuzhinka. Campfire songs are an unforgettable time. It's great that I could hear about God, and even an excursion to an ostrich farm is a great opportunity to think about how wonderfully well God arranged everything in our world. In the camp, we were told about God in a very understandable way, and I realized that I need to read the Bible and will try to do it regularly. Thank you for such a wonderful opportunity to be in the Christian camp! —Margarita, age 16



Lukin

I am very glad that I was able to visit this camp. I really liked the food and the place where I slept was very cozy. I was especially surprised by the care and attention of all the adults who were in the camp. I enjoyed the Bible lessons and evening meetings. It was there that I learned so much about God, and was given knowledge that I want to use in life. If I have a chance to go back, I would never miss the opportunity! —Lukin, age 10

Praising God for Another Record *Immanuel's Child* Year!



Children with their stars and gifts at an *Immanuel's Child* outreach.

Each Christmas is a time of rejoicing for the ministry that takes place through the SGA-supported *Immanuel's Child* outreach, but even more so this past Christmas. With the prayers and support of SGA partners, a record number of children were reached across the former Soviet Union. This is especially amazing when you consider that much of the world was still dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and varying degrees of restrictions.

Children Reached	50,370
Children from Unbelieving Families	35,603
Children Repented	1,892
Adults Reached	18,832
Adults Repented	514
Adults Starting Church Attendance	1,333
Children Starting Sunday School	2,829
Number of Churches	704

Last year, a total of 39,915 children were reached, and that in itself was a record. Among the wonderful reports was this one from Pastor

Alexander in Belarus, who said the joyful atmosphere was evident . . .

The joy and peace was special at this celebration. For some reason, the adults and even the children were speaking quietly, in a low voice, as if they were afraid to disturb the atmosphere of love that was in the room. Two women named Alyona and Maria came to the celebration, each bringing their children. At the service, we prayed, sang Christmas songs, shared testimonies and a message, and our Sunday school children performed a Christmas play about Jesus' birth. Our guests all looked at everything that was happening with wide eyes, holding their breath. We distributed the gifts, which included sweets, fruit, and books along with Christmas greetings and words about the love of God. The Christmas stars were given out with the names of people who care in North America. Then we shared a meal, followed by games for the children, a quiz, and even contests for adults. Afterward, Alyona and Maria both said they wanted to start coming to church, and the children in Sunday school. I thank everyone who took part in making our Christmas celebration so blessed! ♦

CIS IN THE NEWS

Pray for Peace and the Gospel Advance in Ukraine

As this issue of the **Good News Report** was going to print, there has been violent conflict between Russia and Ukraine. As is usual when there is military confrontation in the former Soviet Union, SGA is often asked by media and others to provide our viewpoint on events. Our viewpoint is largely what it always has been—to serve the evangelical churches of the former Soviet Union **as they lovingly proclaim the life-changing Gospel to their people**, and to avoid getting drawn into political controversy as much as possible.

Our brothers and sisters in each of the former Soviet countries must walk a very difficult road. They are citizens of their respective nations and have a patriotic love for their people. They have concerns over the challenges they face from governments and other groups opposed to evangelical ministry. These

concerns certainly include the level of freedom they have to worship and carry out their ministries. Having lived for so long under atheistic communism, as well as oppression in Muslim-dominated regions,

these challenges are not new to the churches. They ask for our prayers and ongoing support, and at the same time caution us to be careful in what we say so that we do not endanger them. Along with them, we strive to be obedient to God's Word . . . *First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and*

thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity (1 Timothy 2:1-2). No matter the outcome, please join us in praying for peace, and for the ongoing advance of the Gospel, which alone can bring true peace. ♦



Destruction in Ukraine.

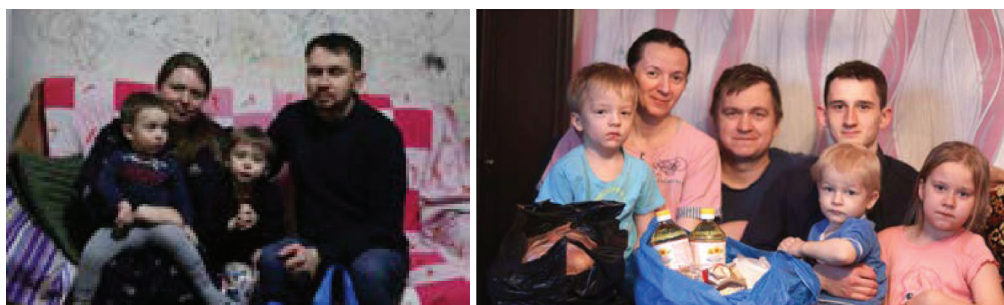
HOW YOU CAN HELP

The war between Russia and Ukraine breaks our hearts, sharing the sorrow of the Bible-preaching churches we serve in both nations, and across the former Soviet Union. This situation no doubt changes many ministry plans, but we serve a sovereign God whose purpose will be fulfilled no matter what obstacles sinful man throws in the way. We hope to report more on upcoming summer camp ministry next month, all the while praising and thanking the Lord for His gracious provision for all SGA-supported ministries—including Bible training, Russian-language Bibles and Christian literature, children's ministries, Compassion Ministry, and so much more. Please pray about how you can help today! ♦



Aid for displaced Ukrainians.

... Continued from Page 3.



(L to R) Sergei, Ksenia, and their two children; Maxim, Larisa, and their four children.

out mobilization, many businesses and factories are closed. Young families are struggling to put bread on the table and to nourish their kids. Alexei and Galina are very thankful for the food you helped provide. Then there is the family of Sergei and Ksenia. When the war mobilization was announced, Sergei's furniture repair business was closed and providing for the family has become much more difficult. They are expecting a third child soon, and in such a situation food aid is very important and a great support. They are very delighted and grateful to the Lord and to all people who gave to help them. And finally, Maxim and Larisa send their thanks. They are raising four children. In the middle of a war, any job for a man means survival for his family, but the employment opportunities are not favorable. Therefore, for them the food aid they are receiving is a wonderful support, and they thank God for it. They pray, thanking the Lord for all those people they don't even know—all who helped make it possible. Thank God!



(Above) Churches minister to displaced Ukrainians by providing aid and shelter.

So many individuals and families have had their lives torn apart in an almost unimaginable way. But they all have this in common. They have a faithful God who loves and cares for them, and they have people like you who care enough to help them in this hour of trial. To God be the glory, and may this ministry continue pointing many men, women, and children to true, eternal home in Him! ♦

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