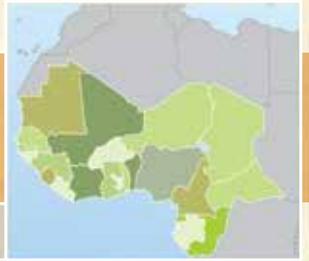




YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

2014 • **QUARTER 1** • WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION



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On the Cover: A church member in Dakar, Senegal, smiles as she welcomes visitors to her church on Sabbath morning.

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 = stories of special interest to teens

Goodbye Miss Charlotte



Charlotte Ishkanian and friend from the Himba tribe in Namibia

We are in transition! After 20 years writing mission stories for children and adults around the world, our good friend Charlotte Ishkanian is stepping down. Over the years she has been responsible for stories that have filled thousands of pages in *Mission* magazines and other outlets. Thanks to her faithful promotion of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings, countless mission projects have been completed. We wish her well as she takes on other responsibilities.



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Dear Sabbath School Leader,

We are thankful for the dedicated work Charlotte Ishkanian has done over the years. We thought you might be interested to know a little about her adventurous spirit as she traveled the globe to gather mission stories.

Mission Adventures

Charlotte has traveled to 140 countries to gather mission stories for Sabbath School. Along the way she has had many adventures, flying in ancient planes better equipped to haul cargo than people, and even riding in a car accompanied by an AK-47 rifle on the seat beside her. (She was careful not to touch it!)

In the Philippines she took a boat to a baptism on an island. As the boat neared the shore, the passengers had to jump into a small rowboat for the trip to shore. Just as Charlotte jumped, the small boat moved, and she landed in the mud on the bottom of the boat. Mud covered her Sabbath

clothes, but she laughed as the boatman rowed to shore, where she continued interviewing people who had stories for her to share with the rest of the world.

Roughing It

She has slept in mud huts with thatched roofs (and a sheet over the door to keep the animals out) and shared “upper rooms” of church offices with odd-looking lizards and big cockroaches. She has eaten Indian curry and rice with her fingers and Chinese food with chopsticks. She has listened to stories while sitting in the back of a pickup bouncing along a rutted dirt road, while sitting on a bag of corn, and even while sitting on a tree stump.

Charlotte has spent many months away from her children, often without e-mail or a telephone. But while she missed them, they were bound together by prayer. She most enjoyed meeting her brothers and sisters in God’s big family, bound together by His love.

Next quarter you’ll meet Gina Wahlen, the new editor of *Mission*. Charlotte joins all of us as we welcome Gina to the team!

Sincerely,

Nancy Kyte
Marketing Director

Opportunities

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will go to help provide:

- A primary school in Parakou, Benin
- A primary school in Dakar, Senegal
- CHILDREN’S PROJECT: library books for the new schools in Benin and Senegal

We're Not Ready Yet

CAPE VERDE | January 4

Lydia



Sundays were always busy for Lydia and her brother and sisters. Her parents were very devout and made sure that the entire family was actively involved in their local church. The day was even more special when Sunday dinners were shared with aunts, uncles, and cousins. When they counted their blessings, life seemed good in Cape Verde, especially when they stopped to admire the beauty of the ocean and the verdant mountains of their island.

One day they became acquainted with a man named Moises. They learned that he was an elder from a nearby Seventh-day Adventist church. Lydia's mother was interested to learn that the church members studied the Bible together every Saturday morning. She decided to visit the church and learn more about the Bible classes Moises had told her about.

The Visit

One Sabbath Lydia's mother took her five children to visit the Adventist church. She enjoyed the classes immensely and brought her children with her to church every week. She wanted her children to hear stories that would help them build good characters and to learn more about Jesus. Eventually she decided to become baptized, even though her husband was against it.

Lydia wasn't interested in the sermons at first, but she loved the hymns. It was the sound of the music that she enjoyed, and she truly loved to sing. The words of the songs began to speak to her heart. In time, she and her older sister were baptized. She became involved in various church activities, but it was the choir that she loved most.

Lydia's voice improved, and it soon became apparent that she was very talented. A group of singers from Cape Verde invited her to sing with them at an event in the public square. Soon they asked her to join their group and sign a contract to travel with them to France. What an opportunity! Plus, they would pay her very well for singing with them.

She thought long and hard about it.

Her family was very poor, so the money would be a great benefit to them. She would be proud to help them in this way.

What should she do? she wondered. *Was this part of God's plan? Or would it be better to help her family at home?* She wasn't sure, but she wanted to be able to help her family financially. Her father agreed that she should sign the contract and go with the singing group. Her mother, however, didn't want her to go.

The Dream

Lydia decided she would sign the contract on Thursday. But after she fell asleep on Wednesday night, she had a dream. "We were on the roof of my house—my parents, the rest of my family, and all my neighbors. In the dream the children were playing and the adults were talking. Suddenly we heard a noise and we saw something coming down. At first it looked like snow. My mother said it was the end of the world, but my father said it was a war. I was afraid and hid behind my mother. I told her that if it was the end of the world, she should tell God we weren't ready yet.

"A cloud with a bright light was

coming closer. Inside the cloud we could see someone dressed in a white robe. I clung to my mother while everyone was shouting, 'Jesus! Jesus!' Then the crowd divided, and God said, 'Lydia, why are you hiding from Me?' I was trembling and didn't know what to say. Then God said, 'I came to tell you to trust Me and follow Me. It's not the end of the world yet.' Then He smiled at me and waved." In the dream Lydia waved back as the cloud rose higher and higher before disappearing.

She must have shouted in her sleep, because her parents came running into her bedroom and woke her up, asking what had happened. She wasn't ready to tell them about her dream, so her parents sat on the floor in her bedroom until she went back to sleep.

The Decision

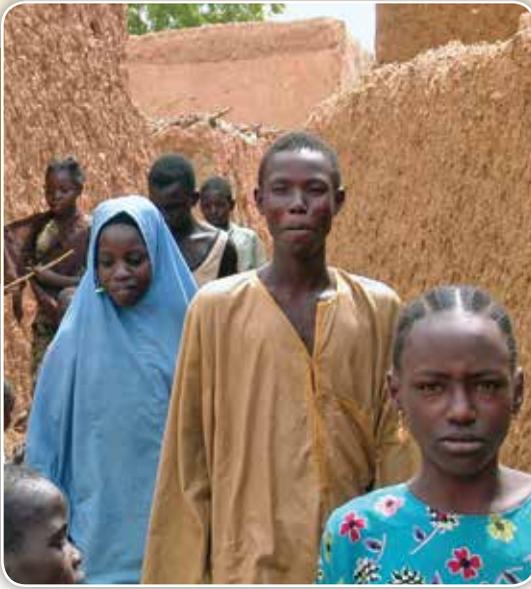
The next morning they asked her what had happened. She told them that she had made a decision. Even though she already had money and a new passport so she could travel with the singing group, she decided not to sign the contract that day. She never sang with the group again. Instead, she organized a singing group at her own church. They traveled from place to place in the islands of Cape Verde. She learned how to witness to others through her music, and eventually she married the church pianist.

Today Lydia and her family live in Dakar, Senegal. Their lives are centered upon God. She is actively involved in children's ministry at her church. She and her husband have a little boy, and they are awaiting the arrival of a second baby.

Lydia thanks God for what He has done for her. She is honoring her commitment to follow Him for the rest of her life. 🌍

Fast Facts

- The islands of Cape Verde rise from the depths of the Atlantic Ocean about 300 miles off the coast of West Africa.
- Active volcanoes, deep canyons, desert plains, and beaches make up the landscape.
- The islanders can feel the breeze from the Atlantic Ocean and the trade winds from the Sahara Desert.



Niger's Children

Life in Niger

[Note: Ask three people to participate in this program, as narrator, Mariama, and Mustapha.]

Narrator: How do you reach a country for Christ when almost no one in that country is a Christian and it is not legal to tell someone about Jesus? That is when Christians must seek ways to find spiritually hungry people. Sometimes the church has been able to enter such countries through medical work, or schools, or through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). Even governments that want nothing to do with Christianity welcome ADRA projects.

The Challenge of Niger

Niger [Nee-JAIR] is a nation of about 9 million people. The majority are Muslims. It is not legal to talk about Jesus or try to convert Muslims to Christianity. When people have tried, they have been put in jail, threatened with death, or ordered to leave the country.

But God has ways. Let's visit an ADRA-sponsored school in Niger and talk with some young people who have found that Christ can make a difference in their lives.

As we enter the school we notice that the children are all older than 10. Many families do not send their older children to school, but keep them home to help the family earn money. So children who have not gone to school before their tenth birthday seldom learn to read or write. But at the ADRA school the emphasis is on teaching older children, and even parents how to read and write.

We see girls in this school. Many parents do not feel it is important for girls to learn to read. But at the ADRA school, girls are welcomed, and both they and the boys eagerly learn to read and write. They also learn good health habits and how to plan a proper diet. And they learn about Jesus.

Let's meet one of these students. Her name is Mariama.* She is 14 years old.

Mariama: I'm so happy to attend the ADRA school! When I was 10 years old my mother arranged for me to marry a boy a few years older than I. I didn't want to marry, and I told her so. She became very angry. If I married this boy my mother

would receive money and gifts from the boy's family. But my father understood and allowed me to refuse the marriage. He also supported me when I wanted to attend school. If it hadn't been for my father and the ADRA school, I might never have had the chance to get an education.

Every week we listen to stories about Jesus. The teachers tell us that Jesus loves us and wants the best for us. They teach us songs and read stories about Jesus. I began attending Sabbath School so I could learn more. But when I told my family about Jesus, they weren't happy! Sometimes I've been beaten because I want to be a Christian. Sometimes my mother makes me go to bed hungry to convince me to remain in our family's religion. But I want to be faithful to Jesus. I still attend school and church, and I still try to tell my family that Jesus loves them too.

Mustapha: I am Mustapha [Mu-STAH-fa]. I am a 12-year-old boy. I too wanted to attend the ADRA school, but my father wouldn't allow it. I wanted to learn so much that I began sneaking off to school. I stood outside the doors and listened.

One day the teacher discovered that I was coming to school against my father's wishes. He talked with me for a long time, and I told him of my desire to learn. He decided to urge my father to permit me to enroll in this school. But my father, who is a strict Muslim, refused. Then a welfare worker convinced my father to allow me to enroll in the ADRA school. I was so happy! Now I can be in class without fearing that my father will be angry.

For several months I listened to the Bible stories and attended the special Sabbath services. Then one day the Bible teacher invited any student who wanted

to become a Christian to stand up. I stood up. I wanted to be a Christian, just like my teacher!

Narrator: The teachers at the school that Mariama and Mustapha attend want every child to have a chance to learn. They want to teach the whole person—mentally, physically and spiritually—and to show the children and their families the love of God. They do this in an atmosphere that permits them to maintain their Islamic beliefs if they so choose.

Last year the Niger government gave the Adventist school an excellent piece of property so we can build a school for kindergarten and primary children. The land was given just weeks before the beginning of the school year, so only temporary classrooms were built, using native straw-thatched roofs. When school opened, 200 children registered!

By this school year two permanent brick buildings were ready, and 320 students enrolled. In addition, the school teaches older students, ages 10 to 20, to read.

The ADRA staff organized weekly afternoon programs for the older students. They include singing, handicrafts, and other projects, plus prayer and some religious instruction. At first some students resisted the religious exercises and prayer, but soon they asked their teachers to include prayer in their morning classes as well.

God is working quietly in the hearts of people in this Muslim country. Please pray for our workers and new believers and their families. 🌍

**Mariama and Mustapha are real people, but their names have been changed to protect them and our school. Riccardo Orsucci was the ADRA director and president of the Niger Mission Station at the time of this writing. Edwin Eisele worked in the Sahel Union Mission, located in Lome, Togo.*

Air-conditioned Evangelist

SENEGAL | January 18

Francis



Francis was not impressed with the church his sister had joined. For one thing, she changed the way she dressed, and there were certain foods she no longer wanted to eat. But worst of all, she wouldn't work on Saturdays. What kind of people won't work on Saturdays, he wondered. They are lazy people! Jobs are hard enough to find. How do they expect to make a living if they won't work on Saturdays?

Privately Francis mocked his sister for becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, but he decided to be patient. Once she was thinking straight again, he was sure she would come back to the religion they were raised in.

Not Impressed

After she had spent the day at church, she would come home in a joyful, cheerful mood. She would tell him about the stories she had heard. She shared what

the pastor spoke about. Sometimes she sang a song she had learned. He listened politely—she was his sister, after all—but he still wasn't impressed. Nevertheless, it was nice to see her so happy.

One day he asked her to explain why she worshipped on Saturday. She opened her Bible and showed him several passages. *It makes sense*, he thought, *but I will never become an Adventist myself.*

He was surprised to find himself at a prayer meeting on a Wednesday night at her church. His sister had invited him, and the next thing he knew, he was there. The message he heard touched his heart. Before he realized it, he was attending meetings at the church regularly, drinking in the Bible truths he was learning. He made a decision to follow Christ for the rest of his life. As Francis rose from the baptismal waters,

he laughed because he had indeed become an Adventist, something he had vowed he would never do.

You're Fired!

Francis had been studying to become an air-conditioner installer, but now he didn't believe that he could continue his training on Saturdays. After many fitful nights, praying about what he should do, Francis decided to talk to his boss. The employer exploded in anger. "I'm the boss, and I work on Saturdays. You are just an apprentice! You think you can slack off? You can do whatever you want after the course is completed, but I'll fire you if you don't show up for the training." His parents tried to intervene on his behalf, but it didn't help. He was fired anyway.

It was a discouraging time for Francis. No job, no money, and still living with his parents. People started telling him how foolish he was. *Why would you give up a good job that will give you food tomorrow? Now you have nothing*, they would say. Francis told them that God must come first in his life now. He began to do door-to-door evangelism as he considered his future.

Francis continued to pray that God would help him find another opportunity so that he could continue his training. Through a series of referrals and connections, he found a place that didn't require Saturday work. He possessed an innate ability to understand how machines worked and how to repair them. Those who knew him were not surprised that he graduated at the top of his class.

Success at last

Francis was thrilled when the members who had been praying for him held a special celebration for him at the church. He was grateful for their support, and they were proud of his achievement, and inspired by his faithfulness.

In just a few short years he earned a solid reputation for doing honest, high-quality work. Francis excelled in his business and soon had a steady income.

Francis still enjoys his air-conditioning career, but he especially loves evangelism. He has used his own money to sponsor evangelistic meetings, and he discovered a talent for leading out. Seven people were baptized recently as a result of this outreach. Today he is married and has three children. His personal motto is "Ask God; He always answers." 🌍

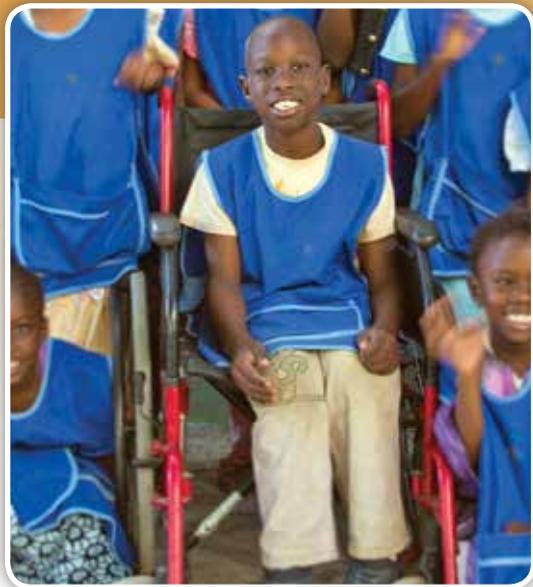
Mission Post

- Senegal has a literacy rate of just 41 percent. Benin is just slightly higher at 42 percent. Many children are not able to go to school because of overcrowding. Providing Seventh-day Adventist primary schools in Senegal and Benin will open doors to literacy for countless young people, and opportunities for them to become acquainted with Jesus Christ.
- Currently, there are six Seventh-day Adventist churches, with 555 members in the Senegal/Mauritania Mission. The region's population is 16,731,000. In Benin, there are 16 Adventist churches with 5,564 members.
- Learn more by downloading your FREE Adventist Mission DVD at www.adventistmission.org/dvd

Jean Paul's Joy

SENEGAL | January 25

Jean Paul



[Editor's note: The following story is from the *Children's Mission* magazine for this quarter. Its sweet message touched our hearts, so we are sharing it with the youth and adults as well.]

Jean Paul was sad and lonely. He wanted to make friends, but other children avoided him or acted as if they didn't see him. Recess time was the hardest for Jean Paul. The children often played soccer, his favorite game. But he wasn't invited to play. You see, Jean Paul had a disease called polio that left his legs too weak to hold him, and now he's unable to walk. He must use a wheelchair to get around.

Jean Paul's parents were worried too. The school Jean Paul attended didn't want to keep him as a student. "We cannot meet Jean Paul's needs here," the

principal explained. "We have stairs, and your son can't climb them."

Jean Paul's parents looked at several schools in the city, but when the principals learned that Jean Paul used a wheelchair, they said that they couldn't meet his needs.

Finding a School

Then someone suggested a small Adventist school in the city. Perhaps Jean Paul could study there. His parents drove to the school. It wasn't as nice as some of the other schools they had visited, but the principal welcomed them and showed them around the little three-room primary school.

When Jean Paul's parents returned to the principal's office, they looked at each other and then turned to the principal. "Our son is bright," Jean Paul's father said. "But he—he can't walk. He had polio, and he must use a wheelchair." The parents waited for the look of rejection on the principal's face, but instead the principal smiled.

"Would you like to bring your son to

the school to meet the children?” the principal asked. “I’m sure we can make arrangements to accommodate him here.”

On Monday morning Jean Paul’s parents drove to the little Adventist school. Jean Paul scooted into his wheelchair, and his parents pushed him toward the school.

The principal met the family and introduced Jean Paul to the students. The children greeted him, and the teacher showed him to his desk. “Welcome!” the children said.

A Place to Belong

At recess the children hurried to the door of the classroom. He turned his wheelchair toward the door and found that one of the boys had put a piece of

wood at the doorway to allow Jean Paul to ride outside. The children stood ready for kick off for a game of soccer. But Jean Paul held back.

The teacher walked up beside Jean Paul and asked, “Do you like soccer?”

“Yes, sir,” Jean Paul said. “I play goalie.”

“Lucas! Omar! I think we have a new goalie for your team!” the teacher called. Omar hurried over and looked at the teacher. “Jean Paul says he plays goalie,” the teacher said. “Do you think your team could use a goalie?”

Omar saw the teacher’s smile and said, “Sure!” Omar pushed Jean Paul’s wheelchair closer to the goalpost, and Jean Paul slid out onto the ground. He couldn’t walk, but he could sure move fast! The game began, and Jean Paul managed to prevent several goals by grabbing the ball or by swinging his body to block it from entering the goal area.

From that day on Jean Paul has been the boys’ team goalie at the Adventist school in Dakar.

“I’m so glad to be in this school,” Jean Paul says. “The children here are kind to me. They let me play with them, and they include me in their work groups in class.”

A Mission to Dakar

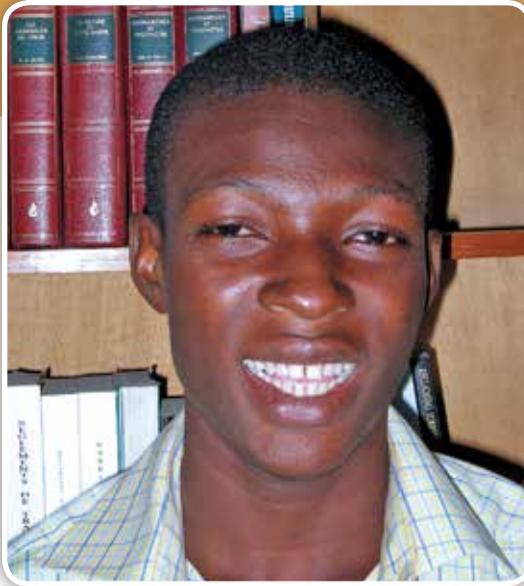
Only a few children in Jean Paul’s school are from Adventist homes. Most are Muslim, for Senegal is a mostly Muslim country. But together the children are learning to serve God and respect one another.

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help build more classrooms at the little Adventist school. And our children’s offering will help buy books to create a library so that all the children can read more about God. 🌍

Fast Facts

- Senegal is the westernmost country in Africa. Dakar is the capital and largest city. Dakar is located on a point of land that juts out into the Atlantic Ocean.
- Senegal has a hot climate and a rainy season and a dry season.
- Lots of wildlife lives throughout the country, but the biggest animals—elephants, lions, cheetahs, and antelopes—live in the eastern half of the country, where fewer people live.
- French is the official language of Senegal, although nearly everyone in the country speaks at least one African language.
- About 94 percent of the people living in Senegal are Muslims; the remaining 6 percent are Christian or follow traditional beliefs.

The Ghost Dancer



BENIN | February 1

Daniel

comes to a priestess for service, that person becomes a servant of the priestess and of the spirit of the sea. You can tell who these priestesses are because on Friday they all wear white.

Women who came to the priestess are told to whisper their problem to a cowry shell. The shell is put near an idol, which is supposed to whisper the person's problem to the priestess. Then the priestess tosses the shell on the ground and chants. The position of the cowry shell tells the priestess what the problem is. Then the priestess tells the person what they must do and bring to receive what they wish. Sometimes they must bring an animal sacrifice before they receive the herbs or oil that will "cure" their illness.

My father worshipped the spirits of dead people. He called on them to come back and bring peace to people who were troubled.

The Dancing Devils

I was supposed to follow my parents into voodoo. My father initiated me into the secrets of how he does his work. He explained that the "ghosts" that dance during voodoo ceremonies are really just men or boys. He invited me to join him in the dancing and be one of the "ghosts." He told me that if I danced well, people would give me money. "But be careful," he warned, "for others will become jealous and will try to kill you."

[Ask a teen boy to present this first-person report.]

I am Daniel—at least that is the name I have taken. I live in the country of Benin, the birthplace of voodoo.

My grandmother was a voodoo priestess. When she died, my mother took her place. My father was also a voodoo worshipper, so I was deeply into voodoo. I watched my parents perform many voodoo ceremonies.

My mother and grandmother said that they belonged to the spirit from the sea. They believe that a spirit in the sea takes possession of a person who must become a priestess. The person, nearly always a woman, performs ceremonies to make women fertile, to help people get jobs or money, to make a man fall in love with them, or to give people power. People bring a goat, chicken, drinks, or money to have a service performed. Once a person

One time some people hired our group of dancing devils to perform in a ceremony. I danced very well and got quite a bit of money. I didn't notice that anyone seemed jealous, but when I returned home I didn't feel well.

A few days later my legs became swollen and painful. I showed my father, who recognized that someone had put a curse on me. He said it was urgent that I get treatment, or I could die. I didn't know who had cursed me, but I was afraid.

I went to an old voodoo priest, and within a few days I felt better. But I decided that this devil dancing was too dangerous and that I needed to get out of it—fast.

Turnaround

I had heard of Jesus, but I laughed at Christians, for I didn't think their God was any different from voodoo gods. But after my brush with death, I was not going to make fun of anyone's God. When I heard an evangelist speaking one day, I went inside the tent and listened. It seemed that the speaker knew me, for he spoke right to me. I was touched, and continued attending the meetings. When the pastor invited people to abandon traditional gods and give our lives to God, I stood. I wanted to become God's servant.

I kept my decision to become a Christian a secret from my parents, for I knew that they would be angry. But I studied the Bible with the evangelist. And when I was ready, I went to a distant city to be baptized.

Shortly after my baptism my father called me to dance in a big ghost festival in our home village. I told my father, "No, I don't dance anymore." He insisted, so I took a deep breath and said, "I have found

a power that is stronger than witchcraft." I knew that my words were a challenge to my father and the ghost dancers who go into the bush to practice and do their juju [witchcraft], usually by putting crushed herbs on their skin.

Kidnapped

When I did not show up for the practice session in the bush, some people came to remind me. I told them I was not going to dance. They argued and tried to convince me, but I refused. Then these dancers grabbed me and forced me to go with them.

When we arrived at the place where the ghost dancers were preparing for the dance, someone forced me to drink something, and I lost consciousness. They tried to wake me, but I did not wake up until the next day. They tried to get me to dance, but I could not even stand. Finally my father told them to leave me alone. I slept through the entire ghost ceremony.

After the ceremonies ended and I regained consciousness, my father took me aside and reminded me of vows I had taken not to tell anyone what we did in our dancing. Then a friend told me to leave the village or face death. I left and have not returned.

I was 18 years old, had no job and no money, with just three or four years of education. But God has not abandoned me. I am learning a trade so that I can support myself. It is not safe for me to go back, for I know that the other people in the ghost group will try to kill me. I am not afraid of them, for I believe that Jesus is stronger than voodoo gods. Your mission offering provides missionaries to tell the people of Benin and the world that Jesus is the only true God. Please give generously to missions. 

A Light in the Village

BENIN | February 8

Pastor Simon Djossou



As Yefunde [Yeh-FOON-deh] bent over her shovel, turning the soil around each mound of yams, she thought about her three daughters who were walking to school with their friends. If only it wasn't such a long walk into town, but what else could they do? There was no school bus to pick them up. The farming community where they lived was at the edge of Parakou, in the central part of Benin, and there simply wasn't another school that was closer.

Jibade [Jee-BAH-deh] was sharpening a farm tool when he heard the wail of an ambulance pass by. "Dear God," he prayed, "please let my children be OK. The youngest one is so little! Please, God, please help all five of them get to school safely." All of the parents worried whenever they heard sirens, knowing that heavy traffic made the road very dangerous.

Busy Road

The road into Parakou was in good condition, but it was always crowded and busy. Cross-country trucks roared by, scarcely leaving room for motorbikes, cars, and pedestrians. Those who didn't have transportation had to share the highway with all of the traffic. This is the route the children had to use to walk to school. They had to be alert at all times, taking great care to squeeze over to the very edge of the road as they walked to school. At the end of the day their mothers and fathers would watch for their children to return down the path from the busy road, sighing with relief when each child was accounted for.

All of the adults worked in the fields every day. Mothers often toiled with babies tied to their backs. After school, the older brothers and sisters would give them a break by carrying the babies on their backs or tending the younger children as they did their chores.

Land for a School

The village chief and the members of the tribal council discussed the school situation many times over the years. Then

Fast Facts

- Benin and neighboring Togo are tiny countries wedged between Ghana and Nigeria in West Africa. Over 5,500 Adventists worship in Benin, a country with a population of more than 9.3 million.
- These countries are called the capital of voodooism; more than half the population of Benin still practice tribal religions.
- Voodoo is a powerful form of witchcraft in parts of Africa and the Caribbean. It incorporates ancestor worship and devil worship with superstition and animal sacrifice. Followers of voodoo invite spirits to enter into their chosen “fetish”: an idol, a charm, or even a mixture of leaves and water.
- *Gris-gris* [pronounced gree-gree] is a medium of magic—the ceremony performed as part of a voodoo ceremony—or it can refer to a combination of objects that have been made powerful by a fetish priest or witch doctor.

the chief had an idea which he shared with the councilmen. He owned quite a bit of land. What if he were to donate some of the land to an organization that would build a new school on the property? Their children would have a chance to get a good education close to home. They wouldn't have to walk so far to school. With a school close by, there would be a greater chance that they would finish their education and have better job opportunities in the future. But where could they find someone to build a school?

Whom could they trust? They didn't know that God was already at work.

Currently there is not even one Seventh-day Adventist school in the entire country of Benin. As church administrators were looking for just the right place to build the first Adventist elementary school in this small country, they felt impressed to look at the area around Parakou. And guess where God led them? To the beautiful, lush property that the village chief had donated!

Light in the Darkness

The chief and the council members, along with all of the people in the village, are thrilled that a new school will be built on this land. They know that this will be a Christian school, and they look forward to welcoming Adventist teachers who will help their children get a good education. They desperately want this school to have electricity so that it can be, as they said, “a light in the darkness” in their community.

A well has already been dug on the property. Work has begun on the first six classrooms, with another six to follow as soon as possible. Future plans call for a clinic on this choice piece of land. The chief, his council members, and the villagers are eager for the school to be completed.

This quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help to fund the new school in Parakou. Thank you for helping to build the first Seventh-day Adventist school in the country of Benin. It is a blessing and a privilege to share in this historic project. 🌍

Pastor Simon Djossou is the pastor of the Adventist church in Parakou. He has been working with the village chief and councilmen as plans develop for the new school.

The Man Who Wore No Shoes

BENIN | February 15

Zouchémé



Zouchémé [Zoon-CHEH-may] never wore shoes. Not in the fields, not at home, not when he walked to the nearby village. It was not poverty that made him go barefoot. He had made a deal with the devil and the evil spirits that if they made him powerful, he would not wear shoes, for he received his power from the devil through his feet.

And Zouchémé was very powerful. He would place some chicken bones, small stones, and a piece of string into a pile in front of him. Then, chanting a secret fetish phrase, he would pour chicken blood over this pile of *gris-gris** [gree-gree], and read the spirits' directions on how to place a curse on someone or how to remove a curse and make a sick person appear to get well.

If someone wanted an enemy killed, he or she asked Zouchémé to perform a ceremony to call the spirits to punish the

person named. And even if that person was far away, he or she often became sick, and even died.

Zouchémé could curse a woman and make her unable to have children. In fact, when his own wife left him to marry a wealthier man, Zouchémé cursed her, and she never bore children.

Zouchémé could perform some *gris-gris* over his fetishes, and suddenly a pot would float in midair. He could speak to his fetishes, and suddenly a wind would carry him to another place without being seen, as if he rode a mighty wind.

This man held sickness and death in his hands to distribute as he wished—and as others were willing to pay him for his powers. He laughed at anyone who believed in Christianity, even his boss at the local bakery, known as Papa Basile. Papa Basile was a new Adventist, and when Zouchémé learned that his boss had become a Christian, he shouted, “Oh, baker, what new foolishness have you come up with? Can you now survive the evil spells that I can cast on you?”

Powerless

Then one day Zouchémé's power seemed to slip away. After his first wife had left him, he had married another woman, and eventually had several children. Then without warning his wife and children became very sick. He called on the spirits

to heal them, but his family did not get better. He tried everything he knew, but the spirits did not respond. He began to wonder who had neutralized his powers with the spirits, and was losing hope of making his family well again.

In desperation Zouchémé sent for his boss. Papa Basile came quickly, and brought some members of the Adventist church with him. Zouchémé begged them to make his family well again.

The small band of Christians looked around the filthy hut of this fetish priest. “We will have to remove all of your *gris-gris* and sweep your hut clean before we invite our God to come here,” Papa Basile said. Silently Zouchémé nodded. What good would it do to object? His *gris-gris* seemed powerless now anyway.

The Christians removed the man’s bowls of herbs, his string, stones, and other *gris-gris*. They burned everything they could and buried the rest while villagers watched in amazement from a safe distance. Few people in the village liked the witch doctor, and no one objected to destroying Zouchémé’s tools of evil.

When the hut was clean, the Christians gathered around the sick family and read from the Bible. Then they prayed earnestly that God would heal this man’s family and show them that true power comes from the true God in heaven. Immediately the sick family began to feel better.

Zouchémé was convinced. He renounced the evil spirits and turned to the true and all-powerful God, the one who could heal his family and change his life. He and his wife invited Papa Basile and his friends to tell them about God and the Bible. They began attending the little

Adventist church.

Zouchémé grew to love God and began to share the faith in Jesus. One day he confessed how he had sent a poisonous snake to strike at the heels of Papa Basile. He told how he had persecuted his boss for his Christian faith. Now these two have become brothers.

When Zouchémé was baptized, he changed his name, which meant “food for the devil.” Now he is known as Brother Mathias. And the man who went barefoot because he had made a deal with the devil is now wearing shoes.

But the devil does not release his hold on people easily. During church service one Sabbath one of his children suddenly lost consciousness. His eyes rolled back, and he went limp. Members quickly gathered around and prayed for this child. Jesus brought the child back from the brink of death. This powerful miracle impressed all those present that God’s love and power are mightier than all the devil’s forces.

Brother Mathias and his wife testify of the love of God wherever they go, even though neither can read or write. Brother Mathias preaches the truths of the “Black Book,” as he calls the Bible. He gives the Bible to listeners and asks them to look up passages as he tells of God’s love.

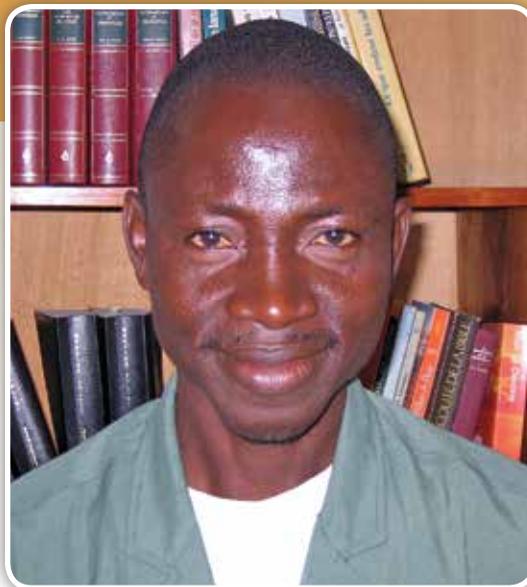
Today the work of God is progressing in all of Benin as people turn their backs on evil and accept the love of God. Your mission offerings help to spread the good news of Christ in this land of fetish priests and voodoo curses. 🌍

Djossou Simon was a theology student at the Adventist Seminary of West Africa in Nigeria at the time he wrote this story. Today he and his wife and children live in Parakou, Benin, where he is the pastor of the church.

Serving God on Satan's Ground

BENIN | February 22

Janvier Hownyemey



[Ask a man to present this first-person report.]

I called myself a Christian. My family and I attended church, but I sensed that I was not close to God. I watched as church members took part in the voodoo ceremonies that seep into every aspect of our culture and lives in Benin. One day I asked God to show me a better way to worship Him—in Spirit and in truth.

I started worshipping with a charismatic group, but in time the members fought and the congregation split. Someone invited a Seventh-day Adventist to share his beliefs with the remaining members. What this man said made sense, and several of us studied the Bible with him. I became convinced that God had answered my prayer. Here was a church that based its entire existence on the Bible and rejected anything having to do with witchcraft.

Some 25 people from the charismatic church were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including my wife and me.

Desire and Dilemma

My wife and I wanted to share what we had learned with my home village, so we moved back to the village. In five years we had established a group of 38 believers.

Then my wife's father died, and a huge problem arose. My wife was her father's only child, and she was expected to be present at his funeral. But we knew that we could not take part in the voodoo ceremonies that would accompany the two-week funeral ceremonies. We went to her home village and buried her father, but we left before the dancing, sacrificing, and drinking began. The voodoo worshippers who came for my father-in-law's funeral were angry when we did not stay and pay for the alcohol and take part in the voodoo ceremonies. They swore that they would get revenge by killing us.

The Power of Voodoo

We knew by experience that the powers of voodoo were strong. Years earlier someone had cursed me, saying that I would never be able to cross the river without jumping in and drowning. We lived along

a river and had to cross it often. Someone always had to hold me in the boat, or I would try to jump out and drown.

But after becoming Christians, my wife challenged me to cross the river in a small boat. Nervously I prayed for God's protection and crossed the river. Nothing happened. I realized that God was indeed more powerful than voodoo and could overcome these curses.

This experience gave us confidence that we could pray for God's protection.

Soon after my father-in-law died, my wife became pregnant. When she went into labor, the baby could not be born. We went from one hospital to another seeking help. Finally we went to our country's main hospital. There doctors performed a Cesarean section and delivered the baby. When they examined her womb, they saw that it was pocked with holes—the result of a voodoo curse. Doctors came from throughout the hospital to see the womb with holes. They did not repair the womb, for they said only God could heal her. We prayed, and her womb was healed.

Wrestling With Spiritual Wickedness

My younger brother and his family joined the Adventist Church. One day people in his community accused my brother of offending the voodoo chief. They demanded that he buy liquor for the entire community and apologize, but he refused. Some 30 people came to kill my brother and his family, but they fled to my house. We knelt together to pray for God's protection. The angry villagers surrounded our house, chanting and yelling, but they could not touch us, for we were praying.

The crowd left, taking my brother's canoe, which he uses for fishing and

transportation, and carried it to the village. There they cursed it and left it standing in the center of the voodoo house.

Church officials went to the mayor, who said the church had to provide liquor before he would consider the case. When church officials explained that we do not use liquor, the mayor dismissed them, saying, "Then go get your canoe at your own risk." We knew that the canoe had been cursed, and we would be poisoned and die if we touched it. But we prayed for God's protection and went together to retrieve the canoe. We took it to the riverside, where we washed it and rededicated it to God. The villagers were amazed that we Adventists did not die when we touched the canoe.

Three days later the huge concrete voodoo meetinghouse crumbled as if a heavy hand had crushed it. Even the foundation was destroyed. "Who are these Adventists that they have this power over us?" some people asked. Some wanted to put more curses on the Adventists, hoping to kill them and burn their homes. The Adventists in the area fasted and prayed for God's protection. This continued for seven days. Then one night three of the voodoo priests died of unknown causes.

Some people came to our worship services to see where our power came from. But they found nothing they could claim. Finally the people, their voodoo priests, and the mayor asked forgiveness of the Adventists and begged that the Adventists not curse them.

Some have seen these miracles and come to sincerely seek the power of God, and they are now worshipping with us. They realized that we don't have any secret power except our faith in God. 🌍

The Curse That Saved a Family

BENIN | March 1

Life in Benin



I was raised in a family that professed to be Christian, but religion meant little to me, and I stopped attending church. I married, and we had several children. I found my happiness in my family and my work as a teacher.

Then one day my eldest daughter became very ill with a form of malaria that wouldn't respond to normal treatment. We took her to the hospital, but she didn't improve. Finally the doctor told us that he thought someone had put a curse on her. He suggested that we take her to a fetish priest. A curse can make a person ill or even cause death. If there was a curse on my daughter, she would not get better until the curse was removed.

I told my wife, but she didn't want to go to a fetish priest, asking instead to go to an African Christian church that specialized in healings and visions. This

church claimed that it could determine if a curse had been put on a person. I took my daughter to this church, and the practitioner said that he saw in vision that my daughter was indeed under a curse. He told me what to do to remove it. I followed his instructions, and he performed the ceremony. Soon after we arrived home my daughter began to feel better.

During this time one of my sons and I were also feeling sick. I needed to see a doctor, but didn't have money to pay him. I wondered if this church could help me feel better.

I told my supervisor about my problem, and he offered to pray for me. He gave me a Bible and showed me the verse that says God takes care of the sparrows, and we are much more important than they (Matthew 10:29-31). I had never read the Bible, even when we attended church, but this verse impressed me, and I decided to memorize it.

My supervisor offered to ask his pastor to come to my house and pray for me. I agreed, and in time we began to study the Bible together. I went to his church, but the loud music bothered me—I couldn't find God in a bunch of noise. But I wanted to know more about God, so I continued studying the Bible.

I visited another church. I liked it better, and began attending. I developed a thirst to understand the Bible more deeply. Often

the pastor and I studied until late into the night. I had many questions. While I was studying I discovered in Exodus 20 the Sabbath commandment.

I asked the pastor about this, but he didn't seem to know what to say. Finally he suggested we study this question with the whole church. So on Sunday afternoon members of the church gathered, and we discussed the Sabbath together. I read the verses I had found, and shared other verses referring to the Sabbath. Although most of the members could not read or write, they followed the discussion closely. Sometimes our discussion became quite heated. We didn't resolve the question that day, but agreed to continue studying.

One day when I was turning the dial of my shortwave radio, I discovered Adventist World Radio. I decided to write them for answers to my Sabbath questions. I received several brochures on the Sabbath and some lessons from the Voice of Prophecy Bible course. I filled out the lessons immediately and sent them back.

My Voice of Prophecy Bible teacher answered my Sabbath questions and wrote careful answers to my questions on educating children, health, and other spiritual subjects. As I studied the Bible lessons, I shared what I was learning with the church members. Then I wrote and asked for someone to come to study with us. A layman came to our village to help us.

Some members of the Protestant church I was attending joined me to form a Bible study group. Although others opposed us, we continued studying. We began meeting on Sabbath morning under the trees!

At first my wife, who had joined the

Protestant church, was fearful that my actions would destroy the church. But she eventually saw that the Sabbath commandment was still valid, and she joined our little Bible study group.

We considered ourselves Adventists, even though no one in our group had formally joined the Adventist Church. Some members of our group who had motorbikes rode the 30 miles (50 kilometers) to worship in the nearest Adventist church. They recorded the church service and shared it with the members who could not come.

Sadly, before our group could complete our studies and be baptized, I was transferred to Ouidah [WE-dah], the voodoo capital of Benin and Togo. I wondered why God would put me in this sinful city where there was no Adventist church at a time when I was just learning about Him. I could no longer ride my motorbike to church, so my family had our worship service at home. But I was lonely, especially when some of my new neighbors began harassing us because we worshipped on Sabbath.

I cherished the times when the Adventist pastor could visit us. I would save all my Bible questions for him to answer when he came. One day the pastor told me that some of the members of my former Bible study group were going to be baptized in the Adventist church 30 miles from my former village. My wife and I decided we wanted to be baptized with them.

After my baptism I couldn't keep what I had learned to myself. I shared the Bible truths with my coworkers and neighbors. Please pray with me that I can share Christ's light in Ouidah, the devil's city. 🌍



Dangerous Friendship

Rebecca*

[Ask a teen girl to present this first-person report.]

I grew up in a religious family in western Nigeria. When I was 16, my aunt asked my parents to allow me to live with her. She promised to pay my school fees and see that I continued my education. This is not uncommon in my culture; often a relative who has no children will adopt a niece or nephew to live with them.

I enrolled in school and settled into my new life. I lived with my aunt for two years, then one day word came that my mother had died. With sadness, I returned home for her funeral and burial.

Strangers Within the Gates

My family lives in a compound house, a cluster of separate hut like rooms built inside a wall. Each person over a certain age has their own room within the wall. When I arrived home, I discovered that my father had rented out one of our compound rooms to two young men. As I greeted them I learned that they were Christians. I was

curious why my father would rent rooms to Christians, since we were not Christians. But as I chatted with the young men, I found them most pleasant and courteous

I learned that they were deeply religious—and that they held some of the same religious ideas my family held. They invited me to pray and worship with them. I was interested to know more about Christianity, so I went to one of their meetings. I had no intention of becoming a Christian, but I was curious about what they taught.

I knew that my father would object if he knew I was going to these meetings, so I went without asking for his permission. I didn't attend every meeting, but I went when I could, and was at the meetings when the men introduced the Sabbath. This was an entirely new idea to me, for I thought that every Christian went to church on Sunday. The lay evangelists explained that God had set aside Saturday, the seventh day, as holy time.

The more I listened, the more interested I became. I began taking Bible studies with the local pastor, but was careful not to let anyone know what I was doing.

We studied about the Sabbath until I understood it, then the pastor introduced the teaching of Jesus' second coming. I had always thought that Jesus was just a prophet, nothing more. But suddenly I realized that He is God,

and He is coming back to take His followers to heaven! I was so touched by what I was learning that I decided to become a Christian and follow Jesus forever.

That's when problems started. I no longer wanted to go to our family's traditional place of worship and pray. Sometimes I prayed at home with my father, but even then I prayed secretly to Jesus. My father noticed these changes and asked me what was happening.

"Why are you not praying anymore?" he asked. "Have you joined these men's religion?" I told him I wanted to become a Christian.

"If you stop praying and stop going to our house of prayer, then you should stop going to school, too. I will not pay your school fees." I knew that my father meant what he was saying, and I became frightened. I had two more years of high school, and I couldn't finish without my father's help. But I also knew that I didn't want to wait until I finished school to become a Christian.

My father told my school principal that I had become a Christian, and the principal watched me closely. Normally we students pray two by two before leaving school each day. I didn't pray in the traditional way we had been taught, so the principal threatened and beat me. Still I refused.

Finally I had to stay home from school. I stayed at home praying and reading my Bible. Father refused to give me food, so I ate with the lay evangelists. I prayed that God would open a way for me to return to school.

New Beginnings

The pastor with whom I had been studying was planning a baptism, and I wanted to be part of it. I did not tell my father of the plans, but somehow he learned about the baptism and forbade me to leave the house that day. I was really sad that I

had missed my own baptism. Then I learned that the pastor was going to hold another baptism the next day. I decided to go before my father could stop me. It was a weekday, a day no one would expect a baptism. So I slipped out of the house and hurried to the river. I reached the water before anyone else arrived and begged the pastor to baptize me quickly. Then I changed my clothes so my father would not know what I had done.

One of the lay evangelists told the pastor that my father had refused to pay for my education. The pastor asked the lay evangelist to get my father to write a letter giving permission for someone else to pay my school fees. The missionary suggested that we fast and pray before he asked my father about the letter. For three days we fasted and prayed, then the lay evangelist approached my father. He explained that Adventists have a good boarding school where I could finish my education if he would agree to send me there. Miraculously my father agreed to let me go.

I was so happy! But I was still worried about my school fees. I knew that I could never afford to pay, and surely my father would not pay. Then I learned that the local conference would pay my school fees so I could finish high school.

My younger brother sometimes communicates with me, and I tell him about God. My prayer is that he and my father will listen to God's voice and answer when He calls.

Your mission offerings support lay evangelists such as the two young men who led me to Jesus. The offerings support the school I am attending and make it possible for me to complete my education. Thank you for sharing with those you have never met. 🌍

** not her real name*

Too Many Jonathans

Life in Nigeria



Jonathan Boeyah [Bo-EH-yah] walked through the main gate of the Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA). He hardly noticed the colorful flowers blooming brightly from recent rains. Tired and dusty, he made his way to the administrative offices and asked for the registrar. He was directed to a tiny office where a man stood to greet him. Jonathan spoke quickly, hoping the man would listen and accept his plea.

Jonathan told how he had fled from the war in his homeland of Liberia for the relative safety of Nigeria. He explained that he was the only Adventist in his family, and that he had learned about ASWA from church members he had met once he arrived in Nigeria. He took a deep breath and asked the question his heart was holding. Would it be possible for him to attend ASWA and to study for the ministry?

The man smiled. How could he turn away a student who wanted so much to attend school that he had walked for days to arrive on campus? Jonathan enrolled in

the ministerial course. Although he was a Christian, his studies helped him to realize how interested God is in the affairs of His children. One course Jonathan found particularly interesting was on how to have a happy marriage.

At the end of the semester Jonathan joined other students who were traveling to neighboring Ghana to sell literature and earn money for school. As a literature evangelist, he was glad for the training he was receiving at ASWA. “As I visited people I realized that they did not just want our publications, but godly counsel. Several people told me about their family problems, and asked for help and prayer.”

One day Jonathan met a family that was on the verge of separation. Although Jonathan is not married, God used him to speak to this family. He shared with the husband some of the principles of a happy home he had learned in school. He prayed with this troubled man, and offered a few suggestions that he felt could help. Later Jonathan visited the man’s wife and shared some suggestions with her about how she

could achieve God's will for her home.

When Jonathan returned to school he received a letter from this family. With joy and excitement, he shared the news with his marriage and family teacher. The husband and wife reconciled their differences. They thanked Jonathan and the ASWA family for their prayers and influence in healing their home.

Ministry of the School

ASWA has trained hundreds of workers since it opened 30 years ago. Students do not simply study at ASWA, they put their training to use while still in school. The school's staff and students have held evangelistic meetings, health classes, stop-smoking classes, Revelation seminars, and even community cleanup days in the neighboring areas. Virtually every neighborhood near the school has hosted some form of evangelistic effort. Following the most recent meetings, 50 people were baptized.

Give Others a Chance

Jonathan is one of the fortunate ones. He found a place to study at ASWA. Many more Jonathans are seeking admission to ASWA, but there simply is not room for everyone. Currently more than 500 students from 18 different countries are enrolled at the school. They all want to prepare to serve God. But the school is overcrowded, and there simply is no room to enroll more students. Dormitory rooms meant for only two students often hold six. Even the deans' offices and the student lounges have become dormitory rooms stacked with beds.

The school has no auditorium that can accommodate the entire student body, so when general meetings are called, most of the students must stand outside the meeting room and watch or listen through open windows!

Classes meet wherever space is available: in the still-unfinished church, in the cafeteria, in the library, and even under the trees in the park. Classes that use the library's conference room often disturb other students who are studying or doing research.

Sixty students meeting in the church sanctuary strain to hear the teacher over the whir of fans and the outside noises that flow in through open windows. Virtually every room in the church has been made into a classroom for the large student population. "Until more classrooms are built," the pastor explained, "I'm afraid we have no choice but to use God's house for classrooms."

The school president, A. A. Alalade, explains that part of the reason for the lack of space was caused when a teachers' strike in the government school system closed the secondary schools for several months. Children of the university's teachers and staff could not go to school. Their parents begged the university to help educate their own children. So the university set aside several classrooms to serve as a high school.

The teachers and students of Adventist Seminary of West Africa are not happy using God's house for classes and general meetings. They pray that soon they will have classrooms and an auditorium so that they can return the church to sacred purposes, and so the school can continue to grow and serve the students. A new classroom and multipurpose building complex could solve at least part of the overcrowding problem at ASWA. The complex will contain classrooms and lecture halls, and an auditorium large enough to seat the entire student body. Your gifts on Thirteenth Sabbath will help make these classrooms and auditorium a reality. Please give generously this Thirteenth Sabbath. 

My Faith Is Firm

NIGERIA | March 22

Monsurat



Monsurat [mohn-soo-RAHT] is from Nigeria. As a teen, she was curious about her neighbor. He didn't go to the mosque on Friday, and always seemed relaxed and happy. She wondered what made him so different. Finally she found the courage to ask him, "What religion do you follow?"

"I am a Seventh-day Adventist Christian," her neighbor replied, smiling. Monsurat had never heard of Seventh-day Adventists, though she knew a bit about Christians. "I can give you a book to read about my religion, if you want," her neighbor offered.

"Yes, please," Monsurat answered. Her neighbor gave her a small book called *Steps to Christ*. Monsurat thanked the man, tucked the book under her shawl, and hurried home. When she was alone, she began reading the book. Although her parents couldn't read, Monsurat knew that

they would be angry if they knew she had a Christian book.

Monsurat was not convinced that Christianity was good, so before she returned to boarding school she returned the book to her neighbor. Busy with her studies and friends, Monsurat soon forgot about the neighbor with the strange religion.

Sneaking Off to Church

When vacation came, Monsurat returned home, and remembered her friendly neighbor. One day he invited her to go to church on Saturday.

"I can't go," Monsurat said, genuinely sorry. "I have special classes on Saturday."

"Perhaps when your classes are over," her neighbor said, disappointment evident in his voice.

"No, wait," Monsurat said firmly. "I want to see what your church is like." That Saturday Monsurat prepared for class, but went to church instead. She was curious to see if the other people were as kind as her neighbor. The church members welcomed Monsurat warmly. She enjoyed the service, though it was so different from the religious services in her mosque. Every week Monsurat went to church instead of to her class. Because church finished at the same time as the class, her parents never knew. Monsurat received a Bible and began reading. She learned to pray as these Christians prayed. She asked God

to help her live a good life. She had been mischievous, but now she was determined that her teachers would see a difference in her life.

A Changed Life

When Monsurat returned to school, she missed going to church. Then she discovered an Adventist church an hour away. She got up early on Saturday morning to catch the bus to church. She spent most of the day there, returning to school in the evening. Before the school year ended, Monsurat gave her life to Christ and asked to be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Monsurat didn't tell where she went on Saturdays, but her friends noticed changes in her. She had become more responsible and obedient. When vacation came, Monsurat attended her neighbor's church. Her parents asked where she went every Saturday, for they knew she no longer had classes. And they asked why she had removed her jewelry.

When the family went to the mosque to pray Monsurat went, but instead of reciting the prayers, she prayed in her heart to Jesus. Her mother noticed her silence and asked why. Monsurat decided that she could no longer hide her faith. She would be honest and tell her parents she had become a Christian. Furious, they forbade her from speaking to her Christian neighbor or attending any church. They talked to her friends and teachers and tried to force her to renounce her Christian faith. But as much as Monsurat wanted to obey her parents, she refused to give up her Jesus.

You're Not Our Daughter

Finally Monsurat's father told her that she was no longer his daughter. She had to leave the house, and he wouldn't pay for the two

remaining years of her high school education.

Terrified of being on her own, Monsurat prayed and God's peace flooded over her. She claimed Psalm 27:10 as her hope: "Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me" (NIV).

Church members helped pay her school fees, and she lived with a friend near the school.

Monsurat often tried talking with her parents, but they refused. Once her mother visited her at school. Monsurat was excited until she realized that her mother was taking her to a spiritual "healer." Reluctantly Monsurat followed, carrying a small Bible. When the healer saw Monsurat, she told her mother, "Leave her alone. Let her do what she has decided to do." Relieved, Monsurat returned to school. Church members visited Monsurat's parents, pleading to let their daughter return home. When Monsurat graduated, her father allowed her to return home. Monsurat hoped that at last her parents had accepted her religion, but was soon told, "If you don't do what we tell you, you must leave this house again!"

Growing Up

Realizing she couldn't continue living at home, Monsurat asked a church elder what to do. He suggested that she study at Babcock University, the Adventist school in Nigeria. The church would pay her fees. Monsurat enrolled in the nursing program. Her parents are proud of what she has achieved, and they occasionally visit her. Monsurat prays that her family will accept Jesus and hopes that her story will help other young people to stand firm in their faith. Our mission offerings support many forms of evangelism and Adventist education around the world. Thank you for your generous gifts. 🙏

Thirteenth Sabbath Program

➤	Note	Because of the transition between Mission editors, we have taken the liberty of suggesting that the adults use the children's Thirteenth Sabbath Program this quarter. Thank you for graciously understanding.—Mission staff
➤	Program	"Follow Me"

Leader: The West-Central Africa Division is made up of 22 countries. [*Show the map on the back of Children's Mission.*]

Three years ago our mission offering helped children in these countries share God's love by providing back-to-school supplies and invitations to attend Sabbath School. Let's hear how one girl helped share God's love by using supplies purchased through our mission offerings.

Storyteller: It was the first day of classes at an Adventist school in western Africa. Children gathered around a table standing under a shelter. The table held neat piles of school supplies—pencils, erasers, notebooks, crayons, and bookmarks with a picture of Jesus and the words "Follow Me" printed on them.

Nine-year-old Joyce joined the other children who were examining the supplies. The teacher arrived and explained why the supplies were on the table.

Fun Mission Project

"We have a special mission project today," she began. "We will make packets

of school supplies to give to children who don't know Jesus." A flutter of excitement rippled through the cluster of children.

The teacher gave the children plastic bags and told them to walk around the table and pick up one item from each pile. "Be sure to put the card with the picture of Jesus in last, so it shows through the bag," she said. "This card is an invitation to Sabbath School."

Joyce and her classmates walked around the table choosing what they would put into their bags as the teacher explained that some children in their own village didn't have the money to buy school supplies to do well in school.

The children filled and sealed the bags. Then the teacher bowed her head to pray. "Dear God," she said, "please show us the children You want to receive these school supplies. Bless them and help them to want to know more about You. In Jesus' name, amen."

Who Gets the Bag?

After school that day the children

picked up the bags of school supplies. The teacher said, “Ask God to show you the person He wants you to give the bag to. And when you give the bag to the child, tell them that Jesus loves them and wants to be their friend. Invite them to go with you to Sabbath School this week.”

Joyce picked up her bag with school supplies and walked toward home. She saw many children coming home from school. “Dear Jesus,” she prayed, “please help me to find someone who needs to know You love them. Amen.”

Joyce looked up and saw a boy walking toward her. It was Theo. Joyce smiled, for she knew she had found the person God wanted her to give the packet to.

Theo’s Surprise

“Hi, Theo,” Joyce said. “Did you start school today?”

“No,” Theo said. “My dad didn’t have money for school supplies.”

Joyce smiled broadly. “Well, now you can go to school! Jesus wants you to have these school supplies!” Joyce held up the plastic bag with the notebook, pencil, crayons, and the picture of Jesus in it.

Theo looked at the bag “Why are you giving this to me?” he asked.

The Gift

“Children from around the world gave a special offering so we could buy school supplies for children who don’t have any. At my school today we prayed that God would show us who we should give them to. God told me to give this bag to you!” Joyce pressed the bag of supplies into Theo’s hands. “Take it,” she said. “It’s from Jesus, and it’s for you.”

Slowly a smile crept across Theo’s face.

“Wow,” he said. “Thank you! Now I can go to school.”

“There’s more,” Joyce added quickly. “There’s an invitation in the bag for you to visit my Sabbath School on Saturday. If you wish, I’ll walk with you so you won’t have to go alone.”

Theo thanked Joyce and promised to ask his mother for permission to go to Sabbath School with her.

On Sabbath morning Theo met Joyce in front of his house. The two friends walked to church together. Joyce introduced Theo to her Sabbath School teacher and to the children in her class. Theo enjoyed learning the songs the children sang. He liked the stories about Jesus and His disciples that the teacher told. In fact, he enjoyed everything about Sabbath School.

On the way home later that day, Theo asked if he could come to Sabbath School with Joyce again. “Of course you can!” Joyce said with a big smile. “Jesus—and I—invite you!”

Theo continued attending church with Joyce. He told his mother about what he was learning and asked her if he could take his younger brother to Sabbath School as well. Now Theo and his brother and mother attend Sabbath School regularly. “I am glad that Joyce—and Jesus—invited us to church,” Theo says. “And thank you for helping me have school supplies so I could do well in school, too!”

Leader: Our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago helped thousands of children throughout West-Central Africa go to school and learn about Jesus in Sabbath School. We won’t know how

many children found a new friend in Jesus until we get to heaven, but we can be sure many will be there because we gave our offering. Let's plan now for a big offering this Thirteenth Sabbath too, so even more children will join us in heaven.



This quarter the children in two schools in Benin and Senegal [*locate on map*] will receive books so that they can discover the joy of reading while they learn more about Jesus.

[Offering]

Future Thirteenth Sabbath Projects

Next quarter will feature the Southern Asia Division. Special projects include dormitories and classroom blocks for three boarding schools and churches for existing congregations in every region including the Bhutanese and Nepalese people.



Leader's Resources

For more information on the cultures and history of Benin, Senegal, and other West African countries, the featured division this quarter, check the travel section of a local library, visit a travel agency and ask for brochures, or search by country name online.

Visit our Website for recipes, language pages, and other activities that you can download and print to make mission more interesting. Go to www.AdventistMission.org. Click on "Resources" and "Children's Mission" in the drop-down menu. Click on "Mission Resources" in the center of the page, and select the activity you are interested in.

Download your FREE Adventist Mission DVD at www.AdventistMission.org/dvd This free DVD contains stories from the featured countries as well as the worldwide mission of the Adventist Church. Perfect for Thirteenth Sabbath Offering appeals.

New resource—*Mission 360°* magazine.



Nearly 50,000 copies of *Mission 360°* magazines were initially mailed to Adventist churches and church members across North America. But *Mission 360°* is more than a traditional print magazine. It was also distributed electronically to tablets around the world. To date, it is available on three of the latest e-reader platforms, Apple's iPad, Google's Android tablet, and Amazon's Kindle HD, absolutely free.

Even if you don't have a tablet, you can still read *Mission 360°* electronically. Visit www.Mission360Mag.org to read it online.

Note: Some stories in this issue were reprinted from earlier editions of *Mission*. We hope you have enjoyed them.

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Mission (ISSN 0190-4108) is produced and copyrighted © 2014 by the Office of Adventist Mission, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A.

Printed in U.S.A.

First Quarter 2014
Volume 60, Number 1

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For subscription inquiries, e-mail Steve Hanson at shanson@rpha.org or call 1-800-456-3991. Annual subscription rates per edition: domestic, US\$7.50; international, US\$14.50. The magazine is also available free online at: <http://www.adventistmission.org/mqa-home>

West-Central Africa Division



ATLANTIC OCEAN

UNION	CHURCHES	COMPANIES	MEMBERSHIP	POPULATION
Central African	997	562	99,858	43,877,000
Eastern Nigeria	549	523	152,853	52,739,000
Ghana	1,255	1,834	400,363	25,546,000
North-Western Nigeria	424	702	73,353	117,386,000
Sahel	175	381	42,786	116,179,000
West African	123	164	34,977	12,196,000

TOTAL 3,523 4,166 804,190 367,923,000
 Statistics as of December 2012

PROJECTS

- ① Primary school in Parakou, Benin
- ② Primary school in Dakar, Senegal

CHILDREN'S PROJECT: library books for the new schools in Benin and Senegal

