



YOUTH & ADULT
MISSION



2020 • **QUARTER 2** • TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION



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On the Cover: Øystein Hogganvik, 61, worked as an Adventist farmer for decades in Norway. Then he saw Jesus in a new way. Now he pastors two churches. Page 22.

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 = stories of special interest to teens

Your Offerings at Work



Three years ago, the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped open a youth community center in Betel Seventh-day Adventist Church (pictured) in Oslo, Norway. You can read stories from Norway on pages 20 and 22.



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Dear Sabbath School Leader,

Andrew McChesney
Editor



This quarter we feature the Trans-European Division, which oversees the Seventh-day Adventist Church's work in 22 countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

The region is home to 205.8 million people, including 87,867 Adventists. That's a ratio of one Adventist for 2,342 people.

This quarter's three Thirteenth Sabbath projects are spread across the division: north of the Arctic Circle in Norway, south on the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea, and to the east in Serbia.

I visited the sites that will receive the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to hear stories about God's transforming power in the lives of people in those three countries. I also visited Poland and Ireland, which

received part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago, and Finland.

You can find their stories on the pages of this publication and the children's Mission magazine. After hearing their stories, I believe more than ever that Jesus is coming soon — and I am sure you will agree as you read about what God is doing in the Trans-European Division!

Special Features

If you want to make your Sabbath School class come alive, we offer photos, videos, and other materials with every mission story. More information is provided in the sidebar with each story. You also can download a list of fast facts from the Trans-European Division to share in Sabbath School at the link: bit.ly/fast-facts-TED20.

Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/missionquarterlies.

For photos of tourist sites and other scenes from the featured countries, I recommend searching on a free photo bank such as pixabay.com or unsplash.com.

You also can download the PDF version of the youth and adult Mission magazine at bit.ly/adultmission, and Mission Spotlight videos at bit.ly/missionspotlight.

If you have found especially effective ways to share mission stories, or if I can be of assistance, contact me at mcchesney@gc.adventist.org.

Thank you for encouraging church members to be mission-minded!

Opportunities

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help to:

- Open a center of influence in Sortland, Norway
- Establish a church in New Belgrade, Serbia
- Construct a church and center of influence in Nicosia, Cyprus

Scared Atheist

SERBIA | April 4

Biljana Mijatovi, 47



Biljana Mijatovi prayed for the first time when, as a 20-year-old atheist, she saw a relative struggling with supernatural forces.

Biljana heard about the problem from a cousin.

“Svetlushka has gone crazy,” the cousin said.

“What happened?” asked Biljana.

She was busy with university studies and hadn’t seen Svetlushka for some time, even though they were neighbors in a duplex located in a suburb of Serbia’s capital, Belgrade.

The cousin said Svetlushka was hearing voices. The voices didn’t say anything important but engaged in constant small talk. Svetlushka’s husband also heard the voices, and their 3-year-old daughter was suffering stomachaches.

The cousin said there was more.

Svetlushka heard knocking on the walls and

squeaking noises. Svetlushka spoke of being shrunk to the size of mouse and walking around the house like a small person. When she walked around the city, she felt like she was wading in waist-high water and passersby were walking through her.

Worried, Svetlushka sought help from physicians. They gave medicine that caused her to sleep but didn’t resolve the problems.

Relatives carried Svetlushka to monasteries, and clergymen visited her at home. One priest placed a Bible at her head and another Bible at her feet in an attempt to perform an exorcism.

As the weeks went by, Svetlushka lost the strength to stand on her feet and spent all day in bed.

Biljana was alarmed by the news, but she didn’t know what to think. As an atheist, she didn’t believe in God, the devil, or the supernatural. She decided that Svetlushka must be suffering from psychological problems. Feeling sorry for her, she decided to pay a visit.

Biljana found the front door open and walked in. Svetlushka, who was lying in bed, was excited to see her visitor.

“I don’t have psychological problems!” she exclaimed. “I’m sad that nobody believes me.”

Speaking clearly and coherently, she described her strange occurrences.

“Why do I have to take medicine when I’m healthy?” she said. “I’m normal. I sleep

Story Tips

- Pronounce Biljana as: bil-YANA.
- Watch Biljana on YouTube: bit.ly/Biljana-Mijatovic.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/scared-atheist).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/ted-13th-projects.

all day because of the medicine. I need another kind of help.”

Biljana grew increasingly convinced that Svetlushka was telling the truth.

“Do you want me to pray for you?” she asked, the words surprising even her. “I’m going to a Christian church, and I heard that God can help in various situations. When there is nothing that we can do, we can pray.”

While Biljana didn’t believe in God, she had been attending Sabbath worship services at New Belgrade Seventh-day Adventist Church. She went because she was searching for answers about the meaning of life.

Svetlushka welcomed the offer for prayer.

“Yes, I would be thankful for prayer,” she said.

Biljana returned to her house and knelt down.

“God, if You exist, please protect me from the demons,” she said.

As she spoke those words, she wondered why she was on her knees. It wasn’t normal to kneel, and she thought that perhaps she was losing her own mind. But she kept praying.

“Please help Svetlushka,” she said. “Protect her.”

The next day, Biljana returned from the university to find Svetlushka on her feet, cleaning the windows of her house. Biljana stopped in wonder. God had heard her prayer!

Svetlushka was free from evil spirits, never to be troubled by them again, and Biljana was overjoyed. From that moment she made a promise to God that echoed a vow made by Jacob in Genesis 28:20, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going ... then the Lord shall be my God.”

One morning, Biljana woke up with faith in her heart. She no longer doubted God. She gave her heart to Jesus and was baptized.

Biljana, now 47 and an insurance company auditor, is an active member at the New Belgrade church.

“In my missionary work, it has been a great comfort to me to see the way that God works with every person from childhood,” she said. “In my experience, I saw how God patiently and perseveringly works with every person. Let God help us to meet the people whom He is leading so they can hear the Word and answer His call for salvation.” 🌍

Biljana is a member of New Belgrade Seventh-day Adventist Church, which will receive part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to acquire its own building. The congregation met in a rented movie theater when it was established in 1993, and it now shares a building with another Adventist congregation near New Belgrade. Thank you for planning a generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

By Andrew McChesney

One Adventist in 10,000

SERBIA | April 11

Radenko Melovi, 58



Going to the university was a great experience for Radenko Melovi.

He left his parents in their village and moved 185 miles (300 kilometers) to a sprawling university dormitory with 10,000 residents in Belgrade.

Radenko had a lot of fun and didn't study much.

The first year passed, and he did not take any exams.

To avoid being expelled from university dormitory, he changed his major for the next academic year.

The second year passed, and he did not take any exams.

Radenko changed his major.

The third year passed, and he did not take any exams.

Instead of studying, he partied. He drank and smoked with friends. A popular student, he was elected student body president.

During his fourth year, tragedy struck. His sister died during childbirth.

Radenko was crushed. His sister had been like an angel in the family. He didn't know what to do. For the first time in his life, he prayed earnestly. He asked God to reveal the right path for his life.

Among the 10,000 dorm students lived one Seventh-day Adventist, a young woman named Emilia. Shortly after his prayer, a friend introduced them.

Emilia immediately began to talk about God. She didn't want to talk about anything else. She told Radenko that she was a Seventh-day Adventist. He had never heard of Adventists.

Emilia invited him to go with her to church on Saturday, and he accepted.

Radenko listened to the sermon and was stopped by the youth pastor as he was leaving. "Would you like to study the Bible?" the youth pastor said.

Radenko had never read the Bible, and he agreed to meet with the youth pastor on Tuesday evening.

When the initial Bible study finished, Radenko experienced something unusual. He felt like he could fly. He had heard teachings that quenched a long-unfilled thirst.

Radenko and the youth pastor met week after week to study the Bible. Then they came to a study about the Sabbath.

Radenko was shocked that the Bible identified Saturday as the Sabbath. The

next day, he went to a priest to double-check on the day.

“Do you know when Jesus was resurrected?” the priest asked.

“Sunday,” Radenko said.

“That is why we worship on Sunday,” the priest said.

Radenko told the pastor about the conversation with the priest. The pastor explained that Jesus’ death and resurrection hadn’t changed the law. The fourth commandment still said the seventh day is the Sabbath.

Radenko returned to the priest, but the priest was nowhere to be found. Another priest listened to his question. “Our holy fathers decided on Sunday, and I am not questioning their opinion,” the priest said.

Radenko found the answer surprising.

“Who has higher authority, the Bible or the holy fathers?” he asked.

The priest refused to answer.

To Radenko, the Bible clearly had the higher authority.

Today, Radenko is 58, married, and a university graduate. He loves God’s law. In his Bible, he used a blue marker to highlight the verse that the pastor read at his baptism. Joshua 1:8 reads, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

Emilie, his friend from university dormitory, was surprised and thrilled when she learned 30 years later that a seed she had planted had yielded fruit. She had left the university dormitory after meeting Radenko, and the two had lost contact.

Radenko believes that Emilie’s mission was to share the gospel with him.

Story Tips

- Watch Radenko on YouTube: bit.ly/Radenko-Melovic.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/one-adventist-in-10000).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/ted-13th-projects.

Fast Facts

- Nikola Tesla, regarded as one of the most important inventors in history, was a Serbian. Tesla made great discoveries in the fields of electric current and magnetism and his name is also used as the unit of magnetic induction. When Albert Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize, a reporter asked him “What is it like to be the smartest person in the world?” and he replied, “I don’t know. Ask Nikola Tesla.” The electric car is named after him.

“It was a real miracle to find the one Adventist among 10,000 people,” Radenko said. “But that was God’s reply when I asked Him to show me the right path to take in life.” 🌍

Radenko is an elder at New Belgrade Seventh-day Adventist Church, which will receive part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to acquire its own building. The congregation met in a rented movie theater when it was established in 1993, and it now shares a building with another Adventist congregation near New Belgrade. Thank you for planning a generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

By Andrew McChesney

SERBIA | April 18

Back to School

Daniela Marinkovi, 41



Daniela Marinkovi's parents never studied beyond high school, and one of their biggest dreams was to see their daughter graduate from the university.

But Daniela rebelled under what she felt were unfair expectations.

"This isn't your decision but my own," she declared. "I'll do whatever I want with my life."

Still, to make her parents happy, she entered a university in Belgrade to study the Russian language. Because this wasn't her first choice, she studied halfheartedly and soon quit.

But Daniela wasn't particularly worried. She was 20 and easily landed a job at the local call center of an international telecommunications company.

Over the next few years, she got married to a fellow Seventh-day Adventist and settled down. But work left her unsatisfied. It was boring. It lacked creativity and dynamism. She began to dread the daily grind.

The routine broke when she gave birth

to a son. The 29-year-old mother left work for three years of maternity leave. During that time, she thought a lot. She couldn't imagine spending the rest of her life working at a job that she regarded as boring and unfulfilling. Regret filled her as she remembered how carelessly she had quit the university. Without a university degree, employment options were limited.

The summer before maternity leave ended, Daniela and her family visited her father and his new wife in Macedonia. Her father had remarried after a divorce.

Her stepmother, a psychologist, encouraged Daniela to resume her studies.

"Why don't you prepare for the entrance exam and enroll at the university?" she said.

"But I have a child and a family and a house to take care of," Daniela protested. "Also I need to go back to my job at the call center."

As the two women conversed, Daniela began to believe that she could balance her home, work, and classes. Daniela

applied to study psychology in Belgrade and prepared for the entrance exam.

The university, however, scheduled the entrance exam for a Saturday.

Daniela appealed to the president of the Adventist Church in Serbia for help. He wrote a letter to the university, but the reply letter said, “We’re sorry, but we cannot change the date for one person.”

Daniela was keenly disappointed. The university seemed out of reach. She told a relative, a well-educated woman, about her difficulties.

“It’s simple,” the relative said. “Enroll in a university that doesn’t have the entrance exam on Saturday. After a year, transfer to the Belgrade university.”

Daniela found a university in Novi Sad, the second-biggest city in Serbia, that offered the entrance exam on a Friday. She passed the exam.

The next year was extremely busy. Daniela had two days a week off work. On Saturdays, she worshipped God. On Mondays, she spent the day at the university, attending classes. On the other days, she worked from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. and then drove to the university for classes. Her mother helped with her son.

“I prayed to God all the time, and I was convinced that I was doing the right thing,” Daniela said. “I had some kind of inner power that pushed me to keep going and to pass my exams with top marks.”

After nine months, the telecommunications company laid off 10 percent of its employees, about 100 people, amid a reorganization. Daniela was let go. She saw the decision as a blessing because she had more time for her classes and family.

When the first year of studies ended, Daniela decided not to transfer to the

Story Tips

- Watch Daniela on YouTube: bit.ly/Daniela-Marinkovic.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/back-to-school-ted).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/ted-13th-projects.

Mission Post

- The first tracts in the Serbian language were printed in Hamburg in 1893 to 1896, although there were no baptized Adventists in Serbia.

university in Belgrade. The professors accepted her and her Sabbath beliefs.

Money didn’t prove to be a problem. Her grades improved after she was laid off, and the university granted her a full scholarship. In addition, she found a summer job cleaning houses in Germany.

Daniela’s parents were proud when she graduated. Their joy grew when she went on to earn a master’s degree in psychology, graduating in October 2018.

Today, Daniela is 41 and works as ADRA field coordinator for a refugee women’s center in Belgrade. She loves her work.

“My job is not boring,” she said. “I was so happy when I got it. It is dynamic and creative. It is everything that I wanted to do.” 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help New Belgrade Seventh-day Adventist Church acquire its own building. New Belgrade is located near Belgrade, where Daniela works.

By Andrew McChesney

Two Unexpected Sons

POLAND | April 25

Halina Pastuszko, 65



Halina Pastuszko decided that she didn't want any more children after giving birth to a third daughter in Poland.

But she learned at the age of 42, the same year that her first grandchild was born, that she was five months pregnant.

The pregnancy alarmed the physician, and he warned that the child might be born disabled because of Halina's age. Poland lacked facilities to raise disabled children at the time.

The physician suggested an abortion and gave Halina the telephone number for a doctor who could perform the procedure.

From home, Halina tried to call for an appointment, but she got no answer. Giving up, she returned to her accountant job in the city housing department in Rumia.

Meanwhile, her husband, Wladyslaw, learned from a daughter that his wife had tried to call the abortion doctor, and he rushed to her workplace.

"This is my decision," Halina said. "I want to have an abortion."

Falling to his knees, Wladyslaw pleaded, "Please, don't do it."

Halina asked whether he would leave her if she had the abortion.

"No," he said. "No matter what happens, I will never leave you."

Halina's heart was touched.

"OK, let's have this child," she said.

Adam, a healthy baby boy, was born three and a half months later. For the first time, Halina realized that people can be wrong no matter how strong their opinions. If God wants to accomplish something, He will fulfill His plans.

Halina began to wonder why her husband attended a Seventh-day Adventist church. She hadn't thought much about God in communist-era Poland. But now she felt grateful for her healthy baby and wanted to do something good for God. She decided to become an Adventist.

Without her husband's knowledge, she studied the Bible with an Adventist pastor. She surprised Wladyslaw by being baptized at a camp meeting.

Several years passed, and Halina enrolled at the Adventist seminary in Poland to pursue higher education. During a class, she was moved to hear a man with Down Syndrome speak about

Story Tips

- Pronounce Dawid the same as “David” in English. Wladyslaw is pronounced: VLAD-i-slav.
- Watch Dawid on YouTube: bit.ly/Dawid-Briszke.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/two-unexpected-sons).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/ted-13th-projects.

Fast Facts

- Marie Curie was born in Warsaw, Poland, on Nov. 7, 1867. With her husband, she discovered the elements polonium (Po), named after her native Poland, in the summer of 1898 and, soon thereafter, radium (Ra). She is credited for coining the term “radioactivity” and won her first Nobel Prize in physics in 1903.
- The first surviving cookbook of Polish recipes dates from 1682 and the dishes have strong Lithuanian, Tartar-Turkish, and German influences.

the difficulties of disabled people. She decided to write her thesis on how to care for disabled children. Around that time, she met a physical therapist who introduced her to a 10-year-old disabled boy at an orphanage.

Halina loved Dawid immediately. The boy had been abandoned as a baby, and the orphanage had unsuccessfully tried to find an adoptive family.

Halina joined a government program that allows families to take orphans home for the weekend. She and her husband took Dawid home on Friday afternoons and returned him to the orphanage on

Sunday evenings. One Sunday evening, Dawid didn’t want to go back. He clung to a chair and cried loudly. Halina also cried. She decided to adopt Dawid.

Halina gathered the family together to announce the decision. Everyone opposed the idea except their youngest, Adam, who was 12. After the family meeting, he wrote a tender letter to his parents.

“No matter how Dawid may act, I want him in our family forever,” he wrote.

Halina decided to take early retirement so she could devote all her time to Dawid. Even though she was in her mid-50s, a court judge quickly approved the adoption.

On July 2, 2009, Dawid came home.

Months after moving in, he had a first operation on his legs. The results disappointed the doctor, and he cautioned that the boy would never walk. He was wrong, no matter how strong his opinion. If God wanted to accomplish something, He would fulfill His plans. Dawid had four more operations and today can walk.

Dawid, 17, is a living witness to God. When the family goes out, people marvel at Dawid. They ask many questions, and the family replies by sharing the gospel. They have distributed 200 copies of “The Great Controversy” in the past year.

Dawid loves the Bible, and he has memorized several chapters. His favorite is Psalms 23. It sums up his life.

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,” he said. 🌍

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in 2017 that helped build a television studio for Hope Channel in Poland, broadcasting the gospel to the Polish-speaking world.

By Andrew McChesney



One Bad Decision

Mariusz Maikowski, 55

After months of weekly worship services, seven inmates were ready for baptism in Poland.

But how and where to baptize them?

Pastor Mariusz Maikowski had an idea. The inmates could be baptized in the Baltic Sea at an upcoming youth camp meeting.

Mariusz asked the prison warden for permission to release the inmates for four days — one day to travel by train to the sea, two days for the camp meeting, and a day to travel back to the prison. Under Polish law, inmates who exhibit good behavior and have completed two-thirds of their sentences are allowed to leave prison for short periods.

The warden granted special permission for six of the seven inmates to make the 250-mile (400-kilometer) trip to Jaroslawiec. The following week, Mariusz arrived at the prison with several church members to take the prisoners to the train station.

Another inmate, Jurek, heard about the baptisms and decided that he also wanted to be baptized. Having served two-thirds of his sentence, he left the prison a day early and made arrangements to join the

Adventist group on the train.

The train ride was a joyful occasion. A church member pulled out his guitar, and the group happily sang Christian songs.

Partway through the trip, the train arrived at the station where Jurek planned to board. But Jurek didn't show up.

On Sabbath, the six inmates were baptized in the Baltic Sea.

Two days later, the prison guards and inmates were surprised to see all six prisoners. They had placed bets on how many would run away.

Jurek, however, didn't return, and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

With the police looking for him, Jurek couldn't get a job. He holed up with some criminal friends and invited his 17-year-old brother to join them.

One evening, Jurek and his younger brother drank heavily in a city park in Toru in northern Poland. A nurse passed by on a bicycle, carrying a bag of apples for coworkers at the hospital. The two men robbed her, raped her, and strangled her.

After a police manhunt, Jurek and his younger brother were jailed.

For 20 years, Jurek's story bothered Mariusz. Jurek had been so close to baptism. If only he had boarded the train.

One day, a female church member approached Mariusz in Lublin, an eastern city where he was serving as pastor. She said her sister was dating a former prisoner

who needed a place to stay.

“He knows a lot about the Bible,” she said. “As a church, can we help him?”

The pastor met with the man, Tomek. He did know a lot about the Bible, and he began to visit the church. An Adventist landlord leased an apartment to him.

But Tomek harbored deep resentment toward God. He often erupted in rage, cursing God, during Bible studies in his apartment.

“You believe in God because you have a good family and a good life,” Tomek told the pastor. “I was born into a dysfunctional family. My father and brothers were criminals. My mother was a drunkard. My older brothers spat in my soup. One regularly raped me. So how can I believe that God is good?”

Mariusz wondered how to respond. During one Bible study, he spoke about how a single bad decision can ruin a life. Remembering Jurek, he related his story.

“You see, Tomek, this man was very close to God,” he said. “But one wrong decision destroyed not only his own life but also the life of his younger brother.”

Tomek turned pale and looked at Mariusz with wild eyes. The pastor was scared. The two men were alone in the apartment, and Mariusz remembered that Tomek had been jailed for murder.

Tomek started to cry. “This is incredible,” he said, weeping.

“What are you talking about?” Mariusz asked.

Tomek gazed into the pastor’s eyes. “I am Jurek’s younger brother,” he said.

Today, Tomek is thinking about baptism and trying to stop drinking. His influence at an alcoholic rehabilitation center has led two other people to baptism. His brother Jurek remains in prison.

Story Tips

- Pronounce Mariusz as: MAR-i-oosh.
- Pronounce Jurek as: YUR-ek.
- Watch Mariusz on YouTube: bit.ly/Mariusz-Maikowski.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/one-bad-decision).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/ted-13th-projects.

Mission Post

- The first Adventist church in Poland is now actually in Russia. In 1888, J. Laubhan, and H. Szkubowicz moved from Crimea to what was then eastern Poland. Their three years of work resulted in a church in Zarnówka in Volhynia.

“The story of Jurek shows that when you are close to God and He speaks to you, you should make a decision immediately and not delay,” Mariusz said.

After all, Isaiah 55:6 says, “Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.”

“Part of this story is sad,” Mariusz said. “But it also shows the great power of God and what He can do in our lives. Imagine meeting Jurek’s younger brother after 20 years and being able to teach him about God.” 🌍

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in 2017 that helped build a television studio for Hope Channel in Poland, broadcasting the gospel to the Polish-speaking world.

By Andrew McChesney

Friend to Finland's Friendless

FINLAND | May 9

Lauri Herranen, 60



Lauri Herranen stood somberly at the grave of a friend in Mikkeli, Finland.

The same-aged friend had died three years earlier when a blood clot moved from his heart to his brain.

"I could be the one in the grave," Lauri thought.

He sensed an inner voice say, "You know where the life that you are now living will lead. Do you really want that?"

Lauri, who was 45, couldn't answer the question. But it echoed in his mind day after day: "If you die, you know what will happen to you. If you die, you know what will happen to you."

With fright, he remembered hearing about Jesus' second coming as a child. He had been taught that the wicked would be cast into an eternally burning hell. He didn't have any Christian friends, and he

didn't know who would listen to his fears.

Matters grew worse when he went to the doctor for an ear infection and was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Now the prospect of death was very real.

Lauri worked up the courage to talk to a pastor at a Christian denomination. The pastor prayed for Lauri's sins to be forgiven and asked Lauri also to pray for forgiveness.

During the prayers, something happened inside Lauri. He left his sins at the foot of the cross, and peace and joy filled him.

Lauri started to read the Bible earnestly. To his surprise, he saw that the gospel of Luke referred to Saturday as the Sabbath. He read the New Testament three times to find a place where the Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday, but he couldn't find any.

Around that time, he saw a newspaper advertisement for evangelistic meetings at a local Seventh-day Adventist church. Less than a year later, he joined the church.

Lauri's wife disapproved of his interest in God, and she filed for divorce. A couple years later, Lauri married an

Adventist woman, Päivi, and moved to her hometown, Lahti.

Lauri longed to find ways to share Jesus in Lahti. After much prayer, he felt impressed to open a food pantry at the Lahti Seventh-day Adventist Church.

“Most Finns are quite secular, and their lives are centered around material goods and worldly pleasures,” he said. “They have no room for God in their lives. So I asked, ‘How can we reach them?’ The food pantry is one way.”

Those who come to the church for food twice a week include construction workers and the elderly. Many are Finns, while others are Russians. Some are facing financial struggles. Most are lonely, looking for friendship, just like Lauri when he had longed for Christian friends to talk to.

“In Finnish society, it is difficult to talk to others about personal issues, especially faith,” Lauri said.

Only a few people visited the food pantry at the beginning. But now, after five years, 40 people come every Monday and Wednesday. The food pantry has touched hundreds of lives, and at least one person has been baptized.

The food pantry also has attracted inactive Adventists. Church members who have not attended worship services in years have volunteered and slowly rejoined the life of the church.

Lauri, 60, who has been successfully treated for cancer and is in good health, doesn’t fear death anymore.

“Now my life is in the hands of Jesus, and I am waiting eagerly for the second coming,” he said. “I am not afraid to die.” 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Watch Lauri on YouTube: bit.ly/Lauri-Herranen.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/friend-to-finland).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/13th-projects.

Mission Post

- The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Finland oversees Finland Junior College (Suomen Kristillinen Yhteiskoulu), a nursing home (Nurmikoti Oy), and a publishing house (Media7 Julkaisut), as well as a Bible correspondence school and a media center.
- The first Seventh-day Adventist in Finland was a sea captain, A.F. Lundqvist. While at sea, he was converted by the Plymouth Brethren. In 1885, he purchased Uriah Smith’s book “Daniel and the Revelation” from George Drew, an Adventist colporteur in England. He also bought Ellen G. White’s book “The Great Controversy.” As a result of reading these books he immediately began to keep the Sabbath and became a Seventh-day Adventist, remaining faithful until his death in 1955 at the age of 97.
- The Finland Union has 62 churches, nine companies, and a membership of 4,678. In a population of 5,518,000, that’s 1,180 people for each church member.
- The official languages of Finland are Finnish, native to 90 percent of the population, and Swedish, native language to 5.4 percent of the population. The indigenous Sami language is an official language in northern Lapland.
- The Finns have the world’s highest annual consumption of milk per capita.

Atheist Shares Christ

FINLAND | May 16

Riitta-Liisa Peltonen, 73



Esko was 63 and ill when he showed up at Piikkiö Seventh-day Adventist Church in southwestern Finland.

“I don’t need the food,” he told food pantry director Riitta-Liisa Peltonen as he picked out vegetables, meat, and bread. “It’s for my friends.”

Riitta-Liisa looked tenderly at the obese man. The odor of sweat and unwashed clothes clung to him. He suffered severe liver problems after years of hard drinking. His eyes were kind.

“Are you a Christian?” Riitta-Liisa asked.

Esko shifted his eyes away.

“Mmm,” he said. “Mmm, I have my own religion.”

Riitta-Liisa understood that he was an atheist like many people in Finland, a highly secularized country with a population of 5.5 million and only 4,800 Adventists.

Esko returned week after week to the church in Piikkiö, population 7,500, to

collect groceries for his friends, a married couple named Pasi and Krista. Riitta-Liisa learned that Pasi had owned a roofing company in the nearby port city of Turku, but the business had fallen on hard times during an economic recession. To cope, Pasi and Krista drank heavily.

The couple expressed surprise the first time that Esko arrived with groceries.

“Where did you get the food?” Krista asked.

“Come and see,” he said.

The couple didn’t.

Then Esko’s sole companion, a beloved dog, died. The elderly man was so discouraged that he could not bear to remain alone in the house. He went to Pasi and Krista’s house to spend the night.

To Krista’s surprise, he prayed before the evening meal.

“How is it that an atheist is praying?” she asked.

She had never seen that before.

Curious about Esko’s actions, she decided to check out the church for herself. She invited her husband to accompany her. But to fortify their courage, she and Pasi drank heavily. They could barely stand on their feet as they

waited in line to get food at the church.

The couple returned the next week, and then the next. After a while, Krista grew interested in the Christian songs and the spiritual messages shared by church members as people collected food. She began to attend Sabbath worship services.

Esko noticed her interest and smiled.

“Now my mission is accomplished,” he told her quietly.

A short time later, in late 2017, he died.

Meanwhile, Krista quit drinking and was baptized. Pasi saw the change in her and also gave his heart to Jesus.

“I have found the faith,” he said.

He made arrangements to be baptized at an Adventist summer camp in 2018.

The married couple became active at the church and participated in prayer meetings. Pasi cooked in the church kitchen for people who came to the food pantry. The enormous change in him was evident to all. One evening, his face shone with joy as he cooked.

The next morning, Krista found him dead in their home kitchen. He was 51.

The funeral was held in the Adventist church, and the service left a big impression on his extended family, who attended.

Krista, 40, is active in the church today, and her own mother has started to attend Sabbath worship services.

In all, 10 people have been baptized in the five years since the food pantry opened.

Riitta-Liisa thanks God for every baptism, but perhaps she is most amazed about Esko.

“He was an atheist who led his friends to Christ,” she said. “He was so happy when his friends began to attend church. He had led someone to a better life.” 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Watch Riitta-Liisa on YouTube: bit.ly/Riitta-Liisa.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/atheist-shares-Christ).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/13th-projects.

Fast Facts

- From the 12th to 19th centuries, Finland was part of Sweden before it became a part of the Russian Empire. It gained independence during the Russian Revolution in 1917.
- Finland has about 188,000 lakes leading to the nickname “land of the thousand lakes.”
- Another nickname for Finland is “land of the midnight sun.” During summer the sun does not drop below the horizon in the north but shines all day and night.
- Finland has some unique wildlife, including the gray wolf, wolverine, elk, its national animal the brown bear, and national bird the whooper swan.
- Per capita, Finland is the most successful country in Olympic history in terms of gold medals. “Flying Finn” Hannes Kolehmainen won three gold medals in 1912 in javelin throw and distance running. Paavo Nurmi won a total of nine gold medals in 1920, 1924, and 1928 in middle- and long-distance running.
- The coldest temperature measured in the country was in 1999, in Kittilä, where the temperature went all the way down to minus 60.7 F (minus 51.5 C).
- There are more saunas than cars in Finland.

Demons and Death

FINLAND | May 23

Timo Flink, 45



Leena abruptly turned to her friends, Anneli and Timo, during a Bible study in her apartment in Raahe, a Finnish town located about 370 miles (600 kilometers) north of the capital, Helsinki.

“I have a bad feeling,” she said. “Let’s pray.”

The three university students sank onto their knees. At that moment, a tall dark figure burst into the living room and darted over to Anneli. She reeled in stark horror as the dark figure tried to grab her.

Timo and Leena prayed more earnestly.

Then a light figure entered the room and chased out the dark figure. The dark figure stood by the door and tried to reenter but the light figure blocked every attempt. After about 10 minutes, the dark figure gave up and left.

When calm returned to the room, the

shaken students pieced together what had happened. Leena described the exchange between the light and dark figures. Timo had only seen light and dark shadows streak past him on the floor. Anneli didn’t want to talk about what she had seen.

Later on, the students learned that the attack had unfolded at the same time as a suicide in a nearby home.

“That’s why I had that bad feeling,” Leena declared.

Breaking her silence, Anneli acknowledged that she had practiced spiritism in the past and was still harassed by evil spirits. God, however, was more powerful, she said. Alone in bed after the attack, she had seen the light figure enter her room and sit on the bed until dawn.

The demonic attacks stopped after Anneli was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

It was the first time that Timo had encountered the great controversy between Christ and Satan up close. It was not the last. Timo, usually a sound sleeper, woke up one night with the sensation that someone was staring at him in the darkness. Then he heard a voice.

“Don’t get baptized,” the voice said.

Timo, a software engineering student, was preparing to be baptized into the Adventist Church. He peered into the darkness. He couldn’t see anything, but he could sense someone’s presence. He

prayed, and the presence left.

The next day, Leena told Timo that someone had committed suicide near his home the previous night.

“Do you know what time?” Timo asked.

She did. It was the exact time when he had woken up.

The nighttime warning didn’t prevent Timo from being baptized, and he went on to become an Adventist pastor.

His experiences with the supernatural and suicide didn’t stop.

One day, he and several other Adventist pastors boarded a ferry for an overnight trip to a pastors’ conference in Sweden.

That night, he was restless. After unsuccessfully trying to fall sleep, he felt a sudden urgency to pray. Almost as soon as he started to pray, he heard demonic laughter. The dreadful sound was indescribable, something like a maniac laughing. Timo sensed something bad was happening, but he didn’t know what. He prayed for two hours.

At breakfast, an older pastor approached Timo.

“What was going on with you during the night?” he asked. “The Holy Spirit told me to pray for you.”

He had been woken in the middle of the night and prayed for Timo.

Then another pastor came to the breakfast table.

“You don’t know what happened to me last night,” he said. “I woke up and felt a huge urgency to go outside for some fresh air. When I reached the deck, I saw a man about to jump into the sea.”

The pastor coaxed the man back onto the deck and counseled him for an hour afterward not to kill himself.

When the three pastors compared

Story Tips

- Leena and Anneli are pseudonyms, which Adventist Mission is using to protect their privacy.
- Watch Timo on YouTube: bit.ly/Timo-Flink.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/demons-and-death).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/ted-13th-projects.

Fast Facts

- Forests including pine, spruce, and birch, cover more than 86 percent of Finland, making the country the largest forested area and largest producer of wood in Europe.
- The national sport of Finland is called Pesapallo, which is a bit like baseball, but the pitcher stands near the batter and throws the ball straight up into the air. The batter has to hit it as it comes down.

the timing of their nighttime experiences, they realized that all three had occurred simultaneously.

Timo, now 45 and the communication director for the Adventist Church in Finland, sees the three encounters with suicide and the supernatural as evidence that the great controversy between Christ and Satan is very real.

“It is taking place all around us,” he said. “The encouraging thing is Jesus has already won. We have nothing to fear. Even with these supernatural and terrifying events, Jesus still protects us. There is nothing the other side can do.” 

By Andrew McChesney

A Shirt to Talk About

NORWAY | May 30

Glenn Lie, 55



Glenn Lie slipped on his favorite green polo shirt and boarded a subway train in Oslo, Norway.

The 55-year-old teacher hoped that people would stare at him. He didn't have to wait long.

Glenn sat across from an elegantly dressed woman who appeared to be in her early sixties. The woman glanced at him and then his shirt. Her eyes remained on his shirt. Embroidered on the left breast were the words, "Advent Airlines, Steward Glenn Lie," and the image of a jet plane.

Glenn said nothing. He knew the woman was wondering why she had never heard about Advent Airlines.

After staring for about five minutes, the woman spoke.

"Excuse me," she said. "I haven't heard about this airline before. Do you work there?"

"Yes," Glenn said.

"Oh," she said. "Where do you fly?"

"We only have one destination."

"Oh really?" she said with surprise.

She didn't ask for the destination, and Glenn didn't volunteer it.

After a long moment, the woman asked, "Is it very expensive?"

"No, the tickets are free."

Now the woman was flabbergasted.

"What?" she exclaimed. "Why are the tickets free?"

It was Glenn's turn to pause. The woman's curiosity grew. Finally, Glenn spoke.

"The tickets are free because they were paid for 2,000 years ago," he said.

The woman looked puzzled for a moment. Suddenly understanding flashed in her eyes.

"I understand," she said.

She paused.

"But, for me, I have a hard time believing in heaven," she said.

"Why?" Glenn asked.

"I have had bad experiences with religion in my upbringing," she said.

It was a story that Glenn had heard many times: people who rejected Christianity because of what they saw as the poor example of Christians. Norway is a highly secularized society, and church membership has declined in many

Story Tips

- Pronounce Glenn's surname as: LEE.
- Glenn compares the church to an airplane, with Jesus at the controls and mission-minded Adventists serving as flight attendants. Here are some questions that he suggests asking your Sabbath School class: If our church were an airline, what would it be like? Why should people choose to fly with us and not competitors like Materialistic Airlines or Atheistic Airlines? What is it that we can offer that they cannot find elsewhere?
- Watch Glenn on YouTube: bit.ly/Glenn-Lie.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/shirt-to-talk-about).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/ted-13th-projects.

denominations for decades. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is no exception, and its 4,500 members have struggled to make inroads in the Scandinavian country of 5.3 million people.

On the subway, Glenn sensed that the woman longed for something better.

"Maybe you can find your way by exploring the Bible with new eyes," he said.

Hearing those words, the woman visibly relaxed in the nearly empty subway car. She spoke freely with Glenn about her doubts and questions for the next 20 minutes. Then she stood up.

"I'm getting off here," she said. "Thank you for the talk. You have given me a lot to think about. I'll have to do some research."

"I am sure you will find your way. I will think of you," Glenn said.

Glenn meant it. The woman was the reason that he had worn the polo shirt in the subway.

Glenn dons the short-sleeved shirt as often as he can during the warm summer months. When he does, the shirt draws stares. Sometimes, the stares lead to conversations.

"I am not very bold," Glenn explained in an interview. "I don't go out to ring on doors. That is something that I am not comfortable with."

But he does love Jesus, and he wants to be involved in gospel outreach. He also loves airplanes. So, he ordered the high-quality shirt from an online clothing company in Germany. The company customized the airplane and his name at his request.

"If I could be a tool to help people reconnect with God, that would be fantastic," he said.

Glenn doesn't know whether anyone has been drawn to Jesus or the Adventist message because of his shirt. But he is convinced that the Holy Spirit can use the shirt to start conversations.

"Let us meet people where they are at," he said. "My job is not to make anyone an Adventist. That is the job of the Holy Spirit. Our job is to sow, and God will take care of the reaping." 🌍

Glenn Lie, 55, is a teacher at Østmarka Seventh-day Adventist School, with about 100 students in grades 1-10, in Oslo, Norway. He also is a member and former youth pastor of Betel Seventh-day Adventist Church, which received part of a 2017 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to open a youth community center in its basement.

By Andrew McChesney

Preaching to the Blind

NORWAY | June 6

Øystein Hogganvik, 61



Two men gave sermons in Norway. The first preacher was well dressed and, in the mind of the farmer wearing work clothes in the back of the room, a bit arrogant.

Opening a book, the preacher read a statement by Seventh-day Adventist Church cofounder Ellen White. Picking up another book, he read another statement by Ellen White. His whole sermon consisted of statements from Ellen White.

That didn't bother Øystein Hogganvik, the 30-year-old farmer seated at the back of the room.

Then the second man stood up to preach. He also was well dressed, but his suit was old and had been mended several times. His shoes were polished but worn. He didn't read much from any books. Instead, he preached from the heart.

The preacher's earnestness touched Øystein's heart, but he strongly

disagreed with the theme. In fact, he was outright offended.

The preacher noticed and approached Øystein after the sermon. He greeted the farmer and politely asked for his name. He inquired about his work and family. He didn't say a word about the sermon.

After a few minutes, the preacher asked for permission to pray for Øystein. As he prayed, a fierce conflict broke out in Øystein's mind. "How can you allow a man to pray for you after you disagreed so strongly with his sermon?" he thought.

Immediately, Øystein sensed the Lord saying to him, "You have to trust in Me."

Back on the farm, Øystein decided to prove the preacher wrong. He spent hours reading the Bible. He bought recordings of sermons on the topic that had offended him and found a variety of viewpoints from Adventist preachers. He felt as if Jesus were slipping away from him. A year passed, and he was completely confused.

One day, Øystein reread the story of how Jesus gave sight to blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52. As he read, it struck him that he was Bartimaeus. Even though he had always had excellent eyesight, he was spiritually blind and needed to ask Jesus to open his eyes.

Øystein opened his mouth and shouted, "Give me spiritual sight!"

Immediately, he felt impressed to turn in his Bible to the story of two disciples

Story Tips

- Pronounce Øystein as EA-stein. “Øy” has the same sound as “ea” in the word “early.”
- Watch Øystein on YouTube: bit.ly/Oystein-Hogganvik.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/preaching-to-blind).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/ted-13th-projects.

Mission Post

- The Advent Tidende, a Danish-Norwegian paper and first non-English periodical published by Seventh-day Adventists, was begun by John G. Matteson, a Dane who had emigrated to the U.S.

who unknowingly walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. Along the way, Jesus gave a thorough Bible study about Himself, but the two men still didn't recognize Him. Their eyes only were opened when Jesus prayed for a meal in their home.

Øystein remembered that the 12 disciples had been with Jesus for more than three years but remained spiritually blind about Jesus' mission and the cross.

He realized that he, a fifth-generation Adventist, had been with Jesus all his life but was spiritually blind because he had clung to his own understanding instead of asking the Holy Spirit to open his eyes. Jesus wasn't leaving him, but he was in danger of leaving Jesus because of his love for his own truth.

In his year of trying to disprove the preacher, he had never prayed for the Lord

to open his eyes. He only had wanted to prove the preacher wrong.

For the first time, Øystein shut his eyes and prayed that his eyes be opened.

“From that day on, the Bible became alive for me,” he said in an interview. “Every story in the gospels was no longer about people living at the time of Jesus. They were stories that I could relate to and that had something for me.”

The recordings from the Bible and Ellen White books took on new life as he worked long hours on the farm. His heart changed, and intellectual knowledge became living, practical reality.

A year later, Øystein began to share his story in churches around Norway. After a while, church leaders from the East Norway Conference asked him to work as a minister.

Now 61, Øystein still owns a farm, but he uses his time and energy to sow the gospel. He has worked as a full-time pastor for the past nine years, and he leads two congregations in Oslo and Jessheim.

Øystein grew up in the front row in church, listening to his mother play the organ and his grandfather preach. He was baptized at the age of 17. He always was an Adventist and always wanted to be a Adventist. But, he said, he was spiritually blind until he asked Jesus to open his eyes.

“From that time, the Bible and the books of Ellen White have been my life,” he said. 🌍

Thank you for your 2017 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering that helped turn the basement of the Betel Seventh-day Adventist Church in Oslo into a “center of influence” community center for young people.

By Andrew McChesney

Why Suffer?



IRELAND | June 13

Axel Domingues, 31

My sister committed suicide when she was 14.

Overcome with grief, my mother decided to have another child, a girl. To her disappointment, she gave birth to me — a boy.

Mother raised me in the southern Portuguese town of Faro with a brother who was nine years older. Father lived in the Middle East, working in construction.

Mother was perpetually sad. That sadness deepened when Father got a divorce and my brother left home. Then she was hospitalized with cancer and I, only 11, was sent to live with relatives.

Mother had never attended church, but my relatives took me every Sunday. As I learned about God, I prayed for Mother to be healed. Two years passed, and Mother died. It didn't make any sense to me. I decided that God was a fable.

I stopped going to church and, when

Father returned to Portugal, I moved in with him and his new family.

Life spun out of control when I entered the university. I drank and used drugs. I listened to the wrong kind of music and practiced Satanism. Several encounters with spiritual beings frightened me into realizing that a spiritual realm existed beyond what people could see with the naked eye.

In my early 20s, I began to reap what I had sown. I lived in constant fear of evil spirits. I wanted to quit smoking and drugs, but I couldn't.

Then I learned that one of my friends, a drug-using atheist, had been baptized.

"What's wrong with you?" I asked him. "Why were you baptized?"

"I read the Bible, and I believe it," he said.

For some reason, I opened up to him about my fears regarding evil spirits. He listened thoughtfully.

"Look, why don't you read the Bible?" he said.

That was a good question. God no longer seemed like a fable to me. I knew evil spirits existed, and I sensed that they were being restrained by a higher power. I read the Bible and prayed.

As I read, I sensed a distinct voice say inside me, "Leave your addictions."

I didn't want to give up everything, and I thought, "I can still enjoy some of my addictions." Then it struck me that I had never been able to quit my addictions

Story Tips

- Ask a man to share this first-person testimony.
- Watch Axel on YouTube: bit.ly/Axel-Domingues.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/why-suffer).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/ted-13th-projects.

Mission Post

- In 1861, the Review and Herald magazine published letters from Ireland reporting that five persons had begun keeping the seventh-day Sabbath as a result of receiving books and papers from relatives in the United States.

piecemeal, so why not to try to quit everything at once?

At that moment, an evil voice came to my mind.

“What are you doing?” it asked.

When I heard the voice, I understood that something serious was happening. I gave up all my addictions immediately.

The Bible was a joy to read. Genesis 3 showed me that God didn’t forsake man at the fall and had a salvation plan. I saw that God’s prophecies about the Israelites came true. My faith increased, and I saw that the Bible was not fiction.

Months passed, and I graduated and moved to Dublin, Ireland, to work as a software engineer.

One day, my former atheist friend sent me a link to a YouTube sermon about the origin of sin. I liked the speaker, a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist, and

looked for more of his sermons. But when he spoke in a sermon about Saturday being the Sabbath, I rejected his message as too strange.

But the Sabbath sermon stuck in my mind. The word for “Saturday” in my native Portuguese is “Sábado,” or Sabbath. It seemed to me that there must be a biblical explanation for why all the Christian world worshipped on Sunday, and I determined to find it in the Bible. But I found no verse changing the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.

I returned to the Adventist evangelist on YouTube. His sermons on the Sabbath and end-time prophecy made sense, and I accepted the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the church of God.

Finding the address for an Adventist church online, I attended worship services and later Bible studies. I began to understand why I had experienced so much suffering in my childhood. It wasn’t because of God. It was because of sin and the bad choices that I and other people in my life had made. As David said in Psalms 16:4, “Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god.”

I was baptized at the age of 26.

Today, I am happily married to Joana, a Brazilian nurse, whom I met at the Adventist church in Dublin. She also was baptized in Ireland. We are working, giving Bible studies, and helping out at church. We are praying for God to show us what He wants us to do next. 🌍

Thank you for your 2017 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering that helped open a church and community center in Axel’s new hometown of Dublin, Ireland.

By Axel Domingues as told to Andrew McChesney

Forgiveness After Divorce

TED | June 20

Mary



Mary left her husband when she was 30. She had biblical grounds for the divorce, but she didn't say a word to anyone because she didn't want to publicize private matters. Moreover, her former in-laws were respected members of the local Seventh-day Adventist church, which she still attended.

Church members didn't understand why Mary's marriage had ended, and they blamed her. Several bluntly told her that she had forfeited salvation by leaving her husband.

Mary, who had been raised in the Adventist Church, stopped worshipping on Sabbath and finally moved across the country to start a new life.

But inner demons tormented her. While no one condemned her divorce in the new town, she couldn't forget it. She felt like a failure. She wondered whether God loved her despite the divorce.

Desperate for answers, she went online

and typed the word "God." The huge number of results overwhelmed her, and she switched off the computer.

Turning on the television, she clicked through the channels. A channel run by a charismatic Christian denomination caught her attention, but the faith healings and speaking in tongues frightened her. She refused to watch. But she noticed a weekly program hosted by a female speaker on the channel. The woman spoke calmly and sensibly. Mary watched regularly for several weeks.

One evening, the woman spoke about forgiveness.

"No one is able to forgive on their own," she said. "You need the help of God."

Those words returned to Mary's mind as she drove to work the next morning. With a start, she realized that she needed to forgive her former husband and his parents, the unkind church members and, most of all, herself.

She felt an irresistible desire to pray to God for help.

Weeping, she tried to pray, but the tears

made it impossible to drive and pray at the same time. She pulled over to the side of the road.

“I would like to forgive, but I am not able to do it,” she prayed. “If I get forgiveness as a gift, I will follow You.”

Almost immediately came the reply.

“I will help you,” a kind male voice said.

Mary cried even more — but now she was weeping for joy. She knew that heaven had heard her prayer and promised to help.

Mary remained in the car at the side of the road for another 30 minutes. She had made a promise to follow God, and she wasn't sure how to fulfill it.

“I was raised an Adventist,” she prayed. “How should I now live?”

An answer came to mind: Read the Bible and the writings of church cofounder Ellen White.

Mary returned home to wash her face and then drove to work. She arrived an hour late.

After work, Mary opened her Bible and began to read. She read every spare minute. When she couldn't sleep at night, she got up and read some more. Mary had never enjoyed reading books, but now she had a seemingly insatiable desire to read.

“I read because I needed to find out who God is,” Mary said in an interview. “I had such a huge hunger.”

In a year, she read the Bible three times and completed the five books of Ellen White's *Conflict of the Ages* series.

Working up the courage, Mary spoke with the local Adventist pastor about her divorce. He formed a Bible study group just for Mary. He hoped that the Bible study group would help draw her back to church and God.

Story Tips

- Adventist Mission is not identifying Mary by her real name or revealing her whereabouts so as to respect the privacy of relatives and church members whom she loves.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/forgiveness-after-divorce).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/13th-projects.

Mary loved the group.

“I was so enthusiastic because I was filled with the things that I had read,” she said.

After evangelistic meetings, Mary began to attend Sabbath services at the church regularly.

Sometime later, she saw her former in-laws. To her surprise, she felt no shame and no longer had any hard feelings toward them. They were friends.

Mary also has forgiven the church members who spoke unkindly. She can't even remember their names.

“I feel forgiven,” she said. “I am at peace.”

Today, Mary is an active member in her local congregation and a leader of a Thirteenth Sabbath project in the Trans-European Division. She still reads the Bible daily, going through it at least once a year, and spends about an hour every day reading Ellen White's writings.

In the interview, her eyes filled with tears as she remembered the day that God helped her forgive others and herself.

“I received forgiveness as a gift,” she said. “This story has forever changed my relationship with God.” 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Befriending a Shoeshiner

13th SABBATH: CYPRUS | June 27

Filip Dmitrov, 49 (left)
Yulian Jankov, 49



Note: The narrator doesn't need to memorize the story, but he or she should be familiar enough with the material so as not to have to read it.

The man shining shoes caught Filip Dmitrov's attention in Cyprus' capital, Nicosia.

The stale odor of tobacco smoke clung to his clothes. His hands shook from alcoholism.

Filip didn't ask for a shoe shine.

"How are you doing, my friend?" Filip asked, speaking in Bulgarian. "Do you need any help?"

The man, Yulian Jankov, looked surprised. No one had asked him such a question since he moved from Bulgaria a decade earlier. It was pleasant to hear someone expressing an interest in him.

But Yulian remained silent.

"Jesus loves each one of us no matter what situation we are in," Filip said. "He gave his life for us."

The mention of Jesus impressed Yulian.

The next day, Filip returned.

"How are you doing, my friend?" he asked. "Do you need any help?"

Yulian was surprised that the stranger had returned. Again Filip didn't ask for his shoes to be polished. Instead, he encouraged Yulian not to waste his money on alcohol and cigarettes.

"It would be wise to put some money aside for savings," he said.

Every day, Filip spoke with Yulian. Eventually, they exchanged introductions and began to converse. Yulian said he had worked in construction after arriving with his family in Cyprus, but he had lost his job and was kicked out of his home for drinking.

"My family has rejected me," he said. "One by one, even my closest friends have left me."

Thirteenth Sabbath Program

➤ Congregational Song	“God Will Take Care of You” <i>The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , No. 99
➤ Welcome	Superintendent or Sabbath School teacher
➤ Prayer	
➤ Program	“Befriending a Shoe-Shiner”
➤ Offering	
➤ Closing Song	“How Far From Home?” <i>The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , No. 439
➤ Closing Prayer	

One day, Yulian led his friend to the abandoned building where he slept. The sight brought tears to Filip’s eyes. Yulian slept on a hard floor. He owned nothing but the clothes that he was wearing. His income went only for alcohol and cigarettes.

“You have gone so far,” Filip said, softly. “You have ruined your life, and you need to do something about it. You need help. To God, nothing is impossible. You know, God loves you.”

Filip began to talk about God and to pray with Yulian. Yulian sensed that Filip saw something valuable in him. He began to see God’s love in his life.

One day, Filip said, “Soon you will be 50, and you have only served Satan. It’s time to give your life to Christ, and He will bless you.”

Yulian wanted change.

“I’m ready to give my life to God,” he replied.

Although he had drunk heavily for 35 years, he gave up alcohol that day. Although he had smoked heavily for 35 years, he quit a week later.

Filip and Yulian studied the Bible together. The two men attended Bulgarian-language Bible study groups that Filip led in various places in Cyprus.

Yulian learned that Filip, a native Bulgarian, was a full-time lay preacher employed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the Mediterranean island. Eight people had been baptized through Filip’s work in three years, a significant number for a country where the Adventist Church has only 103 members in a population of 1.1 million.

Yulian became the ninth baptism when he plunged beneath the waters of the Mediterranean Sea on June 23, 2018.

After being baptized, good things started happening in Yulian’s life. He found work

in a hotel kitchen that allowed him to take off Sabbaths, a rarity in Cyprus. His family welcomed him back home.

He tells everyone who will listen about his love for God.

“From the day of my baptism, I can’t stop praising God for what He has done in my life and what He is ready to do for every person,” Yulian said in an interview. “Whenever I meet a new person, I like to share my story. I say, ‘If God did it for me, He can do it for you.’” 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help construct a much-needed church building and community center where three Adventist congregations will meet in Cyprus’ capital, Nicosia. Thank you for your generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for this and the two other important projects in the Trans-European Division today.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Watch Filip and Yulian on YouTube: bit.ly/Yulian-Jankov.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/befriending-shoeshiner).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/ted-13th-projects.

Mission Post

- The first Seventh-day Adventist to go to Cyprus was Moses Boursalian, an Armenian who fled there with his family from Antioch, Turkey, around 1912. For years he quietly sold combs made by his family, traveling from village to village on donkey back and speaking of his beliefs to his neighbors. Later, his son John became the first Adventist colporteur on the island.

Future Thirteenth Sabbath Projects

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering next quarter will help the West-Central Africa Division to:

- Construct Kobaya Academy, a K-12 school, in Conakry, Guinea
- Open an elementary school and urban center of influence in Buchanan, Liberia
- Establish a medical center in Abuja, Nigeria



Leader's Resources

Be sure to download your free **Mission Spotlight** video, featuring video reports from around the Trans-European Division and beyond. Download or stream from the Adventist Mission website at the link: bit.ly/missionspotlight. Download a list of fast facts to share in Sabbath School: bit.ly/fast-facts-TED20.

Online Information

Following are sources of information that may be helpful in preparing for the mission segment of Sabbath School. For more information on the cultures and history of the countries featured in this quarterly, visit:

Websites

Cyprus: government website	bit.ly/CypGovt
Visit Cyprus	bit.ly/VisitCyp
Finland: government website	bit.ly/FinGovt
Discovering Finland	bit.ly/DiscFin
Ireland: government website	bit.ly/IreGovt
Discover Ireland	bit.ly/DiscIre
Norway: government website	bit.ly/NorGovt
Visit Norway	bit.ly/VisitNor
Poland: government website	bit.ly/PolGovt
Poland Travel	bit.ly/PolTrav
Serbia: government website	bit.ly/SerbGov
Lonely Planet	bit.ly/LPSerb
Seventh-day Adventist	
Trans-European Division	bit.ly/SDATED
South-East European Union Conference	bit.ly/SEEUC
Polish Union Conference	bit.ly/SDAPoUC
Norwegian Union Conference	bit.ly/SDANoUC
Finland Union of Churches Conference	bit.ly/SDAFinUCC
Irish Mission	bit.ly/SDAIreMiss
Cyprus Section	bit.ly/SDACypSec

Remind your Sabbath School members that their regular weekly mission offerings will help the missionary work of the world church and that one quarter of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will go directly to the projects in the Trans-European Division. On the twelfth Sabbath, report on mission giving during the quarter. Encourage members to double or triple their normal mission giving on Thirteenth Sabbath. Count the offering and record the amount given at the end of Sabbath School.

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YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

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Website: AdventistMission.org

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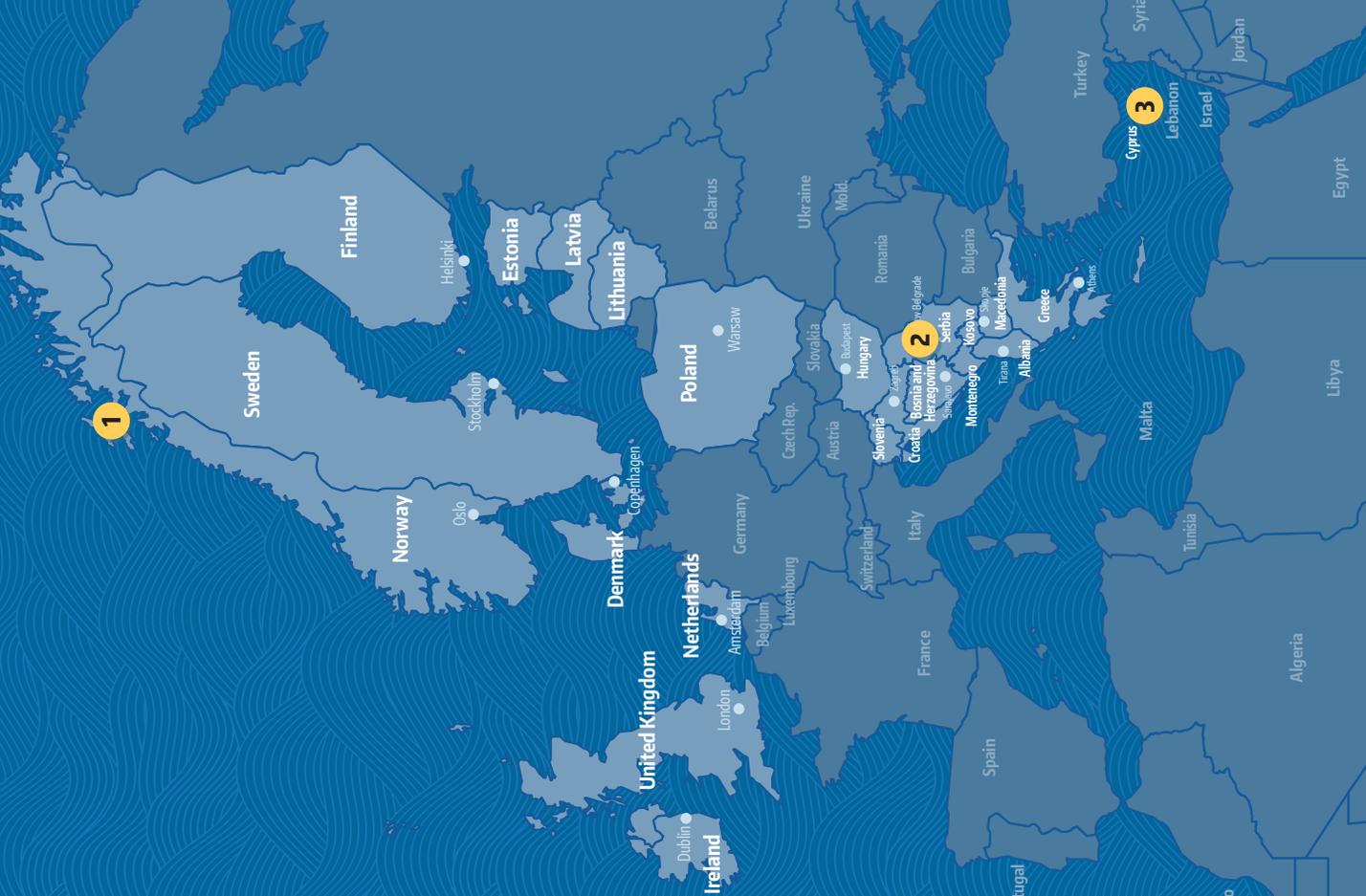
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Greenland

Iceland

TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION

CONFERENCE	CHURCHES	COMPANIES	MEMBERSHIP	POPULATION
Adriatic Union Conference	94	15	3,664	9,050,000
Baltic Union Conference	89	8	5,986	6,033,000
British Union Conference	294	112	38,213	71,546,000
Danish Union of Churches Conference	39	1	2,447	5,892,000
Finland Union of Churches Conference	62	9	4,678	5,518,000
Hungarian Union Conference	113	29	5,223	9,758,000
Netherlands Union of Churches Conference	58	16	6,002	17,235,000
Norwegian Union Conference	62	2	4,535	5,314,000
Polish Union Conference	115	26	5,790	38,434,000
South-East European Union Conference	210	6	7,378	15,016,000
Swedish Union of Churches Conference	32	4	2,916	10,183,000
Cyprus Section	2	1	103	876,000
Greek Mission	11	3	463	10,600,000
Iceland Conference	6	1	469	354,000
Totals	1,187	233	87,867	205,809,000

PROJECTS

- 1 Open a center of influence in Sortland, Norway
- 2 Establish a church in New Belgrade, Serbia
- 3 Construct a church and center of influence in Nicosia, Cyprus