



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION
Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

**The world is shaking ...
but the work of the
Gospel in the former
USSR grows!**



**INSIDE: YOUR PRAYERS
AND GIFTS AT WORK**

- ◆ In a harsh region, God is raising passionate, biblical leaders!
- ◆ The Lord reaches through the storms of war to reach the most hurting
- ◆ Being “born again” stunned him—and now he’s spreading it

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 Support Helps Rekindle Bible Training in Russia's Vast Far East Region

Yegori M.
SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Russia

Editor's Note: Far East Russia is a field ripe for sowing and harvesting. Roughly equal to the geographic size of the United States, the massive area holds cities and villages that have been receptive to the Gospel, but need cultivation—and more leaders. You are helping supply that leadership. The following article provides a glimpse.

After a two-year break, we started the *Antioch Initiative* courses in Yakutsk again with SGA's help. *Antioch Initiative* sessions—a program of intensive biblical lay leader training—help our church leaders and ministers obtain a deeper understanding of God and His Word, therefore serving Him better and with more dedication.

This time, we have young and active church ministers studying via *Antioch* training. In fact, this is the first time ever that we had two students who were so much impressed by the classes that they decided to attend **Novosibirsk Biblical Theological Seminary** (NBTS)—one of the best biblical schools in Russia, also supported by SGA. It's not easy for both of them, but while studying here, they realized how much they needed more biblical training, and it

led them to reach their decision for Novosibirsk.

Alexei is a Sunday school director and youth leader for the Yakutsk Central Baptist Church. He was an *Antioch* student for a year in addition to studying at the Bible school of the church. **It was hard for him to take the decision to go study**



Alexei leads a youth meeting at the church.

at the seminary. He had to quit his job while raising three small kids, and travel 1,700 miles to Novosibirsk. Now he's a full-time student there, and he shares his testimony:

"I became a Christian as a teenager, and since I turned 20 years old I always had a dream to get a Christian education, study at a seminary, and to be a preacher. But at that time I didn't know much about any Christian training, so I graduated from a secular university and then started to work. Then I attended several classes of the Antioch Initiative and then the Bible School at Yakutsk Church. I also talked to a couple of brothers who had studied at NBTS and heard others' testimonies about it. I was so much inspired by the classes, and by what I heard from the brothers, that I started to pray for God's will and asked Him to grant me the blessing to study at NBTS. The Lord gave me courage and confidence in my decision to go to Novosibirsk this summer, and I finally entered the seminary. God provides almost everything I need for my living and studies there. I want to praise and thank the Lord Jesus for His guidance and help!"

Dear brothers and sisters, we rejoice at seeing what God is doing in Yakutia! **We thank SGA partners and NBTS for bringing us sound biblical teaching and training.** May the Lord give His rich blessings to all of you! ♦



Alexei and his family.

Immanuel's Child Reached 61,000-Plus Last Year

Please pray—these young people need to know Jesus!

With 2024 drawing to a close soon, that means preparations for SGA-supported *Immanuel's Child* outreaches will be moving into high gear. While most outreaches will take place on or around January 7, the traditional Eastern Christmas, a growing number of churches in Ukraine and other parts of the former Soviet Union are holding them in conjunction with Western Christmas on December 25.

Andrei is an SGA-supported missionary pastor in Ukraine who sent us several accounts of young people whom God touched through *Immanuel's Child* ministry last year:

"Ivan is from a family of unbelieving parents. The boy started coming to the church as a nine-year-old. There was a time when Ivan thought of himself an atheist, but now he is on the path to repentance. He understands the essence of Christmas as the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Ivan's worldview is changing thanks to his continual attendance of worship meetings, along with activities for teenagers and youth.



L to R: Ivan at the IC event; Davyd and Sofia with gifts from the outreach.

Sixteen-year-old Davyd and 14-year-old Sofia are both from unbelieving homes. Young Davyd has come to church since he was 12 and wants to know more about God. He said, 'I am interested to know God and am gradually drawn closer to Him, but I still relate to God more in order to receive personal blessings.' While Sofia believes in God, she has not yet come to true repentance. As she continues to come to worship services, pray that the Lord will draw her to Himself in faith. Pray for Davyd and Sofia to receive Jesus as their Lord.



Youth at the outreach.

There were several other boys and girls who came to the outreach as well. The kids were pleasantly surprised and thanked SGA partners for the gifts. The parents of these teenagers know that their children attend church and do not object. Moreover, some of the parents also come to church from time to time. Thank God! Please, pray for coming to the saving faith repentance of our teenagers and their parents!"

Last Christmas season, more than **61,000** children and youth received gifts that you helped provide and heard the Gospel through *Immanuel's Child*. Pray with us to reach even more children this year! ♦

MUCH PRAYER, MUCH POWER IN ACTION

And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

Over SGA's many years of serving evangelical churches across the former Soviet Union, we never cease to be amazed at their resourcefulness in the midst of great challenges. This has been most evident in Ukraine since the war with Russia broke out in 2022. So much infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, yet the churches press on with what God has called them to do, and He graciously provides in amazing ways.

Viktor is an SGA-supported missionary pastor in Ukraine's Stremyn region. He shares how the Lord helped them overcome obstacles to hold a children's camp—a camp that bore wonderful fruit in the lives of one needy family:

*“Recently, our church hosted a **day camp for children** on the grounds of our church. Our theme for the camp was ‘Characters that Change the World,’ **attended by more than 100 children**. In our local villages, we have many children from families who had to flee from the war. **Many of them lost their fathers at the war frontlines.***



Children listen to a Bible lesson at the day camp.

The organization and running of the children's camp required a considerable amount of funds. Therefore, we would like to thank everyone who contributed to this ministry financially, where your beneficence was essential for the children's camp ministry. While planning and conducting the camp, we faced some obstacles such as power outages, the lack of transportation for the children, and equipment. We thank God, as this year we were able to negotiate with the local school administration to provide us

with a school bus to collect the children from the surrounding villages. We also borrowed a trampoline, as well as cotton candy and popcorn machines.

*Here is a story of one particular family. **This family is not well off, raising nine children, with the youngest being only five months old.** After the camp, these children started attending our Sunday school, and **the oldest girl, 12-year-old Anya, would always pray for her mother and stepfather to come to the church.** Anya does not live with the rest of the family, instead living at her grandmother's home in another village where she goes to school. One Sunday morning, her mother Maria came to the church service with all of Anya's brothers and sisters and has been coming ever since. **Anya was very delighted and said that God has heard her prayers!** We are so grateful to SGA partners for supporting us in running this camp during such a difficult time for our country. **As we are a small church, we would never be able to hold such a ministry for children from struggling families who do not yet know the Living God, if it were not for your help!”***

From the deprivations and obstacles created by an awful war raging around them, Viktor and his faithful congregation wanted to seize an opportunity to reach needy and hurting families this summer, so they lifted their needs up before the Lord. **The Lord used your prayers and support to help provide,** and moved the hearts of a local school administration to provide the means to transport more than 100 kids to the day camp. **And most wonderful of all, God worked in the hearts of a family to first draw a young girl to Himself, followed later by almost her whole family.** His ways are truly marvelous! Join us in praising Him today for all that He has done. ♦



Anya at the camp.

Reaching More Orphans and Refugees with Your Support!

Viktor B., SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Ukraine

Greetings to you, dear brothers and sisters! Peace be with you! The Lord has given us a lot of blessings in the life and ministry of our local church. I would like to share some of these blessings with you!

Taking the message of the crucified, risen Christ to orphans

We made a trip to an orphanage in our region. There are more than 70 children, including children with special needs. We conducted creative games with the children that help with hand and motor skills, which contributes to the physical development of the children. We also brought them fruit and sweets. At the end, I shared about the Risen Christ Jesus with them. It was special that *the entire administration* of the orphanage was also present and heard the Gospel. At the end, we had a prayer for the children, the administration of the orphanage, and the physical and spiritual salvation of all people in Ukraine. Please pray for these children, that the Lord will give them earthly parents. Also, so that the sown Word will bear its fruit in due time. Also, for the administration of the orphanage, as they are very open to the perception of God's Word!

The Word deeply penetrates a community of refugees

We had an evangelistic event among internally displaced persons and the local population. Liya's husband serves in the Armed Forces. Together with her two children, Liya was forced to leave her home in eastern Ukraine due to constant shelling. Currently, the native village where Liya and her family lived is occupied by Russian troops. Liya and her children, like many internally displaced persons, need spiritual and material support. The food aid contributed to Liya and her daughters beginning to attend our church, and after some time Liya came to Christ. **She is currently attending baptismal preparation courses.** Please pray that the Lord will protect her husband in the war, for the health of

Liya's children, and that in time they will be able to return to their home in their native Ukrainian village. Above all, please, pray that Liya will make a covenant with the Lord through water baptism, and that her husband (with whom we also stay connected), and children, will believe in the Lord Jesus!

How do you reach the men with the Gospel?

Finally, we had a men's meeting on the topic of friendship. **According to statistics in Ukraine, more women come to God than men.** So we came up with a special way of delivering God's Word for men. We found this approach through men's meetings. At the last meeting, we focused on the theme of friendship. In Ukraine, we have a special saw called “Friendship,” and at our meeting we had a fun competition to see who could saw a log faster with one or another type of saw. We had delicious pilaf cooked on the fire, and great conversation. **Most importantly, we had lessons from the Word of God about men's friendship and about the best Friend we can have—our Lord Jesus Christ.** After many meetings, two men named Valery and Anatoly began to attend Bible study groups and Sunday services!



Men at the sawing competition.

Currently in Ukraine, mobilization has intensified and **many men, including pastors, are being taken to the front.** Pray for me and fellow pastors to be able to remain focused on our ministries. Pray for the ongoing aid distributions our church is making among refugees, and for many more Gospel opportunities. You are a great encouragement to us—we always thank the Lord in our prayers for you! ♦

“I felt like a new person, as if I had been born again”

And he had been! Read this amazing account . . .

Sharif S.

SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Central Asia

I was born in 1997 into a Muslim family. There are five siblings, and I am the fourth child. I have two brothers, a sister, and a younger sister. My family was the best during my childhood, but then my father started drinking and our family fell apart. When I was a teenager, my father divorced my mother. We stayed with our mother, and my father physically separated the house and property while marrying another woman. He still lives with her. It was very difficult for us to grow up without a father and to provide for the family.

Eventually, I grew up and went to the university, after which I opened a workshop and repaired electrical devices. In 2018, when my sister testified to me about Christ over the phone, she gave me the contact of a believing brother. I didn't believe immediately and had doubts, but after a while God worked through me to save someone's life. This situation was very difficult because it involved the police. But still nothing changed.

On July 10, 2018, I was in great pain and did

not know what to do or where to go to find relief. At that time I thought, “I am tired of this life, and my life is full of problems.” Suddenly, I thought that this brother who I mentioned earlier might help. When I met him, he told me about Christ. My heart was filled with pain, and I did not understand everything. But he prayed, I felt a strange sensation in my heart, and I was afraid. I did not know what was happening to me. **The next morning, I felt like a new person, as if I had been born again.** I was joyful for no apparent reason, and even now I cannot describe it. I called the believing brother to ask what had happened to me. **He said that God had taken away all the pain I had.** It was a miracle in my life and I believed.

Made new . . . but to do what?

In 2019, I was baptized. In 2020, the brothers suggested that I go to another town for three months to see the ministry for myself and decide in which area to serve. At that time, I had a very difficult choice because I had to leave my loved ones and my

beloved job, which provided a good income. Thank God, I came and realized that I was needed here. **God was calling me to serve the people in this town, as there were no brothers or sisters who could speak about Christ in the national language.**

While I was at the children's center there, God entrusted us with children who had family difficulties, and I was responsible for them over a year and a half. Now God has provided us with a house here in another town 15 miles away, and for the past year and a half we have been feeding children who are in great



need of food and care.

I am very grateful to God for using the difficult times in my life to help me understand how hard it is to be without a father. **Now at our children's center, I take the place of a father for many children. They come to us, we talk, and I give them counsel to help them overcome life's difficulties. Praise Christ for this!** Please pray for God to bless our future ministry with my wife where we will serve together. ♦



Sharif interacts with children at the children's center.



Sharif serving at the church.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

It always brings great joy to see what God is doing through your faithful support of SGA as we serve Bible-preaching churches across Russia and her neighboring nations. Despite ministry



Distributing food aid and sharing the Gospel to a community struggling during the war in Ukraine.

conditions on the ground that are often very difficult, they press on in proclaiming the Gospel, and **many are coming to faith in Christ.** You help provide **Bibles and Christian literature, missionary pastor sponsorship, Compassion Ministry, children's outreaches, Bible training,** and so much more. Please pray about how you can help today! ♦

Insight FROM MICHAEL

Amid War and Uncertainty, One Mission is Certain!

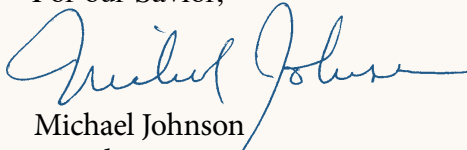
As is the case with our May and June issues of the **Good News Report**, this issue covers the months of November and December. It is amazing that another year has gone by so quickly, and no doubt it seems even faster due to the development of impactful events around the world.

Last October, the war between Israel and Hamas terrorists broke out. At the end of September, Israel began taking related action against Hezbollah terrorists who have constantly launched attacks into northern Israel. In the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, a counter-incursion was initiated by Ukraine into Russia's Kursk region during the summer, catching many by surprise. And this coming February will mark three years of this armed conflict—that is if we don't count the invasion and subsequent annexation by Russia of Crimea in 2014 and the battles with separatists in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions. Tensions also continued between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region after Azerbaijan gained control over it in late 2023. **In all of these regions, your prayers and faithful support enabled SGA to come to the aid of churches in these conflicted regions.** The churches rendered aid and proclaimed the Gospel, and many men, women, and children came to faith in Christ. God is good!

Who knows what 2025 will bring across the vast region of the former Soviet Union and in Israel? That is a question we cannot answer, but future events are no mystery to our wonderful and omniscient Lord. Nothing ever takes Him by surprise, and we can trust that He is in firm, sovereign control. **We also know that His calling to us has not changed.** Specifically to SGA, we are still called to help evangelical churches across the former Soviet Union in reaching their own people for Christ. We are still called to help congregations in Israel as they share Christ with Russian-speaking Jewish immigrants. **As individual Christians, we know that our calling from the Lord has not changed.** As individuals and to SGA, His command still stands . . . *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).*

And by God's grace, that is what we will continue to do until He comes. May God bless you abundantly in the coming new year!

For our Savior,



Michael Johnson
President



SHARING THE GOSPEL • EQUIPPING THE CHURCH
HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

Good News Report is published to report religious news about Russia, the rest of the CIS and the ministries of:

Slavic Gospel Association
6151 Commonwealth Drive
Loves Park, IL 61111
www.sga.org
E-mail: goodnews@sga.org
Phone: 815-282-8900
Fax: 815-282-8901

To start, cancel, or change the mailing address on your subscription to Good News Report, please send your name, your old address, and your new address to the address listed above. Please allow six to eight weeks for the fulfillment of your request.

International Offices

Noble Park, Australia
Cambridge, Canada
Rugby, England
North Shore, New Zealand

U.S. Board of Directors

Dr. Rick Goertzen, *Chairman*
Kelly Abbott, *Vice Chairman*
Michael Johnson, *President*
Brian Kult, *Treasurer*
Dr. Rick Gregory, *Secretary*
Warner Tillman
Harry Leopold
John Wauterlek
Dr. Bill Atkinson
Scott Rich
Josh Tillman
Dr. Robert W. Provost, *President Emeritus*

SGA is a charter member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.



Enhancing Trust