

FRONT LINES

Slavic Gospel Association

- **SGA 70**
Four Years On
- **WHEELS**
Practical Gospel Partnership
- **FUEL FOR THE HEART**
Bible Project in Central Asia



ИИСУС ХРИСТО
есть путь,
ИСТИНА И ЖИЗНЬ

FEB/MAR 14:6
2024

SPREADING THE GOSPEL THROUGH SPONSORSHIP



It is impossible to live in this current age and not be impacted by events on the world stage.

In the church and in the wider community, people's minds are focused on current affairs, trying to understand the meaning of all that is happening. While we live in a rebellious, sinful, broken world awaiting His judgment, God's priority programme is to have the Gospel proclaimed throughout the whole world, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14). Until the King of glory comes, this is the Church's task.



There is no doubt that these are days full of opportunity for Gospel advancement. While the Gospel message never changes, **our methods for sharing it can and will change** as we seek to reach the nations of the world. We believe that one effective means of spreading the Gospel is through our sponsorship programme, by means of which missionaries are enabled to give themselves to the task that is still unfinished.

God's Word reminds us that **the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are too few**. We are to earnestly call on the Lord of the harvest to send workers to the world's harvest fields. Many of you have obeyed this command and joined us in prayer that the Lord would raise up 70 missionary families to mark the Mission's

special 70th anniversary milestone. **God abundantly answered prayer by sending not only 70 missionary families, but 80!** Praise God for your practical support that enables these workers to continue in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Far East Russia. God did 'far more abundantly', than our expectations!

The greatest blessing of sponsorship is knowing that through your prayers and financial participation God is working around the world, transforming individuals and communities. The apostle Paul said, 'I desire fruit that may abound to your account' (Philippians 4:17). As a sponsor, **you are sowing seeds that produce results for all eternity.**

Your regular support helps meet the needs of indigenous missionaries and their families who answer the call of God to go and share the message of Christ among people groups who have never heard the Gospel. While national workers

face difficult obstacles and persecution, **they have enormous advantages for spreading the Gospel** in their native countries. They are fluent in the language, have few cultural barriers to overcome, understand the mindsets of the people, and can employ appropriate evangelistic strategies to reach their people with the Gospel. While addressing spiritual needs, they can simultaneously minister to physical and material needs **by caring for orphans, providing for widows, offering medical care and establishing Hope Centres.**

Investing in their work is your opportunity to take part in God's eternal plan to reach all nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The fields are ripe for harvest, but we currently have national workers who need sponsorship. Join us in praying about this great need!



Slavic Gospel Association
(British Section) Limited
22 Little Church Street, Rugby,
Warwickshire CV21 3AW

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01788 220699



office@sga.org.uk



www.sga.org.uk

WHEELS!



SGA support for Christian missionaries in the Central Asian republics takes many forms – financial assistance, literature production, church buildings and transport. A car for many workers is not merely a convenience but a necessity for the fulfilment of their Gospel ministry. Without a reliable vehicle ministry would be greatly inhibited and restricted. Missionaries travel thousands of kilometres on roads which are often poor and severe on vehicle maintenance. A reliable car or van is especially crucial for those involved in pioneer evangelism, visiting isolated villages and communities which have little or no road infrastructure.

Bobkov family



The need for help with transport for several pioneer Gospel workers in Central Asia came to the attention of the Mission. Nikolai Bobkov is an SGA-sponsored missionary. He, his wife, Olga, and children Zakhar and Lyuba live in Chundzha, Kazakhstan, where Nikolai ministers. From there he reaches out to

many scattered communities **bringing the truth of the Gospel to those who have never heard**. They had a serious transport problem – a very old car which was constantly breaking down. At one point it was out of action for 6 weeks, and Nikolai had to resort to the use of taxis.

Nikolai prayed for God to supply a suitable vehicle for the transport of people and of humanitarian aid. SGA supported the purchase of a 7-seater with adequate space to meet their needs. Recently, film was received of sacks of potatoes and other goods being loaded up in preparation for one of Nikolai's evangelistic 'tours'. His verdict? **'A great tool for ministry here!'**

Sergey Ryahov serves in Khromtau, North West Kazakhstan. He has a special interest in a centre at nearby Aktobe where camps, teenage and children's meetings, hikes, seminars and fellowship events, **all designed to share the knowledge of Christ with unbelievers**, are organized. He shared a vital need:

Sergey Ryahov



For us, there is a great need to purchase transport with a large number of seats (minivan). I very often face the choice of whom I should take with me: family, teenagers, a sister of a disabled person, or members of the church. I ask you to pray that the Lord would provide us with such transport.

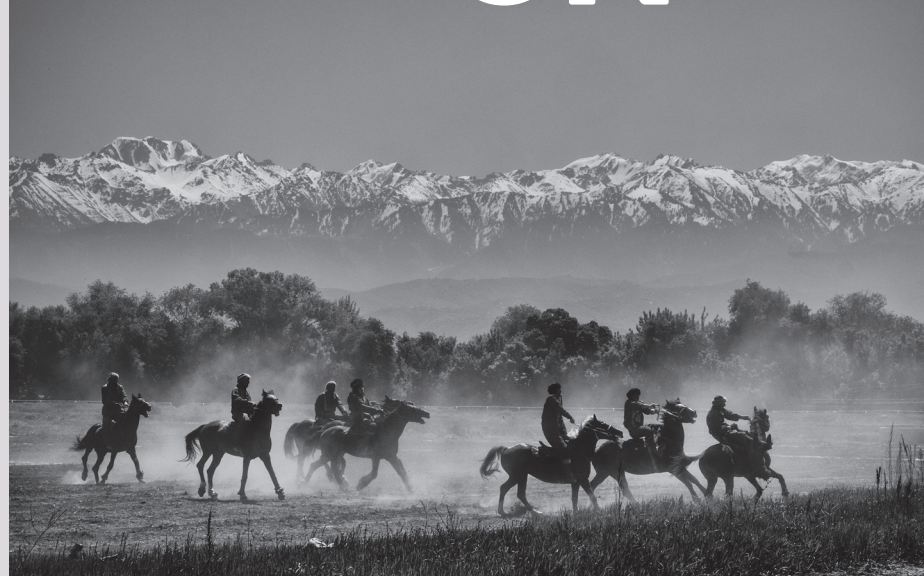
With SGA support, a suitable minibus was purchased, and Sergey's prayer was answered.



Andre Kazhanov (Right)

Andre Kazhanov, a Kazakh speaker, based in Alga, North West Kazakhstan, **visits many surrounding Muslim communities to share the message of salvation** in Christ alone. He had recurring problems with cars which he purchased for his work. They were of poor quality, but he could not afford better. Andre's sponsor learnt of his predicament and supplied the necessary funds for the vehicle. In a letter of thanks he writes that he was overwhelmed by the kindness of God's people, providing him with transportation not merely for himself but for the growing work of the Gospel in which he is involved.

Gospel work in Central Asia has been significantly enhanced through this transport project. If 'wheels' could tell their stories, volumes could be written to illustrate how this very practical support has been integral to the progress of the Gospel and the salvation of precious men, women and young people.

SGA
70FOUR
YEARS
ON

2020 will be remembered for many years to come not least because of the worldwide Covid pandemic which impacted every area of society. Less well known **but having an eternal impact was the launch of SGA's Project-70** – an ambitious project to connect with and find support for 70 new church planters in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Far East Russia.

A project which, if left to man, would have floundered in the first month, but left to God would grow and expand eventually into more than 80 new church planters. **Four years on, we give thanks to Him for the development of these ministries in ways that we could never have foreseen.** New church plants which commenced with a handful of members, have grown in number and maturity; children's work has been developed and whole families have become part of the church fellowship. Regions of the world such as Pamir and Far East Russia are being reached with the Gospel, **and countless souls snatched from a lost eternity and finding salvation.**



3 FAR EAST RUSSIA

Artem Zemlyanov in FE Russia has been able to commence a children's ministry. A large number of children attend along with their parents (an unexpected bonus!) The meetings are held in the House of Culture, and the Director of this has been so touched by the work that she herself is actively seeking the Lord.



4 UKRAINE

In Ukraine, many of the original Project-70 pastors have had to relocate to other parts of the country or to leave altogether. But God's work has not stopped. New opportunities have arisen that would not have been deemed possible before. Pastors **Alex Radin** and **Denis Khurak** regularly minister to soldiers on the frontline. One commander spoke of his conviction that he is still alive today because of the prayers of the church. People, once indifferent to the work of the Gospel, **are now crowding into the churches** each Sunday, eager for the Word.



1 MOLDOVA

In Moldova, Project-70 pastor **Edward Rotari** speaks of his great joy at the way in which his small church has multiplied, with many new children also attending. The church summer camp of 2023 expected to have approx. 60-70 children but over 110 came. Edward writes:

'Many of the children and teenagers repented. We are very grateful to God and you for this wonderful time! There were no words, just thanksgiving to the Lord.'

Yuri Tanin, who commenced his church planting in FE Russia, had to leave when hostilities commenced between Ukraine and Russia. He has found a new spiritual home in Moldova where the Lord has given him greater opportunities among the youth, and other refugees. Already **over 250 people are meeting in the church** and two new youth groups have commenced under his leadership. God is building His church!



2 BOSNIA

In Bosnia, **Danko Malesevic**, who runs a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts, is thankful for the way the work has continued and grown. God opened the door for them to work in other projects such as the *'Bread of Life'* public kitchen and an education programme that seeks to work alongside and encourage children from poor families.



5 CENTRAL ASIA

Last summer, two C Asian Project-70 pastors travelled to Pamir where **a new Hope Centre has been built**, as a witness to the Pamirite people. Having this building has provided evangelistic opportunities. They testify *'We thank God that we are useful tools in His hands, and He uses us for His glory.'*



Many more stories could be shared of how the Lord is blessing ministries throughout these lands, and how He is blessing those who serve Him so faithfully. Our prayer is that the work will continue to spread and expand and that those in darkness will come into the Light. **We are so thankful for all those who committed to pray for and support Project-70 pastors and missionaries four years ago. Be encouraged by what the Lord is doing! If you would like to consider supporting a worker on SGA Leadership Support Programme, then we would be pleased to advise you on how to do this.**

PLEASE PRAY

➞ That the Lord will continue to bless all those on SGA's Leadership Support Programme.

➞ That those who have been displaced will continue to be blessed in new ministries and opportunities.

➞ That the work among young people and children will expand and that they will be won for the Lord.



OPENING DAY!

For many months work on the new ‘Casa Filip’ in Cluj, Romania has been progressing steadily and its doors finally opened on 26 September 2023. It has not been without its problems, not least when Violeta’s husband, Valer (Casa Filip’s Managing Director) was himself diagnosed with skin cancer. Valer had been overseeing the building project. Praise God that he has now recovered, and the new building is completed. ‘*Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.*’ This is the testimony of the team at Casa Filip as the work has come to completion.

New bathrooms, kitchens and floors have been installed. New furniture for the dining room has been purchased, ready to serve meals to those who stay as guests. All 15 bedrooms are now fitted out and ready for use by those undergoing cancer treatment in Cluj-Napoca hospital, and their families. The Casa Filip team joke that the new building is nicer than their own homes! What a blessing this will be for those staying there in future days, as they go through dark weeks and months of treatment, **knowing that they are loved and cared for in this special place. The new house can accommodate up to 40 people**, a far cry from the original building, where Violeta and her team were frequently devastated to have to turn people away, for lack of space.

Carmen was one of the first guests at Casa Filip in 2018, when she was undergoing treatment for breast cancer. Struggling with two teenagers when her husband then left her, **she turned to Casa Filip for support during this bewildering and heartbreaking time.** Now the cancer is back, and the

long, difficult road begins again. Carmen knows **God loves and cares for her** through the dedication and support of the staff at Casa Filip.

Casa Filip was set up following the death of Filip, Violeta’s first husband. She says: ‘*I could never anticipate that Filip’s illness and death and all the pain of going through his experiences, would be transformed into thousands of blessings for other people.*’ From its inception this project was directed at both the physical and spiritual needs of those who come to stay. **The opportunity to share the love of Christ and the message of His saving grace would be of supreme importance.** SGA (UK) has supported this ministry from its commencement in 2018, and it is now part of the Phoebe project. SGA Phoebe Reps. will be happy to share about this work and provide further updates in ladies’ events.



Pray that all those who stay within Casa Filip’s walls would be strengthened with health, peace and salvation. Pray for interactions between staff and guests, that the Lord will be honoured in all that is said and done. Pray that the Casa Filip team will be helped to continue this vital work, for the glory of God.



Carmen

FUEL FOR THE HEART!

Ermek’s story

The Word of God sets people free when its truth penetrates their heart. We can be slow at presenting the Bible to people, preferring the ‘softly, softly’ approach.

Jesus seeks bold, passionate people, who will bring His Word to others. Our partners in Kazakhstan are operating in this way.

David Prokoskin, who leads the Bible project with our partners in Central Asia is a good example. He went to the local petrol station where God prompted him to offer a Kazakh Bible to Ermek, a garage



David & Ermek

attendant. Ermek listened to David explaining that this book is God’s Word. **He received the Bible with joy and kissed it.** Later, when David thought back on his meeting he wondered if it had been just an emotional response.

A week later David returned to the petrol station and Ermek was working. **‘Do you remember me and the Bible**

I gave you?’ asked David. ‘*Yes of course*’, came his reply. David continued: ‘Have you read the Bible?’ ‘*Yes, I’ve read half the book*’, said Ermek. He then asked David for a Bible for his neighbour. Praise God!

What a challenge – to give the living Word of God to someone we meet and let God speak!

MEETING SPIRITUAL NEEDS IN UKRAINE

One thousand new urban churches in Ukraine by 2036!



This is the ambitious goal of the Ukrainian Baptist Union, and we are delighted to outline Odessa Theological Seminary’s newly launched initiative designed to see this vision become a reality.

OTS has introduced a new one year theological training programme which will strike a balance between academic learning and practical hands-on experience.

The students will work together in teams **and join ongoing church-planting projects in the Odessa region.** Under the guidance of experienced local mentors, they will gain invaluable practical experience of work at local church level. Following successful completion of the programme,

students will continue with church-planting involvement in various cities across Ukraine. This will be co-ordinated by the leadership of the Baptist Union’s church-planting and evangelism committees.

Beyond their core education, students will have the option to pursue an additional profession from a provided list. This added dimension will help them to sustain themselves after graduation and develop meaningful connections within their immediate communities.

We are pleased to inform you, our partners, that SGA is committed to this exciting initiative and will help with finance. We believe that this programme will have an incredibly positive impact on Ukrainian cities. **Together, we can sow the Gospel seeds that will make a lasting difference in the lives of many.**



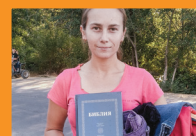
A PACIFIED HEART

SGA's Leadership Support programme is designed to enable Christian workers to bring the truth of the Gospel to those in need of Christ. An example of this partnership in operation is Ivan Djanburshinov from Kazakhstan. He is a church worker serving in a Hope Centre. However, Ivan's ministry is not restricted to one location. Rather, he travels to other villages and towns in the region. These vary in size, but his aim is always the same – to bring the truth of the Gospel to needy people. Within his predominately Muslim context, he has faced challenges and opposition, but the Lord has been answering prayer.

Ivan shared one example of this, relating his experience with an influential Muslim woman who strongly objected to his work. She saw the Bibles that were being given out and became very difficult. Ivan was concerned she would contact the police and local government officials. He began to pray about the situation and said:

'I trusted the Lord and began to talk to the woman... I was amazed at what God (then did)... He pacified the heart of this woman, and she began to talk to us differently. We visited [the town again] and she called all the mothers from the big families to come to listen to us ... We spoke freely to them about God, read to them passages about Christ's sacrifice from the Bible and the women asked questions about forgiveness, justice and many other things that troubled their hearts. I believe God will accomplish His work in this area by using us in this good work.'

We are thankful for this opportunity and pray that God will continue to move in the hearts of these people. Please pray for the Lord's blessing on Ivan so that more will come to know the liberating truth of Jesus Christ for themselves.



SPIRITUAL GROWTH CONTINUES

In the midst of war, the Church of Christ continues to be built in Ukraine. This is the assured testimony of SGA-sponsored worker Olexander Oreshchyn. Having already planted one new church a little over a year ago, he recently reported the progress that has been made in another new church which has been started in Lviv. He states:

'We are happy with the way God leads ... and keeps on adding new people. We found a large hall for our worship services and already began to hold church meetings there because our previous premises were too small. There are now 50 people attending Sunday meetings. The first baptism was held [during the summer], and we had two people baptized.'

An important part of Olexander's ministry has been their care centre which, as well as meeting other needs, provides

humanitarian aid along with medical and legal counselling. With the help of other Christians, **this ministry is reaching over 1000 people each month.** In this way, much-needed help is given and relationships are built which create opportunities for the Gospel to be shared.

Olexander is grateful for the practical and spiritual partnership which he enjoys through SGA's Leadership Support programme. He is already considering other opportunities to plant new churches this year, **and is seeking the Lord's guidance and help for these plans.**

