

## The Heart of Compassion

*So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion . . . (Colossians 3:12).*

Across the 12 nations that make up the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), millions of men, women and children live in heartbreaking



Poverty in many CIS villages is staggering — a tremendous opportunity to show Christ's love.

poverty. The causes are many—rampant unemployment, family dysfunction, alcoholism, drug abuse, mental health issues, and a multitude of other tragedies. But they all have one common need—to hear of Christ's love and the power of the Gospel to change their lives for eternity.

In Belarus and Ukraine, SGA-sponsored missionary pastors and their churches

are reaching out to these families by distributing much needed food items and other aid as God provides. In report after report, we see wonderful fruit being gathered as destitute families see His love in action. Pastor Vasily Shemetov has been distributing food in Belarus' Gomel region, and the Lord has blessed his labors . . .

*I thank and praise God for the opportunity to preach the Gospel through Compassion Ministry. God uses the food packs to help open hearts to receive the Gospel. One family refused all help and even the food, but the Lord blessed us with another family to help—a Roma family with five children. The oldest daughter, Sveta, already has her own family. They attend Sunday worship with their children. Please keep praying for the families receiving help—that God will soften their hearts to the truth.*



In the Grodno region, Pastor Dmitri Smolensky has been visiting ten families and taking them food . . .

*Andrew Mikoaynets had begun attending the church, and he has now repented! His youngest son is attending our Sunday school. Yuri Panasevich also repented and attends church regularly. He will soon be baptized! We thank God for the help of SGA partners and the opportunity to preach the Gospel.*

Pastor Alexander Sheleg also ministers in the Grodno region. He says that patient labors yield great fruit in God's perfect timing . . .

*We have been doing Compassion Ministry for a year and a half. It takes a lot of patience to wait until the seeds of the Gospel begin growing in people's hearts. A good example is a young man named Volodya, who is bedridden. When we began visiting him, he was very stubborn and didn't even want to listen to us. God encouraged us to keep visiting him anyway. One time, my wife, Marina, and I went to see him and Volodya had a guest. We had a good conversation and I noticed that something had changed. Volodya became more open to hearing the*

*Gospel, and he even allowed us to take a picture of him for the first time. I ask you to pray that God will continue to soften his heart.*

As you can see, these outreaches are not the large crusades so familiar here in the



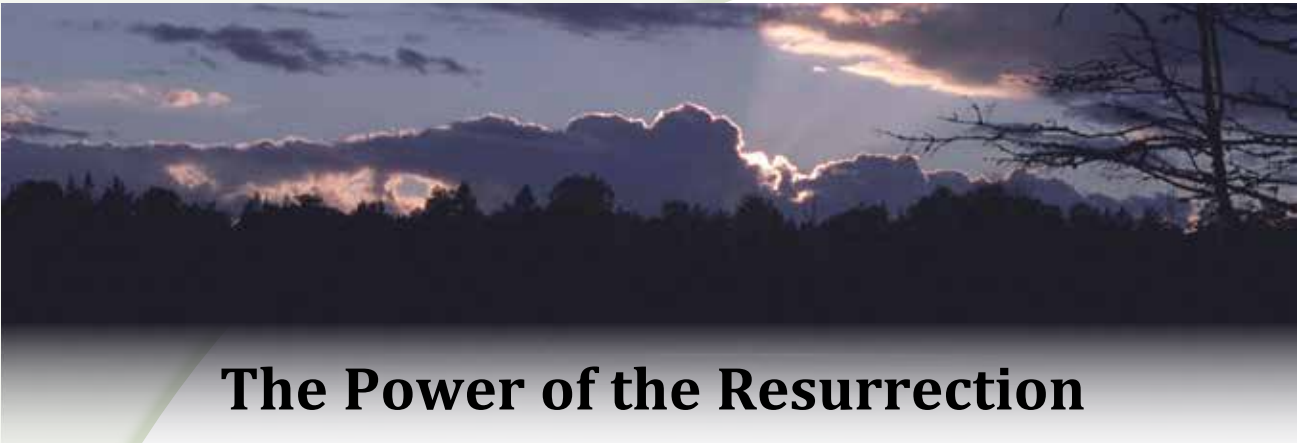
*Pray that God will continue to soften Volodya's hurting heart.*

West—held in stadiums, with well-known speakers and massive numbers of people coming forward. They are the day in, day out, one-life-at-a-time type of ministry—where loving, trusting relationships are slowly built with those in deep need. As they see Christ's love modeled before them with love and compassion . . . as they experience His gracious provision . . . their hearts are drawn to learn more of the One who came to save them from their sins.

And to think you helped make it happen—from half a world away! Thank you for your faithfulness in prayer and giving, and for making an eternal difference.



**Who knows how God will use the loving compassion of His people to make an eternal impression on a young, questioning heart?**



# The Power of the Resurrection

**Missionary Pastor Leonid Demidchik, Vitebsk, Belarus**

In Russian-speaking countries, this year we will celebrate Easter on Sunday, April 20, according to the Eastern calendar. As we prepare for this year, I can't help but remember how special last Easter was for our church, as it was for all our churches in Belarus. Our Lord Jesus conquered the grave, and now heaven is open to all of us who believe in and confess Jesus as our Savior! I want to share with you some of the joy that came to us that day!

The church was filled with lots of new people. Yuri is an ex-officer and we have been spending time together walking in the morning. Because of his keen mind, I presented him with a Russian-language *MacArthur Study Bible* and *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell. Yuri not only came to church, but he brought his friend Igor along with him. In their words, the service "left a bright star" in their hearts!

Alina made the service complete with her repentance. She had been invited to church by our son Nikolai last Christmas, and she began to attend services plus the youth meetings. She responded to

God's call on that Resurrection Sunday! A week later, a young man named Maxim came forward for repentance. He is one of four men who are addicted to alcohol and had been in church on Easter. Before the church, he knelt down with me and prayed, "Please, help me to be free!" Then 14-year-old Liza repented. She studies in the same grade as my daughter Lusia. Liza is an adopted child—taken away from her parents at age 5 because of their alcoholism. She has been living with one of our church families for seven years, and at last God touched her heart to respond. It was a great joy for her new family, as well as for all the church.

Please pray for all of our new brothers and sisters, that they will grow in their faith and new life in Christ!

*Editor's Note: While Christmas is the most significant day for evangelism in Russian-speaking churches, Easter—celebrating Christ's glorious resurrection—is the most celebrated day of the year. Pray for Russian pastors as they prepare to preach the Gospel to the many unbelievers who attend Easter services.*



SGA partners help support many ministries across the CIS. Compassion Ministry, ministry to youth, and sponsorship of Youth IN Ministry are key areas we are highlighting this month. Join us in a brief journey through the harvest field . . . *Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).*

**Compassion Ministry**

We rejoice at the tremendous fruit of Compassion Ministry in Ukraine, Belarus, and other countries of the CIS. According to our most recent reports, 165 families in Ukraine were reached with food parcels. Of that number, 265 were adults and 366 were children. In Belarus, 540 families have been reached with food aid. A total of 26 people repented and came to faith in Christ, while 69 adults and 87 children are now attending the church.



**Central Asia**

While we are not naming locations for security purposes, the Bible-preaching churches of Central Asia have fruitful outreaches to teenagers and younger children through very discreet camp ministries. At this camp, 60 percent of the children and youth were from needy, unbelieving families and were of different nationalities.

**Your faithful prayers and support of SGA ministries are making an eternal difference! Thank you!**



**Russia: 2013 "I am Young" Conference**

Russian national youth leader Pastor Vlad Treskin sent us some tremendous testimonies from church youth and young adults who attended a special conference themed "I am Young."

*The Lord found me while I was in the army. I wanted to read the New Testament. When I opened it and began to read of the Prodigal Son, I understood. God touched my heart, and I repented, asking for His forgiveness.*

**Sasha, from Perm, Russia**

*I am from a Muslim family and always considered myself to be a strong person. I did not believe in God and had no need for Him. However, Christ showed me over the course of two months that I was an evil, perishing sinner. Then I heard the Gospel*



**Marat and his family**

*while translating for some American Christians. The Word was at work in me when I translated it. Two weeks after going to Christian camp, I was saved and baptized into a new life in Christ!*

**Marat, from Saransk, Russia**

*My life has completely changed. My parents were drug addicts. My father died when I was a year old.*



**Aidar**

*My mother could not take care of my siblings and me, so we were sent to a children's home. I always dreamed of one thing—to have a family. As I grew older, my anger grew. I began boxing and abusing alcohol. I wanted to hit anyone who came near me. Then I came to a club where they talked about God and His love. They showed love to me and to all the kids who were there. I understood that God loved me and sent Jesus to suffer on the cross for me. I repented, asked Him for forgiveness, and He took my anger away. He gave me hope and love, and now I can love other people.*

**Aidar, from Ufa, Russia**





# Orphans Reborn

## Orphans Reborn in Jewish Birobidzhan

About 20 years before the founding of the modern state of Israel, Soviet leader Josef Stalin established a homeland for Russian Jewish citizens called Birobidzhan, located in Russia's Far East. A recent *New York Times* article noted that although those who call themselves Jewish in the region are dwindling, a Jewish identity is still very visible. And in this region, SGA-sponsored missionary pastor Viktor Lokaichuk labors to reach local orphans with the help of SGA partners . . .

*With your help, we continue our Orphans Reborn ministry in children's home No. 5 in the city of*



The children of Orphanage #5, learning of God's love.

*Birobidzhan. The Yegorov family from our church visits the children's home twice each month. This past summer, they worked for three months holding Bible lessons on the topics of "The Living Room in My*

*Heart," "Jesus is My Best Friend," and "The Commandment of God: Do Not Steal." They purchase and take fruit and other things the children*



Gifts of food and other aid through the churches can make lasting impressions even among the staff!

*need such as school supplies, socks, and underwear each time they visit. There are 52 children resident in this home right now. May the Lord bless you, and we greet you in the love of our Lord Jesus!*

In Birobidzhan and similar regions across Russia where hundreds of different ethnic groups and other religious beliefs are prevalent, Gospel ministry can face many challenges. But the orphans are the same, and have the same needs—love, compassion, and above all, salvation in the Lord Jesus. Please pray for the ministry in Birobidzhan, for the faithful *Orphans Reborn* teams across vast Russia, and above all, for the children who desperately need the Lord.

## CIS in the News

### Ukraine: Radical Islam on the Rise?



In Ukraine's Crimea region on the Black Sea, a radical Islamic political party called Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Freedom) is gaining in influence, and is causing alarm even among other Muslims. In the Crimean capital of Simferopol, more than 1,000 bearded men gathered last summer for a rally waving white flags and shouting, "Allahu Akbar," the Islamic cry meaning "Allah is Greatest." Hizb ut-Tahrir is banned in several countries, but is showing surprising strength in Crimea, a holiday resort region that also has a significant Muslim Tatar minority.

The stated goal of the party is to re-establish a Caliphate—a pan-Islamic state based on Islamic law as in the medieval era, but the local office told AFP News that their ambition of reviving the Caliphate does not extend to Ukraine. He said the party's presence in Crimea is "educational." The Spiritual Board of Muslims of Crimea, which is the main umbrella group for Crimean Tatars, is calling on Ukrainian authorities to take a closer look at Hizb ut-Tahrir's activities.

Of all the former Soviet nations, Ukraine enjoys the greatest amount of religious freedom. Our prayer is that God will restrain any effort to hinder the Gospel, as well as any move toward the violence and bloodshed connected with radical Islam.

Source: AFP News

## How You Can Help

Across Russia and her neighboring countries, the deep physical needs that exist for needy individuals and families is staggering. Big city or rural village, the needs are immense. But no matter the location—the need for the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ is the same. And the evangelical churches SGA serves are committed to reaching their people for His glory. Your prayers and support help provide 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 advance the Gospel in the CIS.



# Canadian Connection

## "The Tale of Two Cities"

by Allan Vincent

Describing 17<sup>th</sup> century London and Paris, Charles Dickens' memorable words, "*It was the best of times. It was the worst of times,*" also accurately describes two locations that I recently visited in Ukraine: Buzivka—a village, and Uman—a small city.

Other than Kiev, Odessa, and a couple of larger cities, the majority of Ukrainians live either in villages or smaller cities.

**For nearly all Ukrainian villages, it is the worst of times.** Having been established to house workers on collective farms that transitioned to corporate farms after Perestroika, many villages are slowly dying. **For small to larger Ukrainian cities, it is comparatively the best of times.** Those with an infrastructure and employment attract people from nearby villages.

**Buzivka** is a village of about 2,500 people, 150 km south of Kiev. Other than having one of the best bakeries in Ukraine that attracts a few people on their way to Odessa, Buzivka has no reason to exist. By contrast, **Uman**—50 km farther south—is a bustling university city with support services for 90,000 residents, many of whom are students.

**When it comes to Buzivka and Uman, there is a tale to be told** and that tale involves SGA/Canada-supported, young missionary pastor **Vasily Furta**. Vasily lives in Buzivka, where a vibrant growing congregation is impacting their region for Christ. As one of the Buzivka pastors, Vasily and ministry teams from their mother church have planted

multiple churches in their regions. Because young adults are integral parts of those teams, they have a reason to stick around.

A year ago, Vasily and another ministry team made up mostly of young adults began work in Uman. **Although there are two other churches, neither was reaching Uman's young adults. By God's grace, Vasily and team are.** Meeting in rented facilities, their Sunday morning service now numbers about 40. The driving force behind the Sunday attendance is a monthly Thursday night youth meeting where more than 30 older teens and young adults gather for excellent music, Bible study, and fellowship.

With new believers, this congregation will soon outgrow their rented facilities. For that reason, with the encouragement and support of their mother church in Buzivka, the Uman congregation is asking the Lord to provide property where they can eventually build a House of Prayer. Like the previous Buzivka region church plants, this will require the Lord's provision. **Even though the Buzivka congregation and the core group will do their best, they will need the help of SGA prayer and ministry partners.** If the Lord brings this together, **few locations are more deserving of your support and of a construction ministry team than Uman.**

By God's grace, it is the best of times for the believers in both Buzivka and Uman.



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

Slavic Gospel Association  
— Canada  
55 Fleming Drive, Suite 26  
Cambridge, ON N1T 2A9  
www.sgacanada.ca  
E-mail: info@sgacanada.ca  
Phone: 519-621-3553  
Fax: 519-621-7571

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