



SERVING CHURCHES — REACHING RUSSIA

April 2015

A Week of Summer Fun and a Lifetime with Christ

*So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, **by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days . . .*** (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

The above words of Scripture were spoken by Moses to the children of Israel before they were allowed to enter the land of God's promise. As CIS churches prepare for their 2015 summer camp ministries, Moses' call to obedience is like the godly counsel that will once again be shared with thousands of boys and girls—pointing them toward a lifelong and eternal relationship with Christ.

SGA partners' support for summer camp ministries is vitally important. Many of



The earlier Gospel seeds are planted . . .
the better!



Children of all ages eagerly anticipate the time spent at SGA-sponsored summer camps.

the children will be hearing the Gospel for the first time, and camp will be their only exposure to the things of God. Many will respond, trusting the Lord for their salvation, and then impacting their entire families. The wonderful testimonies we received after last summer's sessions provide a glimpse of the great fruit. SGA missionary pastor Valery Akelkin of Krasnoyarsk, Siberia reported . . .

Nine churches from the region joined together to conduct the camp sessions. We had expected about 50

A Special Message from Pastor Valery Antonyuk

President of the Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (UECB)

Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love (2 John 1:3)



Greetings in the name of the Lord! For Christians here in Ukraine, 2014 was a year of great trials and sobering experiences. God has been leading us in a special way of serving the people of our country.

Christian camps, missions, Bible colleges, and seminaries. Five locations were set up for the purpose of helping people relocate and to distribute aid. Local churches collected more than 120 tons of food and other humanitarian aid, and provided financial support to displaced people.

We thank you all who responded to the needs of the Ukrainian people, joining together to provide spiritual and practical aid in these difficult times. Your support inspires us to continue “standing in the gap” for our land” during one of the most critical moments in our modern history.

The situation in Crimea and subsequent developments in the eastern regions we call the Donbas have brought great pain and suffering to our people. Because of the military conflict, many evangelical churches in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions found themselves in a combat zone. Some 150 of these churches are UECB congregations. Many Christians were forced to flee their homes because of threats and persecutions. Many local churches were scattered. Through you, God helped us provide substantial humanitarian assistance to refugees from Crimea and eastern Ukraine.

More than 10,000 refugees have found shelter across the whole territory of Ukraine, in Christian homes, in churches,

Today, we are still helping those who remain in the war zone, as well as those who have been forced to seek homes in other regions of Ukraine. In the conflict zone, the local churches have organized transportation for people, as well as the distribution of food products, medicines, clothing and other necessities. About 70 pastors and workers in eastern Ukraine continue their ministries in the conflict zones or in other areas. They are receiving financial support for their families because they are without work, homes, and even had to leave their home churches.

On behalf of the Baptist churches of Ukraine, I express my sincere gratitude for the sacrifice and support that you have provided during this difficult time. We continue to pray and serve, full of faith that the Lord will guide His Church, and to work through us amid these difficult times in our history.

Editor’s Note: If you would like to read Pastor Antonyuk’s letter in its entirety, please visit SGA’s website at www.sga.org.

children, but praise God, between 70 and 80 children were in daily attendance. Almost all of them were from non-Christian backgrounds. We had morning exercises, crafts, sports, music, drama, and Bible lessons. The children from one village read the literature we had given them, and prayed a prayer of repentance. As a result, one of our church sisters now has a Sunday school for them in her home. We praise God for His blessings. This summer, we plan to hold camp in two different locations instead of just one—in Tertzeh and in Razdolnoe. Please pray!

In Belarus, Pastor Sergei Gormash sent the testimony of Darina, a 14-year-old girl whose experience at camp changed her life forever . . .

My grandmother had brought me to church since I was little, but my life gradually drifted away from God. I felt more comfortable around my non-Christian friends than in the church—or so I thought. I felt so dirty inside, betraying my friends and my mind was filled with bad thoughts. Deep inside, I knew I was wrong, but was afraid to come back

because I thought people would reject me. But at the camp, I understood God’s love and that He was ready to forgive my sins. I learned about Him from the Bible lessons and prayed in repentance. Immediately my heart was filled with joy and peace. I know He is the only One who can do that. I am very thankful to the Lord for this camp.

At another camp near Voronezh, Russia, adults were reached in addition to children. Four men, including two former drug addicts, came to Christ and were baptized!



Christian literature and children’s Bibles are eagerly read and received by the kids.

We are thankful to God for these wonderful reports, and look forward with anticipation to what He will do this year. Pray with us for the resources needed to reach as many as possible with Christ’s love!



Arts and crafts often reflect the eternal truths learned in camp Bible lessons.

SUMMER CAMP



Last summer, SGA partners helped evangelical churches make it possible for thousands of children to attend camp sessions in nine CIS nations—Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, and five Central Asian nations. By summer's end:

14,609 children attended camp

8,442 children were from non-believing families

2,246 children repented and trusted in Christ

1,175 children began attending Sunday school

473 adults expressed the desire to attend church

229 adults began attending church

Camps are held at: church campuses, public parks, nature sites, campgrounds, local forests, and other locations as God provides. In some nations, they must be held discreetly due to opposition by those opposed to the Gospel. We praise God for what He has done in so many lives through this wonderful ministry!

Prayer Requests for the 2015 Camp Season

- Pray for God's abundant provision to send as many children to camp as possible.
- Ask for God's protection over the children and church workers as the camp sessions proceed.
- Pray for the camp sessions being held in regions where opposition to the Gospel is strong.
- Pray that the Lord will bring many children to Himself in saving faith as they hear the Gospel—many for the first time.

A Joyful Call from the Past

Piotr Lokaichuk
Missionary Pastor in Novoaltaisk, Russia

Many SGA-sponsored missionary pastors include outreaches at prisons as part of their overall evangelism ministries. They often have the opportunity of seeing the fruit of their faithful Gospel preaching as time passes, and it brings great joy to the churches.

Pastor Piotr Lokaichuk recently received news of a joyful surprise harvest stemming from the loving witness he and his wife had presented in 1997—some 17 years ago!

One day I received a phone call and the man on the other end of the line asked, "Is it Piotr?" When I replied that it was, he told me his name was Alexander, and he went on to share his testimony with me. In 1997, he was in a high security prison where I had been going to preach the Gospel. Alexander said that he knew about my visits but did not attend the meetings or hear one of your messages.

But then you came to visit that Easter with your wife to provide a special holiday tea with gifts for us prisoners. I found out about your large family, and something changed in me. When I was released from prison, I began searching for believers in the town

where I lived. I found a church, repented, and became part of the church. Then I got married and now I have four children! We serve the Lord in His church, and I wanted to find you and thank you!

Piotr visits both men's and women's prisons. Last year, he suffered a serious bout with pneumonia, and he learned later that the group of 20 women attending his Bible study at the women's prison had been praying earnestly for his recovery. He says the changes in the women have been visible over time . . .

When I began visiting and ministering God's Word, they wept over their situation but were very worn out and hardened. But now they are smiling and look happy even in prison, and several have trusted in the Lord. Their tears are now tears of joy. They ask us to pray for them.

Piotr stands on God's promise . . . *For whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved* (Romans 10:13), and gives Him the glory as did the Apostle Paul . . . *I planted . . . but God was causing the growth. So then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God causes the growth* (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). Please pray for Piotr and his wonderful, fruitful outreach to men and women whose lives are so broken.

Russia Reverts to DST and 11 Time Zones

Reversing a 2011 decision by former Russian president Dmitri Medvedev, the country's parliament has voted to go back to 11 time zones instead of nine. Remaining on Daylight Savings Time instead of resetting clocks in the winter proved to be deeply unpopular. Parliamentarian Alexander Zhukov told Reuters that staying on DST "does not correspond to geography." Russia has the world's largest land mass, and its northernmost regions see less than an hour of sun per day during the winter.

Islamic Radicalism in the CIS

Radio Free Europe recently cited Kazakhstan's National Security Committee as claiming that about 300 Kazakh nationals are fighting with the so-called ISIS (Islamic State) terror

group in the Middle East. National Security Chairman Nurtai Abykayev said the Kazakh militants had formed their own fighting unit, including about 150 women. News reports in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian CIS nations have expressed concerns about growing Islamic radicalism. In Russia, the Federal Security Bureau estimated some 1,500 militants in ISIS had come from the Russian Federation. Parliament has stiffened Russia's anti-terrorism law setting a six-year prison term for anyone participating in an illegal armed formation on foreign soil.

Please pray for evangelical churches across Russia and her neighboring countries as they counter the hate of radicalism with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Especially pray for believers in regions where Islam is dominant and persecution is severe.

How You Can Help

In just two short months—Lord willing—evangelical churches across the CIS will be launching yet another summer camp season. Thousands of children will be gathered together for a time of rest, fun activities, loving fellowship, and most of all, an opportunity to hear about God's great love for them. Please pray in advance as many of these precious young ones will be hearing the Gospel for the very first time. We are thankful for your faithful prayers and generous support for all SGA-sponsored ministries—*Orphans Reborn*, Bible training, missionary pastors, provision of Russian-language Bibles and Christian literature, humanitarian aid, and much more. You are a constant blessing and encouragement!



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Canadian Connection

by Allan Vincent

For most of us, **Summer Camps** evoke warm thoughts of trees, water, a dining hall, chapel times and cabins or tents.

For most campers in Ukraine and Russia though, their warm thoughts would focus on the Bible times, food



and games with food often having a slight edge on the others. Because most of those reached through SGA/Canada-sponsored *Summer Camp Ministry* are from the homes of unbelievers or orphanages, that is not surprising.

While most of those who lead summer camps would appreciate some trees, water and cabins, they are more than grateful just to be able to host a day camp at their House of Prayer or perhaps by God's grace at a nearby park or orphanage. Wherever they hold the camp, **hearty snacks and a substantial, hot mid-day meal are as essential as the Bible lesson and songs.** For one camp, an unsaved lady living next the church offered to cook for the camp – an answer to prayer.

Summer camps are a very effective way of opening the doors and hearts of unbelievers. An SGA/Canada-supported missionary pastor in Chernigiv reported on the fruit of your partnerships . . . *Though there are not many children at the*



church, we have a good Sunday school for the children. To encourage non-believing children to attend Sunday school, we decided to do camp for them. Because we do not have much property, we did the camp in our House of Prayer.

The camp was named "Friendship." We expected children to come, but no one thought that we would have so many. God blessed us and 67 children from unchurched families came!

Young campers were brought by their parents. We were concerned that the young children would not listen to the Bible lessons but God blessed us. All of the children enjoyed the Bible lessons, Christian songs and answering the questions. More importantly there was a change in the children. Instead of pushing, they became quiet and friendly.

Both the children and the adults enjoyed the camp. The parents thanked us and the children were really sorry that the camp was "too" short. They wished that the camp lasted all summer. At the end of the summer, we will invite the children again to Sunday school. Please pray."

On behalf of the dear pastors and church leaders served by SGA/Canada, "Thank you for your integral partnership in Summer Camp and other ministries."



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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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AI's Itinerary:

9 – Benton Street Baptist Church – Young at Heart
12 – King's Community Church – Oakville ON
(tentative)

13-15 – The Gospel Coalition – Orlando, Florida
21-27 – Alberta Ministry Trip – locations to be confirmed