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SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

# Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

## Despite War and Hardship, God is Raising Up a New Generation of Christian Leaders

המכללה ללימודי התנ"ך  
College of the Bible  
كلية ICB للكتاب المقدس

### INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS AT WORK

- ♦ Ukraine's Irpen Seminary is Rising from the Debris
- ♦ Seminaries and Lay Institutes Train Hundreds of Students!
- ♦ A Pastor's Wartime Reflection

*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)*



# Ahead: Hundreds of Ministers. Lifetimes of Ministry.

*You help sustain vitally important Bible training for a new generation!*

Eric Mock

SGA Vice President of Ministry Operations

*... entrust these to faithful people who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2).*

Our brothers and sisters across the former Soviet Union are accustomed to difficulties and challenges, and the past two years have been especially difficult. The COVID-19 pandemic hit hard, and then this past February, the military invasion of Ukraine began with all of its related tragedies.

Yet despite these challenges, we are rejoicing and praising God for His hand of blessing on the seminaries and Bible institutes sponsored by SGA. They continue to prepare hundreds of faithful students for **lifetimes of ministry**.

**Ukraine's Irpen Biblical Seminary is coming back!**

When the Russian military invaded Ukraine in February, all of the plans at Irpen Seminary had to change. It was devastating.

The students were sent away due to the fighting, but some of them had no place to go. Many in the city of Irpen sought refuge in the seminary building, which made it a target. Irpen Seminary was hit by 50 mortar rounds.

When the shelling and troops departed, academic dean Benjamin Brinza returned to inspect the building. By God's grace, the worship center, library, and dining halls were undamaged! For the last few weeks, Benjamin has led a team of volunteers that have cleared all the debris, filled the huge holes in the roof and are sealing the roof to protect the building from further weather damage.

Now Dr. Igor Yaremchuk, the seminary president, Benjamin, and SGA are **pressing forward in restarting pastoral training this fall** if it is safe to do so and local fighting does not begin again. Students will reside both at the school and at SGA's Regional Ministry Center. Also, in light of the influx of Ukrainian refugees into Poland and through our



Irpen seminary was hit by 50 mortar rounds, but with the help of volunteers, the debris has been cleared and the roof sealed.

new relationship with the Polish Baptist Union, Irpen will begin **an Extension Center in Warsaw**. This will be a joint program with Ukrainian and Polish students, with Irpen Seminary and Polish Baptist teachers. This too will begin in the Fall.

Praise God!

### **Almaty Bible Institute in Kazakhstan churns out missionary pastors**

At the moment, **238 students** are studying at the Almaty Bible Institute and its extension centers. This spring, **24 students graduated** from **three different programs**. Alexander Karyakov, the school's director, joyfully reports that all graduates are continuing their ministry in local communities **across Central Asia**. Over the past six months, they held **21 modular sessions spanning six different programs**.

In addition to training in Almaty, they continued teaching at their extension centers in the Russian cities of Omsk and Krasnodar, plus Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

### **Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary in Russia pours out Gospel salt and light**

At Novosibirsk, there are currently **146 students** in both bachelor and masters level studies, with **14 graduates** this year—including four from the graduate program. These masters level graduates are a great help to the professors at Novosibirsk as they continue to grow.

They also provide teachers for **extension centers** and for **SGA-sponsored Antioch Initiative training**. At Novosibirsk Seminary, a major development is the addition of an extension center in **Khabarovsk in Russia's Far East**.

As God provides and leads, we are praying that this eventually develops into the Far East Training Center. Also, they have started the second group of students at their extension center in **St. Petersburg**, which is also growing and in demand. Extension centers continue to be supported in **Ufa, Voronezh, and Irkutsk**. Also, a college-level education program for the deaf is planned for this fall. In addition to all this, SGA is assisting **five students from Yakutia** in their studies at NBTs, and officially this May the churches in Yakutia have joined the Russian Baptist Union.



Students at Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary.

*This is amazing progress in the Far East and Siberia!*

### **Minsk Theological Seminary in Belarus shines Christ's light**

At Minsk Theological Seminary there are **221 students** enrolled. Of that total, there are 37 students in the pastoral program, 26 in the Music department, and 40 in the Biblical Counseling program. They expect that by the start of the fall term, these numbers will increase significantly.

### **Israel College of the Bible grows Russian-speaking leadership for Christ**

Then in Israel, there are **166 Russian-speaking students** that were trained through Israel College of the Bible. Along with training at the school in Netanya, training is also conducted at extension centers in four locations. There are **23 students graduating** from a Biblical Counseling program, which was added to their Biblical Studies course load. With the advent of the invasion, the last course taught this past term was Crisis Counseling, and we made this training available to students in Ukraine and Poland.

Join us in praising and thanking God for His blessing and hand of protection on these vitally important Bible training ministries during these challenging days. Having faithful men solidly trained in the Word of God is needed now more than ever! ♦



# Ministry in Wartime: A Pastor's Reflections

Pastor Viktor in Russia's Caucasus region

*In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider—God has made the one as well as the other so that man will not discover anything that will be after him. I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness (Ecclesiastes 7:14-15).*

I have been writing my reports for many years, but this time it was hard to write. How can I express the suffering of people?

Today, Russia and Ukraine are going through difficult times, when people are dying and hostility grows. We are called to consider, and to think about the temporary nature of life and the insecurity of earthly treasures, which are destroyed. The main thing is the state of our faith, which is tried by fire. If it survives the fire, it becomes more precious than gold.

I think of the refugees and parents whose children are having to fight in the war. Some have perished while others have come back disabled. I am

a pastor and am called to sympathize with the suffering, and to bandage their physical and spiritual wounds. One young family of Christians with twin boys came, and we accommodated them.

We have good contacts with believers in other countries, and have been able to help buy tickets for refugees to travel. We raise funds to buy food, and we have been taking it to Mariupol, Ukraine, by trucks. The churches there cook the food and minister to the hungry. One small church in the region is preparing meals for **500 people each day**.

We here in the Caucasus are familiar with tragedy. Two wars in Chechnya, and a terrible terror attack in Beslan that killed hundreds of school children. That is why we feel this current tragedy keenly. Compassion takes much moral strength—sharing in peoples' needs brings joy, but it also exhausts. **Please pray for our situation and our faithfulness to the Lord. Pray for our son, who has to serve in the army, and wants to remain faithful to Christ.** There is much more that I could write, but want to express my thanks to all of you who support my ministry. *Pray for us!* ♦



Pastor Viktor and other believers distribute New Testaments to drivers stuck in traffic who are passing through the Caucasus region to other countries.



# Antioch Initiative Trains Hundreds in God's Word!

*Your support spurs rapid expansion of qualified, life-changing lay teachers*



Graduates of Antioch Initiative training in Irkutsk.

The SGA-sponsored *Antioch Initiative* Bible training ministry across the former Soviet Union began this year with **eight of the 10 locations able to meet**. The two locations in Tajikistan were unable to meet. Of the six locations that did meet in Russia, three of them are newer locations.

Due to the invasion of Ukraine, we were unable

to send American instructors to Russia. However, the SGA-sponsored seminaries in Novosibirsk, Russia; Almaty, Kazakhstan; and Minsk, Belarus, provided national teachers and continued to assist in this strategic ministry. The eight sessions that were held were attended by **273 students**. This is strong attendance given that all the locations were still dealing with COVID restrictions. We anticipate all **10 locations meeting this fall**, and if realized will put us on a path to have **600 – 650 students** for the year 2022.

The *Antioch Initiative* is becoming more strategic with the possibility always looming of further government inspections and restrictions on evangelical schools in Russia. **If this occurs, it will make Antioch training even more important for the churches we serve.** The Baptist Unions desire to have more locations at which church-based training can occur. Please pray for God's wisdom and guidance in this, as SGA wants to engage to the fullest extent possible to train men for ministry while opportunities exist. ♦



Forty-five men and women participated in Antioch Initiative training in Tuva.

# Dr. Robert Provost Receives Faithful Servant Award From IFCA International!



From left, Louetta and Bob Provost, Robb and Pam Provost.

Each year the IFCA Board of Directors selects an individual IFCA member to receive the Faithful Servant Award. The award recognizes the faithful service rendered to our Lord for a sustained period of time.

Dr. Robert Provost, SGA's president emeritus, was selected this year due to his long, faithful ministry with SGA and incorporating many IFCA men and ministries into the outreaches supported and sponsored through SGA. Most prominently, Bob enlisted IFCA churches and individuals to support missionary pastors across the former Soviet Union, and many continue in their support to this day. Also, Bob enlisted many IFCA churches to help initiate the *Antioch Initiative* training ministry. At that time, Bob

enlisted churches to operate together to underwrite an *Antioch Initiative* ministry and to send their pastors to teach. This fruitful Bible training outreach continues to bear great fruit and to strengthen evangelical churches across Russia.

During his leadership of SGA from 1994 to 2017, Bob Provost was instrumental in giving SGA great visibility in the IFCA, and developing an affinity for ministry among Slavic nations. This close relationship culminated with SGA becoming an official member organization of IFCA in 2022.

We praise and thank the Lord for Bob's decades of faithful service to Christ, and for this wonderful honor bestowed by his peers in ministry! ♦



## CIS IN THE NEWS

### NATO Expands—US to Ramp Up Military Presence in Europe

Earlier this summer, NATO announced that it was inviting the previously unaligned nations of Sweden and Finland to the organization in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Both countries had sought to join after their parliaments approved the move. In addition, the *Wall Street Journal* reported President Joe Biden's announcement that the U.S. would make its biggest military expansion in Europe in decades.

The war in Ukraine has already had devastating impacts for millions of people there, and on neighboring nations that have accepted refugees fleeing from the fighting. Nevertheless,

God is sovereign, and He continues to use the tragedy to reach countless souls who are seeking Him for the first time.

We will continue helping the churches reach refugees with aid and the Gospel as God provides. Please pray with us for peace to come at last to this war, which has now raged for six months. ♦



An SGA-supported team provides aid to people in Ukraine.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

To this day along with fulfilling the Great Commission, Bible and theological training remains the top priority of the evangelical churches we serve across the former Soviet Union, and we are so deeply thankful. Your faithful support for in-country seminaries, Bible institutes, the *Antioch*



Bible students study God's Word.

*Initiative*, and other training opportunities are making a huge difference for the ministries of the churches, and preparing future generations for lifetimes of effective Gospel service. And your vital support also helps provide Russian-language Bibles and Christian literature, children's ministries, missionary pastor support, Compassion Ministry, and so much more. Please pray about how you can help today! ♦

# Canadian Connection

Several of our English words begin with the prefix “re” which means again or anew. This applies to what I want to share with you in this article. Much of what we are doing now, and in the future, will Revolve around: Restore, Revive, Rebuild, Recast, Reintegrate, Return, Remember, Reminisce, Renew, and the list goes on.



Life has changed for millions in the Slavic world where we have assisted with Sharing the Gospel, Equipping the Church and Helping the Forgotten. Right now, the camp season is in full operation. Though it may look different in many locations due to the war and Relocation, leaders have Revised the plan to Reimagine a great experience for children of all ages. Stories of Remarkable transformed lives are already being shared.

Remedies for shattered families will not come easily or perhaps not at all, but the church will Remain Resilient and Render hope for those in need. Here is where we can Respond with the love of God! Our

Response now is critical for the people of Ukraine in their homeland, as well as displaced locations across Europe and beyond. We have dedicated ourselves as a mission to Replenish the Resources necessary for Restoration. This involves all the basic necessities of living, which then opens the door to share the Gospel of Christ. Churches are seeing a Resurgence of attendance in every age group.

We have Recalled the events of God’s people every day through the Christ over COVID campaign, and now the Crisis Prayer Team stories for you to read and pray. Recalling God’s faithfulness has Restored many to Relationship with Christ. A Resurgence of the Church of God is happening across this land today.

You and I can play a part in this mighty movement of God. We can pray, give, and in the days ahead even go to Re-establish entire communities for the glory of God. Doors are opening in new ways and we must be willing to Re-imagine, Re-align, Re-invent, and Refrain from Retreat.

Thank you from SGA/Canada for Redeeming the time and Recognizing opportunities. We live in challenging times with talk of Recession, but we have Realized God will never fail us.

Serving together,

Bill Ball

Executive Director, SGA/Canada

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