

Overview of the work of the SGA

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Preacher: Derek Maxwell, Slavic Gospel Association

[0 : 00] We're glad to be here. My wife Carl is with me as well and we're here in Edinburgh and then over in Glasgow during this week and sharing different churches and about what God is doing as we continue to serve him through Slavic Gospel Association. We're very grateful for all who pray for us and remember the work and encourage us in the work and we are grateful for you this evening as well and that is very, very special and very important to us. The question is often asked, what does Slavic Association do, where do they work, how do they do it and I just want to start my presentation this evening with a short video that just gives you an overall view of our ministries and what we're seeking to do in this day of opportunity as we serve God into those former communist countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia and now more recently into Far East Russia.

I sometimes get asked, what is SGA? Well, back in the day, some people traveled behind the Iron Curtain to meet, encourage, support, teach and provide books and Bibles for believers. Well, that was just the start.

SGA continues to serve and equip the church in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and now in Far East Russia. In partnership with national church leaders, we train workers in local Bible schools. We support more than 100 pastors and church planters, some working in challenging circumstances like Kazakhstan and Far East Russia. That support includes providing places to worship and also the means of transport. SGA has provided dozens of motorbikes for pastors and evangelists in Moldova.

We sponsored the translation and publication of some of the best books available in our language. Recently, we've sponsored the publication of the Bible into Kazakh. We're supporting Christian medical teams and those seeking to alleviate suffering in the war zone in Ukraine.

So as we approach our 70th anniversary, the work continues. What do we do? We serve Christ's church and obey his commission. Amen.

[2 : 26] 70 years ago, SJUK was founded by a man called Peter Dynica, who was fondly known as Peter Dynamite because he was so dynamic for the gospel. And God has been faithful over these years. And as we prepare for our anniversary year, we look back indeed to those years that were very, very different for our mission when they were crossing over into communist countries during the days of the communist regime.

It was very challenging at these borders for the workers as they sought to bring Bibles and literature in to encourage the believers. But of course, 30 years ago, the unbelievable happened.

With man, this was impossible. But with God, all things are possible. And something wonderful happened on the 9th of November, 1989, whenever the Berlin Wall came down and the Iron Curtain fell.

And what were countries, what were close to the gospel became open and freedom came for the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Slavic Gospel Association have been continuing to serve the Lord in these days of opportunity into three distinct areas of the world.

We serve in Central and Eastern Europe, then into Central Asia, and then into Far East Russia, which is a new development for us. This is Siberia and beyond Siberia, right out onto the Japanese Sea.

[3 : 43] It's true to say that Far East Russia, you could describe it as being inhospitable because in the winter, the temperatures are minus 40 down to minus 60. But God is working there, and we're glad to be supporting now five missionary families who are serving God in Far East Russia.

What do we do, and how do we do it? Well, we seek to serve the Lord through our four core ministries. That is, our training workers, our Bible schools, where we currently have around 300 students in training, followed by supporting the workers as well and the leaders by financing church

planters as they serve the Lord.

Christian literature, of course, is very important because these are former communist countries where believers scarcely could have the word of God. So as a mission, we seek to fund the publication of good, solid theological and biblical material for the people.

And then the fourth ministry is distributing aid, bringing help to widows, to orphans, to those in East Ukraine where the war continues, and ministering to those who are finding themselves in hostile situations.

One of our ministries is the publishing of literature. I think it's true to say that the greatest piece of literature that we can give anybody in the world is the word of God.

[5 : 06] You may have picked up there in the video clip where it mentioned about the Kazakh Bible Project. This has been a huge project as we have sought to provide God's word for the Kazakh people.

There are 11 million Kazakh Muslim people living in that vast landmass of Kazakhstan in Central Asia, a country that borders with Russia to the north, with China to the east.

And when we speak of Central Asia, we're speaking about five Stans, five Central Asian countries.

There is Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

Stan means territory. So Kazakhstan is the territory of the Kazakhs. And so there are 11 million Muslim Kazakhs living in Kazakhstan who need the word of God in their very own language.

Over two years ago, God put on the hearts of ourselves and our sister mission in Germany called Bibel Mission that we had partnered together in providing God's word.

[6 : 09] We set out to provide 100,000 Bibles in the Kazakh language with the goal of reaching 1 million Kazakh Muslim people with the word of God.

Kazakh families are extended families, so you will have 10 to 12 living in the same house. By providing one Bible per household with 100,000 Bibles, we should be reaching at least 1 million Kazakh people.

I'm thrilled to tell you this project is coming to a close. The word of God is almost complete. And on the 10th of November this year, God willing, the Kazakh Bible will be dedicated to the glory of God. And people will have God's word in their very own language. The first print-off will take place. And we praise the Lord that this huge project that we launched out on is almost concluded.

And people will have a copy of the scriptures in their language. Please pray that many Muslim families will come to faith in Jesus Christ. God's word brings light into darkness.

[7 : 15] And we believe that tonight. And we pray God's blessing upon it. Also, we help with distributing aid. And tonight I want to focus on the widows and the orphans.

God's word exhorts us to take care of the widows and to minister to the orphans in their time of need. And as a mission, we seek to do that and to provide for them.

The Widows Project is very special to SGA as we provide funds for widows who find themselves in very difficult circumstances. The money that we provide will help widows with medicine, with food, and with health care and provide heat for them.

When we think of widows in Central Asia, we very often think of the elderly widow with a scarf on her head and her weather-beaten face. And it's true to say that the majority of widows that we support are like that.

Elderly widows who have lost their husband and they find it so difficult to survive. And as a mission, we seek to bring joy to the widow's heart with the words of Job 29 verse 13.

[8 : 24] But not only are we helping the elderly widow with the weather-beaten face and her husband has died. But also more and more, we're helping the younger widows who are taking care of their little children.

And this is very, very difficult for them. And through our Widows Project, these widows are being helped as well. I think of one of the widows tonight. We think of Gullah whose husband has died. Her husband was a pastor. He was living in Tajikistan. He was pastoring a church, an evangelist. And because of his ministry, Gullah's husband was arrested and interrogated by the authorities. He returned home from his trying ordeal and went straight to bed saying that he needed rest. Tragically, he never wakened again. She was left with the burden of her three children.

And so, she is a widow that's been cared for through SGA's Widows Project. Like many other widows who are caring for their children. But there is another category of widow.

[9 : 29] When we think of Central Asia tonight, we're thinking of a part of the world where faith is restricted. Because of the opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And as we look across Central Asia and these countries, many believers are suffering.

And are being persecuted because they love Jesus Christ tonight. The result is that ladies who are Muslims, who have come to faith in Christ.

They're disowned by their families. And life is very, very difficult for them. And this is another type of widow. While their husband is still alive, they're abandoned by their families.

Disowned by their husband. And through SGA's Widows Project, these three categories of widows are being cared for. Especially during the winter. And this project is very much alive.

And so, let it be the elderly widow, the younger widow with her children. Or the lady who's disowned by her family and abandoned by her husband. They are so grateful to God for the funds that they receive.

[10 : 36] And it helps to sustain them and encourage them. But then there are the orphans. And in Central Asia, there are many abandoned children. Children that are facing crisis situations.

And so, through our project called Joy of Christmas, we're seeking to provide Christmas gifts for these children in Central Asia. Last winter, we thank God that over 3,000 children were presented with the Word of God, the Gospel.

But also received a Christmas gift. And of course, little children love to get gifts. Now, these will probably be the only gifts that these children will receive. They won't be getting, like our children, 12, 13, 20 gifts.

This will be probably the only one. And so, this is a very special gift for them. In these little boxes, there will be toys. There will be some sweets.

But I want to explain to you that this box, it's not just a pretty box and a lovely, decorated, attractive box. But this box is much more because this is a Gospel-centered box.

[11 : 42] This box, when the children receive it, there will be scriptures inside it. Now, I brought one of these boxes with me. And here we have it. You can see it's very, very attractive.

We don't take any credit for this in SGA UK. It was our friends in Bibel Mission in Germany who designed this box, who got it prepared. And I think it's lovely.

Inside the box, you will have a verse of Scripture. And what better verse of Scripture can you provide than Luke chapter 2, verse 11, that will tell these people that a Savior has been born.

But also inside the box, you have got the figures of Christmas. And so the families will build up the Christmas story. They have instructions as well with all the figures that will tell the Christmas story.

And so this box is a tool for evangelism. You see, when the children receive their Christmas box, they just don't get it very easily. They have to come and sit through a Christian program, first of all, where the Gospel is shared to them.

[12 : 48] And then they receive their Christmas box, and they can bring it home then to their family. And what is happening is that these little boxes are going home to different cultures, different backgrounds, Orthodox, Muslim, whatever it is, whoever it is, wherever they come from.

Families sit and they follow the instructions. They build up the Christmas story. They read the message that a Savior has been born. And we're praying that God will really bless this project in reaching children and parents with the great message of Christmas, and that children will come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

During one of these programs, there was a little boy. He was sitting there, and he was really caught up with what was happening. He was sitting in the front row, and he was so attentive as the Gospel was being presented.

His little boy's name is Vadim. Whenever they had finished the presentation, the children were asked, they were told that, well, that they could say a little prayer if they really wanted to.

Vadim was one of those little boys who prayed. His prayer was not long, but it was very, very meaningful. He prayed, thank you, Lord, for the best day in my life.

[14 : 06] People who traveled 500 miles to put on this program for the children, they said it was worth traveling every mile of 500 miles to hear that little boy.

His mother abandoned him. He has seen more hardship than some adults would see in a lifetime. And tragically, Vadim's story could be repeated over and over again by these children.

But we seek to bring the joy of Christmas to them by giving them a little gift, so that they will hear about Jesus. And it's our prayer that these children, as they receive these little boxes, a little gift,

that they'll receive the greatest gift of all, the gift of God, which is eternal life through Jesus Christ. And that many of them will come to a living faith in Christ in these times. So please remember this project, and we thank God to take care of the widows, to take care of the orphans at this time in Central Asia and minister to them.

As the mission approaches its 70th anniversary, we look back and we give thanks to God for all that he has been doing for us and providing in such a wonderful way.

[15:24] As we approach our 70th anniversary, we think of the great need that still exists. We think of Eastern Europe, a mission field on our doorstep. We think of the country of Poland, where there's only 0.3% of the population that's evangelical believers in 34 million of a population.

We think of Central Asia tonight, where there are 90 people groups, and it's estimated that over half of the people groups in Central Asia have never been reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ tonight.

And this is what pushes us on and motivates us as a mission. As we think of our 70th anniversary, it's not going to be just about looking back and giving thanks to God.

But my friends, the task remains unfinished. And we want our 70th anniversary to be a year that will count for reaching people groups with the gospel, of sending missionaries to tell people who have never heard.

And so as a mission, with God's help, we're stepping out in faith, trusting God that we'll be able to send 70 missionaries during our anniversary year to bring the gospel to those that have never heard.

[16:39] One missionary family for every year that our mission has existed. We're trusting God because we believe that God is in it and God can wonderfully help us at this time. Just last weekend, something wonderful happened in the country of Ukraine.

This little house of prayer, or we call it a church building here, they call them houses of prayer. You remember Jesus said, my house shall be called a house of prayer. This little building was opened in a village where there'd be no believers and it was opened last weekend to the glory of God.

This was a great event. SGA funded this building and it's a joy to see it open tonight. But a lady came to the opening of the building, the mayor of the community.

She came there to be part of this special occasion, the lady there in the center of the picture. During the service, she made a little speech. She's a non-believer. She's not a Christian, but she thanked SGA for their help in constructing this building.

She said, you know, I was very aware that some organization must have helped because we would never be able to erect such a beautiful building. We haven't had a new building in our village for years and years.

[17:51] And the new building is a house of prayer to the glory of God. This mayor went on to explain about the situation in our community. She said, we are controlled by alcohol and drugs and many other issues.

She said, we have got big problems in our community and we've got so many problems, we really don't know how to fix the problems.

And then she went on to say this, faith may be the answer. Faith gives hope. Where there is no faith, there is no hope.

So please come to this house of prayer that God will give faith to our people. This was the mayor who's not a believer and yet she recognizes where there is faith, there is hope.

Dear friends tonight, this is why we want to send 70 missionary families during our anniversary year because we believe that where there's faith, there is hope. And the word of God says very clearly, faith cometh by hearing, hearing by the word of God.

[19:04] And so we believe that by sending missionaries to these communities, people will hear the message, they will come to faith and they will have hope in a hopeless situation.

Sending 70, Luke chapter 10, the Lord sent out the 70. In our anniversary year, with God's help, we trust we'll be able to send out 70 to serve God, to plant churches.

One of the 70 that have been identified, his name is Ivan. Ivan is serving the Lord in Kazakhstan, close to the border with Kyrgyzstan.

He wants to establish a church here. He's hoping to build a hope center. A hope center in Central Asia is a place where children are fed, where people are cared for.

They come and they wash there. But there'll also be a little prayer room. And this will be the church for the new converts. And Ivan is trusting God. And we are going to take him on as one of our 70, that the Lord will help this brother as he reaches out to plant a church.

[20 : 09] Another young man that has been identified is Boris. Boris is serving the Lord in Ukraine, right over in Donetsk region, where the war is.

And he wants to plant a church there. And this missionary family is also part of our 70 that we want to send during our anniversary year.

Please, friends, pray with us. Let's really trust God for those great and those mighty things. With man, this is too big. But we are trusting the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest feed.

May God help us during this anniversary year. Because we're so conscious that the harvest is plentiful. But the laborers are few.

May 70 rise up to serve God across the nations where we work. higher than Gu■ in the first day and cash Preis to have a visit Thank you.

[22 : 16] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[24 : 46] Thank you.

Thank you.

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Thank you.

Thank you.

[27 : 16] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[29 : 46] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

God has called us.

[32 : 16] Again, the latter part of verse 6, how they heard it and understood. Come with me to verse 23. Again, that you have heard. Now in Northern Ireland, and you guessed, I'm not from Scotland, and we came across the Irish Sea with the loveliest sailing yesterday.

The Irish sea, the sea.

wonderful, and the gospel reaches right into the heart of an individual, isn't it? In Ukraine, we helped to provide some funds to provide a dental chair and some dental treatment.

The brother who was a missionary, he said, you know, when I invite people into the church, they get the idea that we just want to get them into the church. I want to show them Christianity's practical, so I want to open up a little dental clinic.

We sent out the money, and he set up the little clinic beside the church, and the people began to come, and he was treating their teeth and helping them in this practical way. Some Ukrainian brothers, they said to us, you know, it's a very good way to evangelize when you are working at their mouth, because they can't talk back. They have to listen. A lady came one day, and she wanted her parents' dentures repaired, and while Alexei was repairing the dentures, he was sharing the gospel with this dear woman. She'd never heard the gospel before. It's the first time for her to hear it.

[34 : 07] And as that lady was sitting there listening to Alexei, the gospel reached the inner part of her soul. And before she left that room that day, she repented of her sin and gave her life to Jesus.

There were no Christians in her family. She went back to her family, to her village. There were no believers, and she invited Alexei, the missionary, to come and have some meetings. And as he

preached this great message of the gospel, God began to move by his spirit, and people began to come to a living faith in the living Christ, and a church was planted there to the glory of God. Dear friends, tonight, that we might hear the gospel in the innermost being of our souls. There's different types of hearers. Jesus mentioned that in Matthew 13 about the sower and the sea, didn't he? The hard ground, the rocky ground, the thorny place, and then there was the good ground. And then we find that whenever we proclaim this message, whenever people hear it in the innermost being of their souls, well, friends, what happens then? What happens? There's the hope of the gospel.

People come to a living relationship with the Lord, and hope rises up within them, and there's that great certainty that all is well with their soul. Paul could say here of these people that they had this great hope in verse 5. And verse 23 again, he says, don't be moved away from the hope of the gospel. And then verse 27, Christ in you, the hope of glory. You know, the gospel is based on relationships, and it's a hope, and it's an uncertainty. It's a certainty. Unsaved people, the Bible tells us in Ephesians chapter 2, they are without hope. They're outside of Christ, and they have no hope. [36 : 03] But those that are in Christ tonight, they have a hope that's steadfast and sure. You know, friends, it's a wonderful thing to waken up every morning and be able to say, it's well with my soul. I've got a certain day that I'm going to be with Jesus.

Paul the Apostle could say, absent from the body, present with the Lord. Dear friends, tonight we're not hoping it's all going to work out at the end. We're certain it's going to work out at the end when Christ is in us. This is the message, the message we love, the message that we long for the world to hear. This is why as a mission, for our 70th anniversary, we want to see 70 missionary families sent out by the Lord. We want to give them a little money to help them to survive, that people might hear this message, that they'll hear in the innermost being of their souls, and friends, that they will have this hope, this certainty that all's well with their souls. I don't know you here this evening, dear friends.

God knows you. God knows where you are. God knows your situation. God knows what you've left behind at home. God knows what you're going back to tonight. I don't.

God knows what you're going back to tonight. But I wonder, do you have this certainty? I wonder tonight, can you say it's well with my soul? I've found Jesus. He's living within me.

I know one day. I know one day. I'm going to be with him in glory. This can be your night, friend. For those of us who have the hope, we have a responsibility to tell others.

[37 : 57] Our mission field is on our doorstep. May God help us to be faithful. May dear hopeless souls, crying out for hope tonight, friends, may they hear this message and find Jesus.

May God bless you as a congregation, as you serve him. May the Lord help us all as we go forward in his name in these days, herald in the gospel, hearing the gospel, hope of the gospel.

Thank God for this great message. Thank you, Pastor Ralph, for the opportunity to be here tonight. Thank you for the joy of sharing with you. Please pray for us as a mission. We need praying people. The task is unfinished. It drives us to our knees. The world needs Jesus. May God help us to band together and serve him in the coming days.

We value your prayers so much. Please take the literature with you. It's on the table in the vestibule, on a little table. You'll have to stoop down, but make the stoop down and take the literature with your magazine.

[39 : 02] Bi-monthly news. There's a copy for you tonight. Please take a copy with you. Maybe you'd like to receive it regularly. Sign up for it. And with that protection, we've got to be careful. So give this directly to me or post it to our office.

And we'd love to have you praying for us during the anniversary year and updating you. Also, our anniversary project of sending the 70. Also, the widows and orphans project that we're seeking to help this winter.

Please take the literature with you. Just to mention very briefly, Christmas cards. Christmas is coming. The profits of these cards go to our widows project in Central Asia. Help a widow. Three pounds for the cards, 12 in a pack.

Also, there are two books tonight. Book of testimonies from Central Asia. Five people who found the Lord coming from very difficult circumstances, but they have hope tonight. You'll be blessed as you read about them.

It's four pounds for this book. And then this book, our 25 years serving God in the Republic of Moldova. This country saw revival. You can read about it.

[40 : 06] What God is doing today, it's three pounds. For this book, four pounds for this book, three pounds for the cards. We're not asking for money tonight. You take them. You can pay online. You can ring up the office and pay some other time.

And if you never pay, you can live with your conscience. Dear friends, thank you tonight. May God bless you. We have a great message. We have a wonderful hope in Jesus.

May we go forward in the coming days to serve him with all that we have. Thank you so much indeed.