

Great Is God's Faithfulness

The words of the beloved old hymn echo the praise offered to God by the prophet Jeremiah . . . *Great is Your faithfulness* (Lamentations 3:23). Not long ago, we received a deeply moving report from SGA-sponsored missionary pastor Constantine Lupashtian in Russia.

Accompanied by fellow pastors Viktor Sipko and Nikolai Devyatkin, Constantine traveled a highway across Russia's bitterly cold Far North that believers had traveled involuntarily many years ago. The



Many faithful believers were exiled to remote regions with brutally harsh climates, yet remained true to the Lord.

earlier generation went on this journey to Vorkuta and Ukhta by force—exiled by the communists for their faith. The story is told that the road to Vorkuta is built on the bones of the prisoners who died on the way. As Constantine relates, it was a

journey to recall God's faithfulness . . .

Many undertook this journey we were making, and thousands perished. Our intent was to travel along this path of sorrow, and offer a prayer of gratitude for the generation of ministers who went before us and were faithful.

The first church we visited was in the city of Ukhta, celebrating its 70th anniversary. Believers from all over the region came to the service and there was not enough room! The day was filled with fellowship, prayer, and worship from early morning til late evening. Our brothers from Syktyvkar told us of Pastor Nikolai Antonov,



Today, the once-persecuted churches in Ukhta are filled with joyful believers eager to share their love for Christ.

who in 1943 was exiled to this region near the Arctic Circle. As a prisoner, he rarely had time alone, but when he did, he read the Gospel by the solitude of the Ukhta River. One of the camp workers joined him, and quickly became a believer. Persecution came, yet one by one, more people believed! From this group of prisoners arose a church in Syktyvkar after the war. Who could imagine that out of war and hate, many churches in this entire region would be built? Pastor Antonov's great grandson was at the service!

We were told of another Christian man in Vorkuta who refused to work on Sunday. He was then taken out of the camp and ordered to walk to the tundra forest. He did not know that, feral dogs were lying in wait to attack him. He had walked about 100 meters and then knelt and prayed. A second Christian man followed him to the forest. He too knelt and prayed. The two men looked at each other and realized that they were father and son! The dogs then started running towards them, but then stopped, crouched down, and began creeping towards the men. When they got closer, the dogs began licking

the hands of the two men instead of attacking them! As in the story of Daniel in the lions' den, so were the dogs mouths shut!

After leaving Vorkuta, the three pastors then traveled further to the Vologda



Nikolai Devyatkin, Viktor Sipko, and Constantine Lupashtian

region, meeting believers where there had never been an evangelical church! They prayed and thanked God for His faithfulness to all who preceded them. Constantine reflected on the sacrifices made for the glory of God . . .

Many Christians who suffered for their faith did not ever return to their homes. They are now with the Lord, and for them, sorrow and pain are no more. May God bless us and enable us to be faithful in our generation, and help us hold to our faith no matter what circumstances arise. We thank you—our friends and supporters—who helped make this journey possible, and helped us to encourage our brothers and sisters.



In Russia's Arctic north, many families still live in wigwam-like structures and endure the brutal climate.

Hope for Shattered Lives

Update from Eastern Ukraine

Pastor Vasily and his church are among the many SGA-sponsored missionary pastors in Ukraine who are reaching hundreds of refugee families who were forced to flee combat and violence in the eastern regions. In a recent report, Vasily shared how your gifts to SGA's Crisis Evangelism Fund—and your prayers—have blessed many and pointed them to the love of Christ.

In one region, we ministered at a camp for families whose relatives were killed or wounded during the conflict. There were 40 people with children, although we did not photograph them all. We had very good fellowship with each other and were able to discuss the serious issues troubling them—including the deaths of their relatives. We looked together to find answers in God's Word and tried to point them toward the only true Source of emotional and spiritual healing.



Pastor Vasily's church is a vibrant lighthouse for the Gospel in a troubled region.

We invited Christian singers to participate at the camp and it brought comfort to the refugees. We had Bible classes and provided delicious food for them. At the end of the camp, many people thanked



Bible studies and singing worship songs lead to opportunities to share Christ with refugees.

God, and us. They were touched that churches were taking an active part in helping people who are suffering because of the war and conflict in our country. Almost half of the camp's participants attend Bible study groups and some have already received the Lord Jesus into their hearts.

We are thankful to God for this wonderful testimony, and the many others we have received. For security reasons, we often cannot disclose locations and names. But know that the Lord is at work in many lives, and His love is drawing many to Himself in saving faith.

When you consider the sheer size of Russia—11 time zones across—and then add Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and the rest of Central Asia, it is overwhelming in human terms to imagine taking the Gospel to every unreached city, town, and village. Yet that is the commitment of SGA-sponsored missionary pastors, and the command of our Lord. Your prayers and faithful support help make their ministries possible. If you would like to find out more about how to sponsor a hardworking, zealous missionary pastor, please call 800-BIBLE-50 or email us at insight@sga.org.

In Russia's Krasnoyarsk region, the Lord blessed our efforts and we were able to have a summer camp for 15 teenage boys, aged 13-17. These were children from orphanages and dysfunctional homes. Each morning, we held Bible study and prayer. The Lord blessed our time, and everything we needed was provided—funds, spiritual food, and even good weather! Because of this ministry opportunity, several young men called on the name of Jesus and prayed a prayer of repentance!



(Victor Bogushevich, Krasnoyarsk)



Through Compassion Ministry, we reach many lonely, forgotten, and needy people with food aid and the love of Jesus. Last year, a widow named Barbul repented and trusted in Christ. Before her husband died, we visited them with food aid and both listened as the Gospel was shared. Her husband repented, was reconciled to God before he died, and entered eternity.



In addition, 20-25 children have been coming regularly to Sunday services after their families received food assistance. Most of them are from unbelieving families!



(Eastern Ukraine)

In ministering to orphaned children in Uzyan, I saw a young girl (name withheld) running and when she stopped, I talked to her for a while. I found out she was 14 years old, and was being beaten. My wife fed her, and we talked some more. Because of this, she visits us often now and even brings younger children from the orphanage to eat with us. Even the smallest of gestures, like sharing a meal, can change a person's life and open the door for the Gospel!

—Alexei Bikov (Ufa Region, Russia)





We Have Set Our Hope on Him.

Crisis Evangelism and Aid for Families in Ukraine

In Ukraine's eastern regions, families continue to struggle in the aftermath of the armed conflict that literally shattered thousands of lives. Your support for SGA's Crisis Evangelism Fund made it possible for local churches to reach out in Christ's love, helping these families with needed aid and sharing the Gospel with them. Pastor Vasily oversees aid distributions in his eastern region, and wrote to tell us of the deep gratitude the families have for the help given to them. Many have received the Lord as their Savior, while others are open and listening . . .



Andrei lost his job, his home, and entire family in the fighting around Debaltsevo. He was in such deep grief!

We met Andrei and helped him with material assistance as well as spiritual counsel and support. Now he attends the church and has made new friends in our Bible study group. Andrei is very thankful to the church for the help that he received in his time of grief.

Elena has two children, and one of them suffers from autism. They fled their home with nothing but the

clothes on their backs, and in a very distressed state. They also received help from us, and today Elena attends our church and a small group on Bible study. She has not yet repented, but is interested in understanding the Word of God. She is thankful to all Christians for their compassion, and aid to her family.



Elena

Igor is a young man who has also suffered much, losing contact with his family and despairing of life. We helped him to make new friends among believers in our church. Igor now attends worship services and our Bible study group, and wants to know more about salvation and living the Christian life. Please pray for the Lord to keep working in Igor's life and bring him to faith.

God's Word tells us . . . *It is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers* (1 Timothy 4:10). Please keep praying for ongoing Crisis Evangelism ministries in Ukraine, and wherever else the Lord may open the door for the Gospel.

CIS in the News



Russia: Back to "Peaceful Coexistence" with the West?

In a recent Moscow Times article, Russian political analyst Fyodor Lukyanov said he believed Russian president Vladimir Putin wanted "peaceful coexistence" with the United States and Western nations. Yet he added that a return to the warmer relations that existed in the 1990s and early 2000s was unlikely . . .

Turning back is impossible. The Crimean decision is irreversible, without putting (Putin's) entire political model at risk. Any backtracking on support for eastern Ukraine would lead to serious political repercussions at home and

would generally be perceived as a clear defeat for the Kremlin. Moscow cannot restore its former relations with the West. Regardless of whether sanctions are lifted, the basis for cooperation that was rooted in the balance of powers of the 1990s has been lost. That is why Moscow prefers the status quo . . . To use a term that is once again in vogue, Russia is entering into a "frozen conflict" with Europe and the United States that none of the parties like, but that they all prefer to open conflict.

We know that God . . . *rules over the nations* (Psalm 22:28). He will continue to build His church, and we are thankful that He has granted us the privilege of serving our brothers and sisters in Russia as they proclaim the Gospel. Pray with us for even greater opportunities to share Christ's love in the days ahead.

How You Can Help

With the help of SGA partners, more than 325 faithful missionary pastors are being sponsored across Russia and the countries of the CIS. Their ministries are as widely varied as the regions in which they work. Russia alone has more than 130-150 different people groups within its borders. And millions have yet to hear the life-changing Gospel. Your faithfulness helps to send these men to the harvest field, and so much more—children's ministries, Bible training, Compassion Ministry and humanitarian aid, and crisis evangelism—so many opportunities to share Christ's love. Please pray about how you can help today!



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Canadian Connection

by Bill Ball

The very heart of what we do centers on the local church representing our Savior, Jesus Christ in local communities all across the CIS. For this reason we support, encourage, pray for and “hold up the hands” of these faithful servants. This would not be possible without faithful donors giving to these men and their families on a regular basis. Each one sends a report to us every quarter which we in turn forward to those who are the generous financial suppliers. You hear directly the good, bad and ugly of raw ministry from the hearts of true servants. They are extensions of your local church serving in another part of God’s Kingdom. Only eternity will reveal how your sacrificial gifts played a part in lost souls coming to the Savior!

One pastor just wrote:

All nations now in the world are not calm. Everyone expects what will happen next. Only those who



love the Lord have peace in their hearts. We know how to behave and how to do everything. The world of today very much needs

to hear the clear Gospel message and also see our deeds. The will of the Lord is in it. Let us remain faithful to Him till the end. Our church lives for Christ. All of us are in one spirit, in one mind and want to grow in the love of Christ. —Pastor Igor

This same pastor has visited almost every prison in his assigned region of Russia. He writes that, “Conditions in prison are more difficult, but men stay encouraged.” All of our pastors write about a record number of children attending summer camps. Christmas outreaches yielded many decisions of repentance.

From the Canadian arm of SGA, we partner with 85 pastors/ church planters. Collectively, SGA International supports over 350 of these humble servants. Funding comes from local churches, individuals, foundations, families and Coalitions. Design a creative means of support and trust God to supply. Many more need our support. Can we count on you? Contact our office and we can discuss how you may become a vital part of the team!



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