



A Way Less Traveled . . . and a Divine Encounter!

As we enter 2015, we have yet to catch our breath from the momentous events of 2014. The violence in Ukraine has had far-reaching impacts—and especially upon the evangelical churches we serve across Ukraine, Russia and the other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent State (CIS). Ministry conditions in many areas have become much more difficult. But Christ is still at work and nothing will stop Him from building His church!

For SGA-sponsored missionary pastor Sergei Burdachev, the past year of ministry in Russia’s Vladimir region has been fruitful. Yet along with the fruit of ministry comes occasional struggle in the spirit of the Apostle Paul . . . *For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and . . . for all those*

who have not personally seen my face (Colossians 2:1).

In the midst of a difficult time a few months ago, Sergei decided one day to go home on a “way less traveled” to think and to pray. It turned out that the Lord had put someone into his path who needed to hear about the great treasure Sergei carries with him as a child of God . . .

I was walking, absorbed in my thoughts, and noticed a man who walked right up to me. He was poorly dressed and his hair was disheveled. He greeted me and said his name was Nikolai. I asked if I could help him, and expected he would ask me for money to buy alcohol.

Nikolai said that he had spent time in jail for disorderly conduct, and left jail hungry. He did not have money for food, but still asked for alcohol, as “his life was hard.” He added that only I could help him find an answer to a question that was tormenting him. I



Sergei’s prayer is to always be prepared for every Gospel opportunity.



felt the urge to keep talking to him, but told him I would not give him money for alcohol. Nikolai replied, "Well, then, just talk to me. I need someone to talk to me!"

We sat down on a park bench and began to talk. The longer we talked, the more I realized that our meeting was not "by chance." The Lord had organized this meeting. I offered to take him to a cafeteria, and asked him why he had stopped me. "I do not know," he answered. "I think you have something very important to tell me. When I noticed you in the street, I knew you could tell me something about how I can continue to live. You do not look like other people."

From that moment, I felt as if the Lord was talking to Nikolai through me. I bought him food, and listened to his story. He had served in the Navy. He told me about friends who had died, his sad marriage and divorce, and separation from his daughter. Next came his alcoholism and disillusionment. He was tired of living like this—suffering without family, work, goals, or hope. Nikolai then asked me, "What do I have to do?" I



Sergei and his family

then told him about sin, and how we deserve death for our sins. But there is One who paid for our sins. I asked Nikolai if he wanted to hear more. He nodded, and I then shared the Gospel—that Jesus died for our sins, and through faith in Him he can have forgiveness and salvation.

Nikolai was silent for some time, and then told me that no one had ever talked to him like I did, and that he had never before heard what I had told him. But he wasn't yet ready to repent, so I gave him my phone number and told him that I would meet with him anytime he wanted.

It is common across Russia and her neighboring countries that people do not respond immediately to a Gospel invitation. But many do shortly afterward. Sergei is praying for Nikolai, and asks that we pray too. He believes that God is at work, and that the Good News will come to life in Nikolai's heart. And think—he had never before heard the Gospel!

That's what your support of SGA is all about—advancing the Gospel across Russia and her neighboring countries. Millions have yet to hear, and there is much work to be done. We pray that you—our faithful partners—will continue to stand with us in prayer and support in a new year of diligent, fruitful ministry. Thank you in advance!

Saved . . . and Just in Time!

Vadim Mikhailin
SGA-Sponsored Missionary Pastor in
Tambov, Russia

*Behold, now is "the acceptable time,"
behold, now is "the day of salvation"*
(2 Corinthians 6:2).

Much has happened in the ministry of our church, and I especially want to tell you about one event where a man answered the Lord's call of repentance. Unknown to him, it would be the last day of his earthly life.

Nikolai was 61 years old and a friend of one of our brothers in the church. Nikolai's mother used to be a member of the church, but he did not attend. He smoked heavily and could not rid himself of that bad habit. But one day, he decided that he wanted to come and see a baptism service.



Baptisms often lead to evangelistic opportunities!

Nikolai came to our home along with his grandson, and after we visited, we went together to the church. When we gave the invitation, Nikolai came forward and

repented at last. He returned home very happy, and immediately told his daughter what had happened in his life that day. And in the night, God called him home. He met his Savior at last, and went to be with him for eternity on the same day!

Fruitful Summer Ministry

The summer was busy with our camp ministry, where we reached out to youth. I prepared the Bible lessons and preached during the services. We had 64 youth attend the 7-day camp, and 22 repented! There were young people attending from the Lipetsk and Tambov regions. Pray for these young boys and girls, that they would be strengthened in their new faith! In addition to the camp, we also worked on further development of our youth ministry. We held a meeting involving 30 youth leaders from churches in Tambov and Voronezh, as well as Ryazan and Lipetsk. New groups have been formed in Kostroma and Orel.

Please pray for our other ministries, including our Bible-based drug rehab center in Yarlukovo, and home Bible study groups. And pray for me as I continue to serve as a preacher, counselor, and in worship ministry.

Editor's Note: If you would like to know more about sponsorship of a faithful missionary pastor through SGA, please call 1-800-BIBLE-50 and ask for Shirley Davis.

Thankful Refugees in Ukraine

SGA Partners Making a Difference

So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith (Galatians 6:10).

Through SGA's Crisis Evangelism Fund, evangelical churches in Ukraine have reached hundreds of refugee families with food and other urgently needed humanitarian aid in the name of the Lord Jesus. Many of the refugees are not believers and the churches are sharing the Gospel as they meet the physical needs of the families. But also included among the refugees are believers and their families, and several have written to express their thanks for the help of SGA partners.



I came with my family from Slavyansk in the Donetsk region. The barricades appeared in our city in April. We were very uncomfortable, as we had to pass through these barricades with our small children. It was hard to explain to them what was happening. Later, riots broke out and we could hear machine guns shooting in the distance. Then it got closer. When shells began flying over our house, my wife and I decided to leave for a relative's home in western Ukraine. Then with God's help, I came back to the Donetsk region and helped evacuate hundreds of people from the area under attack. Praise God for this time of ministry! The fighting got worse, and the shelling eventually destroyed my home. Slavyansk is badly damaged. There are many damaged homes on our street, and some are total losses. There are two unexploded shells in our neighborhood. Many windows, walls, and roofs have been destroyed by shrapnel. We are now in Kiev, where I found temporary work. We would like to wholeheartedly thank God and the staff of Irpen Seminary, along with Dr. Robert Provost and SGA, who provided financial assistance to our family.

—Vitaly and family

I grew up in a family of doctors in the city of Slavyansk. My father is an endocrinologist and my mother is a dentist, as am I. We attended Golgotha Baptist Church in Kramatorsk, and this year was my graduation year from Donetsk Medical University. I had to hurry to finish my exams because every day I spent in the city could have cost me my life. I couldn't return home. The city had been taken and at night you could hear the shells exploding. My parents were able to leave and eventually found a house to rent. I received my diploma and then went to Irpen Seminary. I am thankful for Dr. Igor Yaremchuk's help with my needs and living situation. I found myself far from home, but I was surrounded here with warmth, care, and compassion. Both moral and financial support was provided. In August, I was baptized at Kiev Baptist Church, which I am now attending. I must continue my studies, but cannot return home, so I am enrolled in Kiev University. It is hard to understand why the Lord is allowing all these things, but He tells us that through all our trials... I will never leave or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). Thank you so much, brothers and sisters, for sharing in our pain, and for your prayers and financial help.

—Katerina



I am 80 years old, and spent 10 years in prison for my faith during the Soviet years. I am a pastor at Christmas Church, where we have taken in many refugees from the fighting. They first began coming in May and we housed them with families, but in the summer we began housing the refugees at our summer camp property. Most are from the Donetsk and Lugansk regions in eastern Ukraine, and the majority are mothers with children. Altogether, more than 400 refugees have been at our camp over time. Some refugees returned home to their communities once they were liberated from the insurgents, but other refugees soon took their place. We are concerned with what to do with the refugees in the winter, as the camps are not equipped with furnaces or insulated homes. Some of the refugees need constant medical care. We thank the Lord and SGA, as well as Dr. Igor Yaremchuk of Irpen Seminary for helping us with finances. We appeal to everyone who is concerned to help us provide for these people forced to flee their homes. May the Lord bless all of you!

—Pastor Daniel

If you want to find out more about SGA's Crisis Evangelism Fund and help the churches minister to those whose lives have been shattered by the war in Ukraine, visit www.sga.org/crisisevangelism or call us toll free at 1-800-BIBLE-50.



Ukraine *Crisis Evangelism Fund* Update

When SGA began seeking the help of our partners with our *Crisis Evangelism Fund* last year, the violence in Ukraine was only just beginning. Thanks to you, our partners, we were quickly able to begin equipping the evangelical churches with emergency funds to provide food parcels and other assistance to refugees from eastern Ukraine and the Crimea region.

As time went on and the fighting continued unabated in the east, SGA staff and UECB church leaders discreetly toured the combat zones to assess the local needs of SGA-sponsored missionary pastors and their congregations. The pastors and their families had significant needs themselves. But the opportunity for Gospel ministry had been granted by the Lord. Faithfully, they have seized it by taking the love of Christ to unbelieving families whose lives had been shattered.

SGA partners came through in a major way. We were able to step up the provision of food parcels, as well as mattresses and bed linens to help the churches house the many refugees. The food parcels contained evangelistic literature, and the Word of God was distributed to help bring comfort to the



Feeding the hungry, following the example of our Lord.

refugees. Just as the Lord Jesus Himself observed in His earthly ministry, they were . . . *distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd* (Matthew 9:36). Families were housed in private homes, church buildings, summer camps, and even in dormitory rooms at Vinnitsa Bible College, Irpen Biblical Seminary, and Odessa Theological Seminary.

Only eternity will reveal the impact of all the ministry that has taken place—and will continue to take place as long as the need is there. Thank you so much for all you have helped accomplish for the sake of the Gospel!

Sensible Stewardship

Estate planning is one of the most important acts of stewardship any of us will ever undertake. It is—at its core—the process of determining to whom we should transfer the stewardship of all God has entrusted to us when we are called to step into eternity.

Stewardship is a discovery process that will consider your assets, the people and the ministries that depend on you, and understanding ways to structure inheritances so as to stand the best chance of helping the ones who are most dear to you.

To help our partners deal with these important issues, SGA has engaged PhilanthroCorp, a nationally-known Christian charitable planning firm that works exclusively in the areas of estate and gift planning. They can help you understand issues such as probate, taxes, trusts, wills, powers of attorney, and other complicated matters. There is no cost or obligation to you for this service. For further information, please visit our website at <http://www.sga.org>. Or you can call (800) 876-7958 to speak on the phone with one of their Estate Specialists.

How You Can Help

SGA exists to serve the faithful Bible-preaching churches across Russia and her neighboring countries. Our heartbeat is the same as theirs—to advance the Gospel and see souls won to saving faith in Christ. Your faithfulness helps support missionary pastors as they evangelize and plant new churches. Your gifts help provide Russian-language Bibles and doctrinally sound Christian books, food parcels and other compassionate ministry for needy families, and quality Bible training for future pastors and church workers. There is so much yet to do, and we can never thank you enough!



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Well done, good and faithful servant! (Matthew 25:21).

by Allan Vincent



**Liam* and **Beth* are with the Lord, so there is no way that I can write or call to let them know how the Lord used their faithful partnership with pastors and churches in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). I did not have a chance to personally thank them on behalf of their missionary pastor.

For the most part, ***Liam and Beth, like the majority of our ministry partners, quietly and faithfully partnered with those whom they never met, but cared for deeply.*** When they asked us to pray as they faced some challenges, they were concerned not only for their family, but also for their missionary pastor who had become family.

By God's grace, *Liam* and *Beth* were able to support their pastor for many years, until *Liam* went to be with his Lord. In fact, **over the years they supported more than one missionary pastor.** When *Beth* let us know of *Liam's* passing, she asked us to pray that she would be able to continue the partnership that they had begun together. The Lord answered that prayer.

A few years later, one of *Liam's* and *Beth's* children called to let us know the sad, yet joyful news. Now *Beth* would also hear her Lord's words, "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*" **And perhaps, the Lord was graciously showing both of them some of the unseen but eternal fruit of their partnership.**

Liam's and *Beth's* story did not end there. Their lawyer notified us that they had remembered SGA in their will. *Liam* and *Beth* finished well and faithfully. They cared for their local church, their immediate family, a couple of other ministries, and through SGA, their missionary pastor, who had become family. By God's grace, *Liam's* and *Beth's* missionary pastor now has another ministry partner. And their departing gift helped with the transition and assisted their pastor with some of the lifetime projects that *Liam* and *Beth* had shown were dear to them.

*Not their real names or exact ministry partnership pattern.



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

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11-18 Saskatoon, South SK Meetings, Millar College Missions Conference
(some dates open)

23-26 Central BC Churches and Millar (Sunnybrae) Missions Conference