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SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

God Opens Hearts to the Gospel Across the Former USSR Despite Sorrow and Destruction in Ukraine

INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ♦ Irpen Seminary Buildings Destroyed by Bombs!
- ♦ “I am Georgina”—a Refugee from the Past Gives Hope Today
- ♦ *Orphans Reborn* Reaches Children in Belarus



*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 Will Have the Last Word!

The Future of Irpen Biblical Seminary After the Destruction of War

By Michael Johnson, SGA President

Many years ago in the Ukrainian city of Zaporozhye, there was a knock on the door at the home of a man named Gavril Brinza. At the time, he was a deacon in the local Baptist church, and who among other things conducted a ministry to families who lost their husbands and fathers to



Gavril Brinza

persecution of Christians by the communists.

That night, the KGB informed him that he was to be arrested for the crime of sedition, which meant crimes against the state. He then kissed his family goodbye, grabbed the packed bag that sat at the door for a time such as this, and then he was taken away. Gavril was convicted,

sentenced to death, and put on a train to Siberia. On the way, many of the prisoners died from either starvation or exposure, and when he arrived at the camp, he was held in a room with other condemned prisoners. Every night the door would open, a flashlight was turned on, and the person upon whom the light fell was taken out and shot. Finally, the light fell upon Gavril, and as he was led across the yard praying for strength, the warden stepped out of his office and asked who was being executed. "This is Brinza," the guard said, "and he is a Baptist." The warden then replied, "My mother is a Baptist, commute his sentence."

Gavril was one of those who escaped death. Sadly, so many Christians were executed over the years simply for naming the name of Jesus as their Lord and Savior. **Who could have foreseen what would happen decades later in 1991, when Gavril**



Alexei Brinza

Brinza, his son Alexei, and other Ukrainian Baptist leaders began a new Bible school in the Kiev suburb of Irpen. This school became Irpen Biblical Seminary, which SGA has been privileged to support since its inception. It was a *miraculous development* in the aftermath of the

equally miraculous fall of communism, and Gavril's miraculous deliverance from execution years before.

Gavril's son Alexei was chosen to head Irpen Biblical Seminary. **They developed a wonderful strategy for the recruitment and selection of students.** Local church leaders would identify members whose faithful and fruitful ministries had demonstrated spiritual giftedness and evidence of our Lord's calling upon their lives. The main spiritual qualification would be having an already good command of Scripture, and above all, consistency with Isaiah 66:2 which reads . . . ***But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My Word.***

The process began with 57 candidates who needed to be screened down to the best suited 25 men to meet budget requirements. But during the course of examination, a crisis emerged. All 57 men qualified for training! When hearing this, former SGA president Bob Provost, who agreed to raise the funds for the new school, simply laughed and said, "I didn't know where the funds would come for the 25 men let alone 57. We need to trust God for these resources." And God indeed provided. A radio appearance by Bob on Dr. John MacArthur's *Grace to You* radio program attracted the attention of a Christian trucking company owner, who then



*“I know that God is
in control of all of this.
Lord willing, we will
rebuild Irpen Biblical
Seminary . . .”*

committed to supporting the school each month. That step of faith led to the wonderful development and growth of the school in subsequent years. **Over the past 25 years, Irpen has graduated 2,500 men and women, with a student enrollment this year of 830. More than 95% of the graduates are still in full time ministry.**

The Heartbreak and Horror of War Comes to Irpen

On February 24, 2022, the world was stunned when Russian forces invaded Ukraine. Fighting and aerial bombardment was constant, and on Sunday, March 16th, bombs finally fell on the Irpen Seminary building, destroying it and bringing all the Bible training activity to a halt. At the time of the bombing, the building was being used as an aid station for the citizens of Ukraine that had lost their homes due to the fighting. One hundred people were in the basement that served as a bomb shelter—and *not one was severely injured.*

I know that God is in control of all of this. Our Lord spared the life of Gavril, blessed the ministry of his son Alexei, and continues to bless the school through the leadership of Alexei’s son-in-law,



Irpen Biblical Seminary before and after the bombing attack.

Dr. Igor Yaremchuk, academic dean Benjamin Brinza, and many others. A significant number of the pastors we are equipping now with food and humanitarian aid are graduates of the seminary, and as a result many people are coming to faith in Christ as they minister in both word and deed. **Lord willing, we will rebuild Irpen Biblical Seminary as Christ continues to build His church in Ukraine during times of both peace and conflict.** I count it a privilege to serve these wonderful churches and training institutions such as this, knowing that these churches are being built upon a foundation of great sacrifice, persecution, and the blood of the martyrs! ♦

“I am Georgina”

SGA's History of Helping Refugees . . . in Jesus' Name

By Ruth Deyneka Erdel

Editor's Note: The following story by Ruth Deyneka Erdel, daughter of SGA founder Peter Deyneka, is a wonderful account showing SGA's decades-long legacy of helping war refugees in the name of Jesus, and sharing the Gospel with them. May you be blessed and encouraged as you read!

It was July 1950—five years after the end of World War II, that I sailed to Europe as a missionary.

My mission field? The numerous Russian-speaking refugees that now found themselves living in Displaced Persons (DP) camps. I traveled together with my father, SGA founder Peter Deyneka. We landed in Southampton, England. We then went on to London, then to Brussels, Belgium, to attend the large Youth for Christ Congress that was held in Brussels that year.

My father had been in touch with a Russian minister who had been working with Russian immigrants and refugees in Belgium. I was glad to go with Mr. and Mrs. Urban to a Sunday afternoon Russian meeting he held at the Displaced Persons Camp outside of Brussels. **These DP camps had been set up across Europe in the aftermath of the war, with thousands of displaced refugees being sheltered in them.** There I was asked to give my testimony. Many refugees attended, and most of them were nonbelievers. They listened intently as I simply gave my testimony of being saved at age nine, and now having hope in the Lord for my future.

When the service ended, people thanked me. Some refugees accompanied us to the car. I especially noticed one family. **There was a young girl about the age of 10 with them.** Eventually she came over to me rather shyly. I quickly welcomed her, and we began to converse freely in Russian. It wasn't long before she told me she liked my speech. She went on to say that I was the very first young Christian girl she had ever seen, and I was the first one who ever spoke so openly about Jesus (I was 22 years of age at that time).

My young friend asked me many questions about God and about having a relationship with Jesus. It seemed that she was under the impression that only older people could know God—one had to be elderly to repent and be saved. I carefully explained that the way of salvation is open for all ages. She started to cry and stopped walking. Looking up to me, she asked me if she could receive Jesus right NOW? **I was quick to say yes, and soon we were standing there praying and both crying.** When we finished, she thanked me for praying for her. I hugged her and knew that the angels were rejoicing.

From Belgium, my father and I went on to Germany. Joined by two other SGA missionaries, there our team began several weeks of gospel services in scattered DP camps located in Augsburg, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, and other cities. **Everywhere, Russian-speaking refugees responded to the Gospel!** After my father returned to the US, I stayed in Frankfurt, Germany. There, along with SGA missionary Roz Leonovich, we held regular services mainly with the women and children at two different DP camps.

One day, at the back of the hall where we held the meetings, a man stopped us. **Could we please tell him where he could buy the book from which we were giving the lessons? He had never seen a Bible before, and his heart was touched with its message.** He tried to kiss our hands when we brought him a Russian Bible! We also spent several weeks ministering with refugee children and women at a DP camp near Vienna, Austria, as well as several weeks with Russian-speaking youth in France. The Lord blessed during several visits to the large DP camp in Trieste, Italy, where thousands of refugees were waiting for visas to other countries.

Several years later, I attended some Russian meetings in New Jersey. A lovely young lady came to me with a smile. **"I am Georgina" she told me.** Georgina was the young girl that I had prayed with in Belgium. She shared that her family finally got a visa to immigrate to the USA. Now she was so grateful to have Jesus in her heart.

I thank the Lord for giving me the privilege of telling refugees of Christ our Savior who died for our salvation. What a joy it is to serve our Lord! ♦

She Sent the Gospel Behind the Iron Curtain . . . and Didn't Stop There

The Amazing Impact of SGA Missionary Stella Jarema Kapitaniuk

On February 27, SGA senior missionary Stella Jarema Kapitaniuk went to be with the Lord at the age of 93 after a long battle with cancer. While we grieve with her family, we also rejoice in knowing that Stella is now safe in glory with Christ after a lifetime of service to His kingdom.

Stella was a native of Smoky Lake in the Canadian province of Alberta. Her father had immigrated from Ukraine and eventually ended up in Alberta where he established a farm and raised his family. Stella was the seventh of 10 children. **When she was 15, SGA missionaries had been sent by SGA founder Peter Deyneka to the Smoky Lake region to spend the summer and share the Gospel, and Peter himself had preached there.** Stella trusted in Christ as her Savior, and later graduated from Prairie Bible Institute in 1952 majoring in Bible and Music. A short time later, she was invited to join the SGA family as a missionary.



Stella and Beill Kapitaniuk.

Stella worked at the SGA office in Chicago for a while, traveling with Peter and Vera Deyneka and engaging in music ministry as a vocal soloist. **Eventually, her ministry took her to South America to minister in music through SGA and shortwave radio station HCJB, which beamed the Gospel and Christian music behind the Iron Curtain.** Ruth Deyneka Erdel, the eldest daughter of our founder, served with Stella there and shared

warm reflections of their time in ministry:

“Stella was involved at HCJB for over 22 years. Oh, how she sang, in Russian, Ukrainian, English, and Spanish! Truly God used her voice to tell the Gospel story by music. When not singing, her days were filled with work in the Russian office at HCJB, doing all types of secretarial work in connection with correspondence with our Slavic radio listeners. She also participated in our Wednesday Letter radio program, and part of the HCJB Radio Choir. Stella never said no. She always joyfully looked forward, always praying and leaning on Christ for strength.”

Stella had never married, and after her retirement, she once again encountered a fellow SGA missionary whom she had met when they were both young in Alberta—Bill Kapitaniuk. Bill's wife Sophie had gone to be with the Lord after a long illness, and after reconnecting with Stella after many years, they were married in 2010, settling back in Smoky Lake.

Please join the SGA family in prayer for Bill, along with the Kapitaniuk and Jarema families, during this difficult time. Also join us in great thanksgiving for Stella's many years of faithful service to Christ. ♦



Stella, third from left., Ruth Erdel, second from right in back row, and the team at HCJB.

Your Support Propels *Orphans Reborn* in Belarus! [Wonderful Fruit Despite Many Challenges]

From the *Orphans Reborn* team near Kobrin, Belarus:

Pease be with you, dear friends! Please accept our cordial greetings

On February 11 and 25, we had blessed meetings with our friends from the orphanage in a nearby town. Despite the difficulties connected with the COVID-19 pandemic at the beginning when all the institutions were closed for quarantine, the doors were always open to us, thanks to the good work we do. On our last visit, the border guards stopped us at the entry to the city and asked where we were going. **When they saw the gifts in the trunk of our car and heard we were going to an orphanage, they let us through.** This particular orphanage is near the border zone with Ukraine, so there are checkpoints.

The themes of our meetings with the children were David and Jonathan, and Solomon, the wisest man on earth. The lessons the children learned were—if God has made you a leader, be obedient to Him. Pride goes before a fall. And the second lesson, from Solomon's example, is that it is impossible to please all men and God. Making pleasing people our highest priority compromises our walk before God. **Before and after the lesson, we had a quiz to review what we had learned, played simple games, and sang songs.**

On the eve of the Christmas and New Year holidays, the orphanage management asked for help to buy materials for homemade crafts. We bought a lot of useful things. We also brought water, fruit, and snacks. **Why do we get water? The groundwater here has a high iron content, which makes it unsuitable for drinking.** That's why we *always* bring water.

We continue to work with children from dysfunctional families in another nearby village. Every Sunday, a minibus brings the children to our meetings. There are nine people in all. They have already started to make friends with the children from our Sunday school. We recently were able to take them to church in an agricultural town, where we held a worship service on our own. The children

served with verse, singing, and commentary on the songs. Afterward, we had lunch together. The children are excited about these trips and we will continue to do this in the future!

One boy named Alexander came to us for help because he is very cold in winter. He is 16 years old and is studying construction in a vocational college. **His parents don't help him because his father is in prison and his mother drinks heavily. The whole winter, he wore only torn sneakers.** We bought him winter boots and sneakers for the summer.

Most important, we told him about Christ, that He is the meaning of life, and encouraged him to go to church for youth meetings.

The Youth Center continues to operate. **At one of the meetings, we discussed the theme: "love is".** There were a lot of young people and the topic was relevant. Love or infatuation, how to recognize the difference and how to not make a mistake. We also visited the children in yet another village of our district. We gathered our team, bought cakes, pizza, gifts, and made a holiday for them. They were delighted. We told Bible stories about David and Goliath, and the theme was how small things with the fear of God can defeat great things that are without God!

Friends, thank you for providing a helping hand in our ministry to children. May God bless you! ♦



Alexander trying on his new shoes..

CIS IN THE NEWS

Ukraine War Has Global Agricultural Impacts

While the war in Ukraine has been going on for several months now, economists say that the economic and political ramifications of the conflict are still taking shape. A recent panel discussion at the Virginia Governor's Conference on Agricultural Trade focused on potential impacts, according to a report filed with the Emporia Independent Messenger.

Russia and Ukraine are two of the world's largest grain producers, and grow nearly one-third of the world's wheat supply. The American Farm Bureau Federation's Veronica Nigh explained that the bulk of Russia's military activity is taking place in Ukraine's most agricultural regions, and is halting production. As a result, national corn

production is expected to decrease by **37 percent**, and wheat is projected to drop **40 percent** from 2021.

World conflicts nearly always cause market

impacts, and this is no different. American farmers can be impacted by rising fertilizer costs, and Russia is the world's largest exporter of nitrogen—as well as the third largest exporter of phosphate and potassium. **The impacts on the world food supply overall remain to be seen, and with the number of needy**



Burnt fields in Ukraine.

people growing due to the war's impacts, any resulting food shortages are of significant concern. Please join us in praying for peace, and that SGA's efforts to help churches respond to the needy in their regions will not be hindered. ♦

HOW YOU CAN HELP AT A CRITICAL TIME

With the tragic war between Ukraine in Russia, there are so many questions about what the future holds for both countries, the former Soviet Union as a whole, and for long-term impacts around the world. While we cannot answer those questions, we know that should the Lord tarry in



Aid for displaced Ukrainians.

His coming, our role at SGA will be what it has been since 1934—to serve the faithful churches that Christ is building as they proclaim the Gospel to their people.

Your fervent prayers and faithful giving help us do that in so many ways. **You help provide Bibles and Christian literature, doctrinally sound Bible training, food, clothing, and other items as part of Compassion Ministry, children's outreaches, summer camps, and so much more.** Please pray about how you can help today! ♦

Canadian Connection

Support is something we all can use from time to time in our lives. It comes in various forms through prayer, encouragement, assistance, gifts, and the list goes on. We at SGA will be the first to tell you that a large part of what we do is to support partners in Eurasia through local churches, which in turn support others who otherwise would not make it in many cases.

Right now, as we write this article, and you receive its stories, life has been shattered for an entire country with effects that have extensive ripples to other nations. Over 5 million people thus far in Ukraine have left their homeland, and another 5 million have been displaced. Half of that number are school age children. The ongoing psychological damage requiring support will continue for years following the initial trauma many have experienced.



We at SGA will support those who need a variety of practical forms of assistance. Coming alongside local believers has always been our strong point and now we will put this into “high gear.” Showing the love of Christ through humanitarian and spiritual resources with various partnerships will enable a nation to endure and overcome. Your gifts have been so appreciated by so many across Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Moldova, and beyond.

Like a mighty army all across the nation of Canada, you have shared sacrificially like we have never seen before. We cannot stop now because the work has only begun, and we do not know all the twists and turns that we will take on this journey. We do know that God goes before us, and we will be careful to follow His leading each step of the way.

There will be many rebuilding projects in the future, but for now our focus is on people and their immediate needs. Read these stories and be blessed. We are collecting funds to provide a summer camp experience for thousands of children. It may not be where they might normally go but we trust it will be a week to lift them from their difficulties. Whatever you can do, we will together witness a mighty moving of God's Spirit.

Thank you for your commitment to SGA/Canada and the partners overseas who really do need us now and are so grateful for your support. These are days in which we can see God at work. Let's be a blessing!

Partners Together,

Bill Ball
Executive Director, SGA/Canada

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