



SERVING CHURCHES – REACHING RUSSIA

May 2013

## Celebrating a Growing Russian Church

Being a missionary pastor in a country as vast as Russia presents all sorts of challenges. The country is enormous, stretching from Kaliningrad in the West to Vladivostok in the east—a distance of more than 4,000 miles by air and 6,200 miles by land route. There are hundreds of different people groups with their own cultures and beliefs. And 90 percent of Russian cities, towns and villages remain without an evangelical church or consistent Christian witness.



Eugene's vibrant new congregation has been blessed with phenomenal growth in Moscow—Russia's capital and largest city.

Even the huge capital city of Moscow can be difficult ground to plow for a young missionary pastor intent on planting a new church. Yet last September, SGA-sponsored missionary pastor Eugene Bakhmutsky celebrated the three-year anniversary of

the new Russian Bible Church in Moscow. And the Lord is abundantly blessing through your prayers and faithful support. Eugene wrote to tell us of the day's celebration . . .

*On the day of the event, lots of our friends came to congratulate us. The hall hardly had room for everyone. We shared about the great mission of our church, which is "To Make Christ Known." This subject was central to all that we did. Our guest speakers preached on this theme, and several members of the church witnessed about how God has worked in their lives through the church. I preached about the most important Name in the world—the Name of Jesus Christ. Russian Bible Church has no senior pastor, because Christ takes this position. Our ministers are only co-pastors. We also celebrated as Russia's national youth ministry director, Vlad Treskin, joined our church as yet another co-pastor. We took a group photo so you can see how we've grown by God's grace.*

Russian Bible Church's outreach in Moscow is wide and varied. There is a vibrant small group ministry, where non-believers attend Russian Bible Church meetings, and in home small groups. Church members are being trained to become small group leaders themselves, thus multiplying the outreach of the congregation. They just began their seventh study group theme called "Foundations of Faith". God is bringing new people to the church through it. There are 32 now involved—some of them are new believers, while others have not yet come to faith. Eugene says that God's Word is able to change people as they read two chapters from the New Testament, and then apply God's truth to their lives. The church's Sunday school ministry is growing, especially with young children. The focus is not only discipling young children, but also working to involve the parents in the process. This fulfills the biblical command . . . *bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4).

### Discipling Believers for Christian Service

Adults are not forgotten in the ministry of Russian Bible Church. The church began a Leadership Academy ministry, which has now been transformed into a Discipleship Academy open to all. The classes take place every Saturday, and Eugene and two other pastors teach the nine topics. The purpose is to help believers grow spiritually, and to lift up the Word of God as the answer to life's questions. The church reaches out into the community with a sports (soccer) outreach, Christmas ministries, teaching English as a second language using Scripture, and in many other ways.

We are thankful to God for how he is using Eugene and the ministry of Russian Bible Church in the midst of Russia's most important city. Pray with us that many new men, women and children will come to saving faith, and go on to reach even more with the life-changing Gospel!



**The Russian Bible Church congregation is young, passionate about the Gospel, and in earnest about preaching the Gospel in Moscow—and all of Russia!**



## We Are No Longer Orphans!

By Tolik Strelkov

I am 14 years old, and would like to tell you about myself. I was born in Tajikistan and this is where I live. I lived with my mother, grandmother and my grandfather. I also have a brother, Dima. We lived a difficult life. I would skip school months at a time, steal money, and go around the city and parks. But then we were told that our grandfather died. He drank too much and died from high blood pressure.

My grandmother and mother continued to drink and sold our apartment. While we still had money, we were able to rent an apartment. But often we would have no food, and so my brother and I would spend all day on the streets. I was not a good student in school and would often skip school.

Soon my mother died (she was disabled). We were left alone with our grandmother. She had cancer and no longer walked. We were then given to a foster parent, but she didn't need us and didn't care for us. That is when we found ourselves in a very difficult situation and started attending the evangelical church in the city. They helped us. We had warm meals. When grandmother died, we practically moved in to live at the church since we had nothing at all. There, Mr.

Vitya and Ms. Tanya said it was fine, as long as we were not transferred to an orphanage.

So now, they clothe us, provide us with shoes, feed us, and watch after us at the church. Now I am enrolled in school and do not miss a day. We have breakfast, lunch and dinner. Ms. Tanya does our laundry, looks after us, and goes to school for meetings.



Young Tolik's life has been changed because he learned of Christ's great love. SGA partners helped make it possible.

Six months ago, I genuinely repented and know now that to steal and lie are sins. I pray that God will change me. Also, we have a bicycle club at the church. I am training in our team. My only friends are at the church. I have all that is necessary. But most important, I know God—the church has a Sunday school where we study the Bible. My brother Dima is also in the church. We are no longer orphans. Thank you very much for your care for me. Praise Christ that he does not forsake me; I can see that through your care.

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

Across the CIS, there are more than 340 faithful missionary pastors sponsored by SGA partners and laboring for the Gospel. Through your prayers and faithful giving, you truly have a vital part in their fruitful ministries. Below are some brief excerpts from some of their recent reports.

### **Vladimir Mikhailov** **Odessa Region, Ukraine**

We organized a Bible study group and 13 people came to it. One new woman came to our meetings, repented, and received the Lord. Her name is Luba and she is a teacher. She reads the Bible and understands that she needs to be in our church. Formerly she had been singing at an Orthodox church. When she shared her salvation with her husband and relatives, her husband raised a huge noise and forbade her to come to our church, but she comes anyway. Her husband called me and threatened to hire people to harm my family. He even came to my house and made threats while I was at work. Please pray for him. His name is Anatoly. Pray for Luba also and for our family. Persecution awakens us, and threats can be very hard to bear. Despite all this, we held a baptism service, and several new members joined the church. I thank our God for His Son, whom He sent to this world. Thank you for your financial support of our ministry!

### **Valery Akelkin** **Altai Region, Russia**

In May 2012, we organized a street outreach. We went to the yard of a large apartment building, cleaned the property and posted advertisements about the event. We then decorated the landscape with balloons, set up music equipment and organized sports games for the children (You can see the turnout we had from the picture). We had more than 50 children participating in the games, and many others were watching and cheering them on. Afterward, we had a Bible lesson, and all participants received a children's Bible and a chocolate bar, plus

many other prizes.

On a separate matter, we saw the power of God in action in the lives of a drug-addicted couple. They have come to the Lord, and God did even more than we could have imagined. Their brother, who was also a drug addict, and whose apartment was a place where other drug addicts met, also came to the Lord. Today, his apartment is instead a place where we meet for Bible study! All of them serve God today! Praise Him!



As Valery's church helps with community cleanup and other projects, it opens the door to fruitful outreach with local children.



### **Gennady Solovyov** **Kromy, Russia**

Our ministry has had many opportunities, including being able to share on a local Christian radio station, which is unique in the North Caucasus. But late last summer, we held a major sports and ministry event in the city of Beslan—the site of the horrific 2004 terrorist attack on a school, where more than 340 people—including many children—lost their lives. We informed the local administration, police and mass media. Our prayer teams prayed 24 hours a day in advance of the event. About 150 children and their parents came, and our church team was made up of 25 people plus 10 teenagers from the Sunday school. Even the police officers were pleasantly surprised at the level of the event, and one said, "It would be better if all children could come to such places. Please organize activities like this for problem families, and we will give you their addresses!" We gave medals and diplomas, and we give glory to the Lord because we had the opportunity to tell so many of His endless love. Please pray for us, so these ministries can continue.

## **Children's Literature in Ukraine**

### **Pastor Yaroslav Machinsky** **Revival Church, Kiev**

During the last week of August, we did a children's camp in two local villages. More than 20 children came and attended our Bible lessons, made crafts and participated in competitions. All the children were presented with rucksacks containing different school supplies, and the children's Bibles received through SGA. For many of these children, it was the first Bible they had ever received.



### **Pastor Vladimir Griskho** **Borislav, Ukraine**

May God richly bless you for your devotion to God and lost people! We thank SGA partners for the Christian literature you sent us. We have the opportunity to visit orphanages and boarding schools. You helped us buy fruit and sweets for the children, and we presented them along with the wonderful Christian books. They were so excited to receive all these things! Praise the Lord for the hearts of the children, which are fertile soil where the seeds of God's truth can grow. On behalf of the boarding school in Dobromil and the orphanage in Sambir, we thank SGA staff and partners for your donations and prayers!





## The Needy Children of Russia's Tiny Villages

In addition to Russia's enormous cities and metropolitan areas, there are hundreds of tiny, forgotten towns and villages dotting the vast landscape. The southern Ural Mountain region around Kurgan is a great example of a place where faithful SGA-sponsored missionary pastors are . . . always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58). Beginning last summer and continuing on through today, hundreds of children have heard the life-changing Gospel with your help.



For rural, remote Russian villages, a visit by local church workers and their ministries can be a spiritually fruitful event.

Pastor Alexander Yurovskikh wrote recently to tell us of this regions' deep poverty—and spiritual hunger . . .

*One of the poorest villages is Gorbuneshnoye. The children of various ages (3 to 17) are always happy about our visits to them. Despite their age differences, they love to play together and be together, listen to Bible stories, and have craft lessons. We even took a trampoline with us (borrowed from the Kurgan church), which was an unexpected surprise since there aren't*

*even any swings in this village. When we said goodbye, even the older girls saw us off with tears in their eyes.*

*In Zotino, the children were already waiting for us. We met with them and played games with them in the street. Their parents even joined in the Bible classes and crafts.*

*In Petukhovo, we organized a playground. Seeing that the church was open, the parents could allow their children to come and fellowship with Christians and children from Christian families. Even a local policeman stopped by to talk with us! It was one more great opportunity. We had a specialized program for the orphanage and a local secular camp called "Cosmos." The administration was very thankful and asked us to come again this summer.*

*When we meet and talk to the children and see their eyes, we cannot stop wondering at how God created each one of them. They all differ, but they are all so wonderful. In all, 236 children heard the Gospel, and we now have Christian activities in the district four times a year. We are sincerely grateful for your prayers and material support. It is your share, and your part in God's work!*

## CIS in the News . . .

### Americans Now Barred From Adopting Russian Children

Russian president Vladimir Putin has signed a law that bans Americans from adopting Russian children and imposes other sanctions in retaliation for a new U.S. human rights law that he says is poisoning relations. The law, which took effect January 1, has sparked significant controversy among child rights' advocates. Russian media reported that 52 children whose adoptions by American parents were underway will remain in Russia. Russia's child rights commissioner, Pavel Astakhov, confirmed this news. At the time of this writing, Russia's Supreme Court intervened and ruled that some of the adoptions could go through. Officials are hopeful that all 52 will be allowed to proceed in time. However, hundreds of

adoptions were still awaiting approval before January 1. The law is believed to be in response to the U.S. Magnitsky Act, which bars entry to Russians accused of involvement in the death in custody of anti-corruption lawyer Sergei Magnitsky and other alleged rights abuses. This story is a tragic development for the 700,000-plus Russian orphans—the majority of whom will never be adopted out. This makes the SGA-sponsored *Orphans Reborn* ministry all the more important. With your help, faithful church workers make regular visits to orphanages, spending time with the children, loving them, and discipling them in the Lord. Please pray with us for increased resources to reach even more lonely, forgotten children with the Gospel.

Sources: Reuters, Interfax



## How You Can Help

Twelve of the former Soviet countries are knit together these days in a loose union known as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Russia by far is the largest country in terms of land area, but all CIS nations have one thing in common. The overwhelming majority of cities, towns and villages remain without a Bible-preaching church or consistent Gospel witness. The faithful

missionary pastors you help sponsor through SGA are dedicated to reaching their people for Christ, and they are thankful for your prayers and faithful support. You help make so much possible—church-planting, reaching orphan children through SGA's *Orphans Reborn*, provision of Russian-language Bibles and Christian literature, Bible training . . . the list goes on. We need each and every one of you! Please prayerfully consider how you can help today.

# Canadian Connection

by Allan Vincent



Slavic Gospel Association serves national pastors, church leaders and churches. Across the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), faithful missionary pastors are not only reaching their communities with the Gospel, but also those who will plant other churches.

Three years ago, SGA/Canada - supported missionary pastor Alexander (Sasha) Dubynin and his family moved to Vladivostok in Russia's Far East to plant a new church. Their first evangelism focus was a university student ministry. The Russian government had invested much effort and significant finances in Vladivostok with the goal of turning it into the most strategic eastern city in Russia. Those plans included expanding existing colleges and developing new ones. Sasha reports that Vladivostok is brimming



Sasha and his family

with students from every nation, including many from next-door China.

Shortly after Sasha arrived, several

Chinese students called and asked if they could study the Bible. That was a miracle, but not the only miracle!

Sasha didn't know Chinese or any of the students personally, but they started to meet once a week for Bible study and prayer. During those first meetings, most communication was done with their hands.

God answered their prayers and communication needs in a miraculous way. God not only brought Boris, a young Russian man to the church, but he also soon repented. Having also lived and studied in China before studying in Vladivostok, Boris knew Chinese and their culture. For over a year, Boris has been an integral part of that Chinese language Bible study. And there is more. Boris is preparing to serve as a full-time missionary in China. What could not have been imagined 25 years ago, the Lord has brought to pass.

Would you please support Sasha Dubynin and his very fruitful ministry?

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