



SERVING CHURCHES — REACHING RUSSIA

July 2012

## God's Word Changes Lives!

*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My Word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life (John 5:24).*

The provision of Russian-language Bibles and Christian literature has been a high priority of SGA since our founding 78 years ago. In those days, Soviet communist rulers did all they could to keep God's Word out of Russia and her neighboring countries. But SGA partners prayed and gave, helping to provide thousands upon thousands of copies of the Bible for distribution behind the Iron Curtain. And thousands of lives were changed through the power of the Gospel.

In the 21 years since the Soviet collapse, we've had a brief window of openness to supply evangelical churches with Bibles, children's Bibles and Christian literature. But now governments in several nations—especially the Muslim dominated countries of Central Asia—are again beginning to restrict people's access to Scripture, even to the point of confiscation and imposing severe penalties on the churches. And that makes it all the more imperative to step up our production and provision of Bibles.

The hunger for God's Word is still there, and the testimonies of changed lives are just as powerful.

### **Igor, a Bible, and the Truth**

Igor is a former prisoner who is now a pastor joyfully ministering in Tajikistan.



The power of the Gospel can't be stopped, even behind prison walls.

But if he had not encountered a copy of the Bible while in prison, Igor's life might have taken a far different course.

*I had been convicted several times  
and did time in prison for my crimes.  
Even so, I continually searched for*

an answer to the question, “What is truth?” I searched everywhere, both in and out of prison.

One time I was invited to a prayer room in the prison, where for the first time I started to read the New Testament and saw the words of Jesus Christ . . . I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me (John 14:6). I found the One I was looking for, and a short time later I repented.

After Igor’s release, he began to attend church and serve at a drug rehab center in Dushanbe. SGA partners enabled him to receive Bible training, and today he pastors in a rural Tajik town—the location being withheld for security reasons. But Igor—like so many across the former Soviet Union—is thankful to you for making it possible for him to read and have a Bible of his own.



Behind prison walls, inmates have come to faith in Christ and even started churches to reach other prisoners with the Gospel.

## Our Supplies of Bibles Are Running Low

As new churches are planted, and as SGA-sponsored missionary pastors continue to

preach the Gospel and win the lost to Christ, they need more Bibles in the Russian-language. Our stocks of Russian Bibles, children’s Bibles, diglots (a parallel English/Russian Bible) and study Bibles need to be replenished on an ongoing basis. Today, it only takes \$5 to provide one Russian Bible. What

a tremendous opportunity to help our Russian brothers and sisters put a copy of God’s Word into the eager, waiting hands of excited new believers! Please pray with us, asking as always for the Lord’s gracious provision. And know that generations of Russian believers, both today and those who have since gone home to glory, are deeply thankful that someone cared enough to give them the Bible—and the hope of eternal life in Christ.

“... in the prison, where for the first time I started to read the New Testament and saw the words of Jesus Christ . . .”



## From Moldova to Russia

### A Youth Missions Trip to Remember



Youth of different CIS ethnic groups brought together by Christ’s love.

It’s a bit more than 1,000 miles between Russia’s Tatarstan region and the former Soviet republic of Moldova. But distance or nationality didn’t matter for an excited group of young believers traveling from Moldova to the town of Chistopol

in Tatarstan. Their purpose: to join other Christian youth for the purpose of evangelism. Overseeing was missionary pastor Valentin Verbitski who, wrote to express his thanks to SGA partners who sponsor his ministry.

*The first outreach took place in the summer, and the youth team from Moldova came to help us. They became good friends with the locals here, and had daily fellowships in the evening where they watched Christian films and discussed biblical topics. The Lord prompted them to come again at Christmas, and we were united with one purpose—to reach people with the Gospel.*

*Young people here (in Chistopol) were*

*waiting for them, and the youth from Moldova got involved the very first day. They had daily meetings with Bible classes, Christian music, games and competitions. Sometimes up to 20 youth came to the meetings, and they became so interested that they started to invite their friends!*

After the Moldova team left for home, the local youth who had been drawn to the church continued to come. Up to ten young people now come every week to study the Bible. And the fruitful ministry in Chistopol is having an impact on the church back in Moldova, with more exchanges planned. Two youth from Moldova have been praying for Valentin’s church-planting ministry, and they want to return and serve as missionary pastors with him. At the same time, two members of Valentin’s church are raising funds to visit Moldova for ministry with the Christian youth there.

Valentin is asking that we continue to pray for their labors. As this issue of *InSight* was being printed, we were eagerly awaiting reports from another visit from the Moldovan team for ministry at Easter in Chistopol. We praise and thank the Lord for all He has done, and for your part in helping to make it happen for His glory!



# Thank You for Our Bibles!

We are thankful to God for the thousands of Russian-speaking men, women and children whose lives have been changed through the power of the Gospel and God's precious Word. Below are just a few of the notes we received thanking the Lord and you—our faithful partners in ministry.

We distributed many children's Bibles through our church for children who just started attending our Sunday school. The children received the Bibles with great joy, saying that they wanted them, and eagerly promising that they will read them! Thank you!

**Russia**



*Establish Your Word to Your servant, as that which produces reverence for You (Psalm 119:38).*

*In every summer camp, we have children from orphanages. Some of them have never seen their parents, brothers or sisters. They grieve because nobody visits them. They are joyful when we come for ministry and when we leave, their tears speak for themselves. But they have a hope. [Through the Bible] they found out about God and the love of the Lord Jesus. The Bibles and New Testaments that they received will help them in their future lives, and they will overcome difficulties through faith in God.*

**Kazakhstan**



*I committed to read the whole Bible throughout the year, to delve into the Word of God, to live as it says, and to learn how to receive the blessings of God. This gives God glory. I know that such commitments are not easy to fulfill. But I also know that this is what God wants from us!*

**Russia**

*Previously, the Bible seemed boring to me, and I only read small passages from time to time. But when I started to read it seriously and in order (beginning with the Gospels), I realized that it was the most fascinating book I had ever read. With each chapter, Christ was revealed to me more and more—His deeds, compelling words, wisdom, faithfulness, and love of God the Father. My soul found the answer in Christ. I trusted in the Lord and repented, receiving the Good News of Christ's work on the cross that saves me from the power of sin.*

**Russia**

## Belarus: Needy Families Receive Help through SGA/CHF Partnership

Over the past few months, a total of 20 SGA-sponsored missionary pastors in Belarus are reaching the needy in their communities with much needed humanitarian aid and the Gospel. Children's Hunger Fund (CHF) is partnering with SGA by coming alongside local pastors who are already active in community outreach. They remember the Lord's command to the children of Israel to . . . *seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you* (Jeremiah 29:7), and strive to be examples of Christ's love.

CHF provides food products for the most impoverished and needy, while SGA partners are helping to fund the distribution costs. We are praising God for the wonderful spiritual fruit already being realized, as Natalia's story illustrates . . .

*Natalia is a woman to whom we brought a food pack. She has two children of her own and she adopted four orphans who had been taken from their alcoholic mother. Natalya has given them a lot of love and the kids have changed very much. The oldest boy didn't do well at school and was an outcast, but now he is in military school and is studying to be an officer. Natalya's own younger daughter, Anna, had heart disease, and Natalya came to the church with tears. We prayed with her and the Lord healed Anna. Natalya understood that the children are a gift from the Lord. This past February, she repented and trusted in Christ for salvation. She wants to raise her children in a Christian home.*

**Pastor Alexander Yavorsky**



*[With food aid], my wife Elena and I visited the family of a 10-year-old adopted boy named Pavlik, who suffers from infantile paralysis. He can barely walk and cannot speak well, but he understands clearly. In spite of his challenges, Pavlik can play the button accordion and he played for us. I played guitar and we sang Christian songs to the family. One day we talked of repentance, and I noticed that Svetlana (Pavlik's mother) did not clearly understand what that meant. When I explained and followed up with my own testimony—how my life was before and after—I asked Svetlana if she had ever trusted in Christ. She admitted that she had not. She agreed to pray with me, with a repentant heart, trusting in the Lord for her salvation. When the prayer was over, she exclaimed that while we were praying, she felt something unusual stirring inside of her. I told her that God was working in her life and heart. Please pray for this family!*

**Pastor Pavel Chilik**

We will be sharing more of these reports as they come in both in *InSight*, as well as on our website—[www.sga.org](http://www.sga.org).



### **Reminder: Pray for SGA-Sponsored Summer Camp Ministries!**

The month of July is not only the middle of summer, it is also the middle of the children's summer camp ministry season across Russia and the CIS. SGA partners help sponsor many of these camps, for which we are deeply thankful. Please remember to intercede in prayer, asking God to draw many young Russian-speaking boys and girls to Himself in saving faith. Be sure to watch the pages of *InSight* and SGA's website for camp ministry reports as they come in.

## **CIS in the News . . .**



### **Vladimir Putin Returns to Kremlin as Russian President**

In a widely predicted outcome this March, Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin easily won re-election to the presidency with approximately 60 percent of the vote. The percentage was more than enough to avoid a run-off election with his closest challenger, communist leader Gennady Zyuganov. With ally and outgoing president Dmitri Medvedev at his side, Mr. Putin declared, "I promised

you we would win. We have won. Glory to Russia!" He further attacked what he said were attempts to "destroy Russian statehood and power. The Russian people have shown today that such scenarios will not succeed in our land."

Mr. Zyuganov and other candidates charged widespread fraud in the election, refusing to recognize the results. The election came in the wake of the largest protests nationwide against Mr. Putin's rule since he came to power 12 years ago. From our perspective, our main prayer is that Russia will not follow the path of several other former Soviet republics and begin crackdowns on religious freedom. Russian evangelical churches are not political activists in general, and are concentrated on sharing the Gospel and the love of Christ with their people. Please continue to join us in intercessory prayer for our brothers and sisters across Russia as the situation in-country continues to evolve.

## *How You Can Help*

Here in the United States, it is very common for one household—or for even one person—to have several Bibles. That is not the case across Russia and her neighboring countries. Church congregations within some of the more oppressed countries often have to share a few copies among the believers. As faithful missionary pastors continue to preach the Gospel, it is important to have Bibles and other Christian literature to distribute to new believers. Your gifts help meet this need, but also help provide Bible training, support for children's ministries, humanitarian aid, and other means of equipping churches to advance the Gospel.





# Canadian Connection

Summer and Camp somehow go well together. And whatever image comes to your mind as you think of *Summer Camp*, the range and quality of facilities available to pastors and churches across the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is far broader than anything that you can ever imagine. Some are reasonably comfortable while others are very rustic. In a few of the Central Asian States, campers are more at home in yurts, the round tents that we associate with Mongolia.



Summer Camps—like other ministries in the Central Asian States—are often hindered or disrupted by the authorities. A ministry pastor supported from SGA/Canada wrote,

*We spent the whole summer in children's camps working with teenagers. There were three larger camps by the sea and three smaller camps. **There were a total of 296 teenagers in those camps and many of them repented.***

*One camp consisted almost completely of unsaved teenagers as well as those of disadvantaged families. It all went very well, but two camps were hindered by the authorities. But **all of these hindrances were for the glory of God** because we had the opportunity to witness. It was amazing! Three days in a row, from the morning until afternoon, representatives of the authorities invited the adult camp workers and asked them questions about their faith and why they believed. They did not even suspect this gave the believers opportunities to share about their faith and about Jesus Christ. It was a wonderful testimony about faith in God. This went on every day with officials engaged in the issues of religion.*

*One day, one of the officials said to our brother, **'You know, it's enough – because if you go on another five minutes, we will become Christians ourselves!'** After that, the official drove them back to the camp and did not summon them anymore.*

By God's grace and through the generous support of SGA/Canada ministry partners like you, hundreds of teens and children will be able to attend camp across the CIS. Please pray that the Lord will bless this summer's camp ministries.



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