

In the Spirit of Ezra

Youth in Love with the Word of God

For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel (Ezra 7:10).

Belarus' Dzershinsk region is located near the capital of Minsk. The city of Dzershinsk has had several names in its history, but under atheistic communism it was renamed in honor of regional native Felix Dzerzhinsky—head of the dreaded Soviet secret police in the 1920s. Given its history, who would have expected Dzershinsk to someday be home to a wonderful Christian youth movement, where zeal for the Word of God is growing daily!

Pastor Ivan heads up youth ministry in the region and writes to share about his ministry where youth in his church conducted a conference that included a special young man named Zhenya . . .

We have organized several Bible conferences this year with youth serving, learning, and ministering. During one of the conferences, Zhenya really stood out to us. His desire to know God better through



Faithful young men like Zhenya are eager to know the Word of God and to share it!

the conference was very obvious. He sat apart from the others and listened intently to the messages. His intent in sitting alone was so that he could understand the Gospel and its preaching in a deeper way. During the lunch break, Zhenya continued to ask questions of the brother who preached the message. He really desires to know God and His Word. He didn't waste any time during the conference. He located a book about the beginning of the evangelical Baptist movement in Belarus. It tells

the story of how our brothers and sisters endured great persecution. Zhenya said that his spirit was fed as he read through the book.

I thank the Lord for this young man and his desire to serve God. He is moving in a forward direction and filling himself with spiritual food. He lives and acts according to the Bible. We are observing it in his daily actions. Zhenya honors his father and mother as it is written in the Bible. He is taking seriously the command . . . But prove yourselves doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves (James 1:22).

Ivan also related the news from a special youth-led conference held



Church youth conferences are vital for equipping young people for ministry.

in the spring. Young brothers from other churches were invited, and the theme was centered on Proverbs 22:6 . . . Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it. Many different questions were discussed, such as why it is vital for a Christian to be trained at a young age. Youth are seeking answers for their many questions from the Bible. They studied how a young minister needs to be trained in the right, biblical way . . .

Older ministers organized and conducted a small Bible quiz for teens and young adults. The Bible quiz was intended to help the youth



Learning together, praying together, and serving together. Youth IN Ministry!

retain the theme of the conference within their hearts. I was happy to see that the majority of the youth answered the questions quickly and correctly! I thank the Lord for youth who affirmed their faith during the conference. They worked to clearly identify their goals and specific calling in Jesus Christ. I hope that these youth conferences will be held more often. Youth from small churches are in need of encouragement and spiritual edification, and the conferences help them find new friends in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are thankful to you, our partners, who help make these conferences and other youth ministry possible across Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, and the other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). You are truly helping to lay a firm foundation of faith for a whole new generation for the glory of Christ!



Church Youth Sowing for a Great Harvest

I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Dima Podrez is a name you've seen in SGA's publications from time to time. His father Piotr is director of SGA's Minsk Regional Ministry Center in Belarus. Dima, along with his brothers Anton and Sasha, is heavily involved in the SGA-sponsored Youth IN Ministry program. SGA partners make it possible for Dima and the youth from Minsk's Golgotha Baptist Church to travel and evangelize, plus encourage small churches in rural locations.

Dima reports that the youth team visited a small church near Vitebsk earlier this year and had quite an impact . . .

People from unbelieving homes were invited to the church. Brothers and sisters from the church invited their friends and relatives to come and hear the Good News. When they wrote the invitations, they said that "young people will be leading the service." This raised curiosity and attracted people to the meeting.

The church has about 40 attending



The joy and love of church youth can help revitalize a small rural congregation.

regularly, and the people from unbelieving homes also came. The purpose of our program was to reach people with the Gospel. The evening was filled with evangelical poetry, singing, and messages from the Scriptures. The young brothers shared the Word, and finally at the end of the service, Pavel—the local pastor—shared the Gospel and gave an invitation for repentance. While no one responded immediately (which is common in the CIS), several people expressed interest and asked a lot of questions. Pastor Pavel gave solidly biblical answers. The desire was expressed to visit the church again.

Please pray for Pavel. To support his family, he works as a welder. People often ask him for help. Pavel helps them and instead of charging for his work, instead he shares the Gospel and invites people to the church. And the people respond!

We praise the Lord for this small church laboring to have eternal impact in a difficult region. We are thankful for the zeal of Dima and the Golgotha youth who want to help gather the harvest in any way they can. Please pray that God will fill the church with new souls who will glorify the name of the Lord!

Fruitful Ministry—By and To the Young!

It always thrills our hearts to see needy children and teenagers receive great blessings through SGA-supported ministries across the CIS. What a great joy it is when the youth come to saving faith in Christ, and then enter into ministry themselves—youth IN ministry for the glory of God and for the advance of the Gospel!

Summer Camp in Belarus

Alexander is an SGA-sponsored missionary pastor in the Grodno region of Belarus near the Polish border. He reports that the Lord really blessed their three camp sessions . . .

The first was a children's session with 70 kids participating. The second session was held for physically and mentally challenged children—63 in all. Then the third session was held for 52 teenagers. The last day in the teen's session, we had a nighttime bonfire where we sang songs and shared our testimonies with the teens. We believers shared our stories of how God had changed our lives. Then 10 of the teenagers responded to the invitation and repented! Praise the Lord for His mercy and the powerful Word of God. I am so thankful to the Lord for the privilege of proclaiming the Good News, and that we could share it with the children . . . behold now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

As follow up ministry takes place among the over 5,900 children and teenagers who attended SGA-sponsored camp ministries this past summer, pray that the Lord will continue His work in their hearts and draw even many more of them to saving faith!



Youth IN Ministry at a Glance

The SGA-sponsored Youth IN Ministry emphasis is continuing to bear significant fruit, and it is serving as a tremendous encouragement to older believers. This is especially the case when zealous, eager young people travel out to rural villages where the churches are small and most of the members are elderly. They visit, minister in song, preach in the worship services, and perform physical labor either for elderly church members, or in cleaning up the local villages as a witness. Today, SGA partners are making Youth IN Ministry outreaches possible in 22 locations in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Central Asia. We help equip them with discipleship and evangelistic materials, travel assistance, training, and other helps.



Praying for Peace this Christmas

The Bible-preaching churches SGA serves are finalizing plans for this year's *Immanuel's Child* Christmas ministries. And it is good to look back at what God accomplished in the lives of so many last Christmas season—especially in Ukraine, as their national conflict began to rage in the weeks that followed.

Alexander Chernyak is an SGA-sponsored missionary pastor in the Lutsk region in the western part of the country far removed from the violence and tensions of the east. Even so, the believers couldn't help but prayerfully wonder what lay ahead. But Alexander says they were determined to lift the name of Jesus high at Christmas . . .

The Christmas celebration in our church brought lots of joy for the children. The kids in our church along with their parents helped prepare gifts for needy children out in the villages. We held Christmas celebrations for children in Bobly and Volytsya, and believers from Lutsk wanted to travel out to participate. We were concerned about how we



As political tensions increased in Ukraine, the church was a place of peace and hope last Christmas.

would hold the meeting because the local community house was not heated and the windows were very drafty. But the Lord granted us warmer weather, and many came out for the event.

After we had distributed the gifts, we discovered that we had inadvertently missed one 2-year-old girl. After I found out, we made a special visit to that family and brought her a gift, and I apologized to her parents for the oversight. This "accident" actually brought us closer to this family, and I have been able to visit several more times to share the Lord with them!

Alexander's church also held Christmas outreaches in Turiysk. All in all, about 120 children were reached. Along with his fellow pastors across Ukraine, they are praying to be able to reach many more children this year despite the challenges . . .

During these days in Ukraine, "peace" is not just a good word, but it is the word we keep repeating in our prayers, as no one wants war. The tragic events have made a lot of Ukrainian people fall to their knees before God, and we remain in great need of your prayers. I believe that through the joint prayers of believers, God fulfills His will. We should not be afraid, and we need to keep doing what we're doing! In our church, we have placed this verse on

our front wall . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life . . . (John 14:6). We want all—especially unbelievers who visit our church—to realize that eternal life is only possible through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please pray for Alexander, and all churches across the CIS who will be reaching children through *Immanuel's Child* outreaches. Above all, pray for peace this Christmas, so that the Gospel will not be hindered.

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Earlier this year, SGA launched four new subscription email lists for the convenience of our partners and to provide them with more choices. The available no-cost subscriptions are:

SGA Prayer Alert - Communicates urgent prayer needs as they arise for our ministries and partner churches across Russia and her neighboring countries.

SGA Ministry Update - Includes regular updates on ministry opportunities, ways you can help, news events, plus other reports on SGA's ministries across Russia and her neighboring countries.

SGA InSight Newsletter - An electronic version of our monthly *InSight* newsletter.

Mission: SGA - A quarterly electronic publication that offers an expanded focus on one of SGA's primary ministries across Russia and her neighboring countries.

If interested, please visit the homepage of SGA's website at www.sga.org. In the right-hand column, you'll see a small box with a link to the signup page. We pray that these electronic publications will be a blessing to you.



How You Can Help

The Lord is preparing young believers for lifetimes of Christian service across the CIS, and your faithfulness is helping to accomplish so much more—Bible training, church-planting, youth outreaches, children's ministries, Christmas ministry, provision of Russian-language Bibles and Christian literature, and so much more. Thank you for standing with us for the sake of the Gospel. Please keep praying for us! Prayer is the key. As SGA founder Peter Deyneka often said, "*Much Prayer, Much Power!*"

Canadian Connection

by Allan Vincent

When was the last time that you looked at a class photo and prayed for your former classmates and their need of Christ?

It's probably been a while, but the Lord can use each of us like He did Pastor Vladimir Zuev, who serves in the city of Irkutsk in eastern Russia. Vladimir was driving through the city when he saw an automobile accident. **He was startled to recognize one of the drivers – Kirill Petrov, a former schoolmate from Irkutsk Middle School.** Naturally, Vladimir made sure that Kirill was okay. Although they had not seen each other



since 1998, when they finished ninth grade, Kirill was very glad to see him. That was the first of several meetings with Kirill.

The Lord used that meeting to prompt Vladimir to make a list, to pray, and to share the Gospel. It had been 15 years since Vladimir had talked with some former classmates, but he searched diligently. Since then, he has met and shared the Gospel with 30 people, almost everyone on his list. Several were very open to Vladimir, and **four prayed to repent and receive Christ. Kirill was one of those four.**



But teachers also need the Lord, so in 2015, Vladimir will search for former teachers in order to share the Gospel with them, and to pray for them as well.

In addition to the Lord's grace and strength, Vladimir was encouraged by the fact that all former classmates were excited to meet with him. Their times together brought back cherished memories of their childhood and school days. **But more importantly, they were interested to hear about the change that the Lord had made in Vladimir's life.** It happened naturally and without pressure.

Vladimir is one of many young pastors and young adults whom the Lord is using greatly in Russia, Ukraine, and the rest of the Commonwealth of Independent States. **Vladimir's experience is not unique. Eighty percent of young adults bring their friends to Christ and 50 percent of young adults are used by the Lord to bring their parents to repentance.**

SGA/Canada continues to partner with the very fruitful ministries of young men and women like Vladimir. They are worth supporting and emulating.



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