



SERVING CHURCHES — REACHING RUSSIAN SPEAKERS

January 2017

The Gospel to the Ends of the Earth

Reaching Russia's Far East for Christ

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will worship before You (Psalm 22:27)

Eric Mock
SGA Vice President of Ministry Operations

Late last summer, I spent two days of driving with the purpose of visiting seven small cities and villages in Far East Russia. With the exception of a small village of 300 Nanai people (one of Russia's 130-plus ethnic groups), we visited what are termed small cities. These towns are less than 13,000 people, but large enough to sustain a church that will



Thousands of unreached tiny villages dot the remote landscape of Far East Russia. reach the surrounding small villages, of which there are many.



Eric (left) had the opportunity to see missionary planes in action. Pray for more!

The last church I visited one evening had begun holding services on August 21, just a few weeks prior to our visit, in a village with no believers. This village was in the region where the Nanai people live. Nanai villages are historically pagan, practicing shamanism and offering gifts to the gods to the river—even calling to the “underworld.” The Gospel is so desperately needed here! It is a perfect example of why SGA-sponsored aviation ministry is such a vitally important project that needs to be realized in reaching remote villages!

The Fruit of SGA Partners' Support

One day, Avel and Olesya Dolohov received a call from Pastor Benjamin Levtsenuk. He needed a missionary couple to come out to a small city in the Khabarovsk region, revitalize the church, and use it as a home base to reach the surrounding villages. Pereyaslovka is a town of about 7,000 people, and a small evangelical church had been there. A



Avel and Olesya

church building was built in 1999, but problems arose and eventually, the church was left with no congregation and no pastor. Avel and Olesya had a nice home, a comfortable life, and a good ministry in Russia's Ryazan region. Pastor Benjamin gave them no promise of income, nor assurance of a decent place to live.

But that didn't matter. In obedience to what they saw as the call of God on their lives, they and their children packed what they could into a small sedan, gave away everything else, and made their way driving across Siberia to the Far East. Arriving at the ramshackle church building in which they would now live, Avel picked up a job clearing trees from the land, and started his ministry. This would prove to be no easy assignment. As is common across rural Russia, many in this region see the Baptist church as a cult, and not from their traditions. Yet, with 10 adults and 12 children, and the even their children now reaching other children through their witness, the church is growing!

As a side note, missionary pastor Avel graduated in 2005 from SGA's Strategic Bible Institute in Ryazan, and was proud to show me the diploma he earned and has treasured ever since! Please pray for Avel and Olesya, and for the faithful missionary pastors laboring for Christ in the Far East, remembering that they are serving in difficult and often pagan villages. Pray for the Gospel to go forth in this last Gospel frontier—the frontier of Far East Russia!



Living conditions in the Far East can be very difficult. Pray for more laborers willing to go.



Orphans Reborn worker Larissa continues to touch the lives of orphans in Kazakhstan!

A Divinely Arranged Reunion

Orphans Reborn in Kazakhstan

But He sets the needy securely on high away from affliction, and makes his families like a flock (Psalm 107:41).

We receive many testimonies and wonderful reports from SGA-sponsored *Orphans Reborn* workers across the CIS. A recent one told to SGA's Eric Mock while he was visiting Central Asia was such a tremendous example of God's power on display that we had to share it with you. It's the story of a young man named Sergei, and how God worked to reunite him with the family he never knew.

Sergei was born in Kazakhstan's former capital of Almaty. His mother and father were not married, and his father did not know his girlfriend was pregnant. When Sergei was born, his mother left him at the birthing house. Abandoned from the beginning, Sergei never knew his mother or father, and was alone. In first grade, he met Larissa Zatova, the administrator of the SGA-sponsored *Orphans Reborn* ministry in Kazakhstan. Through her, Sergei learned about the family of God and about the Lord Jesus. Larissa became like a mom to him, but he was still alone as he grew up. By God's grace, Sergei came

to faith, but was not prepared for life in the world. Eventually, upon reaching adulthood he was forced to leave the orphanage. Concerned for where he would go, Larissa and Sergei were able to access paperwork about his life. They joined with others in a search for his real parents, and a surprise was awaiting them. They found his father and grandmother—at Larissa's church! Both were now believers, and Sergei was joyfully introduced to them. By God's grace, Sergei now has both earthly and heavenly fathers who will never leave him or forsake him!



Sergei with his father and grandmother.

Fruit from the Harvest Fields of the CIS

Back on Christmas Eve of 2014, our House of Prayer was robbed. I went to the local inspector, but he advised me not to take the matter any further due to “bureaucracy.” He then asked me for some cash to buy gas, and promised that he would return the stolen property by the end of the day. But as time went on, nothing happened. Local taxi-drivers told me they had their suspicions and were ready to present facts. But I went to the inspector again, and once again, he declined to act. I confronted his behavior, and we parted with offended feelings.

But there’s another side to this story. The next spring, the wife of this inspector came to one of our worship services, repented, and turned to Christ. When I was giving the invitation, she was sitting next to my wife, and told her that she felt her heart burning. She went forward, took the microphone and began to pray in repentance! I was concerned about how her husband would react, but he received the news peacefully. More than that, we even had dinner together and have had several meetings since. We pray it will be soon time for him to repent—God continues His work in peoples’ hearts! I thank God for you and for your participation in our ministry!

—Pastor Yevgeny, Ukraine



The “Wild West” and the Gospel in Belarus

Last summer, we held a special camp for 60 children, with almost half from unbelieving homes. We also had seven orphan children. The theme of the camp was the American “Wild West.” The goal was to teach the children the importance of having true friends, and with the most important friend being the Lord Jesus Christ. The “mayor” of the ranch was the sheriff and the children were cowboys. There were also “Indians.” They all lived on a



ranch and received their wages in gold and silver nuggets. The camp was decorated like a Wild West ranch, and we had Stetson hats, horses, etc. The children received a bar of gold for their special achievements during the camp. We devoted much time to Bible lessons and teaching the children to



pray. Most importantly, 10 children repented and trusted in Christ as Savior . . .

I enjoyed my time in the camp . . . the stories of Jonah, Abraham, and the Good Samaritan. They taught me to be friendly. I learned in the camp that I have to repent of my sin before the Lord. I learned that God is kind and He sent His son to die for our sins. I made a decision to pray and read the Bible. (Valera)

I liked the camp. I learned that



I have to obey God and trust Him in every circumstance in my life. I learned that God is very kind and that Jesus loves people so much, and wants to save them from their sins. I repented and am going to talk to Him through prayer. (Viktoria)



I enjoyed the stories and activities in the camp. I learned that you can’t receive salvation through your good deeds. That I can repent and I know that Jesus will forgive my sins if I ask Him. I am going to tell my brother about God! (Veronika)



—Pastor Pavel, Belarus

First-Time Evangelization in Ukraine Village

During the rainy spring, we did as much as we could for the glory of the Lord. We were able to hold Easter celebrations for the first time in the local public school—previously we had only done it at our church! But God moved the hearts of the principal and the teachers, and they heard the Gospel together with the children. There were more than 120 children present. Moreover, our evangelism spread over into the village of Kotelva, where such an event had never been held! In Poltava, we held a meeting for unchurched youth. We had conversations, soccer, a bonfire, and a lot of fun. Even the head of the village administration came and was with us until the end of the meeting. Most important was that everyone heard the Word of God! We are very thankful to you for your constant prayers and sacrificial support of our ministry and family!

—Pastor Viktor, Ukraine



Bible Training in Progress in Russia's Frozen Far East

SGA's Eric Mock recently had the opportunity to again visit Russia's remote, frigid Yakutsk region in the Far East to help local churches with Bible training. Eric describes the challenges believers in this region face, while also calling for prayer—asking for God's blessing on these classes . . .

As I write this, I am at a gathering of men who have traveled here from very distant towns, some nearly 900 miles away. The temperature is 45 degrees below zero, and the frozen air has turned to a light fog of ice crystals.

Our brothers here have significant challenges. They have been laboring in cities where there are only 5-6 believers



and no pastors. Yet they are intent on proclaiming the Gospel and growing churches. In the Yakutia-Sakha Republic, there are approximately 650 believers among 1 million people. SGA was invited to visit and teach Bible classes to these peoples in Russia's Far East, and this week we have been teaching through the book of Acts.

With their first church being planted in the early 1990s, they are in many ways just starting, and many villages remain largely unreached. I have heard heartbreaking stories this week of villages and cities where suicide, violent crime, alcoholism and general hopelessness are the norm. The need for the Gospel is so great—the need to Reach Russia Now.

At these Bible training sessions, there are both ethnic Sakha brothers as well as ethnic Russians. They are taught in separate sessions in their own language. We are thankful for the opportunity to help strengthen Christ's churches in Yakutsk. Pray with us that they will become a great spearhead of faith to advance the Gospel across the Far East.

CIS in the News

Russian Pro-Life Activists Launch Abortion Ban Drive

This past fall, the public pro-life movement in Russia known as "For Life" launched a petition drive to completely ban abortion in Russia. According to RT.com and other media reports, this petition has the backing of more than 300,000 people including the children's rights ombudsman. In addition, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church addressed the country's parliament urging passage of the ban. Interestingly, Patriarch Kirill's press service said in a special statement that Kirill did so only as an "ordinary citizen."

Russia's largest evangelical church fellowship—the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists—has long been on record opposing abortion. In *InSight* last year, we also reported on SGA's assistance in the start-up of the first crisis pregnancy center ministry in Russia's huge capital city of Moscow. The earnest desire of the Russian Bible Church is for women and teen girls to choose life for their babies and be won to Christ. Russia has one of the highest abortion rates in the world according to the UN. In 2010, there were 37.4 abortions per 1000 women aged 15-44 years—a truly tragic figure. Please pray as the churches continue to develop ministries to reach these women with the love of Jesus.

How You Can Help

2016 is now history—and should our Lord tarry in His coming, the pages of 2017 are yet to be written. It offers you—our faithful partners—yet another year of opportunity to help Bible-preaching churches advance the Gospel across Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Central Asia, and in Israel. While we look at world events and anticipate the soon return of our Lord Jesus, we obediently carry out His command to . . . *Occupy till I come* (Luke 19:13 KJV).

Your prayers and support help accomplish so much—providing Russian-language Bibles and Christian literature, Bible training, compassion ministry, sponsorship of summer camps and other children's ministries, and support of hardworking missionary pastors dedicated to proclaiming the Gospel. Please prayerfully consider how you can help our brothers and sisters fulfill what God has called them to do.



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Canadian Connection

By Bill Ball



In reflection upon many conversations with our church planters, one thought stands out. No one ever complains about difficult conditions or circumstances. All look ahead to the opportunities that abound in serving King Jesus wherever God has planted them.

Entering this New Year challenges every one of us to consider how we view life and liberty. A few years ago, I heard a message on Philippians 1 where the preacher's 3 points were: 1:12 – Restrictions; 1:15-18 - Competition and 1:21 - Extinction. The concluding thought was that in all this, Paul challenges us to rejoice (Phil. 4:4). May that be our thrust in 2017.

We are pressing forward with the Gospel even as restrictions appear to be tightening. Our world speaks of "Globalization" from various facets, and this is relevant in Christian ministry as well. Where a door closes in one place, more are opened elsewhere. Our task is to find the doors that are unlocking and venture through them.

At SGA, new ministry avenues have developed in Russia's Far East where we will focus our efforts. Training in Jerusalem with those of Russian descent is ever expanding at Israel College of the Bible. Ukraine is sending missionaries to several countries. It seems every week we hear of more creative advancements.

In reflecting upon Philippians, Chuck Swindoll wrote in one of his devotionals,, "*No rusty Roman chains could deter Paul from reaching for the goal of pursuing the prize of Christ. He pressed on, determined to remain focused on his mission.*" May that be our resolve!

Your prayers, thoughts, gifts and encouragement are greatly appreciated as we partner together. We say thanks for the tremendous response to *Immanuel's Child* Christmas gifts for children. It was a privilege to also send a special Christmas gift to all of our pastors this year.



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