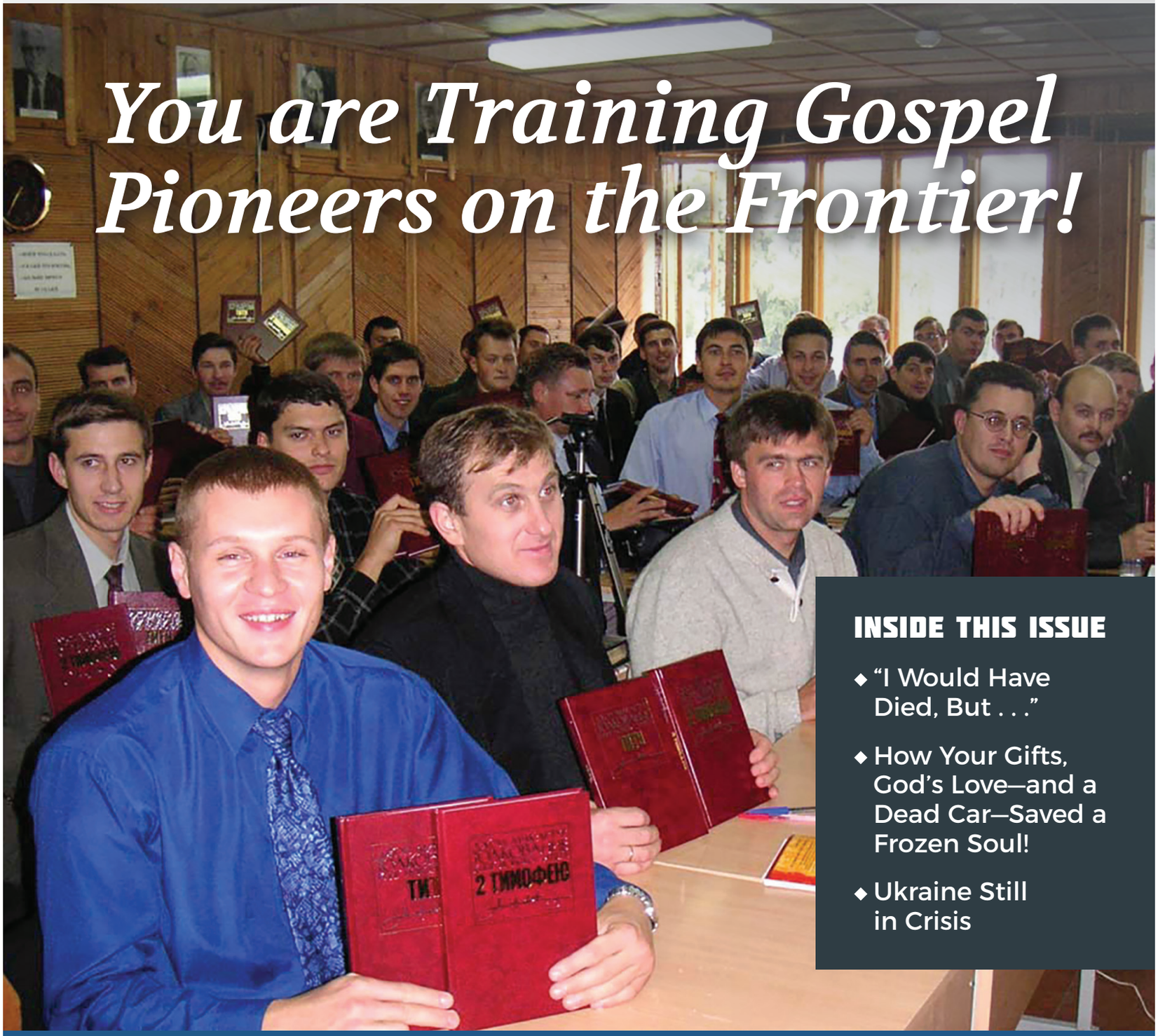
May/June 2018

SGA
A Bridge of Hope

SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ◆ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ◆ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN



You are Training Gospel Pioneers on the Frontier!

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Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit . . . (MATTHEW 28:19)

How Your Gifts are Training Pioneers for the Gospel on the Rugged Russian Frontier!

Newly opened highway leads to newly opened hearts

Unless you have traveled there, the sheer vastness of Russia is hard to fathom. The Russian Federation—the formal name of the largest nation in the former USSR—can seem endless.

There are 11 time zones to cover, between 130 to 160 different people groups, and climate ranging from Arctic cold to arid plains. **Millions of people have yet to hear the Gospel, especially across Siberia and the Far East.** Yet in this physical and spiritual frontier, SGA partners like you are helping to prepare Gospel pioneers to journey forth and reach their people for Christ.

Late this past winter, SGA's Eric Mock visited the **frigid city of Yakutsk** in the Far East, where SGA is supporting Bible training for missionary pastors. While there, he was able to get a sense of the job that lies ahead . . .

Heading out northwest from Yakutsk, one can pass through five regions in which 90% of the population is Sakha (one of Russia's ethnic groups). Several of these have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. ***In God's providence, a new highway was recently constructed through these regions—a highway that can become a conduit for advancement of the Gospel.*** *In these regions are scores of villages that have never been reached with the Good News. There are only a few small "preaching points," or small groups of believers existing, but* ***these are the seeds of the future churches.***

While in Yakutsk, I taught through Genesis 1-11, as well as Matthew 28:19-20, focusing on the call of God to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples. I finished the class with Genesis 12:1-2—a command to leave the comforts of home and venture out for God's sake and glory. In the class were 15 Sakha believers— ***faithful first generation believers who are being trained in the Word of God to take that Word to their own people!***

By God's grace and provision through the committed partnership of SGA partners, **new churches will be planted in the next few years**—churches in small cities that will also reach the many small villages with the Gospel. This frontier ministry is urgent, as many are waiting to hear of Christ's love. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? *How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher* (Romans 10:14)? ◆

Eric Mock (third from left, center row) with those he taught in Yakutsk, Russia.

"I Would Have Died If Not For God"

Editor's Note: Many of our missionary pastors also have fruitful ministry through their church-based drug rehabilitation centers. Pastor Vladimir in Belarus recently sent us the testimony of a man who found Christ as his Savior while undergoing the rehab program. We are not publishing his photograph or name for security considerations.

"Looking back, I would say that I am only alive only by the compassion of our Loving God. **If it were not for God, I would have died when I was four years old.** My parents were not at home, and I tried to smoke cigarettes. I caught the tablecloth on fire, and then the corner of the house was caught on fire. My youngest sister was at home too, and she was a baby. A pedestrian who was passing by saved our lives.

"Two years later when I was six, my life again came within a hair's breadth of death. The mighty hand of God saved me again when a bread delivery vehicle struck me. I sustained many broken bones and my kidney was badly injured. At the time, my father was heavily addicted to alcohol and my mother was sick, so I became a social orphan. I was sent to a children's shelter in Kobrin before I had reached school age. When I was in that orphanage, my behavior was so very bad that they had to send me to a special children's home. **While I was there, both parents passed away and I became a true orphan.** I began to drink alcohol in the orphanage and began to smoke.

"Years later when I graduated from the orphanage, I lived for five years in my parents' old home and continued to sin. I got married when I was 21 years old, but my marriage didn't stop me from drinking. Vodka ruined my life. I had trouble with the law and was convicted of crimes five times. I divorced my wife, my children refused to have anything to do with me, and I became homeless.

"The rehab center became my second home. While there, I became born again with a true relationship with God . . ."

"The rehab center became my second home. While there, I became born again with a true relationship with God at the center of my life. Our daily reading of the Bible, spiritual talks, and prayers strengthened me and caused my faith to grow. I have rethought my life while here in the rehab center. I also note changes in the hearts of other people who are at the rehab center. The people here were also bogged down in their sins, but God has changed their hearts. God, through the Holy Spirit, literally has raised us from the ashes. Praise the Lord!" ◆

Why Did God Let My C in –40 Degree Weather

By Mikhail Vladimirov
SGA-Sponsored *Orphans Reborn* Team
in Krasnoyarsk, Russia

My car was dead. It was -40 degrees. And God was about to perform a life-giving miracle for a Russian orphan.

I had no choice but to walk home in the freezing Krasnoyarsk weather, and came to an underground road crossing. There I saw a homeless person begging for spare change. I had no money and was in a hurry, so just walked past him. But as I kept walking, I felt a special conviction from God: "Return and help that person!"

We can feed them, give them warmth, teach them, but a changed hearts is a work of the Lord . . .

The man was sitting on the concrete with his face covered. He had a few dogs around him keeping him warm. I crouched near to him and asked, "Are you not cold? Why are you sitting here?" When he looked up at me, I saw that he was actually a young man!

He looked at me with some mistrust and indifference, and gave me a very brief answer. "Everything is fine, I am not at all cold. I have been here for the last six months. I feed the dogs." **I told him that *God* had urged me to help him, and I asked him what needs he had.**

Alexander

The youth replied that he needed clothes, food, a bath, and some hygiene items. At the moment, he was actually living in a basement of a building with some other homeless people.

This was how I met Alexander. Within the next two days, I collected all that the young man needed, and together with another brother we went to meet our friend in the underground crossing. **When he saw us, he understood that we were not like others who walked on by, and he told us his story.**

It turned out that he had **graduated from an orphanage in Esaulovo, and that he knew our former *Orphans Reborn* leader Oleg Smal.** Alexander had attended Bible lessons, but he did not yet want to live according to God's Word. When he learned that I was from the church, his eyes sparkled. He had very good memories of the brothers and sisters who led the Bible lessons at the orphanage.

After Alexander left the orphanage and entered college in Krasnoyarsk, he fell into the net of sin—wild living, alcohol, bad friends, and even crimes. Eventually he was expelled from college and ended up in prison for a few months. He

;ar Die :? Love!

had nowhere to go, and that was how he ended up in the streets. He didn't come to the church because he had borrowed money from Oleg and was ashamed. I told Alexander, "Oleg forgave you 2,000 rubles, and God forgave you even more—just receive His forgiveness!"

For three weeks, Alexander attended Sunday services and meetings for graduate orphans, and more than that, he brought along a friend from the basement whose name was Gennady. Now, he is currently in a Christian rehabilitation center for people with addictions. I believe that with God's help, he will complete the course and find the freedom that the Lord gives to those who ask Him! When he completes rehab, we will help him with all of his documents, to find work, and a home for him as he has lost everything. His friend Gennady continues to attend the church. The miracles do not cease, and this is a real miracle! We can feed them, give them warmth, teach them, but a changed hearts is a work of the Lord, which only He can do! ◆

Orphans Reborn

You can help change the lives of unwanted, broken children!

More than 700,000 children are jammed into often bleak, underfunded, cold orphanages across Russia, the former Soviet countries of Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. And once they turn 18, they'll be evicted and likely have no place to live, no work, no skills . . . and no warm clothes. Russian-speaking children like these are very often lured into drugs, crime, or prostitution just to survive. Others simply commit suicide because they have no hope.

People like you, who have Christ's compassion, can help save their lives and give them hope and a future.

Celebrating the Life and Ministry of Evon Hedley

SGA's Former Board Chairman Now With Christ

On February 26, the SGA family received word that our former board chairman and director emeritus, Evon Hedley, had gone to be with the Lord at the age of 102. Evon leaves behind a wonderful, faithful legacy of service to Christ and commitment to the Gospel. Evon's family released the following statement after his homegoing . . .

> *On a beautiful sunny morning, February 26, Evon Hedley slipped peacefully into Heaven to meet his Lord and Savior, and rejoin so many who've gone before him. Two years ago, as his centennial birthday was approaching, we realized that it would be a wonderful opportunity to really celebrate his life while he was still with us. It turned out to be a fantastic decision as friends, family, and ministry colleagues spanning many decades joined us to celebrate Evon Hedley. He cherished you all and we want you to know how grateful we are for the part you played in his life.*

Evon Hedley served on SGA's board of directors from 1967 to 1993, with nine of those years as our chairman. **Evon lived to see God bring an end to 70 years of atheistic Soviet communism, and open the door for unprecedented Gospel advance across Russia and her neighboring countries.** Evon was with Rev. Billy Graham at the beginning of Youth for Christ in 1944—serving as executive director. At the same time, SGA founder Peter Deyneka would be leading prayer at Rev. Graham's first crusades in Los Angeles, then later across Europe. What a remarkable chain of grace, and what a tremendous legacy of service for the glory of Christ!

Evon celebrating his 100th birthday.

If you would like to honor Evon Hedley's memory, gifts can be made to SGA, a charity of your choice, or four other ministries that Evon supported—Youth for Christ International, World Vision International, Christian Business Men's Committee International, and Lake Avenue Church. Please join us in prayer for Evon's family during this difficult time, even as we rejoice with thanksgiving for how God used this gentle, humble man to help reach generations with the Gospel. ◆

CIS IN THE NEWS

EU Keeps Russia Sanctions Over Ukraine in Place

The European Union recently announced that sanctions were being extended against Russia in connection with the ongoing Ukraine crisis. The EU first imposed sanctions after Russia annexed Crimea and supported separatist fighters in eastern Ukraine. The sanctions—which include travel restrictions and asset freezes against 150 people—will continue until at least September 15. Russian president Vladimir Putin stated that Crimea would never be returned to Ukraine. Russia has maintained a naval port there since tsarist times, and the late Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev turned Crimea over to Ukraine in the 1950s. The peninsula has been a contentious issue for decades.

This report once again illustrates a "frozen crisis" that continues to impact the lives of millions even though it seldom makes the news here in North America. **SGA continues to help evangelical churches reach out to war-ravaged individuals and families in eastern Ukraine with humanitarian aid and the Gospel.** Please join us in praying for a peaceful resolution to this four-year-old conflict, as well as the financial resources needed for outreach. ◆

HOW YOU CAN HELP

As you read this, SGA's Summer Bible Camps are about to get underway! Think of it: More than 340 Bible-training camps for children . . . sprawled across 10 nations of a former atheist region of the world!

We are praying for 30,000 boys and girls this year. Most of each year's campers are not believers—but God brings *thousands* to Christ every year. And SGA training means that these new believers will have sound churches in their communities.

At the same time, SGA is supporting missionary pastors in regions where they can't get jobs. Churches are planted and grow due to *your* support. And as you read in this issue, your gifts also provide *Orphans Reborn* outreach, biblical drug rehab, and much more. **Please pray how you can help, and use the enclosed reply card to respond to His leading today!**

Your prayers and support mean that children like these can find the truth of Christ at Summer Bible Camps this year.

Canadian Connection

This edition of Canadian Connection covers a two-month time span in order to reduce costs for mailing. We know you will be in prayer for all those actively involved in ministry during these troublesome times in which we live.

For this issue, I thought we could focus on children. We all know that the greatest percentages of salvation conversions are made before age 16. After the teen years and into adulthood, the rate of conversions is drastically reduced. We understand we must provide ministry to all ages and not minimize opportunities for God to work everywhere at any time, so we seek wisdom to minister effectively. Every community is different as well, along with a multitude of other factors.

News media will quickly inform us of the tragedies of war placed upon the youngest in society. It breaks our heart to see weeping, hungry children before news cameras with little to no hope of a bright future. They represent so many more who will never be seen or known. Pleas through TV commercials and every source of mass media available bombard our hearts and minds for help. Where does one begin? I know as a pastor the requests would never end.

I am convinced that God does not expect us to meet every need, but will direct us to people and ministries where the best can be done. We are all led in different ways. As you receive this report, perhaps God is touching your heart about those in Slavic world. This is a population group of a quarter billion people. Many of this number are poor children. Well over 1 million find themselves confined to an orphanage.

We at SGA have a special place in our hearts for orphans. Our missionary pastors and people visit many homes and assist openly. The Gospel is not restricted in most homes because we bring hope and lasting peace through God's Word. These children can experience a week of summer camp that could potentially change their entire life on earth, as well as giving them assurance of heaven when they die.

Our project memories from 2011 in Volgograd were not so much the actual construction but meeting children in the community. One day we 'lost' several of our workers because the local school invited our men to share in the classrooms. From then on, we had regular, daily visits from many children.

If God touches your heart for children's ministry, please respond by providing a week at camp for only $50.00 Canadian. It could change a life for eternity.

Blessings,
Bill Ball
Executive Director, SGA Canada

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