

ADVENTIST MISSION

YOUTH AND ADULT
MAGAZINE

QUARTER 2
2010

EURO-AFRICA DIVISION



featuring:

A SECOND CHANCE pg 8 | **THE DEVIL'S LIES** pg 20

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On the Cover: *A woman sells flowers in a marketplace in Madeira, an island off the western coast of Morocco, part of Portugal.*

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 = stories of special interest to teens

Dear Sabbath School Leader,

This quarter features the Euro-Africa Division, which includes Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Holy See, Iran, Italy, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, and Western Sahara. More than 596 million people live in this area, but only 176,230 are Seventh-day Adventists, a ratio of one Adventist for every 3,382 people.

The Challenges

Stretching from the heart of Europe to the shores of northern Africa, the Euro-Africa Division faces challenges far greater than distance. Cultures vary widely, and most countries within this division have relatively few Adventists.

Belgium is a modern and largely secular country. Evangelism is difficult among people who are comfortable in their lives. However, the church is growing among immigrants, many of whom have come seeking work and

a better life. In Brussels, the capital city, several immigrant congregations worship in their native languages. They have no church buildings of their own and must rent facilities at a high cost.

The church in **Bulgaria** remained strong during Communist times and continues to grow, though at a slow rate. However, among the close-knit Romani—the Gypsy—people, the church has found fertile ground and is growing rapidly. They, too, need simple houses of worship to share their faith with their families and friends.

The island of **Madeira**, part of Portugal, has about 300 active Adventists who meet in one church in the capital city and a few companies and groups across the island. In spite of the church's size, it is making an impact on the people on the tiny island through its primary school. The vast majority of children in the preschool-through-fourth-grade school are from non-Adventist homes.

However, the school must upgrade its facilities in order to meet government standards for the number of students enrolled. It could enroll so many more children and expand its outreach into the community even more if the school could be enlarged and modernized.

Yours for the kingdom,



Charlotte Ishkanian
Editor, *Mission*

OPPORTUNITIES

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will go to help provide

- a church for two multiethnic groups in Brussels, Belgium
- a church for a Romani congregation in Bulgaria
- an expanded and modernized mission school on the Portuguese island of Madeira.



A FAMILY AFFAIR

April 3 | Nikola and Emilia Valchanov

[Ask a mature couple and a teenage girl to present this first-person report.]

Nikola [a man]: My family and I are Romani, or Gypsies. We grew up in non-Christian homes. But when my sister became ill my mother went to a Christian church, and the people there prayed for my sister. She was healed, and my mother became a believer.

My father refused to allow a Christian in his home, so my mother was forced to live in the barn. In spite of her difficult life, her faith remained strong.

Emilia: I was impressed by my mother-in-law's faith, and when she invited me to worship with her, I went. Nikola, my husband, was a heavy drinker. I begged him to stop drinking, for we had five young children, and I didn't want to raise them alone.

My mother-in-law and I prayed for our husbands. When a special speaker came to the church, I invited Nikola to go with me to hear him. I was thrilled when he agreed to go! He continued attending church with me, and eventually he joined the church. How happy I was!

Nikola: Several years passed, and I

became a lay pastor with 14 churches. During some training classes for pastors, I overheard one teacher say, "We're not supposed to tell you the whole truth." I wondered, *If this church doesn't teach the truth, who does?*

This troubled me, and we searched for another church. We couldn't find a church to meet our needs, so we worshipped in our home. Soon 15 people met with us on Sundays.

Emilia: Our youngest son was studying the Bible through a correspondence course. "It's good stuff," he said. "You should try it." We enrolled in the Bible study course and invited the other members of our study group to enroll too. We used the Bible lessons during our weekly worship and study sessions.

Nikola: We knew we had found the truth, and we asked the Bible correspondence school to send a pastor to visit us. A layman named Todor came and helped us understand the Bible lessons. For months he came every Sunday.

We invited more friends to join our group. When we learned that Todor

was a Seventh-day Adventist, we asked him whether we too could worship on Sabbath. With a big smile, Todor agreed.

Emilia: Soon our house became too small for everyone who wanted to come. We needed to find a bigger place to meet. Even though none of us had become Adventists, Adventist believers bought a house where we could worship. Then Nikola asked, “The church is Adventist; why can’t we be baptized into the Adventist Church?” Todor agreed, and soon the pastor baptized 12 people into the Adventist Church. Over the next several months more were baptized. Today our congregation has 25 members and a baptismal class of about 30. Almost all of our children have joined us in our new faith.

Young Emilia: I am Nikola and Emilia’s granddaughter. I learned about the

Adventist Church when I visited my grandparents a few years ago. A few months ago my parents moved to be closer to my grandparents, and now I attend church with my grandparents.

Recently our lay pastor invited us to pray for a person we care about during the following week. At the end of the week we would give that person a book. I chose to pray for my father and gave him a book. The second week I prayed for my mother. Then I invited them to visit the church. I was so happy when they agreed to come!

My father is a big, tough man, but he and Mom struggle to care for my younger brother who is sick. As my father listened to a song about how God can solve our problems and wants to carry our burdens, my parents wept. I realized how much they need the hope that Jesus can give.

Jesus is giving my parents strength to bear their burdens and hope for the future. I pray that God will touch their lives and that they will surrender to Jesus.

Emilia: Your mission offerings helped us establish our little Romani church. This quarter part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help provide a church home for another congregation in northwestern Bulgaria. Romani people are a close-knit group. When a Romani finds something good, such as our faith, we tell everyone. The new congregation in northwestern Bulgaria will grow rapidly when they have their own place of worship. Thank you for your sacrificial gifts so that more Romani can meet the Savior. 🌍

FAST FACTS

- Bulgaria is located in southeastern Europe on the shore of the Black Sea.
- The Adventist Church in Bulgaria is growing faster than other countries in Europe. One of the fastest growing groups is the Romani (Gypsy) people. In their close-knit family-oriented culture, when someone accepts the Adventist message, others follow. Church groups are forming in towns and villages across Bulgaria. One city has three large congregations of Romani people, and about one in every 10 Romani in the city is a Seventh-day Adventist.
- See the Adventist Mission DVD for special features from Bulgaria.



GOD SENT AN ANGEL



April 10 | Strahil Angelov

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

I am a Romani, a Gypsy. We are a close-knit community, and families are especially close. When my young son-in-law died recently, I nearly died too. He was just 30, and I loved him like my own. The shock of his death caused my health to fail. My daughter is suffering too, with nightmares and loneliness. She is struggling to raise her three children alone.

Then someone invited her to attend the Adventist church, and she went. The people embraced her, and the pastor prayed for her. And there she found peace. She told my wife and me about her experience at the church and invited us to go with her.

I went to church with her the next week, and there I met the pastor, a layman named George. George told me that Jesus can help us face the crises that come our way. I was so impressed with the dedication of this pastor and the church members and how they are helping my daughter find God that I decided to give God a try too. I continued attending church and asked

God to take away my desire to smoke and drink. And He did.

Stuck in the River

Two weeks after I first attended church, I took my horse and wagon to a nearby village. We had to cross a river, but my horse slipped down the riverbank and into the water, pulling the wagon with him. I was surprised, but I decided that the river must not be too deep, so I let the horse lead the way through the water.

As my horse made his way through the water, he became mired down in mud and couldn't pull the wagon any farther. He could barely keep his head above water, and I feared that he would drown. As he struggled to get out, he and the cart sank more deeply into the muddy bottom.

I jumped from the wagon and tried to pull my horse out of the mud, but they were so stuck that I couldn't move them. I loosened the yoke and pulled on the reins, but my horse couldn't free himself.

“God, please save my horse!” I cried out. Suddenly my horse thrust himself free and turned toward the riverbank. But the wagon remained lodged in the mud with only the top of the wheels showing above the water. It was humanly impossible to get it out. Again I prayed, “Lord, I need this wagon to feed my family. Please help me get it out of the mud!” Then I whistled to my horse to pull on the reins. He pulled me, and I pulled the wagon, and the wagon rolled out of the mud as if it were on smooth pavement. I knew that only God could have saved us from the muddy river!

On Sabbath I shared my testimony with the church. Later Pastor George told me that he wanted to help me prepare for baptism. “Let’s go; I’m ready,” I said. I was baptized, and my wife and daughter plan to be baptized soon.

MISSION POST

- The Adventist Church is growing among the Romani people in Bulgaria. One new church group is in the town of Montana, where some 1,800 Romani live. The Adventist congregation has about 30 members, but at least 60 worship every week in a run-down café because they have no church in which to worship.
- Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help build a church for the Romani people in Montana.
- See the Adventist Mission DVD for a special feature on this church.

Sharing With Others

I’m not a Bible scholar. But God is showing me that He has given me gifts to use for His glory.

A few weeks ago I entered a hospital for some medical tests. I took my Bible and Sabbath School lesson to read while I waited. Some ladies saw me reading and wanted to talk to me about God. They said that their church pastor had moved away and their congregation was falling apart. They asked me to meet with them and talk about the Bible. I agreed to go.

We talked in the hospital for quite some time. Then one of the women said, “God sent you here.” There’s no Adventist church in their village, so I invited the women to visit my church. They gladly accepted. As my strength returns I will visit them in their village and enroll them in the Bible correspondence course. Perhaps someday there will be a new Adventist congregation in the village where these women live.

God led me to Him during a difficult time in my life. Now I want to introduce Him to others.

My people, the Romani, share the good things they discover. One city in Bulgaria has more than 1,000 Romani Seventh-day Adventists. That’s one Adventist out of every 10 Romani. Planting new churches means that more Romani will find Jesus.

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help build a Romani church for a group of believers in northwestern Bulgaria. Thank you for helping to spread the word among the Romani, my people. 🌐



A SECOND CHANCE



April 17 | Metody Eftimov

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

I opened my eyes and slowly realized that I was lying on the floor. *What happened?* I wondered. *How did I get here?* My head hurt, and I felt confused. I realized that I must have fainted. I slowly sat up and reached for the telephone. I needed help.

I am Metody [MEH-toh-dee], an old man living in Bulgaria. My wife died several years ago, and my children are grown and living in other cities. Most of my friends are gone, too, and my life has become increasingly isolated. Sometimes I wondered whether my life mattered anymore, whether I had accomplished anything in life. When I awoke on the floor that day I wondered whether this was the end for me.

Life-Threatening Illness

The doctor couldn't find anything wrong with me and suggested I take a vacation and relax. I took his advice and visited a resort. But soon after I arrived, I felt my arm and leg stiffen. Something was wrong, but before I could do anything, I fainted again.

I awoke in the hospital, half paralyzed and helpless. A brain scan revealed that I had a hematoma [hee-mah-TOH-mah], bleeding in the brain. The doctors said that I had just hours to live. But one doctor wanted to operate. It was my only hope.

I awoke following surgery, struggling to remember where I was. Oh yes, the hospital. I recalled that I hadn't been able to move my arms or legs. I tried to move my arm, and it moved. I wiggled my toes and saw the sheet covering me move. I was alive!

Three weeks after I had been told I would die, I walked out of the hospital by myself. I felt better than I had for months. I had a second chance at life.

A New Life

My daughter worried about me, for I lived alone and far from her home. She asked Violeta, a family friend, to check on me. But before I knew about my daughter's arrangement, I met Violeta on the street and invited her to visit. We talked a lot, and I invited her back.

Sometimes she brought me food or fresh water, and she often spoke of Jesus, her best friend. When she invited me to visit her church with her, I accepted.

I had attended the traditional church when I was younger, but I received little from its services for I couldn't understand the ancient language that the priests spoke. I wondered what Violeta's church would be like. To my surprise, it was a small group but warm and friendly—more like a family gathering. We studied the Bible together, and I soaked up knowledge like a sponge. I looked forward to going to Violeta's church each week.

The questions I had often asked myself about whether my life had any meaning were answered in this little church. I realized that even in my old age God had something important planned for me. He wanted to change my life and mold it into His likeness. Then he could use me to make a difference in other people's lives as well.

I completed a Bible study course and read the entire Conflict of the Ages series from *Patriarchs and Prophets* to *The Great Controversy*. As I studied and learned, my mind grew sharper than it had been in years. I made new friends and reached out to people.

My family sees the changes God is making in my life. I am happier and healthier than I have been in years. I have new friends, both in church and in my neighborhood. My daughter asked what was happening in my life, and I told her that I have met Jesus. I gave her and her daughter a copy of *The Desire of Ages* to read. What a joy to be able to share my discoveries about God with my family!

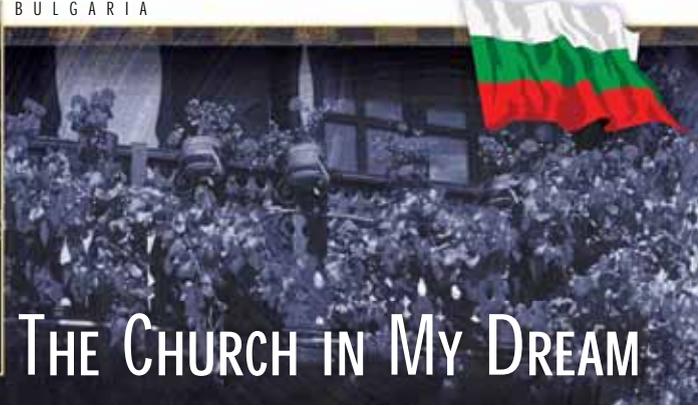
I will be baptized soon, and I've invited my family to witness this big step. I want them to see that I have found something worth living for. I hope that they don't wait as long as I did to discover Jesus.

God has given me a second chance at life. I want to use my time left to tell others what a joy it is to live with Jesus in my life! I share books and literature with those I meet and pray that they will turn to Jesus in their trials.

I know that the literature I share costs money, and I'm grateful that our mission offerings help buy these materials so we can introduce others to Jesus. Thank you for giving your mission offering today. Someone may be in heaven because you gave to mission this week. 🌍

FAST FACTS

- Bulgaria borders the Black Sea in southeastern Europe. The capital city is Sofia, and the national language is Bulgarian.
- Bulgaria was dominated by Communism for much of the twentieth century. During that time people didn't have the right to worship freely or even to talk to others about their faith. After Communism fell the dominant church in Bulgaria exerted its influence and made it difficult for Protestant Christians such as Adventists to publicly share their faith or hold evangelistic meetings.



THE CHURCH IN MY DREAM

April 24 | Valentina Manova (right) and friend

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

I awoke with a start and sat up in bed. The dream that I'd had was so real that I knew it was from God. But what did it mean? Jesus had shown me a church sanctuary and said, "This is My church." As I gazed at the simple sanctuary, my eyes fell on the platform. The pulpit was beautifully hand carved from wood. The chairs on the platform were carved to look like angels, and a wooden candelabra stood in front of the pulpit. They were a craftsman's gift of love to God.

Then Jesus pointed to a row of chairs near the platform. "This is your seat," He said. I stared at the chairs, marveling that God had chosen a place for me in His house!

But where was this church? I had no idea, but I was determined to find it.

Three Other Dreams

For years I had worshipped in a large church in my hometown in Bulgaria. I'd enjoyed singing praises to God in the choir, but I sensed that some things were amiss. I didn't understand the church rituals, and the priest sometimes

came to church with the smell of liquor on his breath. Eventually I'd stopped attending the church. But I'd been left with a spiritual hole in my life.

A neighbor had invited me to her church, and I'd gone. They didn't have a choir, but the people loved to sing, so I'd continued attending her church. I'd felt uneasy, however, about the noise and confusion during their worship service. I wondered whether God had another church for me, a church that worshipped Him in simplicity and holiness. I'd begun to pray for His leading. That's when I'd had the dream.

Finding God's Church

I knew that God had spoken to me through this dream, and I was willing to obey. But how could I find the church that He had shown me?

The next day I saw my neighbor outside. I remembered that he attended church somewhere. I approached him and asked, "Will you take me to your church?" He looked surprised, so I told him about my dream. He smiled and told me his church meets on Saturday

morning, and he'd be glad to take me.

As we walked into the courtyard of my neighbor's church that Saturday morning, several church members smiled and greeted me warmly. I was pleased, but I was eager to see the inside of the church. I stepped inside the foyer and felt my heart racing in anticipation. Would this be the church that God had shown me in my dream?

Then I looked inside the sanctuary. There stood the pulpit, the platform chairs, the candelabra—just as I had seen them in my dream! “Praise God!” I said aloud. “Praise God! This is the church! This is God's church!”

I realized that some believers were praying, so I became quiet. I looked to the right of the pulpit and saw a row of chairs. This was where God told me I would sit.

As I worshipped that day in God's church, I remembered that once many years earlier I had puzzled over the fourth commandment and wondered how one should keep the Sabbath day. At that time it had made no sense to me. But suddenly, as I worshipped in this little church, I understood.

I began attending this church every week, and soon I invited my best friend to join me. Together we began studying the Bible with the pastor, and in time we were baptized together.

Praying for a Change of Heart

My husband thought I was crazy for going to church on Saturday. But when he began to have problems with his back and hips and couldn't walk, church members visited him and encouraged him. They prayed for him, and one member even brought him a device he had made to help him walk

again. Slowly my husband began to soften toward the church members. He even visited the church a few times. He still doesn't attend church with me, but he sends his greetings to the church members. I pray that one day my husband will give his life to God and join me in God's church. It would make me so happy to sit beside him in the church God showed me in a dream.

God calls people to Himself in many different ways. For me He used a dream. He calls others through evangelistic meetings or literature or through friends who invite them. Your mission offerings help make it possible for many to hear the gospel message and respond to God's call. Thank you for sharing so others, like me, can hear. 🌍

MISSION POST

- In spite of years of religious oppression during Communist times, today some 7,600 Seventh-day Adventists share their faith in Bulgaria, a nation of just 7.6 million people. That's one Adventist in every 1,000 people.
- The work in Bulgaria is growing stronger among the Romani, or Gypsy, population. The close ties Romani have to one another make personal evangelism easy. Several new Romani Adventist congregations are worshipping across Bulgaria. One of these congregations will receive part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.
- For more information on the Adventist Church in Bulgaria, see the Adventist Mission DVD in your church or type <http://missiondvd.org> into your web browser to view or download a program.



JOURNEY TO FAITH



May 1 | Geraldo and Marlen Ruiz

Geraldo and his wife, Marlen, stepped out of the doctor's office and turned toward their home just as several fire trucks sped past, sirens screaming. As they neared their street they found the fire trucks blocking their way. It appeared as if something had happened in the apartment next door to theirs. They didn't realize it, but Geraldo's visit to the doctor had saved their lives.

The Honest Workers

Geraldo and his family had owned a shoemaking business in South America. The business had grown, and Geraldo hired two men, Adriano [ah-dree-AH-noh] and Carlos, to work for him. The two men were careful and precise in their work, and Geraldo offered to pay them extra to work on Saturdays. But the two men declined, explaining that they were Seventh-day Adventists and honored God's Sabbath.

The three men became good friends, and eventually Adriano and Carlos invited Geraldo to study the Bible with another friend. Geraldo didn't want Bible studies, but he didn't want to hurt his friends' feelings. So he agreed.

Seeking a Better Life

Difficult financial times came, and Geraldo's shoe business began to suffer. He told Adriano and Carlos about his concerns. Another Adventist friend suggested that Geraldo consider moving to Europe, where opportunities were better. It seemed like a good idea, so Geraldo traveled to Belgium to find work and a place to live while his wife and son remained behind in South America.

Geraldo stayed with Miguel [mee-GEHL], also an Adventist, who offered to help Geraldo get a job where Miguel worked. "Tell the boss you won't work on Sabbath," Miguel urged, "If you don't ask for Sabbath off, he'll expect you to work seven days a week."

Geraldo got the job and Sabbaths off. With nothing else to do on Sabbaths, he attended church with Miguel. He again agreed to study the Bible, this time with the pastor.

Geraldo found a small apartment, and Marlen and their son soon joined him in Belgium. The family attended church with Miguel, and Marlen joined Geraldo at the Bible studies. Their lives settled into a comfortable routine.

Brush With Death

One day Geraldo felt sick. He stayed home from work. Marlen suggested that he go to the doctor. Geraldo agreed; but, for reasons he couldn't explain, he wanted Marlen to go with him. The little family walked the short distance to the doctor's office. After seeing the doctor, they started home.

They heard the fire trucks' sirens and saw the vehicles pass down the nearby street. As they neared their home, they found the roads blocked by fire trucks and police cars. "You can't come this way," the official said.

"But we live here," Geraldo said. Still, the officer wouldn't allow them to pass.

Marlen found a neighbor standing in a crowd of spectators nearby. She asked him what had happened. The neighbor was visibly relieved to see them and explained that there had been an explosion in the building next to theirs, probably from a gas leak. Their neighbor had been killed.

Stunned, Marlen returned to Geraldo and told him what had happened. The family couldn't enter their home, so a friend invited them to stay with him. The couple gratefully accepted.

Three days later the couple was allowed to return to their apartment to gather what they could of their belongings. Almost everything had been destroyed. As they looked at the devastation around them, they knew that God had spared their lives. If they had been home, they would have been killed or seriously injured.

New Lives, New Commitment

Geraldo and Marlen realized that God had saved their lives. They accepted Jesus as their Savior and

committed their lives to Christ in baptism. They have joined the Spanish-speaking congregation in Brussels, the capital city.

Their congregation is one of several new groups of Adventist believers made up primarily of immigrants. These congregations must share crowded worship facilities with other groups of believers or pay large sums to rent facilities for a few hours each week. They need their own facilities to grow and reach out to others in their new homeland.

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help provide worship facilities for two congregations in Brussels. Geraldo and Marlen thank God for leading them to a new homeland and a new faith in Christ. Now they pray that God will provide a means of sharing their faith with others in Belgium. 🌐

FAST FACTS

- Belgium is one of the smallest countries in Europe. It's a modern industrialized nation and one of the most urban countries in the world with 97 percent of the people living in cities and large towns. The capital is Brussels.
- Belgium is sandwiched between France, Germany, and the Netherlands, all of which influence the country's culture and languages. The people speak three official languages: Dutch (Flemish), French, and German.
- For a video presentation on Belgium, watch the Adventist Mission DVD in your church or download a program by visiting <http://missiondvd.org>.



FLOWERS FOR CIGARETTES

May 8 | Erika Charry and Paula Diaz

The Adventist Church in Belgium is growing rapidly among the immigrant population. One reason is that young people in these churches actively share their faith with others.

The Pathfinder Club from the Spanish congregation in Brussels enjoys going into their community to share their faith with others.

Flowers for Cigarettes

One recent Sabbath the young people spread out in the heart of the city, their arms filled with flowers and pamphlets on the dangers of smoking. They had a mission: to encourage people to stop smoking. Erika and Paula, both 13, were among the group.

“We wanted people to know that smoking is harmful,” Paula says, “so we gave them a paper that told them God loves them. It included a short message about health and smoking.

“At first I was a little nervous,” Erika admits. “I didn’t want to say something unkind, but we wanted to get the message out that every minute they smoke takes a minute of their life. Most of the people we spoke to were really quite nice, but we were serious. We

wanted them to think before they lit up another cigarette.”

The young people walked down several side streets with their flowers and their message. “We talked to one man sitting outside a bar,” Erika says. “We asked him to trade his cigarette for a flower. The man thought we wanted to smoke and offered us an unlit cigarette in exchange for the flower! But when we made it clear that we wanted his lit cigarette, he gave it to us.”

“Another man listened to what we said and offered us his whole pack of cigarettes!” Paula adds. “He was so happy that we cared enough to ask him to take care of his body. We didn’t want his cigarettes, so he broke them in half and threw them into the trash.”

Trouble With the Police

A police officer saw the young people giving away literature and told them that they had no permit to pass out literature on the street. He took their flowers and pamphlets and told their leader to go to the police station to get their things back. The youth leader was given the flowers back, but the police refused to give him the pamphlets.

When he returned to the group with the flowers, the young people each took some and continued giving them to people in exchange for their cigarettes. The youth felt bad that they had no literature to give to the people, but they prayed that God would help those who really wanted to stop smoking.

“We were a little nervous when we started this outreach,” Paula says. “We didn’t know how people would react to us. But when we finished we were excited about how it had gone. We want to do it again.”

Cheering Others

“We do other outreach activities, too,” Paula says. “We visit nursing homes and give small gifts to the elderly to cheer them up. We’ve gone to poor neighborhoods to spend time with the

children there. I really enjoy taking part in the outreach of our Pathfinder Club and telling people that God loves them.

“It’s not easy to find people who are interested in hearing about God here in Belgium,” Erika says. “For many, life is so easy that they don’t think they need God.”

At Christmas the young people made hot chocolate and warm food for the homeless. Some of the youth were nervous about talking to the people they were serving, but they quickly realized that many of the people they were serving were not so different from themselves. “These people have nothing and are so grateful for whatever we can do,” Paula says. “It makes me realize that though we are struggling to make a life for ourselves in a new country, we can reach out and help those who are having a difficult time around us. It’s what Jesus would do.”

FAST FACTS

- About 10 percent of the population of Belgium was born outside the country. Many have come in search of a better life. About 29 percent of the people living in Brussels, the capital city, are immigrants.
- The Adventist Church in Brussels has several foreign-language congregations, all of which are growing. Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help provide church homes for at least two of these congregations: The Spanish church, which has more than 100 members, and the Romanian church, which has 250 members.

We Can Help

The Spanish congregation in Brussels is made up of immigrants. They struggle to support their families and have no church of their own. It costs a lot to rent a place in which to worship, and the congregation cannot afford to buy a church.

But we can help. The local conference has purchased a building that can house two churches. Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help to refurbish that building so that the Spanish and Romanian congregations—the fastest growing congregations in Brussels—will have a church. Paula and Erika and the other members will have a place to invite their friends to learn that God loves them, too. 🌍



HOPE OUT OF HOPELESSNESS

May 15 | Gilmara Muniz and José Ramos de Oliveira

[Ask a man and woman to present this two-person report.]

Woman: Gilmara [geel-MAH-rah] hung up the telephone and stared out the window. Gilmara and her son were visiting family in Brazil, and the telephone call had come from her husband in Belgium. Gilmara tried to recall her husband's words, to make sense of what he had said.

"I need your help," she remembered him saying. "I want to change my life and quit gambling." Gilmara had heard the words before. How many times had he promised to stop gambling, but his words had been little more than lies, broken promises. But he had said something about attending a church. The last time he had been interested in a church, the members had driven a wedge between the couple.

Gilmara sighed. If only her husband's words were true. If only he could stop gambling and drinking. If only he *could* change his life.

Man: José is a hard worker, but his gambling had cost him his business and threatened his marriage. When he lost his business he decided to move to Belgium to start over.

Woman: But his evil habit followed him there, and soon the familiar lies flowed again. Often Gilmara sat alone at night wondering where José was and how much money he would lose that night. Sometimes she wished she could walk away from it all.

She had accepted her family's invitation to visit because she needed a break from the stress of her marriage. When José called to tell his wife that he was studying the Bible and attending church, she was cautious. She had never heard of the Adventist Church before.

Man: Gilmara returned to Brussels and realized that while she was gone her husband had suffered serious financial setbacks when a business didn't pay him for work that he and his coworkers had done. José had to pay the men from his own pocket. Sometimes he hadn't even had food to eat. He had no one to turn to. When his friend Carlos invited him to church, he had accepted.

José was surprised to learn that the church met on Saturday afternoon, but as soon as he entered the church, he felt at ease. The people welcomed him

warmly and included him in the service. “I felt loved and at peace,” he says. José felt as if a weight had lifted from his heart. That afternoon instead of visiting a bar, he read his Bible.

He continued attending the church and asked to study the Bible with Mario, the lay pastor. Mario arranged to study with him on Thursdays after work.

Woman: When Gilmara returned home José told her that his friend Mario was coming over for tea. He didn’t want to frighten her by saying that Mario was coming to study the Bible.

Gilmara was glad that José was feeling better. She invited more friends to join them. She had no idea that “tea” was going to be a Bible study!

Mario was gracious, and after tea

he turned the subject to God and the Bible. The couple’s friends stayed for the Bible study. But the next week when Mario came to study, Gilmara busied herself in the kitchen while the men studied together. She heard snatches of conversation and found the discussion interesting. When Mario left she discovered that he had placed two Bible lessons on the table, one for José and one for her. Gilmara decided to see for herself what kind of church José had become involved with and asked to attend church with him that week.

Man: José was glad when Gilmara visited the church with him. The next week, Gilmara joined them for the Bible study.

The couple saw miracles in their lives as they put their trust in Him. One Friday a debt came due and José didn’t have the money to pay. He asked God to take care of the debt, and that very day he received enough money to pay it.

Woman: Gilmara and José have been baptized into the Portuguese congregation of believers in Brussels, Belgium. José says, “God has blessed us so much. My family is at peace. My dream now is to share the gospel with my friends at work.”

Man: Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help renovate the first floor of a large building in Brussels to create houses of worship for two immigrant congregations. This will make more space available for other congregations to worship as well.

Thank you for giving so that these people in Belgium can share their faith with others. 🌍

MISSION POST

- Brussels, the capital city of Belgium, has thousands of foreign-born residents. Some of them are Seventh-day Adventists.
- The Adventist Church has planted churches among several ethnic groups, including the Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, African French, and English-speaking groups. At present these groups must rent worship halls or meet in other congregations’ churches.
- Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help provide churches for two foreign-language congregations. This will help make it possible for all the churches to worship in their own language group. See the Adventist Mission DVD for more information on the churches our offering will support.



A TIME FOR GOD



May 22 | Gilles Sitz

Gilles [Geels] pressed the channel button on the remote control, and the television station changed. He pressed it again and again until a program caught his attention. He sat up as a German scientist spoke of creation and evolution, the very topic that had been troubling him. “Dad,” he called to his father, “come watch this.”

Gilles lives in the tiny country of Luxembourg in northern Europe. He grew up in a secular home and knew little about God. When his teachers explained that the earth and its creatures had evolved over millions of years, Gilles had no reason to doubt them.

When he was 15 his cousin gave him a Bible and another religious book. Gilles put the books on a shelf and forgot about them.

A Time to Wonder

But Gilles began wondering about life. Where did he come from? What was the purpose of his life? He decided to find the answers to his questions, but he didn't know where to look for the answers.

He remembered the Bible his cousin had given him and began reading

it. Gilles was totally unprepared for the first verses in the Bible, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” *How could this be?* he wondered. His teachers had said that the world evolved over eons. The more he read, the more questions he had about God.

He kept reading the Bible. Sometimes it was hard to understand, but his interest continued to grow.

A Time to Seek

Gilles asked his parents questions about God and the Bible, and they urged him to seek out the truth for himself, looking in the Bible, not in a church or an individual.

Gilles visited a couple of churches, but several things the churches taught didn't seem right to him. So he kept looking.

The question of evolution bothered Gilles the most. *How could God be God if He didn't create the world?* Gilles wondered. *And how can I be sure which teachings are true and which are men's inventions?* Gilles prayed that God would show him the answers to his questions.

A Time to Find

Then one day as Gilles flipped through the television channels, he found a German professor talking about evolution and creation. Gilles put down the remote control and listened. Gilles was impressed with how the man explained both concepts from a scientific and biblical perspective. It made sense. Gilles called his father to join him, and the two talked about what the professor was saying.

Gilles wanted to know more. He spent hours on the Internet reading about creation and other Bible topics. Gilles learned that the professor was a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. Gilles hadn't heard of Adventists before, but he searched for a church and found one a few miles from his home.

The next Sabbath he attended the church. The members welcomed him warmly and included him in their Bible study. Gilles was impressed with the

congregation's strong Bible-based faith. He sensed that he had found the truth he had been searching for.

But he still had questions. He found a Christian chat room on the Internet and typed in some of his questions. An Adventist young man answered his questions and even telephoned him from Germany to be sure he understood the answers.

A Time to Rejoice

Soon Gilles was convinced that he had found God's true church. So great was his interest in studying the Bible that, even before he was baptized, his Sabbath School class asked him to be their teacher. "Teaching the class is helping me understand the Bible better," Gilles says.

Gilles has invited his parents to visit the church, and his father has attended. They don't yet share his religious faith, but they support his decision to become a Christian.

"God has answered my questions, and now I'm seeking His will for the next step in my life," Gilles says. "I had planned to study engineering, but I believe that God is calling me to prepare to be a pastor. I know that God will lead me, just as He led me to find the truth about Him."

Gilles found God and the answers to his questions through television and the Internet. Our mission offerings help support such outreach activities around the world. We may never know who has come to Christ through these resources, but we know that our offerings will be used to reach out to others who are searching for God. Gilles found answers that changed his life. Those answers will change others' lives as well. 🌐

MISSION POST

- Luxembourg is a tiny landlocked country of just under a half-million people located on the southern border of Belgium. Luxembourg is one of Europe's smallest independent countries. It is smaller than Rhode Island, America's smallest state.
- About 94 percent of Luxembourg's population claim Catholicism as their faith. The Adventist Church has just one congregation, located in the capital city, Luxembourg. A significant number of the church members in this congregation are immigrants from Portugal.
- Gilles' story is featured on the Adventist Mission DVD.



THE DEVIL'S LIES

May 29 | Rui Costa

Rui lived with his grandparents in Portugal. But when he was 7 years old his grandparents died. Rui wanted to know what happened to people when they died, but his uncle, with whom he'd gone to live, didn't have the answers.

Long Search for Answers

Rui began a long search for answers. He started by attending a Sunday School near his uncle's home. Hoping to find answers to his spiritual questions there, he often recited the prayers he had memorized, but he couldn't seem to bridge the gap between himself and God.

Rui bought a Bible, hoping it would help him understand God. But because he had been taught that common people can't understand it, he placed it on a shelf of honor and didn't read it.

Years of Confusion

Then one day he moved the Bible to clean the shelf. The Bible flipped open to Exodus 20. Rui noticed that the page heading said "The Ten Commandments." He sat down and read the chapter. He had memorized the Ten Commandments in church, but he was startled to find that

the commandments in the Bible differed from those he had memorized.

That Sunday he asked the priest why the commandments in the Bible differed from those he had memorized in church. He was disappointed with the priest's answer, and he stopped attending the church. But the emptiness in his life remained.

Asking the Dead

Frustrated because he couldn't find the answers to his spiritual questions in church, he decided to seek the answers from the dead.

He went to meetings to call on the spirits and began to sense a spiritual presence with him. Soon he was deeply involved in the spirit world. He found a book on witchcraft and began studying it. But some of the instructions were so horrifying that he destroyed everything he had that related to the spirits. He kept only his Bible.

Rui again began searching for answers about God. He attended several churches and asked many questions. But what they told him left him confused and frustrated. He began reading the Bible on his own. In this way he discovered references to

the Sabbath day.

Rui knew that the Sabbath was Saturday, for the words are the same in Portuguese. But he didn't know of a church that worshipped on Saturday. Then a few weeks later Rui heard a radio program during which the speaker offered free Bible studies. He enrolled and began studying the lessons.

Almost immediately Rui found answers to the questions that had troubled him for so many years. But before he made a decision about what he was learning, Rui's study was interrupted when he met a young woman. Rui put aside the Bible studies and spent his time with his beloved. Eventually the couple married. At last he felt fulfillment in his life.

But whenever the couple attended church, Rui felt the old conflicts arising

in his heart. He no longer believed that Sunday was the biblical day of worship, and he now understood that the dead are asleep, not alive in some other place. These religious tensions spilled out into his family life, causing unrest and arguments. Rui feared that if he followed his convictions, his marriage might be over.

The Answer at Last

Rui learned that his wife's cousin was a Seventh-day Adventist and that the Bible studies he had taken were sponsored by Adventists. Suddenly the questions he had asked all his life had answers. Everything fell into place. But still he faced a dilemma: what would his wife say if she knew of his interest in this church?

Rui began watching an Adventist television network while his wife wasn't home. When she went to visit her parents for several weeks, Rui attended the Adventist church. He found a spiritual home and was convinced that this was where God wanted him.

Rui struggled to tell his wife. She didn't take his religious fervor seriously, for she had seen him struggle spiritually since they had met. But Rui knew that he had found what he was looking for. He studied further and then asked to be baptized. "I'm at peace," he says. "The devil's lies no longer plague me, for I have found the truth."

Rui praises God that the Adventist Church cares enough to provide Bible studies to people such as him, people who are seeking to find the truth in Jesus and answers to life's questions. Your mission offerings help people make choices between life and death, between lies and truth. Thank you. 🌐

FAST FACTS

- Portugal is located along the western coast of the Iberian Peninsula, neighboring Spain. Some 12 million people live in Portugal, where the official language is Portuguese.
- Almost 2 million people live in the capital city, Lisbon, located in the southwestern corner of Portugal. Lisbon can trace its roots to the twelfth century, and many ancient churches and other important buildings stand next to modern office buildings.
- Portugal has claimed Catholicism for centuries, and even today more than 90 percent of Portugal's citizens are Catholics. Religious feasts and holidays often are the highlight of small-town life. About 1 percent of the population is Protestant.



THE MISSING LINK



June 5 | Ruben Dias

This story is not about me. It's about what God is doing through me and what He can do through anyone who's willing to let Him use them.

The Business of Business

I've always loved business. I founded my first company selling computers to schools when I was 21. From the beginning God was my partner, and He has blessed me so much.

Later I bought a software franchise that grew fast. In five years it grew from one employee to 50 and earned a lot of money. I gave a lot to missions, but I felt empty. Over time I realized that although I was supporting the church's mission, I wasn't personally involved in mission. My wife and I agreed that we needed to be a part of God's outreach to humanity.

Our business interests continued to grow, but I felt God leading me to sell the biggest company. I left the sale in God's hands, and the company sold quickly for more than I had expected.

Time for God

I knew that God doesn't need my money, but I began to realize

that what God wants from me is my time. Mission isn't something we do on Sabbath. It's something we do full-time. I wanted to be personally involved in mission. So I asked God what He wanted me to do for Him.

One day as I was talking with a fellow Christian businessman, a member of Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), I told him about my burden to be personally involved in an evangelistic mission project. I didn't care where the project was, I just wanted to be God's hands. I asked him if he had any ideas for such a project. He said that he'd think about it.

Just then his phone rang, and he excused himself to take the call. When he returned, he told me that the call was from a church leader who told him about a project that's in a country that isn't open to evangelism.

Tailor-made Ministry

As he told me about the project, I realized that God was answering my prayer! The project was in a country I was familiar with. I knew the language and the culture of the people in that country, and as a businessman I

could help the church leaders make it happen. I knew that I could travel there, a place that many others wouldn't be able to enter.

I met with church leaders in the region, and we laid plans to train and equip 1,000 laypersons to share the gospel in their homeland. Although evangelism in this country is technically illegal, God opened doors.

When we arrived we thought that some of the 1,000 people who had signed up wouldn't come. But 1,300 people came! Some knew that they wouldn't receive the materials, but they wanted to come and learn anyway. What an amazing bunch of laypersons we have there!

Exciting Partnership

We couldn't import evangelistic materials or DVD players for the lay evangelists, so we had to buy or produce these items within the country. Each

person is allowed to buy only one DVD player, and we had to be sure that they didn't all go out to buy the DVD players at the same time or in the same place. We bought paper and printing materials on the black market to print the scripts that go with the DVDs we gave to the volunteers. All of this had to be done secretly, and we can't talk about how God made it happen—but He did!

We trained and equipped the lay members and sent them back home to start working. One hundred of these lay members are now working full-time, like Global Mission pioneers, to teach and baptize and establish new church plants. They have been secretly moved to areas within the country where we have no churches. There they teach their new neighbors about God's love and plant new churches.

God's Amazing Power

In the first six months of the program the believers in this country have studied with thousands of eager people. More than 650 people have been baptized, and six new churches have been planted. And these dear people are just getting started!

I'm amazed at what God is doing through my family and me and others who are dedicated to serving God however He leads. We are God's hands, stewards of His resources. He's using us to further His work in a place I never could have dreamed possible.

Every believer is a steward of God's resources, and He will bless each of us as we turn our lives and resources over to Him. 🌍

MISSION POST

- About 90 percent of the people living in Portugal profess to be Catholic. Some 9,300 Seventh-day Adventists live in the country. This is a ratio of roughly one Adventist for every 1100 people.
- Significant numbers of Portuguese have moved to other European Union countries, and among those are many Adventists. They are sharing their faith with their new friends in their adopted homelands and creating a stronger church where once there were few members.



MY MOTHER'S PRAYERS

June 12 | Sandra Sousa

[Ask a mother and daughter to present this first-person report.]

Sofia (daughter): My family lives on the island of Madeira, which is part of Portugal. I grew up in an Adventist home in which we believed in prayer. When I was 8 years old I got an ear infection. We visited several doctors and tried many medicines and treatments, but the infection just wouldn't go away. My ear hurt terribly, and in time I lost my hearing in that ear.

Sandra: Our family prayed for Sofia's ear infection; but, when God didn't answer, my faith began to waver. It seemed as though God wasn't hearing my prayers. But Sofia urged me to keep praying. She felt that God would surely answer a mother's prayers. I wasn't so sure. It didn't seem as though God was answering my prayers. I asked myself, "What more can I do?"

Sofia: About this time we attended some evangelistic meetings. The pastor told us that his daughter had suffered from an ear infection too. He said that his wife fasted and prayed for two weeks, and her daughter got well. I wondered

whether fasting along with prayer could be the answer for me too.

When the meeting ended, I asked the pastor if I would be healed if my mother fasted and prayed in faith. He told me that we must go to God in faith and He will work all things out for our good.

Sandra: Sofia waved for me to join her and the pastor. I'll never forget her words to me: "Mother, if you pray with enough faith, God will heal me!" I smiled, but I wasn't sure I had enough faith to trust that God would heal her.

Sofia: I knew that through prayer and faith, God would heal me and I would be able to hear again with that ear. The pastor gave us a card that said "Pray with daring!" I placed the card above my bed and read it every day. I encouraged my mother to keep praying.

Sandra: Sofia reminded me every day to pray believing that God would heal her. At first I struggled with my faith; but, as I prayed, God took away my doubts. At last I could tell God that I trusted Him

to heal my daughter. Sofia had been right. I needed to have more faith. I confessed my unbelief and asked God to forgive me. When I prayed “Your will be done,” I really meant it. And that night when I checked Sofia’s ear, the visible signs of infection were gone.

Sofia: The next morning Mother told me to take the cotton out of my ear. When I did, I could hear again! I knew that God had healed me. Mother, Father, and I thanked God for the miracle He had given me.

Sandra: I’ve learned that Satan wants to discourage those who follow Jesus. He wants us to give up our faith. I still have my spiritual ups and downs, joyful times and tearful times. But I know that God hears and answers my prayers.

Sofia: My faith has been tested often since my healing. When times got

hard I tried to think about when God healed my ear.

Recently I applied to study medicine at the university, but I wasn’t accepted. My test scores were good, but not good enough to study medicine. I was angry and wondered if God cared anymore. I fought with Him and asked, “Why did You do this to me?” I began to feel weak in faith and unworthy to go to God with my problems. But as I prayed and studied my Bible, God showed me that the devil was causing my feelings of unworthiness so I would lose faith in God.

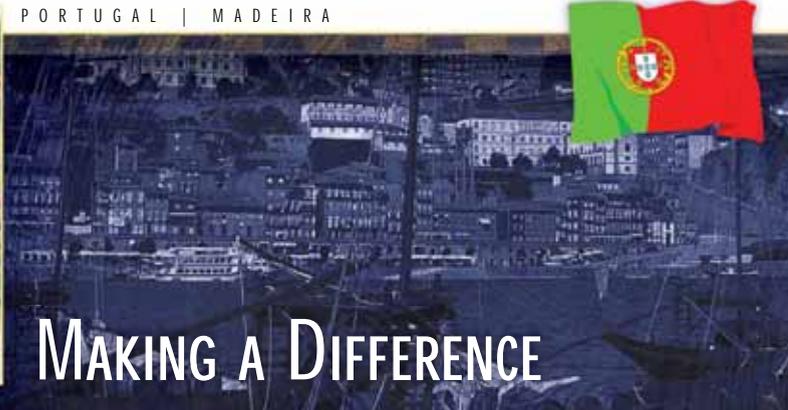
I’ve learned that being involved in church and telling others about God help me keep my faith strong. I’ve learned that nothing I can do will make me worthy of God’s love. God’s love is unconditional.

Sandra: Jesus told us that we must become like little children in our faith. Sofia’s childlike faith helped me develop a stronger relationship with God and a growing faith that I had never experienced before.

Our faith helps us to reach out to others and share God’s love with those who don’t know Him. Our mission offerings help us accomplish that too. Thank you for giving in faith so that people in Madeira and around the world will find faith in God. 🌍

FAST FACTS

- Madeira is the largest of a small set of islands in the Atlantic Ocean southwest of Lisbon and west of Morocco in northern Africa. About 244,000 people live on the island group, most of whom live in or near the capital city, Funchal, which surrounds the only navigable harbor on the main island.
- Madeira was discovered by the Portuguese 600 years ago and remains a part of Portugal. The official language is Portuguese.
- Tourism is a major source of income in Madeira.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

June 19 | Natércia Ferreira

Natércia [nah-TEHR-cee-ah] stood in her classroom on the first day of school and greeted the children as they entered and sat down. She prayed that she would make a difference in their lives.

Natércia is a teacher at the Adventist primary school on the island of Madeira [mah-DEH-rah; *locate Madeira on a map*]. Over the next four years her job would be to mold these wriggly first graders into citizens of God's kingdom.

Challenges

But her 19 little students nearly overwhelmed her. Some had learning disabilities and special needs; others were hyperactive or had behavior problems. Still others had deep-rooted family problems that caused the children to act out in class. *What have I gotten myself into?* she wondered. *How will I ever teach these children if they can't sit down and listen?*

Most of her students had not come from Adventist homes. And none of them had attended the school's preschool or kindergarten program during which they would have learned

the basic lessons of respect and cooperation that children need to know before they can work together as a team. But knowing this didn't make Natércia's daily struggle any easier. Many days she sat in the principal's office in tears. "I thought I was a good teacher!" she said. "But they won't listen, and they don't want to learn!" The principal assured her that she was a good teacher. Together they prayed often for the children. Natércia prayed many times a day for her young students.

Because the children had little religious training at home, Natércia started teaching Bible class with the basics. She tried to make Bible stories come alive for the children and worked hard to help them understand that Jesus loves them and wants to be their special friend. She explained that He listens to their prayers and cares about everything that happens to them.

Breaking Through

Little by little the children began to change. They learned to cooperate with one another instead of fight. They learned the values of friendship, love, patience,

and helpfulness. They learned to treat one another with kindness as Jesus did.

Natércia continued praying for her children every day. She began seeing signs that her children were listening, were accepting the important lessons of kindness, faith, and love. She taught them to pray for one another and to encourage one another to be like Jesus. They began working together and defend one another in class and at play.

But still Natércia wondered what would happen when her children moved on to another school at the end of the fourth grade. Would they remember what she had tried to teach them? For Christmas she gave each child a Bible. Later one boy told her that the Bible had been the best gift he had ever received. "It has helped me change my life," he said eagerly.

Natércia admits that at times when

the children behaved badly or refused to listen she wondered if they would ever learn. "But now I see how much they've grown and learned," she says. "Even the most difficult child has changed, those with learning disabilities have learned, and the hyperactive children have settled down. And instead of making fun of others who are different, they now protect one another and encourage one another to do their best."

Knowing that the children will go on to attend schools that teach evolution, Natércia has tried to instill in them knowledge of God and faith in Jesus. "I want them to know how to go to the Bible to find answers to questions they will face in the coming years," she says. Several of the children have told her, "We'll never forget what we learned here. We'll never forget our Bibles."

Beyond the Classroom

The lessons Natércia and her fellow teachers have taught in the Adventist school have gone beyond the classroom. "Parents tell us that their children refuse to eat without praying first or sleep without a Bible story," she says. "Knowing that these children have taken what they've learned in our little school and applied it to their lives at home makes it all worthwhile."

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help enlarge and update the school to government standards. Our offering will help make it possible for more children to learn who God is and that He wants to be a part of their lives. This school is the main outreach of the Adventist Church in the capital city of Madeira. Let's give generously so that children can learn lessons that will last a lifetime. 🌍

MISSION POST

- While 600 Seventh-day Adventists hold membership in the church in Madeira, many have left their homeland in search of work. About 300 Adventists remain on the islands.
- The Adventist Church operates one primary school in Funchal, the capital city. The student body of the school is roughly 90 percent non-Adventist, making it a true mission school. In spite of the crowded conditions, parents are eager to enroll their children in the school, which is known for its strong academic and social training.
- Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help renovate and enlarge this school to meet government standards and increase the church's impact on the island.

THIRTEENTH SABBATH PROGRAM

OPENING SONG	“In the Heart of Jesus” <i>The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , No. 577
WELCOME	Superintendent or Sabbath School teacher
PRAYER	
PROGRAM	“A Difficult Place”
OFFERING	Ask kindergarten and primary children to sing one or more of the songs they have learned this quarter as the offering is taken.
CLOSING SONG	“Lead Them, My God, to Thee” <i>The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , No. 653
CLOSING PRAYER	

A Difficult Place

Participants: Narrator and three reporters (or alternate with two presenters).
[Choose participants who will practice their parts and present them clearly. While participants do not have to memorize their parts, they should be familiar enough with the content that they can present the material with confidence.]

Speaker 1: Sometimes it’s hard to think of Europe as a mission field. But with roughly one Adventist for every 3,400 people, it certainly qualifies as a mission field and in many ways is a difficult place to lead people to Christ!

The Euro-African Division faces huge challenges to evangelize its territories, which range from modern, wealthy, secular nations such as Belgium and Switzerland, to former Communist-bloc countries that are still struggling to gain their national identity. And a number of countries

within the division are non-Christian nations located within the 10-40 Window, where it’s difficult and often dangerous to share one’s faith in God.

This quarter we have focused on three of the countries in Europe: Belgium, Bulgaria, and Portugal. Our first report comes from Belgium. _____ *[name of speaker]* will share with us a bit of the challenges and the opportunities that Adventists face in that country.

Speaker 2: Belgium is one of

the smallest countries in Europe. Sandwiched between France, Germany, and the Netherlands, its culture is heavily influenced by its neighbors. The nation is highly industrialized, and 97 percent of its people live or work in cities. Belgium has attracted many immigrants, a large percentage of whom have made their homes in the nation's capital, Brussels.

About 80 percent of the people claim Roman Catholicism as their religion, though relatively few Belgians attend church on a weekly basis.

The Adventist Church in the Belgium-Luxembourg Conference numbers fewer than 2,000. That's one believer for every 5,700 people. A significant number of Adventists in Belgium are immigrants and live in and around Brussels. This segment of the Adventist Church is growing the fastest. They don't have their own places to worship and must rent halls or share worship facilities with other congregations. But the cost of renting halls is expensive, and there simply aren't enough Adventist churches to accommodate the growing number and size of new congregations.

Recently the church in Belgium purchased the ground level of a building in the heart of Brussels and divided it in half to create houses of worship for the two largest immigrant congregations. Church members are doing much of the work on the buildings to keep costs down and complete the work so they can move into their new church homes.

Part of our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering today will help complete these two new worship centers in Brussels and will strengthen the outreach for Christ in Belgium.

Speaker 1: Our second country of focus today is Bulgaria. _____ [Name of speaker] will give us some background on the challenges and opportunities in this nation.

Speaker 3: The church in Bulgaria struggled during generations under Communist rule. The dominant religious faith in Bulgaria is Orthodox, but the Adventist Church is growing. The church in Bulgaria has almost 7,600 believers, one for every 1,000 people there.

One fast-growing segment of Adventists in Bulgaria is the Romani people. Also called Gypsies, these people maintain close-knit communities throughout Europe. While they tend to resist change, when a clan or group finds something worth sharing, others listen.

In one city of 70,000 people, the first Romani converts were baptized some 15 years ago. Today that city has more than 1,000 Romani Adventists. That's one Adventist for every 11 Romani.

Wherever the Adventist Church has established a foothold among the Romani, groups of believers are growing. But few have houses of worship, and the Adventist Church in Bulgaria is not able to help as it would like.

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help provide a simple house of worship for a congregation of Romani in northwestern Bulgaria. Please give generously to help these brothers and sisters reach out to their families and friends for Christ.

Speaker 1: That's an exciting project. Thank you for that report.

Our final report comes from the tiny

island of Madeira [mah-DEH-rah], which belongs to Portugal. _____ [Name of speaker] will tell us about Madeira.

Speaker 4: Madeira is a tiny island group about 400 miles west of Morocco on the coast of northern Africa. Discovered by Portuguese explorers almost 600 years ago, the main island looks like a rock jutting from the sea. Its rugged mountainous landscape creates a uniquely beautiful place.

The capital city, Funchal [foon-CH AHL], lies around the only navigable port on the island. About 250,000 people call Madeira home, and nearly all the residents are Roman Catholic. But about 600 Adventists are members of the Adventist Church. However, many members have moved off the island in search of work or to study. About 300 active Adventists remain on the island.

The church has one organized church and a few small congregations in isolated areas of the island. But Madeirans know the Adventist Church because of the Madeira Adventist Primary School located in the heart of the capital city. Most of the children

attending the school are not from Adventist homes, so the school is a mission project. Children are on waiting lists to attend the school, which has a good reputation in spite of its cramped and outdated facilities.

In order to meet government standards and to accommodate the children who wish to attend this school, the school must renovate and enlarge its facilities, including new bathrooms and a cafeteria. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help enlarge and renovate this school, a light on a hill on an island in the Atlantic.

Speaker 1: We have three significant challenges in three quite different regions of the Euro-Africa Division. There's no question that our offering today will be used to expand the work and make a difference in the lives of the people living in these regions. Let's link arms with our church family in Europe and help them cast their gospel nets into the seas surrounding them to bring in a large catch of souls for the Savior.

[Offering]

YOUR OFFERINGS AT WORK

Adults and children alike learn that God loves them through radio and television programs. Many of these programs are produced in the new Adventist Media Center in Darmstadt, Germany, which was built three years ago with the help of a Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. Thank you for sharing your offerings so that others can hear about God's love.



For more information on the cultures and history of Belgium, Bulgaria, and Portugal, the featured countries this quarter, check the travel section of a local library or visit a travel agency and ask for brochures.

Visit our website for additional photos, recipes, language pages, puzzles, and other activities that you can download and print to make mission more fun for children. Go to www.AdventistMission.org. Click on "Resources" and "Children's Activities" in the pop-up menu. Go to second quarter and select the activity you want.

Adventist Mission DVD is a free video that features stories from the featured countries as well as the worldwide mission of the Adventist Church. Ask your Sabbath School superintendent to make you a copy of it. Or go online at www.AdventistMission.org to download one of the DVD programs.

Embassies and Tourism Offices sometimes can provide interesting information on their country. In North America, contact:

Embassy of Belgium, 3330 Garfield Street NW, Washington, DC 20008. Check out websites that feature information on Belgium at www.visitbelgium.com.

Embassy of Bulgaria, 621 22nd Street NW, Washington, DC 20008; phone 202-387-0174; websites: www.webhousing.biz/~bulgaria; www.bulgaria-embassy.org/about_bulgaria.htm; www.bulgaria-embassy.org/Culture_Intro.htm.

Embassy of Portugal, 2125 Kalorama Road, NW, Washington, DC 20008; phone 202- 234-8524. For information specifically on the islands of Madeira, go to www.madeira-island.com or type "Madeira Islands" into your search engine and watch videos or see stills of the islands.

Remind members also that the ongoing work of the world church depends on the weekly Sabbath School mission offerings. On the twelfth Sabbath, report on mission giving during the quarter.

FUTURE THIRTEENTH SABBATH PROJECTS

Next quarter the Trans-European Division will be featured. Special projects include:

- an international church in Copenhagen, Denmark
- a church for an active congregation near Helsinki, Finland
- renovation of the Polish Union's campground at Zatonie, Poland
- Children's project: Bibles for children in Pakistan, Israel, and Sudan

Fourth quarter 2010 will feature the West-Central Africa Division.

ADVENTIST MISSION

SECOND QUARTER 2010
EURO-AFRICA DIVISION

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Euro-Africa Division

UNION	CHURCHES	MEMBERS	POPULATION
Austrian Union of Churches	49	3,871	8,352,000
Bulgarian Union of Churches	118	7,598	7,621,000
Czecho-Slovakian Union Conference	186	9,861	15,833,000
Franco-Belgian Union Conference	138	14,626	73,263,000
Italian Union of Churches	107	8,675	60,309,000
North German Union Conference	357	20,301	47,905,000
Portuguese Union of Churches	97	9,332	10,621,000
Romanian Union Conference	1,085	67,393	21,498,000
South German Union Conference	225	15,371	34,265,000
Spanish Union of Churches	104	14,625	46,615,000
Swiss Union Conference	49	4,311	7,669,000
Trans-Mediterranean Territories	7	266	262,704,000

TOTALS
(as of December 30, 2008)

2,522 Churches
176,230 Members
596,655,000 Population

- PROJECTS**
- 1 Church for existing multiethnic groups in Brussels, Belgium
 - 2 Church for Romani congregation in Bulgaria
 - 3 Expand and modernize a mission school on the island of Madeira, Portugal

